



Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

The Student Leadership Initiative: How New Jersey is Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

April 27, 2005

presented by:

LeDerick Horne
Self-Advocate

Jan Carr-Jones
Transition Specialist
New Jersey Department of Education

Ms. Mavis: Hi, everyone, this is Ann Mavis, the Coordinator at the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. Welcome to our teleconference "The Student Leadership Initiative: How New Jersey is Developing Tomorrow's Leaders," presented by LeDerick Horne and Jan Carr-Jones. We're very glad you could join us.

LeDerick experienced severe learning disabilities as a child, as well as crippling self-esteem. Despite his disability, he was able to become an outstanding student and ultimately graduated *cum laude* from New Jersey City University, where he received many accolades. He currently manages a rental property business and is beginning a career in commercial and residential real estate. He also devotes a portion of his time to inspiring and advocating for people with disabilities and has been a keynote speaker to a variety of audiences.

Jan has been a transition specialist for the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs since 1998. She provides technical assistance to school districts, students, and parents. A major focus of her recent work has been to organize a series of annual conferences that provide students with disabilities a forum for developing and showcasing their leadership skills. Her past employment includes Transition Coordinator for Hunterdon County Schools, Coordinator for the Job Bank of Central New Jersey for adults with disabilities, and Job Placement Counselor in Boston. She is currently an officer of the Transition Coordinators Network, a group of over 400 professionals working to improve transition for New Jersey students with disabilities. We welcome Jan and LeDerick to our call today.

All right, LeDerick, we'll start with you. Thanks.

Mr. Horne: Okay. I want to begin by just thanking the folks at NCSET for inviting Jan and

myself to share with you some of the exciting things that are going on in the state of New Jersey. Personally, I'd just like to thank everyone who is involved in this conference call for taking time out of their schedules to listen to me talk about my experiences, as well as offer you some of the strategies and the services that really helped me to get to this point where I am today.

I want to start by making an honest confession. Although I've been involved in quite a few conferences, this is my very first teleconference, and there is a certain degree of nervousness involved in doing this. So despite the novelty of this, at least on my end, I hope that I'm able to deliver a presentation that you guys find entertaining as well as informative.

I want to start out by just telling you a little bit about my experiences as a person with a learning disability, and then continue on by telling you about some of the different services and strategies which really helped me to get where I am today. My story begins like a lot of students' with learning disabilities. I began struggling in school almost immediately upon entering the education system. My parents were particularly frustrated because although I appear to be a pretty gifted and relatively intelligent child, by the age of nine I still was not able to read, could not distinguish the different letters of the alphabet, and it wasn't until I was in the third grade that I was diagnosed as having a learning disability, given the diagnosis of being neurologically impaired, and consequently removed from mainstream classes and placed in the special education.

I consider myself to be fairly lucky, because my first special education teacher was a lady by the name of Ms. Priscilla Yates. Ms. Yates had a teacher's aide named Ms. Norsha. Ms. Yates and Ms. Norsha were wonderful teachers who developed

the academic skills that my parents had pulled their hair out trying to convey to me. Ms. Yates and Ms. Norsha, in the environment of their classroom, were able to get through to me. But the negative aspect of being in Ms. Yates and Ms. Norsha's class was that they were the head of a self-contained classroom, and I am sure that all of you know what means. I had to deal with being in the same classroom with the same teacher, same teacher's aide, and the same students about 3.5 years in a row, and I describe it as really learning in solitary confinement. It's like learning on an island. What it did for me, and what it does for a lot of students who have to endure school in a less than inclusive environment, is that it begins to make us very aware that there is a hierarchy among the students in any school.

There is one group of kids that we sometimes called the gifted and the talented students, and these are the future Harvard graduates, definitely fast track for Advanced Placement courses, and kind of held up on a pedestal so that every student will aspire to be like these kids. The next group is the largest one, they are the mainstream, and everything about our school, right down to its architecture, is designed around making sure that they get the best education possible. And then there are kids like me, who are classified, who definitely struggled in school, who were either perceived as or may have actually been kids who have behavior problems, and people thought that we would be lucky if we made it to graduation.

And so within this hierarchy, I was certain that we were sitting at the bottom. There were a few things that let us all know that we were at the bottom of the hierarchy. First, our classes were always at the end of the hall, or somewhere in the school's basement, or in those trailers that are permanently parked in the back of the school. And also because everybody else rode on normal-sized buses to and from school, but we unfortunately had to ride on these dwarfed vehicles, which represented what most schools think about the potential for classified students.

So, my self-esteem, my view of myself, all became very negative. My personal outlook on myself and my future got very dark, and I began to describe myself in words that I hear time and time again when I talk to different students who

are classified or dealing with disabilities. I began to refer to myself as being dumb, as being stupid, as being crazy. And, again, my self-esteem was dropping and got lower and lower and lower. Eventually, Ms. Yates' class gave way to junior high school. My self-esteem was still dropping and the thing that I want to make really clear here is that although I had been removed from mainstream classes, placed in special education, had gone through many years in a self-contained classroom, throughout my entire time in school, no one took the time to explain to me what my disability was or how being classified was supposed to help me to be successful.

So I'm frustrated, I don't quite understand what was going on, and by the time I get to high school, I really felt as if I was leading a double life. And I say that because I felt very closeted, I felt frightened and afraid that at any moment as I walked through my high school, someone could pull me out of the closet and expose the fact that I was in special ed. The odd thing about that was, although I felt dumb, although I was classified, for the most part I was referred to as being a pretty intelligent kid. Most of the students in my classes looked at me as being a very talented artist. From the time I was a very little kid, I could always draw and paint. I was looked at as being a talented athlete; I was a runner. And I was also respected as being an intellectual. I was frequently in dialogues and debates with my classmates and teachers about religion, politics, and philosophy. If a girl broke up with a boyfriend, I was the guy to come and talk to. I had all the answers.

Anyway, so I was kind of living this double life. And I was always afraid that despite how bright everybody thought I was, that if someone found out that I couldn't spell, that I could barely read, that my math skills were so poor, my entire world was going to come crumbling down. And what that did was eventually, as I crept closer to graduation, I built up this extreme level of anxiety and a tremendous level of depression. Soon I got to the point where I was in my junior year and I was honestly suicidal. I think my junior year was significant, because I had one more year left before graduation, and then I would have to deal with the realities of the real world. I thought there were only two choices for me after high school. Either I was going

to go to college, and I really didn't think I was going to be able to make it in college, because, again, my skills were so low, and all I knew of college was what I saw on television and in movies. You know those huge lecture halls with kids struggling to write notes. And I really didn't think that I was going to be able to make it in that sort of environment.

And then the other choice was work. And the bogeyman that every classified student gets scared with, directly or indirectly, as you're going through school is that when you grow up you're either going to be a janitor or a carpenter. And although I come from a long line of carpenters, I was really depressed that those were the only options for me, the idea that I was not going to be able to do something with my mind really, really depressed me. So I sank lower and lower, until I got to the point that I had what I describe as a self-diagnosed emotional breakdown. And this was really the turning point in my life. I don't know if we have any school psychiatrists listening in, but I'm sure you guys are experts on the way that breakdowns can go. For some people, you hit that rock bottom and there's just no getting up. But for me when I got to that real, real low point, it allowed me to really question everything about myself, about my place in the world, about my future, and I came out of that breakdown determined to give myself an opportunity at having a future.

When I began to really seriously talk about wanting to have a future it manifested itself in a desire to go to college. In one of my last IEP meetings in high school, I conveyed this to the child study team. Probably the best thing they ever did for me was that they recommended, based upon looking at my academic history, that I wasn't going to be able to make it at a four-year college. But they suggested that I go to Middlesex County College, because they had a program called Project Connection, which was a completely integrated, very, very well supplied support system that offered support for students with learning disabilities at a college level.

And so my first advice to everyone listening in is that high schools have to make meaningful connections with postsecondary institutions. I don't think that I would have been able to do as well as I did if my high school did not know about Project Connection and help me get connected to it. Now I

am sure that no one listening is guilty of this, but I have heard there are still high schools out there that when it comes time to look at special education kids, so much of the focus is just getting them out the door, just getting them to graduation and then the school's work is done. But we have to be really conscious about what happens to these kids at the next step. I felt really fortunate, because I was able to get hooked up into this program that gave me exactly what I needed to be successful.

So I went on to Middlesex County College and was accepted by Project Connection. The first event that I got involved in once I got to Project Connection was their summer orientation. At the summer orientation, it was the first time that I really felt a feeling of safety associated with being in school. And the reason was because it was the first time I was ever in an environment where a bunch of people who had been classified and dealt with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder were able to sit around and talk about our experiences and how we felt.

And then once school began, within my first week of taking classes, probably one of the more empowering things that ever happened to me was that my counselor at P.C. brought me into her office, sat me down, closed her door, and put out a folder that had every single IEP report that was ever written about me in it. Now, although I'm talking about my experiences in college, and I know that the audience is primarily servicing high school students, I'm mentioning this because these are the experiences and services that I really wished I could have had at least in high school, if not earlier. And so my counselor sat me down, she pulled out this folder, it had every IEP report in it that had ever been written about me, and she read through them, page after page, in a language that I could understand, and in that meeting she explained to me what my learning disability was. So my second point to you guys is that if you really want to help build leadership skills within your students, if you want your students to do well with transitioning, one of the things that absolutely has to happen is that they need to be clear about what their disability is, what their needs are, and what are their strengths and weaknesses. So my counselor sat me down and explained to me, "LeDerick, you know, it's really clear that your spelling sucks, and it is prob-

ably going to remain pretty bad.” But she explained to me that there are academic accommodations out there that could help me with my spelling, like using a word processor or a Franklin speller. I was 18 years old, a college freshman, and this is the first time anyone had ever explained to me what my disability was and that there were accommodations that I could use to compensate for the areas that I needed help with.

One of the next things that happened to me, and this is my next point, is that while at Project Connection, all the students began to really build advocacy skills. And by this I not only mean self-advocacy, in that we learned how to address our teachers or our future boss and ask them for the different accommodations that we would need to be successful, but we also began to get active in different activities which helped us to become advocates for other people. And I mention this because, again, although I experienced it at a college level, in the state of New Jersey, as well as I’m sure in other states, I’ve seen quite a few high school programs where, whether it be an after-school club, there are student advocacy programs, some of which may just be kids sitting around talking about their different challenges. Some of these programs that I’ve seen, one that stands out to me is a program up at Bayonne High School where the students not only talk about the challenges they have and their plans for their future, but they also mentor elementary school kids to help build a bridge. As an adult I heard someone say once that adulthood is really surviving the things that happened to you as a child. And I know personally so many of the challenges that I dealt with and I still deal with now are a direct result of the things that sort of happened to me when I was in elementary school. So building leaders, giving these kids an opportunity to transition to be successful, I would definitely say if you want to have a stellar program, if you can, get your students involved in some sort of advocacy program as early as possible, where they’re learning not only how to stand up for themselves, but also how to stand up for others.

And this kind of leads me to my last point that I want to touch on, and then we’re going to turn it over to Jan, which is that going through college, it took me about five years at community college. I transferred with a 3.75 GPA, then went on to a

university called New Jersey City University, where I was a part of another program called Project Mentor, which also offered me services for my disability. Upon being at New Jersey City University, I began taking part in different conferences and speaking at different conferences, and eventually I was recognized by someone in the State of New Jersey, and after graduation I kind of got linked up to the State in a relationship that I’m very, very proud of, and began to participate, among other things, in a series of conferences called the Dare to Dream Conferences, and Jan is going to talk to you a little bit more about what those conferences are and what they accomplish. But just in brief, they’re leadership conferences for students with learning disabilities. And the role that I played within those conferences is that I am sort of overtly the MC, where I kind of introduce people and move the program along. And I also am their keynote speaker. I do a presentation at each and every one of the conferences that we do. But I think the real strength of these conferences and my role in it is that I stand up there as a relatively young person—I know you guys can’t see me, but I’m 27 years old—and I talk very honestly about my experiences. It’s a marvel to me how strong so many students are, compared to how I was in high school. But I still find that there are a lot of kids who for the first time, you know, like going to these conferences, I’m the first person that they see who really talks, is really open about their experiences. And so it’s been a great pleasure for me to be sort of like this role model and be able to stand up in front of these students and convey my struggle, my challenges, and hopefully give them hope that although the times they may be going through now in high school may seem dark and they may be very frustrated and aggravated and upset with their situation, that there is hope and there is a possibility for them to go on and to do greater things.

That’s my presentation. To conclude, I would like to leave you guys with a poem. Again, I’m part of the Dare to Dream conferences, and last year I actually wrote a poem called “Dare to Dream,” and I’d just like to say it to you guys, and then Jan is going to go, all right? You guys have been a great audience, although I haven’t seen anyone or heard anyone. So this is “Dare to Dream.”

We are gathered here today
to bear witness,
to bear witness to the union
of two beautiful people
Yes, today is the day that we merge
who you are
with who you want to be,
making the vision
and the reality – one
An integration
born of communication
and made tangible
by your commitment to yourself
Now, I know some of you might be afraid
but don't let cold feet
stop you from jumping the broom,
from taking the first step,
from beginning a journey
that will transform your life
Yes, I know some of you might be afraid,
But see, it's my job
- to show you that better days are coming
Yes, it's my job
- to be Harriet Tubman like
with my movements and verse
So if I have to steal a way
just for us to make a way, then Star
I'll be the first one with his hand in the cookie-jar
of self-advocacy,
I'll use these sticky fingers
to pick-pocket the pocket of
self-determination,
And if I got to grand-theft-auto
the Mercedes-Benz
of a quality education,
then they might as well leave the doors unlocked
and the keys in the ignition
'cause I'm gone in 60 seconds
and ain't NOTHING, and I mean NOTHING
standing in my way
You see, it's my job
to unlock doors
unshackle minds
break through glass ceilings
motivate, inspire, and challenge you,
- I'm here to challenge you

And so I dare you,
- I dare you to sit in your seat
and not feel moved
by the testimonies of these brave souls,
who come before you as examples of excellence
I dare you,
- I dare you to look in the mirror
without imagining,
see yourself as yourself
A diamond, that might need a little polishing,
but whose beauty has always existed
I dare you,
- I dare you to step
bounce and move to your own rhythm
excite minds
in time
we'll redefine the system
I write lines
designed to embrace and kiss,
plus supercharge like imports strapped with nitrous,
this is a revolution
a fight for inclusion
segregation is no solution
Brown vs. Ed is how I'm provin'
we deserve the best
nothin' more and nothin' less
every child gets left behind
when all we focus on are tests
And so I dare you,
- To judge yourselves by a different standard,
to lift as you climb,
to fight like gladiators
to become master and commander
of your own beautiful minds
And above all else,
I dare you to dream – dare to dream y'all

Thank you again. Jan, I give it over to you.

Ms. Carr-Jones: Okay, thanks, LeDerick. That was great. I wasn't sure if you were going to recite a poem for us, and I would have recommended that you do that one. That was excellent.

I'm here to start off with a little history and with a question which is, what is happening in New Jersey to support students in transition from school to adult life? Well, over 10 years ago a partnership for transition began as a systems change grant. In

it, consortiums of key players were organized to discuss issues of transition from school to adult life. For the first time, stakeholders—that is, schools, parents, adult service agencies—all in the transition process were seated around the table by county to discuss referral to adult services, parent concerns, postsecondary options, transportation, and access. Each of these groups participated in a grant process to improve transition in their local schools and counties. Some groups employed a transition coordinator or wrote articulation agreements with adult service agencies, wrote transition manuals, held student conferences, and more. Many of these groups continue today. From this major initiative grew the concept of student leadership conferences. Since that time, student leadership conferences have grown from a few regional high schools coming together into a major event. Last year there were seven conferences around the state with over 40 districts presenting and over 2,000 students and educators in attendance. This year the expected eight conferences will draw an estimated 2,400 participants. The purpose of student leadership conferences is to give students with disabilities an opportunity to examine concepts of transition and share their experiences with other students. As many of you know, students with disabilities have few chances for leadership in traditional high schools. They simply are not seen for their full potential. These conferences which have had the “Dare to Dream” title for some years now allow students to dare to see themselves in leadership roles. They make major presentations, hear the applause, and have the experience for their resume or their college application.

Conferences begin with a plenary or general session where selected adult motivational speakers like LeDerick share the stage with local student keynote presenters. Following this general session, students move to a smaller workshop. These workshops are presented by groups of students from the same local school district to cover a topic of interest. The creativity of student presentations is truly inspirational. Groups select and practice their topics. Past workshops have included self-advocacy panels, an original IEP play written by a parent of a special ed child, college and postsecondary planning seminars, interest in preference topics, hands-on goals plan-

ning sessions, study skills presentations, and other creative and original topics.

Strong high school districts are the key to good student presenters. Over the years, many of our high schools have distinguished themselves through the efforts of committed teachers and transition coordinators. Year after year, these professionals support and train students in leadership roles. Students return to the high school invigorated. Some student groups present to their local boards of ed and teach board members about learning styles and self-advocacy. Some students start their own self-advocacy clubs.

The inspirational element for me is seeing student presenters after their workshop. The joy and pride that they have is immeasurable. My favorite part of the conference is listening to students about their workshop, hearing their stories about how it went, the reaction of the audience, and most of all applauding their bravery. Student audience members are often inspired to respond with thoughtful comments and their own personal anecdotes.

Topics that will be explored in this year’s conference will include self-discovery, self-advocacy, IEPs, and postsecondary education. The goal of the conference committee is to encourage the most interactive workshops possible. Involving students in activities where they participate enhances the experience. To this end, a revision of an earlier transition manual, *It’s Your Life, Live it to the Max*, is being utilized. The new *Connections* revision is currently four chapters in a draft version that has been developed through the Office of Special Education Programs. The chapters are Self-Discovery, Self-Advocacy, IEP, and College and Postsecondary Planning. The activities in each chapter are organized like lesson plans with student materials included.

So here’s an example of a self-advocacy activity and it’s called “Corner Your Learning Style.” In it students identify their preferred way of learning. There are three different colored posters that are put in corners in the rooms. Students are asked a series of questions and then when they answer the question, they go to a corner of the room that matches their answer. Each poster is colored and students will be asked this question: When you have a problem, how do you deal with it? Do you (a) walk it off, (b) talk about it, or (c) read more about it? And the students go to the

corner and pick up a card at each poster. So A would have one color, B another, and C a third color. By the end of the series of questions, the students will have a handful of cards that possibly, and sometimes not, but often will have one preferred style. Then they would go to the corner with their preferred style, the most colors, and talk about their learning style. So let's say they've selected visual learning. They'll talk about how they learned that. Is it by watching, face-to-face contact, looking and using diagrams, explaining ideas and drawing? And then they can develop action plans. They can talk about how to study best, how to record information, make visual links, or use color-coding when they're prioritizing their notes.

Each activity of our conference has similar kinds of workshops which have similar kinds of activities. Another one for self-advocacy includes role playing, and that's a lot of fun where students have different ideas and topics on cards in a paper bag, and then they have to go through the bag and pick one and then describe what they would do in that event. So they will be actually gaining confidence by practicing. Here's the kind of question that one of the entry-level role-playing scenarios looks like. It says you need a ride home from school and you're having difficulty using the telephone to call your family; what do you do? The student would be required to act out and describe what they would do, and then the audience, the people that are working with them, could assist them. There are activities for preparing for your IEP, such as learning how to write your own Present Level of Performance. There are worksheets and discussions about how to set that up, accommodations information, and then some activities about preparing for postsecondary education. We try to make them really fun and we've worked with the learning resource center in our state, and Sharon Atiker is one of our leaders there.

Some of these activities were introduced to teachers at one of these four Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) in New Jersey. LRCs are libraries and materials for special educators. LRCs also provide workshops and resources of interest to special education teachers. Along with the library materials, there are generous spaces with supplies and ideas for the creation and development of classroom materials, including laminating, die cutting, assis-

sive technology software, etc. The LRCs this year had a special role in the conferences by working on preparing workshops to train teachers to help prepare our student leaders. In the past years, people who worked for the Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs have gone into districts and provided technical assistance one-to-one to districts. Now we've added "Dare to Dream" in the classroom; this year we made presentations to approximately 70 people to introduce activities in our *Connections* draft version to prepare students.

Another initiative that is part of the conferences but also ongoing and separate is connecting with Centers for Independent Living (CILs). CILs are part of a state improvement grant and there are 12 CILs in New Jersey. We're participating in a project called Promoting Self-Advocacy. Through this three-year grant program, students with disabilities, families, and school personnel participating in the transition planning process are increasing their awareness of involvement in the CILs for self-advocacy training and technical assistance. The CILs focus on teaching students to access postsecondary education, employment, housing, recreation, medical, and other federal, state, and local community services. They also assist them in working towards self-advocacy concepts, self-determination, self-help skills, and strategies for independent living. The greatest part about this is that students who are connected to CILs while in high school have advocates after graduation and they've already made that contact.

For many years, the Office of Special Education Programs has been providing technical assistance to school districts to assist them in understanding Least Restrictive Environments and transition regulations. I've participated in supporting districts in the area of transition, and regular workshops are organized to describe the transition process and best practices. When dealing with regulations, forms really do follow function. With a plethora of IEP software and dropdown lists, if the program is written badly, then the IEP will be as well. A large part of the training is helping school district personnel understand the purpose of the regulations and how the regulations support students in transition. Technical supports are also available to individual districts to help them accomplish their goals. I've done some of these. I've

worked with districts to give parent presentations, assist in curriculum development, and work on creating career exploration courses in the community.

Another initiative through New Jersey Department of Education is the Structured Learning Experience (SLE). SLE is a support for teachers in the area of training on how to keep kids safe in the community and how to provide authentic learning while they're at work and learning in the community. SLE training is a cooperative program through OSHA, the Department of Labor, and Vocational Education through the Department of Education. The collaboration assists teachers to support students in the field. And I think it's really important to have teachers and students understand safety rules and to make sure that there's a real plan for education that connects with the core curriculum content standards for students who are learning in the community.

One last important thing that's happening in New Jersey is the Transition Coordinators Network. The Transition Coordinators Network has been operating for about eight years, and there are actually more than 500 people on the mailing list. It's a professional organization that meets three times a year, and the purpose is for professionals in transition to support each other. We coordinate speakers for our annual meetings; we promote information sharing between teachers and transition coordinators; and there's always time for networking, because that's where we learn and that's how we make our connections to improve our programs, is to find out what's working somewhere else.

New Jersey has been working very hard to improve the transition of students, and I'm very proud to be part of that. Thank you.

Ms. Mavis: Thank you, Jan and LeDerick. We have time now for some questions. If you would, please identify yourself and where you're from before you state your question. Actually, I can jump in. I have a couple of questions for you, Jan and LeDerick. I'm wondering how these programs are funded, the student leadership conferences and the Transition Coordinators Network?

Ms. Carr-Jones: The student leadership conferences are supported through the Office of Special Education Programs. They are set on college campuses which let us use the facilities for free, which

is an important part of coordinating. We usually connect with Disability Services for linkage and support through the college, and then they set the wheels in motion to work with Facilities people at the college. The Department of Education supports the program through their time and their employee time, and also lunches and cookies. So feeding students is really important.

Ms. Mavis: That's very important. So the conferences are free to the students, then?

Ms. Carr-Jones: The conference is free to the students there. They receive T-shirts every year, which are always fun to hand out. It's a great day. I love the excitement of the students and watching them kind of go through their day and really talking to them and seeing how they've discovered something new.

The Transition Coordinators Network is separate, and that's a professional organization which is really off the books. Everyone pays \$10 dues and we use our money for mailing and coffee. So it's really kind of grassroots, no frills.

Ms. Mavis: Okay, yes. I knew they were separate. I threw that question together, though, because that's always something that comes up, how are things funded. Are there any other questions?

Ms. Malveaux: Hi. My name is Judith Malveaux. I write our special education issues for LRP Publications. I was wondering, I know from a report that I think came out last year that New Jersey doesn't exactly have the best track record for inclusive education, and I was wondering what kind of efforts were being done in the high schools to help the students with disabilities prepare for transition aside from some of the efforts that you've already mentioned?

Ms. Carr-Jones: Well, the point of it is education. I think that all districts are required to understand and document why students would be an excluded environment. I know also the governor has put a halt on building any new facilities that are exclusively for special education students. So I think those two things are coming together. And I think it really is important to have teachers and staff people understand that students do learn and learn better when they're included, and behavior is better, and everything is really improved when students can mix and learn together.

Mr. Horne: Yes, and I can say from my experi-

ence in going to different schools and just feeling the current of what's going on in the state, that we're all aware that there is still a lot of work to be done, but the inclusion drive is really something that's taking hold in a lot of the schools, and people are implementing different inclusion models to make sure that students are getting what they need as far as social skills and everything else, to be able to transition.

Ms. Mavis: Thanks, Judith. Are there any other questions out there for Jan or LeDerick? Jan, I did have another question. I'm wondering when the *Connections* publication will be available? I know you talked about that and let us take a sneak look at a draft of it, and how will that be available?

Ms. Carr-Jones: Well, we're still in the draft process and we're a few chapters short, so I'm working on writing it and working on editing, and so I'm not really sure when it will be finished or when any part will be released or if we're waiting for the entire *Connections* document to be finished before we release.

Ms. Mavis: If you let us know when that is finished, we'll be able to make note of that on the NCSET Web site. And we could also put that in E-News, our electronic newsletter that goes out twice a month.

Ms. Carr-Jones: That would be excellent.

Ms. Mavis: So if people are looking for that, if you're either on the Web site or if you subscribe to E-News, you'll get a notice about that.

Ms. Carr-Jones: Right. That's great. Thank you.

Ms. Mavis: That looks like a great book, and it just looks like you have a really great program.

Ms. Carr-Jones: We're having fun putting it together, and I think the teachers who we present it to are really receptive to the ideas.

Ms. Mavis: We also have something and I don't know how it would "connect" with you, which is a new Web site called Youthhood, part of which has just opened up in the last couple of weeks. It's a site for teachers and students, and it's really designed to help students look at all the different aspects of transition as they move from high school out into the postsecondary environment, whatever they're doing. So as you were talking about it, I was thinking, well, there may be some connection there, too, in terms of linking it up with Youthhood....Are there any more questions today?

Ms. Malveaux: This is Judith again. I have one more question. Is there any more information available about some of the programs that you've talked about on the Web anywhere?

Ms. Carr-Jones: What resources did you mean, that would be on the Web?

Ms. Malveaux: Just more information about some of the different programs that you were talking about, some of the transition-related initiatives that you have going on in New Jersey.

Ms. Carr-Jones: You can get on the New Jersey Department of Education Web site and scroll through that. If you click under the map of New Jersey, there is kind of a dropdown there where you can peruse that. There are also news articles related to a lot of the initiatives that are going on. I'm not aware of anything specific to my talk today, though. But all of the initiatives for Least Restrictive Environment and transitioning would be included on that Web site.

Ms. Mavis: Jan, is there anything on the student leadership conferences that could be accessed via the Internet?

Ms. Carr-Jones: No, but if we can go off-line later, I can take her name and connect and do something directly with her.

Ms. Mavis: Actually, Judith, if it's okay, we do get a list of participants. I could forward your name and phone number or e-mail on to Jan—

Ms. Malveaux: Not a problem.

Ms. Mavis: Okay, great. Well, if there are no more questions today, I just want to thank both of our presenters so much. LeDerick, I did forget to mention in your intro that you're a poet and an artist, and I apologize for that, and I really am so glad that you read your poem. That was just very inspirational.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you for allowing me to participate.

Ms. Mavis: That was great. We have two more teleconferences coming up in May:

- One May 11 on "Disproportionality and Special Education: One State's Perspective," talking about what Wisconsin is doing to scale up efforts to address the disproportionate representation of minority students in special

education. And that is the last presentation of the Disproportionality Series that's sponsored by the North Central Regional Resource Center in partnership with NCSET and the OSEP Exiting TA Community of Practice.

- One May 12 with Al Abeson from Easter Seals Project Action, talking about transportation. And that is part of our series leading up to our upcoming National Leadership Summit in June.

So those things are coming up. All of this information can be found on the NCSET Web site at <http://www.ncset.org/>. Transcripts of this teleconference will be on our Web site within the next few weeks, and they're also announced in E-News. If you're not currently subscribed to E-News, you can subscribe on the Web site. Thanks again, everyone, for joining us. Have a good day.

This teleconference was coordinated by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition.

This transcript is copyright free. Please duplicate and share with others.

Contact us at:

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD)

6 Pattee Hall

150 Pillsbury Drive SE

Minneapolis MN 55455

(612) 624-2097 (phone)

(612) 624-9344 (fax)

ncset@umn.edu (E-mail)

<http://www.ncset.org> (Web)

