







HOW SCHOOLS ARE REINVENTING COMMUNICATION



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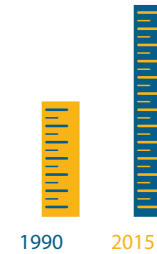
Communication with key stakeholders is a central factor in the success of any school or school district. Parents expect to be informed of important events, students use communication to meet classroom expectations, and staff rely on accurate communication to appropriately plan school learning and activities. Improving school communication, is a central theme to enhancing the experience of students throughout the school community. Studies have shown that consistent school communication has tangible advantages, including: ¹

-  Higher academic achievement
-  Reduced number of days absent
-  Greater parent and teacher collaboration
-  Positive student attitudes and behaviors in the classroom
-  Increased student interest in learning and classroom participation
-  Improved teacher satisfaction ratings, lowering staff turnover



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25 years



Research shows that the level of communication within schools and parental engagement has increased steadily over the past 25 years.² However, some schools continue to struggle with making communication with students, parents, and staff a priority - often leading to “communication deserts”, where key information is not shared.

With communication being tantamount to school community engagement and long-term student achievement, flagship schools are using affordable and innovative ways to reinvent daily communication.

Technology- and communication-driven schools, like the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), are teaming up to leverage the best in technology and social media to take communication within their school to the next level. KIPP and other inventive charter schools and school districts have been invited to participate in The League of Innovative Schools, started by educational non-profit, Digital Promise. Its mission is to reinvent the school experience for all students by making communication and learning more accessible and on the go. These schools among others are using the latest in technology to revamp school communication.

Here are the top 5 ways that schools are enhancing communication to improve student, parent, and staff engagement, inside and outside of the classroom.

01

CLASS WEBSITES

Surfing the internet for information is a growing trend, with a recent Pew Research poll finding that over 89% of smartphone owners use their phone to visit school and work-related websites at least once per day.³ Having a class website is a great online resource for parents and students to access homework assignments, test/quiz dates, and download supplemental activities. More schools are moving toward creating class websites for each grade and teacher, even starting as early as the first grade. Event pictures, curriculum schedules, necessary forms, and parent newsletters all can be housed and shared

via a class website. To keep information secure, the most innovative schools are using password protected web pages, where parents are given a unique code to allow them to access personalized information related to their child's particular classroom or their child's academic progress.



02

VIRTUAL PARENT CONFERENCES



Leveraging videoconferencing tools like Skype and WebEx, innovative schools are remixing the traditional in-person parent conference. According to recent surveys, 43% of parents who want to be more involved say they are too busy to do so.⁴ Allowing video parent conferences reduces the need for parents to take off of work to travel to the school. Conferences can

also be recorded and shared with others and reviewed later - enabling improved access to key topics discussed related to a student's development and academic achievement.



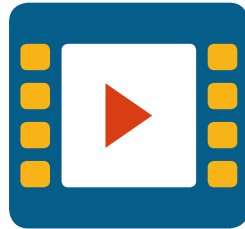
43%

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03

VLOGGING

Schools are leveraging social media like never before. Classroom Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and Pinterest profiles are innovative ways to communicate with students and parents, outside of the classroom. The most inventive schools are taking this a step further and creating YouTube channels of educational and informational vlogs. A vlog is a hybrid term for a video and a blog. Teachers can use vlogs to share weekly information about class events, or to give parents insight into what is being taught in the classroom. For example, a Math teacher can record a short video lecture explaining a new Math concept, upload the vlog, and

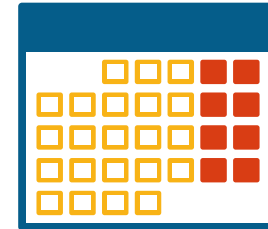


share it with parents to watch. This is a great way to engage parents in classroom content and empower them to help their child with completing homework assignments and effectively studying for assessments. Absent students can also use vlogs to learn and review key lessons that they have missed, reducing the time to transition back into classroom content following extended absences.

04

ONLINE CALENDARS

Parents, teachers, and students have to juggle school, recreational, and personal schedules on a daily basis. Providing access to an online school calendar that lists important dates, testing, project deadlines is just the beginning. Innovative schools, are revamping the traditional, stagnant online calendar. These schools are implementing individual classroom calendars, where parents have access to view and edit the online calendar. Parents are encouraged to input upcoming days their child will be absent, volunteer for class events, and share useful online resources with the teacher and other



parents. Studies have found that increased accessibility to updated and accurate information has helped to boost parent engagement in the classroom. This has obvious benefits to the students and teachers, but is a key component in building cohesive and organized school communities.⁵

05

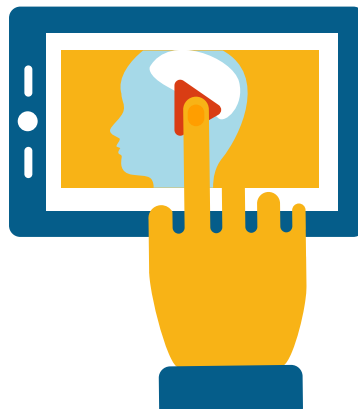
FLIPPED PARENT COMMUNICATION

This is a revision of the flipped classroom concept which is a pedagogical model where the typical sequence of lectures and homework assignments are reversed. The most inventive schools are using this flipped classroom ideology in reinventing school-wide communication. Administrators are leveraging screen capture technology such as Screenr or Jing to record key information related to PTA meetings, State standardized testing, community events, and school-wide changes.

For example, prior to a parent meeting, a Principal can record a 5-10 minute video outlining the important points related to the topic of the parent meeting. The video can be shared with all parents to review, up to one week before

the meeting. Therefore the time spent during the meeting is done more effectively and can be focused on discussion, questions, and collaboration between parents, teachers, and administrators. This flipped communication also serves as a great repository of information that parents can access, over and over again, throughout the year.

5-10
minute video



As technology evolves and the growing demand for instant and reliable communication increases, schools must work to implement more innovative communication tools that can be accessed through smartphones.

New mobile platforms are, now, enabling schools to implement all of the innovative techniques previously mentioned - all in one mobile application, that can be downloaded straight to parents, students, and teacher's mobile phones. Approximately 90% of teens and adults in the United States own a cell phone, with over 64% of these cell phone owners having daily access to a smartphone.⁶ Now, more than ever before, schools are looking for creative ways to engage the school community through their mobile devices.



64%

having daily access to a smartphone

Innovative school districts are investing in state-of-the-art, dynamic mobile applications to reinvent their communication with key stakeholders. Industry leading technology solutions, such as the Embr School, the Embr District, and the Embr Event applications are revolutionizing how administrators disseminate critical information to students, parents, and staff. Offering a turnkey solution, the Embr suite of mobile applications are easily customizable, and built to be implemented with minimal IT expertise required. Run as a native application, Embr products are compatible with all devices, across all platforms, and are able to push information in real-time for crisis management, class assignments, or extracurricular activities.



CONCLUSION

In today's environment, schools are continually faced with the task of improving communication, but staying within predefined budget constraints. Upgrading classroom and school community communication tools can be costly, require extensive IT infrastructure improvements, and are not always user-friendly for parents and students. A concerted effort is being made by the top technology-focused schools to make communication efficient and engaging for everyone in the larger school community. As schools continue to explore new technologies, social media, and other ways of sharing content and information, companies, like Embr will continue to evolve and design best-in-class products to meet the 21st century communication needs of all schools.



To register for a complimentary demo of the suite of innovative Embr mobile applications, visit www.embr.mobi

¹ <http://researchnetwork.pearson.com/teaching-in-a-digital-age/stronger-communication#sthash.EXWTbuXK.dpuf>

² <https://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/foundation/MetLife-Teacher-Survey-2012.pdf>

³ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/01/6-facts-about-americans-and-their-smartphones/>

⁴ <http://researchnetwork.pearson.com/college-and-career-success/resources/virtual-parent-teacher-conferences>

⁵ http://researchnetwork.pearson.com/wp-content/uploads/DigitalAge_ParentCommunication_121113.pdf

⁶ <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/mobile-technology-fact-sheet/>