

A bond without a ribbon to cut

Midway ISD needed an \$83.5 million bond to fund deferred maintenance across its 11 campuses and additional district facilities. Over three consecutive school years, at least one campus could not open on the first day of school due to infrastructure failures, from flooding to power outages to buildings without air conditioning in the Texas heat. Unlike previous bond cycles, this one would not produce a new school or a visible addition.

“There’s nothing that you can point to at the end to say, this is what your money paid for,” said Emily Parks, Director of Communications.

A new Texas law compounded the challenge. The ballot was required to include the phrase “this is a property tax increase,” even though the bond carried no actual tax rate increase. The law had only gone into effect in 2024, making Midway one of the first districts in the state to navigate the mandate. The language created immediate confusion, and some voters accused the district of being dishonest.

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## The Approach

To overcome these challenges, Midway’s communications team needed to educate a diverse community—including parents, retirees, and voters without children in the district—on a bond that was both essential and easily misunderstood. The team turned to ParentSquare [Community Groups](#) to reach audiences beyond the classroom, while using multi-channel messaging and public post features to extend their reach.

## The Outcome

- All three bond propositions passed with 57–59% voter approval.
- Community Groups expanded the district’s reach beyond current families to grandparents, taxpayers, and prospective parents.
- Parents organically shared bond content from ParentSquare into neighborhood Facebook groups, extending the district’s reach to voters outside the platform.
- The communications team attributes over half of the bond’s success to ParentSquare.

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## How ParentSquare Community Groups powered a winning bond strategy

Midway's success was built on years of platform adoption and an intentional communication strategy. Emily and Robert Pryor, Communications Systems Coordinator, had already established several Community Groups before the bond campaign began: a general "Panther Nation" group, an Athletics group, a Fine Arts Fans group, and dedicated groups for incoming pre-K and kindergarten families. When the campaign launched, those audiences were already active and reachable.

Parks then researched her full voter landscape, roughly 36,000 voters ranging from highly educated parents who work at universities such as Baylor to retirees on fixed incomes, and developed three to four distinct messaging tracks for the ballot language issue alone. For data-driven voters, she used myth-versus-fact messaging with charts. For residents aged 65 and older, the team used mailers, community presentations at churches and civic organizations, and clear messaging that their tax rate would not change. For younger families, the messaging led with equity between campuses.

Community Groups made it possible to deliver each track to the right audience. The Fine Arts Fans group received updates about improvements to performance stages. The Athletics group heard about the high school gym expansion, framed as a multipurpose facility for cheerleading, ROTC, CTE, and robotics. The pre-K and kindergarten group heard about campus disparity, a message that resonated with parents evaluating where to send their children as school choice options expand across Texas.

"We were able to really take advantage of each community group with targeted messaging," Parks said.

The pre-K and kindergarten groups were among the district's most replicable strategies. Those families were not yet in the student information system, so the district had no automatic way to contact them. Community Groups solved that because they do not require a student information system (SIS)-linked account. Parents self-enrolled through the district website or at registration events, and once their children enrolled, they automatically rolled into standard communication. The group then reset for the next cohort, creating a repeatable annual cycle.

“The hardest communication is reaching the kids that are not in your district yet,” Parks said. “Community Groups have been, hands down, the easiest way for me to communicate with an audience that I otherwise wouldn’t have access to.”

The team also made ParentSquare bond posts public so anyone could view them, and parents began sharing direct links in neighborhood Facebook groups. Pryor also created friendly URLs on the district website so community members could find and join groups with a memorable link. Parks pulled every contact from the SIS, including designated contacts and authorized pickup persons, and emailed each one an invitation to join the Panther Nation Community Group, turning one-time outreach into a lasting channel.

Pryor pointed to another advantage: Community Groups kept the district’s social media channels from being overwhelmed. “With groups, you don’t have to flood your social media accounts, because you can post a lot of that information in the Community Groups instead,” he said.

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Director of Communications

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

Building adoption *before* the bond

None of this would have worked without strong adoption. The district pre-installed ParentSquare on every teacher-issued iPad, Pryor led training sessions for staff, and teachers can complete [ParentSquare Summer Camp](#) for professional development credit. The district also set a clear expectation: all teachers, coaches, and staff would communicate with families through ParentSquare.

“When ParentSquare acquired Remind, that was a really big plus for us, because that’s what most of our coaches were using, and they hadn’t made the shift over to ParentSquare,” Parks said. “Now, all of our coaches, fine arts, and extracurricular sponsors use ParentSquare to communicate with students. So it makes communication easier for them and their students, and also allows the district to maintain greater consistency, oversight, and alignment across

all communications.”

On the family side, the team launched a “Parent Hack” video series in the district’s monthly newsletter. Each short video walked families through a specific ParentSquare feature, and the series drove organic increases in both platform usage and parent engagement. Today, 94% of Midway’s teachers use direct messaging, and the district translates communications into more than 14 languages with automatic two-way translation.

“I’ve been in school PR for a long time, and I’ve used a lot of tools,” Parks said. “I’ve never used a tool that has been as intuitive, easy, and impactful as ParentSquare.”

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

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