

PUENTES Newsletter

Educate. *Inspire.* Empower.

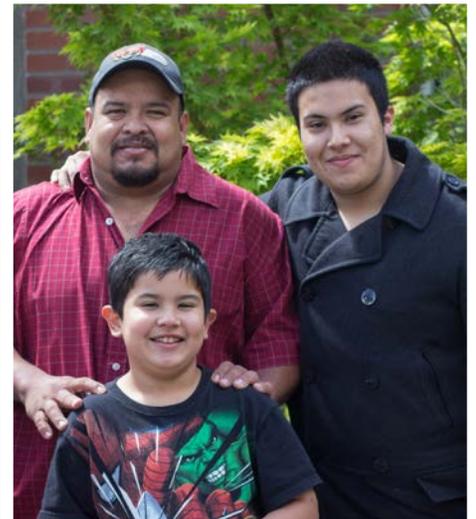


Willamette Academy's PUENTES Program

Willamette Academy's PUENTES Program [Parents and Guardians Using Education and Networking To Empower Students], is a program specifically designed to empower parents/guardians of Academy students to advocate for their student's academic needs, support their educational goals, and bridge the generational gap that exists between them and their students.

How PUENTES is Successful

PUENTES promotes a community and support network in order to improve the connection between the **STUDENTS** of Willamette Academy, their pursuit of **HIGHER EDUCATION**, and their **FAMILIES**. This goal is achieved through specifically designed workshops and events that complement the Academy's age-specific student programming and inform the parent/guardians of the necessary information about their students' personal pursuit of higher education.



PUENTES Family Spotlight



“For my family—especially my parents—PUENTES allows them to know what is happening in regards to the college application process. They want to hear information from outside sources, not just me or what I consider important. My parents learn and receive information, which they share with other families coming from similar backgrounds—basically spreading the knowledge around! PUENTES also helps my younger brother out because he is getting ahead, learning from my mistakes, and being proactive.” -Efrain Zuniga ‘14

“The Saturday workshops have been a huge help for my wife and me. Thanks to those workshops we have learned a lot about the different types of universities that exist (community colleges, state, and private universities), the application process, financial aid, and the different scholarships our son can apply to. We have also learned how to prepare our son so he can be a good student that several universities would like to have, but most importantly a school that will meet his academic and financial needs. At these workshops we have learned that universities like to receive applications from students that not only show good grades but that demonstrate community service, participation in clubs, and sports. All of these activities have enriched our son’s applications.” -Ismael and Romana Zuniga, Parents of Efrain Zuniga ‘14

PUENTES Workshops

Throughout the year, Academy students and their families take part in an array of workshops designed to support each student in their pursuit of higher education and to inform parents of the knowledge necessary in order to help their student succeed. These workshops focus on a variety of topics including:



High School 101:

Provides families with the necessary tools and resources in order to develop a successful high-school experience.

College Track 101:

Provides families with a clear and detailed understanding of the college admission process and how to help their student be the best applicant they can be.

Financial Aid 101:

Informs students and their families about the numerous financial aid opportunities available to them.

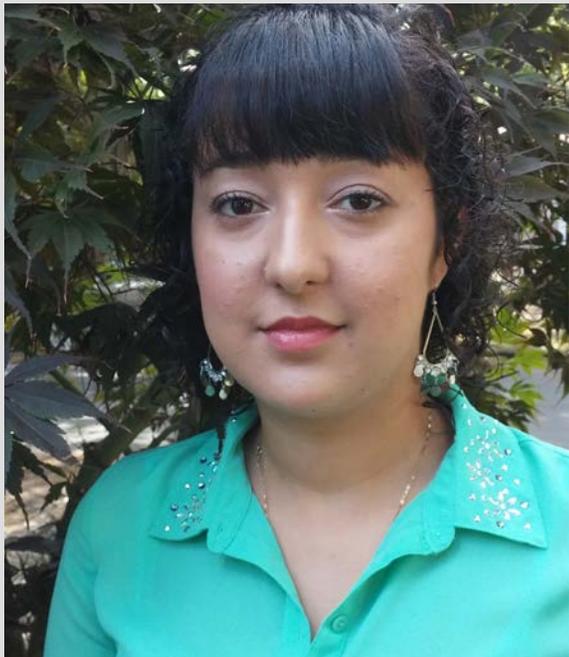
Scholarship 101:

Specifically teaches parents/guardians successful strategies and techniques for completing successful scholarship applications.

And Many More Including:

Balancing Time & Volunteer Opportunities, College Resume Building, and College Search, etc...

Meet Our PUENTES Family Coordinator!



Name: Guadalupe Torres
Position Title: Family Coordinator/
Academic Support Program
Assistant

What is your past experience working with Academy parents?

“My past experiences with Academy parents/guardians have been great. I have seen their true commitment to the program, and how they are willing to go above and beyond to help their students succeed and attend a university of their choice.”

What are you most excited for about the position?

“I am really excited to meet new families and to get to know current families better in the program. But I am most excited to be able to help families with the college process and just witnessing how invested these parents/guardians are in their student’s education.”

What do you think makes PUENTES so successful?

“I believe PUENTES is successful because parents/guardians are receiving the information that is needed to support their students through high school and the college process. By having knowledge about this information they are able to navigate the college process along with their students, not only by providing support, but also by helping them and advising them through the whole process.”



Building Bridges

Building Bridges was part of a larger, three-year research evaluation project that was conducted by Brianne Dávila, Sociology Professor at Willamette University, and a team of undergraduate research assistance in collaboration with Willamette Academy (WA). The analysis of the qualitative data collected focused on the participants’ experiences at WA, parents’ perceptions of WA’s influence on them and their families, and the knowledge that has been transmitted from WA to them.

In conclusion, this research evaluation demonstrated that parents would like to have more opportunities to build relationships and networks with families within the program as well as WA staff. All the parents expressed gratitude and appreciation towards WA for the college access assistance that Willamette Academy has given their student.

We want to say **THANK YOU** to the parents and families who participated in this research evaluation.



After-school programs for parents have been shown to, “boost school grades and test scores, improve school attendance, foster social skills, and increase graduation rates and postsecondary education attainment.” PUENTES fosters these characteristics through our unique mentoring system that aims at solving the individual needs of each student and their parents.

How PUENTES Measures up to National Research

Students take their cues from their parents about what is reasonable to expect for their educational goals, and they plan their futures accordingly. By introducing Academy parents to the necessary resources, PUENTES effectively trains both parents and students in the best methods to reaching success in life.

Public opinion polls conducted by Gallup, and other research conducted over more than 40 years, find that involving parents or engaging families in their children’s education and schools is one of the highest priorities for improving American education. PUENTES workshops allow parents the opportunity to learn alongside

their student and develop into knowledgeable and encouraging role models for the students.

Students who are strongly encouraged by their parents to attend college are much more likely to attend 4-year institutions than students who do not receive that support from their families. *Willamette Academy boasts 100% high school graduation and 100% college acceptance rates, evidence of the true impact parent involvement has on students’ lives.*

For more information on these statistics and the national research behind their findings, please email academy@willamette.edu.




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