

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL SERVICES
Township of Union Public Schools
M – E – M – O – R – A – N – D – U – M

TO: Dr. Gerald Benaquista

CC: Ms. Marissa McKenzie
Dr. Jose Rodriguez
Yolanda Koon
Diane Cappiello
Bernadette Watson

FROM: Kim Conti 

RE: Board Agenda Item

DATE: May 23, 2025

Approve the district, at no cost to the district, to participate in the 2024-2025 Person-Centered Approaches in Schools and Transition (PCAST) Cohort Participation Agreement to begin in June 2025 and to continue with ongoing multiyear on-site support as per the agreement in the hands of the board.

Person-Centered Approaches in Schools and Transition (PCAST)

Cohort Participation Agreement

Congratulations!

The New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education, in partnership with the Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development, is pleased to announce that your district has been selected to participate in the 2024-2025 PCAST Cohort pending acceptance of this agreement. If your district agrees to implement all the project requirements listed in this agreement, your staff will receive on-going customized training and technical assistance on person-centered approaches with multi-year on-site support. PCAST staff will work collaboratively with your staff to explore person-centered approaches, including but not limited to, individual person-centered plan facilitation, classroom implementation, and development of more person-centered IEP meetings and processes.

The PCAST Project has been built on a foundation of respect, trust and partnership with educators, families and students working together to broadly apply person-centered approaches. PCAST efforts focus on helping students to identify, prepare for, and attain their desired post-school outcomes for adult life in their own communities. All person-centered approaches involve a continuous process of discovery that engages educators, and students and their families to develop a deep understanding of each student and supporting them to shape a personal vision for a positive future.

WHAT SUPPORT CAN BE PROVIDED TO PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS?

- Consultation to identify a PCAST Project Coordinator and a PCAST Implementation Team
- Facilitation of organizational self-assessment and project plan development
- Training, technical assistance and customized on-site professional learning opportunities for educators, students and families
- On-site demonstrations of person-centered planning methods and techniques
- Assistance with district-specific project planning events with team
- Guidance developing site-specific person-centered tools, resources, and protocols
- Certification of district PCAST facilitators after training, observation and feedback
- Electronic resources on person-centered practices
- Information on accessing needed services, supports and resources
- Help designing person-centered and student-led IEP meetings and processes
- Support for meeting facilitation, conflict management, and problem-solving skills
- Mentorship with development of person-centered, classroom-based lessons and activities

WHAT BENEFITS HAVE SCHOOLS REPORTED AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT?

- Improved post-school outcomes for students
- Improved staff relationships and collaboration with families
- Improved decision-making for educational placement and support strategies
- Improved self-advocacy, self-determination, self-direction skills of students
- Increased students' preparation for, and participation in, IEP meetings
- Improved skills of facilitators and others in the IEP process and other family and staff conversations
- Increased development of person-centered IEP goals
- Increased student and family knowledge of available services and supports
- Improved sharing of person-centered information throughout the school years and beyond

WHAT IS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE?

- A PCAST Participation Agreement signed by the director of special services
- Approval from the district's Board of Education for participation in PCAST
- Attendance of at least 1 administrator and 1 implementation team member at PCAST: Introduction to Person-Centered Planning training in year 1
- A designated staff member to serve on a PCAST Project Implementation Team
- A designated staff member to serve as PCAST Project Coordinator to handle scheduling, coverage and follow-up for project-related activities
- Completion and submission of the PCAST Project Self-Assessment Tool
- Completion and on-going review/revision of the PCAST Project Site-Plan
- Identification of at least 2 staff to be trained/certified as PCAST Facilitators by the end of year 2
- Staff coverage allowing for implementing staff to participate in project activities
- Representation by 2 staff at the annual PCAST Innovation SWAP Meet and/or Community of Practice
- Completion by implementing staff of the online PCAST Project Evaluation Surveys
- Sharing with NJDOE and The Boggs Center all PCAST related materials developed
- Inclusion of an attribution to NJDOE/Rutgers Boggs Center on all PCAST related materials used and/or developed

A director of special services must complete and sign this section. Signing indicates administrative commitment to the creation or expansion of person-centered approaches in the district. The undersigned agrees for the district to implement all the project requirements listed in this agreement.

Director Name (Print): _____

District: _____

Phone Number _____ Email Address: _____

Director's Signature: _____ Date: _____