DECEMBER

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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Theme

Celebration, Connection, and Continuity

In December, communication on ParentSquare pivots sharply toward celebration, community, and coordination. Data from over 124,000 posts in December 2024 shows that classroom party planning (22%), performance schedules (20%), and holiday greetings (19%) dominate platform use.

At this time of year, school communications often focus on logistics, gratitude, and connection. The most effective districts help families feel included, informed, and cared for — even as campuses close for break.

Your Goal for December

By the end of the month, families should:

- Feel connected through inclusive celebrations and community updates.
- Receive timely information about concerts, performances, and classroom parties.
- Know exactly when school closes and reopens — with reminders pre-scheduled in ParentSquare.
- Have access to winter break resources (meals, childcare, counseling).
- See staff and student appreciation messages that build warmth and trust.
- Experience ParentSquare as the “steady heartbeat” of school connection — even when buildings are quiet.

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.*

December Checklist

Focus Area	Key Actions	ParentSquare Tip
Classroom & School Celebrations	☐ Share celebration guidelines (food, photos, equity reminders). ☐ Encourage teachers to post highlights and photos from parties.	Use **Studio Editor** templates for classroom recaps or "Year-in-Review" newsletters. Use **Pay** to collect money for events or fundraisers.
Performances & Events	☐ Post concert and performance schedules early. ☐ Include arrival times, attire, and livestream links.	Use **Calendar Events and RSVPs** so parents have all logistics in one place.
Holiday & Winter Greetings	☐ Send school and district-wide holiday messages. ☐ Encourage staff to post short thank-you or reflection notes.	Try **AI Rewrite** to make greetings clear, warm, and easy to translate.
Winter Resources & Support	☐ Share info on meal pick-ups, childcare programs, or counseling hotlines. ☐ Use polls/forms to assess family needs.	Use **Forms** for "Winter Needs Surveys." Schedule posts to publish during break.
Scheduled Posts During Break	☐ Pre-schedule "See You in January!" reminders. ☐ Add auto-posts for key January return dates.	Families still open messages! **Schedule now** to maintain presence.
Community Gratitude	☐ Highlight staff and volunteer appreciation. ☐ Celebrate acts of kindness or service projects.	**Share photos on social** and in newsletters tagged #WarmWinterSchools.

Where to Communicate What

Use each communication channel purposefully this month — share appreciation widely while keeping logistical updates clear and consistent.

Channel	Examples This Month
ParentSquare Posts	• Classroom party invites, performance reminders, winter break updates, “thank you” notes. • Many include sign-ups
Newsletters	• Monthly roundup of celebrations, family resources, upcoming January reminders.
Social Media	• Share community spirit—concert photos, thank-you videos, and family resource links.
School Website / Smart Sites	• Add banners for winter hours, resource links, and weather alerts.
Forms & Polls	• Winter meal or childcare need assessments.

“Our interaction levels tripled almost overnight. The smart alerts coupled with user-friendly event sign-ups make information flow easily within our community—it truly sparks life into parent participation like never before.”

— AMANDA HARR

GREATER JOHNSTOWN CTC, PA

Spotlight: Making Celebration Inclusive

Not all families celebrate the same holidays—or any at all. Model inclusion by:

- Framing classroom parties as seasonal or end-of-term celebrations.
- Sharing food policies and allergy reminders early.
- Encouraging traditions posts ("Share your family's favorite winter activity").
- Offering opt-in participation for holiday-specific activities.

📌 ***Pro Tip:*** Encourage teachers to use "Ask Your Child About..." prompts to keep learning alive during festive activities.

Spotlight: Attendance & Re-Entry Around Winter Break

December may feel like it's all about parties, performances, and holidays, but the transition back to school can be hard on many students: routines are disrupted, travel and illness increase, and some students experience stress or trauma over the holidays rather than rest. A few "extra days off" can quickly snowball into chronic absenteeism, especially for older students where absences directly impact credits and GPA.

This spotlight helps you use ParentSquare to set clear, caring expectations about attendance before break and support a gentle, inclusive return after break.

Before the Break: Set the Tone of Why Attendance Still Matters!

Focus your December attendance messaging on belonging and support, emphasizing that school is a special place to be as the holidays near.

District & School Leaders

- Include a short "Why attendance still matters" note in December newsletters and principal updates ("Every day this month still counts toward learning and connection").
- Share clear return dates with simple graphics and calendar events, and send a reminder post a few days before school resumes.
- Use ParentSquare Attendance Plus and Auto Notices (if enabled) to quietly flag emerging patterns so schools can check in with families early.

Teachers & Counselors

- **Post class-level reminders** a week or two before break:
  - What students will be doing up to the last day (projects, celebrations, showcases).
  - What they'll jump into when they come back ("We'll be starting our new unit on…").
- **Invite families to share concerns** via **Direct Messages** if travel, illness, or family circumstances may impact attendance. Emphasize partnership ("Let us know what's going on so we can support your child").
- **Avoid "perfect attendance" hype** that could pressure families to send sick kids; pair any recognition with clear health guidance.

📌 ***Pro Tip:*** **Use Rewrite with AI to make staff posts clearer and easier for families to read—especially on mobile.** After drafting your message, select **Rewrite with AI** to improve spelling, sentence structure, and any phrasing that might be confusing or hard to translate. This helps ensure key details—like dates, actions, and links—are easier for families to find and understand.

After the Break: Gentle Re-Entry, Not Holiday Show-and-Tell

For some students, writing about "what I did over break" can surface painful or private experiences (housing instability, family conflict, illness). Instead, use the first week back to rebuild routines and connections in the present.

Welcome-Back Messaging Ideas

Use ParentSquare **Posts** and **StudentSquare** to:

- Share a **district or principal "Welcome Back" message** that:
  - Acknowledges mixed feelings about returning ("Some students are excited, some nervous—that's normal").
  - Re-states the importance of showing up every day in the new term.
- Have teachers send a **"Week 1 Back" overview**:
  - What routines will look like.
  - How students can get help if they're feeling anxious or behind.
  - One fun, low-stakes activity to look forward to.

Classroom Practice Shifts

- Replace holiday narratives with prompts like:
  - "What's one thing you're looking forward to this month?"
  - "What helps you have a good day at school?"
- Use quick **polls** or **forms** in ParentSquare to ask families: "Is there anything we should know to support your child's transition back?"

When Absences Start Adding Up

Short holiday-adjacent absences can quietly turn into chronic absenteeism. Use ParentSquare to respond early, with care:

Automated, personalized nudges

- Use **Attendance Plus/Auto Notices** to send gentle reminders after a certain number of missed days: "We've missed [Student Name] in class lately and want to check in. Is there anything we can do to help them get back into routine?"

Two-way messaging, not robo-calls

- Encourage staff to follow up with a **Direct Message** or quick **Virtual Phone** call instead of only system notices, especially when patterns appear.
- Offer problem-solving, not lectures: transportation options, nurse/counselor support, make-up work plans.

Equity & Wellness Lens

Attendance efforts around the holidays should recognize that not all students experienced a "fun" or restful break.

Use ParentSquare to:

- **Share resources discreetly:** Post or **pin information** about food pantries, counseling, and community support services to **Smart Sites** and school groups, so families can access help without having to ask publicly.
- **Coordinate counselor outreach: Create internal groups** for counselors and support staff to track students who may need extra check-ins after break.

A simple sequence you can reuse each year:

1. Early December: “Every Day Still Counts” post + clear last/first day reminders.
2. Week Before Break: Class-level posts about what students will finish and what’s coming next.
3. 3–5 Days Before Return: Scheduled district/school “We can’t wait to see you back on [date]!” message.
4. First Week Back: Welcome-back posts, counselor check-ins, and gentle follow-ups for absent students.
5. Mid-January: Launch formal attendance challenges and campaigns, pointing back to the routines you’ve already re-established.

This keeps attendance messaging supportive through one of the most fragile points in the school year.

Data to Monitor

Use ParentSquare’s **dashboards** this month to see which messages of gratitude, service, and celebration resonate most — these insights help you strengthen family connection heading into the holidays.

Metric	Why it Matters
Post engagement on celebrations	Shows how families respond to joyful, visual content.
Form responses for winter resources	Indicates family need and readiness to access support.
Social media impressions	Extends the reach of celebration and gratitude messaging.service

Reflection Prompts

Did every family receive consistent, inclusive updates about celebrations and schedules?

- Are winter support resources clearly communicated and easy to access?
- Did your staff and families feel appreciated before the break?
- Are your January posts scheduled to go out automatically?

Appendix:

AI Prompt Bank for November

🎉 Classroom Parties & Celebrations

- "Write a cheerful ParentSquare post inviting families to help with the class winter celebration. Include sign-up links for snacks, crafts, and volunteers."
- "Draft a thank-you message from a teacher to families after a classroom party, including photos and a holiday wish."

🎭 Performances & Events

- "Create a ParentSquare post announcing the winter concert schedule with student arrival times and livestream details."
- "Write a ParentSquare reminder for families about parking and pickup during the holiday show."

💌 Holiday Greetings & Year-End Messages

- "Write a heartfelt message from the principal thanking families for their partnership this semester. Tone: warm, community-focused, and hopeful for the new year."
- "Draft a short 'Happy Holidays' post from the district office with multilingual translation enabled."

💬 Winter Support Resources

- "Create a post listing community meal programs and mental health resources during break."
- "Draft a ParentSquare poll asking families if they need meal or childcare support during winter break."

📢 Scheduled Break Posts

- "Write a pre-scheduled post that sends on January 2 reminding families of the first day back, bus schedules, and new semester details."

Sample posts:

Holiday parties:

Hello Families, Our winter class party will be on Friday December 20th (the last day before Winter break) at 2:30pm. During that day we will do plenty of fun crafts and games. We have 22 friends in our class. In order for us to have as much fun as possible and make lasting memories our class needs your help with donations for crafts and party supplies. Please sign up if you are able to donate.

Pro Tip: Use Canva to help create your post. **View** our templates!

Holiday parties:

Students will be assigned a classmate to purchase a $5 gift for next Thursday's Secret Santa. If you need assistance with this, please reach out to me. Thursday we will exchange gifts and cookies. Please provide one store bought package of cookies.

Pro Tip: Use Canva to help create your post. **View** our templates!

Reminder of when to return:

Dear <Name> Class, I hope you all enjoy our Winter Break and have a happy holiday season! I will see you all on Monday, January 6th. I'm sending warm holiday wishes to your family! <Name>

Pro Tip: Use Canva to help create your post. **View** our templates!

Looking Ahead:

January – New Year, New Goals

The new year brings a fresh start for attendance, learning, and engagement. In January, use ParentSquare to reset routines, reintroduce communication cadences, and celebrate new goals.

Have Questions or Ideas?

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