

Case Study

Enabling Student Success Through Family Engagement

A few years ago, the communications department at Darlington County School District in South Carolina realized they had a blind spot. While they applauded teachers making the extra effort to reach out to families, the "Wild West" of fragmented messaging apps and random join codes meant the district had no idea what was said in each message or who received them.

With that in mind, the district's communication and technology teams started looking for a new, centralized platform. They wanted something simple to adopt (so momentum wasn't stalled) and centrally controlled.

After a thorough search, they landed on SchoolStatus Connect.



District

Darlington County
School District



District Size

9,000 students



Location

South Carolina



Products Used

SchoolStatus Connect



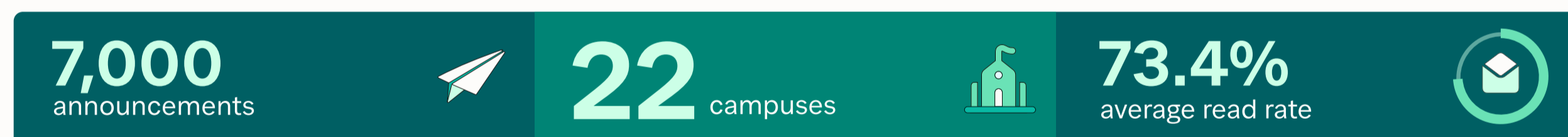
SchoolStatus Connect integrates well with PowerSchool, meaning roster information in the district's SIS is used to create contacts and build classrooms. Robust reports also solved the district's other concerns. They can see every message sent across the district, who received it, and even what it said. Even phone calls are recorded, offering a complete record of communication with each family.

Several years after the district implemented Connect, Chris McKagen, the Communications Manager at the district, points to an even greater benefit than he first anticipated: **facilitating the family partnerships that support student growth.**

The district's communications team doesn't see their role as divorced from learning. In fact, it's just the opposite. They believe that communication, and specifically, family engagement, is critical to student learning.

"One of the most vital ways that we can increase student success, growth, engagement, happiness, and mental health is to have our parents engaged with our schools," said Mr. McKagen. He continues, "SchoolStatus Connect is a direct investment into what we're hoping our teachers can achieve."

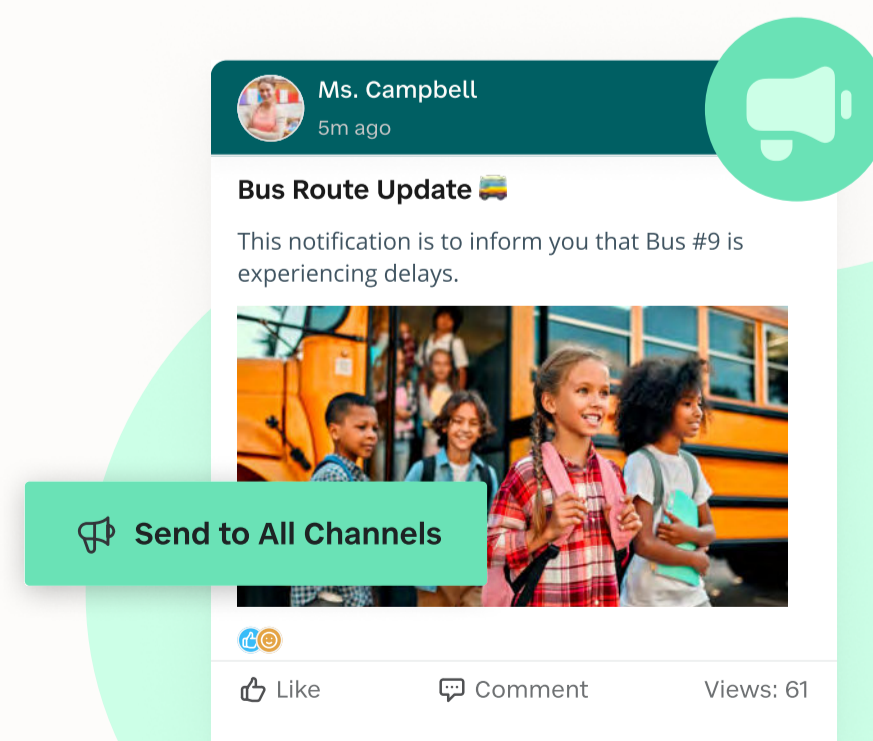
In just the first semester of the 2025-26 school year, the district sent over 7,000 announcements across 22 campuses. The data shows that families are listening: Darlington is maintaining an impressive 73.4% average read rate.



Communication on SchoolStatus Connect is varied to meet all communication needs. Teachers are reminding families about upcoming tests. School staff send out notices about "Crazy Hat Day." Even critical messages, like bus delays, have found a home in SchoolStatus Connect.

SchoolStatus Connect's audience segmentation features allow announcement creators to send messages only to the families affected by a specific delay.

From Mr. McKagen's perspective, all of the information families are receiving is making a difference, "Those updates help families feel like they're part of the building."





Facilitating 1:1 Conversations That Increase Student Growth

Announcements are a critical part of Darlington's strategy. They ensure every family receives positive, frequent communication from educators. The other key part of the strategy is the quieter 1:1 conversations.

When attendance starts to dip, a student struggles academically, or behavior incidents arise, teachers can reach out to families directly and brainstorm solutions. Every message is translated into a family's home language and delivered in the method they prefer (email, SMS, or in-app).

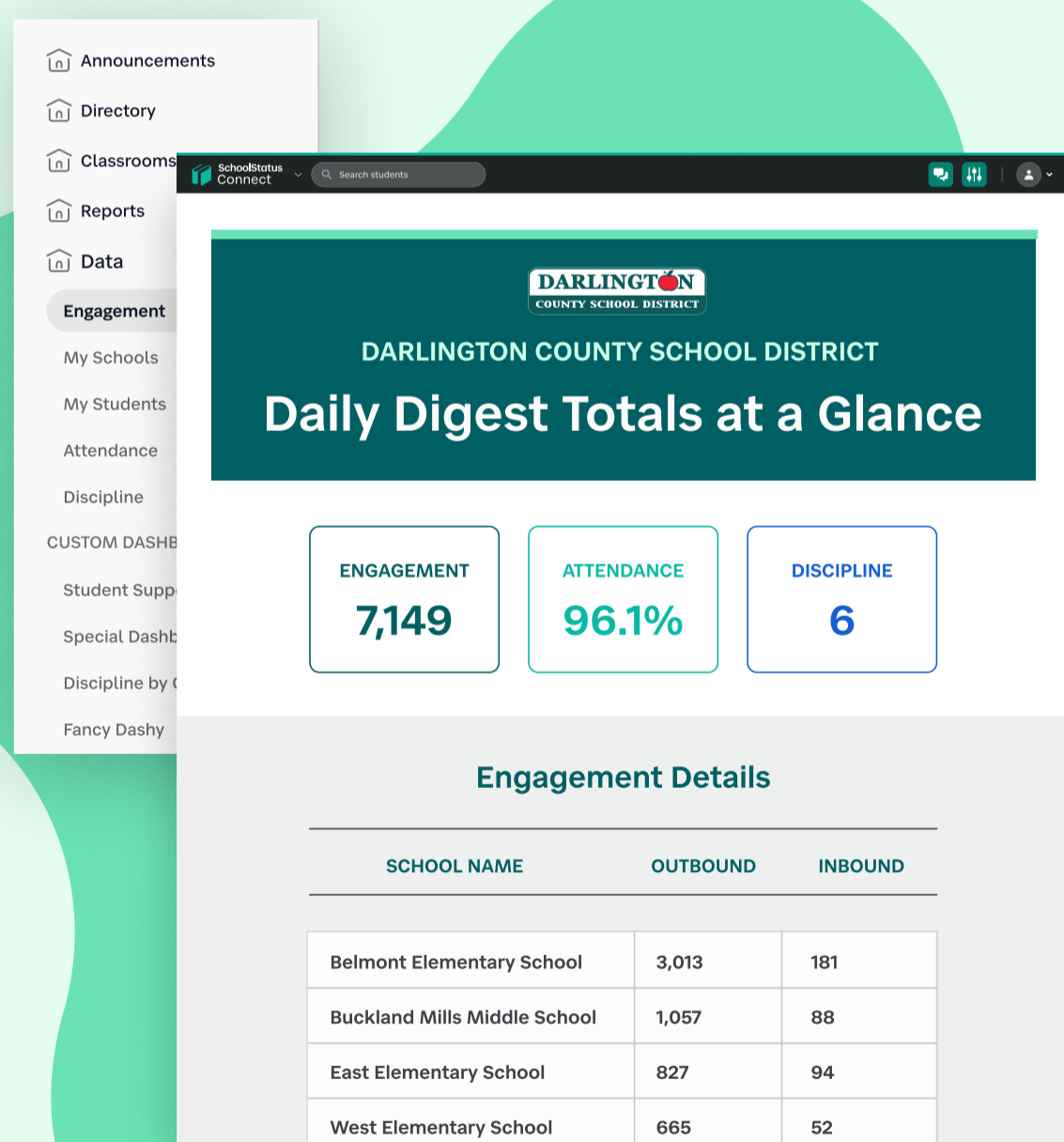
The result is more partnership. Educators have the support they need from families to increase student success, and families have the information they need to make a difference at home.

Growing Usage Throughout the District

Because family engagement is such an important pillar of student success, Darlington County School District doesn't leave adoption to chance. The district knows that for an educator, a new tool can quickly feel like "just one more thing" on an overfilled plate. To ensure educators aren't overwhelmed, the Communications team remains visible throughout the district, meeting teachers where they are.

"We're going to come to your classroom. We're going to plug into your Promethean board...we're going to walk through this step by step," Mr. McKagen said. He recognizes that while the technology may be straightforward for some, it represents a change in workflow for others.

However, the team can't be in every classroom at once. To scale the district's success, they use SchoolStatus Connect's engagement data to "deputize" the district's most effective users.



"Having that data available to us to see which schools are using it and where it's successful...allows us to help them help each other," Mr. McKagen explains. This strategy might involve pairing a principal from a high-engagement school with one looking to grow, or connecting two teachers to share what's working in their specific grade levels.

This combination of personal support, peer mentorship, and SchoolStatus Connect's ease of use has led to a steady climb in engagement every year.

An Invaluable Investment

What began as a search for a more secure way to message families has evolved into a fundamental part of the Darlington County School District's identity.

Educators are sending fun updates. Critical conversations have a home. District leaders have visibility into it all, creating a streamlined monitoring, training, and support mechanism.

With SchoolStatus Connect firmly in place, the district feels comfortable saying to teachers, "We support you, and we are always working to give you what you need to be successful."

Learn more about how SchoolStatus can transform your school district's communication strategy by visiting our website or scheduling a demo today.

