

The Summer Springboard into a Successful Fall

This companion guide to the edWeb webinar 7 Strategies for Using Summer as a Springboard to a Successful Fall Through Family-School Engagement offers practical, actionable insights, recommendations, and solutions education leaders can put into practice right now.

Challenge 1 Interrupted communication with families

Interrupted communication

Summer presents an interruption to communication with families.



Strategy: Think of summer as an opportunity to communicate rather than a lost time

There are two groups of families to consider: students who participate in summer programming and students who do not. Think about your families as a whole, not just the few that you hear back from the most.

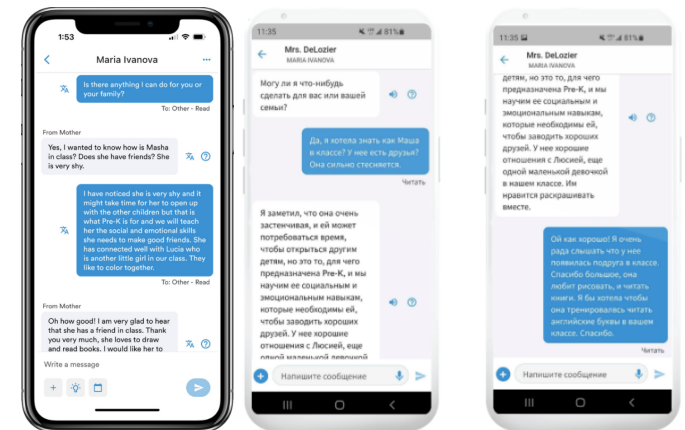
List the ways you communicate about summer programming with families who do - and do not - participate. To build consistency between the school year and summer, create a district calendar of important events that you want parents to be aware of.

Ensure communication is:

- Real-time
- Two-way so families can get help if they have questions
- In families' home languages
- Via channels families use most: mobile and/or texting

TalkingPoints solution: Send daily messages and announcements from all staff in quick, easy text messages

Summer school is an informal, less high-stakes time, and text messaging aligns with this. It's a low-lift, accessible way for schools to communicate with families in real time. Many families don't use email, and phone communication can be intimidating or ineffective, especially for non-English-speaking families.



Challenge 2 Not all families see themselves in schools

Not all families see themselves in schools

It is difficult to build strong family-school partnerships when schools don't reflect the communities they serve. EL families can sometimes be hesitant about communicating.

Strategy: Open up your school to students and families in the summer to set up strong ties for the new school year

Use summer to create a positive school feeling with families by being intentional and co-creating summer offerings and structure with families. Be flexible to ensure offerings really meet the needs of your families, considering diverse schedules. Use strong school-year relationships to invite families to summer programming.

Ensure communication is:

- Real-time
- Engaging and interactive vs. one-way
- In families' home languages
- Able to be targeted for specific families or groups of families

TalkingPoints solution: Use polls to engage family and gather quick, actionable feedback

Polls

Does your child need transportation for summer school?

by Bay School | May 10, 2022

RESPONSES

246/269

RESPONSE RATE

91%

Yes

108 votes

No

138 votes

[VIEW RESPONSE BREAKDOWN](#)



Challenge 3 Schools struggle to bridge the gap between policy and community for families

The two-way learning challenge

Families want to support their students but don't always know the best ways to do so. Curricula are often dense and filled with education-specific terminology, making it difficult for families to understand.

Strategy: Use summer as an opportunity for mutual learning

Use summer as a quieter time to bridge the gap around understanding the educational system for families. Tools like QR codes that open videos explaining education terms or how the system works can help. Use summer as a time to share important information families can use next school year to understand learning standards. Communicate across language barriers directly with families to build relationships, instead of relying on older siblings to act as interpreters. Use summer for two-way learning: learn about family needs and barriers to engagement or understanding, and help families better understand the education system and their child's learning path.

Ensure communication is:

- Using simple terms - not education jargon - to help clearly convey concepts, standards, processes and protocols
- In families' home languages
- Two-way, where families are sharing information back with schools to help them better serve the community

TalkingPoints solution: Break down key policy and event information into digestible, understandable communications

Send school-wide announcements to help families understand important information collected in your handbook, calendar, or information about upcoming events. Pre-schedule messages about known events to save time, and improve translation. Use polls to quickly gather and synthesize important information, like if a family needs a translator for an event.

SCHEDULED ANNOUNCEMENTS

See all

06/20	TO: Whole School Attendance Tip of the Week: Use TalkingPoints to let the school know...
06/27	TO: Whole School Attendance Tip of the Week: Being tardy three times counts as one full...
07/05	TO: Whole School Attendance Tip of the Week: We want to hear from you! What are your...

EB

Bay Elementary School
Sunday, Apr 3rd - Whole School

Attendance Tip of the Week: Use TalkingPoints to let the school know when your child will be absent or tardy. You can send the message in your home language. This keeps our phone lines available for other calls!

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Challenge 4 Get ahead of the fall rush

The fall rush

There isn't time, especially in the fall, to reflect on new changes and how they might be affecting my school community. Teachers, students, and families alike are often overwhelmed by the frenzy of the start of the school year.

Strategy: Use summer to practice structures and patterns ahead of the new school year

Summer is a great time to soft-launch procedural changes or new systems/tools both for teachers and for families. Identify a team to road test new approaches during summer, including teachers, staff, families, and students. Get feedback from a variety of stakeholders and use this to inform decisions for the next school year. Plan in the spring to practice in summer to launch in fall. This will help avoid surprise, build buy-in, and help focus investments on continuing successful approaches.

Ensure communication is:

- Flexible to support two-way relationships between families and staff in varied roles
- Two-way so families can provide feedback and input
- In families' home languages so all voices can be heard

TalkingPoints solution: Send open-ended questions as messages to families to gather input and feedback

You can elevate the voices of all of your families by asking open-ended questions in your TalkingPoints messages. Families can respond back with their feedback in their home language. Ask them to share their experience about new procedures and gather testimonials about changes you've rolled out over summer before fully launching in the fall.



Bay Elementary School
Sunday, Apr 3rd - Whole School

Hi Bay Elementary families! We want your feedback on the new arrival and dismissal procedures we've been testing out this summer. Your feedback will help us determine what we do for the new school year. Please respond to this message to let us know what you think!



Attendance

Persistent chronic absenteeism can equate to a full year of lost learning by the end of high school.

Use summer to build connections so families feel comfortable sharing their story and the barriers they face that may impact attendance. Make school a positive, supportive place - not somewhere seen as “just for school.” Identify gaps in family experience and find ways to support and empower families. Consider Sunday community nights offering support that meets family needs. Loop in additional resources, like social workers and counselors, to connect families with necessary resources. Proactively communicate around attendance and rethink how policies are communicated to provide context and reasoning to build a shared understanding with families.

- Tailored to address specific barriers to attendance
- In families' home languages
- Written in simple language
- Inclusive of additional support and resources

Adopt a proactive, asset-based lens to communicate about attendance. Empower front office workers to use TalkingPoints to help families understand why attendance matters, explain policies, and to check in on absences and tardies. Engage with families to build trust and learn more about each family's situation and specific barriers that can impact attendance. Address each barrier with messages that offer support and help build a shared understanding. Use welcome outreach communication to make the first interaction with each and every family positive to help families feel comfortable engaging.

Send a message

To: Whole School

Filter languages

Good school attendance can help your child's success in school and can even make graduating on time more likely. Students are sometimes absent from school because of anxiety and other worries. If you think your child may be missing school because they are worried or anxious, please click on the link below for resources that can help.

<https://u.org/3fYI3PJ>

357/600

Save as template

School templates

Teacher templates

TalkingPoints templates

ATTENDANCE / Mental Health:

Good school attendance can help your child's success in school and can even make

ATTENDANCE / 3 Absences

This Month: Hi [parentFullName], your child [studentFullName] has missed 3

Hello families

sent home to know if you them. Thank

CANCEL

SCHEDULE

SEND

Challenge 6 It's difficult to try to fix all academic gaps in the summer

Learning gaps

“Summer school” can have a negative connotation as being only for remediation or credit recovery.

Strategy: Use summer instruction to build confidence for both teachers and students

Select an important standard or one that will be taught at the beginning of the year. Test out new instructional methods - small groups, hands-on experiments, or a flipped classroom approach. Try new approaches to progress monitoring and data-driven instruction, without the pressure of scope and sequence. Explore funding specific to summer. Bring the fun back! This will pay dividends all year long for staff and students.

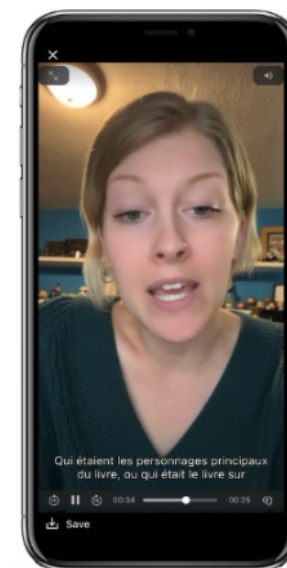
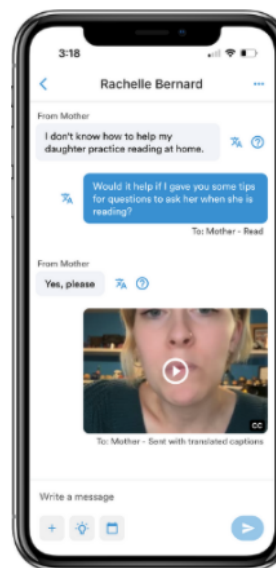
Ensure communication is:

- Mindful of varied literacy levels
- Two-way, to foster dialogue that builds strong partnerships
- In families' home languages
- Simple to access for families via mobile phone / text message

TalkingPoints solution: Send video messages with translated captions to families as a way to demonstrate key concepts and offer a warm, inviting way to engage

Video messages with translated captions offer a warm, inviting way to reinforce positive family-student check-in activities, and demonstrate concepts families can reinforce at home with their students.

[Click here](#) to see how this works.



Challenge 7 Overcoming predictable gaps

Predictable gaps persist

Summer remediation doesn't always accomplish intended goals and subgroup gaps are rarely closed in the summer. Families may not understand the support systems in place to help all students.



Strategy: Truly partner with families to address students' academic success

Hold subject-based programs to address learning gaps or prepare for the new year, like programs that prepare students for advanced math, in-depth work in STEM to address math learning gaps, or English language development programs focused on academic vocabulary. Think about pathways that are established, who is missing, and how to include them. Invite club or sports groups to set up a table. Host student-led jumpstart programming for each grade level. Enable students to visit school in the summer to learn about curriculum and tour the campus. Set aside time for families to visit campus, too, to learn about resources, policies, and procedures, and learn more about what they want the new year to look like.

Ensure communication is:

- Mindful of varied literacy levels
- Two-way, to foster dialogue that builds strong partnerships
- In families' home languages
- Welcoming and approachable - consider videos with translated captions, positive messages and simple, easy-to-understand language

TalkingPoints solution: All staff, including those who provide wraparound services, can send brief, daily messages to families in support of students

Reassure and welcome families regardless of barriers of language, literacy, or understanding about how American schools work. Save templates to make it quick and easy to send positive messages that are mindful of limited literacy levels. These features aren't limited to teacher accounts; all staff members can have access to communicating with families through TalkingPoints' expanded roles and permissions tools.

Send an announcement

To: Select recipients...

Hi, I'm Ms. Berry, your child's summer school teacher. I will be sending you messages about what we're learning this summer. You can always reply to this message to reach me. I'd love to hear from you! Please reply to tell me something about your child.

254/600



Save as template