



## **The Next Phase**

**Jennifer Friedman, May 2011**

I am by no means a sentimental person. Yet the past few weeks, as my husband and I have contemplated leaving New York for Barcelona, a flood of clichés have been swept over me. In the fall of 2002 as I began my first school search I was shocked to find fruitless my quest for a dual language preschool. It was a phone call that changed my career path (See? Cliché). “What do you think it would take to start a preschool?” I asked Jennifer Woodruff, to which she responded, “I’m in.” And so it began.

La Escuelita is incredible not because of the people who founded it but thanks to those who sustain it. It was and is a fantastic idea in the abstract but the reality is in fact so much more, and it is the actual experiencing it which leaves all of us, staff, students and parents alike, absolutely breathless. Countless visitors, from parent visitors to other preschool educators to private school admissions directors, have expressed their awe at what they see happening in the classrooms. The language learning is what most captures their attention but quite often they also comment on the joy and the warmth they see in the classroom. Many note the diversity and the emphasis on its importance. All notice how fluidly the students play and learn through that play and how rich the learning environment is for the students.

La Escuelita of today was set on course by an idea implemented that first year. I think back to that first team of educators and parents. Carolina, Loreto, Shuber, Gaby, Lina and Rosie were more than we could have asked for to head up the teaching staff our first year. Founding parents like Steven and Louisa Plous who stay involved to this day (Steven is on the Board of Directors). Our last two founding families still at the school include Jason and Estela Ogiste whose younger daughter Indigo graduates this year, and Martha Escobar (also on the Board) and Sandor Lehoczky who have their third child graduating this year and their fourth will enter in September 2012. These families took a risk to send their children to a school that still did not even have furniture when they signed contracts, and these teachers had nothing to go on but an idea. They believed in our mission, as do all of the staff and all of the families who have come since and will come to La Escuelita in the future. I know that every school has had this moment, where it takes that final step from founding phase to independent existence phase. Thanks to all of you, it will continue to be the amazing school and warm community it has been for the past eight years. And surely I will miss it more than it will miss me. I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to set into motion an idea. I will forever be grateful for being allowed the honor of being a founder of La Escuelita.