



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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ParentSquare partners with Computers for Families

ParentSquare, a tool designed to increase parent engagement through streamlining all school-to-home communication, recently announced a new partnership with Partners in Education. Together, they will ensure that all members of Partners in Education’s Computers for Families program — which has provided thousands of local families with technology resources — will receive important communications more efficiently.

Partners in Education fulfills needs in K-12 schools and youth programs through the coordination of volunteer and business resources. Computers for Families (CFF) is its longest running program, designed to bridge the digital divide that can hinder students, specifically those from low-income families, from achieving academic success. Though technology has become more affordable, many families still lack a level of access to technology that is adequate to support their children’s education. Thanks to hundreds of annual hardware donations, Computers for Families provides free, refurbished computers to local students lacking these educational tools at home. CFF also offers families ongoing tech support, as well as help getting connected to discounted Internet, through Cox’s Connect2Compete (C2C) program, for example.

ParentSquare is an all in one communication and parent engagement platform for PreK-12 schools and districts, already used by most of the schools Computers for Families serves.

By coordinating efforts, the two entities hope to eliminate communication issues that arise when addressing a family’s technology needs, and to support those parents who are not as familiar with technology and may need more help using ParentSquare’s features.

“It can be a challenge connecting with our parent community in efficient, timely ways,” says Walter La Riba, Partners in Education staff person who has worked with CFF families for more than 10 years.

“Although we have a support line, families often forget about it, or work odd hours and can’t get through to us during office hours.”

As a result, he reports, families often fail to come forward if they have a technology issue, or simply need a computer replacement.

“Now, thanks to the collaboration with Partners in Education,” says ParentSquare CEO Sohit Wadhwa, “we can help ensure that parents who may need more support using this technology can get it, and will have the chance to be more connected to their child’s education.”

Beginning this month, Partners in Education will use ParentSquare’s secure platform to reach its Computers for Families audience via text, app notification, email or voice, and in their preferred language, with over 100+ languages available through Neural Machine Translation. For the first time, CFF staff and families will also be able to communicate amongst each other, presenting common questions or sharing available resources. To assist families further, all computers distributed by CFF will come installed with ParentSquare, and instructions on how to use the tool will be incorporated into the technology training all parents receive at the computers distribution events.

Partners in Education plans to eventually utilize ParentSquare features in promoting its many opportunities to volunteer to the parent community.

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