

Oakland Unified School District Plot Program



Oakland Unified School District is one of the most diverse districts in California, with 50% of students speaking a language other than English at home and over 70% being eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program. With over 50 different native languages spoken, communicating with non-English speaking parents has been a big barrier to driving parent engagement and making all parents feel welcomed at school.

Strong parent engagement leads to improved student outcomes, but many parents in OUSD struggle to get involved. During the 2016-17 school year, OUSD piloted TalkingPoints in over 20 schools to support meaningful parent engagement. Schools needed a way to connect with their non-English speaking families and make them feel welcomed in the school community. TalkingPoints provided school administrators, teachers and staff the ability to communicate and engage with parents directly, regardless of their home languages, through text messages, parents' preferred method of communication. We facilitated thousands of conversations between school leaders, teachers and parents and the results show positive outcomes for all involved.

In an end-of-year school survey:

- 97% of parents felt more informed about what is happening at school since they started receiving text messages
- 93% of parents felt more included in the school community
- 89% of parents were having more conversations about school with their child at home

Teachers were able to communicate with families directly without having to rely on bilingual staff members or their students and reported feeling more connected to their families.

As Ms. Wilson shared "TalkingPoints has been so useful this year in getting information out to families about upcoming dates and expectations. We send home a lot of paper information that doesn't always get to parents, so TalkingPoints has helped either take the place of that paper and more extensive information is getting into the hands of families."

School administrators noticed a change in their interactions with families, especially those that were the hardest to reach. One principal shared how he had conducted two home visits to get in touch with a parent who hadn't responded to any of his phone calls or emails.

He needed to speak with the parent about an important matter concerning her child. After one home visit, he tried sending a message through TalkingPoints and heard back from the parent right away! He couldn't believe the quick response and hasn't had a problem reaching this parent since then, saving him a lot of time and ultimately getting the child the support he needs.

The district decided to expand our partnership to serve triple the number of families this year based on schools' requests and positive response from parents.

TalkingPoints supports our district's Strategic Plan by helping our school leaders and teachers engage families in their home languages using accessible technology to help Every Student Thrive!



Susan Beltz

CTO, Oakland Unified School District