

SUMMER

# The Family Engagement Planner



A Month-to-Month Guide Full of Ideas,  
Templates, and Routines That Work



ParentSquare

# Introduction: Why Family Engagement Matters

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ParentSquare began with a simple, deeply held belief: **every family—no matter their schedule, language, or background—deserves to feel connected to their child’s school life.**

What started as a grassroots effort in just four local schools has since grown into a platform that supports over 20 million family-teacher connections across the country.

But along the way, I’ve learned something important: **technology alone isn’t enough.** True family engagement doesn’t happen by accident—it takes intention. It takes systems, routines, and a shared commitment to making families feel seen, heard, and valued.

That’s why I started this guide.

Whether you’re a district leader, a school administrator, or a teacher in the classroom, my hope is that this month-by-month roadmap helps you move beyond one-way updates—and into real, ongoing partnership with the families you serve.

And like ParentSquare itself, this is a **living guide**—built to evolve with your feedback, questions, and ideas.

Inside, you’ll find templates, tools, and practical ideas—but more than that, you’ll find heart. Because our goal isn’t just to communicate better. **It’s to build something better—together.**

Let’s begin.



Anu Vaid  
Founder & President



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# Summer: Preparing for the New Year

The school year doesn't start in August—preparation, planning, and thoughtful setup need to start much earlier. The summer months are critical to laying the foundation for a successful communication year. By taking action now, you set the stage for a year where communication feels intentional, not reactive.

**Your Goal:** Set your district and schools up for communication success by cleaning up systems, organizing groups, refreshing templates, and ensuring alignment.

## Top 3 Takeaways:



01

### Create groups that parents can join.

Do not send everything to everyone. Set up groups that families can join based on their needs and interests (PTA, Athletics, Clubs, Volunteer Teams, etc.).



02

### Establish Weekly Communication Days.

Create a predictable rhythm by assigning specific days for communication, such as “District Tuesdays” and “School Thursdays,” so families know when to expect important information and look out for the digest that day.



03

### Encourage Families to Download the App.

The mobile app offers the best ParentSquare experience—instant alerts, easy access to posts, messages, calendar events, forms, and more. Promote app downloads early and often.

**Please note:** Many of the tools and templates linked in this chapter live in ParentSquare's customer knowledge base. If you're not yet a customer, [reach out here](#) to learn more or request a preview.

## Checklist: Summer Setup Must-Do

- ❑ **Audit roles and permissions:** Make sure the right people have the right access (see *Appendix: Sample Roles and Permissions*).
- ❑ **Update branding and contact info:** Refresh details for your district/schools if needed.
- ❑ **Audit websites:** Review and update the district and all school websites
- ❑ **Ensure contact data readiness:** Make sure parent emails and phones are up-to-date.
- ❑ **Clean up last year's groups:** Archive or refresh outdated groups and posts (see *Appendix: Suggested Groups*).
- ❑ **Create or refresh Group structures:** **Get ready** for groups in the new school year. As you audit, consider structures for groups such as
  - ▶ District Updates
  - ▶ Celebrations
  - ▶ PTA
  - ▶ Community Events
  - ▶ After-School Programs
  - ▶ Department-based groups (Counseling, Athletics, EL, Choir, Theater, etc.)
  - ▶ **Additional groups to consider: Create groups** for entities like Booster Clubs, PTOs, Alumni, etc., and assign **group managers**.
- ❑ **Review and update templates:** Ensure **Alert, Post, Forms, Auto Notices, Attendance,** and **Studio Editor** templates are ready for recurring and urgent communication needs (see *Appendix: Templates*).
- ❑ **Prepare a content calendar:** Draft a monthly outline of district-level and school-level communications (see *Appendix: Sample: District-Level Communications Outline*).
- ❑ **Decide on PTA communication plan:** Clarify how PTA will post updates—through its own group, inclusion in newsletters, or school-wide posts (see *Appendix: PTA Communication Plan*).
- ❑ **Prepare for Registration:** Get **forms** and **payment systems** ready.



## Sample Tools You Can Prep Now:

### For your district and schools:

- Templates
  - ▶ Welcome message templates
  - ▶ Weekly newsletter templates (see Appendix: *Sample: Weekly District Newsletter Template*)
  - ▶ Provide other Posts and Studio Editor templates matching your brand
  - ▶ Prepare crisis response templates in the Smart Alerts Message Library
  - ▶ Refresh form templates in your Forms Library
  - ▶ Check Secure Documents and Auto Notice templates
- “What’s New in ParentSquare” update for staff
- Training materials for principals, office staff, teachers, and parents
- Establish teacher communication cadences
- Parent-Teacher Conference Guidelines

### What your teachers can prep:

- Back-to-school introduction messages
- Weekly classroom update templates (see Appendix: *Sample: Weekly Teacher/Classroom Newsletter*)
- Parent communication guidelines
- Ideas for first posts (e.g., class routines, classroom celebrations, learning goals)

## Accessibility & Equity Considerations

- **Review language preferences:** Check SIS data to ensure family language preferences are current and correctly reflected in ParentSquare settings.
- **Leverage ParentSquare’s translation features:** Review your districts and schools’ secondary language and other common languages for which you have translators available.
- **Simplify language:** Consider enabling “**Rewrite with AI**”. This rewrites your posts in plain language and also results in better translation.
- **Check alternate communication needs:** Consider families who may have limited internet access or technological proficiency, and print out posts to send to them.
- **Mirror lengthy content on website:** Ensure handbooks and policy updates are also available on the school/district website.

## Communication Cadences

### Create predictability. Reduce fatigue. Build trust.

Establishing consistent communication rhythms helps families know what to expect—and when. Cadence creates calm.

### District and School Communication Cadence

Set specific weekly days for central communications to prevent communication fatigue and help families anticipate important updates.

- **District Day (e.g., Tuesdays):** Ask all your central departments—Transportation, Food Services, Superintendent’s Office, Family Engagement, etc—to share key updates on the designated district day.
- **School Day (e.g., Thursdays):** Similarly designate a school day when all school-wide news from Administration, Counseling, Athletics, Library, and site events get posted.

This approach, coupled with **setting digest notification default notification preference** across your district, helps families know when to expect official information from the district versus their specific schools. Communications can be compiled into a single Newsletter using ParentSquare’s templates or sent as individual posts that families receive together as a digest on that day.



## Teacher Communication Cadences

School Level	Suggested Frequency	Primary Channels	Content Focus Examples
Elementary	Weekly	Posts, Calendar Events, Direct Messages, Photos/Videos	Classroom activities, skills practice, behavior updates, event reminders, simple homework, volunteer/supply needs, “Ask Your Child About...” prompts
Middle School	Weekly or Bi-Weekly (by subject)	Posts, Calendar Events, Direct Messages, Groups (optional)	Assignment details, deadlines, test/quiz dates, project milestones, required materials, school event reminders, extracurriculars, and academic support
High School	Monthly Summaries or As-Needed	Posts, Calendar Events, Direct Messages, Groups (recommended)	Major deadlines (projects, exams, college apps), graduation requirements, course selection, school-wide events, scholarship info, policy reminders.

## Best Practices and Tips For Groups

**Use Groups Wisely:** Don’t send everything to everyone. Structure Public and Community Groups in a way that allows families to subscribe based on their interests. Use “subscribe/unsubscribe” culture to reduce communication fatigue while giving families control over what they hear from you.

- **Group owners and managers matter:** **Assign clear owners** for each group and train them on communication and expectations. Remember to make non-staff members group managers, not group owners.
- **Create a pinned post** with a purpose, primary resources, and strategies for parents in the group to understand and implement at home.
- **Add photos, videos, files, and links** with resources to the group and inform parents in the pinned post about how to access these (a quick screen-sharing video is a great strategy)
- **Populate the group calendar** to **add events** or simply to provide reminders for parents to complete tasks.

- **Use Appointment Sign-Ups** to schedule trainings, support check-ins, and 1:1 coaching for parents where needed.
- **Use Forms** to create parent surveys with multiple-choice and fillable response options to increase parent engagement and participation in the group.
- **Get quick “pulse checks”** by sending one-question anonymous polls. Use these to inform instruction and get parents involved in the simplest way.
- **Create a Newsletter Template** to add reminders, tips, and a weekly goal that is sent to parents through a Post.
  - ▶ Create a series of scheduled posts to go out as “Drip Tips” for parents.
  - ▶ Add memes, GIFs, and other digestible content to keep parents and students engaged.

## Training & Adoption Strategies

A critical component of a strong communication launch is ensuring that all staff, especially admins and teachers, feel confident using ParentSquare. Here are several proven strategies to boost training and adoption:

### Available Trainings

- **ParentSquare Summer Camps:** These fun, week-long onboarding series include:
  - ▶ **A camp for teachers** and **one for admins**, delivered via daily emails with training videos and activities
  - ▶ A separate camp purpose-built for teachers who are **moving from Remind to ParentSquare**
  - ▶ These camps include a week full of webinars, bingo, networking, and more, and they are widely loved for being light, fun, and engaging, helping staff build confidence with ParentSquare.
- **ParentSquare Learning Courses:** **Self-paced online learning modules** available for both new and returning staff.
- **Weekly Webinars:** ParentSquare hosts summer-long **weekly webinars** for deeper dives into specific features and use cases.

### Best Practices

- **Peer-to-Peer Training:** Encourage school sites to host internal peer-led sessions. Teachers often learn best from other teachers who are already using ParentSquare effectively.
- **“Did You Know?” Tips:** Start a habit of including short ParentSquare tips in your internal staff newsletters and even in family newsletters. Example: “Did you know you can schedule your posts in advance to go out later? Here’s how!”

- **Back-to-school Teacher PD:** Guide teachers through creating their first and weekly posts and newsletter, to ensure that all parents receive insight into their child's class.
- **Compare and Share Ideas:** Join the **ParentSquare Facebook Group**, attend a **virtual ParentSquare CoHive**, or **host an Impact Session** to compare ideas and strategies with your neighboring districts.

These strategies go a long way in making adoption smooth, reducing staff overwhelm, and building ongoing engagement throughout the year.

## Reflection Prompt

Before the school year starts, ask yourself:

- **Have families been told where to go for updates?**  
Have you clearly communicated that ParentSquare is your primary home-to-school platform?
- **Are your groups set up to support engagement—not just announcements?**  
Can families easily join or leave groups based on their interests?
- **Is your staff set up for success?**  
Do teachers, admins, and office staff feel confident in their roles and tools?
- **Do you have a clear communication rhythm?**  
Is there a shared plan for what goes out, when, and from whom—across the district and each school?

Setting the stage now will save time, reduce confusion, and make space for real connection later.

*Next up: Creating a welcoming and coordinated first impression when families return in August.*



# Summer Appendix: Samples & Tools

## Sample Roles and Permissions

Regularly audit roles and permissions. Remove access for retirees and grant it to new administrators. The following samples provide a framework to guide this essential setup.

Role	Common Permissions	Notes
District Admin	Full district access	Oversees the communication system, maintains quality control of messaging across the district.
School Admin/ Principal	Full school access	Often, Principal or Office Staff. Note that Principal roles do not receive DMs.
Assistant Principal	Post school-wide, Manage All Posts, Send Smart Alerts, Create Groups, Social share, Manage Newsletter Templates, Manage Form Templates, Manage Auto Notices, Manage Secure Documents	
PTA Leader	Group Manager of a public PTA group, or Give permissions to post to the entire school	Can request permissions via district/ school admin
Athletic Directors, Theater Teacher	Group Manager of their groups	Create a group for each department, and make them the owner or the manager. These people typically only need to send communications to the students and families in their group.

Role	Common Permissions	Notes
Technology Staff	Data Admin, Manage Auto Notices, Manage Secure Documents	
Communications Staff	Post school-wide, Send Smart Alerts, Create Groups, Social share, Manage Newsletter Templates, Manage Form Templates, Manage Auto Notices, Manage Secure Documents	
Librarians, Nurses	Post school-wide, Make Phone Calls	These people typically need to message the entire school.
Counselors	Group Manager of their groups, or Give permission to post school-wide, Make Phone Calls	
School Secretary	Post school-wide, View all posts, Send Alerts, Make Phone Calls	
Attendance Clerks	Attendance Permissions, Manage Auto Notices	
Payment Officers	Manage Payments	
Coach, Sponsors, Club Advisors	Group Managers	People who are not rostered but need to manage groups and invite people to join groups.

## Suggested Groups with Descriptions and Setup Tips

### Examples of School Groups that can be Public

To prevent overcommunication and provide families with relevant information, create groups that families can **join on their own** based on their interests. This way, families can receive only the communications that matter to them.

Remember to **share links to these groups** in your district or school newsletters and include a direct link to join and encourage families to subscribe. join and encourage families to subscribe.

## District-Level

- **District Announcements:** Important updates and messages from the district office to keep families informed.
- **Community Events:** A space to share local events and opportunities available to students and families.
- **Parent Education Series:** Resources and sessions to support parenting, student learning, and wellness at home.
- **Tech Help & Resources:** Tips, guides, and troubleshooting support for using school technology tools.
- **Early Literacy Group:** Resources and support for early childhood parents

## School-Level

- **Principal Updates:** Regular communication from the principal with school news, announcements, and celebrations.
- **PTA:** Updates and volunteer opportunities from the Parent-Teacher Association to strengthen the school community.

## Examples of School Groups that are Private

Some groups are best used privately for targeted collaboration, information sharing, or committee coordination. Others can begin as public to attract volunteers, and then be converted to private once the team is assembled.

In recruitment posts, include a link to the group and a note that it will be made private after the initial signup phase. This helps families feel more confident in joining.

- **Clubs:** Communication hub for student interest-based groups and extracurricular clubs.
- **After School:** Information and updates from after-school enrichment or care programs.
- **Athletics/Choir/Band/Theater:** Updates, schedules, and highlights from extracurricular programs and performances.
- **Room Parents Group:** A space for room parents to collaborate and coordinate class-wide activities.
- **School Beautification/Green Group:** A group to plan and manage campus improvement projects.
- **Ways and Means Committee:** Focused on fundraising planning and execution.
- **Counseling/Support Services Team:** Coordination group for wellness and mental health services.
- **Special Programs (ELPAC, SPED, etc.):** Messages, resources, and event updates for families in specialized programs.

## Examples of Community Groups

These groups are designed to connect not just parents, but the broader school community—alumni, prospective families, local supporters, and partners. Set these groups to be Community Groups—public and self-joinable, so anyone can subscribe and stay informed without needing to be tied to a student record.

- **Kindergarten Readiness Group:** Information for incoming kindergarten families about school readiness, orientation events, and helpful tips.
- **Alumni:** A group for former students to stay connected with school updates, reunions, and giving opportunities.
- **Athletics:** Sports schedules, team highlights, and booster club updates for all school athletics programs.
- **Theater:** Updates on school productions, auditions, ticket sales, and behind-the-scenes news.
- **Volunteers & Community Partners:** Calls for volunteers, event support, donation drives, and updates for local organizations or business partners.
- **Carpool Connect:** A place for families to coordinate transportation and find nearby families for carpooling.
- **<School Name> Press:** Highlights, student-written stories, staff shout-outs, and celebrations from across the school.
- **Alerts + Closings:** Real-time updates about school closures, delays, and emergencies.



## Sample: District-Level Communications Outline

Remember

- For **district-wide messages**, keep them monthly and high-level.
- **School-level messages** should feel more personal and relevant. Weekly works best.
- **Teachers remain the core connection point** with families. Light, consistent updates foster trust and engagement.

Leverage scheduled posts to manage the monthly content calendar.

Month	Key Themes	Communication Types
August	Back-to-School readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome message from Superintendent</li> <li>• District calendar</li> <li>• Safety updates (health protocols, transportation)</li> </ul>
September	Attendance awareness / Parent engagement kickoff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance Awareness Month message</li> <li>• Family engagement opportunities</li> <li>• Highlight student/family success stories</li> </ul>
October	Post school-wide, Make Phone Calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying Prevention Month</li> <li>• Mental health resources</li> <li>• Safety drills and tips</li> </ul>
November	Gratitude & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank you message to families and staff</li> <li>• Community service initiatives</li> <li>• Holiday schedule reminders</li> </ul>
December	Winter updates & family support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter break schedule</li> <li>• Support resources (meals, childcare)</li> <li>• District reflections/achievements</li> </ul>
January	New Year goals & attendance focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superintendent's message on goals</li> <li>• Mid-year attendance push</li> <li>• Enrollment reminders (for next year)</li> </ul>

Month	Key Themes	Communication Types
February	Celebrating diversity & inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black History Month</li> <li>Multicultural events</li> <li>Parent-teacher conference reminders</li> </ul>
March	Academic progress & testing prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State testing schedules/tips</li> <li>Student achievement highlights</li> <li>Spring break schedule</li> </ul>
April	Safety reminders & end-of-year prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety reminders (around travel, school closures)</li> <li>Preview of end-of-year events</li> <li>Graduation/promotion information</li> </ul>
May	Celebrations & transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher/staff appreciation</li> <li>Summer program offerings</li> <li>Surveys for parent feedback</li> </ul>
June-July	Summer resources & planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer meals, activities</li> <li>Reflections and a sneak peek at next year</li> </ul>

## Sample: School-Level Communications Outline

Month	Key Themes	Communication Types
August	Back-to-School specifics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal's welcome letter</li> <li>Supply lists</li> <li>Bell schedules</li> </ul>
September	Routines & relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom routines</li> <li>Curriculum nights</li> <li>Volunteer opportunities</li> </ul>

Month	Key Themes	Communication Types
October	Fall events & parent-teacher connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fall festivals</li> <li>Parent-teacher conferences</li> <li>Classroom highlights</li> </ul>
November	Gratitude & giving back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom gratitude activities</li> <li>Food drives/service projects</li> <li>Holiday reminders</li> </ul>
December	Winter celebrations & supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom celebrations</li> <li>Family resources for winter break</li> <li>Attendance reminders</li> </ul>
January	Fresh start & academic focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom goals</li> <li>Mid-year progress updates</li> <li>Attendance focus</li> </ul>
February	Celebrations & mid-year engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valentine's activities</li> <li>Black History Month classroom projects</li> <li>Parent engagement events</li> </ul>
March	Academic focus & testing prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing prep communications</li> <li>Academic strategies</li> <li>Classroom highlights</li> </ul>
April	Spring growth & safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spring classroom projects</li> <li>Safety drills</li> <li>Field trip info</li> </ul>
May	End-of-year celebrations & reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field days</li> <li>Classroom reflections</li> <li>Transition tips (moving grades)</li> </ul>
June-July	Light touch: Summer learning & connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer learning packets</li> <li>Optional check-ins</li> <li>Prep for next year (if needed)</li> </ul>

## PTA Communication Plan

In ParentSquare, we have seen schools follow these four ways to allow PTAs to post.

1. **Opt-in group:** Create a public PTA-managed group for parents to join. Promote it in school newsletters with a direct link.
2. **Give permission to post school-wide:** Grant a designated PTA leader direct permission to send school-wide messages, following agreed-upon school guidelines.
3. **Collaborative Posts (School & PTA):** School staff initiate posts and add a PTA representative as a collaborator to contribute PTA-related content.
4. **Post as the PTA:** Establish a department called “PTA” for PTA leaders to post from, ensuring clear PTA branding on posts.

## Templates

Templates are a powerful way to streamline communication, save time, and maintain consistency across your district and school teams. Whether it’s crisis alerts, regular classroom updates, or permission forms, templates help educators and staff communicate more effectively.

**Tip:** Remember that **Auto Notice templates** allow for merge parameters (like student name, grade, etc.) that help personalize messages. These notices can be triggered automatically via SFTP integrations (ask your tech team to help set it up), or by simply uploading a CSV with student ID and optional merge fields. This is an effective way to send personalized communications like class assignments, awards recognition, detention notices, afterschool program selection, fines, and fees, etc.

### Alerts (Crisis Communications):

- Weather-Related Closure Alert Template
- Lockdown Alert Template
- Transportation Delay Alert Template

### Posts (Teacher Inspiration):

- “Ask Your Child About...” prompts
- Monthly Learning Goals

## Posts/Forms:

- Event RSVPs
- Parent Surveys (Engagement, Wellness, Preferences)
- Permission Slips
- Feedback Forms

## Sample: Weekly District Newsletter Template

**Subject:** Weekly Family Update – [District Name] | [Date]

**Header:** Hello [District Name] Families! Here's what's happening this week.

### Sections:

- 1. District Announcements:** Key updates or initiatives
- 2. Department Highlights:** One update each from:
  - Curriculum & Instruction
  - Counseling & Wellness
  - Athletics & Activities
  - Tech Tips (Parent Portal, Online Forms, etc.)
- 3. Celebrations Corner:** Recognizing students/staff/community
- 4. Upcoming Events:** Dates & registration links
- 5. Groups to Follow:** “New on ParentSquare” group roundup (Celebrations, PTA, Community Events)
- 6. Quick Links:** Lunch menus, bus schedules, support resources, etc.

## Sample: Weekly Teacher/Classroom Newsletter

- Welcome message
- Highlights from the week
- What's coming up
- Ask-your-child conversation prompts
- Parent reminders/requests
- Content vocabulary with definitions

### Have Questions or Ideas?

Please submit to [support@parentsquare.com](mailto:support@parentsquare.com) with the subject line: **Family Engagement Guide Question/Idea.**

