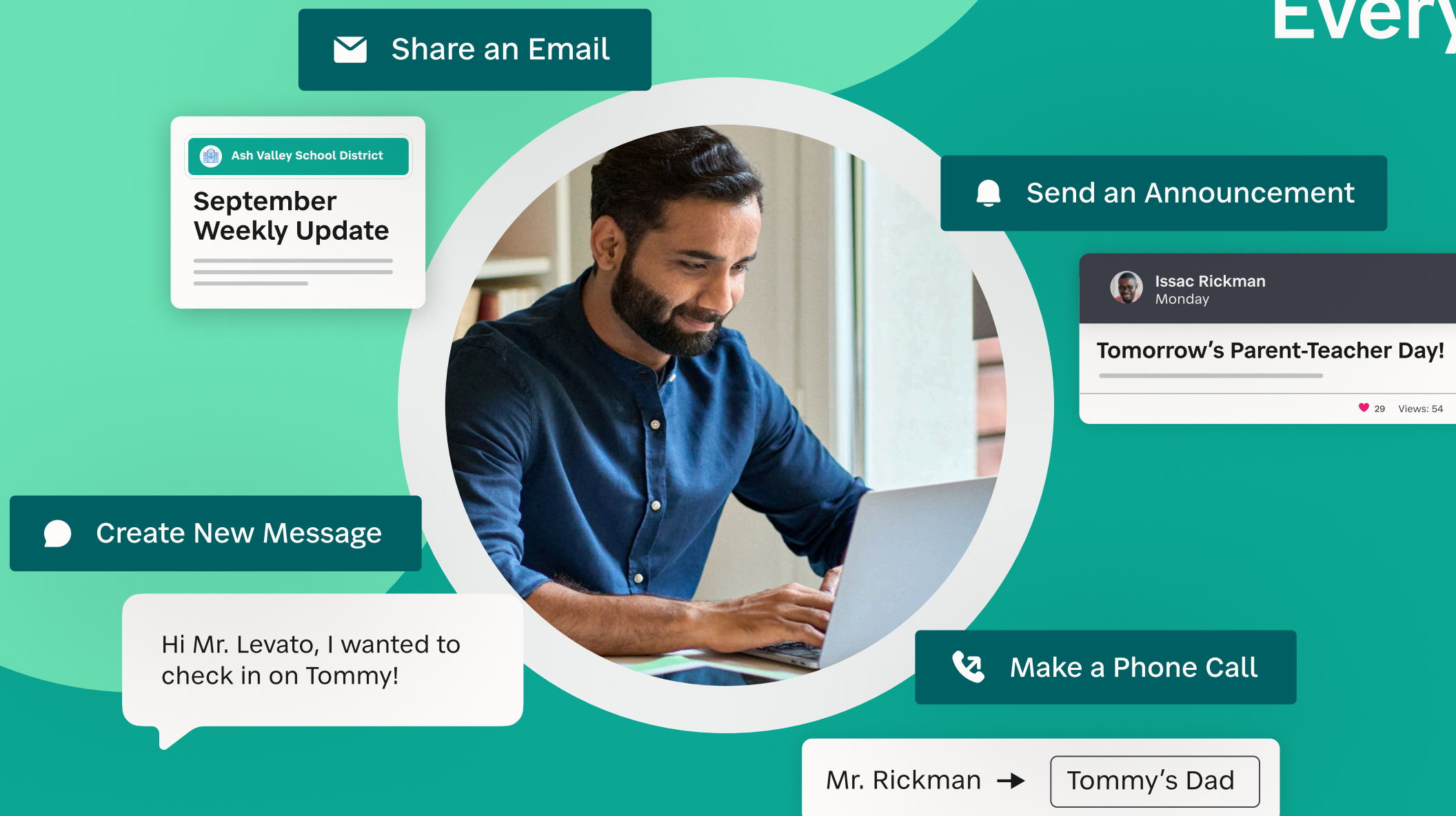


EBOOK

Your Guide to Improved Communication & Academic Success



Messaging Across Every Channel



The Importance of Regular Communication

Making sure school communications work for your community is about ensuring that every student has what they need to graduate and enter into the world a productive, healthy, informed citizen.

Communication between the school and families is crucial. The more adults hear from their child's teacher and principal, the more they are informed and engaged, and the more families and caregivers feel involved in school life, the more they trust the adults in the building. And that's the key. This is equally important for students from immigrant families as those students whose families attended the same school a generation back.

In other words, fostering communication with the student's family is an essential element of success.

Setting the Stage for Communications

On a micro-level, school communications are about conveying information. But on a macro-level, they're about building strong relationships between families, caregivers, school leaders, and teachers—creating a culture of transparency and support.

Research shows that consistent family communication leads to:

- ◆ Higher attendance rates
- ◆ Higher academic achievement
- ◆ Improved behavioral outcomes & social/emotional functioning
- ◆ Higher graduation rate & increased college attendance

There's a single simple but powerful reason behind all this improvement.

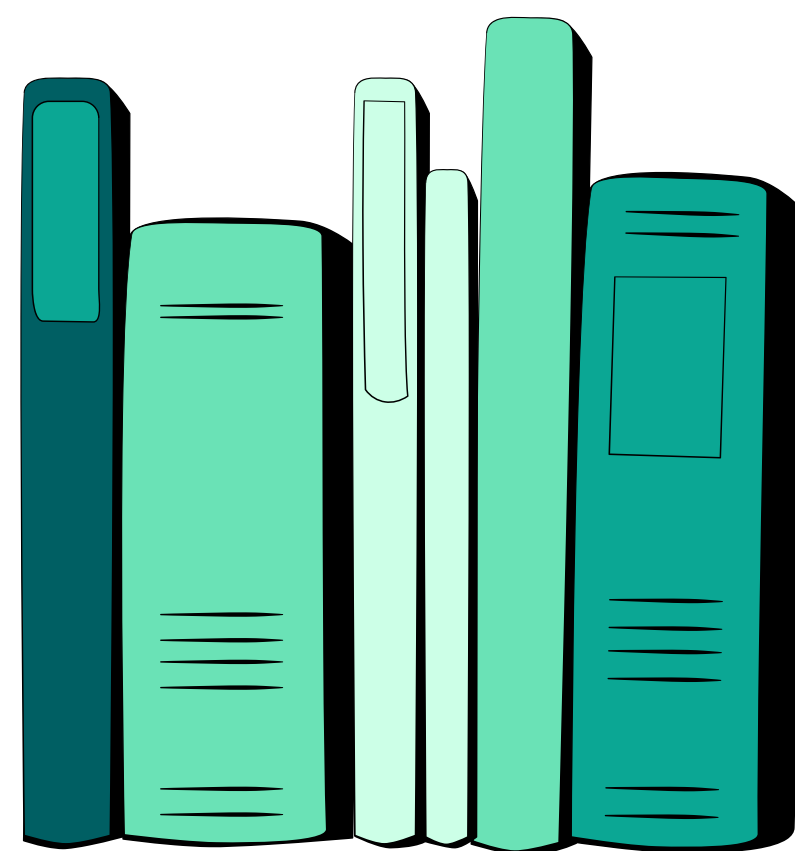
According to The Journal of School Psychology, "parents & educators consider communication the number one factor to increase trust."

The more the adults hear from their child's teacher and principal, the more they feel "in the know" about what's happening with their child at school.

According to The Journal of School Psychology, "parents & educators consider communication the number one factor to increase trust."

The more adults at home trust the adults at school, the more support the child has at home. This is equally important for students from immigrant families as students whose families attended the same school a generation back.

It's clear that communication is key to a child's learning and development.



Here are 3 important ways you can set the stage for trustworthy communication:

Create meaningful engagement

◆ Encourage family involvement

Build trust and dialogue with families via centralized, consistent updates about school events, volunteering opportunities, etc. Don't let too much time pass without informing them of what's happening at school.

◆ Create a dialogue with families

Establish two-way communication that allows staff, admins, and families to keep an open line of dialogue when needed.

Keep families informed with relevant information

◆ Send the right message to the right group

Your staff should use efficient communication tools that can segment students by grade, group, and attribute, so they can easily send messages to the right sub-groups.

◆ Simple accountability & oversight

Have confidence and oversight for any situation with a family; know what's been communicated with easy-to-understand call recording and state-level reporting.

Reach every family

◆ Bridge communication gaps

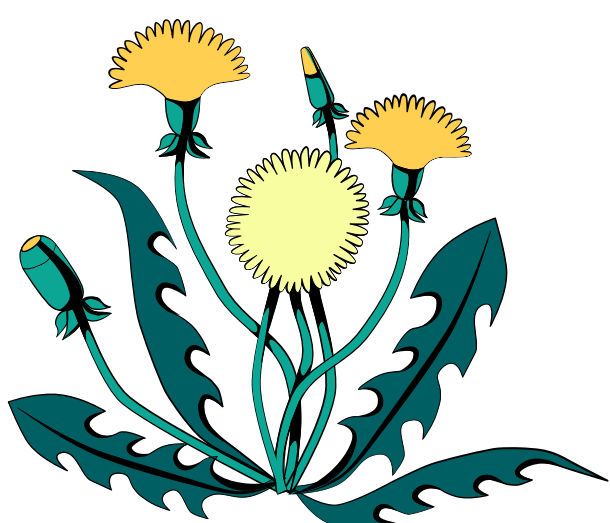
Use tools that can translate documents accurately and efficiently, so everyone receives information in their preferred language.

◆ Make it easy for families to participate

Not every family communicates the same, so diversify communication through different channels: letters, email, text messages, phone calls, etc.

What do school communications that work look like?

- ◆ Removes technology, language, and access barriers to family engagement via tools that automatically translate into a family's preferred language and don't require an app or any kind of download
- ◆ Offers a single, centralized platform for school-home communication with an array of customizable messaging templates, helping teachers connect with families and caregivers from a single source in their preferred method of communication, on any device
- ◆ Enables educators to text from a private number, video chat, share engaging weekly updates, and easily keep a log of all communication
- ◆ Empowers educators with data to make evidence-based decisions that help to achieve their overall instructional goals while supporting the growth of individual students



 1 course x

 1 group x

Hello Eighth Grade Families!

I hope you're as excited as I am for Thursday's field trip. Please make sure your permission slip is signed and let me know if you have any questions.

Mr. Thompson

☒ Auto-translate to preferred languages

Send as Message

Send as Email



SchoolStatus provides all this and more for your administration:

All-in-one solution

Instead of having several apps and tools for family communication, you can streamline your messages and digital forms, choose how they are sent (including Smore newsletters, email, text, etc.) and in what language, and automate distribution—all in one place.

Simple to use solution

Skip the complicated set up. All our tools are easy to use, have a seamless onboarding process, and cut down on tedious time spent on admin work.

On-demand data

Whether you're looking up a student's history or want to see a holistic view of attendance trends, you can gain actionable insights instantly.

Preventing Truancy

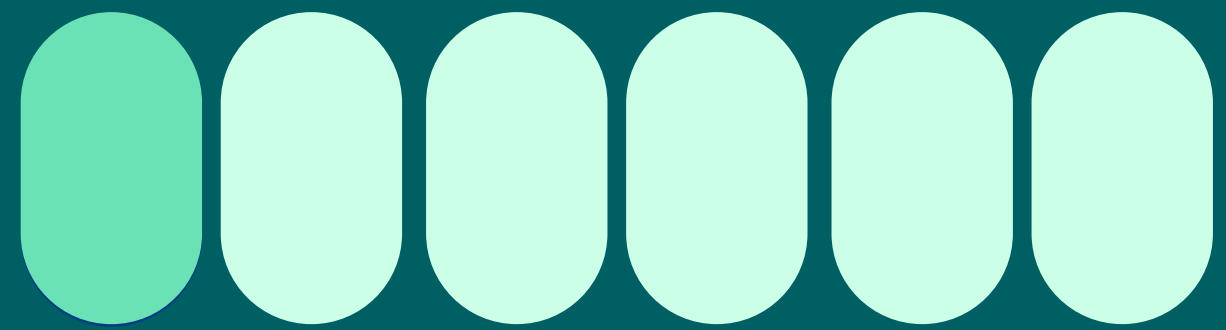
The Life-Saving Potential of Effective Communication

A report by the federal government found that irregular attendance is a better predictor of dropout rates than test scores, and has a higher likelihood of future involvement in the criminal justice system.

Good communication and the right tools can help you lower that number and improve academic outcomes. Preventing truancy by investing in a 360° school communications program can literally save student lives.

\$10.7B

**Student absences cost schools
\$10.7B per year**



**1 out of every 6 students are
chronically absent.**

Who is most impacted by chronic absenteeism?

According to Attendance Works, Children living in poverty are almost 3x more likely to be chronically absent. Students from communities of color, as well as those with disabilities, are also disproportionately affected.

A great many of these excused absences are tied to health problems persisting in historically disadvantaged communities, like asthma, diabetes, and dental and mental health issues. Additional barriers include lack of a nearby school bus route, safe or reliable transportation to school, and food insecurity.

Students who are most at-risk, who most need to be at school, are the ones most often absent from it. And we might not even notice.

Empowering Families Through Communication

6 steps administrators can take to reduce absenteeism:

I. Implement a district-level Superintendent's initiative to reduce absenteeism, including sending periodic, translated letters home to encourage attendance and explain the importance of being at school.

II. Share a weekly digital, translated building-level Principal Update to Families that clearly communicates procedures & policies. Include a weekly "fun feature" that folks look forward to. Post across multiple platforms.

III. Share weekly, digital, translated classroom/homeroom updates that build a communication bridge from home to school. Include schedule information, lunch menu, upcoming assignments, upcoming events, shout-outs for good attendance, and contact information for teacher and school counselors. Post across multiple platforms.

IV. Every week, check the analytics from the above weekly updates. See who is engaging and who isn't, and measure this against attendance data.

V. Each week, work with educators and counselors to reach out individually to families of students showing a pattern of absenteeism, ideally in their preferred language, to reinforce the importance of their student's participation in school.

VI. Where possible, swap out paper-based forms, which can serve as barriers to attendance, with digital forms.

"The teacher is engaged not in teaching the subject, but in teaching the student."

– John Dewey

School Event



Ash Valley School District

5th Annual Family Wellness Day

Don't miss our 5th Family Wellness Day!



GrandParent • 44m ago

So great I can help out



P

Parent • 43m ago

¡Gracias! Estoy muy agradecida por la escuela de mi hijo



Synced with calendar



100% Reach  500  50 Volunteers

School Communications & Improved Student Performance

Parents and caregivers are far better able to support their child's education when they have readily available access to information about what their child is learning, class expectations, assignments and due dates, and what support systems exist at school if their child is struggling.

Most educators truly believe they're already communicating this information home, and, on a certain level, they are. But it's possible that what's being shared is based on the principle of equality rather than equity.

Student performance is dependent on families being able to access and understand information sent from schools. Translated texts, emails, calls and letters become necessary to keep everyone informed and engaged in their student's education.

School Communications and Improved Family Engagement

An educator's ultimate goal is to meet students where they are and help them succeed. Investing in a comprehensive digital communications plan bridges gaps and establishes a connection with a student and their family.

Educators need to evolve as the population does.

In 5 years, 100% of the K-12 family population will be millennials. Millennials have their own communication style and set of needs:

- ◆ They are the first generation of digital natives
- ◆ Their mobile phones serve as their base of operations
- ◆ They chronicle their family lives on social media
- ◆ They schedule everything, including leisure activities
- ◆ They hate phone calls

By 2025, 1 in every 4 US K-12 public school students will speak a different language at home.

Multilingual families and caregivers have different barriers to engagement since they may not be versed in English. Building trust means having accessible class materials and conversations with them in their preferred language.

And then there are the challenges that come with being an immigrant family:

- ◆ Struggling with the social and cultural mores
- ◆ Struggling with the language
- ◆ Being unfamiliar with the ins and outs of the US public school system

A one-size-fits-all approach to school-home communication will not work for what is soon to be 25% of the school-age population.

At-Risk Families Are Increasing in Numbers

Children living in poverty have the highest absenteeism and drop out rates. Arguably, engaging this group of families and caregivers is our most important task, and that means removing every barrier we possibly can, including language and social barriers. Keeping an open line of communication with families and building trust from the beginning is critical.

6 ways to improve family engagement:

I. Before students return to school after summer break, introduce families to the counselors, the building, the classroom, and the principal with a translated digital newsletter welcoming students back.

II. Share a translated digital “Meet the Teacher” newsletter and include photos of the classroom, contact details, and bulleted information about procedures at the beginning of the year.

III. Reach the families that are hardest to engage by mailing out communications in their home language.

IV. Look for alternative ways to hold family conferences for those whose transportation, employment, or childcare situation doesn’t allow them to attend in person.

V. Encourage family and caregiver engagement by adding digital surveys to weekly updates.

VI. Families aren’t opening the digital updates? Resend the next day with a clearer, and more urgent, subject line: “What you need to know for your 4th grader this week” will get more opens than “4th grade news.”

How Administrators Can Help Teachers Succeed



Data-driven communication is as integral to success as data-driven instruction.

When school districts/buildings invest in robust communications tools, leadership has a 360-degree view of communications across their entire community: how educators are communicating with families, how leaders are communicating with educators, and how educators are supporting students and communicating home. Aligning professional learning with district priorities such as student attendance, student achievement, and stronger home-school engagement is far easier when there's data to support the goals.

From district/building leadership to instructional coaches to educators, using data to guide your professional development plan can give you insights that will lead to success.

Two immediate steps you should take to align school communication goals with educators' professional development:

- ◆ At the building leader level, share a weekly update that sets the tone, models communications, and shares resources for educator growth and development.
- ◆ Build family communication goals into the district evaluation process and instructional coaching program.

Sample Communications Plan for Schools & Districts

SchoolStatus supports administrators, educators, and families by optimizing school communications. This is a sample school communications plan based on successful programs we’ve worked on with our partners.

Strategy	Purpose	Timeline	Audience	Distribution	Persons Responsible	Measures of Success
District-Level						
Superintendent Update	Leadership vision for the district; district in the news; highlights & wins	Monthly	Families, faculty/staff, School Board, community members	Smore Newsletter via Social Media; SchoolStatus Connect; website	School PR team; Superintendent	Opens & clicks on analytics dashboard
Achievement Initiative	Engage families & increase attendance (daily & at transition points)	Automated	Home adults	Mail, email, text	SI&A	Increase in attendance numbers
Building-Level						
Principal Update	Welcome & engage families with weekly accounts of school life & explain procedures	Weekly	Families at each building	Smore Newsletter via MNS; social media; website	Principal & assistant	Increase in percentage of readers
Library Newsletter	Encourage literacy, reading for pleasure, tech support & make families feel welcome; celebrate National Theme months	Monthly	Families at each building	Smore Newsletter; MNS; social media, website	Librarian	Percentage of opens; increase in families using library
Classroom Update	Keep home adults informed about week-to-week classwork	Weekly	Home adults of students in class or homeroom	Smore Newsletter via email, social media	Teacher	Percentage of readers

Strategy	Purpose	Timeline	Audience	Distribution	Persons Responsible	Measures of Success
Graded Work on Portal	Keep students and families up-to-date on academic progress	Ongoing	Students, families	Portal, Messaging Alerts through SchoolStatus	Teachers	Percentage of families accessing portal; timely updating of grades
Teachers' Messages to Families	1:1 communication for check-ins, challenges, praise not included in weekly update	As needed	Families	SchoolStatus Connect platform	Teachers, counselors	Improved patterns of attendance, student success, & parent engagement
Conferences & Conference Reports	1:1 meetings to discuss student progress; translatable reports for families unable to attend	Twice yearly; as needed	All families	Event announcements in principal & teacher updates	Teacher	Participation
Student Progress Reports/ Report Cards	Communicate successes & opportunities for improvement	Quarterly	Students and families	Portal; MNS; translatable versions on Smore	Teacher	Student improvement; graduation rates
Digital Forms	Track forms and ensure none are missed	Ongoing	Families	1 to 1 messaging; Forms page	Teacher	Improved response rate
Counseling						
Counselor Updates	Keep families informed about academic support services; mental health services; college counseling	Variable	Families in each building	Smore Newsletter; social media	Counselors	Percentage of opens; numbers of click throughs for services
College Counseling	Keep families engaged; encourage attendance & college/career readiness	Monthly	High School families	Smore Newsletters & automated SchoolStatus Attend letters	College Counselors	Percentage of opens; numbers of click throughs for services; attendance numbers
Faculty Professional Learning						
Teacher Professional Learning & Growth	Digital tool for coaching teachers	Ongoing	Teachers & coaches	SchoolStatus Boost	Coach	Teacher improvement across goals
District Coaching Newsletter NL	Tips and strategies for faculty	Monthly	Faculty	SchoolStatus Boost; Smore Newsletters; social media	Instructional coach leadership	Engagement rates
Faculty Building Newsletter NL	Alignment with building & district goals; events; PD; rewards	Weekly	Faculty	Smore Newsletters	Building principals	Faculty retention rates

 12 individual contacts x

 2 courses x

 2 groups x

Send as Email

Send as Message

☒ Auto-translate to preferred languages



Main Takeaways

In conclusion, effective communication is the cornerstone of a flourishing educational environment. It builds strong partnerships between schools, families, and students, fostering trust and encouraging academic success. Employing digital tools such as SchoolStatus supports these efforts by breaking down barriers and making information easily accessible to all.

When you create a plan for your district, make sure to revisit the main insights from this guide to reach academic success:

- ◆ School districts and buildings must consider the needs of all families in developing their school communications plan.
- ◆ School communications are about building relationships, which means different families have different needs.
- ◆ Building equitable communications practices across districts and building communications can decrease absenteeism.
- ◆ Taking all families' communication needs into account in your school communications will improve family engagement.
- ◆ Opportunities abound to communicate, coach, & model equitable and inclusive communications practices with educators.
- ◆ Explore the sample Academic Communications Plan in pages 12-13

About SchoolStatus: Helping You Communicate Effectively

It takes a lot to keep families informed, but investing in communications means better academic outcomes. That's where we come in to help—making things easier by automating communication and data about your district.

SchoolStatus is a communication tool created to help school administrators build stronger relationships with families. With SchoolStatus, there's a centralized communication hub where you can find easy-to-digest data and auto-translated two-way conversations for text messages, emails, and phone calls. It helps empower administrators, inform families, and improve student outcomes.

Schedule a personalized demo of SchoolStatus and learn how we help schools and districts decrease absenteeism and improve school-home communication.

[Book your demo today!](#)

SchoolStatus
enables districts and
schools to **engage**
more families with
impactful, data-
driven messages.

[Request a Demo](#)

