



Culturally Responsive Practices:

Working With Diverse Families and Students With Disabilities in Urban Settings



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.

Since most of the participants in HUNE youth programs live in environments reflecting diverse Hispanic cultures, HUNE focuses upon supporting them through a smooth acculturation process by both supporting them while adapting into American culture, as well as empowering them to maintain and strengthen their cultural heritage. There are at least 21 Spanish speaking countries represented in the HUNE community, so knowing the community you serve is imperative.

The following are some effective practices implemented at HUNE:

- Create an environment that integrates and embraces Hispanic culture and customs
 - Position an experienced and friendly receptionist at the front desk, who provides appropriate bilingual and bicultural services to incoming clients
 - Cultivate a safe and open environment that encourages students and their families to express their ideas without prejudice

- Empower students and their families through self-advocacy awareness, so they learn to appropriately present their points of view
- Respect authority and rules, with an understanding of the inequities and inequalities that might be present
- Provide families with information and resources on parent-child relationships as they reflect on the similarities and differences between the home culture and the new culture (not imposing, but informing)

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- Design youth activities enhancing the diversity of the Hispanic culture
 - Support Latino/Hispanic youth in familiarizing themselves with their cultural heritage through culturally relevant reading, writing, and media-based activities
 - Work with youth and families considering their cultural background
 - Connect home and school cultures, and enhance the importance of bilingualism/biculturalism
 - Address youth and family relationship problems, considering cultural norms and values
 - Encourage open communication with families related to students' needs, rights, and responsibilities
 - Assist families in understanding and respecting American cultural norms as they reflect on the similarities and differences between the home culture and the new culture

Studies show that students who graduate with a high school diploma have higher self-esteem, feel more confident in pursuing a career, and are proud of their achievements.



Completion for All Pennsylvania Students

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- Promote cultural competency. The majority of the organization personnel reflects the community served, allowing for families and youth to feel welcomed with the understanding that cooperation and collaboration is expected.
 - Bilingual/bicultural personnel communicate and engage with youth and families;
 - Personnel is familiar with the community and is committed to the HUNE mission; and
 - Professional development opportunities are offered with the goal of empowering all staff and faculty in culturally responsive practices.

The goals of the HUNE programs are aligned to the Pennsylvania State Systemic Improvement Plan by including the following outcomes:

- Increase on-track factors that impact high school graduation (i.e., attendance, behavior, school performance)
- Create a safe, culturally responsive place for students with and without disabilities
- Improve students' social skills
- Increase participation within the community
- Increase school retention
- Increase graduation rate

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

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 Publications for Parents, www.pattan.net
- PYLN, Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network, www.pyln.org
- The PEAL Center, www.pealcenter.org

PaTTAN (www.pattan.net)

- Enhancing Family Engagement: The Indicator 8 Training Toolkit
- *Enhancing Parent Engagement: A Practical Guide*
- *Teachers' Desk Reference: Communicating With Parents*
- LEA to LEA Webinar Series – Family Engagement

