

ACTIVITY

HERITAGE HANDS

A Back-to-School Family Connection Activity

A simple way to honor every family's story and build a more connected school community from day one.

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ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



Purpose:

Celebrate the diverse cultures, stories, and traditions of every family in your school community with the Heritage Hands Unity Activity—a simple, meaningful way to create a powerful visual reminder that every hand matters.



When to Use It:

Perfect for the back-to-school season, when relationships are forming and the foundation for a strong, connected community is being built.



Key Benefits:

- Builds a stronger sense of belonging right from the start
- Highlights the unique voice and culture of each family
- Creates a meaningful, low-prep visual display
- Makes participation easy and inclusive—no special supplies required

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Guide Steps & Directions
- Display Ideas
- Templates & Printables



ACTIVITY PREP

Get ready to introduce the Heritage Hands Unity Activity by gathering the following materials and using the talking points below to explain the purpose to your staff:

Materials to Gather:

- Printed family letters (include Spanish versions as needed)
- Heritage Hands Instruction Template
- Crayons, markers, scissors (optional—can be sent home or used in class)
- Sample hand template (optional for display or demonstration)
- Display materials (bulletin board paper, signage, tape, or stapler)
- **Pro Tip:** Try the example script below to introduce this activity to your staff and kick things off.

“ Good morning, everyone! As we begin the school year, we want every family to know they belong here. One way we’re doing that is with a simple, joyful take home activity called Heritage Hands. Families will trace their hands and share something special about who they are, whether it’s a tradition, a language, a recipe, or a memory.

These hands will become part of a school-wide display to show that every story matters here, and every hand helps us grow stronger together.

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS

- 1 Choose Your Launch Window:** Set the date to introduce the activity and decide how families will receive it (backpack mail, email, open house, etc.).
- 2 Prepare Materials & Printables:** Print the family letters, gather any needed supplies, and determine how completed hands will be returned.
- 3 Introduce It with Heart:** Send the activity home with a warm, clear message about its purpose and why it matters.
- 4 Collect and Celebrate the Hands:** Gather the finished hands and create your visual display—such as a “Unity Tree” or “Hallway of Hands.”
- 5 Reflect, Share & Keep the Momentum:** Take time to reflect on the impact, share highlights with your school community, and look for ways to build on the momentum for future family engagement.



EXTENSION

Keep the display up through Hispanic Heritage Month, Indigenous Peoples' Day, etc., as a foundation for ongoing cultural celebration.

DISPLAY IDEAS



TEMPALTES & PRINTABLES



FAMILY LETTER TEMPLATE



Dear Families,

At [Your School Name], we believe every child—and every family—brings something beautiful and important to our community.

As we begin the school year, we'd love to celebrate the stories that make your family who you are.

Here's a simple and meaningful activity to do together at home:

1. Trace each family member's hand on a sheet of paper.
2. Inside the hand, write or draw something special about your culture, family, or identity. This could be a favorite meal, a tradition, a saying, a memory, or something you're proud of.
3. Feel free to decorate the hands—markers, crayons, photos, stickers—anything goes!
4. Return your hands to school by [Insert Date] so we can add them to our community display.

Your hands will become part of our "Unity Tree" (or "Hallway of Hands")—a visual reminder that every story matters and every voice belongs.

Thank you for sharing your story. We're so glad you're here.

With gratitude,
[Your Name / School Team Name]

PLANTILLA DE CARTA PARA FAMILIAS



Queridas familias:

En [Nombre de su escuela], creemos que cada niño—y cada familia—aporta algo hermoso e importante a nuestra comunidad.

Al comenzar el año escolar, queremos celebrar las historias que hacen que su familia sea única.

Aquí tienen una actividad sencilla y significativa para hacer juntos en casa:

1. Dibujen la silueta de la mano de cada miembro de la familia en una hoja de papel.
2. Dentro de cada mano, escriban o dibujen algo especial sobre su cultura, su familia o su identidad. Puede ser una comida favorita, una tradición, una frase, un recuerdo o algo de lo que se sientan orgullosos.
3. ¡Si quieren, decoren las manos con marcadores, crayones, fotos, calcomanías—lo que quieran!
4. Por favor, devuelvan las manos a la escuela antes del [Inserte la fecha] para que podamos incluirlas en nuestra exhibición comunitaria.

Sus manos formarán parte de nuestro “Árbol de la Unidad” (o “Pasillo de las Manos”)—un recordatorio visual de que cada historia importa y cada voz tiene un lugar.

Gracias por compartir su historia. Nos alegra mucho que sean parte de nuestra comunidad.

Con gratitud,
[Su nombre / Nombre del equipo escolar]

Instructions:

Trace your hand on a piece of paper. Inside the hand, write or draw something special about your family or culture. Then decorate it however you like! When you're finished, cut it out and return it to school by _____ to be part of our community display.



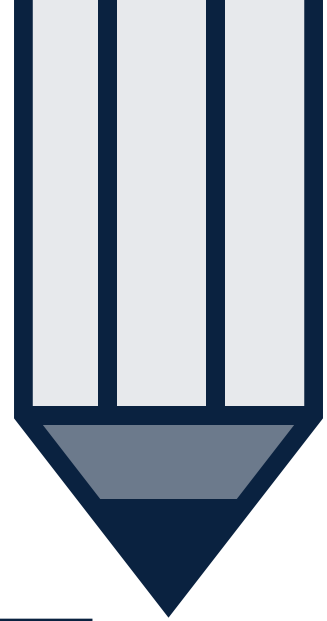
Instrucciones:

Trace la mano de cada miembro de su familia en una hoja de papel, escriba o dibuje algo especial sobre su familia o cultura dentro de la mano, ¡luego decórelo como quiera! Cuando termine, recórtelo y devuélvalo a la escuela antes del _____ para que forme parte de nuestra exhibición comunitaria.



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COLLABORATION

BUILT BY EDUCATORS, FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

This resource was created in collaboration with dedicated educators and school leaders who brought their experience, ideas, and insight to every step of the process. We're grateful for their partnership in building tools that truly make a difference in schools.



Elisha Suttles

Scholar & School Support Liaison
Omaha, NE



Karen Avila

2nd Grade Teacher
Omaha, NE

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Got an idea brewing?

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