

Early Intervention: The Role of Families in Supporting Oral Language Development



Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE) Mission

HUNE empowers and supports parents of children and youth with exceptionalities in obtaining a quality public education, so that the students will lead rich, active lives and attain future success.

While all children grow and develop in unique ways, some children experience delays in their development. Children with developmental delays and disabilities benefit from the Pennsylvania Early Intervention Program, a state-supported network of families, service practitioners, and others that builds upon the natural learning opportunities that occur within the daily routines of a child and his/her family.

Early Intervention Program at HUNE

The Early Intervention Program at HUNE follows the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services guidelines by:

- Providing support and services to families with children, ages birth to five, who have developmental delays and disabilities in their natural environment.
- Supporting services and resources for children that enhance daily opportunities for learning provided in settings where a child would be if he/she did not have a developmental delay and disability.
- Providing families' independence and competencies.
- Respecting families' strengths, values, and diversity.

Early Intervention supports and services are designed to meet the developmental needs of children with a disability, as well as the needs of the family related to enhancing the child's development in one or more of the following areas:

- Physical development, including vision and hearing
- Cognitive development
- Communication development
- Social or emotional development
- Adaptive development

Specific Early Intervention Services Provided by HUNE

Academic Instruction and Speech and Language Services: The special education instructional program provides academic supports and speech and language services to toddlers/children, ages three to five, eligible for special education services in their natural environment.

Family Engagement: HUNE empowers and supports parents of children and youth with exceptionalities in obtaining a quality public education, so that the students will lead rich, active lives, attain future success and graduate on time. HUNE also facilitates a parent support group, Andy's Café, which provides network opportunities for parents and tailored workshops on specific topics chosen by the families.

Training and Workshops: Various workshops and training events are provided for families on a variety of special education topics, such as a child's rights and parents' responsibilities and Internet 101 training for families with a focus on establishing computer/internet literacy to benefit both child and family.

Case Management Services: Individualized services are offered that provide families with extra assistance and referrals based on child's/family's needs and issues.

Supporting Oral Language Development in the Home: Unless early childhood educators and families make an effort to support both the home language and English, young Dual Language Learners can easily lose the ability to speak and understand their home language, or lose the balance between the two languages (Puig, 2010; Castro, Ayankoya,

& Kasprzak, 2011). If young children lose the language of their home, they will never experience the many advantages of becoming fully bilingual. They might find communicating with elder family members difficult and feel less connected to their family traditions and heritage. This disconnect can lead to emotional and self-esteem concerns as Dual Language Learners approach adolescence (Wong Fillmore 1991).

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Completion for All Pennsylvania Students

Do you know a student who is considering dropping out of school?

**We can help!
(215) 425-6203**

Supporting and encouraging young children's oral language development and learning is crucial to their long-term success.

What Family Members Can Do at Home	What Early Childhood Educators Can Do at School
Support the use of language and literacy activities in both English and the home language, when applicable.	Support the use of language and literacy activities in both English and the home language, when applicable.
Create a safe, nurturing and culturally and linguistically responsive environment allowing for both the home language and/or English to develop.	Create a safe, nurturing and culturally and linguistically responsive environment. Books, materials, displays and artifacts reflect all languages, cultures, families, and communities of children.
Promote the communication of children's experiences and discoveries through interactions in the home language and/or English with family members concerning their daily activities.	Promote the communication of children's experiences and discoveries in the home language and English.
Promote interesting and interactive conversations in which children take part.	Promote interesting and interactive conversations in which children take part.
Read books, sing, play word games, talk to and with children in both home language and/or English to build vocabulary while providing increased opportunities to develop listening and oral skills.	Read books, sing, play word games, talk to and with children to build vocabulary while providing increased opportunities to develop listening and oral skills.
Engage children using greetings, alphabets and key phrases written in the home language and English.	Engage children using greetings, alphabets and key phrases written in the home language and English.
Share books in the home language sent home by the early childhood educators. The availability of books in L1 communicates to family members that home language reading is considered valuable by the early childhood educators.	The library corner features multicultural literature in various home languages and English.
Volunteer their time and skills in the classroom. This would allow dual language learners the opportunity to communicate in their home language during the day.	Cozy learning spaces allow children to interact around interesting and familiar topics.
Teach vocabulary or nursery rhymes in the home language to the class or early childhood educators, extending opportunities to practice a second language to all children (Espinosa, 2008).	Interview the family about their children's talents, home language practices, and interests to better connect family, teacher, and child, and to promote home-school connection. When established early on and in person, it establishes a common goal to support the child both at home and in school.
Be prepared for the possibility that your children will express disinterest in their native language. Support your children's interest in maintaining their native language by talking to them about the importance of dual language development.	<p>Instructional Supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional message: sets the purpose of each lesson and can be pre-written or co-written with the children. It provides a framework for the content and lesson, giving the children expectations. • Early childhood educators value parent-child reading by sending home books in the child's home language. • Intentionally selecting picture books (anchor texts) used to repeatedly foster vocabulary and concept development. Teachers can use an anchor text in multiple ways and for many purposes with dual language learners.
Bring children to activities in which the demand to speak the home language is high, such as in extended family or community gatherings (Tabors, 2008).	Provide a welcoming environment in which early childhood educators recognize children's unique abilities, what they know and what they need to learn, allowing them the use of their home language, English, or a mixture of both.

Families play a crucial role in supporting their children's oral language development. It is a misconception that children are just natural learners who effortlessly store and maintain knowledge of languages. Dual language development requires the conscious effort, reinforcement, and support of parents, early childhood educators, and family members (Tabors, 2008).

Resources for Families

- HUNE, www.huneinc.org
- PaTTAN, Increasing Graduation Rates and Decreasing Dropout Rates Initiative, www.pattan.net
- PaTTAN, Parental Engagement Initiative, www.pattan.net
- PaTTAN, Parent Information, www.pattan.net
- PYLN, Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network, www.pyln.org
- The PEAL Center, www.pealcenter.org
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Early Intervention Services. <http://tinyurl.com/jshnn85>
- PaTTAN Early Intervention Initiative <http://tinyurl.com/hpzvhwf>
- PaTTAN Project MAX, Maximizing Access and Learning <http://tinyurl.com/guu7zmx>
- PaTTAN Publications. *State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Theory of Action* <http://tinyurl.com/zahwwqk>
- WIDA Focus Bulletin. Family Engagement, September 2015 (also available in Spanish) <http://tinyurl.com/jx1k5z8>



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