

CASE STUDY

Implementing a Remind District Plan at Milwaukee Public Schools

ENROLLMENT	SCHOOLS	FREE/REDUCED LUNCH
77,000	154	71%

IN THE SPRING OF 2017, MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MPS) rolled out a Remind District Plan to improve family and community engagement. Since then, teachers in Wisconsin’s largest district have successfully used Remind to individualize communication with students and families—progress that MPS can now quantify and track against their goals.

The need for more meaningful communication

Students in Milwaukee come from diverse backgrounds and speak more than 60 different languages. Translating information into every family’s preferred language isn’t always possible, and many households don’t have regular access to email.

To cover as much ground as possible, MPS used a variety of district communication tools—including autodialed phone calls, printed newsletters, and websites. There was just one problem: Families would tune out messages that didn’t seem directed to them. “When you’re communicating with thousands of households, it’s impossible to individualize,” says Danielle Costello, Family and Community Engagement Specialist at MPS. “Eventually, families stop seeing the value in the messages.”

It was clear that the district had tools for mass communication. But to improve engagement, MPS needed to find a tool that let teachers connect directly with families—in a way that was quick, meaningful, and available to everyone.

“ Our challenge was figuring out a way for families to connect with the person they view as the most important person in our district: their child’s teacher.”

A district solution that empowers teachers

Danielle had used Remind before as a parent, so her superintendent asked her to look into a Remind District Plan for MPS. As she learned more about features at both the district and

classroom levels, she kept returning to two-way communication, cell phone accessibility, and the ability to translate messages into more than 70 languages.

“ Putting power in the hands of classroom teachers to communicate directly with parents was the green light for MPS.”

Another advantage was the number of teachers in MPS schools who already used Remind in their classrooms, which would make it much easier to get buy-in for the District Plan. “We didn’t want to mandate that schools use Remind,” Danielle says. “But we definitely wanted people to view it as a useful resource.”

Building on a new foundation

As soon as the rollout was under way, MPS teachers got started with the basics: sending messages, photos, and other materials and resources to their classes. Soon, they were connecting with students and parents through individual conversations. Since implementing the District Plan, Danielle’s seen teachers use Remind for everything from planning field trips to collecting forms.

“ Using a Remind District Plan to extend learning beyond the school day is something that people are really excited about.”

With this foundation in place, the district has started working on a comprehensive survey to assess how parents feel about Milwaukee Public Schools. Now that it’s possible to quantify engagement with metrics like the number of messages sent and percentage of parents reached, the district can correlate family climate with activity on Remind. “If you look at our numbers, we’ve already grown,” Danielle says. “I only see that continuing.”

Learn more about School and District Plans.



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