



Best Apps for Parent Engagement

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Parent engagement is one of the most important pieces to an administrator's job, and there are so many ways to do it. In many conversations I have with other school administrators, one of the most common questions that arise is, "What do you use that works?" There are multiple apps and services that allow for communication between school and parent. At St. Mary Catholic School in Rockwood, Michigan, we utilize the apps listed below and our parents are so thankful to have the insight into our building and our classrooms.

1. Seesaw allows teachers to share student work and progress with parents in real-time. Teachers give parents a unique QR code to scan, and they are then connected securely to their child's online portfolio. Students and teachers can add information to the journal and parents are notified when anything is added. Students can add text notes, videos, photos, drawings, or PDFs. Teachers and parents can communicate through the app or via an email option. This allows for an "open door" classroom without having to physically be there. Parents are engaged via the updates throughout the day and students love being able to instantly share and archive their work.

2. Like Seesaw, Class Dojo also has an individual code for parents to securely sign up. While the app has come under fire for being utilized in the classroom as of late, it can be a great tool for parent communication and engagement. Students who struggle with certain behaviors can be motivated by the positive points awarded by the teacher and take note when negative points are added. Parents have the ability to see in real time which points are being awarded and which behaviors may be continuing while in the classroom setting. Teachers can send messages and photos to the entire class via a "Class Story" and also to individual parents. The app allows for secure communication between parent and teacher and can be a great way for schools to engage parents in the classroom.

3. Remind began as an app for one-way reminders but has grown to so much more. The company is continuously working with educators and administrators throughout the country to discuss and test new features. Classes and lists can be set up in remind and messages can be sent to and from the school account via the new chat feature. Messages can be scheduled for a later time allowing you to create multiple messages at once and send throughout the day. Engagement stays high with minimal effort. Documents, voice clips, and photos can also be sent, making Remind a great option for sharing homework with a parent whose student may have forgotten theirs at school or sharing a special moment in class like the loss of a first tooth. [Remind for Schools](#) has also just launched, making whole school (teacher to parent or administrator to staff) communication much easier and more streamlined. I have used Remind as a teacher and an administrator and cannot think of a better app to keep parents engaged.

4. Instagram is on the rise in schools as another way to keep parents engaged. Many connected educators will tell you that you have to meet your parents where they are, and a LOT of them are on Instagram! Creating a private channel for your school is a great way to engage your families. Sharing photos throughout the day of a great student project, assemblies, recess fun or anything else you can think of is a great way to keep your families “in the know” with what is happening in your building and also a great way to share with others using hashtags. Many teachers are currently utilizing Instagram for sharing classroom ideas and schools are doing a great job taking that one step further as a great way to engage their community.

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