



# Using an Early Warning System (EWS) to Increase Graduation Rates of Students With Disabilities



## 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.

### Using an Early Warning System (EWS) at the High School Level

A useful EWS relies on student information that exists at the school level. The EWS houses the following types of information: attendance (i.e., number of absences), behavior (i.e., School Code of Conduct and State Offenses), and course performance (e.g., grades in Language Arts and Mathematics).

#### Attendance

Research suggests that missing more than 10 percent of instructional time per semester is cause for concern. This percentage translates to roughly two weeks (10 days) of school per semester in most high schools. Students who miss more than 10 percent of instructional time should be flagged for possible interventions. An EWS will help schools identify students in need of intervention.

#### Behavior

Students are considered off-track for graduation when the student has five or more school code of conduct referrals, and/or when the student has one or more state offenses. Students should be flagged for possible interventions. An EWS will help schools identify students in need of intervention.

#### Course Performance

Research indicates that students who fail Language Arts or Mathematics (i.e., received an “F” in either or both classes) have a higher probability of dropping out and not graduating from high school. An EWS will help schools identify students in need of intervention.

#### HUNE’s Data Collection

HUNE collects both qualitative and quantitative data on the students in their After-School Programs (ASP) as a means of assessing student progress, perceptions, and projections. The data that HUNE collects provides the groundwork in developing program goals for assisting students and their families.

The initial intake data that we receive from the families consists of grades, attendance, and Individualized Educational Program (IEP). These data inform staff on the nature of the student’s disabilities, specific student’s needs, goals, and specially-designed instruction that worked or failed, and how HUNE can work with the students, their families, and the schools in moving forward to accomplish the overall goal of high school graduation. The collected qualitative data from students assists Youth Programs Staff (YPS) in better understanding student perceptions regarding the effectiveness of interventions designed to aid students therapeutically and scholastically in the ASP.

#### Quantitative Data

- School attendance
- Students’ grades
- State assessment scores

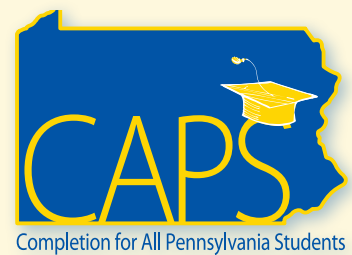
#### Qualitative Data

- Feedback from students, families, and school partners (behavior data)
- Surveys

- Group discussions
- Interviews

Continued on reverse . . .

**HUNE believes that providing students with the proper emotional and scholastic supports greatly increases students’ ability to successfully graduate from high school. HUNE promotes and nurtures family/school collaboration to reinforce students’ commitment to reach graduation goals.**



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

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

## Highly Predictive Risk Factors for Dropping Out of High School - School District of Philadelphia Examples

### Academic Performance

- Earning an F in English or math during grade 6 or 8
- Failing courses and falling behind in credits in grade 9
- Failing to earn a promotion from grade 9 to 10

### Educational engagement

- Low attendance (80 percent or lower) during grade 6, 8, or 9
- Receiving a failing mark for classroom behavior during grade 6 through grade 10

## HUNE's Responsive Practices to These Risk Factors

Since the inception of the Youth Programs (YP), HUNE has worked with

approximately 35 students. Of those 35 students with whom the agency has impacted, only one student has dropped out of high school and the Youth Programs. HUNE is currently working with this student's family to provide the student and family with additional supports.

HUNE's staff follows up with high-risk students by mail, email, phone calls, and visits to both the student's home and school.

HUNE's experience is that in-person follow up is the most effective method of communication with the families and youth served.

HUNE is currently tracking one student who has successfully graduated from the YP and is now in his second year of college. HUNE currently has two students who are scheduled to graduate in May of 2016. These students work with the YP's transitional support team where they

take part in career assessments, career mentorship, visits to colleges and transition workshops for students with special needs.

*Examples of Highly Predictive Risk Factors for Dropping Out of High School, From School District of Philadelphia* (National High School Center, 2008 [http://www.earlywarningsystems.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/IssueBrief\\_EarlyWarningSystemsGuide.pdf](http://www.earlywarningsystems.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/IssueBrief_EarlyWarningSystemsGuide.pdf))

## Resources for Families

- HUNE, [www.huneinc.org](http://www.huneinc.org)
- PaTTAN, Increasing Graduation Rates and Decreasing Dropout Rates Initiative, [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net)
- PaTTAN, Parental Engagement Initiative, [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net)
- PaTTAN, Parent Information, [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net)
- PYLN, Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network, [www.pyln.org](http://www.pyln.org)
- The PEAL Center, [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org)



*Bureau of Special Education*  
Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network