



# New Jersey Psychologist

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## *Energy Psychology*





# NJPA Foundation Community Service Project Grant

## Newark Vocational High School

by Project Coordinator, Dr. Kalenah Witcher, PsyD,  
School Psychologist (not pictured)  
and Funded Student, Aishah Manuel  
2nd year Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey,  
Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology

This year Newark's Science Park High School welcomes Ms. Aishah Manuel as a School Psychology Practicum student from Rutgers University's Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP). Ms. Manuel is a second year student in the School Psychology program. Her past professional experiences include providing comprehensive sexuality education and sexual health services for at-risk youth. Ms. Manuel hopes to provide services to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students in urban communities as a professional psychologist.

During the 2013-14 school year, Ms. Manuel serviced students at Miller Street School, West Side High School, and Newark Vocational High School. In these settings, Ms. Manuel's one to one counseling and small group work were largely centered on guiding young people to better manage the stressors of traumatic life experiences and poor school performance. Ms. Manuel offered individual and group counseling work with students to cope with peer conflict, relationship problems, low self-esteem, stress, depression, and academic motivation.

Although she will continue to share her skills and expertise with diverse students who reside within the city of Newark, New Jersey, the Science Park student population is distinct from most others in the district. Because Science Park is a high performing magnet school, Ms. Manuel has learned quickly that the students in this environment require more support learning to manage academic expectations rather than social and/or emotional issues. As such, she expects this year's individual and group counseling to address concerns including time management, effective study skills, goal setting, and persistence. Additionally, students will identify and cultivate self-efficacy, self-esteem, leadership skills, and effective decision making.

Ms. Manuel has also initiated collaboration with the school's Gay Straight Alliance with hopes of providing small group and/or individual support for LGBT students and allies who are dealing with issues related to gender, cultural, and sexual identity. The goal is to create a platform for these youth to discuss their personal concerns including family and

peer conflicts that might arise and develop strategies for managing this conflict. One of Ms. Manuel's first individual cases involved a Latina student. The student came to Ms. Manuel to discuss the conflict she has encountered as a result of not being able to disclose her sexual orientation to her family. Ms. Manuel will continue to provide individual counseling to help this star student deal with academic, social, and emotional expectations.

Counseling will provide youth with opportunities to gain specific skills and strategies to meet personal goals and explore areas that present personal challenges that might interfere with school functioning. Individual sessions will use strength-based, client-centered, and eclectic approach integrating cognitive, behavioral, and psychodynamic therapies to address the unique needs of youth. Small group activities will help teens develop skills to identify and understand maladaptive behavior patterns and strategies for changing these behaviors. ❖

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