

Challenge & Solution

Cherokee County School District needed a districtwide communication platform that could reach specific subgroups, grades, and classes while aligning with its strategic blueprint priorities. After piloting ParentSquare across select schools in 2020, the district rolled out the platform to all 40 schools in 2022, replacing multiple tools with one unified, bidirectional system.

Results

- Saved \$130,000 by distributing student handbooks and codes of conduct digitally
- Consolidated multiple communication technologies into one districtwide platform for 42,500 students
- Delivery reports and engagement analytics provided documentation for federal program compliance

Strategic alignment from pilot to full district rollout

Cherokee County School District (CCSD) wanted to enhance their school to parent communication to promote greater family engagement and collaboration. Prior communication tools for school-to-home communications weren't as user-friendly as CCSD's principals would have liked, for instance, and drilling down into specific subgroups, grades or classes was impossible.

"We went in search of another option," CCSD Chief Operations Officer, Debra Murdock, Ed.D., said. "Once we started digging in, we realized that our need for a tool was larger than just a principal/school-based function, and that what we needed was much broader, districtwide communications functionality."

After exploring its options and discovering ParentSquare, CCSD's selection team decided to pilot the secure, safe school-home communication platform. "We learned about ParentSquare through the request for proposal (RFP) process," Murdock said. "We loved that the platform came with a lot of functionality and that it gave control to our principals in providing better communication to families, staff and students."

Following the blueprint

When CCSD looks for new technology solutions, it strives for strategic alignment with several Blueprint priority areas. Those areas include (but aren't limited to) being able to communicate across multiple audiences, streamline district processes, use feature-rich platforms and achieve hard and/or soft cost savings. ParentSquare checked off these and other Blueprint boxes with a single solution.

From its new communication platform, CCSD also wanted to be able to communicate with its stakeholders in multiple ways. It not only wanted the functionality of email, for example, but it also wanted to be able to use SMS text and mobile apps for interactions. The district launched a ParentSquare pilot with a specific group of elementary, middle and high schools.

"Our goal was to get feedback from the principals and teachers," CCSD Supervisor of Instructional Technology Shannon Carroll, Ed.D., said. Because it was 2020, and the nation was in the early stages of the global pandemic, the district decided that this phased-in implementation approach would be best.

"We didn't want to mandate the use of ParentSquare across the board because everyone was just doing what they could do to get through the day at that point," Carroll explained. The decision to switch to ParentSquare would prove invaluable as the district worked through myriad pandemic-related challenges.

"Our team crafted ways to communicate the important information about COVID exposures, quarantines and other issues," Carroll added. "I can't even imagine how many ParentSquare messages we were sending a day through that initial pilot period."

Letting them focus on core goals

As CCSD's Executive Director, Business Information Services, Office of Technology & Information Services, Bradley Orth especially likes ParentSquare's "bidirectional" communication capabilities and the fact that the platform is student information system (SIS) agnostic. "ParentSquare is the best of breed approach," Orth said, "and one central point to converge multiple technologies."

ParentSquare not only manages family community engagement, Orth added, but it also helps CCSD improve its operational efficiencies. "For the most part, we're not putting the burden

on our staff at the schools to print and mail things anymore,” Orth said. “That creates a positive impact on our climate and lets teachers focus on their core goal of educating our students.”

Orth said the school-home communication platform also provides the reporting and analytics that CCSD needs for federal program compliance and other mandates. “We can easily review delivery reports and engagement and substantiate everything with data.”

For example, by statute parents can opt out of clubs that they don’t want their student to participate in. Because the opt-out links are sent through ParentSquare, the district has a breadcrumb trail showing exactly who did or didn’t opt out of which communications. “We don’t have to do that very often,” Murdock said, “but when we do, all the information about which emails were sent and when they were opened and read is right in front of us.”

Full district rollout

In 2022, CCSD rolled out ParentSquare across all 40 of its schools. Having garnered feedback from its schools throughout the pilot period, CCSD combined ParentSquare’s training with its own guidance to help new users. For example, the district advised those users to be deliberate with their communications and to focus on two to three messages per week.

“We didn’t want to inundate our stakeholders,” Murdock explained, “knowing that if they receive too many messages, they’ll just tune them out. That approach has had a great impact across the board as well with all of our stakeholders.”

The district has also been able to save paper and the related costs by using ParentSquare to distribute its code of conduct and student handbook to all families and students. The hard copies were going to cost \$130,000 to print and send. “Instead, we leveraged ParentSquare to send those documents out with links,” Murdock said. “That covered the statute requirement and saved the district a great deal of money.”

“We’re not putting the burden on our staff at the schools to print and mail things anymore. That creates a positive impact on our climate and lets teachers [focus on their core goal](#) of educating our students.”

Bradley Orth

Executive Director, Business Information Services, Office of Technology & Information

Services

01 / 01 [Previous](#) [Next](#)

Letting them focus on core goals

As CCSD's Executive Director, Business Information Services, Office of Technology & Information Services, Bradley Orth especially likes ParentSquare's "bidirectional" communication capabilities and the fact that the platform is student information system (SIS) agnostic. "ParentSquare is the best of breed approach," Orth said, "and one central point to converge multiple technologies."

ParentSquare not only manages family community engagement, Orth added, but it also helps CCSD improve its operational efficiencies. "For the most part, we're not putting the burden on our staff at the schools to print and mail things anymore," Orth said. "That creates a positive impact on our climate and lets teachers focus on their core goal of educating our students."

Orth said the school-home communication platform also provides the reporting and analytics that CCSD needs for federal program compliance and other mandates. "We can easily review delivery reports and engagement and substantiate everything with data."

For example, by statute parents can opt out of clubs that they don't want their student to participate in. Because the opt-out links are sent through ParentSquare, the district has a breadcrumb trail showing exactly who did or didn't opt out of which communications. "We don't have to do that very often," Murdock said, "but when we do, all the information about which emails were sent and when they were opened and read is right in front of us."

A platform everyone can use

Going forward, Orth expects CCSD to expand its use of ParentSquare within its extracurricular and athletic program areas. This will put the district one step closer to having one place where all stakeholders can go for relevant informatio.

From the parents' lens, ParentSquare makes things much easier than having to track down an email, he added, and supports the student, the faculty, and the parents. "Parents can easily support their child's academic achievement by going to one platform for relevant and actionable information," Orth added, "it keeps them informed of events, attendance,



academic performance, and many other areas.”

Ready for a Better Way?

Bring ParentSquare to your district or school

[Get a Demo](#)