

Marlborough Public School District

At a Glance

Marlborough Public Schools in Marlborough, MA is a district of nearly 5,000 students, served by an early childhood center, four K-5 elementary schools, one 6-8 middle school, and one high school of grades 9-12, with an additional alternative program for high school students.

Marlborough Public Schools serves a diverse community. With a wave of immigration to the area in the past several years, the district now has more than 34 percent of their students living in homes where English is not the first language spoken.

District Challenges

- In Marlborough, like in many other districts, student absenteeism was a concerning issue and the district wanted to launch an initiative to build on the family-school partnership to help.
- Given the increasingly diverse student and family populations, two-way communications with translation that is accurate and accessible was a challenge and a top priority too.
- An audit of the district's technology found that they lacked an effective way for teachers to engage with families.
 - Family surveys revealed that parents/guardians were increasingly using mobile phones rather than a computer as their primary mode of digital communication.
 - Utilizing email was challenging for families, especially on mobile devices where it was more difficult to respond and have good two-way communication.
 - Phone calls and robocalls were not useful either since many families are often unable to answer or return the call and they typically will not answer calls from unknown numbers.
- It became clear that providing a system-wide solution and framework for engagement that will help families and create a common experience for families and staff was the way to go.



Chris Henry

Director of Instructional Technology,
Marlborough Public School MA



We've noticed that the culture has shifted to a "I can do that" mindset. Previously, teachers felt that in order to communicate with multilingual families they needed to start with our translations department. That takes time to set up a phone call, or have email messages translated. Now, teachers don't see barriers (translations services, time, energy, etc.) for reaching out to all of our families.

TalkingPoints Platform

TalkingPoints uniquely combines all three components of Universal Family Engagement in one research-based platform:

- **Embedded Best Practices:** Built in family engagement expertise and research-based guidance builds staff capacity and promotes best practice engagement.
- **Scaled Family Engagement:** Universally designed platform enables equitable access to build relationships with all families.
- **Data-Informed Guidance:** Actionable, improvement-centered tools to motivate engagement and target areas of needed support.

Engagement & Impact

- Teachers and administrators love that TalkingPoints is so easy to use. Staff can efficiently and effectively engage with families and the two-way translations enable better communication with all families.
- Steady and increased family engagement! In the first two months of implementation, the district had over 120,000 messages between staff and families. By June 2024, the total number of messages was over 815,000! Engagement and conversations that would not have been possible without TalkingPoints.
- Marlborough also saw a **decrease in absenteeism** by way of partnerships with parents/guardians. For example, nurses are able to quickly address absenteeism questions, concerns and policy and teachers can engage with families when students are missing, Marlborough High School went **from an 84% attendance rate in fall of the previous year to 93% attendance rate** in the fall of their first year of partnership with TalkingPoints. According to Chris Henry, "It's the teacher-family connection that gets students to school".

Causal study results show TalkingPoints improves student academic and attendance outcomes with outsized impacts for historically underserved subgroups.

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