



Family Engagement:

Using Effective Practices with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families in an Urban Setting



Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE) Mission

HUNE empowers and supports families 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.

HUNE has focused on empowering families to learn ways to support their children's education. HUNE offers different program models, from small and large group workshops to individual contacts with families in their homes.

Our organization has also established collaborative relationships with families, the School District of Philadelphia, community agencies, and businesses. Based on the input of our partners, we have been able to provide the following services:

- Training sessions for families of children with disabilities, offered in English and Spanish.
- Assistance and guidance to families so that they understand their children's rights to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education.
- Technology training provided for family members in accessing information to improve their children's education.
- Early childhood interventions to inform and support families regarding their children's literacy development, as well as other opportunities to improve their children's lives.

HUNE's family engagement initiative is anchored in research-based best practices for culturally and linguistically diverse families in an urban setting.

- HUNE has bilingual/bicultural staff members who are fluent in the languages most often represented among the families of enrolled children and youth. These staff members are available to support school-family communication.
- Families are invited to share information about their home language use, methods families use to promote their children's learning and development, family strengths and challenges, and goals for their children's education; this information is used to plan family engagement and family support activities.
- Information about youth programs—including consent forms, newsletters, and invitations to events—is provided in families' home languages; important information is provided orally in families' home languages for family members with limited reading skills.
- HUNE staff communicates with families about methods for supporting learning at home in their home language and use multiple formats for this communication, including individual meetings, group family meetings, home visits, and the provision of home learning materials with easy-to-use guidance.

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The realization that academics alone may not be enough: Students have to want to come to school, work hard, and graduate on time. And they have to feel capable of achieving their academic goals. The challenge for educators and families is to figure out how to make that happen.



Completion for All Pennsylvania Students

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- Outreach efforts to families help remove barriers to their participation in program-based family engagement activities. Methods for reducing barriers include the use of interpreters, meeting with the family at a time that accommodates their work schedule, arranging a conversation by phone, and assisting with transportation.
- Family engagement activities provide opportunities for families from the same linguistic and cultural background to develop social networks with each other, including family and family–youth events.
- HUNE staff receives ongoing professional development on cultural and linguistic diversity and on engaging linguistically diverse families to effectively support their children’s social and academic development.

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

PaTTAN (www.pattan.net)

- *Is Your Child Having Difficulty in School? A Guide to Communicating With Your School and District*
- *Pennsylvania Parent Guide to Special Education for School Age Children*
- *Pennsylvania’s Supplementary Aids and Services Toolkit: An Overview for Parents*
- *Understanding the Language of Special Education: A Glossary for Parents and Educators*
- *Teachers’ Desk Reference: Communicating With Parents*
- LEA to LEA Webinar Series: Family Engagement 2015-2016
- *Enhancing Parent Engagement: A Practical Guide*
- Enhancing Family Engagement: The Indicator 8 Training Toolkit

Additional Resources for Families

- Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania <http://www.parenttoparent.org/>
- The OSEP Spanish Glossary Project www.neparentcenters.org/glossary/glossary.html

Family Feedback

“Yuliana likes the program. The program has helped her to get integrated. She is less shy and is open to socializing. She gets a lot of homework help. She gives the program five stars. Yuliana has had new experiences. She is really happy about the youth program.”

– Yuliana’s Mother

“He likes the program because he can socialize with other students of his age. He gets a lot of homework help. Also, he has developed as a person.”

– Jose’s Mother

“My son does homework in the program. He likes the program a lot because people are nice in the program. He is a little bit nicer to others now that he is in the program. He likes the way he is treated in the program.”

– Henry’s Mother



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