



Remind

Choosing a Communication
Platform for School-Home
Engagement:

A Buyer's Guide



In this guide

Choosing the right communication platform for your organization requires considering the needs of every stakeholder in your community, from everyone who needs to send home information to everyone who needs to engage with it.

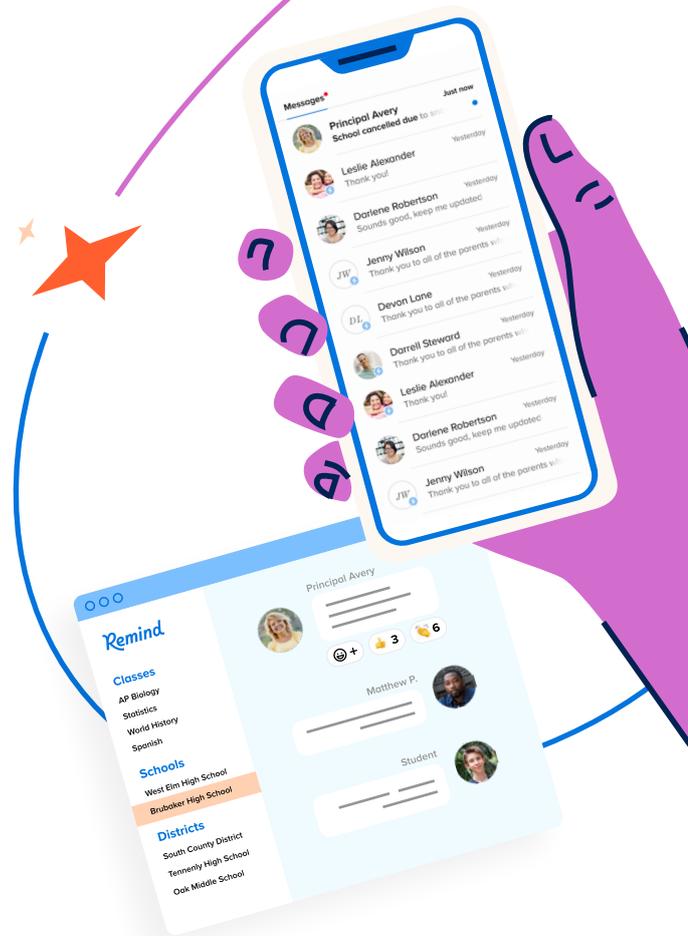
In order to support student and family engagement—crucial to key outcomes like attendance, graduation rates, and academic achievement—school-home communication has to be **effective**, **equitable**, and **engaging**.

Administrators, teachers, and staff members need a communication platform that's **simple to use, compatible with their specific uses and workflows, and successful at reaching students and families**.

Both the Title I coordinator collecting lunch forms and the soccer coach rescheduling a rained-out practice need a solution that lets them not only send out important information, but generate and manage responses as well.

Equally important are students and families, who need communication that's **easy to access and easy to engage with**. When communication platforms are designed primarily with the sender experience in mind, recipients are often required to download apps, activate accounts, and manage their notifications—challenges that disproportionately affect students and families that need additional support.

If you're choosing a communication platform for school-home engagement across your district community, this guide includes questions and considerations to help you clarify your organization's needs and evaluate prospective vendors.



Questions to consider

How do you enable two-way communication?

ESSA defines parent and family engagement as “regular two-way, meaningful communication between families and school staff” (Public Law 114-95, Section 1116).

To enable true two-way communication, consider:

- ~ What communication channels are available to families in your community? Can they respond directly to notifications from their teachers or schools? How do they reach out independently?
- ~ Which communication channels generate the most engagement?
- ~ What feedback have teachers and other staff members shared about communicating with parents and families?
- ~ What feedback have families shared about communication or engagement with your organization?



How do you support equitable communication?

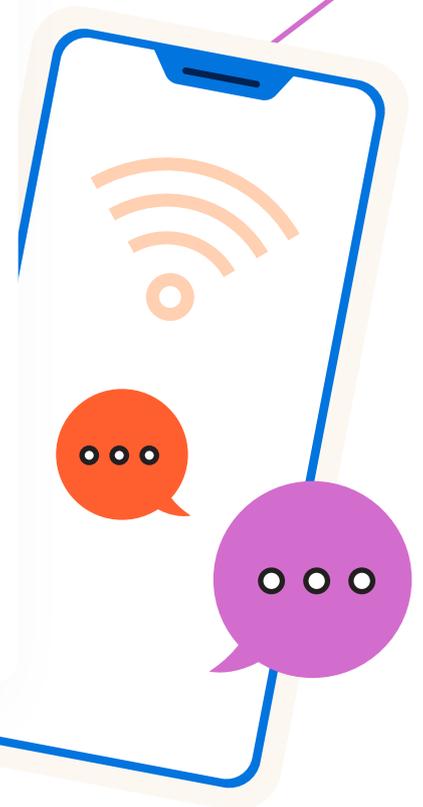
Today, **15%** of Americans don't own a smartphone, while **23%** of American adults don't have broadband internet service at home—with people of color and groups with less education or income more likely not to have either. However, **97% of all Americans do own a cell phone of some kind** (Pew Research, 2021).

To ensure equitable communication for your community, consider:

- ~ What technology (devices and connectivity) is required for students and families to communicate with school staff?
- ~ How many steps are required for students and families to access your organization's communication channels? Do they have to set up and log in to online accounts?
- ~ Are parents and families able to access and respond to communication at the time that it's sent?
- ~ How does your organization communicate with ELL families? How does translated communication appear to recipients? Does it vary with different channels?
- ~ How do ELL families communicate with teachers and staff? How do they respond to messages? Who do they reach out to with questions?

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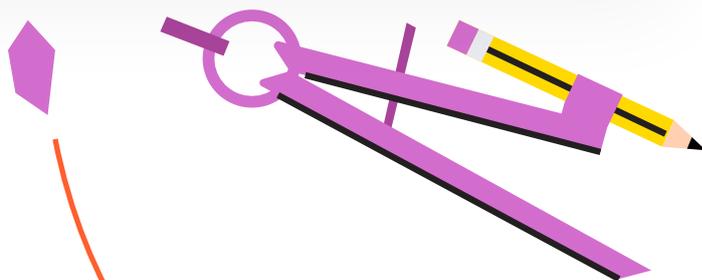


How do you integrate other tools and systems?

District organizations rely on a number of tools for day-to-day operations, from district-level systems like LMS and SIS to the apps and resources that teachers use with their classes. A communication platform should allow your organization to utilize tools that have already been purchased while simplifying content distribution for your teachers.

To leverage your existing tools and systems, consider:

- ~ Is your communication system linked to your SIS?
- ~ Does your organization have an LMS?
- ~ What tools has your organization procured for classroom, school, and district use?
- ~ What additional tools and resources do individual teachers and staff use for instruction, student engagement, or managing logistics?
- ~ Does your current communication system integrate with any of the tools above? If not, how do stakeholders manage content distribution?

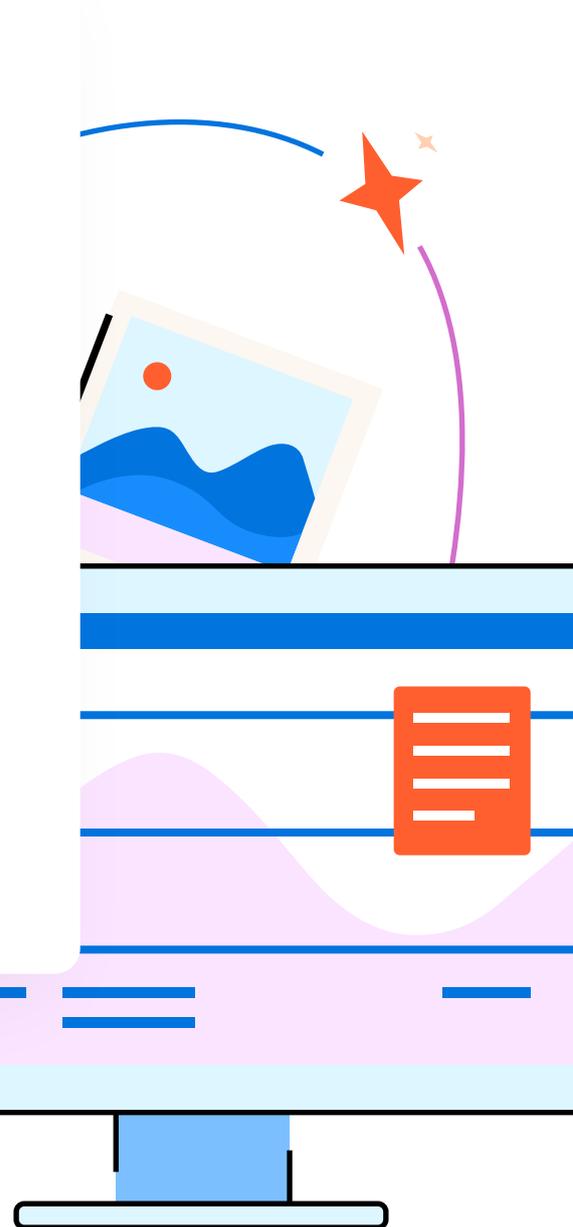


Will stakeholders in your organization adopt and use the platform?

Stakeholder adoption is critical for any communication platform, especially if the goal is to improve school-home engagement. As important as it is to consider features and functionality, even the most advanced technological capabilities can't succeed without buy-in and active usage from administrators, teachers and staff, students, and families.

To encourage stakeholder adoption and usage, consider:

- ~ What tools do teachers and staff in your organization use to communicate with students and families?
- ~ Are teachers and staff required to use any communication tools? If so, what does adoption look like?
- ~ Are teachers and staff able to create their own groups for activities outside of the classroom like sports and extracurriculars?
- ~ In the past, what challenges have you experienced in implementing new technology tools? Transitioning from one tool to another?



Questions for vendors



Reach, access, and engagement

	Yes	No	Comments
Does the platform provide two-way communication between school and home?			
Does the platform support two-way communication on the following channels? ~ SMS/text message ~ Mobile app ~ Email ~ Website			
Are teachers and staff members already using the platform?			
Does the platform require parents and students to download an app?			
Does the platform require parents and students to create an account?			
Can the platform sync with student information systems (SIS) to create and roster accounts and classes? ~ If so, can stakeholders also create their own groups for athletics, clubs, field trips, and PLCs?			
Does the platform automatically translate messages into stakeholders' preferred languages? ~ Does the platform support two-way translation into 90+ languages? ~ Does the platform provide two-way translation via text message?			
Can messages be scheduled in advance?			

	Yes	No	Comments
Do messages include delivery summaries?			
Can messages be edited or deleted?			
Are all messages archived?			

Classroom communication

	Yes	No	Comments
Can educators communicate with students on the platform? ~ <i>If yes, is personal contact information (like mobile phone numbers) exposed?</i>			
Can teachers share content (files, photos, links, etc.) in messages?			
Can teachers make two-way, one-on-one voice calls on the platform?			
Does the platform integrate with the following educational technology tools? ~ <i>Google Classroom</i> ~ <i>Google Drive</i> ~ <i>Google Meet</i> ~ <i>Microsoft OneDrive</i> ~ <i>Zoom</i>			
Does the platform integrate with learning management systems (LMS)?			

Administrator communication and oversight

	Yes	No	Comments
Do students and families receive district, school, and classroom communication through the same notification channels?			
Can administrators send messages to an entire school or district organization?			

	Yes	No	Comments
Can the platform send emergency alerts to all contacts in an urgent situation ~ Can administrators personalize messages with voice recordings?			
Can messages be automated and customized with data from a SIS? (e.g. attendance, lunch balances)			
Does the platform provide visibility into school and district-level usage?			
Does the platform provide actionable usage data and statistics?			
Can administrators download message transcripts for any user in the organization?			

Data privacy and security

	Yes	No	Comments
Does the company comply with FERPA?			
Does the company comply with COPPA?			
Does the company have iKeepSafe certification?			
Does the company have ISO 27001:20013 certification or comply with a similar international standard for information security?			

What you get with *Remind Hub*

Remind Hub gives you the ability to enable student and family engagement at every level of your district organization.

Features

Two-way, text-based messaging

Send messages and file attachments via text, smartphone app, email, or web

More characters, classes, and participants

Your entire organization gets access to longer messages and higher class limits

Two-way preferred language translation

Roster home languages for automatic translations into 90+ languages via text, app, and web

Video conferencing integrations

Enable Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom for your entire organization

Organization-wide messaging

Reach everyone in your community—or everyone with a specific role—with a single message

Rostering

Provision accounts and create classes for everyone in your organization

Oversight and advanced controls

See and manage who's in your organization, including access to communication logs

Community engagement statistics

Detailed statistics help you track and report teacher and family engagement

Premium features

Voice calls, LMS integrations, advanced messaging, and urgent messaging (available as add-ons to Remind Hub)



“A complete win-win for our district.”



John Armstrong
Director of Technology and Information Services,
Joliet Public Schools District 86