

AUGUST

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



August: Back-to-School Communications

First impressions to students and families matter. After all, you only get one! August is your opportunity to welcome families into a new school year, build trust, and establish communication norms. Now that foundational tools and templates are in place (see **Summer Guide**), it's time to execute. This chapter includes guidance and communication norms you can provide to schools and teachers for a successful year.

Your Goal for August

By the end of the month, families should:

- Feel genuinely welcomed by the district, school, and teacher
- Know how to use ParentSquare (or your centralized app) to stay connected
- Receive timely, consistent communications from multiple levels
- Be connected to key interest-based groups (e.g., PTA, Celebrations)
- Begin responding to posts, signing up for events, or completing forms



Your Goal: If you asked parents if they feel welcome at school, your goal is for them to pick option C below.

A: “Not really, I don’t even know who to reach out to”

B: “Sometimes, it depends on the staff.

C: “Absolutely, we love our school.

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.

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Back-to-School Essentials Checklist for Districts

This is a quick-start list of top communication tasks for your district to complete in August.

District Communication Tasks

- ❑ **Confirm SIS data has rolled over correctly** and is syncing properly with ParentSquare
- ❑ **Ensure classes are set to be active** on the school start day and class lists are accurate.
- ❑ **Double-check that emergency alerts are loaded into the message template library**
- ❑ **Update your school websites** and ensure policies, contacts, and calendars are accurate.
- ❑ Publish the first **district-wide newsletter** with a welcome message from the superintendent, calendar, tips, and links to join groups
- ❑ **Monitor Contactability** and aim for 100% family reach.
- ❑ Offer **'ParentSquare Q&A' Support Sessions**: Consider hosting brief 'ParentSquare Q&A' virtual/in-person sessions during the first week or two of school.
- ❑ **Set Communication Norms** for Schools and Teachers.

Communication Norms

Establish communication norms for your schools and teachers. Communication from all ParentSquare users should, at minimum, follow the guidance below. School leaders may create additional guidance to better meet specific community needs.

Tone: Any posts or 1:1 messaging should be family-friendly and free from jargon. Additionally, please ensure communication is free from typos or grammatical errors.

Branding: Schools are encouraged to design posts that best represent their school communities. All communication with families should align with the district Brand Guidelines.

Frequency: Package aligned announcements and messages together to maximize readership and utilize the group messaging function to share messages with the most proximate audiences. Post all school-wide messages on Thursday so parents come to expect that the Thursday digest will have school messages.

Success Tip:

The “Thursday Folder” Philosophy

Encourage schools to adopt a ‘digital Thursday folder’ approach. By consistently sending all non-urgent school-wide messages on a specific day (e.g., Thursday), parents learn when to expect important information, which increases readership and reduces complaints about message overload.

School Communication Tasks

Here are some helpful first month tasks you can share with schools

- ❑ **Post first-day logistics:** arrival/dismissal, transportation, supplies, back-to-school events
- ❑ **Promote Group Culture:** Regularly highlight groups families can join (PTA, Athletics, ELPAC)
- ❑ **Populate school calendar** with school holidays, celebrations, and school events
- ❑ Share **“How to Use ParentSquare”** posts (adjust settings, message teachers, join groups)
- ❑ **Monitor message engagement** and repost any key info families may have missed
- ❑ **Share links** to district/school handbooks and ParentSquare FAQs on ParentSquare
- ❑ **Designate a ParentSquare champion:** Identify and promote a go-to contact who can assist families and staff with common questions and platform tips.

Teacher/Classroom/Group Communication Tasks

- ❑ **Send classroom welcome posts** with photos of the classroom and yourself
- ❑ Post **“What We’re Learning This Month”** and learning goals
- ❑ **Populate calendar** with field trips, assignment due dates, and testing days
- ❑ **Send a post after the first day of school** to reflect, share highlights, and reassure parents
- ❑ Ask parents to complete a **“Get to Know Your Child” form**
- ❑ **Assign class assistants** or add co-teachers as post admins when needed
- ❑ **Add photos or a short video** tour of the classroom for families who may not be able to attend in person

The ‘Why’ Behind the Form

When sending the ‘Get to Know Your Child’ form, briefly explain how it helps you support their child’s individual needs and strengths. This extra context builds trust and dramatically increases parent response rates.

Pro Tip: *If your teachers, coaches or group owners are new to ParentSquare, share a few example posts from other classrooms—or run a “First Post Challenge” for fun!*

Group Dos and Don'ts:

Groups are one of the most powerful features in ParentSquare, and one of the easiest to misuse if not structured thoughtfully. To maximize engagement and avoid message fatigue, it's crucial to use Groups intentionally. This section offers guidance for structuring and managing your school's groups effectively to increase engagement, reduce communication fatigue, and support families with the resources they truly need.

First, it's important to use Groups wisely. Not every message needs to go to every family. Instead, structure your Public and Community Groups in a way that allows families to subscribe based on their interests. This “**subscribe/unsubscribe**” model creates a culture of choice, helping families feel empowered while protecting them from message overload. See below for some examples of groups:

- Teacher Celebration Committee
- School Beautification Committee
- Community Events
- Parent Education
- Volunteering opportunities at school

Group **ownership and management** is also critical. Every group should have a clear owner or manager who understands both the communication tools and the purpose of the group.

To build clarity and connection, each group should include a **pinned post** outlining the group's purpose, the primary resources available, and strategies families can use at home. This pinned post should explain how to access attachments like photos, videos, files, and links, which can all be added to the group's media section. A quick screen-sharing video is a great way to walk parents through accessing these resources.

School admins are also encouraged to populate the **group calendar** with upcoming events, deadlines, or gentle task reminders.

When used with care and creativity, Groups can become an essential tool for authentic family engagement at your school. This **Best Practice Guide** for Groups is great for athletics, fine arts, extracurricular, etc. groups

Note: Manager vs. Owner Access

Remember, non-staff members (like PTA reps, walk-on coaches, or volunteers) should always be added as Group Managers, not Owners. This provides them with posting capabilities without giving them access to sensitive school-wide data or settings, ensuring security and oversight.

Grade and Class Posts/Messages

Clear, purposeful, and consistent communication supports school engagement. School leaders can set clear expectations with their teachers on the number and types of engagement they should commit to over specific time periods for their classes (e.g. 2nd grade teachers should post at least a monthly newsletter or each family should receive at least 2 direct messages with updates on their child's progress over the course of the 1st quarter. It is important to remember to prioritize quality of communication over the quantity of communication. More is not necessarily better. School leaders can review and monitor teacher use via the Notifications Activity Dashboard.

If teachers and coaches are migrating to ParentSquare from a free tool, it may be helpful to provide them guidelines on when to use Posts vs. Direct Messages [here](#).

PTAs/PTOs and ParentSquare

Partnering with the school PTA is an incredible opportunity for schools to improve family communication and engagement. Principals should encourage PTA leadership to utilize ParentSquare to communicate with families about approved PTA initiatives.

Collaboration Processes: The principal should work with their PTA leadership to determine the best process for posting on ParentSquare. Here are four common approaches we see schools use:

- 1. Create a Public PTA Group:** A designated PTA leader is made a Group Manager, allowing them to post directly to members who opt-in. This is ideal for active PTAs who want a dedicated space.
- 2. Grant School-Wide Posting Rights to a PTA Leader:** For trusted, tech-savvy PTA leaders, create a specific role that allows them to post to the entire school, following agreed-upon guidelines.
- 3. Collaborate on School Posts:** For PTAs that communicate less frequently or need more support, a school administrator initiates posts and adds a PTA leader as a Post Collaborator to review or add content.
- 4. Post as a PTA "Department":** Create a department called "PTA" that an administrator can select when posting on behalf of the PTA. This clearly brands the message while keeping posting control with school staff.

Staff to Staff Communication via ParentSquare

ParentSquare isn't just for communicating with families—it's also a powerful tool for streamlining internal staff communication. Encourage various departments (e.g., Counseling, Athletics, Grade Levels) to create private staff groups to collaborate and share targeted information. To facilitate this, consider designating a Department Liaison or school leader who can help appoint group owners and managers, ensuring everyone is connected and informed within a single platform.

Monitoring Data to Maximize Reach

You should set the expectation that 100% of families at each school are contactable via ParentSquare so that the district and schools can share the most important information with all families. School leaders and teachers play a crucial role in supporting their school community to accomplish this goal and can strategically monitor progress using ParentSquare's analytics. School leaders should designate a person to receive Contact Verification reports and review Dashboard Data themselves at least once per month to identify the parents requiring additional outreach and support to access ParentSquare.

Success Tip: Make It a Team Effort

Don't put the full weight of contact data cleanup on one person. At the next staff meeting, give teachers 10 minutes to review their own class contactability reports and identify parents who need a personal follow-up to get connected.

ParentSquare and Crisis Communications (Urgent or Smart Alerts)

There are two types of messages that support real-time, urgent communications to families: Urgent and Smart Alerts.

Urgent Alerts

What is an Urgent Alert? Urgent Alerts are for school-wide messages when there is a critical threat or when a natural disaster strikes and speed of delivery is most important, or when you want to override notification preferences and deliver notifications even if users have turned them off. Urgent Alerts are sent via all modalities - email, text, voice, and push notifications - to everyone at school.

Smart Alerts

What is a Smart Alert? Smart Alerts are one-way mass notifications sent via all modalities - email, text, voice and push notifications. By default, Smart Alerts are first sent as a text message, and only if the text message fails does it send the voice call. (You do have the option to send a text and voice message simultaneously during setup.)

Learn the difference between when to send a Post vs a Smart Alert [here](#).

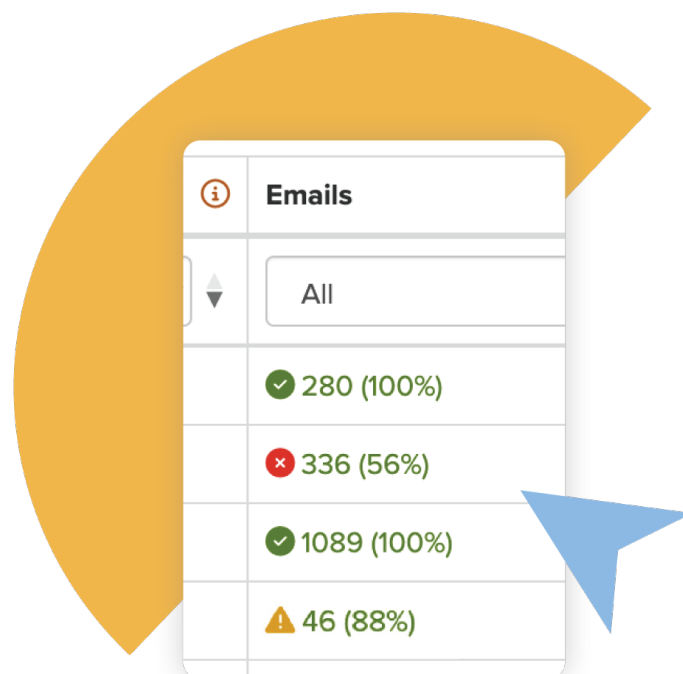
Establish the metrics you will report to your board

Lay the groundwork now—so you can measure real engagement later.

While August is just the start of the school year, it's a critical month to establish your communication baseline. Focus on foundational metrics that show reach, readiness, and rhythm.

Choose 1-2 key metrics to improve by the end of the semester.

- **Contactability:** % of families reachable via at least one method? Strive for 100%.
- **Group Membership:** Participation in groups like PTA or Celebrations
- **App Downloads:** % of families using the ParentSquare app
- **Average Post Views:** Are families opening and reading key messages?
- **Reduction in Overposting:** Are posts being targeted through the right groups rather than sent to all parents?
- **Teacher Usage:** Are teachers using Posts and Direct Messages regularly and effectively?
- **Business Metrics:** How much money did your district save in mailing and printing costs? Did you collect more with money with **ParentSquare Pay**? Did you reduce absenteeism? Survey Staff and Parents



Success Tip: Look at metrics together to tell a story. For example, if 'Average Post Views' are low, check your 'Group Membership'. You may be sending too many school-wide posts instead of targeting interested groups, leading to message fatigue.

Pro Tip: Start with a Baseline

Use August to establish your baseline for key metrics like contactability, app downloads, and group participation. This allows you to set a realistic goal—like increasing app downloads by 10%—and show measurable improvement to your board by the end of the semester.

Survey Staff and Parents

Staff Pulse Check: Ask teachers and office staff:

- What's working well in communication?
- Where do they feel unclear or under-supported?
- What kind of communication guidance or templates would be helpful?

Parent Survey: A quick survey to families early in the year can help you fine-tune your strategy and show that you're listening.

- Did the welcome feel intentional?
- Are families joining the right groups?
- Are teachers posting?
- Is family input being collected?

August Reflection: Did We Start Strong?

Before you move into September, take a moment to reflect on how families and staff received your back-to-school communications.

- Did your welcome sequence feel cohesive and intentional to families?
- Are all key voices (district, schools, teachers, groups) using the platform?
- Are families finding and joining the right groups?
- Are teachers collecting parent input to understand students better?

Next up: **From Welcome to Routine**

Now that you've made a strong first impression, it's time to help families settle into lasting rhythms. In September, we'll focus on building consistent communication habits—and supporting student attendance, every day.



August Appendix: Samples & Tools

Sample School Communications

UA = Urgent Alert, SA = Smart Alert, P = Post, DM = Direct Message

Message/Template Name	Alert Type	Frequency
SAFETY & SECURITY		
• Fire	UA	As needed
• Secure, hold, or lockdown	UA	As needed
• Shelter-in-place	UA	As needed
• HVAC outage (whole school)	UA	As needed
• HVAC outage (isolated, e.g. 5th grade classroom)	SA Group Specific	As needed
• Utilities outage (whole school)	UA	As needed
• Utilities outage (isolated, e.g. 2nd floor bathroom not working)	SA Group Specific	As needed
• Social media threat (urgent)	UA	As needed
• Social media threat (not urgent)	P	As needed
• Weapon found	UA	As needed

Sample School Communications

UA = Urgent Alert, SA = Smart Alert, P = Post, DM = Direct Message

Message/Template Name	Alert Type	Frequency
SCHEDULE		
• Early release (planned) notice	P	As needed
• Early release (planned) reminder	SA	As needed
• District closure (planned)	P	As needed
• District closure (planned) reminder	SA	As needed
• District closure (unplanned)	UA	As needed
• Event postponed (whole or small group)	SA	As needed
• Early dismissal (unplanned and school specific)	UA	As needed
COMMUNICATIONS		
• Event announcement and/or Reminder	P	As needed
• School parent newsletter	P	Monthly
• Individual student update	DM	As needed
• Event announcement and/or Reminder	P	As needed
• District Newsletter	P	Monthly
• Message from the Superintendent (not embedded within the District Newsletter)	P	As needed
HEALTH & WELL-BEING		
• Student / Staff death	A	As Needed

3-Week Launch Timeline

This phased communication rollout outlines what to share each week during the first three weeks of school.

Week	Focus Area	Key Actions
Week 1 (First Day - Friday)	Warm Welcome	• Superintendent/Principal welcome post • Confirm SIS sync and contactability • Teacher “Meet the Class” post • Launch school-wide calendar • App download reminder
Week 2 (Second week of school)	Participation & Routines	• Invite families to join groups • Share communication cadence (e.g., “District Tuesdays”) • Teacher post: learning goals • First classroom highlights • Get to know your student form
Week 3 (Third week of school)	Feedback & Family Voice	• Share quick family survey • Highlight key posts families may have missed • Promote upcoming events with RSVP • Volunteer sign-up posts • Spotlight a celebration or student effort



What to Include in District Back-to-School Newsletters

- Warm welcome from the Superintendent, including
 - ▶ Theme or focus for the year (e.g., “Stronger Together” or “Engaged Families = Empowered Students”)
 - ▶ Encouragement for family engagement
- District-wide events calendar (e.g., First day of school, Minimum days or early dismissals, Family Info Night, Attendance Awareness Month)
- Tips for using ParentSquare
 - ▶ Subscribe to groups
 - ▶ Message teachers
 - ▶ Get the app
 - ▶ Talk about digests
- Weekly Communication Rhythm
 - ▶ “You’ll receive weekly messages from us every Friday, and your school principal and child’s teacher may send updates throughout the week.”
- Did you know
 - ▶ “You can reply to a post in your home language and it will be automatically translated!”

See sample here! (and if you have one that you love, please share it with us!)



What to Include in School Back-to-School Newsletters

- Principal welcome message
- Information about Open House/Orientation/Meet the Teacher day
- Information about first day of school and first-day reminders
- Reminders for Parents
 - ▶ Any paperwork to be completed and forms to be filled
 - ▶ Joining PTA
 - ▶ Joining ParentSquare and downloading App
 - ▶ Any immunization requirements
- Athletic News for High Schools
 - ▶ Annual passes
 - ▶ Tryouts
- Performing Arts News
 - ▶ Band, Chorus, Dance, Visual Arts, Orchestra, Theater Dates
- Daily Schedule
 - ▶ Attendance Reminder
 - ▶ Character Reminders
 - ▶ Dismissal time and Early Dismissal days
- Parking and drop off
- School year calendar
- Group introductions with links to join (Join PTA, Join Celebrations)
- Quick links (handbook, transportation, lunch menus)



What to Include in Teacher Back-to-School Newsletters

- Introduction
- Meet the teacher day
- Classroom pictures
- Routine - where to drop off
- Classroom supply list
- Wish list item list to keep class happy and healthy

What to Include in Coaches Back-to-School Newsletters

- Introduce all coaches
- Any program fee requirements
- Uniforms needed
- Practice Days
- Injuries and Doctor's Notes



Sample ParentSquare Tips Post For Parents

Subject: ParentSquare Tips for a Smooth School Year!

Hi Families,

Welcome back! We use ParentSquare for all school and classroom communication. To help you stay informed and connected, here are a few key tips:

1. Download the Mobile App

- Get instant alerts & stay up-to-date.
- Search “ParentSquare” in your app store.

2. Customize Your Notifications

- Choose Instant or Digest (daily summary).
- Select Email, Text, or App alerts.
- Access via Website/App -> Your Name -> My Account -> Notification Settings

3. Set Your Language Preference

- Receive posts in your preferred language.
- Access via Website/App -> Your Name -> My Account -> Language Settings

4. Explore & Join Groups

- Find information for clubs, sports, PTA, and more! (If applicable)
- (Look under “Explore” -> “Groups”)

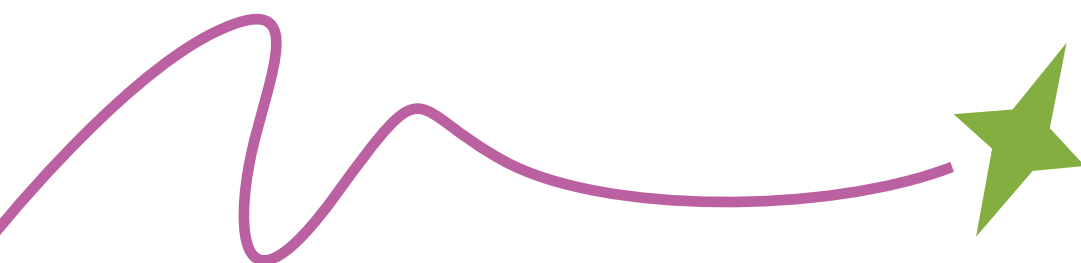
5. RSVP, Sign Up & Fill Forms

- Easily respond to requests from school & teachers.
- Don’t miss deadlines!

6. Get Help: Having trouble?

- Check out ParentSquare’s Help Articles for Parents [here](#)
- For school-related inquiries, please contact our school office at [Phone Number] or [Email Address].

We look forward to partnering with you this year!



Sample Form: Getting to Know Your Child

Title: Help Me Get to Know Your Child

Hello families!

Welcome to the new school year! I'm so excited to be your child's teacher and partner with you this year.

To help me understand your child as an individual learner, including their strengths, interests, motivations, and any helpful learning strategies, I would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete the "Getting to Know Your Child" form below.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and are intended solely to support your child's learning and well-being in the classroom. Thank you so much for your time and partnership. I'm looking forward to a wonderful year with your children!

[Include ParentSquare form with these questions]

- What does your child like best about school?
- What are your child's strengths?
- What motivates your child?
- Any specific learning preferences or needs?
- What activities is your child most interested in?
- What should I know to support your child better?
- Anything you'd like me to know about your family?
- What hopes or goals do you have for your child this year?

Sample Volunteer Request Post

Title: We Need Your Help!

Looking for classroom volunteers to help with:

- Beginning-of-year portrait pictures of kids for the classroom picture wall
- Photo documentation of learning activities
- Organizing classroom libraries or book orders
- At-home prep (cutting, organizing materials)
- Afternoon support in class or events

Please message me if you're interested—we'll find something that fits your schedule!

Ideas for Celebrations

Use ParentSquare to share moments that spark joy, pride, and connection.

Celebrating your school community builds trust, lifts morale, and reminds families they're part of something special. Here are ways to celebrate all year long using Posts, Direct Messages, or Phone:

Using ParentSquare Posts

Publicly recognize and amplify what's going well:

- Student achievements
 - ▶ Academic awards, artistic recognition, and citizenship
- Showcase successful school events
 - ▶ Science fair, multicultural night, spirit week
- Recognize staff contributions or milestones.
- Share positive feedback received from families or the community.
- Celebrate classroom wins
 - ▶ Projects, learning breakthroughs, and creativity on display (with appropriate permissions).
- Extracurricular Excellence
 - ▶ Sports wins, club activities, performances, student-led initiatives, and community service projects



Using Direct Messages for Personal Recognition

Sometimes the most meaningful messages are the quiet ones.

Use ParentSquare Direct Messages to share personalized notes with families—it builds trust, celebrates student success, and strengthens your school-home connection.

Key Elements of a Genuine Message:

- **Be Specific:** Instead of “great job,” mention the student’s specific action, question, or moment.
- **Focus on Character:** Praise qualities like kindness, persistence, curiosity, and leadership.
- **Keep it Brief:** A few heartfelt sentences are more powerful than a long, formal paragraph.
- **Make it “No Action Required”:** The goal is to share good news or a warm thought, not to ask for anything in return.

Praising Effort, Character, and Growth

These messages focus on the “how” and “why,” not just the outcome, which makes them feel much more personal.

- **The “I Noticed Their Persistence” Message:**

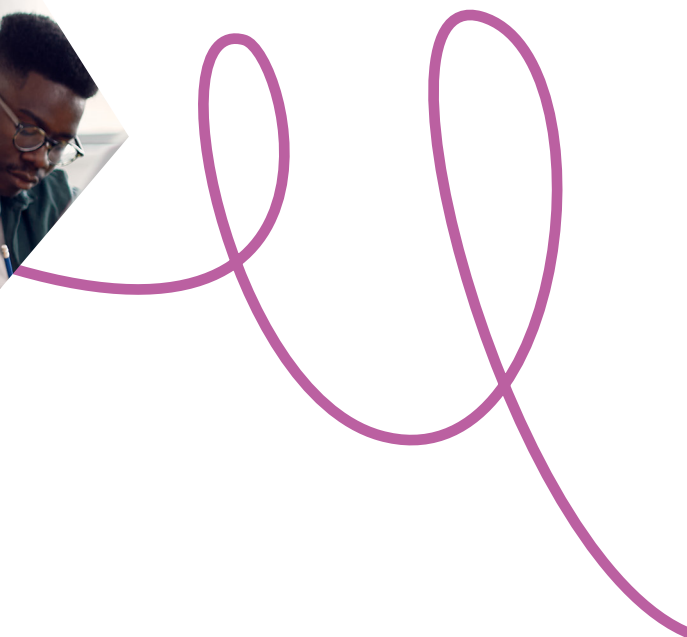
“Hi Mrs. Doe, Taylor had a great day today. Our class learned a new and difficult math formula, and I saw them struggle a bit, erase their work, and try a completely new way to solve it. They did not give up, and I was very proud. I am so impressed with their effort.”

- **The “Kindness and Compassion” Message:**

“Hi Mrs. Doe, I saw something in class today that I had to share. A classmate was sad, and Taylor went over and quietly shared their snack with them. It was a small, kind moment, but it speaks volumes about their character. You are raising a very compassionate child.”

- **The “Curiosity in Action” Message:**

“Hi Mrs. Doe, Johnny asked a question in class today that made the whole class stop and think. Their curiosity about [topic here] sparked a great discussion, and I wanted to thank them for making the lesson more exciting for everyone.”



Sample “Meet the Team” Intros

Post Title: Meet the [School Name] Team!

Help families put faces to names and build early connections by introducing your staff. A simple, personal post can go a long way in making your school feel welcoming and approachable.

What to Include:

- **Name, Role, and Photo**
 - ▶ Clear, friendly headshots work best—group photos also welcome!
- **Fun Fact or Personal Detail**
 - ▶ Share something relatable: a favorite book, hobby, pet, or why they love teaching.
- **What They’re Most Excited About This Year**
 - ▶ Invite staff to share what they’re looking forward to—projects, classroom themes, student goals, or community events.



Tip: Feature 3–5 staff per post throughout August and early September to avoid overwhelming families. Consider cross-posting to your school website or social media to extend reach.

Survey Templates

Quick 3-Question Family Survey

Title: How Are We Doing? We'd Love Your Feedback!

1. I feel welcomed and informed by my child's school so far.

- ☐ Yes, absolutely
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Not really

2. Have you downloaded and used the ParentSquare app?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Not yet, but I plan to
- ☐ I need help with this

3. What is one thing that would help improve school communication for your family?

[Short answer box]

Staff Survey

1. Are you confident using ParentSquare to post and message?

2. Are families engaging with your posts?

3. What ideas or templates would help you feel more supported?

Looking Ahead: From Welcome to Routine

In September, shift from launch to sustainability. You'll reinforce habits, deepen connections, and begin tying communication to outcomes like attendance and engagement. Let August set the tone, and September carry it forward.

Have Questions or Ideas?

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