

Esperanza Charter School

WHY TIMING MATTERS:

How one principal boosted family engagement using data.
Based on an interview with Melissa Molina, Principal,
Esperanza Cyber Charter School

The family engagement challenge

At Esperanza Cyber Charter School, meaningful communication with families is at the heart of student success. For Principal Melissa Molina, building that bridge between school and home has always been a top priority, but this year, she added a new layer of strategy to her outreach.

She recognized that several barriers often stand in the way of strong family engagement, chronic attendance issues, low student engagement, working families with limited availability, high student mobility, and the unique challenges of a cyber school environment, where opportunities for live, in-person interactions with students and families are limited. By addressing these challenges head-on, Melissa's approach became more targeted and intentional, ensuring that no student or family slipped through the cracks.

A simple strategic solution

Using the TalkingPoints platform, Molina began sending out a weekly newsletter to families packed with important updates, events, and helpful reminders. With TalkingPoints, families can receive these via text, app or email - all translated into their home language. But she didn't stop there. She was determined to find the most effective time to deliver these messages so families would not only receive them but engage with them.

"Sometimes the difference between engagement and silence is just a matter of timing." Molina said. "And when we get that right, we can help families feel even more connected to their students' success."

Over several weeks, she used TalkingPoints' scheduling feature to test three different delivery times for the newsletter:

- Friday after school
- Sunday afternoon
- Monday at 7:00 a.m.



Melissa Molina

Principal | Esperanza Cyber Charter School,
School District of Philadelphia

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What the data revealed

The results spoke volumes. Monday at 7:00 a.m. stood out as the time when parents were most responsive and engaged. Families not only opened the messages at higher rates—they also asked questions, followed up with teachers, and had conversations with their children about the week ahead.

"It was clear that Monday morning became part of their routine," Molina shared. "They used the newsletter to start the school week with purpose, and that energy translated to how students showed up." This data-driven approach has allowed Esperanza Cyber Charter School to deepen its family partnerships in a way that's practical, inclusive, and impactful. With TalkingPoints making it easy to connect across languages and devices, timing became the final piece of the puzzle.

What this means for schools

Molina's experience underscores the importance of tailoring communication strategies to meet families where they are. By analyzing engagement data and making informed adjustments, schools can unlock new pathways for meaningful family involvement. "It's about building trust and relationships," Molina said. "When families feel heard and supported, they're more likely to engage in their child's education. And that's a win-win for everyone."

Looking ahead, Esperanza Cyber Charter School plans to apply similar data-driven approaches to other areas of family outreach, such as parent-teacher conferences and school events. By continuously refining their strategies, they aim to create an environment where every family feels empowered to play an active role in their child's academic journey.

"Engagement is a two-way street," Molina emphasized. "By listening to our families and meeting them where they are, we can create a true partnership that sets our students up for success."

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