



Date: August 3, 2023
To: All Principals
From: Mariel Milano, Director
Professional Learning Department
Leigh Ann Bradshaw, Senior Executive Director
Professional Learning Department
Recipients: All Principals
Subject: TalkingPoints – New Two-Way Family Communication Platform

What's Changing?

To provide consistency and opportunities for engagement for all families, the district has adopted a new platform, for all non-charter schools, called "TalkingPoints" after piloting it last year. TalkingPoints is a two-way multilingual family engagement platform that allows school administrators, instructional staff and other key staff to send messages to parents/guardians who receive them in their home languages as text messages or through the parent mobile application. Parents/guardians can reply to the message they receive in their home languages, because TalkingPoints will translate it into English for staff. TalkingPoints supports over 145 languages, including the primary languages in OCPS. Please view the [introductory video](#), [infographic](#), and [one-pager](#) for more information. **Please share the change with teachers during pre-planning week. Schools should plan for teachers to send an introductory message to families and communicate back-to-school information for their class. After the first week of school, it is a best practice for teachers and other school staff to continue to send a balance of general announcements, reminders and individual messages.**

Background

Family engagement is more than twice as predictive of students' success as socioeconomic status. Current research and best practices for family engagement indicate the need for districts to establish effective two-way communication with parents/guardians of students using a variety of media, including SMS text messaging. To be considered two-way, communication must have an opportunity to be continuous. The spring 2023 OCPS Communications Survey indicates that parents/guardians who responded prefer receiving classroom communication via text message over phone, email, or planner.

Current adopted district communication platforms either do not allow for two-way communication (i.e. School Messenger, Skyward Family Access) and/or do not support SMS text messaging (i.e. Canvas Parent InBox), and/or do not support multilingual translation (i.e. Canvas Parent InBox). As a result, school leaders and individual teachers have used a variety of free or freemium model (i.e. Remind, Class Dojo, Bloomz, etc.) to fill the gap of a district-adopted two-way communication system in past school years. This led to inconsistency among schools and confusion for families. There are also significant risks to using free or freemium platforms that have not been approved through the OCPS software request process, which requires a data sharing agreement be in place. Risks to using free or freemium software include, but are not limited to, the district's inability to archive/view past messages and respond to public records requests, the vendor's ability to share/sell student information without consent, and the use of targeted



ads. Schools should avoid using free/freemium platforms (i.e. Remind, Class Dojo, etc.) moving forward because they will no longer be accessible on the OCPS network AFTER this school year.

TalkingPoints Access

TalkingPoints is rostered and accessible to school administrators and instructional staff through Launchpad, or using the optional mobile application, TalkingPoints for Teachers. Select classified staff will also be able to access TalkingPoints directly on the platform homepage, <https://talkingpts.org/>. All parents/guardians listed as contact 1 or 2 in Skyward are automatically opted-in to TalkingPoints and will be able to receive SMS text messages without the need to sign-up. Staff office hours have been set automatically, to prevent notifications from being received from 4 P.M. to 8 A.M. Staff can adjust the set office hours to reflect their unique start and end time and set up auto-reply, as desired.

TalkingPoints Training Resources

School Administrators: Many school administrators will be able to use TalkingPoints out-of-the-box with no training. However, additional support will be available through [live, daily pre-planning support sessions](#)- Click on **Family Engagement tab**. Additional on-demand resources can be found below.

- [Pre-Recorded Training for School Admin](#)
- [School Admin Analytics Dashboard](#)

Instructional Staff: Many instructional staff will also be able to use TalkingPoints out-of-the-box with no training. However, additional support will be available through [live, daily pre-planning support sessions](#)- **Family Engagement tab**. Additional on-demand resources can be found below.

- [Pre-Recorded Training for School Teachers](#)

TalkingPoints Informational Resources

- [TalkingPoints & SchoolMessenger](#) | [TalkingPoints & Class Dojo Comparison](#)
- [TalkingPoints Supported Languages](#)

TalkingPoints Communication Timeline

- A Connect Orange voicemail and email was sent to all OCPS parents/guardians at non-charter schools about the new TalkingPoints platform on **Tuesday, August 1, 2023**.
- An Instructional-ALL email about the use of TalkingPoints will be sent on **Friday, August 4, 2023**.
- An introductory SMS text message to all parents/guardians at non-charter schools from TalkingPoints will be sent on **Saturday, August 5, 2023**.
- School administrators can schedule an introductory announcement to families about Back to School events on **Sunday, August 6, 2023**.
- Elementary grade level classroom teachers should send an introductory message to families on **Monday, August 7, 2023**. School administrators should work with staff to stagger introductory text messages from elementary elective teachers and key support staff on **August 8 and 9, 2023**. Introductory message templates are available in TalkingPoints.
- K-8, middle and high school principals should work with core teachers to stagger introductory messages from **Thursday, August 10 through Friday, August 18, 2023**. Introductory message templates are available in TalkingPoints.

Contact Mariel Milano, Director Family Engagement and Digital Outreach at mariel.milano@ocps.net with additional questions.