

Come Together!



An Internal Change Management Initiative for the Roll-Out of a Single-Source Communication Platform

NSPRA Gold Medallion Entry
Special Communication Project

Kelly Avants, APR
Chief Communications Officer
Communications Team of 7

Clovis Unified School District
1450 Herndon Ave.
Clovis, CA 93611
559.327.9092 | kellyavants@cusd.com

TK-12 Public School District
43,500 students/7,000+ employees



Synopsis

For more than five years, parent satisfaction and staff climate surveys have shown a growing concern about the variety of different school-to-home communication platforms in use in our schools. Through these surveys, a common strand reoccurred that parents and employees were frustrated by inconsistency across district schools and within teaching teams with the number of different platforms used to communicate information (such as Remind, Band, S'More, etc.) leading to confusion, missed opportunities and abandonment of communication vehicles by parents.

Following several years of this complaint rising to the top three concerns expressed by parents across the district's 56 schools, Clovis Unified leaders took steps to implement a unified communication platform as the single source solution for teachers, coaches/advisors and administrators to deliver school-to-home communication.

This was the first time ever that staff at the school site and teacher/coach level would be expected to use a specific, district-supplied communication platform since the advent of email, and in a district of nearly 7,000 employees and 56 schools. The Communications team was tasked with leading an internal change management initiative that called for expert application of marketing and public relations strategies to achieve adoption and implementation of this new platform; end the routine use of many other platforms; and create staff acceptance and support for the change.

In its first year, the campaign resulted in 66.6% of employees actively using the platform, which exceeded our objective of 60% of staff using the platform by the end of year one. A separate strand of this initiative following the internal change management phase of this Gold Medallion Entry was end-user implementation among our parent groups. The second phase is in progress, but in its first half-year has already resulted in higher than average adoption by our parent community as well as a year-over-year increase in parent satisfaction affirming improved communication as reported in annual parent satisfaction survey comments.

“ *This was a public opinion and change management initiative requiring strategic planning, theory and tactics applied through the RPIE process.* ”

THE TEAM

- Chief Communications Officer **Kelly Avants, APR:** Strategic planning & leadership coordination.
- Digital Media Specialist **Kendra Burt:** Content management, training coordination.
- Manager of App Development & Support **Tara Lindlahr:** Data integration and troubleshooting.
- Coordinator of Educational Technology & Development **Sherri Johnston:** Led Teachers on Specialist Assignment (TOSAs) to support roll out.

Research

The genesis of the Come Together communication initiative was a common concern among parents and staff that the current lack of consistency was confusing, prone to errors, and frustrating. While this meant that there was a greater common belief that a need existed (as evidenced by more than five years of Parent Satisfaction and Employee Climate survey data), there was little consensus about a preferred solution, little interest of teachers and schools to give up their current choice of communication platform, and even less interest in having to learn an entirely new system (as identified through existing parent-teacher-school-leader feedback channels).

Once an extensive selection process was completed and the decision was made by district leadership to invest in a single-source platform for school-to-home communication while also requiring all staff to abandon any individually selected platforms (like Remind, Band, Sign Up Genius, Q messaging, etc.), work began to develop the internal change initiative. A research plan guided work during this phase in which Communications team members used historical and scientific research, conducted a SWOT analysis, used primary and secondary research sources as well as qualitative (e.g. interviews and focus groups) and quantitative sources (climate and parent survey data) to develop goals and objectives for the initiative.

During this time the team conducted 12 employee focus groups with school site leaders, teachers, and activities and athletics directors. Feedback was also collected that identified areas of potential opposition to change and barriers that the team

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might encounter in rolling out the new platform. Additional qualitative research was conducted with clients of the new communication platform to best understand its functionality, ease of use, and strengths.

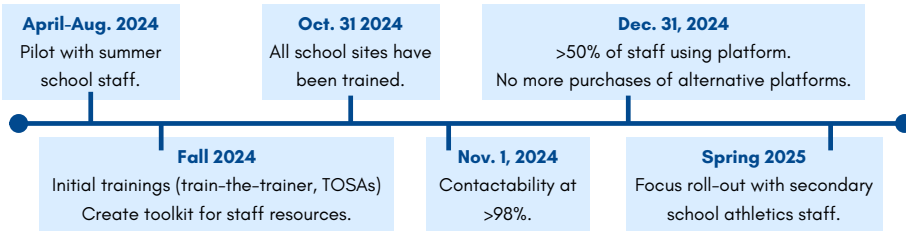
The Communication team partnered with summer school staff, the Superintendent and executive leadership to identify trusted employee communicators and test key messages. Annual parent survey data from parents and staff helped determine unmet needs created by the dispersed communication model used historically at the teacher/coach level - an element identified during our research phase as a key motivator for staff to adopt the change. External secondary research was conducted into change management communication, and cross-analyzed with internal primary research to determine that a two-way symmetrical model would be the most effective to ensure employees felt a part of the solution, reduce resistance, and foster acceptance of the change.



Planning

Planning included members of the business and school leadership divisions of the district to ensure they became partners in the roll out. Through leadership meetings, the Communications team was able to gather information about the educational climate across our schools, identify areas where a particular school leader may need a differentiated approach based on personal leadership styles, and otherwise increase our understanding of the environment into which this change initiative was being introduced in the district. A smaller implementation committee was developed to process research and continual feedback during implementation. This group continues to meet to address on-going needs of the Come Together initiative.

Timeline



Budget

\$0

Communication Resources

videos, e-newsletters, training videos, presentations, leader toolkits

\$1,200

Print Materials

printed one-sheets \$800
swag \$100
food rewards \$300

\$88,700

Staff Time

1 Administrator + 3 Specialists

200 hrs admin, 800 hrs digital specialist,
10% of TOSA, 500 hrs Tech

\$89,900

Total Budget

Target Audience

The primary target audience was district employees, with communication strategies and tactics differentiated for subgroups of Principals/Admin; elementary and secondary teachers; office managers/registrars, and co-curricular coaches/advisors.

Goal

Our goal was simple but not easy: **change the behavior of the majority of our close to 7,000 employees so as to adopt use of the ParentSquare platform.**

Measurable Objectives:

- By Oct. 31, 2024, all school sites will have received training.
- By Nov. 1, 2024, contactability rates will exceed 98%.
- By Dec. 31, 2024, at least 50% of staff will be using the new platform.
- By Dec. 31, 2024, sites will not ask to purchase other independent communication platforms.
- By June 2025, more than 60% of employees will express satisfaction with the roll out.

Key Messages Emphasized

- Simplicity of new system.
- Convenience to employees.
- Support available and offered.
- Change as a response to a need articulated by employees themselves, along with parents.
- Desire to work together and listen to the needs of employees and parents.
- Improved features, including two-way translation capabilities to support better communication with second language families.

Strategies Identified

- Using **DRIP (Differentiate, Reinforce, Inform, Persuade) Model for clarity**, because the change required learning a complex new platform. This meant starting with a top-level overview of the platform in initial trainings and delaying training on more advanced features until a user group felt comfortable with the basics.
 - An example of how this strategy was deployed was the creation of “Beginner,” “Intermediate,” and “Advanced” webinars and trainings that staff became eligible to participate in based on demonstrated engagement with the platform. Not only did this lessen initial fears for technology-averse groups, it also gave users a sense of accomplishment as they could move through the stages of learning.
- Engage **key influencers** within each target audience subgroup to gain acceptance of change. Key influencers would also model the change, address misinformation and fear of change, and advocate for adoption.
- Create a **“Super User” group of early adopters** and encourage their participation as role models and an important feedback chain over the course of the roll out.
- Use a **train-the-trainer model** of delivery to increase the speed and penetration of messaging and increase adoption rates.
- Provide multiple **feedback opportunities** to staff and use **face-to-face** delivery of communication as often as possible.
- Maintain **consistent messaging** across all 56 school sites to ensure employee groups had confidence that the roll out plan was comprehensive and well-executed.
- **Equip site and department leaders** with information, training and support needed to feel confident in holding teachers accountable to make the change.
- **Lead with the “why”** - that parents and staff had routinely reported dissatisfaction with the current model requiring multiple platforms/apps to access communication from teachers and coaches and asked for a change, and that the district was stepping up to better support our teachers and coaches with resources and training



Implementation



An implementation team of communication, educational technology, data and school leadership was convened. This group met weekly, then monthly to evaluate progress, solve problems and respond to feedback.

Adoption started with an initial pilot of the platform during summer school in June and July of 2024. Thirty nine staff members, including teachers, school administrators and district staff, utilized the platform for summer school communications to test out the platform and roll-out techniques on a smaller scale before fully launching with the entire district.

In August 2024, the Chief Comms Officer and Chief Tech Officer led the initial introduction and timeline delivery. The initial announcements were delivered in a phased approach first to district leaders, then to school site and department administrators.

Technology Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) were a key influencer group used heavily for training, advocacy and problem-solving at the site level through in-person work.

Key influencers were chosen to lead each level of training with an emphasis on selecting the most influential member of those key groups to establish

the reason for change and the urgency of adoption (e.g. the head of our schools division, supported by the superintendent, delivered the first message to site leaders).

A training toolkit was created and train-the-trainer meetings held before school began and during the first two months of the year, then transitioned to periodic meetings with the Technology TOSAs to keep a feedback loop open from teachers to the implementation team. Communication team members delivered in-person training and support and collected feedback on barriers encountered to roll out by attending dozens of existing meetings of the district (e.g. area principal meetings, athletic director meetings, district deputy principal meetings, site staff meetings, district leadership meetings, Admin/HR team meetings, and more).

- More than **60 on-site trainings** in Fall 2024, with even more in winter and spring.
- **7 in-person trainings** held over summer for a variety of skill levels, totaling **61 staff members**.

Tactics

- **Attend existing meetings** around the district to reach key communicators and platform users.
- Conduct in-person and virtual **training sessions** during initial roll-out and continuing through the school year for additional support.
- Provide **webpage** with on-demand support for users to access 24/7.
- Weekly, then periodic **newsletters** with updates specifically on the platform.
- Provide **branded "swag" to early adopters**, coined "Super Users," to make them identifiable.
- **Usage reports** shared with school leadership to help monitor progress and tap into the natural competitiveness of our school areas to encourage increasing usage of the platform.

Implementation



Weekly updates were used throughout the first semester and then scaled back based on feedback received. These updates were part of the DRIP approach of introducing the most basic concepts of the new platform and then building on that knowledge over time, and were combined with dozens of virtual and in-person training sessions. The weekly updates were also used to answer frequently asked questions.

Wherever possible, the Digital Media Specialist, with support from the Chief Communications Officer, was physically present with office managers and registrars, and at teacher meetings to express empathy for the change, deliver personalized support, and demonstrate confidence in the change. Over the course of the year, more than 60 different in-person trainings were held by staff.

On-demand content was also created as well as office hours by the Communication team and a special webpage created for 24-7 support as the implementation team fielded questions and identified areas where new communication protocols were needed given the new platform's capacities.

Two versions of each newsletter were sent: one for all users and one specifically for administration, to ensure each audience was targeted properly.

Evidence of the volume of questions generated through our intensive implementation effort was found when, at the end of the 2024-25 year, we learned that our district had created 295 troubleshooting tickets - three times more than any other client for the same period.

Some support content provided by the company, ParentSquare, was used and/or customized while other collateral was created originally to address unique needs of our district. Because all staff can communicate in English, there was not a differentiated approach needed for second language audiences (though that is addressed in our Phase II parent plan). Instead, our communications were differentiated based on the type of employee groups we were currently working with and new approaches were developed and messaging adjusted for unique groups such as career technical education teachers (whose students might come from multiple different campuses) or walk-on coaches who did not have the same access to student information systems as full time teachers.

Monthly reports by school site were created and discussed with Assistant Superintendents and their principals to ensure depth of implementation across school sites. Updates on the roll-out were delivered at Executive Cabinet (top seven leaders in district) and Cabinet meetings, and communication plans adjusted based on the feedback cycle of these meetings.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this initiative included qualitative and quantitative data. Adjustments to future communication have been made based on the data collected, and initial results showed no need for changes to the strategies used, just minor adjustments to and reinforcement of tactics.

- Based on the percent of staff members using the platform, which is **over 73%**, evidence supports that our overall goal is nearly achieved.
- **By October 31, 2024, all school sites had received training.**

Evaluation

- Contactability rates are higher than average for ParentSquare and our district has been invited to be a model district for the company, with **99.67% out of 82,000 contacts reachable** by the end of the school year. This is proof of the buy-in of our office staff and registrars to the change.
- By Dec. 31, 2024, 44.38% of teachers were using post features in the new platform (an increase of 5% over the previous quarter) and 61.87% were using direct messaging tools (up 7% from the first quarter check). This indicated that **at least 61.87% of our teachers were using the platform** and knowledgeable enough to choose which features they wanted to use. As of Fall of 2025 this percent exceeded 66%.
- By **December 31, 2025 our business office reported only one request in progress** to purchase an alternate communication platform (i.e. S'More).
- A survey specific to the roll out of the new platform in the Spring of 2025 showed **94.8% of responding staff was satisfied** with the change.
- Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) demonstrated the effectiveness of our strategy to use their support to diffuse anxiety about learning something new, and regular feedback sessions were held with the TOSAs, after which frequently-asked-question one-sheets or e-newsletters would be created to provide responses. Surveys indicated this was a particularly effective strategy.
- On multiple occasions at meetings, Board members reported that staff and parents were positively positioned toward the roll out and appreciated the change, including the Board members themselves.
- 2024-25 climate assessments showed an increase in positive sentiment of classified employees (a 7.55% increase since 2024) and a slight decrease of 1.02% in positive sentiment of teachers, which in a year that required them to make a major shift in their habits and practices was less of a decrease than expected.



Anecdotally, TOSAs reported that while many teachers were still struggling to change their habits, sentiment toward the change of platform was positive. Work continues this year to address specific school sites that are underutilizing the platform through targeted trainings and leadership outreach.

In our first-year analysis, we found that the selected strategies were extremely effective in encouraging change across our sites/departments and teacher groups. We continue to refine our communication plan to capture those remaining staff still reluctant to adopt the platform, and are narrowing our focus in some areas to individual conversations with leaders and special training options provided.


In the end, the Come Together initiative was undertaken with the best interest of our families and students at its center. Improved communication builds confidence and trust, and early indicators from our parents are that this initiative is making a positive difference in these areas. While the parent adoption initiative was a separate phase of this initiative, we are already seeing adoption rates of our parent community exceed national averages for the platform. As of January 2026, 60% of parents have downloaded the app, 90% are receiving text messages, and 55% are engaging with communication from their school. All of these statistics are higher than the national averages for the platform and given that most students have two parent/guardian contacts means we are likely closer to 100% of our families engaging in some form with communication.

Supplemental

Communication Plan

The Communication Planning worksheet was used to outline how each step of the change management initiative would happen, and how we would communicate with each sub-section of our overall target audience (our staff) to effectively complete their part of the initiative, whether they were being trained or taught how to train others.

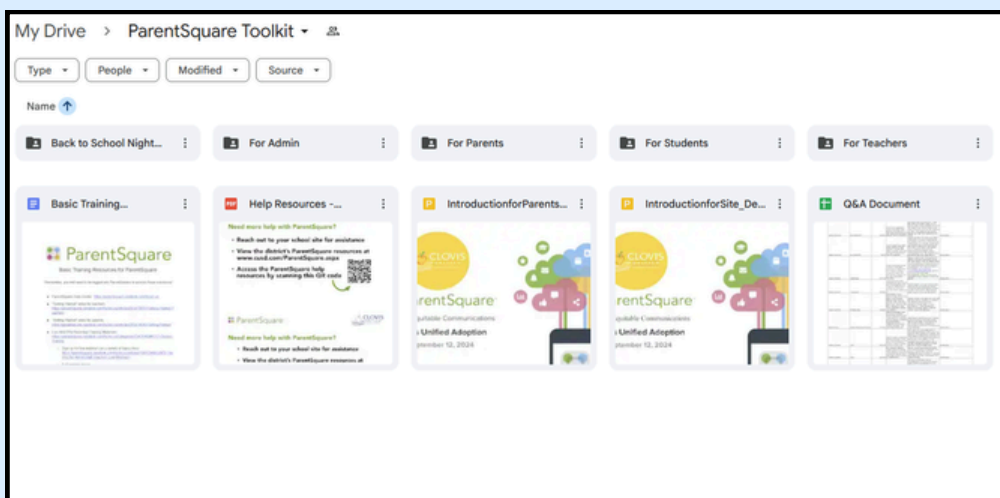
Communication Planning Worksheet	
Purpose of Project/Initiative (What are we doing?) - Come Together! Unified communication through ParentSquare In response to more than five years of data collected in parent satisfaction surveys and staff climate assessments that there are too many different communication platforms being used by coaches/schools/teachers/advisors the district is consolidating communication to one, unified platform for autonotifications - text, email, phone and moving its content management system to a partner company. For the first time, teacher/coach-level roles will also be expected to use this platform. This will require changes in behavior and purchasing decisions across the district's 56 school sites and 7,000 employees. Before we can make a concentrated effort to move parents to the platform we must first have a high confidence level that staff will be using the system and using it correctly and consistently.	
Who will be affected? Staff will be the first target audience with parents and students the second line of communication.	
Are we asking that a specific action be taken by those affected?	
Action needed Stop using other communication platforms like Remind, S'More, Bands, etc. and adopt ParentSquare; learn something new and let go of something they chose themselves (given teachers/coaches have been left to their own decision-making and adoption of comms platforms)	By whom Staff and then parents and students
Positives of Project/Initiative Consolidation of multiple platforms to one location; ability to have a feed of information so parents can find information more easily, ability to integrate forms and sign ups into the platform, reduction of expenses for site administration, training and support resources available from district and vendor, increased capacity for in-system translations including two-way communication in home language between second language parent and English speaking teacher, simplicity of system, integration with existing student information system; automation of workflows; better oversight capacity between staff-student communication	
Probable concerns/fears/obstacles of those affected? Changing the way our schools communicate, shifting to a new platform will lose any saved messaging that teachers have used year-over-year, need to re-learn a new system that will have similar but not completely identical features, requiring site leaders to get behind the new roll out and support a change, capacity to understand that there will be data and capacity challenges as there are with any new system; loss of the familiar and fear of new technology; loss of control over choosing their own communication system; increased expectations for communication for some teachers who have been otherwise able to avoid district expectations of school-to-home communication. Many coaches and advisors are in walk on roles and will not have access to traditional training opportunities.	



[View the worksheet.](#)

Roll-Out Toolkit

This toolkit, housed in Google Drive, is the resource center for staff to access training materials, one-sheets to use as reference for both staff and parents, a live question-and-answer document to make sure frequently asked questions were made accessible to all and more.



[View the toolkit.](#)

Supplemental



Training Presentations

Training presentations were varied to meet both the skill level and specific needs of trainees, from basic training for teachers to more advanced training for administrative users. ParentSquare provided templates for these, which we modified and customized to meet our specific needs.

Training Agenda

- Clovis Unified's Plan for Possible Adoption & Rollout (Kelly Avants)
- Integration of Data for SS & School Year (Raj Nagra)
- Training Schedule
 - Administrator training June 10
 - Training for teachers (synchronous or asynchronous?) June 13 & follow up offered June 18
 - Training for parents shared June 13 & follow up week of June 17
- Administrator Training
 - Question & Answer with ParentSquare's Mandy Fouts

www.parentsquare.com

[View the training materials.](#)

One-Sheet Resources

We designed a variety of one-sheet resources for schools and staff to utilize. These ranged from offering helpful tips to staff on using the platform, to equipping schools with resources for their parents as they started educating them on the new platform.

Can we reach you in an emergency?

ParentSquare

Together, let's make sure our messages reach you in the event of a school lockdown, evacuation or shelter-in-place

- 1 Download the ParentSquare app.
- 2 Activate your account.
- 3 Customize your preferences.

¿Podemos comunicarnos en caso de emergencia?

ParentSquare

Juntos, asegurémonos de que nuestros mensajes de cierre de escuela, evacuación o refugio lleguen a todos.

- 1 Descargue la aplicación ParentSquare.
- 2 Active su cuenta con su correo electrónico/número de teléfono que aparece en Parent Connect.

¿No recibes notificaciones?

Asegúrate de estar suscrito a los mensajes de texto enviados desde el sistema de mensajes de texto. Puedes gestionar las opciones para situaciones de emergencia en la Configuración de la cuenta.

ParentSquare® for Administrators

ParentSquare is made for the modern world. With ParentSquare you can...

1. UNIFY all communication tools used in your classrooms, sites, and district, with oversight throughout
2. UPGRADE your basic communications with bundled-in features like Forms & Permission Slips, Appointment Sign Ups and more
3. SOLVE ISSUES around sending Urgent Alerts, Report Cards and Attendance Notices

- Email, Text, Push Notifications, Voice Calls
- Text
- Email
- Push Notifications
- Voice Calls
- Social
- Website
- iOS App
- Android App
- School & District-Wide Alerts: Broadcast alerts and emergency messaging.
- Posts: School administrators, designated staff members, teachers and authorized parent leaders can all post news and announcements every day keeping parents in the know.
- Direct Messaging: Send and receive direct instant messages over text, email, web or app. Send a single message privately to all recipients (BCG) or hold a group conversation, for instance, with parents, teacher and counselor. All messages are two-way translated. A teacher can write message in English and it will get delivered in Spanish to a Spanish speaking parent and vice-versa. You also have access to secure messaging with students at the secondary level.
- Attendance will now have automatic notifications
- Parent-Teacher Conferences & Appointment Sign-ups
- Forms & Permission Slips: Create simple text-based forms to gather input from parents. Forms and permission slips are easy to set up with no training needed. Just click the link and type questions. Allow parents to sign and submit electronic permission slips directly through the event post/form - saving paper and the hassle of rounding up paper base permission slips.
- Volunteering and Participation Sign-ups: Easily add participation options to a post - request RSVP, ask for project supplies, recruit volunteers, create online sign-ups and more.
- Easy Staff Directory
- Newsletter Templates: Use a template provided by ParentSquare or customize your own templates for your school or district to help with branding.
- Synced Calendar from SchoolDude
- Secure Document Delivery for Report Cards & More

For questions or information about available trainings, contact our team:
Kelly Avants, Chief Communications Officer at ext. 79092 or kellyavants@cusd.com
Kendra Burt, Digital Media Specialist at ext. 79030 or kendraburt@cusd.com

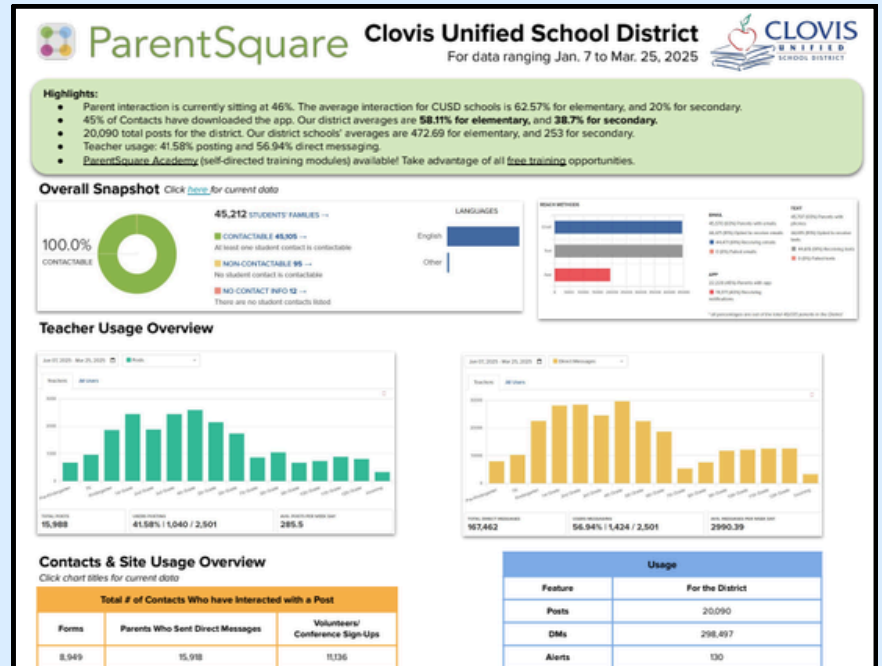
[View the one-sheets.](#)
(divided into folders by recipient)

Supplemental



School Usage Reports

These school usage reports track metrics like parent engagement, contactability rates and teacher usage of the platform. We record and share these analytics with leadership from each of our school areas, so they can track progress of their schools. Additionally, these reports tap into the natural competitiveness of our school areas, encouraging them to strive for even higher numbers as they compete to be "the best" in the district.



[View samples of the Analytics Reports](#)

Newsletters

Throughout the roll-out of ParentSquare to our staff, we supplemented training sessions in-person and virtually with weekly, then periodic, e-newsletters. These were used to teach about new features, share answers to frequently asked questions and provide reassurance that we were supporting staff every step of the way by reminding them who to talk to if they had questions or concerns.

ParentSquare
ParentSquare Updates
Tips and Info for All Staff Users

Welcome back to school!
Over summer there were some updates and exciting changes to the ParentSquare platform. Many are available now, and a few are coming soon, so read on for the latest happening on ParentSquare!

Office Hours Available for Help
We're offering office hours prior to the start of school, as a flexible way for you to get help with ParentSquare. Kendra Burt will be available via Zoom (join links are below):

- [Wed., Aug. 13 - 9:00-11:00](#)
- [Wed., Aug. 13 - 2:00-4:00](#)
- [Thurs., Aug. 14 - 10:00-12:00](#)
- [Fri., Aug. 15 - 2:00-4:00](#)

Other Reminders

Reminder: New Direct Message Tools
With the new Direct Message update, you'll be able to select an entire class or group with just a few clicks, making it faster and easier to communicate directly with larger groups. Learn more:

- [When to Use a Direct Message or a Post](#)
- [Send a Direct Message to a Group or Class](#)
- [Direct Message Quick Select Recipient Guide](#)

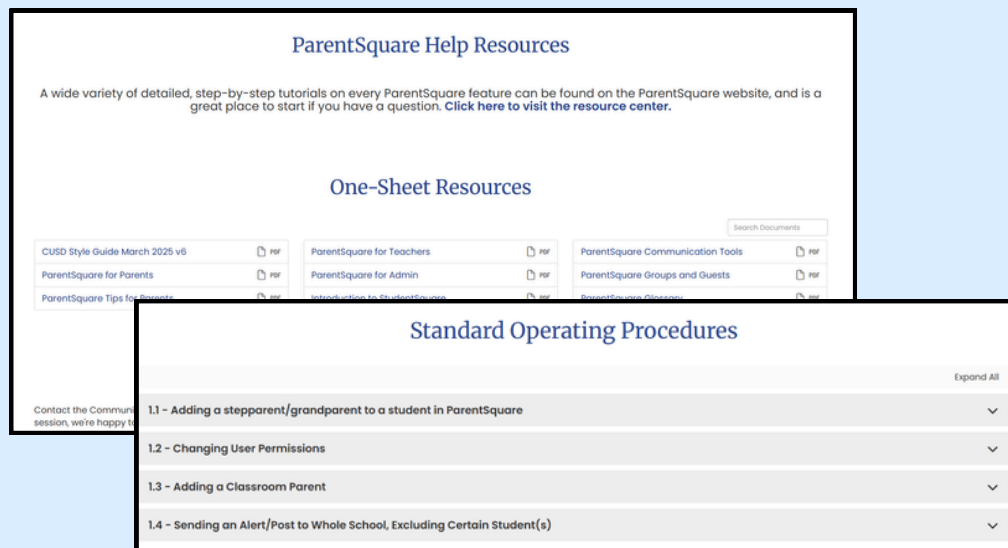
Questions? Concerns?
If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us. You can reach out to us by our CUSD email:

- Kendra Burt, Digital Communications Specialist
- Raj Nagra, Chief Technology Officer
- Kelly Avants, Chief Communications Officer

Night Resource
Parents get on ParentSquare!
Include in teachers' Back to School Night presentations
Slide includes download codes for the ParentSquare

Staff Training Webpage

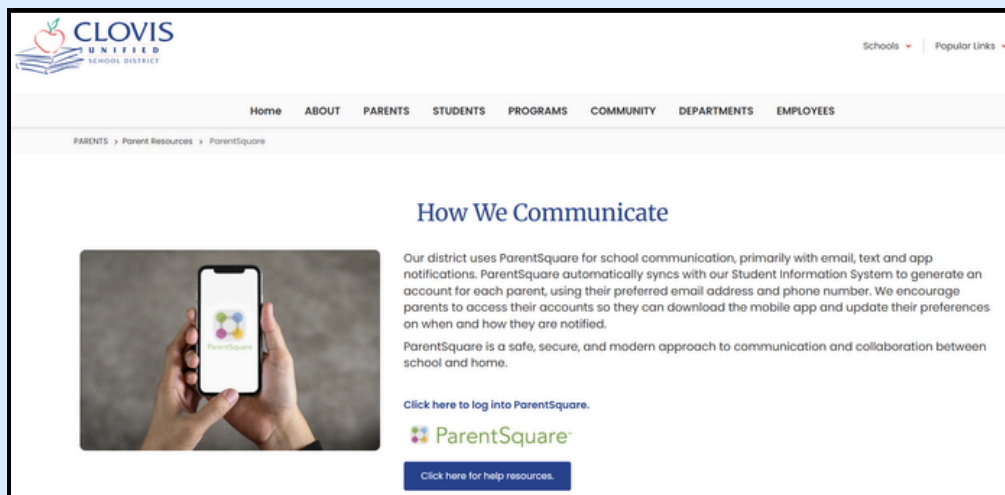
In the Employee Training section of our website, staff can access a ParentSquare resource page that houses digital versions of the one-sheets, an up-to-date FAQ section, and a list of Standard Operating Procedures for certain actions taken in ParentSquare or when communicating a difficult situation sensitively.



[View the Staff Training Webpage](#)

Parent Information Webpage

Our district website also has a ParentSquare resource page for parents to learn more about the platform. It's also a great resource for school staff to utilize when parents have questions about or need assistance with the platform.



[View the Parent Information Webpage](#)