

## Challenge & Solution

Napa Valley Unified School District was managing communications across multiple platforms, with Google Forms creating duplicates, errors, and hours of manual spreadsheet reconciliation. The district implemented ParentSquare across all 28 schools, replacing fragmented tools with one platform for mass notifications, conference signups, permission slips, and auto-translated forms for its 23% Spanish-speaking population.

## Results

- 99.4% contactability rate, with individual schools working toward 100% using real-time dashboards
- Replaced Google Forms with built-in forms synced to the SIS, eliminating duplicate entries and manual data reconciliation
- Secure Document Delivery for Title III reports and IFEP letters reduced printing and postage costs

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## Replacing a patchwork of tools with one reliable platform

As the person who is responsible for distribution of district communications and support for Napa Valley Unified School District Communications Media Specialist, Jennifer Baker orchestrates these activities across 28 schools serving more than 17,000 students in grades Transitional Kindergarten (TK)-12. Previous to adopting ParentSquare, the district was using everything from district-level mass notification to classroom portfolio tools to manage family, social media, website, and general communications.

The district was also using Google Forms to collect student information—yet another technology tool that administrators have to learn and use for communications. Even after the Google Forms information was submitted, sometimes the data would be resubmitted or edited, leaving staff to wonder who made the adjustments and why.

“It was just a nightmare,” said Baker. “An entire team would spend hours going through spreadsheets trying to figure which ones were duplicates or reconciling it with the information that we had in Aeries, our student information system.”

The district's communication management difficulties escalated when Napa Valley USD moved to remote instruction due to the pandemic. At that point, the district knew that it needed a safe and secure platform for all of its school-home communication. After exploring its options, Napa Valley USD decided to implement ParentSquare, a single platform that manages and unifies all district mass notifications, including parent contacts, conference signups, and permission slips.

The district had been using ParentSquare for district-level communication but its use by individual schools and teachers was inconsistent, and many of the features available had not been used at all.

And while good communication is always important for school districts, 2020 brought with it a new crop of challenges as parents, teachers, and administrators struggled to adapt to the virtual learning environment driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. "We had to get everyone up to speed quickly; it wasn't easy," said Baker. "We did this by making sure teachers knew what communication tools were available, and then providing the resources and training on how to fully leverage those tools."

### Nearing 100% Contactability

Today, the district boasts a 99.4% contactability rate—the real-time tracking of reaching parents/guardians along with the ability to update contact information—a number that Baker would like to increase over the next few months. "Some of our individual schools have made it their mission to get that number to 100%," she said.

With ParentSquare's Forms, the district has gained access to reliable reporting and clean data (since the platform is synced with the student information system) that were lacking in its previous setup. Now, the district not only has access to all of its collected data, but it can also gather additional information from parents as needed. During the pandemic, for example, it has used a customized form for daily student health screenings—a process that it would have had to manage using Google Forms. "That's fine if all you're doing is temperature checks," Baker said, "but tracking that data to each student and checking the accuracy of the data in each of those Google Forms on a daily basis would have required building a separate server and multiple staff to monitor.

## Supporting a diverse student population

With a diverse student population, 23% of which is Spanish-speaking, Napa Valley USD can easily translate its forms and communications for those recipients. “We use the platform to provide custom translation of our forms for Spanish,” Baker said, “and the platform also auto-translates for multiple other languages which we can edit as needed.”

Napa Valley USD uses ParentSquare’s Secure Document Delivery for Title III reports, IFEP letters, and other documents. With less printing and postage to worry about, the district saves both money and time on these document-sharing processes. Plus, the district’s administrators and teachers can see who opened, clicked on, and responded to a piece of communication.

These and other features proved extremely valuable during remote learning, and Baker expects them to continue paying off for the district as school days return to normal

“Without ParentSquare, our elementary school ‘intent to return’ forms would have needed to be done on paper (for in-person responses), or using Google Forms or another third-party product that conducts surveys (for virtual responses),” said Baker, who adds that Napa Valley USD has leaned on ParentSquare heavily in the past and will continue to explore more of the platform’s features and capabilities.

“We use ParentSquare’s Forms constantly now, whereas we’d never even tried it until last October,” said Baker about the district’s 2020 experience. “We’ve had a lot of opportunities to test and improve our use of the product this last year, and quite honestly I don’t know how we would have managed remotely without ParentSquare. I can’t even fathom what it would have been like.”

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Jennifer Baker

Communications Media Specialist

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