



Morning Session Descriptions

9:45am - 11:45am

Bringing Out What I Had in Me

Keynote by Chelsea R. and Farrah Ruiz

A student/graduate of the P94M Arts program and her mother reflect on the impact of that experience.

Speakers

Hi, my name is *Chelsea R.* and I am 14 years old. I am a very sweet girl, but at times I could be shy. Working with Ms. Derfner at P94M in the Drama program has been a great part of my life. It has given me lots of self-confidence. It has shown me that we are all different in our own ways, but that we can accomplish anything we want with the proper help and dedication, and that's why I feel there should be more programs like the one at P94M so that more autistic children could have the same opportunities I did at P94M.

Farra Ruiz, Chelsea's mother, would like everyone to know that working in the Drama program with Ms. Derfner and the rest of the lovely staff at P94M made a huge difference in my daughter's life. Because of it Chelsea has overcome many of her fears, is so much stronger and has so much more self-confidence. I am so proud of Chelsea because – with the help of Ms. Derfner and the others – Chelsea has shown what she had in her the whole time. Programs like the Drama program at P94M should be offered to other autistic children.

A Musical Performance by The PS 177 Technology Band

This group of very talented young musicians has been the featured band at the VSA Festival, Queens, and has performed for Apple Store events and the District 75 Principals' Conference. We have been featured on Fox Network News, as well as in video productions by District 75 and Apple. It means a great deal to us to be able to perform at ASEC's annual conference. In doing so, we represent the potential capabilities of all learners, and the fruitful benefits of raised expectations. The PS 177 Technology Band is under the direction of Adam Goldberg, and is comprised of a mix of students with Autism and other learning challenges who range in age from 12 to 18 years.

The band and its director would like to acknowledge our Principal, Kathy Posa, for her generous and undying support of the Arts at PS 177Q, without which our band, and what you see them accomplish here today, would not be possible.

A graduate of Manhattan School of Music with a B.A. in Classical Piano, *Adam Goldberg* has toured the U.S. with the Glenn Miller Orchestra, and has gigged throughout the tri-state area, working with such artists as Michel Camilo, Lew Soloff, and Steve Turre. Mr. Goldberg currently enjoys the privilege of teaching Special Needs students at PS 177Q. He implements the latest technologies to empower his students as music makers in an all-inclusive music-making environment. This has led to wonderful opportunities for his students to be representatives of

what Special Populations are truly capable of. These opportunities include filmings by District 75, Fox News and Apple, as well as live performances at VSA festivals, the Upper West Side Apple Store, pedagogical conferences and various special occasions. Mr. Goldberg writes education/technology-based articles for macProVideo.com, and has recently been selected as an Apple Distinguished Educator.

We have prepared four selections for you today:

- *Wonder* by Emeli Sande
- *Being Me* by student, Jason H and Adam Goldberg
- *Nessun Dorma* by Giacomo Puccini
- *4-2-4 Jam* by The PS 177 Technology Band

A Theatrical Performance by Students From P94M, The Spectrum School, at PS 15

These performers, ranging from grades K-5, are in an intensive day treatment program that works with students with severe emotional and behavioral disturbances in an 8:1:1 classroom setting. The excerpts performed today are from their upcoming, full, spring production of *101 Dalmatians*.

As the SPECTRUM school, our goal is to be a dynamic and reflective organization providing differentiated instruction that comprehensively meets the academic and social needs of our wide range of students. For these reasons we use theatre and all it encompasses to teach children to work together, have a voice, bring characters to life, sing, dance and take ownership of their successes.

The staff involved at this site all have specific roles in which they guide the rehearsals. Ms. *Wandaliz Tejada* is the stage manager. She ensures that everything is running smoothly and on schedule. Ms. *Lauren Handfuss* is the director. She makes sure that everyone is following his/her job and guides each rehearsal. Ms. *Jenna Brodsky* is the choreographer. She makes up the dances and teaches the students the choreography. Wandaliz, Lauren and Jenna are all classroom teachers. *Scott Evan Davis*, our wonderful teaching artist partner from ArtsConnection, is our piano accompanist who also helps with strategies, techniques and skills needed to put on a production. Scott is a composer and lyricist whose work has been performed widely, including 5 sold out concerts at Don't Tell Mama's in NYC. His musical *A Powerful Day*, (book by Tessa Derfner and Jason Foreman) which was written with and for children on the Autism spectrum at P94M, won the 2012 MTI (Musical Theatre International) prestigious COURAGE IN THEATRE AWARD presented by Freddie Gershon and his wife Myrna. Ms. *Darvy*, Ms. *Conception*, Ms. *Baker*, Ms. *Lorenzo*, Ms. *Milania* and Mr. *Laster* are our wonderful paraprofessionals who help the students get through each and every rehearsal.

Together, we work to provide the students a safe and educational environment in which the children are free to express themselves and step into a new world filled with endless possibilities.

Since 1979, *ArtsConnection* has pioneered innovative arts education programs in music, dance, theater and the visual arts that have enhanced the intellectual, personal and social growth of over 3.5 million children attending New York City public schools. Student programs, professional development for educators, and research into the efficacy of the organization's work all contribute



to a comprehensive approach, nationally recognized for its quality, design and impact across diverse learning communities. Each year, ArtsConnection works in partnership with 100+ schools, grades pre-K through 12, across all five boroughs. At P94M, ArtsConnection's success in using musical theater to teach and nurture middle school students on the autism spectrum led to an expansion of programming to the school's five sites. Now, all P94M students participate in a sequential musical theater program that builds in complexity, and supports both developmental and academic growth.

Afternoon Session Descriptions

1:15pm and 2:30pm

A Village of Art Makers – Learners, Thinkers and Doers

A Panel of Partners From P94M at PS/IS 276

At P94M, The Spectrum School, everybody – from the custodians to the principal; from the paraprofessionals to the parents – is involved in the Arts. P94M is a whole-school village of dedicated, cohesive and partnering teams ensuring all students are active participants in the visual and performing arts. In this session one of those teams – instructional staff, related and support service providers, teaching artist, art organization administrator and school principal – will walk participants through the collaborative process they use to make sure all children are engaged in genuine work in the arts and that that work is integrated into all aspects of P94 life and learning.

Panelists

Nichole Bina is a speech language pathologist at P94M. Prior to working at the Spectrum School she taught Kindergarten and then began her career as a speech language pathologist in Brooklyn. Nichole received her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from the University of Kansas and her Master's Degree in Speech Language Pathology from Teacher's College Columbia University. She regularly uses music to improve her student's communication and social interaction skills.

Emily Caballero Lukens received her B.A. in Dance with a minor in Business Management in 2007, from DeSales University in Center Valley, PA. While in school, she created an afterschool dance program for Broughal Middle School in Bethlehem, PA, that emphasized a comprehensive dance curriculum focused on ballet, jazz, modern & hip hop. Inspired by the outcome of that work, she began her career in arts education at The Center for Kinesthetic Education, implementing dance and conflict resolution residencies into public schools. Emily later joined ArtsConnection, one of the leading arts education organizations in NYC. She currently manages visual and performing arts programs in 15 public schools throughout all 5 boroughs. Emily is also a dance instructor at Cindy Smith Dance Studio in New Jersey and has performed with dance groups such as Kustom Fitted, singing artist Keyonna Hall and repertory theaters in NYC, NJ, PA and Washington DC.

Tamar Cohen is a second grade teacher of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in a 6:1:1 setting. She is in her fifth year of teaching at P94M, and has taught grades kindergarten through fifth since she first started. Tamar received her Master's Degree in Education at New York University. She loves helping to instill a hunger of the Arts in her students, especially Dance!



Tessa L. Derfner teaches theater and dance to Middle School students with autism and is the Arts Coordinator for P94M's five sites throughout Lower Manhattan. Working with P94M teachers and ArtsConnection Teaching Artists, she created the STAARS (Systematic Training Arts Action Research in Sequence) program, which provides children with special needs the opportunities to perform, design and even create original musicals from grades K-8. Before teaching, Tessa was a theater producer, director and playwright in Off-Broadway and Off-Off Broadway theaters. She was the Company Manager for Lincoln Center Festival and the Henson International Festival of Puppet Theatre, as well as manager for singer Diamanda Galás. Tessa holds a M.F.A. degree in Fiction Writing from Vermont College of Fine Art and a M.Ed. from Mercy College.

Leah Miles hails from Lynn, MA and holds a BA in Psychology from Salem State University and an MFA from the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at NYU's Tisch School Of The Arts. Leah lives in New York City where she works as a bookwriter/lyricist and a Teaching Artist. Her musicals have premiered in New York with Write Act Eastside, MuSE, and Ugly Rhino Productions. As a Teaching Artist, Leah works with The Brooklyn Youth Chorus Academy, teaching private piano lessons and musical theatre workshops; ArtsConnection, as an advisor and music director; The Metropolitan Opera Guild, as a creative writing teacher; and Arts Interface, as a music therapist to adults with Cerebral Palsy. Leah is also a visiting Teaching Artist to schools and camps in Massachusetts and Maine. She is a proud member of ASCAP and the Dramatists Guild Of America.

Tom Pilutik is a second year special education teacher at P94M and a New York City Teaching Fellow. With a background as a drama therapist and a performing artist, Tom is excited to share his passion for the Arts with the children at P94M. Working with children with disabilities is a passion, and the opportunity to teach in the Arts is a gift. Tom is delighted to be part of a strong team of educators and administrators who share his love for the visual and performing arts and its place in New York City schools.

Ronnie Shuster, a former paraprofessional and classroom teacher, is principal of P94M, a K-8, District 75 public school. Her entire career has been spent in special education. P94M is committed to tapping into each child's fascination in order to help him/her learn and be productive. Dedicated to the Arts, creative programming ensures that every pupil is involved in both visual and performing arts. Following this vision, her school has developed a mission - Every student, through academic rigor infused with the visual and performing arts, will become a productive member of his or her community. In 2011, Ronnie received a Mayor's Award for Arts and Culture for providing students on the special education spectrum quality arts education.

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Dance Partners: 1 + 1 = much more than 2

Presenter Dr. Jenny Seham

At the heart of this interactive talk is the derived wisdom from a partnership between a blind teen-aged boy with Asperger's Syndrome and his sighted teen dance partner. Teaching artist, Jenny Seham, observes exponential learning benefits through partner learning in her work with blind children and teens, many with multiple cognitive and physical challenges, and their sighted dance partners. Although dance is the core subject, students also engage in writing, theater, singing, and drawing. This workshop invites teachers, TA's, related service providers, administrators and parents to experience the challenge of arts activity without sight. Participants will be further challenged to reflect on specific strategies to raise expectations of capacity in their own arts and educational communities.

Presenter

Dr. Jenny Seham recently participated in the National Forum of Thought Leaders at the intersection of Arts Education and Special Education and the International Convening of Thought Leaders in Theater, Dance, Disability and Inclusion at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. She currently serves as a teaching artist and Director of Teacher Training for National Dance Institute's (NDI) programs for children and teens with physical and cognitive challenges. Additionally, she leads dance classes for students with visual impairments at the Lighthouse International and for Deaf students in a dual language program at PS 347. Her choreography has been performed at venues that include: The White House, The United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Paramount Theater at Madison Square Garden. Dr. Seham also serves as an Attending Psychologist at Montefiore Medical Center where she has launched a program of research studying the benefits of arts participation for youth with special needs.

Empowered Music Making in the 21st Century Special Needs Environment

Presenter Adam Goldberg

See, touch and hear how the iPad can be used to open doors to learning, self-expression and self-confidence in this hands-on workshop. Discover a world of creative options for any level of student via the use of a variety of apps designed to offer the educator complete differentiation. Through the multi-sensory experiences these apps provide, students can break through learning boundaries towards higher level learning experiences and artistic self-expression. The iPad's role in the development of higher level motor, listening, cognitive, and many other skills, will be discussed and demonstrated.

Presenter

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Unpacking and Communicating Arts Values

Presenter Stephen Yaffe

We all know the Arts are important for special needs students. But are we, especially arts practitioners, sufficiently communicating how and why? Do we fully understand those values ourselves, or are we more intuitively than consciously aware of them? This interactive session – for all stakeholders – will help participants unpack Arts values in their own/their students’ work and explicitly convey them. The more school administrators, classroom teachers, related service providers, paraprofessionals and parents understand them, the more they understand how those values align with their own core goals, the greater the likelihood of achieving meaningful, broad-based support and collaboration – and an enduring place at the table.

Presenter

Stephen Yaffe is an arts and education consultant and former professor. His professional development work has been praised by the Director of Education Programs for the Corporation of Public Broadcasting as being “brave, visionary, smart.” He has mentored classroom teachers, teaching artists and arts administrators nationally, served as the VSA Teaching Artist Fellows coach, and has led professional learning communities in inclusive practices and Universal Design for Learning across the country. Additionally, he has evaluated numerous arts-in-education initiatives and conducted many needs assessments, including one of NYSCA’s Arts-In-Education Program, and one of special needs students and the Arts in NYC Public Schools, K-12 (under the auspices of VSA). Stephen is Chair of The Arts in Special Education Consortium.