



In towns like those around Indiana’s Lake Wawasee, Friday night lights still matter. So do familiar last names and high school rivalries that stretch back generations. But things are changing. Families are moving out. Small schools are shrinking. And in [Wawasee Community School Corporation](#), that slow population shift is beginning to show up in sharper ways. It’s meant smaller kindergarten classes, fewer athletes in uniforms, and a growing need for connectedness, for community, and for reminders that what’s happening inside school walls is worth staying for... or perhaps returning to.

### Shifting Demographics

Once home to more than 3,100 students, Wawasee Community Schools (pronounced *WAH-wah-see*, *emphasis on the first syllable*) has seen enrollment drop by an alarming 20% over the last decade. Fewer families are putting down roots in the district’s small towns, as a cluster of big-city suburbs just a few hours away draws residents away with more opportunities and newer schools.

“We’re seeing a lot of families leave rural areas to hit the suburbs surrounding bigger cities like Indianapolis, Chicago, Columbus, and Cleveland,” explains Communications Director Emily Worrell. “The outside perimeters of these major cities are expanding so quickly, they can’t build fast enough, whereas we’re seeing our schools deplete so quickly that we’re a little concerned about what five or six years from now looks like.”



Recent policy shifts in Indiana have compounded the problem. The state’s voucher program and broader school choice policies allow students to take their per-pupil funding with them to other schools. More recently, a new [IHSAA](#) (Indiana High School Athletics Association) rule granted high school athletes one free transfer without losing play eligibility. That has opened the floodgates.

“It’s very much that same feel in high schools that you see in college athletics now,” says Emily. She’s a Wawasee native and, though she left the community for a time, she’s returned to lead its PR and communications efforts. “You’re seeing kids shift schools—not just for academic reasons, but for athletic opportunity.”

Add in a natural demographic decline—more students are graduating than enrolling—and the school board has recognized that communications and marketing aren’t luxuries. They’re critical to the future of Wawasee Community Schools and the broader community.

### Bridging the Gap: Communications Meets Athletics

At the center of this challenge were two leaders working under pressure—and, especially in the beginning, not always in sync. Emily, on the side of storytelling and Athletic Director Brent Doty, juggling oversight and logistics for 24 sports with limited staff and even less time to entertain the details of complex brand strategy.



Their relationship wasn't necessarily antagonistic. But it wasn't especially aligned, either.

Emily was preparing to carry out a district-wide rebrand—a change, in fact, to one of the schools' core brand colors. Though seemingly small, these types of updates can be taxing, especially for athletics departments. New jerseys need to be ordered; student and fan merch recreated, reordered, and restocked; signage and facility updates like new court graphics, floor decals, endzone art, and scoreboards.

"I knew I was going to have to start with Brent," says Emily, who soon found herself in his office delivering the news.

"That went over about like the Hindenburg," says Emily with a laugh. "It's a *color*," Brent adds. His voice is flat, but good humored. He's exaggerating his own flippancy in an effort to convey the perspective he had at the time. It's one sometimes held by those outside PR, marketing, and communications. Goals and directives such as consistency across brand colors, collecting appealing photography from games, and getting quotes and interviews from coaches and players can feel unimportant in the grand scheme of things. For ADs, they take a backseat to bigger, more pressing objectives like building competitive programs, winning games, and keeping kids safe.

"I do understand the importance of color and brand and consistency," admits Brent, especially now. "It's just that it's about the 150th thing on my to-do list."

## The Pivot Point

Everything shifted at a [ParentSquare user conference](#) for K-12 leaders and staff. Emily and Brent—who admit they’d been butting heads a bit—were directed to head to the event together. The district’s head felt it could be an ideal opportunity for a shift in perspective—and, indeed, it was.

“We were in a breakout session with [Dr. Joe Sanfelippo](#),” Brent says. Surrounded by school communicators and listening to one of the sector’s leading voices, he had something of an aha moment. “I realized, if we don’t tell our own story, someone else will. And they’ll get it wrong.”

That moment reframed everything.

“I started to really see in full view the value of sharing stories and experiences from across our athletics teams and programs,” explains Brent, noting social media as a critically important avenue for this kind of storytelling.

He had started to buy-in, but the very real challenge of limited time remained, and despite wanting to put out more stories, it didn’t seem realistic to add planning, scheduling, captions, photos, videos, and edits to the already-full plate of an athletic director or his coaches.

## Building a Team of Content Creators

The solution? Get parents involved—and give them ownership.

“We started to pull together this idea for parent ambassadors,” explains Brent who, together with Emily, brought the idea back to the district. “We wanted to tell our story so, we thought, let’s tell it through our parents and families—let’s invite our parents to completely buy-in, and take ownership of how we’re showing up in the community. Let’s get some people inside the ropes, and have them tell the story along with us.”

Through the Wawasee Parent Ambassador Program, they trained and equipped parent volunteers to become content creators and advocates for student-athletes and teams. To get the project off the ground, Emily and Brent:

- Handpicked ambassadors strategically—narrowing in on parents and families with strong voices and high expectations.
- Created materials to help standardize the Wawasee brand and ensure consistency across content.
- Held training sessions covering values, tone, social media best practices, and logistics.
- Provided templates, season passes, branded gear, and ongoing coaching.

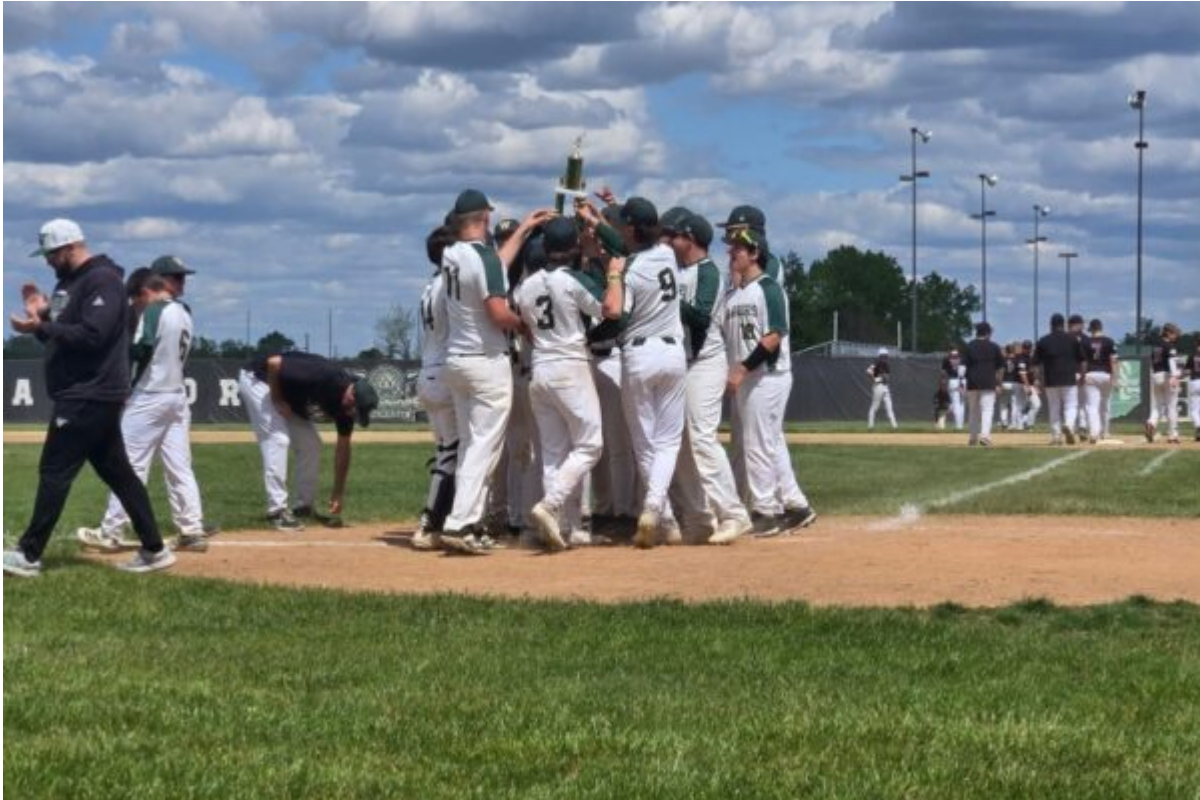
“This isn’t just a ‘team mom,’” Emily explains. “This is a *storyteller*. An *advocate*. Someone who helps our athletes get the recognition they deserve—and helps our community see what’s really happening behind the scenes.”

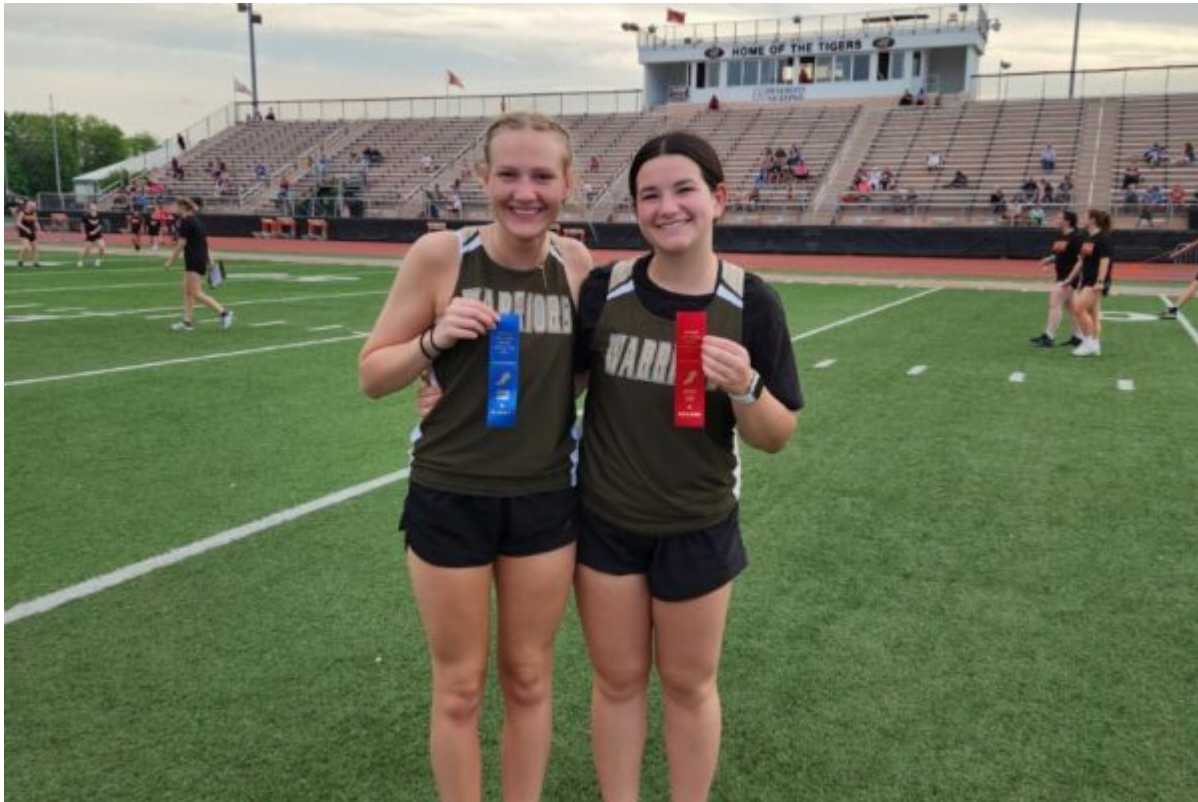
“This is a *storyteller*. An *advocate*. Someone who helps our athletes get the recognition they deserve—and helps our community see what’s really happening behind the scenes.”

—Emily Worrell, Communications Director

The program launched with spring sports. Within weeks, Wawasee’s social channels transformed. Branded visuals, celebratory posts, student spotlights, eye-catching photography of athletes, teams, and coaches on and off the field. Community engagement surged.







### Putting Class Intercom to Work

With Class Intercom, Wawasee built a scalable and secure way to manage the growing flow of content. The platform enables schools to create, schedule, and publish social media content across platforms while maintaining central administrative oversight.

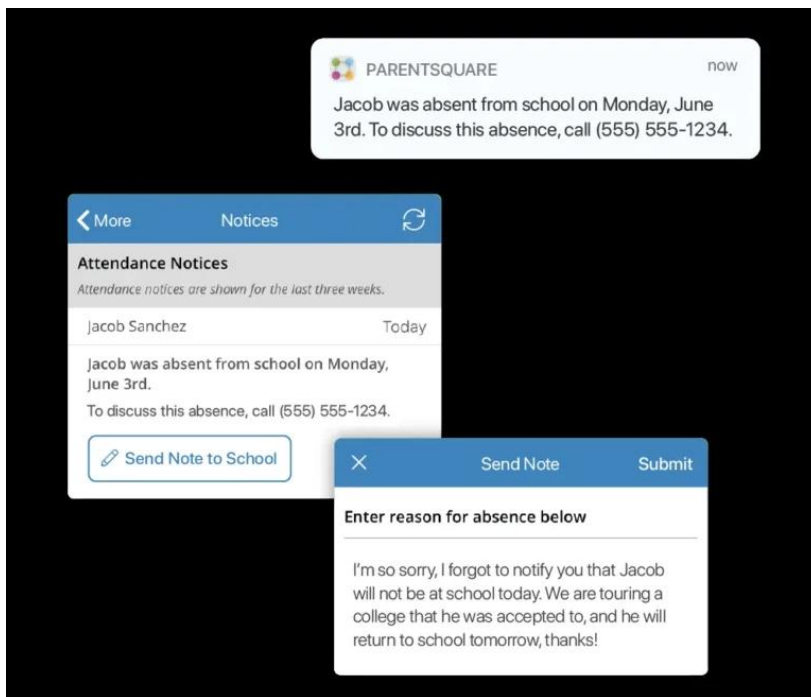
Parents, staff, and students can be given custom permissions to draft and submit content. Those in oversight roles then review, edit, and approve before anything goes live. For Emily and Brent, this meant they could distribute the work of storytelling without compromising brand standards or losing visibility.

“We don’t have a full-time social media person,” explains Emily. “Class Intercom helps us scale the voice of our community—without losing control of our brand and message.”

More importantly, Class Intercom has made it easier to align the district’s voice. Coaches stay focused, while parents feel involved, and their contributions are seen. For Emily, the shift represents a broader win: the community no longer needs to be told what Wawasee is

about—they can see the meaningful experiences student athletes are having on social media.

### Being Intentional with Direct Communication



With the emphasis on using socials for storytelling, Wawasee also pushed for clarity and intention around more direct communication channels, ensuring parents have pertinent updates about scheduling, weather, pick-ups and drop-offs, last-minute changes, and more. While Class Intercom helps Wawasee tell its story, another crucial tool ensures critical family communications don't get lost or buried: [ParentSquare](#).

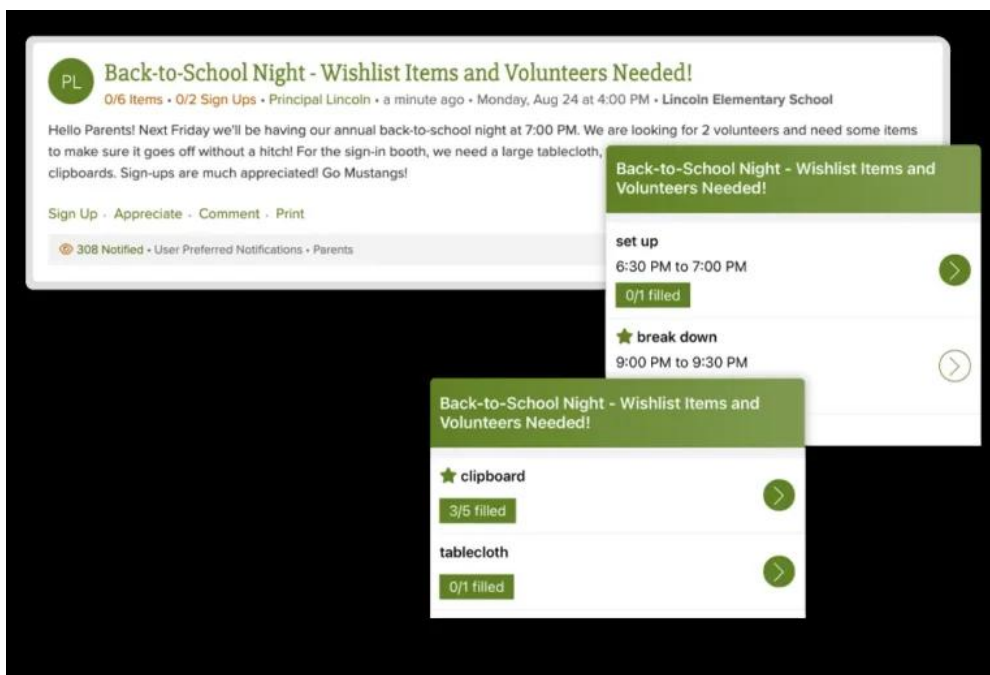
Before adopting ParentSquare, communication across the district was fractured. Each building—and often each coach—used different tools. Parents juggled multiple apps, emails, and message threads. Consistency was a challenge, resulting in a barrage of notifications for parents and families and making important updates easy to miss. From a compliance and oversight perspective, it was a liability.

ParentSquare changed that. As the trusted leader in K-12 school-home communication, ParentSquare provides a secure, unified platform that helps districts streamline messaging,

ensure consistency, and reach every family. It allows for:

- Automatic syncing with the student information system (SIS)
- Translation into 190+ languages
- Mass notifications, two-way messaging, and phone calls
- Real-time dashboards to drive 100% contactability
- Paperless forms, document delivery, signups, and more
- Fully-integrated, ADA-compliant websites that reflect and extend the district brand

Emily, who herself is a parent with students in the district, made it clear: if families needed to know when practice was, where to go for a field trip, or how to contact a coach, they'd find it in ParentSquare. Not on Facebook. Not by text. Then, they rolled it out methodically and without exception, training every coach in basic or advanced sessions and setting expectations for consistent use. The result: a 99% contactability rate between parents and their school's teachers, coaches, and staff.



“ParentSquare really allows you to sleep better at night,” explains Emily. “Everything is documented. There’s no ambiguity. It protects our staff, it protects our students, and it protects our families.”

It’s not just about compliance. ParentSquare brings structure to the chaos and clarity to the message. In its emphasis on precision, timeliness, relevance, and intention, the tool helps schools and districts avoid message fatigue. Instead, quite the opposite happens: Parents and families stay engaged, informed, and committed to student success.

### Communication with Purpose

By pairing Class Intercom and ParentSquare, Wawasee found a rhythm: Storytelling and culture-building happen on social media, where ambassadors work together to collect and contribute content through Class Intercom. There, it’s approved and curated into a bigger school story about what it means to be part of the Wawasee school system. On the other hand, direct, timely, actionable updates that convey specific information happen through ParentSquare, where they can be drafted and distributed with precision and intention.

“We defined our spaces and stuck to them,” Emily says. “And we communicated that to our staff and to our parents.”

That distinction has turned confusion into confidence—helping the district deliver the right message to the right people, at the right time.

### Real Results, Real Relationships

The impact of clear channels powered by the one-two punch of Class Intercom-plus-ParentSquare has been measurable and meaningful:

- Community feedback turned positive within months
- Coaches, once skeptical, now ask for ambassadors by name
- Athletics social feeds reflect consistency and professionalism
- Students and families are proud to share the content that goes out on social

- Parents feel involved and informed, not overwhelmed
- Parents and families have the information they need to support their students
- Internal buy-in from leadership and staff keeps things humming

As for Brent and Emily, their relationship is stronger than ever. “We’ve learned how to work together, push each other, and respect each other’s roles,” Emily says. She’s quick to razz Brent up, and he dishes it back. The two have the rapport of old friends. “This partnership between us has made all the difference,” adds Brent.

It’s a bit of a universal lesson—a cautionary tale about what can happen when school communicators and athletics teams aren’t on the same page. “If you have a communications team or person,” warns Emily, “They sure as heck better have a relationship with the AD because that’s what the community is talking about—athletics. ”

Brent’s perspective has changed too.

“Before,” he admits, “I didn’t really think any of this mattered. Well,” he’s takes a moment to correct himself, “I knew it *mattered*, I just didn’t realize exactly *how important* it was, and I didn’t have the time to prioritize it. Now I know it can be done—and must be done.”

### A Playbook for Progress

Wawasee’s transformation is ongoing—but its foundation is solid. Strong tools, empowered storytellers, the intentional delivery of important information, and a unified message have become the district’s new standard.

In the end, this isn’t just about social media or how last-minute updates spread through text chains. It’s about community, identity, and pride.

And it’s a reminder that for schools (especially those facing enrollment challenges) telling your story, engaging with families—these aren’t optional.

They’re essential.

---

*Interested in learning more about how Class Intercom and ParentSquare work together to help schools and school districts build and scale intentional and strategic communication programs? Learn more about this partnership [here](#), or [get in touch](#).*