



BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Over the years, hundreds of families in Boulder Valley School District have conveyed that they do not receive communication from teachers in their preferred language. As a result, these families miss out on vital information about their student and lose an opportunity to develop a relationship with the classroom teacher. For example, at Eisenhower Elementary School last year, 4 out of 10 parents did not know the name of their child's teacher. Five months later, the Coordinator of Family Partnerships did a 15-minute training on Talking Points for teachers who have students who speak a language other than Spanish. The principal at Eisenhower Elementary implemented the app and noticed a huge change. During its first year with the app, the school sent out 2800 texts and received 3500 texts back from parents. Now the principal sends out texts regularly and Talking Points has opened a flood of two-way communication.

Families and Educators Together (FET) teams identified the need for better communication systems. They asked for parent feedback and identified interested staff to work with families who speak a language other than English at home. The district's Coordinator of Family Partnerships provided training to teachers on Talking Points. Then, front office staff helped load student information into the app to reduce the burden for teachers. Finally, FET teams shared about the Talking Points app with families so they could become comfortable with it. Eisenhower Elementary was an early adopter and champion for utilizing the Talking Points app. Talking points is not district wide yet, but principals are hearing how easy it is to set up and utilize.



One FET leader shared, "I'm loving Talking Points and glad we're about to train the whole staff next week. I used to only email my class parents once a week. I communicate four or five times more now by texting them. I often send them one sentence where in the past I'd never send a one sentence email. Text really is a way for more ongoing spontaneous connection." Talking Points has allowed families greater access to their child's education, and they can now better support their children as they have access to projects and academic information in their own language. Families feel more connected to staff and more comfortable asking questions.

One challenge of the program is getting more schools who are disconnected from underrepresented families aware of the benefits of using the app. Talking Points is not a district mandate just yet so making schools that do not have a FET team more aware of the app is a priority. Setting up the app also takes a bit of work on the front end. Therefore, teachers must see the value of the app. Parents have also requested videos, so the team is working on a variety of ways to send quick videos about events.

For those hoping to implement Talking Points, start small and do not wait to get all your schools on board. Cultivate one or two champions at each school and draw on someone at the district level who can gain experience with the app and provide training. When talking with schools, emphasize how easy it is for both educators and families to utilize, that the application is free for families, and the positive return is huge with very little investment of time and energy.