

Challenge & Solution

Kaimuki High School relied on a patchwork of phone, email, SIS, and personal cell phones for family communication, with a campus phone system limited to local Honolulu numbers. The school adopted ParentSquare to unify all outreach on one platform, introducing it gradually through one-on-one labs and small group demonstrations to build teacher comfort and adoption.

Results

- 70%+ graduating student attendance at the first mandatory meeting after launch
- Built-in translation enabled real-time, true two-way communication with multilingual families
- Eliminated paper flyers and 500+ printed copies per announcement

From a patchwork of tools to one unified platform

Like many schools, Kaimuki High School in Honolulu, HI, was using a hodgepodge of different tools for its school-to-home communications efforts. “Our communications were what we call ‘chop suey,’ or basically everything under the sun,” said Keevan K. Matsumoto, student services coordinator. “Teachers would use phone, email and our student information system (SIS) and the school was sending out mass attendance notifications. They were even sending emails to parents of students who were no longer attending their schools.”

While the SIS offers both text and email options, Matsumoto said the program was “very cumbersome” to the point that teachers rarely used it. Complicating the issue even further was their 1970s-era campus phone system that doesn’t allow calls to numbers outside of the immediate vicinity.

“If it’s not a Honolulu number, we can’t call it,” he said. “So, teachers were using their own personal cell phones and Google Voice, which only made our communication approach even more disjointed.”

Getting everyone on the same page

Two years ago, Kaimuki High School’s administrators learned about the ParentSquare unified school-home communications platform from a neighboring elementary school. The school’s principal shared how the school was using ParentSquare—what he considered an affordable option compared to other platforms—for posts, direct messages and for translating messages into different languages.

Interested in learning more, Matsumoto reached out to ParentSquare and signed up. The vendor provided a launch kit and tutorial videos to Kaimuki High School, which sent out an introductory letter to all families about the new platform. Initially, faculty weren’t required to use ParentSquare but were introduced to its comprehensive features during a meeting and encouraged to use at their own pace.

“We wanted them to play around with the platform and see what we saw - a tool that would be easy to implement and would greatly improve our connections with our families,” said Matsumoto, who focused on the more “urgent” messaging, such as texts about power outages and school cancellations for both families and teachers. He also viewed ParentSquare as a unified communication tool that could replace the school’s current disconnected approach and shared those goals with faculty and staff.

“I’m now in the process of doing one-on-one labs and small groups with the teachers, so they can get more comfortable with ParentSquare,” Matsumoto explained. “So far, the teachers who have been using the platform are using ParentSquare a lot and their feedback on it has been very good.”

“So far, the teachers who have been using the platform are using ParentSquare a lot and their [feedback on it has been very good.](#)”

Keewan K. Matsumoto

Student Services Coordinator

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

Reaching the school’s population

Kaimuki High School’s teachers use ParentSquare for direct, two-way communication with families, with the outreach including attendance and grade updates; correspondence back from parents and guardians; for posting events; and for sending out and receiving conference RSVPs. Teachers also use it for campus club and group correspondence.

The school's Parent Teacher Association and Parent Community Network Center both use the platform for interacting with families and sharing information about community events. With a percentage of its families residing in public housing—located about 1-1/2 miles from campus—the school utilizes the Parent Community Network Center for many of its community meetings.

The high school also uses ParentSquare for yearbook and senior photo announcements, both of which previously required a lot of paper and manual effort. “We’re no longer making 500 copies of something for the students to take home,” Matsumoto added. “We just use ParentSquare as the vehicle for sending that and other information home.”

They were blown away

Like the feeder elementary school that introduced it to ParentSquare, Kaimuki High School is also benefiting from the platform's built-in translation capabilities, including those for Spanish-speaking and other languages commonly spoken in Hawaii. In one specific instance, the school used ParentSquare to successfully communicate with the Spanish-speaking parents of a special education student.

“We have to do annual Individual Education Program meetings to update the student's learning plan, and we couldn't get a translator that day and had our Spanish teacher help us with the translation,” said Matsumoto, who realized at that point the parents were receiving communications from school that they couldn't understand.

“We showed them how to download the ParentSquare app,” Matsumoto explained. “We would send them messages in English, and they would send us responses in Spanish, with ParentSquare translating everything for it. The parents were just blown away by how easy that was.”

“Our data is off the charts”

In terms of engagement, Matsumoto said the school's “data is off the charts” as a result of ParentSquare. Prior to implementing the platform, the school was dealing with very sparse attendance numbers at mandatory graduation meetings and open houses. In many cases, those low attendance numbers were due to the fact that flyers were sent home with students but never made it into their parents' hands.

For reinforcement, the school would then send out a message using its SIS—a tactic that also wasn't working very well. "Maybe a dozen parents would show up at those events," Matsumoto said.

That changed at the school's first mandatory graduation meeting, which took place just after it launched ParentSquare. "We gave them a choice of two different dates, and on that first night more than 70% of graduating students attended," Matsumoto added. "It was pretty amazing."

The platform's text feature is critical because no one wants to talk to the school. "If you call home, they see the school number and they won't pick up. You leave a voicemail, and they'll return your phone call one out of 10 times," Matsumoto said. "With ParentSquare's text capabilities, parents can respond really quickly about an event or just absorb the related information. That's been a great engagement tool for us."

Ready for a Better Way?

Bring ParentSquare to your district or school

[Get a Demo](#)