

JANUARY

The Family Engagement Planner



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



ParentSquare

Introduction: Why Family Engagement Matters



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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JANUARY – New Year, New Goals



Theme: Resetting Routines & Renewing Engagement

As families return from winter break, January is the moment to re-establish routines, renew communication rhythms, and bring focus back to learning. Analysis of more than 143,000 ParentSquare posts from January 2025 reveals a clear pattern: schools return to core operations. Nearly 40% of all posts fall under general announcements — the weekly newsletters, reminders, schedules, and updates that keep families in sync.

This month, use ParentSquare to restart strong habits, clarify expectations, support attendance, and prepare families for key mid-year tasks like re-enrollment, elective selection, and spring event planning.

Your Goal for January

By the end of the month, families should:

- Feel grounded in updated routines, schedules, and expectations.
- Understand the academic focus for the new term and upcoming assessments.
- Receive clear communications about winter clubs, enrichment programs, and sports.
- Complete re-enrollment, elective selection, or spring program interest forms.
- Hear directly from school and district leaders about goals for the year ahead.
- Recommit to strong attendance and consistent home–school connection.
- Use an updated, ADA-aligned district website as a clear, trustworthy hub for information.

Note: Many of the tools and templates linked in this chapter are available to ParentSquare customers through our knowledge base. [Reach out here](#) to request a preview or learn more.



January Checklist

Focus Area	Key Actions	ParentSquare Tip
Welcome Back & Routines Reset	□ Send principal and teacher “Welcome Back” posts. □ Reconfirm daily routines, procedures, and expectations.	Use Rewrite with AI for clearer, easier-to-translate messages.
Academic Restart	□ Post weekly “What We’re Learning” updates. □ Share study guides, reading lists, and assessment reminders.	Upload testing materials via Secure Documents .
Attendance Recommitment	□ Send supportive “We’re excited to see you back!” posts. □ Identify early patterns using attendance tools.	Use ParentSquare Attendance Plus to flag students needing check-ins.
Mid-Year Conferences	□ Open appointment sign-ups. □ Send pre-conference surveys to families.	Use Forms for interpreter needs and time preferences.
Re-Enrollment & Electives	□ Launch forms for next year’s enrollment or elective choices. □ Share “What’s Ahead” newsletters.	Smart Sites can host enrollment timelines and program info.
Winter Clubs & Enrichment	□ Provide schedules, procedures, and needed materials. □ Post reminders for practices or meetings.	Use ParentSquare Pay for club fees or winter sports payments.
Website Refresh & ADA Compliance	□ Update calendars, deadlines, and resource pages. □ Ensure accessibility alignment.	Smart Sites templates support ADA-friendly designs .

Spotlight: Your District Website — A Mid-Year ADA & Accuracy Check

January is the ideal time for districts to review their website for accessibility, accuracy, and clarity. As families return from break — and as enrollment, conferences, and mid-year events ramp up — your website becomes a critical hub for reliable information.

A mid-year audit helps ensure every family can find what they need, including those using assistive technology.

Why It Matters

- Federal law requires websites to meet WCAG 2.1 AA to ensure district information is accessible to all visitors.
- Outdated or non-compliant pages can lead to OCR complaints, confusion, or barriers for families with disabilities.
- January is the most common month for parents to search for enrollment, transfer, and program information.

Use **Smart Sites** to Keep Information Clear & Compliant

- Update **homepage banners** with return-to-school reminders.
- Review pages for outdated dates or broken links.
- Ensure **alt text** is present for all graphics in documents you link to on your site
- Update **calendars** for winter–spring events.
- Archive or reorganize cluttered or outdated content.
- Spot-check pages using screen readers or **accessibility tools**.

★ **Pro Tip:** Smart Sites **won't let you miss alt text**. Use January to refresh imagery, regenerate alt text with built-in AI, and double-check that graphics inside linked PDFs have accessible descriptions too.



Mid-Year Website Review Checklist

For district leaders, communications directors, web editors, and boards

Mid-Year Website & ADA Compliance Checklist

Use this checklist to complete a quick January audit of your **Smart Sites** pages and ensure alignment with **ADA requirements** and **WCAG accessibility** guidelines. This is a repeatable, documented process districts can reference in board updates, audits, and compliance reviews.

Content Accuracy & Clarity

- ☐ All dates, calendars, and schedules are updated for January–June
- ☐ Enrollment, program, and event pages reflect current information
- ☐ Outdated or duplicate pages are archived or consolidated
- ☐ Links point to correct, live resources (no broken links)

Navigation & Structure

- ☐ Homepage banners and “What’s New” sections reflect current priorities
- ☐ Menus are clear, consistent, and free of redundant items
- ☐ Key parent tasks (enrollment, forms, calendars, resources) are easy to find within 1–2 clicks

Accessibility Requirements (WCAG-aligned)

- ☐ Every image has alt text that describes meaning, not just appearance
- ☐ PDFs and attachments are accessible (selectable text, tagged reading order, alt text)
- ☐ Color contrast meets accessibility standards
- ☐ All videos with sound have captions
- ☐ No essential content is delivered only through images or inaccessible PDFs
- ☐ Page headers follow a logical outline (H1 → H2 → H3)

Language Access

- ☐ Critical pages (enrollment, calendars, policies, programs) include translation options
- ☐ Contact forms and event pages are easy for non-English-speaking families to use

Compliance & Public Notices

- ☐ Required state/federal notices (Title IX, bullying, nondiscrimination, wellness policy, school accountability reports) are present and updated
- ☐ Contact information for coordinators (Title IX, Section 504, ADA) is current

Technical Health Check

- ☐ Pages load quickly on mobile
- ☐ Site is responsive across devices
- ☐ All email and form submissions route to correct staff members
- ☐ School subpages follow consistent structure and branding

✦ **Pro Tip:** ParentSquare Smart Sites support accessible structure and navigation automatically — a short mid-year review keeps information accurate, equitable, and easier for all families to use.

“Smart Sites is the quickest, easiest product to set up and use daily that includes meaningful, secure cross-platform integrations, saving time and energy for all of our staff while still allowing for a beautiful, ADA-compliant site that is device-agnostic.”

— COREY JEFFERS

DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY AT WRIGHTSTOWN COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT, WI

Where to Communicate What

Use each channel intentionally this month — January is about clarity, consistency, and helping families re-establish strong habits.

Channel	Examples This Month
ParentSquare Posts	• Welcome-back messages • Weekly learning previews • Winter club/sports updates • Attendance encouragement • Form reminders (re-enrollment, electives)
Newsletters	• “January at a Glance” overview • District goals and updates • Academic highlights • Spring timelines and deadlines
Social Media	• First-week-back photos • Winter spirit days or events • “New Year, New Goals” graphics • Academic celebrations and shout-outs
School Website / Smart Sites	• Updated calendars • Re-enrollment/elective selection pages • Compliance updates • Winter event/logistics hubs
Forms & Polls	• Mid-year family check-ins • Conference sign-ups • Program interest surveys • Attendance support surveys

Reflection Prompts

- Did we clearly communicate routines and expectations for the new term?
- Are families receiving consistent academic updates?
- Have re-enrollment and elective tasks been launched?
- Did our attendance messaging feel supportive rather than punitive?
- Is our website accurate, ADA-aligned, and easy to navigate?
- Are winter clubs and enrichment communications clear for families?



Data to Monitor

Use ParentSquare's dashboards this month to understand how families re-engage after break — and to refine your communication patterns for the rest of the year.

Metric	Why it Matters
Newsletter open rates	Shows re-engagement with weekly communication.
ParentSquare Attendance Plus insights	Identifies students needing early support.
Form submission rates	Measures completion of key mid-year tasks.
Academic post engagement	Indicates interest in learning updates.
ParentSquare Pay usage for winter activities	Tracks payments for clubs/sports and associated gear.
ParentSquare Smart Sites	Confirms families rely on your website as the hub, and future

Appendix:

From the Field:

What Schools Communicated About Last January

Analysis of 143,000+ ParentSquare posts in January last year shows:

- General Announcements – **39.6%**
- Extracurricular/Event Logistics – **23.5%**
- Digital/Admin Communication – **20.1%**
- Academics – **16.8%**

Takeaway: January communication blends logistics and learning — ParentSquare becomes the core operating system that keeps schools moving smoothly.



Sample:

Pre-Conference Family Survey

Subject/Headline: Help Us Prepare for Your Child's Mid-Year Conference

We're looking forward to meeting with you for mid-year conferences. Your insights help us better understand how to support your child's learning and well-being. Please take a moment to complete this short survey before your conference time.

Questions (for a **ParentSquare Form**):

1. What is one academic strength your child has shown this year?
(Short answer)
2. What is one area where you would like to see growth or added support?
(Short answer)
3. How is your child feeling about school right now?
 - Very positive
 - Mostly positive
 - Mixed
 - Struggling
 - Not sure
4. Is there anything happening at home that would be helpful for us to know as we support your child?
(Short answer, optional)
5. Are there specific questions or topics you'd like us to cover during the conference?
(Short answer)
6. Do you need an interpreter for the conference?
 - Yes (please specify language)
 - No
7. If you cannot attend at your selected time, would you prefer:
 - A different time
 - A phone call
 - A virtual meeting
 - Written follow-up
 - (Families can choose more than one)

Thank you for sharing your input — we value our partnership and look forward to talking with you soon.

Sample Posts:

1. Welcome Back / New Year Message

Subject: Welcome Back — Here's What to Expect in January

Welcome back, families! We are excited to begin a new year and a fresh semester together. This week, students will review routines, begin new units in each subject, and get back into the rhythm of learning. Thank you for helping your child ease back into routines — we're looking forward to a strong start to 2025!



✦ **Pro Tip:** Use Canva to help create your post. [View](#) our templates! When using Canva or other image tools, avoid placing essential text only inside the image. Text embedded in graphics can't auto-translate in ParentSquare. If your design includes text, repeat the same wording in the post description so every family can access it in their preferred language.

2. Weekly Learning Update

Subject: This Week's Learning Focus

Here's what we're working on this week:

- Reading: Comparing texts and identifying key ideas
- Math: Fractions and mixed numbers
- Science: Weather patterns and data
- Writing: Opinion paragraphs

A study guide for next week's quiz is attached. Please reach out if your student needs support.



✦ **Pro Tip:** Use Canva to help create your post. **View** our templates! When using Canva or other image tools, avoid placing essential text only inside the image. Text embedded in graphics can't auto-translate in ParentSquare. If your design includes text, repeat the same wording in the post description so every family can access it in their preferred language.

3. Winter Clubs & Enrichment Programs

Subject: Winter Clubs Begin Next Week!

Our winter clubs and enrichment programs are kicking off!

Please review the schedule, pick-up procedures, and any materials your child may need. If your club requires a participation fee, you can submit it easily using ParentSquare Pay.



✦ **Pro Tip:** Use Canva to help create your post. **View** our templates! When using Canva or other image tools, avoid placing essential text only inside the image. Text embedded in graphics can't auto-translate in ParentSquare. If your design includes text, repeat the same wording in the post description so every family can access it in their preferred language.

4. Re-Enrollment / Elective Selection

Subject: It's Time for Re-Enrollment and Elective Choices

Planning for next school year begins now. Please complete the form linked below to confirm your child's re-enrollment and select elective preferences. This helps us prepare accurate staffing and schedules for the year ahead. Thank you!



✦ **Pro Tip:** If you are a private school, ask us about using ParentSquare pay along with our partner, **Clad**, to guarantee income schedules, whether parents pay it on time or not – all backed by the highest quality banking partners.

✦ **Pro Tip:** Use Canva to help create your post. **View** our templates! When using Canva or other image tools, avoid placing essential text only inside the image. Text embedded in graphics can't auto-translate in ParentSquare. If your design includes text, repeat the same wording in the post description so every family can access it in their preferred language.

AI Prompt Bank for January



😊 “Draft a Warm Welcome Back post that outlines new routines and academic focus areas.”

- 🖋️ “Write a weekly learning overview for families with reading, math, science, and writing goals.”
- 🏆 “Create a ParentSquare post that explains elective selection for next year, including a link to the form.”
- ★ “Write a supportive attendance encouragement post that focuses on habits, not consequences.”
- ✅ “Draft a Smart Sites checklist for an ADA-aligned mid-year website review that I can use to present to my superintendent, comms director, CIs, and school board.”
- ⚠️ “Review the webpage at: [insert URL]. Identify any potential accessibility issues — including missing alt text, low-contrast elements, unclear navigation, inaccessible PDFs, broken links, or outdated content. Provide specific recommendations to make this page more ADA/WCAG-aligned and easier for families to use on mobile devices.”



Looking Ahead:

Spotlight on Belonging

February is a month for celebrating community, culture, belonging, and connection. We'll share ways to uplift family voice, strengthen inclusive communication, and create spaces where every student and family feels they belong — all while supporting the busy rhythm of February celebrations, conferences, and planning for next year.



Have Questions or Ideas?

Please submit to support@parentsquare.com with the subject: **Family Engagement Guide Question/Idea**. Thanks.