

Teacher Appreciation Week is a moment to recognize the educators who shape student success every day. But beyond lesson plans and curriculum, there's another layer of impact that often goes unseen: the relationships teachers build with families.

This year, we're proud to launch the first-ever ParentSquare Teacher Appreciation Awards, a program designed to celebrate educators who go above and beyond to build strong connections between schools and families.

We received more than 100 nominations from schools and districts across the country, each telling a powerful story of an educator who goes above and beyond every day to connect with students and families.

From those nominations, a group of standout honorees emerged. These are teachers who don't just communicate, they build trust, create belonging, and bring parents and caregivers into the school community in meaningful ways.

Together, they show what strong family engagement infrastructure looks like in practice: consistent, accessible communication that keeps families informed, involved, and connected to their child's success.

Here are the educators who stood out.

What makes these educators exceptional

Across every nomination, a few themes came through clearly.

These teachers:

- Build lasting partnerships with families, not just one-way communication
- Create inclusive, supportive classrooms where every student feels seen and heard
- Connect communication to real student growth and success
- Show up with consistency, creativity, and care—day after day

Their stories look different, but the impact is the same. Students feel supported. Families feel connected. School communities grow stronger.

2026 Teacher Appreciation Awards honorees  
Samuel Griffin- an advocate for student success



KIPP Legacy High School, KIPP KC (MO)  
*Bringing history to life through connection*

Samuel doesn't just keep families informed, he brings them into the learning experience.

Through thoughtful, consistent weekly messages across all of his classes, he ensures families always understand what students are learning, how they're progressing, and how families can help at home. His communication is proactive and personal, especially for students who need additional support.

*"He goes far beyond standard expectations...ensuring that families are always informed, engaged, and connected. Rather than waiting for concerns to escalate, he maintains regular, personalized communication with parents; sharing progress, offering strategies, and partnering with them to ensure each student's success. This level of care builds trust and creates a true home-school partnership."*

— Nominator: Erica Kenney, Assistant Principal of Operations at KIPP KC

In the weeks leading up to a field trip to the World War I Museum, Samuel transformed his ParentSquare posts into messages written from the perspective of a World War I

soldier—blending storytelling with key information in a way that drew both students and families into the experience.



*“He doesn’t just share information—he creates experiences that deepen learning and strengthen the connection between school and home.”*



Jami Navarro—a positive, solution-oriented leader

Ovilla Christian School (TX)

*Building community through creativity and care*

Jami Navarro’s impact reaches every corner of her school community.

As an art teacher across all grade levels and a varsity cheer coach, Jami creates opportunities for students to feel connected, confident, and inspired. Whether through ParentSquare newsletters, classroom updates, or school-wide communication, she brings energy and inclusion into everything she shares—helping families feel part of the experience, not just observers.

*“She jumps into learning new techniques and processes, giving advice and perspective from her more than 20 years of teaching experience at all levels. Her focus is on what’s best for students and this is what makes her communication stellar.”*

— Nominator: Julianne Fowler, Marketing and Communication Director at Ovilla Christian School

Her encouragement can be life-changing. When one student discovered a passion for photography but struggled to find his place socially, Jami saw his potential and encouraged him to submit his work to a state competition—where he went on to win two awards!

*“Jami is a cheerleader for our students in so many ways!”*

From ParentSquare updates to everyday interactions, Jami builds belonging and opens doors, helping students grow in confidence while strengthening the entire school community.



Faraz Chaudry—a caring, dependable student advocate

Holmes Middle School, Community Consolidated District 21 (IL)

*Creating belonging in the smallest moments*

For Faraz, impact begins before the school day even starts.

Each morning, he greets every student by name, setting a tone of belonging that carries through the day.

*“It makes a child feel seen, valued, respected, and welcomed.”*

— Nominator: Olga Shingurova, Parent at Holmes Middle School

For families, that consistency matters, knowing their child starts each day feeling supported brings a sense of reassurance that extends beyond the classroom.

He communicates clearly with families through ParentSquare and email, making sure they stay informed about concerts and school events, while also making communication

accessible by connecting with families in Spanish when needed.



*“Being bilingual, Mr. Chaudry makes the announcements during concerts in both English and Spanish. He can communicate with families in Spanish, whenever needed, which is helpful since our school has over 70% Hispanic students.”*

He also supports students in practical ways, providing loaner instruments for families who may not be able to afford rentals, making sure every student has an equal opportunity to participate and succeed.

Together, these everyday actions create a classroom where students feel supported, families feel included, and every child has the opportunity to thrive.



Stephanie Boynton—an inclusive, engaging educator

R.J. Murray Middle School, St. Johns County (FL)

*Creating a classroom students will never forget*

Stephanie Boynton creates a classroom where students feel seen, valued, and excited to learn.

Through ParentSquare updates and family outreach, she brings parents into the learning process while creating a vibrant and engaging classroom culture.

*“Mrs. Boynton helps students feel seen and valued just as they are, while making school a more fun place to be with her over the top enthusiasm and school spirit! She goes far beyond teaching the required social studies curriculum, but creates a safe space and community for all.”*

— Nominator: Carrie Groleau, Parent at RJ Murray Middle School

Her presence extends beyond the classroom, supporting students in extracurriculars and building lasting relationships with families.

*“She is truly one of the most caring and effective teachers at Murray...She meets them [students] where they are and is the kind of teacher that makes a lasting impact.”*

— Nominator: Catherine Growick, Parent at RJ Murray Middle School

Through it all, Stephanie creates a classroom experience that stays with students long after they leave, one built on connection, confidence, and a genuine love of learning.



Jeremy Henderson—an unwavering student supporter

Excelsior Barstow, Excelsior Charter School (CA)

*Leading with quiet, committed compassion*

Jeremy Henderson’s impact is defined by care, consistency, and compassion.

When a student in his school was experiencing homelessness, he stepped in quietly providing support to make sure that student had what they needed. He didn’t seek recognition. He simply acted because it was the right thing to do.

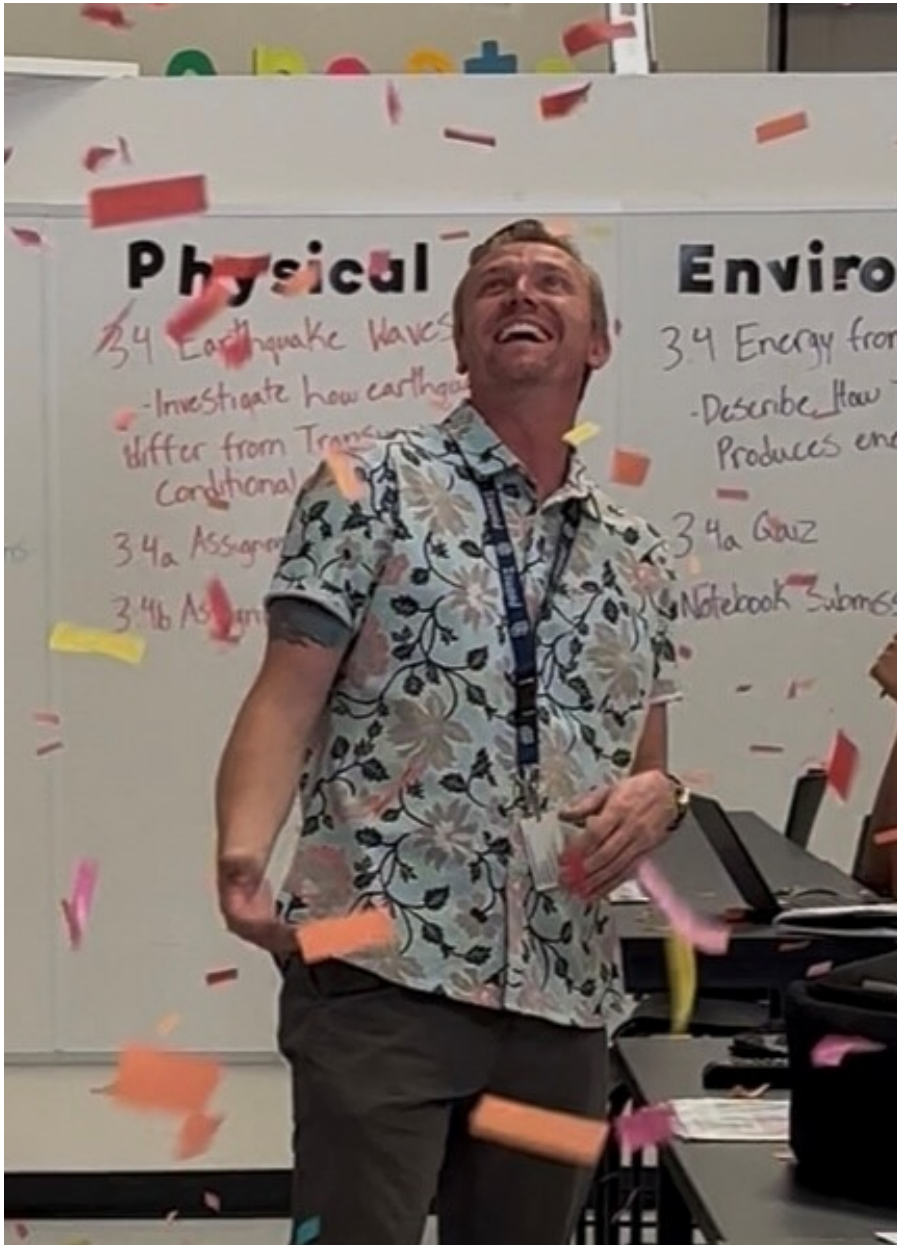
*“Mr. Henderson’s impact on our school community extends far beyond the classroom and into the lives of the students and families he serves. His commitment to students is not*

*situational or occasional. It is consistent, genuine, and rooted in a deep sense of care.”*

— Nominator: Jennifer Van Norman, Assistant Principal at Excelsior Charter School

In moments like this, his support goes beyond academics—helping families navigate challenges and making students feel safe and supported, so they can focus on learning.

*“Mr. Henderson exemplifies what it means to be an educator who leads with both heart and purpose. His influence is seen in the trust he builds, the excitement he creates, and the lives he quietly changes every day.”*



In the classroom, Jeremy brings energy and curiosity into every lesson, while outside of it, he consistently shows up for his students and community—quietly making a lasting difference in the lives of those he serves.

Tiffany Stephan—a conduit for connecting families as true partners

Brookville Elementary School, Brookville Local Schools (OH)

### *Turning communication into true family partnership*

Tiffany Stephan connects families to the classroom through daily ParentSquare updates, photos, and messages.

*“Mrs. Stephan is a ‘master of reach’ who transforms the educational experience by turning parents into true partners in their children’s growth. Her commitment to daily communication is extraordinary, connecting with busy families through photos, videos, and weekly newsletters that bridge the gap between home and the classroom.”*

— Nominator: Cory Caudill, Director of Technology & Digital Communications at Brookville Local Schools.

Families feel connected, informed, and supported in their child’s learning.



*“Mrs. Stephan is an amazing teacher who goes the extra mile...I am sure she could have chosen any career she wanted, but somehow ended up exactly where she was destined to be. Truly a magnificent teacher.”*

Through that consistency and care, Tiffany turns everyday communication into meaningful connection, helping families feel like true partners in their child’s learning journey.



Sherri Kolodziej—a clear, concise communicator

Wilkins Elementary, Indian Springs School District 109 (IL)  
*Making communication simple, meaningful, and human*

Sherri understands that communication isn't about volume, it's about impact.

Her weekly “Friday Preview” delivered through ParentSquare gives families a clear, concise look at the week ahead, eliminating guesswork and reducing stress for students and parents alike.

*“She has mastered the perfect balance of predictability and personal connection.”*

— Nominator: Patricia Van Huisen, Information & Technology Support Teacher at Indian Springs School District 109

For busy families, this clarity makes it easier to stay engaged without feeling overwhelmed—turning communication into something helpful rather than another task to manage.

*“Sherri curates windows into the kindergarten world, sharing photos of ‘important and fun’ milestones that allow parents to feel like a fly on the wall during their child’s most formative year. She proves that you don’t have to be a ‘new’ teacher to be a tech-forward one; you just have to care deeply about the community you serve. Any parent in her*

*classroom feels more than just ‘informed’—they feel like a valued partner in their child’s education.”*

Sherri’s thoughtful approach turns communication into connection, helping families feel informed, involved, and truly part of their child’s earliest school experiences.

#### Recognizing the impact of connection

These educators remind us that thoughtful communication is more than a tool or gesture—it’s a bridge between schools and families. When connections are strong, students show up better prepared and confident in their bright futures

During Teacher Appreciation Week, we’re proud to celebrate these educators. Together, they reflect what strong family engagement infrastructure looks like across schools and districts: intentional communication that builds trust, strengthens partnerships, and supports student success.

#### Celebrating educators everywhere

These honorees represent a small sample of the millions of incredible educators making an impact every day across the country. During this week, and always, we encourage districts, students, and families to take a moment to recognize the educators who make *all* the difference in their communities.

Ready for a better way?

Bring ParentSquare to your school or district

[Sign up for a demo](#)