No Longer Worlds Apart: Home-School Advocacy Connections with TalkingPoints

CATESOL 2017, Santa Clara
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Outline

1. Introductions
2. Building a culture of advocacy
3. Overcoming barriers to parent engagement
4. Towards a parent engagement plan with TalkingPoints
5. Application
6. Questions & Answers
Introductions
Backgrounds

Jeff Mattison
● ELD Teacher & EL Coordinator
● Cerritos High School (LA area)
● 5% English Learners
● 20+ different home languages spoken

Nancy Lee
● VP of School Engagement at TalkingPoints
● San Francisco (Bay Area)
● Former classroom teacher and head of literacy program in low-income schools
Building a culture of advocacy
Background

6 years prior to my employment at the school, English Learners in the attendance boundaries were bussed to another district high school for services.

A new principal was hired and advocated that the school needed an EL program.

EL Coordinator duties were passed from teacher to teacher. As they got tenure or were transferred, another teacher assumed responsibility.

When I assumed EL Coordinator responsibilities in my 2nd year, ELD courses gradually were transferred from other teachers to me.

Overall, an EL program with stunted growth of advocacy and narrowly-dispersed sense of shared responsibility among teachers for supporting ELs.
The Problems

High % of Emerging bilinguals with Ds and Fs in A-G classes

Low % of those students coming for help or tutoring

Low attendance at ELAC meetings

Little activism or motivation at the meetings
The Solution

Leverage connections with teachers and parents to advocate for these emergent bilingual students (Garcia, 2009).

- Partner with English, Science, and Social Studies teachers to support use of Integrated ELD standards
- Increase avenues of communication with parents to support their children in these classes
- Address basic needs identified from this communication
- Acknowledge home language as asset, not deficit, to learning
200% Increase in Jeff’s ELAC meeting attendance with a parent engagement plan
Overcoming barriers to parent engagement
First Things First

Consider Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- Physiological first
- Social second
- Thoughtfulness third

(Maslow, 1943)
How does this apply to engaging EL families?

Physiological

- Support with health care services if needed to register or attend school daily
- Arrange home visits with partner (interpreter, community liaison, social worker)

Social

- Learn about home life through student writing assignments
- Communicate with home, back-and-forth

Thoughtfulness

- Supporting EL family members to advocate for themselves (Fenner & Segota, 2014)
Physiological

Newcomer families’ first road block to school could be CA immunization law

Does your district have personnel and connections to make this easier?

Lack of access to health care can be a major reason for student absences

Some districts offer school-based health clinics

Others seek connections with local clinics/Doctors

(Fenner & Segota, 2014)
Get to know your families through students’ writing assignments:

- Time spend outside of school
- Whom they live with
- Their home and responsibilities
- Literacy practices

*I wish that my teacher knew that I...*

(Fenner & Segota, 2014)
Social - Get to know families’ perceptions

Educación vs Education

Emphasizing moral development over academics.

Good manners leads to good classroom behavior which results in academic achievement

Group Behavior

Belonging to a group, and contributing to its well-being, is more important than individual achievement

(Fenner & Segota, 2014)
Social

Communicating with home

District translators

Community Liaisons

Home visits

**Best practices**

Go in pairs, focus on child goals, build relationship

(Faber, 2015; Kuttner & Mapp, 2013; Parent Teacher Home Visits, 2017)
Thoughtfulness

Step 1: Supporting families as advocates

- Requires establishment of lower needs first
- Give parents information and guidance on what/when to act on it
Thoughtfulness

Step 2: EL families advocating for themselves

- Self-actualization, the highest realm of Maslow’s hierarchy
- Participating on policy-making school bodies such as PTSA, School Site Council, LCAP, School Board

(Fenner & Segota, 2014)
Impact of Family Engagement Strategies On Student Learning

USDOE Framework: Family Engagement Should Be Relational, Build Capacity Of Families And Staff, And Be Linked to Learning

- Lower Impact
  - Celebrations
  - Parent help on administrative tasks
  - Parent resource rooms
  - Fundraisers
  - Potlucks
  - Performances and showcases
  - Generic school newsletters

- Higher Impact
  - Goal-setting talks
  - Weekly data-sharing folders
  - Regular, personalized communication
  - Home visits
  - Modeling of learning support strategies
  - Positive phone calls home
  - Classroom observations
  - Parent help on learning projects
Towards a parent engagement plan with TalkingPoints
The Problem

Parent engagement can be **2x** as effective in predicting a student’s success than family’s socio-economic status.

However, in low-income communities, parent engagement can be lower by as much as **50%**.

Poorer, non-white parents also hear from schools **50%** less compared to richer parents.
Top barriers to Parent Engagement

FOR TEACHERS
- Inadequate training on how to engage parents
- Attitudes about parents

FOR PARENTS
- Limited parent education on how to aid their child's learning
- No tech access
  - 50% of families do not have at-home wifi
- Language and cultural differences
  - 40% of parents do not speak English
- Lack of time
Our Mission

To increase parent engagement by meaningfully connecting schools, families and students across technology, language and education barriers.
What is TalkingPoints?

TalkingPoints is a free parent-teacher messaging app with translation. Teachers send text messages in English using the web or mobile app. Parents receive and reply to the text messages in their home languages.
Why TalkingPoints?

Simple to use
Parents don't download anything, and teachers only set parents' home languages once

Seamlessly translated
Machine and human translations support your communication in 20+ languages

Private and secure
We maintain teacher and parent privacy (we won't share your personal number or data)
Help ALL your parents get involved in their children’s education
Parent Engagement

**What** to communicate with families:

*Whole class announcements/Reminders*

Our class is going on a field trip to the zoo on Friday. Please sign and return the permission slip that went home today if you’d like your child to attend. Thanks!

*What students are learning in class*

Hello families, we have been learning about the solar system this week. Please ask your child how the Earth is different from the other planets and text me their answers if you’d like to share. Thanks!

*Positive behavior messages*

Hi, Maria helped a classmate figure out a word problem during Math class today. Please praise Maria for trying her best and being a good classmate!
Parent Engagement

When and How to communicate with families

- Send routine text messages 2-3 times a week (i.e. Monday, Wednesday, Friday)
- Set a limit that won’t overwhelm your parents (2-3 times a week)
- Let parents know you won’t be checking messages after a certain time (i.e. after 6pm)
How to Get Parents Engaged

Make TalkingPoints part of your weekly routine:

- Prewrite your messages during planning time and schedule them to go out during the week:
  - **Mondays**: Send classroom announcements and/or preview of the week
  - **Tuesdays**: Share what students are learning in class
  - **Thursdays**: Send positive behavior messages home

- Create a predictable schedule for parents to make checking for your messages a part of their routine

- **Mr. Brinson’s Story**
“Make TalkingPoints **part of your daily routine**. It makes life easier for you. In the morning, I go to my computer and write a message to parents about that day’s homework assignment or reminders. **This takes only 5 minutes.** I schedule it to go out around 3:00pm when school gets out and parents are picking up their children. I use TalkingPoints to communicate with my parents almost daily, because it’s easy to use and I’ve made it part of my routine."

By being in close communication with his parents, Mr. Brinson was able to plan a field trip on short notice. **90%** of the permission slips were returned within 2 days and his class was able to go on their special field trip.
Our Impact

**FOR TEACHERS**

- After sending messages with TalkingPoints:
  - 98% of teachers have reached families they haven’t been able to reach before
  - 81% of teachers have seen positive changes in student behavior or performance
  - 99% of teachers have built stronger relationships with students’ families

**FOR PARENTS**

- After receiving messages via TalkingPoints:
  - 9 of 10 parents feel more included in school communities
  - 9 of 10 parents feel they can easily communicate with schools
  - 8 of 10 parents have more conversations at home about school with students
Application
Sign up for TalkingPoints

Go to talkingpts.org to sign up for a TalkingPoints account that’s free for teachers.

Once you’ve set up your class, download our mobile app to message your families anytime, anywhere!
Questions & Answers
References


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