

BROOKLYN NEWS

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Aiming for overnight successes

Subsidized boarding HS for boys is a first for city

BY RACHEL MONAHAN

THEIR DAY AT SCHOOL never ends — but these students couldn't be happier.

School officials said that the ANCHOR boarding-school program at Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School is the first of its kind for boys in New York City.

"What happens outside of the school setting has a great impact on a student's performance in the classroom," said ANCHOR executive director Barbara Welles. Her nonprofit funds urban boarding-school programs for low-income students.

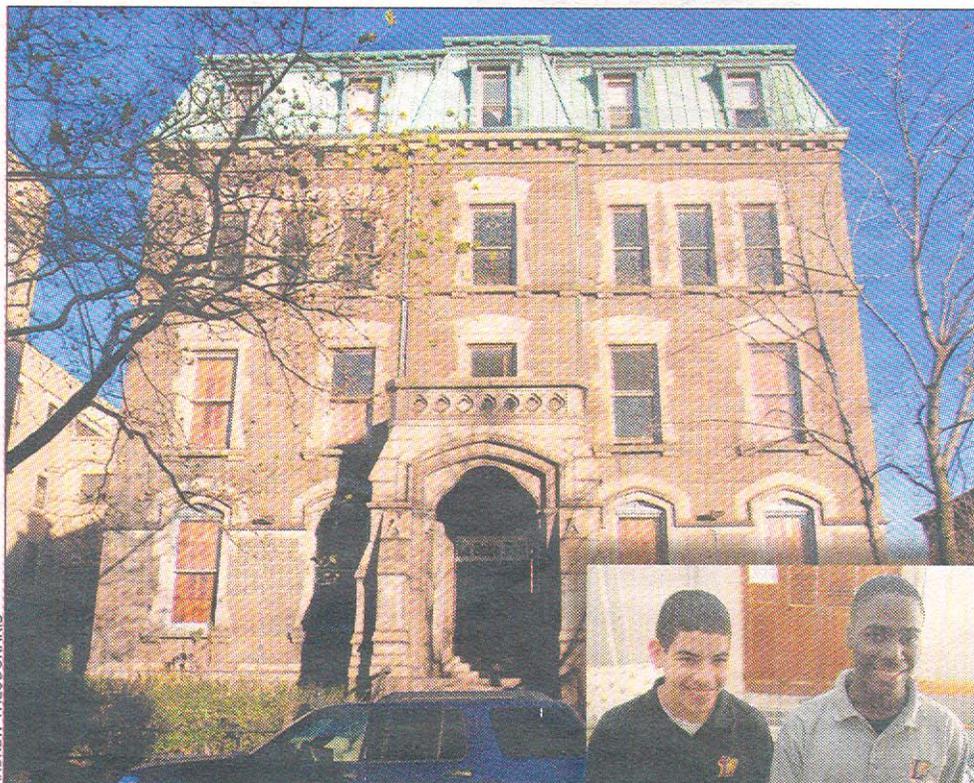
Welles had previously worked with students whose home life or neighborhoods, she thought, were discouraging achievement at school. She viewed boarding school as a solution.

ANCHOR's program for girls at Catherine McAuley High School in East Flatbush has had success since it began in 2002. All of last year's graduates received academic scholarships to college, said Welles.

Since September, the 20 new Loughlin boarders have spent Sunday night through Friday afternoon at the Fort Greene school, and they've gone home to their families on weekends.

Shaun Hudson, 15, a freshman from Farragut, said his teachers promised the program "would bring me further in life."

The Catholic high school most famously graduated Rudy Giuliani. Its student body is currently 85% black



ANDREW THEODORAKIS

LaSalle Hall at Bishop Loughlin High School now houses students such as A.J. Cipolla and Shaun Hudson, right.



and 14% Latino.

Freshman A.J. Cipolla, 14, said that the two-hour study halls each night provided more discipline than his mother could.

"She would ask me [about homework], but sometimes I wouldn't do it," he said.

The program is designed to further academic achievement but also to make the students well-rounded.

For Aaron Temple, a 16-year-old junior, living at school has improved his grades dramatically — from a 69 last year to an 84 this quarter.

A member of the basketball team, he would get too tired or simply didn't have enough time for studying after his hour-long commute to Flatbush.

"I love it here," he said.

Families of Loughlin boarders earned an average of \$29,000 annually, said Welles.

That's just several thousand more than the \$23,000 a year that the program currently costs per student. Parents contribute between \$2,400 and \$3,500.

"For my son it's nothing but good," said Aaron's father, Llewellyn Temple, 50, who lives in Ditmas Park. "I want him to go to college."

The beautiful dorm, originally the home of the first bishop of Brooklyn, is a perk for the boys in itself. It has 12-foot ceilings and dark-wood details.

Residential life director Ray Walker told the students when they were applying that they'd live as well as a famous rapper.

"It's like Nelly's crib," he said. "Well, we're missing a few cars."



The Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, bishop of the Brooklyn-Queens Diocese, (center) gathers with the Bishop Loughlin community to mark the opening of the new boarding school.



Assemblyman Roger Green, City Councilmember Letitia James, Brother Dennis Cronin, Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, John Hayer and Ray Walker (from left) come together for the presentation of a proclamation from Borough President Marty Markowitz.

Boarding School Opens

By Helen Klein

New York City's first urban boarding school for boys is now open in Brooklyn.

Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School, a co-educational Catholic high school at 357 Clermont Avenue in Fort Greene, opened its boarding program with 20 male students this past September, with the goal of eventually doubling enrollment in the program. The program was subsequently dedicated, last month, by Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio during a ceremony marking the landmark occasion.

In opening its student residence, Bishop Loughlin joins another of the borough's Catholic Schools, Catherine McAuley High School, in providing such an option for its students. McAuley's program, which now serves 40 female students, opened in 2002.

Maryann Feeney, a spokesperson for Bishop Loughlin, said that the goal of the program was to provide a supportive environment for learning outside of school hours for students who might otherwise not enjoy such a situation. All of the students are from the New York metropolitan area.

"It's designed for students who have the academic capacity but perhaps come from a neighborhood or family that don't support the academics," she explained. "The idea is that they are with us from Sunday evening to Friday afternoon, with time for study, chores and recreation. It's a classic boarding program, and it's an opportunity for us to give extra aid to really well-deserving young people."

Bishop Loughlin was a perfect fit for such a program, Feeney noted. Not

only did it have an available residence hall that could be used, but the principal, Brother Dennis Cronin, has had experience in running such an establishment, because of his time at the now-defunct LaSalle Military Academy, Feeney said. "Part of our style is that we are willing to research and implement innovative programs. This is definitely an innovative program," she added.

So far, the program appears to be a success, said Feeney. "The kids are loving it," she noted. "They weren't too sure when they came in, because it was a new concept to them, but several have increased their academic records for the first quarter, as well as their social skills."

In putting the program together, Bishop Loughlin partnered with ANCHOR, a not-for-profit organization whose goal is precisely to

create such learning environments, to reinforce the educational process.

Barbara Welles, ANCHOR's executive director, said that the organization's efforts were, "Based on the belief that so much of what affects a child's performance in school happens outside the school setting.

"Kids need a learning environment and community that support the learning process," she stressed. "So many of these kids don't have that. ANCHOR is designed to provide everything these kids need to succeed."

Results at McAuley have been promising, Welles said. The girls in the boarding program at that school, she noted, "Not only do really well academically, but out of 19 leadership positions in the school, 12 are filled by ANCHOR students, so they are really



The Lamban Loughlin African Dancers wow the crowd. Photos By Ted Levin

having a presence in the school. That's what we expect to happen at Bishop Loughlin as well."

In addition, Welles said, 100 percent of seniors graduating from the program at McAuley had gone on to college. "And they go with scholarships, so we're very proud of that too."

Beyond providing the students with a top-notch education, a further goal of the ANCHOR program is to

equip the young men and women who are in it to serve their communities in turn. Many of the students at the boarding programs at both Bishop Loughlin and McAuley are involved in community service, Welles said.

"We are cultivating a group of young people who could become leaders and give back to their communities, have an impact on them," Welles added.

DEERFIELD

MAGAZINE





Stokes Foundation

RAY
WALKER

best friend
'92



above: J.J. at Deerfield; a memorial in the MSB

From the very beginning, **Ray Walker '92** makes one thing perfectly clear: this is not about him. The foundation he recently established is about his best friend: J.J. Stokes. J.J. died during his senior year at Deerfield, but he continues to inspire Mr. Walker. "J.J. was super active on campus," Mr. Walker said. A tri-sport athlete and band member, "he bled green and white."

Searching for a way to honor his friend, Mr. Walker met with a group of Deerfield alumni—most from the Class of 1992—last summer. At this small gathering, the idea for the Stokes Foundation was born.

The Foundation's mission is "to bring the life-transforming experience of boarding school life directly to students in need" through "building athletic, extracurricular, and residential life programs in partnership with urban schools."

Mr. Walker cannot overstate the importance of extracurricular programming; he refers to the afterschool period as the “danger zone.” Studies have shown that 14.3 million youth in the US are not involved in meaningful extracurricular programming, and teenagers who do not participate in afterschool programs are three times more likely to skip classes or use drugs. “When kids are in school from 3:00 to 6:00, education in America will change,” Mr. Walker asserted.

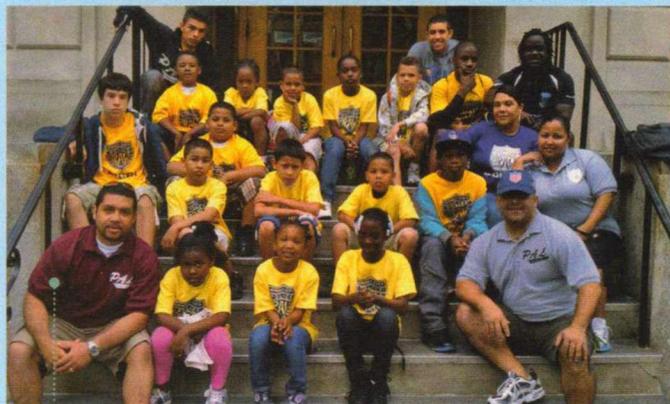
Through the early efforts of the Stokes Foundation, the Schomburg Charter School in Jersey City, NJ, now has students playing rugby, aided by its partnership with the Jersey City Police Activity League and Play Rugby USA. There are also plans to start soccer and flag football teams in the fall, as well as a debate team. In addition, the New York Harbor School in New York, NY, and CityLax, Inc. will partner to create lacrosse teams at the school.

Already the extracurricular programs are seeing early success. One of the first rugby teams at the Schomburg Charter School won the New York City Rugby Mayor’s Cup this past June, an impressive feat considering that the team was the only one based outside of New York City.

As an operating philanthropic organization, the Stokes Foundation does more hands-on work than just doling out grants to start programs. It builds strategic partnerships between schools and community-based organizations, ensuring that their relationships are strong and that partners have the motivation and commitment to make progress. Mr. Walker describes the organizations that he works with as ones that align with the mission of the Stokes Foundation, that are receptive to feedback, and “that don’t mind a little bit more involvement from the grant-maker.”

As the foundation grows, Mr. Walker doesn’t want to lose sight of his inspiration—J.J. Stokes. Before the rugby team at the Schomburg Charter School started its season, Mr. Walker gave the kids a preseason speech, telling them about J.J. and his legacy. As the first group of Stokes Scholars, “I let them know that they are forever going to be special.”

The Foundation’s mission is “to bring the life-transforming experience of boarding school life directly to students in need” through “building athletic, extracurricular, and residential life programs in partnership with urban schools.”



Ray Walker may be contacted directly at rwalker@stokesfoundation.org for more information, to volunteer time, or to make a pledge.

Visit stokesfoundation.org for more information and to stay connected to the foundation’s work in service of students and school communities.

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Urban Boarding Schools Offer Twist on the Elite

by Eleanor J. Bader

Think boarding school and your thoughts will likely take you to a country setting where large trees, manicured grounds, and ivy-covered buildings greet a largely upper-crust student body. Since the first private boarding schools were established in the U.S. in the 1700s, this reality has prevailed.

Yet the stereotype may be changing. As a response to charges that schools must do more to help low-income students, a small number of boarding programs—two of them in Brooklyn—have been established in America's cities. Brooklyn's programs have been sponsored by ANCHOR, a six-year-old nonprofit that partners with schools to create boarding programs for underserved youth.

“ANCHOR grew out of the belief that what happens outside the school setting has a great impact on what happens in school,” says executive director Barbara Welles-Iler.

It sounds like a no-brainer.

Although ANCHOR is the only project of its kind in New York City, it is part of a growing national trend to bring residential education to the nation's poor. As of September 2006, 30 urban boarding programs have been developed in Washington, DC, Philadelphia, San Diego, Minneapolis, and St. Paul.



Photo courtesy of Barbara Welles Iler

ANCHOR currently runs two residential programs, both based in Brooklyn. The first, established at Catherine McAuley Catholic High School in Flatbush, began in 2001 and feeds and shelters 40 girls. The second opened in October 2006 at Fort Greene's Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School. Although the school is coed, the residence is not; 20 boys, ages 14-18, live there.

That both ANCHOR programs are located in parochial settings is more coincidence than design, says Welles-Iler. The Loughlin residence was previously used by the DeSalle Christian Brothers who ran the school. By 2005, their numbers had dwindled to 10 men. Similarly, the Convent at Catherine McAuley, once home to 40 Sisters of Mercy, was by 2001 home to just six. While both buildings needed extensive renovations, the fact that the dwellings existed made the establishment of dorms easier and far less costly than starting from scratch. Simply put, says Welles-Iler, “the infrastructure was there because of the church's holdings.”

But students need more than an edifice, and ANCHOR tries to provide everything they require, from counseling to tutoring, athletic programs, and mentoring. “Our goal is to give low-income students who do not have enough support and structure outside the school setting what they need to succeed,” Welles-Iler says.

Students at both McAuley and Loughlin stay in the dorms from Sunday evening to Friday afternoon but go back to their families on weekends.

The arrangement works. Jonathan, a 17-year-old from Coney Island, had been at Loughlin for two years when he heard about the boarding option from his handball coach. “I was doing bad my sophomore year,” he admits.

“I didn’t do my homework or study for tests. I’d go home, go out, come home, and fall asleep. Here, it’s structured. You have a two-hour study time and it’s mandatory. No one nags you. They tell you to do something and you are expected to do it. My average is now in the 80s and I’m in Latino dance, play handball, and do community service. Sure, sometimes the rules seem strict, but it’s a good program. It helps you achieve your full potential.”

Sitting in the computer room of the mansion-turned-dorm—the huge stone house was originally built for Brooklyn’s first Bishop, John Loughlin, in the 1850s—Aaron, age 16, is also effusive. “I had a 69 average last year. I could not find room for homework. Plus, at home if I didn’t understand something, I’d close my book and say, ‘Okay, I’ll do it tomorrow.’ Here, there are tutors or I can ask a counselor for help. At home I didn’t have a schedule. Now I follow one. I want to be here. I figure college will be like this and when I get there I’ll already be adjusted to living by myself.”

Aaron’s GPA, now 84, is indicative of how well he is doing. Is there anything he doesn’t like about the dorm? “Yeah, of course,” he says while fingering his braids. “I don’t like that there are certain hours, 4-7, when we can’t be on the computer. But I understand why it’s a rule.”

Malcolm, a 14-year-old freshman from Brownsville, came into the program straight from junior high. “Living here is hard,” he says. “I miss my brother, my house, and my cat, but you go home on weekends and there are breaks. It feels really good to go home and see my friends and lie in my bed, but I plan to stay here for all four years.”

Despite the newness of Loughlin’s residential program, staff have already noticed changes in the boys. James Smith, the senior boarding program counselor, calls it social development. “Some of the guys were kind of isolated when they came here. They stayed to themselves, playing video games. Gradually, they saw others get involved in after-school activities, things like dance, music, sports, chess club, and it had a domino effect. They saw the enthusiasm of other students and it fed their energy.”

The same contagion exists within the dorms at Catherine McAuley. Students with previously lackluster grades have seen improvement and credit the residence’s structure and imposed discipline

for the gains. Indeed, the results are impressive: Every boarder who graduated in 2006 went on to college.

The demand for housing, says Sister Pat Gale, co-director of the McAuley program, is high. “We had 30 applicants this year and were only able to take six. That’s the hardest part for us.”

Not surprisingly, those who are admitted consider themselves lucky. Nubia, a 17-year-old from Harlem, says that she dreamed of going to a boarding high school relatively close to home. After learning of the McAuley program from her guidance counselor, she decided that it was where she wanted to be.

Still, the dorms are not what she expected. “I thought there’d be less help and guidance,” she says. “I thought I’d be more on my own. I didn’t expect to have a specific time to study and do homework. I didn’t think we’d all eat together. Everything is organized and on task. I didn’t like it at the beginning but it’s grown on me.”

Living in a tight-knit community, while sometimes difficult, has given Nubia a sense of belonging. “Sometimes if you’re alone in your room for a while, someone will check on whether you’re okay. It makes you understand that people care about you,” she says.

Sixteen-year-old D’Asia, like Jonathan and Aaron, believes that living away from home has helped her excel academically; it has also taught her to mediate difficulties. “In a building with 40 girls, attitudes will come out and you can get aggravated with a person,” she laughs. “There are sometimes big arguments but give it a month or two and we’re all the best of friends again.”

This camaraderie will empower students throughout their lives, says ANCHOR’s Barbara Welles-Iler. Students are also strengthened, she adds, when they know that their families are invested in their education. That’s why both schools ask parents or guardians to attend meetings and pay a portion of their child’s food and shelter fees. While the actual cost of room and board exceeds \$10,000 per pupil, each child’s family is asked for an annual \$2,000 or \$3,000.

None of the parents have bristled at the demand, says Ray Walker, director of Loughlin’s boarding program. “Parents tend to respect our input and advice,” he says. “Last week I was talking to a mother and she was giving me sensitive medical information. At one point she stopped and said, ‘You’re raising him more days and hours than I am.’ She acknowledged it, but it’s sometimes hard, and a very real push and pull exists.”

“We have to respond to the sacrifice of parents,” Welles-Iler adds. “Sometimes the kid used to help out at home with the care of younger siblings or with chores around the apartment. Sending the child to a boarding program reflects a commitment from these families.”

And sometimes the commitment falters. In the five years since McAuley’s residential program began, says Sister Pat Gale, a handful of students have left. Reasons vary. Some had to follow their families

when they moved out of state; others found the structure of the dorm burdensome or had difficulty dealing with the separation from family or friends.

Yet the majority have done exceedingly well. “I’ve seen tremendous resiliency, rays of light in these kids,” says Loughlin’s Ray Walker. “A lot of things are not right in their lives, but these kids want to better themselves. I think every child here would say that the program has helped them maintain their focus.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eleanor J. Bader is a teacher, writer, and activist. She writes the monthly Stoking Fire column on rrealitycheck.org, and also contributes to feministreview.org, ontheissuesmagazine.com, *The Progressive* and other progressive, feminist publications and blogs.