

Reaching Families Requires More Than Publishing Information

Fredericksburg City Public Schools needed a better way to help families receive and respond to school communications. Katie Hornung, Supervisor of Communications, had seen how difficult that became when website updates, family messaging, and district communications lived in separate systems.

“Some families relied on email, while others responded to text messages. We didn’t want to depend on families downloading an app to receive school communication,” Hornung said.

Disconnected systems and inconsistent contact data made it harder for staff to reach the right families. As Katie explained, “We had no way to directly message groups.”

That’s why she partnered closely with Thomas Johnson, Instructional Data Coordinator and Student Information System Lead, to evaluate how the district could improve both communication and the accuracy of family contact data.

“We’ve always wanted a one-stop shop,” said Hornung. “Direct messaging, two-way translation, forms, RSVPs, and mobile-responsive, ADA-compliant websites. We wanted all of that in one place.”

After evaluating its options, Fredericksburg chose ParentSquare.

Challenge & Solution

Before ParentSquare, Fredericksburg used separate tools for websites, family messaging, and district communications. Updating the website required multiple steps, slowing the district’s ability to share timely information with families. Teachers could not easily message groups or receive responses, and staff had limited visibility into whether messages were actually reaching families.

The district also relied on a patchwork of tools to manage communication workflows such as notifications, forms, and event coordination. Various platforms were being used by teachers, advisors, and coaches, and none of it was monitored across the division. Support challenges added additional friction. Communications staff sometimes waited weeks to resolve website issues and experienced frequent changes in account support, which made it harder to maintain continuity.

ParentSquare brought messaging, workflows, and websites together so Fredericksburg could manage school-home communication more efficiently.

Direct messaging, multi-channel delivery, and two-way translation allow teachers and staff to communicate with families through text, email, or the mobile app. Built-in workflows for forms, conference scheduling, volunteer sign-ups, attendance alerts, and event coordination eliminated the need for separate tools and emails.

With ParentSquare, classes, sports teams, and clubs all connect in one platform to inform, plan, and celebrate. School calendars are easily accessible for building-level events and classroom activities, and field trips no longer require separate paper forms for lunches, chaperones, and funding.

Integration with the district's student information system (SIS) also helps keep family contact data accurate and connected to communications.

At the same time, ParentSquare Smart Sites gave the district a path to ADA-compliant, mobile-responsive websites that communications staff can update quickly as information changes.

Outcome

- Families now have one reliable place for school communication.
- Teachers and staff can communicate directly with every family in their home language without switching between multiple tools.
- Conference scheduling, RSVPs, alerts, and other workflows now run through the same system.
- Smart Sites brings translation, calendars, and content into one streamlined experience.
- Supporting staff across the district is easier to manage with ParentSquare's responsive team.

From Operational Messaging to Real Engagement

Fredericksburg's communications team shifted away from tools focused primarily on publishing information and toward tools that support everyday interaction with families.

Teachers now use ParentSquare for classroom updates, attendance notifications, event RSVPs, and volunteer sign-ups. Families receive messages through text, email, or the mobile app and can respond directly through the same channel.

Managing conference scheduling and family communication in one system also saves staff time by eliminating the need to coordinate separate emails and forms. Automatic two-way translation allows the district to communicate with multilingual families in their preferred language.

The team also recognized that communication isn't just about publishing information. The truth is, a website and social posts don't build a brand; it's how families feel about their interactions with schools that shapes trust.

"What really hit home for the teachers was that direct messaging," Hornung said. "It's the most inclusive way to bring in your entire class community."

For Johnson, the platform's value also comes from its connection to the district's SIS. By syncing ParentSquare with the district's data systems, he works with school teams to identify and correct account issues that might otherwise prevent families from receiving messages.

"We needed a partner that understands the complexity of our data and empowers our leadership team with tools like Secure Document Delivery," Johnson said. "Now we send sensitive records and report cards digitally. It helps us reduce administrative work and save money on mailing."

Johnson added, "ParentSquare Groups has also made a big difference for transportation communication. When a route changes or a bus is running late, our transportation team can send dedicated, timely messages directly to families on that specific route, in their preferred language, which helps us avoid confusion and keeps families informed the moment plans change."

By using Groups to reach families by route, Fredericksburg can deliver targeted transportation updates without relying on general announcements, so parents and caregivers get the specific information that affects their student's day.

Simpler, More Reliable Website Management With Smart Sites

Fredericksburg also selected [ParentSquare Smart Sites](#) to replace its previous website platform. The district has begun converting its school websites and plans to launch the new sites later this year.

The team wanted ADA-compliant, mobile-responsive websites that communications staff could update quickly and easily. Early experience with Smart Sites has been extremely promising. Hornung recalled her district's webmaster reacting immediately to the platform's ease of use:

"She said, 'This is like a child could use this! This is fantastic.'"

Moving to Smart Sites also gives the district built-in translation on every page, integrated calendars that stay in sync with school events, and one streamlined workflow for sharing content with both internal audiences, like staff and school leaders, and external audiences, like families and the broader community. Communications staff no longer have to update the same information across multiple systems, which gives them more time to focus on the messages that matter most.

ParentSquare support has also been a key differentiator.

"The support is immediate, you are going to get someone within minutes," Hornung said. "They are always friendly and prioritize finding the right solution."

A Platform Built for *Real* School Communication

Fredericksburg ultimately chose ParentSquare because it supports the real communication needs of schools.

"The razzle dazzle is great," said Hornung. "But it's what ParentSquare offers us that is the real selling point."

The district replaced a fragmented communication landscape with a more reliable way to reach families, keep information current, and build stronger connections across its school community.