

# Schreiber ENL Students Share Their Dreams

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Thanks to a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts (SCA), Schreiber High School English as a New Language (ENL) students were able to participate in the Multicultural Voices—I Have a Dream program. Eighteen students from seven countries shared their dreams for themselves, for their families, for their communities and for the world. All of them, here as a result of individual circumstances, are faced with the difficult task of learning English while navigating their teenage years. Teaching Artist Elise May brings her Expressive Elocution program to help these multinational students become more confident in their abilities to express their thoughts and feelings in English. Students are videotaped during the first class. Then, through a series of lessons based in theatre activities for voice and diction, students learn how to increase their volume and articulate sound so they can be heard and understood. In fact, these students learn so quickly, they are videotaped a second time and during the last session compare the two tapes to quantify their new skills and



learn how to self-assess for continued improvement. These life skills help prepare students for college and job interviews as well as social interactions in school—critical to embracing life in a new country.

Susan Colon, Schreiber ENL teacher, saw amazing transformations in her students. “The Multicultural Voices program was highly beneficial to my English language learners. I gained insight into the potential my students have to grow in their communication abilities both within

and outside of the school context. Certain students who I had initially predicted to be shy and reticent during the program demonstrated great enthusiasm. I found that they internalized the lessons that addressed body language, articulation and volume, and will implement these strategies in school, at work and in their social lives. The Multicultural Voices program addressed multiple facets of students’ abilities, including art, writing and communication, offering outlets for students to present their strengths and feel successful. The growth observed in the before and after tapes was astounding.”

Students shared reflections after the program’s completion: “I learn to control my fear and my nerves”; “It is important for people to hear me because sometimes my opinion can help”; “I learn about my friends’ culture and new words”; “If they don’t understand me they think in [a] bad way”; “It is important to be understood because that way they can know my goals, my feelings”; “I learned I

have to show people I’m not afraid to talk to them”; “Now I feel comfortable when I speak”; “Expressive Elocution helped me to smile more and I feel more confidence.”

As a close to the series of workshops, May has the students listen to “The Impossible Dream” from *Man of La Mancha*, supplying lyrics in all languages. These students walk away knowing their words are important and that, no matter how impossible their dreams may seem, they should never give up.

Expressive Elocution has been offered at Weber since 2005. Thanks to a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, administered by The Huntington Arts Council Inc., this is the first year that the program has been extended to include both middle school and high school students. Shirley Cepero, director of ENL, and both Weber and Schreiber HSAs also offer support to this very special program.

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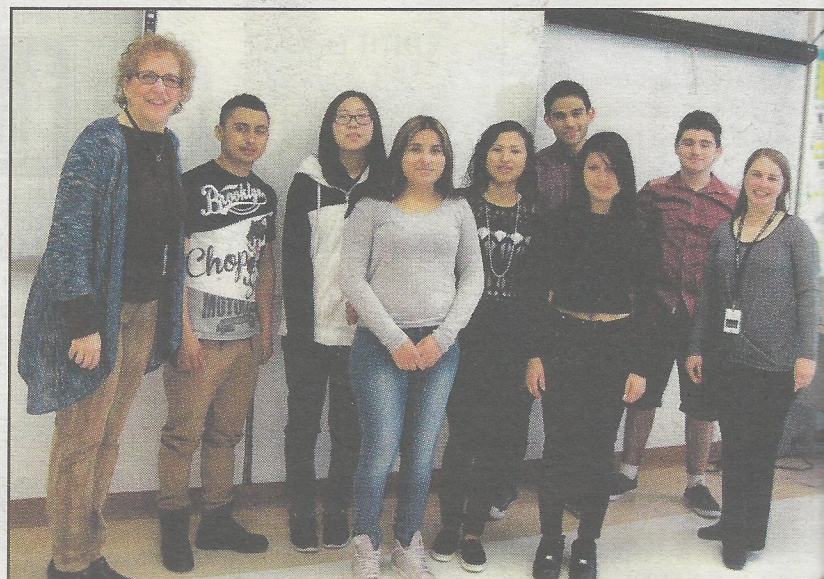


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Elise May (left) and Susan Colon (far right) with one of the participating ENL classes at Schreiber High School