



## Person-Centered Practices in Schools: Lessons from New Jersey

Summary of a webinar from March 29, 2021

### Introduction

This webinar is about person-centered practices in schools. Michael Steinbruck asked panel members about their experiences with person-centered planning. The panel included students, parents, and teachers from John F. Kennedy (JFK) School. It is located in Newark, New Jersey. JFK is part of a statewide project called Person-Centered Approaches in Schools and Transition (PCAST). It is at Rutgers University. The PCAST program provides coaching and training on person centered approaches to:

- Students
- Family members
- School staff

These approaches can be used with students of all ages and abilities. Panelist talked about using person-centered planning to help students plan for life after high school. It is important for students to learn how to be in control of their lives. They learn advocacy skills by directing their plans.

### Quotes from the Panel

DJ is a student at JFK. He says his planning meeting felt like, “Just a simple get together.”

Raquel, DJ’s mother, says, “The person-centered planning process gave me more perspective on my child getting older and what he wants to do in life and what he wants to accomplish.”

The principal at JFK, Jill, shares, “This plan gave our children a voice and helped them to advocate for themselves. It helped parents realize that their children had hopes and dreams.”

Ruby says, “My plan was refreshing because I had everyone that cared about me there. The process is a lot of fun. They got to know a different side of me.”

LaPrice is a Transition Coordinator for a school district in New Jersey. She works to get the word out about person-centered practices. She shares information about the PCAST program. She makes connections between schools.

Lenya says that facilitating person-centered plans helps her step out of her role as teacher. She’s known many of these students for years. She learned more about them through the planning process.



## National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems

The speakers on this webinar were:



**Jill Summers-Phillips** is the Principal of John F. Kennedy School in Newark Public Schools in New Jersey, which supports and educates students with disabilities at the middle and secondary level. She has been working in education since 1996 and in 2018 Mrs. Summers-Phillips was appointed Principal of John F. Kennedy School. At JFK she encourages the students and staff to embrace the “No Limits” motto which challenges everyone to push beyond any limits that this world may have set for them.



**Michael Steinbruck**, MA is a Senior Training & Consultation Specialist at The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. Mr. Steinbruck’s programmatic focus is on developing the [Person-Centered Approaches in Schools and Transition \(PCAST\) project](#). He provides training and technical assistance related to the development and delivery of person-centered thinking and planning, and works with schools on implementation of person-centered approaches and related organizational improvement efforts.



**Lenya Morgan-Banner** is a servant of God, wife, mother, teacher, chaplain and advocate for children with special needs. She is a lifelong learner and holds a MA in Educational Administration. In 1997, her son Farad was diagnosed with ASD. Subsequently, she founded YANA-PGRS. A nonprofit organization providing cost free aid to families of children with special needs. Lenya currently works diligently to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats individuals with disabilities.



**Ruby Frempong** is a senior at John F. Kennedy High School. She enjoys music, specifically 90’s hip-hop, pop and rhythm and blues. After graduation, Ruby plans to further her education by attending a two-year college with a focus on business and entrepreneurship.



**Derick “DJ” Scott** is a sophomore at John F. Kennedy School. He is an adventurous foodie who enjoys reading fictional titles with a unique story line. After graduation, DJ plans to attend college with a focus on genetic science, energy and space travel.



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**Raquel Hernandez** is an LPN who currently works in a maternal fetal medicine department where she aides in monitoring high risk pregnancies. Raquel has been dedicating herself to the health care profession for the past 12 years. Raquel is a proud mother of 3 and is a strong advocate for her son DJ who is autistic. In Raquel's free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, and is also the entrepreneur of Oshe Candles.



**LaPrice Weatherington, M. Ed** is a special education teacher for the Newark Board of Education. She is a co-author of #HELPME: A Parent's Guide to Navigating the School Experience through the Eyes of Teachers and a member of the National Association for Special Education Teachers. Ms. Weatherington received her undergraduate degree from New Jersey City University and her graduate degree from Concordia University.