

Boosting Attendance and Reducing Suspensions Through Family Engagement

Findings from a Two-Year Implementation of TalkingPoints in a Large Urban District

TalkingPoints' commitment to research

TalkingPoints is a mission-driven education technology nonprofit working to improve student outcomes by unlocking the power of effective family-school partnerships. Rooted in decades of research and guided by the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, our platform puts the principles of Universal Family Engagement into practice—helping districts activate families as partners, expand educator capacity, and drive system-wide impact. Developed in collaboration with leading experts, such as Dr. Karen Mapp, and grounded in evidence, TalkingPoints is both informed by research and committed to expanding the evidence base to ensure our tools support real change for the students who need it most.



Research outcomes

TalkingPoints usage was associated with significant gains in attendance and reductions in suspensions, including among historically underserved students.

- High school attendance increased by 12%, equivalent to nearly three extra weeks of learning, compared to the control group.
- Suspensions in early and middle grades were 43% lower than in the control group, with significant improvements for Black, Latino, English learners, students with IEPs, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.



12%

High School Attendance

Students gained ~3 more weeks of learning time annually vs. control group



-43%

Suspensions (early & middle grades)

Compared to control group

Tone matters

Students associated with more positive messages had better attendance and lower suspension rates

Key Takeaways

Improving attendance and reducing suspensions are urgent priorities for districts, but traditional approaches often fall short. This study demonstrates that when schools intentionally and positively engage families, outcomes can improve, including students who are most at risk. By enabling consistent, strength-based communication at the classroom, school, and district levels, TalkingPoints was linked to meaningful improvements in student behavior and attendance, confirming decades of research that family-school partnerships are a powerful yet underutilised lever for student success.

The challenge

Improving attendance and behavior outcomes starts with building strong, trust-based family-school partnerships, but that's easier said than done. In large, multilingual districts, it can be hard to build those relationships across hundreds of classrooms with limited educator time. Without accessible, two-way dialogue that centers strengths, builds trust, and invites collaboration, schools miss early signals and chances to co-solve issues before they escalate. The challenge is finding a scalable system that embeds partnership into daily practice.

Study approach

This study examined the usage and impact of TalkingPoints in a large urban school district. The district serves roughly 50,000 diverse students across approximately 120 PreK-12 schools. The two-year, quasi-experimental study included nearly 34,000 students and examined how TalkingPoints messaging influenced attendance and suspensions. Results showed significant improvements, including for students facing systemic barriers, demonstrating the potential of accessible, positive communication to drive meaningful systemic change.