



# Listening to Students' Voices:

## HUNE's Youth Voices



### 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.

Research by Harvard Graduate School of Education indicates that when schools seek out ways to welcome youth voices by partnering with students as stakeholders in their own learning, they succeed in creating programs and policies that are more effective at meeting the school's goal of supporting young people in their healthy development.

#### Definition of Youth Voice

Youth Voice is the active, distinct, and concentrated way young people represent themselves throughout society.

Youth Voice requires action. It is more than making students heard; it is empowering children and youth with purpose. Engaging young people can build a strong sense of community, a commitment to civic action, and a passion for active learning.

- To be **Active** with Youth Voice means engaging young people intentionally, instead of coincidentally.
- To be **Distinct** means that young people are seen as having their own views, separate from those of their families or teachers.
- To be **Concentrated** means engaging young people in a focused way, including the personal, structural, political, and financial support it needs to be effective.

- To **Represent** means re-representing ourselves, our families, our communities, and our society every day and sharing that perspective with someone else.
- **Community** is any place where a young person belongs, which may include a neighborhood, an ethnicity, a church, or a sport. Community is defined by identity. Youth Voice can powerfully affect community engagement among young people and adults.

#### HUNE's Youth Voices

- *"It's important to learn in school because we need to be smart and know what we want to be in the future."*
- *"Show me that I matter to you."*
- *"Not give tons of problems for the same concept."*
- *"It's important to learn what you like in school and how to find a job . . . so that you know what you want to do in the future."*
- *"This is for all schools not just mine. You get to select one class of your choosing that teaches you the basics of a certain field."*
- *"Me gusta las clases por los trabajos" (project-based learning)*
- *"Learn something about me!"*

#### HUNE's Advocacy and Outreach

Assists families and toddlers, children, and youth (0-26 years of age) with learning and navigating the public school system, helping them to have a voice.

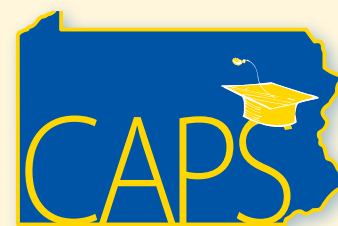
HUNE provides workshops educating families of students with disabilities about their children's rights. These

sessions are also for professionals, teaching them how to work with families of children with disabilities and increase their cultural competency within the Hispanic community.

Continued on reverse . . .

**Research shows that dropout rates, student achievement, and workforce readiness will improve by integrating student voices in the classroom and in society.**

Student Voice, [www.studentvoice.org](http://www.studentvoice.org)



Completion for All Pennsylvania Students

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

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

## Four Ways to Welcome Student Input

Brion-Meisels (Edutopia.org) offers **ways schools can integrate student voices**. These practices can be applied to community agencies, as well.

1. **Regularly solicit student feedback.** Surveys and other research methods should be used to routinely gather data regarding how they feel about class content and structure, and for suggestions on improving their school experience. Feedback from students is employed to draw conclusions about what's going right, what could be improved, and how to structure next steps.
2. **Include authentic student representation on leadership teams.** Administrators should leave space
3. **Invite students to any discussion related to their own learning.** Individual students need to be included in family-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, student support meetings, discipline hearings — any discussion in which they are the main topic.
4. **Consider young people as stakeholders and partners in their education.** When setting new goals or making major decisions, students should be expected to contribute.

for students on leadership teams. In meetings, participants should treat students as full members of the team, not just observers.

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## Resources

- Edutopia. *Student Voice Resources*, [www.edutopia.org/topic/student-voice](http://www.edutopia.org/topic/student-voice)
- Fletcher, Adam. *Washington Youth Voice Handbook: The What, Who, Why, Where, When and How Youth Voice Happens*. Common Action: Supporting Youth Engagement in Schools and Communities, 2006.
- Johns Hopkins School of Education. *Student Voices*, [www.education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/student-voices-12/index.html](http://www.education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/student-voices-12/index.html)
- *Student Voice*, [www.stuvoice.org](http://www.stuvoice.org); #StuVoice

## 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)

## Youth Feedback

“More youth need to be encouraged to define who they are, where they are from, and what they stand for and what they stand against.”

– Washington Youth Voice Handbook  
by Adam Fletcher, p.10

“On the learning front, I’ve become a better student. Having people to bounce my writings on has given me a lot of ideas and let me find problems I wouldn’t have been able to find. It’s even allowed me to take more experimental ideas. Right now I’m writing an essay about the presidents that deserve an action movie! So I’d have to definitely say HUNE has helped me more than anything.”

– Student: Guillermo

“I used to be a bad student because I used to be bullied because of my color. It was difficult for me because I did not know how to speak English. The program helped me with anger management issues that I had in the past. It helped me figure out my future goals in life. The program is awesome and it helped with everything like being a good student, being a better son and a better person. We have awesome trips and great mentors here. We play sports and have adventures. We do cool projects and good team work.”

– Student: José Rivera



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