

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: ELENA SEMINARA



Elena Seminara, the art teacher at the Robert Randall School on Staten Island (P.S. 373), has been working with the Guild’s Urban Voices program since 2009. We sat down and talked to her about the benefits of arts education for her students at P.S. 373, a special-education school which serves students in Pre K–6th grade.

“Many of these students have difficulty with social appropriateness and have difficulty working

**“Music soothes the soul.
It’s good for our students.”**

collaboratively with others. Consequently, many of our students have lower self-esteem and do not see themselves as successful in many areas, academically, socially, and so on. The positive effects for our special needs students cannot be merely quantified. They are in evidence—experienced and felt.

“Students who seldom, if ever, participate voluntarily in class feel emboldened and readily stand up for presentations or to offer support to other students. Vocabulary increases, time on tasks increases, focus and

attention to details are heightened. Additionally, speech teachers have noted improvements in enunciation and articulation, and have noted advancements with one student in particular who will be decertified from Speech Services, citing participation in the Urban Voices program as a factor in his progress.

“It has always been my hope that my students would gain confidence and a belief in their abilities through Urban Voices,” says Elena. “I want my children to feel good about getting up and speaking in front of others, who think of themselves as people who can learn new things without fear of failure. Participation in the Urban Voices program opens up new worlds for these children and allows them to see and think beyond their small communities.”

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