ParentSquare

Funding Guide:

Navigating Resources for Improving Family Engagement

2025

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Introduction

Schools and districts across the country are finding that effective communication with every student's family is more important than ever before. In fact, research shows that the active involvement of families in a child's education is the number one predictor of their academic achievement and long-term success.

However, funding a modern family engagement technology platform, when facing competing priorities and budget constraints, can be challenging.

The range of functionality available in ParentSquare opens up many different funding sources for K-12 schools and districts.

ParentSquare is the only fully unified technology platform that engages every family with school communications and communications-based services—all the way from the district office to the classroom teacher, and all in one place. With ParentSquare's intuitive, two-way communications platform, district and school officials can involve all families and overcome language or socioeconomic barriers, while maintaining the highest standards of **privacy and security**.

Updated for 2025, this guide details how ParentSquare aligns with different funding sources and includes guidance that leaders can consider for their district or school.

Key Takeaways

- ParentSquare aligns with
    - ESSA Title I, Title II, Title III and Title IV funding criteria
    - IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) Education Program
    - State plan chronic absenteeism prevention goals

- ParentSquare has ESSA Level III Certification - Promising Evidence

- Using General Funds:
    - ParentSquare replaces the need for multiple tools and applications, often reducing costs overall
    - ParentSquare benefits multiple departments which can share costs

Federal & State Funding Strategies

As we explore the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it's essential to understand the landscape of federal education funding provided to states. ESSA lays the groundwork for how these funds are utilized by each state and local school district. The following contains excerpts from ESSA and other federal funding possibilities, with a specific focus on areas where ParentSquare can serve as a valuable support. However, it's equally crucial to consult your individual school district's plans for alignment, especially as you review potential funding sources.

ESSA and Title Funds

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ESSA outlines the use of federal education funding provided to the states. Each state and local school district creates plans around using these funds.

Title I Alignment

Title I: Improving The Academic Achievement of The Disadvantaged Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Education Agencies

"The purpose of **this title** is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps."

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INVOLVEMENT

- "Shall provide assistance to parents of children served by the school or local educational agency, as appropriate, in understanding such topics as the challenging State academic standards, State and local academic assessments, the requirements of this part, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children."

USE OF FUNDS

- "Supporting programs that reach parents and family members at home, in the community, and at school
- Disseminating information on best practices focused on parent and family engagement, especially best practices for increasing the engagement of economically disadvantaged parents and family members."

> **How ParentSquare Supports Title I**
>
> - Reaching out to and engaging with parents is central to ParentSquare's functionality—**click here** for a more detailed description.
> - One of the key benefits of using ParentSquare is the ability to reach specific groups of parents with information pertinent to their students. Secure SIS integration allows for the creation of groups with particular attributes, including grade level, bus group, Tier 2 MTSS, McKinney-Vento, demographic information, and more.

Title II Alignment

Title II Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, or Other School Leaders
Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction

"The purpose of **this title** is to provide grants to State educational agencies and subgrants to local educational agencies to—

- increase student achievement consistent with the challenging State academic standards;

- improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders;

- increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and

- provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders."

"IN GENERAL—A local educational agency that receives a subgrant under section 2102 shall use the funds made available through the subgrant to develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities…"

"TYPES OF ACTIVITIES—The programs and activities described in this subsection—Providing high-quality, personalized professional development that is evidence-based, to the extent the State (in consultation with local educational agencies in the State) **determines that such evidence is reasonably available**, for teachers, instructional leadership teams, principals, or other school leaders, that is focused on improving teaching and student learning and achievement, including supporting efforts to train teachers, principals, or other school leaders to—

- …..effectively engage parents, families, and community partners, and coordinate services between school and community."

🟦 How ParentSquare Supports Title II

- Consider using Title II to fund training on the use of ParentSquare for engaging with parents and families. ParentSquare provides live webinars, train-the-trainer resources, self-guided courses, personalized, on-site training, and content to help educators and leaders use ParentSquare.

- ParentSquare also provides content and ongoing training opportunities to help teachers and school leaders better communicate and engage with parents and families.

Title III Alignment

Title III Language Instruction For English Learners And Immigrant Students Part A, Subpart 1—Grants and Subgrants for English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement

"The purposes of **this part** are—

- …..to promote parental, family, and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents, families, and communities of English learners."
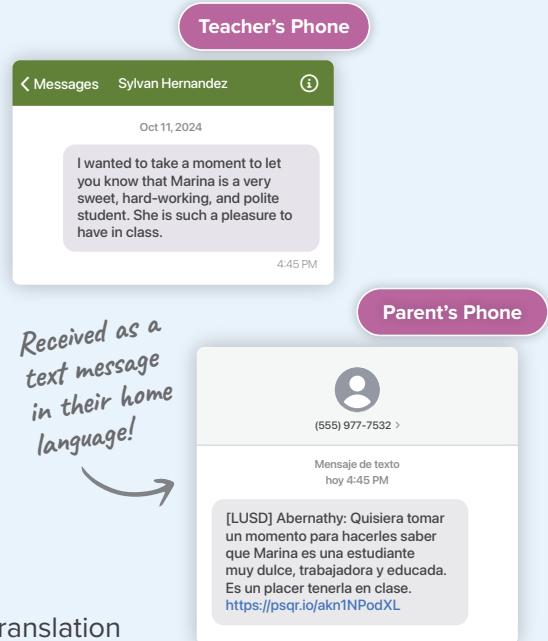
"An eligible entity receiving funds under section 3114(a) shall use the funds—to provide and implement other effective activities and strategies that enhance or supplement language instruction educational programs for English learners, which—

- …..shall include parent, family, and community engagement activities…."

How ParentSquare Supports Title III

- Connecting families interested in school- and district-sponsored language programs to the information they need to access these programs.

- Helping EL families overcome language barriers they may face when trying to communicate with school staff. With translation available in 130+ languages, ParentSquare can encourage and enhance family participation by offering communications in their preferred language.

- ParentSquare's platform includes translation for all kinds of communication:

  - **Direct messages:** Built-in real-time, two-way translation
  - **Media-rich posts:** Built-in real-time translation or human translation
  - **Critical alerts:** Built-in real-time translation or human translation
  - **Permission slips/forms:** Built-in or human translation

Teacher's Phone

Messages   Sylvan Hernandez

Oct 11, 2024

I wanted to take a moment to let you know that Marina is a very sweet, hard-working, and polite student. She is such a pleasure to have in class.

4:45 PM

Received as a text message in their home language!

Parent's Phone

(555) 977-7532

Mensaje de texto
hoy 4:45 PM

[LUSD] Abernathy: Quisiera tomar un momento para hacerles saber que Marina es una estudiante muy dulce, trabajadora y educada. Es un placer tenerla en clase.
https://psqr.io/akn1NPodXL

Title IV Alignment

Title IV 21st Century Schools Part A, Subpart 1: Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants

"The purpose of **this subpart** is to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of States, local educational agencies, schools, and local communities to—

- provide all students with access to a well-rounded education;

- improve school conditions for student learning; and

- improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students."

"DIGITAL LEARNING—The term "digital learning" means any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student's learning experience and encompasses a wide spectrum of tools and practices, including—

- the use of data and information to personalize learning and provide targeted supplementary instruction;

- learning environments that allow for rich collaboration and communication, which may include student collaboration with content experts and peers."

How ParentSquare Supports Title IV

Enhancing collaboration and communication across the entire school community, between students, families, teachers, administrators, and staff.

- ParentSquare's **StudentSquare** platform provides teachers and school staff with a simple, effective way to communicate with students in middle and high school.

- **Virtual Phone** allows teachers to call students and family members without revealing personal contact information for either party, and provides the school with complete records and oversight of the communication taking place.

- Reaching out to and engaging with parents is central to ParentSquare's functionality—**click here** for a more detailed description.

- Educators can personalize communications for targeted supplementary instructional programs by creating groups on the ParentSquare platform.

  - **Example:** Create academic groups, such as Tier 2 MTSS, to provide parents of these students with resources specifically tailored to support their learning. This approach will foster two-way communication between parents and educators about the student's needs.

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is the cornerstone that laid the foundation for the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Program. The purpose of this program is to:

- Make grants to States educational agencies and sub grants to local educational agencies "to assist them to provide special education and related services to children with disabilities in accordance with this subchapter."

- Assure a "free and appropriate education" is provided to all students regardless of disability.

- Plan, develop and implement Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) for students with disabilities with the input and assistance of teachers, service providers, administrators, parents and other appropriate personnel.

USE OF FUNDS

IDEA empowers educational institutions to invest in personnel training, technology integration, and streamlined paperwork processes—all aimed at better supporting students with disabilities and enhancing communication among staff, parents, and students regarding IEP progress and ongoing needs. Here are a few ways to use these funds:

- Provide technical assistance and professional development to personnel to better support students with disabilities.

- Improve the use of technology in the classroom, in part, to serve the needs of students with disabilities and communicate effectively with all staff and parents relative to the progress toward meeting IEP goals and ongoing needs of students.

- Funds reserved under **IDEA Subchapter IIb, Section 1411** subparagraph (A) may be used to support paperwork reduction activities, including expanding the use of technology in the IEP process.

How ParentSquare Supports IDEA

- Through the use of **Secure Document Delivery**, school districts are able to send student Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to parents/guardians digitally and confirm that they have been received. This saves time, provides downloadable reporting, and promotes the use of technology to share IEP progress.

- ParentSquare provides a wide number of effective communication tools to support the needs of staff and parents, including direct messaging with two-way translation, mobile apps/SMS, and secure phone calling with full audit records including transcripts and call recordings.

![ParentSquare logo]

State Plans and Chronic Absenteeism

Every state must create a plan as to how they will use federal funds, and reducing chronic absenteeism is consistently part of every state plan and state goals. (See examples from **Ohio**, **California**, and **Illinois**).

A great place for you to start is to review your **state's ESSA Consolidated Plan** and understand what is available to your area.

It's worth noting that there may be state-specific grant and funding opportunities available to you, which we don't cover in this guide. You may consider looking for state grants that have goals similar to the federal funding vehicles we discuss. We encourage you to use the information detailing how ParentSquare aligns with federal goals and apply it to state-level opportunities.

How ParentSquare Supports Chronic Absenteeism Reduction

- ParentSquare's communications platform **can help districts reduce chronic absenteeism** by improving the ability of school personnel to communicate and engage families as well as students.

- From absence notifications and truancy letters to one-to-one direct messaging and phone calls, ParentSquare can help schools intervene early and appropriately, partner with families, and keep students learning and in school.

ParentSquare

Best Practice Guide

Showing up for Success: Family Engagement Strategies for Chronic Absenteeism

Download the Best Practice Guide "Showing up for Success: Family Engagement Strategies for Chronic Absenteeism"

ESSA III Certification - Promising Evidence of Efficacy

Having examined the various federal funding sources, it's equally crucial to be equipped with evidence-based research that underscores the transformative impact of technology on educators, students, and families. To start, ParentSquare has earned **ESSA Level III certification**, based on a third-party study showing "promising evidence" of its positive impact on school-family relationship outcomes.

The Level III certification not only ensures that ParentSquare is eligible for federal funding, but also provides evidence in support of its impact on educational outcomes.

Among the findings, the study showed that ParentSquare usage can positively affect school-family relationships, which is one facet of school climate. Specific findings include:

- Elementary schools that sent out more posts on ParentSquare reported families being more caring toward administrators and friendlier toward their teachers.

- Elementary schools that sent out more direct messages on ParentSquare reported greater respect from parents toward administrators, families being friendlier toward teachers and greater trust that parents at their school treated administrators fairly.

Supporting Your Funding Reporting Requirements

Once you secure funding for ParentSquare through a federal or state program, it's critical to be able to have evidence to report back and demonstrate that your spending has delivered against the program's intent.

🔲 How ParentSquare Helps Meet Reporting Requirements

One benefit of ParentSquare is its **extensive reporting and analytics dashboards**.
Schools and districts can document and report on a number of metrics, including:

- When and how communications were delivered
- Whether communications were opened
- How many times communications were sent
- What kind of feedback was received in response
- Communications with a particular group or family over time and across multiple channels

This makes it easy to meet specific reporting requirements and also helps you use ParentSquare effectively.

General Funding Strategies

If you've explored all avenues for federal funding and still need funds to support a new communication platform implementation, it's worth considering the possibility of replacing multiple platforms or expenditures with ParentSquare. Sometimes, the most effective solutions are found within your own organization's resources and by streamlining existing processes.

Replace or Reduce Existing Costs

ParentSquare's multipurpose, unified platform can **replace a wide range of existing expenditures** and may not require any additional funding. ParentSquare can replace costs related to:

- Mass broadcast communication platforms
- Website/content management systems
- District mobile apps
- Classroom/teacher communication apps
- Virtual or physical phone systems
- Paid digital document services
- E-signature services
- Marketing email and texting platforms
- Extracurricular communication apps
- Payments, invoices

📊 How ParentSquare Supports Cost Savings Through Secure Document Delivery

If you're looking to reduce printing and mailing costs, ParentSquare offers a feature that has an immediate cost-saving and process efficiency impact. For schools and districts still physically mailing out important, confidential progress reports, grades, truancy/attendance communications, and more—ParentSquare's Secure Document Delivery is a perfect solution to offset costs.

Secure Document Delivery is a safe and effective way to send messages, forms, or documents containing private student information. Schools use it to send any official communication containing student information, deliver it digitally to the majority of families, and then click to send off any undelivered documents to be printed and mailed by USPS.

Some additional uses for Secure Document delivery include:

- Progress reports
- Report cards
- Class schedules
- Chronic absence/tardy letters
- Printing and postage for mailings
- Invoices
- Bus passes
- State testing results
- At risk (may not pass) letters

Moving away from manual and paper-based communications can save both time and money, while also improving both family and staff satisfaction. Plus, it helps keep parents and guardians consistently in-the-loop, allowing them easy, anytime access to documents, forms, and progress reports that formerly would have been lost to the junk drawer or their child's backpack.

Using Secure Document Delivery, **Glendale Unified School District (CA) saved $32,000 in postage costs alone** – just for attendance letters. After a few days, the district will look at reports to see what hasn't been delivered, then send those documents out manually in the mail. **Kris Kohlmeier, Teacher Specialist, Ed. Technology & Services**, noted that through this feature, the district has been able to send 52,000+ secure documents to families in their first year.noted that through this feature, the district has been able to send 52,000+ secure documents to families in their first year.

Glendale Unified's First-Year Stats

$32,000
saved in postage costs for attendance letters alone

52,000+
total secure documents sent

Cross-Departmental Budgeting

ParentSquare helps staff from any department or site communicate and manage transactions effectively with families, students and/or staff. K-12 organizations adopting the ParentSquare platform as their one platform for all communications will often share costs across department budgets, since the platform can help multiple departments achieve their specific goals and objectives.

Department	ParentSquare Platform Alignment
Communications / Public Information Officer	Critical communications, broadcasting announcements, newsletters, social media, website, human and auto-translation, face-to-face events, community involvement.
Educational Services	MTSS family communication and reporting, special education programs, EL Programs, summer school, grade/site/classroom communications, academic field trips, clubs, programs.
Family Engagement	Support translation needs, remove barriers to participation, increase event or program participation, increase parent involvement in student's learning and contributions.
Human Resources	Secure staff communications with reporting, secure document delivery to staff as well as automated notices. Reporting and records of communications in the case of a dispute or conflict.
Student Services	Secure and efficient accurate forms, enrollment data from families, student and family contact data, attendance and chronic absenteeism prevention.
Technology Services	Rationalize platforms, reduce support costs, remove the need for free/unmonitored apps, ensure district-wide privacy and security protections for all levels of communication.
Extracurricular/Athletics	Provide secure communications for activity groups, remove the need for free/unmonitored apps, support translation needs, enable volunteer and part-time staff to reach students and families securely, reduce admin time spent getting family sign-ups and managing distribution lists.
PTO/PTA	Enable volunteer and part-time staff to reach students and families securely, support translation needs, increase donations, volunteering and sign ups for school events.
Foundations/Fundraising	Increase fundraising event RSVPs and sales, increase donations (in kind and monetary), enable volunteers to communicate with appropriate permissions.

Suggested Next Steps

1. **Check with your district's special education, curriculum, instruction, and assessment leaders** for access to ESSA or IDEA funding sources currently used to support academic achievement goals.

2. **Check with your student services leader about chronic absenteeism initiatives** and how the use of ParentSquare may help. Look at your state's consolidated ESSA plan for references to supporting the reduction of chronic absenteeism; if included, funding will be available to support measures to improve attendance.

3. **Check with your administrators for information on state-specific funding sources** that may available for goals that ParentSquare can help you achieve.

4. **Check with your finance team about replacing or reducing expenditures** that may be potentially consolidated or available for cross-departmental budgeting.

5. Contact us if you have any questions or would like more information!

About ParentSquare

ParentSquare is the leading provider of digital family and community engagement solutions for K-12 institutions, serving over 20 million students across all 50 states. Districts rely on ParentSquare's unified platform for mass notifications, classroom communications, school websites, translation in 130+ languages, and other everyday parent interactions. Seamless integrations with existing school information systems (SIS) easily connect schools with families to advance communication equity and impact student success.

Founded in 2011, ParentSquare has experienced over 500% growth in the last three years. Explore how it is shaping the future of school-home communications at **parentsquare.com**.

**To schedule a ParentSquare demo,
visit parentsquare.com/demo-signup
or call (888) 996-4156.**