



*Social*  
**AFFAIRS**

**Plum  
Sykes'**  
*The  
Debutant  
Divorcée*

**MIR**  
Women with  
a Mission

**Casa de Campo  
Getaway**

**The Latest Couture**  
Vicky Tiel, Zac Posen,  
Carlos Miele, and more

**Summer Sparklers**  
Jewelry to Complement Every Woman

Plum in Oscar de la Renta  
at the Brazilian Court,  
Palm Beach



THE POTAMKIN BUILDING



# FISHER ISLAND DAY SCHOOL

By Millie Acebal Rousseau  
Photographed by Zoltan

## Fueling the Mind & Spirit of Children

Imagine a school where children learn Mandarin and PowerPoint in the second grade; where junk food is banned and kids eat freshly catered, healthy lunches, and where parents can go online to view their children's classroom activities in real time. While that may sound that a dream to most parents, Lexie Brockway Potamkin made it a reality. An extremely warm and cheerful person, Lexie's joyful demeanor and selfless attitude are present everywhere she goes. Walking into her home, you are greeted by happy children and excited poodles, and while talking to her, you cannot help but recognize her legitimate concern for the community and, more specifically, for the welfare of children. You also realize that Lexie is someone who makes things happen.

Mom to six-year-old twins Ayla and Alura and two-year-old Alex, Lexie and her husband hired professional teachers to speak Spanish to her oldest children when they were younger. After a while, the girls began being completely home-schooled, and the Potamkins invited the girls' friend, Olivia Pearce, to join. A school, in essence, began in a closet of their home.

"We started to invite everyone on the island to join us," explained Lexie. "We had 13 children come to the house for over one year."

Lexie spoke with other families, and the idea to launch what would become known as the Fisher Island Day School, a non-profit private school for grades pre-kindergarten through fifth, was born.

"Nothing is more important than the education of our children," Lexie declared. "We all thought it would be a great idea to start a school."

Valerie Pearce, mom to Olivia and four-year-old Evan, was one of the founders.





"We wanted what's best for our families and kids," reiterates Valerie. "The intensive Mandarin and Spanish came about because we wanted our kids to [have the ability to be] competitive business people, if that's what they want, of course. We thought: start early and make it fun."

The school, which is celebrating its second anniversary in June, focuses on foreign languages (specifically Mandarin and Spanish), technology, and healthy lifestyle choices.

"Our mission is the education of mind, body and spirit," asserted Lexie.

The children have physical education everyday and eat wholesome, nutritional snacks such as watermelon, apple slices, yogurt, organic cream cheese, and rice cakes. A chef prepares daily hot, healthy meals that the kids eat outside in a picnic area next to the state-of-the-art playground that is environmentally friendly, just like the rest of the school. Special air filters are used so that mold will not grow, and the classroom walls are colorful, with special lighting that prevents young eyes from getting tired.

"We want learning to be fun and environmentally green," continued Lexie.

In addition to the facility, the curriculum is also top-of-the-line.

"We felt technology was important, so there are computers in every classroom," remarked Lynne Allen, head of the school.

Lynn DeAraujo, a second-grade teacher, explained that the students are learning to use PowerPoint, Photoshop, and the Internet as a result of the availability of technology. While convenient, computers are found to be excellent education resources as well. For example, when Lynn was teaching the kids about birds, students were able to go onto the Internet and conduct their own research.

"I like going on the Internet and researching birds' beaks and the different feathers they have," declares seven-year old Ariana Viglione.

The teachers also use SMART Boards, an interactive whiteboard connected to students' computers. Teachers can save information to be used later, as well as put programs on the board to demonstrate to students how to actually use each. "We're preparing [the students] for rigorous education," Lynne affirms, but was quick to reveal one key to the success of the Fisher Island Day School: keeping education fun. "Children get farther when they enjoy school and learning," she adds.

And it seems to be working. "Chinese class is really cool. We use paintbrushes instead of pencils", eight-year-old Nicholas Matos explains.

The school is not limited to children who live on Fisher Island. "I live outside the island. I [went] to several schools, and there's just not that many programs for two-year-olds," reveals Johanna Sarria, whose daughter, Mina Lu, attends the school.

Lexie plans to expand the school, but wants to keep classes small so that "teachers get to know students and individually teach according to their learning styles. It's a lot more rewarding for teachers, but also a lot more work."

In addition to the advantages the Fisher Island Day School offers to children, parents also find many other benefits as well: There are 23 cameras present in the school so that parents can log on and see what their kids are doing at any time, and teachers e-mail parents everyday about what the children are taught in class so that learning can be reinforced at home.

This year, the Fisher Island Day School Employee Scholarship Fund was launched for children whose parents work on the island. Through fundraising, which included auctioning off a Rolls Royce and a boat, money was raised to fund scholarships for three or four students for three years.

To learn more, visit [www.FisherIslandDaySchool.org](http://www.FisherIslandDaySchool.org)

