

EBOOK

# 10 Ways to Improve Family Engagement at the District Level



**Proven Approaches for K-12 Superintendents Looking to Bridge the Communication Gap, Strengthen Family Involvement, and Enhance Student Success Through Cohesive, Efficient, District-Wide Communications.**

# The Criticality of School-Family Communication

Most K-12 school district superintendents know how important it is to stay engaged with their students' family members and caregivers.

**When families are regularly kept informed on school activities, schools see these benefits:**

- ◆ More positive learning environment
- ◆ Increase in attendance
- ◆ Improved social and emotional functioning
- ◆ Fewer disciplinary issues and drop-out rates
- ◆ Increase in college enrollment rates



Streamlined, user-friendly school-family communications are as integral to a student's educational progress as the curriculum and instructional methods. At a micro level, communications are about sharing information. At the macro level, they're about building relationships and trust. Study after study points to school-family communication as an essential component of student success.

## Building Relationships with Families

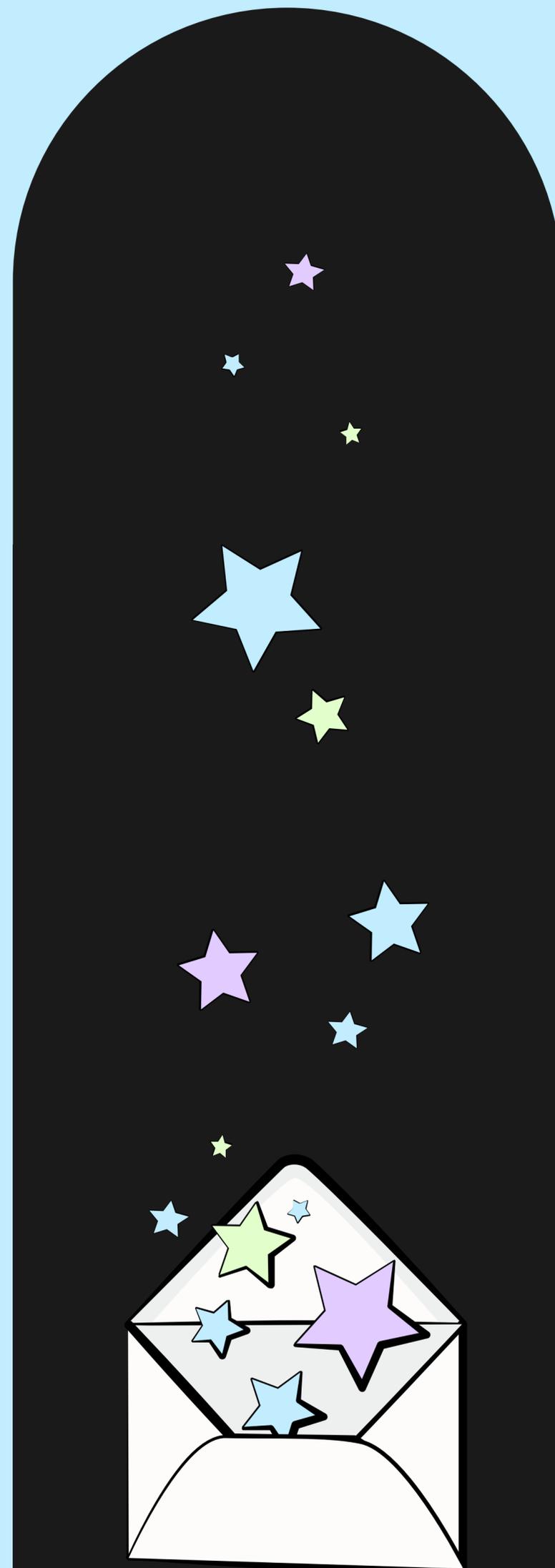
At the heart of a ready-for-excellence communication strategy is the need to build trust. Research has also shown that well designed communication leads to family members being more supportive of their children's academic success, as they're more likely to collaborate with the district and appreciate recommendations to improve students' learning.

**In a recent survey, 84% of US educators said that building trust with families was a top communications priority.**

The more that family members feel informed about their child's educational status and school activities and plans—when families feel like they are part of a team working towards a common goal—the more they trust school administrators and educators and become involved with school events.

## The Role of the Superintendents in Communications

As a district leader, you set the tone and rhythm of communications. You oversee the decisions about how often families hear from educators, the positivity of messages, and the types of content that are relayed, as well as the technology that's adopted and used by stakeholders, from administrators to educators to families.



It's important to be thoughtful in designing or revamping your district's communication system to ensure that it serves everyone in the community now and well into the future.

The superintendent also has a public role to take on, one that's instrumental in defining a school's culture. Well-timed, constructive, and regular communications from a superintendent can set a tone that leaves families feeling good about the culture of the school their child attends. For example, it can put families at ease to send a welcome letter at the beginning of the school year, messages that promote attendance as a community value, and letters congratulating students with exemplary academic success or attendance.

**Superintendents also have the responsibility of ensuring that those on staff do their part to align with a district's communications strategies. Here's how those different communications should flow:**

**SUPERINTENDENT OUTREACH TO ALL FAMILIES**

**PRINCIPAL UPDATE TO FAMILIES**

**CLASSROOM UPDATE**

**1:1 OUTREACH**

The challenges are there—families' busy schedules, multilingual communities, different technology preferences, at-risk factors—but regular communication that comes from district leaders and educators can mitigate those issues to help build relationships and trust with families, giving students the best chance of achieving academic success.

# 10 Proven Ways to Optimize School-Family Communication

District leaders looking to meet communications objectives can turn to evidence-based strategies—ones that have been proven to build relationships and trust between school districts and the families of the students they serve. Let's review 10 strategies that offer schools the best chance for success.

## 1 . Streamline Communication Channels

School communities that rely on multiple communication systems tend to have a difficult time keeping families and staff informed and involved. It leads to confusion, missed messages, and apathy. All-in-one communication platforms like SchoolStatus, on the other hand, offer districts a centralized platform so that all communication—newsletters, texts, emails, and phone calls—take place in one secure portal that families can access without having to provide their personal contact information.

## 2 . Provide Accurate, Up-To-Date Information

Consistent, reliable information from schools is a key component of student success. When families know what's happening in school, they feel more involved and better able to support their students' education and development. SchoolStatus makes it easy for school administrators, educators, and advisors to keep families informed through direct outreach, mass announcements, and up-to-date school websites. And the platform's automated tools help school staff save time and control when and how information is shared.

## 3 . Keep It Personal

The idea of interacting with a school superintendent can be intimidating to families. Bridge that gap by sending regular emails and newsletters that express yourself as a person and get across why issues such as school attendance and communication are important to you. Include your photo so that families recognize you on campus.

#### **4. Relay Multilingual and Inclusive Content**

School districts can keep families informed and build trust by ensuring that all communication is presented in the languages preferred by family members. SchoolStatus' translation feature makes this easy by automatically translating all forms of communication. Administrators should also be mindful of unconventional family dynamics when crafting language in communications. For example, some students may be cared for by a single parent, grandparents, same-sex couples, or foster parents.

#### **5. Implement an Effective Attendance - Tracking System**

Districts need a turn-key solution that automatically delivers positive, consistent, and timely attendance notifications to help increase attendance rates and save staff time. SchoolStatus accomplishes these goals through automated processes that replace the manual stuffing of envelopes and other tasks used for attendance interventions.

It also provides detailed data that's required to measure, manage, and prevent chronic absenteeism, generates legally required notices, responds to chronically absent students, and manages conferences. The workflow-driven dashboard guides authorized users through the attendance-intervention process, identifying all students who should be sent an attendance notification or require a conference.

## **6. Enable Visibility Into Student Data**

Teachers don't have time to sift through papers and disorganized digital files looking for student information. With SchoolStatus, all data and communication relating to a student's record—assessment records, attendance rates, educational status, and more—is contained within the Student Card, which educators and administrators can quickly access and scan.

## **7. Share Updates In All Languages**

School districts can keep families informed and build trust by ensuring that all communication is presented in the languages preferred by family members. SchoolStatus' translation feature makes this easy by automatically translating all forms of communication. Administrators should also be mindful of unconventional family dynamics when crafting language in communications. For example, some students may be cared for by a single parent, grandparents, same-sex couples, or foster parents.

## **8. Go Paperless with Digital Forms**

Relying on manual, old-school processes can stick families and teachers with a mountain of paperwork. And sometimes an important permission slip, approval form, or payment request gets crushed in the bottom of a backpack. Send online school forms to families via email or text, so they can quickly and securely enter information, share approvals, and make payments.

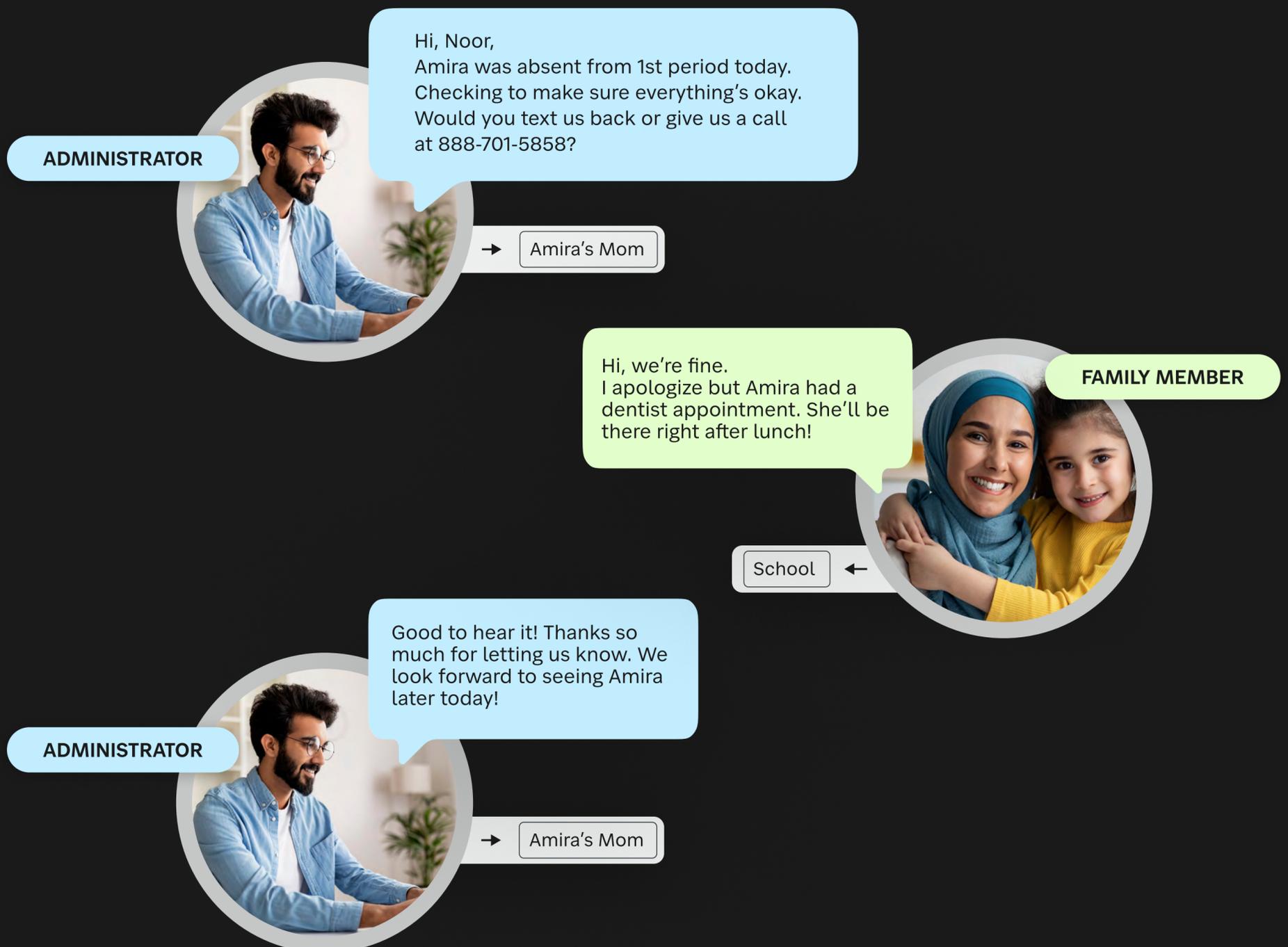
## **9. Prioritize User-Friendliness, Convenience, and Digital Equity**

One of the most impactful features of a communications platform is the ability to be device-agnostic and send information across multiple channels. This offers options to families so they can decide which is the most convenient way for them to receive information. Communication choices and needs greatly vary based on the age of family members, access to technology, and at-risk status. Practicing this type of digital equity by offering families options for receiving information in different ways ensures better engagement.

## 10. Encourage 1:1 Outreach

To maintain engagement, family members must not only receive email “blasts” that are meant for large audiences, but also communications meant only for them. 1:1 outreach is particularly important to reduce absenteeism, whether the message is in the form of a text, phone call, or email. These notifications can be automated to ensure all communication happens in a timely way.

Here’s an example of an 1:1 text conversation between a school and family member that’s initially triggered by an automatic notification and then followed up with a personal text sent by an administrator:





# Build Relationships Through Meaningful Engagement

Superintendents who stay engaged with district families can realize ongoing, long-term benefits that positively impact the entire community, as it generates good feelings and confidence in the decisions they make. They can improve communication methods by following best practices derived from strategies that have been proven to optimize school-family communication at the district level. From leveraging technology wisely to promoting positive messaging, district leaders can take practical approaches that positively impact family engagement and student success.

# The Intersection of Technology and Trust

Having moved past the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, school districts around the country have had the chance to experiment with different types of digital communication tools.

But making a measurable impact on such important issues as attendance and graduation rates begins with a solid communications strategy that includes the adoption of a best-of-breed digital platform.

It's why many school districts are moving past manual, outdated communications methods, such as paper tracking and phone calls to family homes, and opting instead for SchoolStatus' automated, digital tools that build and strengthen relationships that families have with superintendents, administrators, and educators.

SchoolStatus is a unified K-12 solution for streamlined school-home communication and data-driven attendance management. We help districts increase the quality, consistency, and frequency of school-home communications; improve attendance with automated interventions; build trust and community engagement with integrated Smore newsletters and digital forms; streamline form management and workflows; and promote teacher coaching and effectiveness.

**With 200 million+ successful home-school interactions and millions of users across all product lines, SchoolStatus drives meaningful results for districts and schools throughout the US.**

Learn how SchoolStatus can help you optimize school, educator, and student success.

[Request a Demo](#)

