

## Challenge & Solution

North Clackamas School District was using multiple tools and inconsistent messaging approaches to communicate with families who speak more than 60 languages across 32 schools. The district adopted ParentSquare as its unified platform, standardizing communications with messaging guidelines, templates, and built-in translation to deliver consistent, accessible outreach to every family.

## Results

- Replaced inconsistent tools with one unified platform across 32 schools
- Built-in translation supported 60+ languages beyond the district's in-house translation team
- Strengthened community trust through consistent, multimedia communications

## Consistent, multilingual communication that builds trust

On any given school day, the 17,300 students at North Clackamas School District just south of Portland, Oregon, speak over 60 different languages. With 32 schools and four comprehensive high schools, the district's top languages (aside from English) are Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese, in that order.

To serve its student population, the district has numerous specialized programs, three bilingual elementary schools, a bilingual middle school, and a high school that participates in its own bilingual program. Before implementing the ParentSquare platform for school-home communications, the district used multiple tools and messaging systems to communicate with parents and guardians.

"There's no emoji to illustrate the frustration of a parent who receives one communication style from a teacher one day, and then something completely different from a principal or the district office the next," said Shelly Reggiani, Ed.D., Executive Director of Equity, Community Engagement & Communications.

Ready, set, go

When U.S. schools moved to remote learning during the early stages of the COVID-19

pandemic in 2020, North Clackamas School District was already beginning to use ParentSquare as its primary means of school-home communications. “Our early adopters were already up and running when the pandemic hit,” said Reggiani. “We used them as role models of what really worked, and particularly in light of the pandemic, to shift everyone to ParentSquare.”

By spring 2021, the district moved back to some in-classroom learning. By then, it shifted 100% to using ParentSquare and began standardizing communications on the platform (e.g., using messaging guidelines and templates, and showing staff how to leverage the platform as a group.)

As part of its planning process for the upcoming school year, the district conducted empathy interviews with a cross section of parents and guardians that were representative of the district’s demographics about what *they* wanted their schools’ reopenings to look like. “We wanted to make sure that people knew the survey was generated by us and that we were actually listening,” said Reggiani.

Through that exercise, the district learned that parents wanted consistent, frequent, and predictable communications that met the needs of its diverse community. “We designed our whole return-to-school plan based on that parental feedback,” she explained.

Parents and guardians also needed reassurance that they’d be able to receive communications in a format that they could understand. “We already had standards in place for language interpretation and translation,” said Reggiani, “and we’re grateful for ParentSquare’s translation capabilities for those languages that are not represented by our translation team.”

Keeping everyone in the know

Today, North Clackamas School District uses ParentSquare for several different types of communications. Most frequently, it uses the platform to send out information about what’s happening right now on any of its campuses. “When events take place at our schools, people know about it,” Reggiani said. “They’re very attuned to what’s happening, including reports of vague threats or other information that can spread quickly.”

“Unfortunately, our silence can become complicit in fanning that misinformation,” she

explained, noting that one of the district's commitments is to quickly get to the core of current information needs, the intended audience, and whether any follow-ups are needed. The district also keeps its messaging concise, knowing that no one has 20 minutes to read something that could be encapsulated in a paragraph.

On a monthly basis, Reggiani also uses ParentSquare to share the excitement of the district's classrooms, staff, and community. She sees this as yet another trust-building activity that helps showcase some of the amazing things that are happening on campus. "We're embedding videos and photos into our communications, so it's not just text," Reggiani explained. "We're delivering information in the way that the modern reader digests that information."

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[Bridging differences](#)

Ultimately, Reggiani said having a unified communication platform to replace the district's previous tools helps share the brand of North Clackamas School District and solidify relationships with everyone vested in the district. "The stories we send go out to all of our staff, parents, and guardians," she explained, "plus other key stakeholders (e.g., community members) who want to receive them."

Both during this time of great uncertainty and whatever the future may hold for how schools operate (remote, hybrid or in-person), Reggiani said having a centralized communication platform will help the district meet its goal of always putting its students, families, and community first. "With everything going on in the world, we need to put the communication with families right at the center of our work so that trust can continue to be built," she added. "That's how we're going to bridge differences."

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