

OCTOBER

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.**



Anu Vaid
Founder & President



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Engagement Beyond the Classroom: Coaches, Clubs & More



Theme: Engaging Families in Extracurriculars

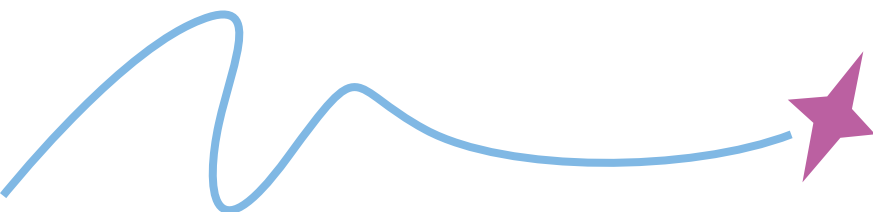
October is when student life moves beyond the classroom—onto the fields, into the arts, and across club activities. With sports, performances, and events in full swing, families need clear, consistent communication to stay connected. It's also the month for mid-semester parent-teacher conferences and seasonal celebrations like Halloween. Together, these moments offer powerful opportunities to build trust, strengthen belonging, and make sure every family feels included.

Your Goal for October

By the end of the month, families should:

- Be connected to at least one extracurricular or club group in ParentSquare.
- Receive clear, timely updates from coaches, advisors, and activity leaders.
- Use ParentSquare for volunteer sign-ups, forms, and payments related to activities and events.
- Feel prepared and supported for mid-semester parent-teacher conferences.
- Understand school-specific expectations for Halloween or fall celebrations, ensuring their child feels socially included.
- Know where to find schedules, updates, and urgent alerts—via ParentSquare and Smart Sites.

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.



October Checklist

October isn't just about sports and clubs — it's also the month when parent-teacher conferences often happen, and when schools navigate seasonal events like Halloween. Together, these moments create opportunities to deepen trust, strengthen relationships, and help families feel more confident in supporting their child socially and academically.

Area	Key Actions	What customers say...
Clubs & Extracurriculars	- Encourage every club/team to set up a ParentSquare group. Share sample posts/templates for coaches/advisors.	<i>"ParentSquare's ability to provide efficient one-way and two-way communications at the district, building, and classroom levels, as well as for athletics and clubs, in a secure environment has been beneficial and has made our school communications more effective."</i> – Lou DeVincentis, Orange City, OH (1500 students)
Volunteers & Sign-Ups	- Promote opt-in Community Groups (PTA, athletics, celebrations). - Run a volunteer drive with classroom or event support sign-ups. - Show teachers how to use ParentSquare to collect needed classroom supplies with sign-up lists.	<i>"We wanted a single hub for everything—conference sign-ups, classroom updates, volunteer info, school notifications, confidential docs, and parent-teacher chats. ParentSquare came to the rescue, replacing several platforms and making it much easier to keep in touch with our families."</i> – Corey Mott, Groton School District, CT (4400 students)
Team Communication	Train coaches/advisors on schedules, results, and highlights. Position ParentSquare as the "team app."	<i>"Some of our coaches needed a little extra help, so we made a quick 3-minute video and offered open lab time. Now, it's a breeze for students and families to stay connected!"</i> – Valerie Verhunce Hartford, UHS School District, WI (1,300 students)

Area	Key Actions	What customers say...
Parent-Teacher Conferences	□ Share district dates early; set up ParentSquare sign-ups for scheduling; encourage pre-conference family surveys. Provide interpreters/translation reminders.	<i>“ParentSquare allows us to communicate with non-English speaking families in their native language, streamlines parent-teacher conference sign-ups..”</i> – Susan Moore, Meriden School District, CT (8,600 students)
Halloween & Seasonal Events	□ Post school-specific guidelines (costumes, food, cultural alternatives). Share “what to expect” so no child feels left out. Use ParentSquare to promote inclusive activities like story times, fall festivals, or “orange & black” spirit days. Add events to your class calendar.	<i>“Parents are more aware of the daily goings-on of school, which allows them to engage with their students at home as prepare for future events and activities. Delivering messaging straight to their phones has also led to increased RSVPs to events.”</i> – Michelle Dietz, Quaker Valley SD, PA - (1,800 students)
Celebrations	□ Highlight achievements in newsletters/social. Encourage photos and short recaps after games/events.	<i>“Community members have expressed the organization and ease of finding things. We incorporated many pictures of our students and staff, and our community loves seeing our students, not stock photos!”</i> – Tracy McCown, Central Heights ISD, TX (1,100 students)
Crisis Comms	□ Prepare for weather/winter with Smart/Urgent Alerts. Reinforce ParentSquare as the official channel for closures.	<i>“Smart Alerts are a great way to keep in touch with parents and ensure that everyone receives accurate, consistent messaging during emergency situations where every second counts.”</i> – Ashley Thomas, Wichita Falls ISD, TX - (12,800 students)

Let's huddle about this: Coaches, Compliance, & the Case for ParentSquare

Let's face it, getting your coaches and activity leads on ParentSquare can be quite challenging. This often represents the final hurdle in your efforts to achieve widespread adoption.

Common issues include the fact that many coaches are part-time, stipend positions, or even volunteers. Consequently, they tend to default to third-party apps like TeamSnap, Hudl, SportsYou, Band App, or group texts to manage their teams. However, there are several drawbacks to this approach:

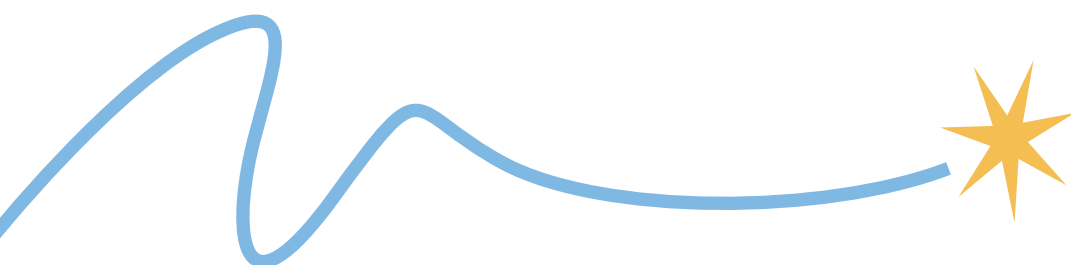
1. These platforms can impose additional costs on families.
2. They create fragmented communication channels.
3. They often do not comply with student privacy and archiving requirements, such as FERPA and evolving state communication laws.
4. They elevate risks by requiring the use of personal devices and phone numbers.

Using non-district-approved apps exposes schools to potential liabilities, a fact that must be emphasized. These apps generally lack translation and accessibility features, which can exclude families from important communications. Additionally, records stored on these platforms are not centralized, leaving districts vulnerable to audits or legal challenges.

The Opportunity

ParentSquare provides a single, secure, and compliant platform that meets district standards while also making life easier for busy coaches.

- ✓ One post, all channels: app, email, text — no juggling.
- ✓ Archiving & oversight: protects both the coach and the district.
- ✓ Built-in translation: every family can understand.
- ✓ No extra cost: families don't have to download/pay for another app.
- ✓ Add-ons coaches need: calendars, sign-ups, payments, photos, even video links.



How to Talk with a Resistant Coach

Coaches are some of the busiest, most overextended people in education. Many juggle teaching, practice, games, and often multiple jobs, all while managing team logistics and parent communication. ParentSquare is designed to make life easier for coaches, protect districts from risk, and give families one trusted place for updates.

- 1. Start with Empathy:** “I know you’re busy and want the simplest way to keep your team updated. ParentSquare is built to save you time and reduce stress.”
- 2. Show the Big Picture:** “Families are already using ParentSquare for school and district updates. By posting here, you know parents and students won’t miss important team messages.”
- 3. Reinforce Protection:** “ParentSquare protects you as much as it protects the district — all communication is logged and archived. No one can question what was sent, and you don’t need to share your personal phone information.”
- 4. Appeal to Fairness:** “Families shouldn’t have to pay extra or download another app just to follow their child’s team. ParentSquare is the official, district-approved channel — everyone gets the same information at no cost.”
- 5. Offer Support:** “You don’t need to set anything up. Athletic directors or an admin will create the groups for you. All you need to do is post updates.”

Pro Tips for Champions:

- Frame it as removing a burden (“less to manage”), one post to all families with built-in translations (via app, email, or text).
- Highlight how district leaders will back them up with setup, training, and expectations.
- Get the AD’s support knowing they will have oversight and can see all communications across teams.



Want More? ParentSquare for Athletics Best Practices

Looking for step-by-step guidance on setting up athletic groups, helping coaches get started, or managing team communications? Check out our [ParentSquare for Athletics Best Practices Guide](#).

You'll find:

- How to create and manage groups for teams
- Tips for coach adoption (even if they're not in the SIS)
- Sample posts and direct messages for team updates
- Best practices for schedules, sign-ups, payments, and last-minute alerts
- Guidance for end-of-season group clean-up and rollover

Spotlight: ParentSquare as the “Team App”

Coaches communicate differently depending on grade level—and ParentSquare adapts to each context:

- **Elementary:** Updates go primarily to parents (practice schedules, supply lists, event reminders). Translation ensures equity.
- **Middle School:** Communication often needs to reach both parents and students. StudentSquare helps coaches share reminders directly with students while families confirm logistics.
- **High School:** Coaches balance communication to students and parents. StudentSquare is ideal for urgent or motivational messages to athletes, while ParentSquare keeps families informed and communication archived.

Why it matters: One platform for all extracurriculars means no juggling multiple apps or personal texts. Families know where to look, coaches save time, and admins have oversight.



Spotlight: Parent-Teacher Conferences

Mid-semester check-ins are critical for academic progress and family trust. Use ParentSquare to simplify scheduling, reminders, and follow-up:

- **District:** Announce dates early and provide templates for school-level sign-ups.
- **School:** Create forms for conference slots, coordinate interpreters, and remind staff to follow up with families who can't attend.
- **Teacher:** Send a short pre-conference survey to capture family input; post reminders; share student work samples in Secure Docs.

Pro Tip:

Conferences are about partnership, not just progress reports. Use ParentSquare to gather input ahead of time so conversations are two-way.

Spotlight: Halloween & Seasonal Events

Not every school celebrates Halloween the same way — some hold costume parades, others host fall festivals, and some avoid holiday themes entirely. What matters most is clarity for families so every child feels socially included.

- Share clear guidelines for costumes, food, and activities.
- Post “what to expect” checklists so families can prepare their child for the day.
- Offer inclusive options: consider alternatives like “Book Character Day,” pajama day, or harvest-themed celebrations.
- Post safety and equity reminders (allergy notes, dismissal changes, cultural sensitivity).

Pro Tip:

Ask families to share a photo or favorite tradition in a ParentSquare group — it builds community and sparks joy, even if celebrations differ across classrooms.

Spotlight: Weather & Crisis Communications

Snow days, power outages, and emergencies often hit without warning. The key to calm, clear communication is planning ahead — so leaders don't have to scramble at 5:00 am after a snowstorm.

Big Tip:

Draft your weather/closure alert now, so when the moment comes, your superintendent can simply hit “Send” and go back to bed. ParentSquare will push the alert instantly across app, text, email, and phone — while Smart Sites automatically update with a banner notice.

District

- Create pre-written closure, delay, and early release messages in the **Message Library** for ParentSquare Alerts.
- Test your notification system with a mock alert before winter weather begins.
- Set up Smart Sites banners to automatically reflect urgent alerts.

School

- Remind staff how urgent alerts work, and when they should be used.
- Share clear guidance with families about how notifications will be delivered.
- Post a short FAQ on Smart Sites about weather/closure policies.

Teachers

- Schedule a quick reminder post to families about what learning/work expectations are during closures.
- Use ParentSquare to share resources for at-home learning (if needed).

Pro Tip:

Always send one official message through ParentSquare rather than multiple texts or calls. Families trust a single, consistent channel in moments of disruption.

Where to Communicate What

Channel	Examples This Month
ParentSquare Posts	Team schedules, last-minute alerts, volunteer asks, photos and shout-outs.
Newsletters	Club/team spotlights, upcoming events, volunteer sign-ups, conference reminders.
Social Media	Game-day highlights, performance clips, student spotlights, “Meet the Team” posts.
School Website / Smart Sites	Athletics calendars, conference info pages, seasonal celebration guidelines, crisis comms banners.

Data to Monitor

Metric	Why it Matters
Group Membership Growth	Shows family engagement in extracurricular communities.
Coach/Advisor Posting Rates	Confirms consistency in team/club communication.
Volunteer Sign-Ups	Tracks family participation in supporting events.
ParentSquare Pay Usage	Measures adoption of digital payments vs. paper.
Conference Attendance	Gauges family-school partnership strength.
Crisis Comms Response Rates	Ensures readiness for weather or urgent updates.

Reflection Prompts

- Have all extracurricular groups been created and adopted ParentSquare?
- Are coaches and advisors posting consistently to families and/or students?
- Do families feel prepared for parent-teacher conferences?
- Have you clearly communicated Halloween or fall celebration guidelines?
- Are Smart Sites updated with event calendars and crisis comms banners?

Appendix: AI Prompt Bank for October



Not every district or school has time to write communications from scratch. Use these ready-to-go AI prompts in your preferred tool to quickly generate posts, forms, or messages that fit your school's voice and events. Then copy the final version into ParentSquare.

Pro Tip:

Use **Rewrite with AI** in ParentSquare when creating posts to make your message clearer, more family-friendly, and easier to translate.

Extracurriculars & Clubs

Prompt: “Write a ParentSquare post from a [coach/club advisor] announcing this week’s schedule for [team/club]. Include practice times, event dates, and one student shout-out. Keep it positive, concise, and family-friendly.”

Volunteer & Events

Prompt: “Create a ParentSquare post inviting families to volunteer at the [event]. Include sign-up slots for shifts, donations, or tasks. Add a cheerful tone and thank volunteers in advance.”

Prompt: “Draft a ParentSquare form for RSVPs to [event name]. Collect family name, number of guests, and any accessibility or dietary needs.”

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Prompt: “Draft a ParentSquare reminder for families to sign up for conferences on [date]. Encourage them to share questions ahead of time. Use a warm, welcoming tone.”

Prompt: “Write a short survey for families to complete before conferences, asking about their child’s strengths, areas for growth, and any concerns.”

Halloween & Seasonal Events

Prompt: “Write a ParentSquare message explaining school guidelines for Halloween (or fall festival). Include what’s allowed for costumes, food policies, and inclusive alternatives. Keep it upbeat, clear, and inclusive.”

Prompt: “Create a ParentSquare post for a fall spirit week. List the daily dress-up themes, remind families of expectations, and keep it fun.”

Celebrations & Thank-Yous

Prompt: “Create a ParentSquare thank-you post recognizing volunteers who helped at [event]. Keep it short, heartfelt, and celebratory.”

Prompt: “Write a ParentSquare post spotlighting a student, staff member, or team accomplishment. Include a photo prompt and invite families to comment with congratulations.”



Looking Ahead: From Extracurriculars to a Season of Gratitude

October has been about energy beyond the classroom — the cheers from the stands, the excitement of fall performances, and the pride of student clubs in action. With ParentSquare, you've given coaches, advisors, and families a simple way to stay connected, celebrate wins, and build community through shared experiences.

In November, we'll carry that spirit of connection into a season of gratitude and giving. It's the perfect time to spotlight appreciation for staff and volunteers, showcase student-led service projects, and highlight how schools and families come together to support their communities. From thank-you messages and food drives to partner events and holiday planning, ParentSquare helps you turn moments of generosity into lasting impact.

From Friday night lights to holiday lights, your work continues to build bonds. One celebration, one thank-you, and one act of service at a time.



Have Questions or Ideas?

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

