

Challenge & Solution

Bedford School District's administrators and teachers were using separate communication systems, requiring teachers to manually create and maintain distribution lists that were often outdated or incomplete with each new class rotation. The district selected ParentSquare and rolled it out across all six schools, starting with principals and expanding to teachers, athletic coaches, and school clubs.

Results

- Eliminated manual distribution lists through automatic sync with PowerSchool SIS
- Streamlined parent-teacher conferences with consistent, reusable templates across all schools
- Full accountability loop for all communications, with delivery and read confirmation for every message

Bringing consistency to every school and every coach

When Bedford School District set out to find a communications platform that all six of its schools could use across all grades, it had good reason for doing so. For starters, its administrators were using one communication system and its teachers were using a completely different system. Teachers had to create their own distribution lists, which weren't always current.

For example, a teacher would develop a distribution list at the start of the new school year but would get a new student in January and forget to add their parents to the distribution list. The district's middle school integrated arts instructors faced a different set of challenges, namely due to the rotation of their classes throughout the school year.

"Those teachers see half the school over the course of a year, or a different group every half-quarter," explained Digital Learning Specialist (middle school) Donna Dennis. "That meant teachers were creating new distribution lists with every new class rotation." And while those teachers were sending similar information to each new group, they'd still have to start from scratch for every new class. even receiving," White added.

One-Stop-Shop communications wanted

After evaluating various communication tools on the market, Bedford School District selected the ParentSquare school-home communications platform. It started at the School Administrative Unit (SAU) principal level and then quickly moved to initiating teachers, athletic coaches, and school clubs on the program.

Digital Learning Specialist (high school) Craig Sheil worked with the high school athletic director to roll out the application at the winter athletes meeting, where all student athletes converged on campus to learn how to activate their accounts and use ParentSquare.

“The athletic director had a meeting with his coaches, and he explained to them how they would log in and use the platform,” Sheil said. “We repeated that process until we got through basically all of our athletes.” Next, the district began prepping all incoming freshmen on how to activate and use their accounts.

Fast-forward to 2023 and Bedford School District is using ParentSquare across all of its schools. The platform is also used to share information about field trips, clubs, athletics and other extracurricular events. “The expectation now is that the teacher or coach creates a group in ParentSquare, which gives them the ability to message parents and reach out to students,” Sheil explained. “The idea is for us all to have one-stop-shop communications.”

“We’ve encountered some situations where parents have told us that they didn’t receive the message, but [we can see right in ParentSquare that the message was sent, received and read](#). We have that validation, and we can easily see when someone has opened all of the messages that we sent them.”

Donna Dennis

Digital Learning Specialist

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A platform that does the heavy lifting

Teachers that once had to add new students to their distribution lists, or build completely new lists every quarter, no longer have to do this heavy lifting. With ParentSquare synced with the district’s SIS, PowerSchool, all information added to the latter is automatically transferred into the ParentSquare platform. “It’s all taken care of for the teachers,” Sheil added.

For schoolwide communications, Sheil can log in and immediately check all three: staff, students, and parents (or just one or two, depending on the specific need). ParentSquare has also helped the district streamline its parent conferences. Before, every school used a different program. Now, all teachers are using ParentSquare's conferencing tool.

Dennis said being able to create templates for those parent conferences has been a huge time saver for teachers, who can adjust the templates while also maintaining a consistent look and feel across all communications. "It's a lot less work for teachers; it saves them time," she said.

ParentSquare has also helped the district create an accountability loop for all of its school-home communications, which used to hit parents and guardians from different angles and in different formats. Now, all of the messages, posts and resources are on a single platform.

"We've encountered some situations where parents have told us that they didn't receive the message, but we can see right in ParentSquare that the message was sent, received and read," Dennis said. "We have that validation, and we can easily see when someone has opened all of the messages that we sent them."

Flexible and adaptable

Dennis also liked how ParentSquare is adaptable for different schools and grade levels. High school teachers may use it differently than middle school instructors do, for example, and that's perfectly okay.

"ParentSquare is flexible enough to be used at different levels, and how different teachers want to be using it," she added. "They can turn on messaging at the high school level, but we don't have to do that at the middle school level. That's because the platform is customizable for the intended audience."

Ready for a Better Way?

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