

Maintaining a strong school climate and culture of engagement and attendance

DEL SESTO MIDDLE SCHOOL, PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND



The Pilot to Student Success

In Spring 2018, Providence Public Schools (PPSD) launched a seven-school pilot with Kininvolved, a social enterprise that uses software and family engagement services to boost student attendance and tackle chronic absenteeism. After the pilot, 100% of PPSD schools opted-in to use Unified Operations Attendance Intervention Suite (formerly KINVO by Kininvolved).

Since then, leaders and educators have discovered the value of putting families first, and the resulting implementation of Attendance Intervention Suite has boomed in PPSD. **District staff exchanged 21,824 messages in 2018, more than 1.5 million messages in 2019, and over 4.4 million messages in 2020.**

Research shows that family engagement and attendance are two of the biggest predictors of student success. Attendance Intervention Suite is a powerful, user-friendly software that address both predictors by giving districts everything they need to minimize absenteeism and engage families—anytime, anywhere—to keep students on track to graduate.

Throughout the semester-long pilot in 2018, Kininvolved worked with district leadership to develop and implement policy strategy, develop critical relationships, and ensure the pilot rollout accommodated the district's culture and community. After the initial pilot and Community Summit, district leadership offered all 40 schools the option to use Attendance Intervention Suite, and all of them opted in. Since then, Attendance Intervention Suite has been the backbone family engagement and attendance tool for PPSD.

AT A GLANCE



Challenges

- Difficulty tracking attendance during distance learning
- Difficulty engaging different student and family groups
- Struggle to engage families that speak other languages



Solution

- Unified Operations™ Attendance Intervention Suite (formerly KINVO by Kininvolved)



Results

- District decreased chronic absence rate by 4.2 percent
- District staff exchanged 21,824 messages in 2018, more than 1.5 million messages in 2019, and over 4.4 million messages in 2020
- Effectively engaged with all families regardless of language preference

Year-by-Year Overview

Early Impact: 2018

As of May 2018, concluding a three-month mid-year pilot:

- School leaders and families exchanged more than 14,000 messages via Attendance Intervention Suite
- Four pilot schools reduced chronic absence rates
- All 40 PPSD schools opted to adopt Attendance Intervention Suite for the 2018–19 school year

PPSD district leaders rightfully believe that school-level buy-in is critical to success. At the conclusion of the pilot, the district offered all 40 schools the option to participate in the Kininvolved partnership and Attendance Intervention Suite rollout and 100% opted in.

Expanded Impact: 2019

In May 2019, the [Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy led a review of PPSD](#) at the invitation of the Rhode Island Department of Education. With all PPSD schools using Attendance Intervention Suite, the researchers noted:

- "We heard about strong efforts to get to know students' parents, including via multiple digital platforms (Kininvolved, Facebook, etc.)." – Pg. 40
- "The review team also met with administrators, teachers, and students in every school. We heard about several positive initiatives in schools, such as the increased enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, better communication with parents via Kininvolved, and a new data system in place to monitor students' social and emotional behavior." – Pg. 46

Usage of Attendance Intervention Suite rose across the district, and building leaders continued the charge to create positive school climates and cultures that engaged families and kept students on track to graduate.

Deepened Impact: 2020

The use of Attendance Intervention Suite grew throughout PPSD for two years. During the school year 2019–20, Attendance Intervention Suite served as an essential daily tool throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

- PPSD schools sent a total of 4,413,195 messages through Attendance Intervention Suite during the 2019–20 school year

“I can’t imagine going back to not **having attendance and communications together** in the same software. Attendance Intervention Suite enables us to send effective communications based on data-driven decisions.”

REBECCA DELBARONE

Assistant Principal, Del Sesto Middle School

- Messaging through Attendance Intervention Suite increased 376% in March 2020 during the first few weeks of school closure
- Administrative teams at multiple sites in PPSD describe Attendance Intervention Suite as a "game changer" and "essential tool"

Del Sesto Middle School

Principal Arzinia Gill led Del Sesto’s pilot, and she focused on learning the mechanics of the software and integrating it with a comprehensive suite of diverse attendance interventions. She has served as Del Sesto’s principal for six years and has built a strong culture of positive family engagement.

Attendance Intervention Suite enabled her team to download attendance reports and strategically build relationships with families, thus supporting her mission to ensure that all families are not just included but also engaged in her school community.

Nicholas Bernardo, the school culture coordinator, says that it is critical to ensure families who speak languages other than English are equally involved. "In the past, we have worked on getting information out, informing parents that an event would happen. We could not have a two-way conversation with English learners. Now we can talk about the event, answer questions, and build healthier relationships."

Since implementing Attendance Intervention Suite, Del Sesto has continually invested in the software and thoughtfully engaged families. This investment in building strong school-home relationships paid dividends during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Maintaining strong school climate, culture, and engagement during closure

When PPSD schools received word they were closing, Del Sesto Middle School administrators had approximately 45 minutes to strategize and distribute 1,000 devices while also planning other logistics and communications.

Rebecca DelBarone, an Assistant Principal at Del Sesto Middle School, says, "The ability to easily create custom groups and send personalized messages to specific families regarding information that they need in their language so that they understand it is huge. I don't know how we would have done it without Attendance Intervention Suite."

As Del Sesto administrators wrapped up their initial communications strategy, they began training their teachers to track distance learning through work completion—no small task for 950 students. The Del Sesto team turned to the power and flexibility of Attendance Intervention Suite to create custom groups of students depending on their tier of engagement.

DelBarone says, "I genuinely believe that Attendance Intervention Suite is the reason we've been able to engage so many families." Del Sesto administrators used messaging to promote attendance during distance learning in addition to measuring work completion. After noticing that attendance on a Friday dipped from an average of 90% to 82.2%, they decided to text families to remind them that their children had class the following Friday. **On the Friday they deployed the reminder message, attendance jumped back up to 90.06%.**

The Del Sesto team describes the ability to have all attendance data and communications capabilities on one

“Parents are asking us questions now. They want to be more involved with our school. This is something they could not do in the past with other communication systems used.”

ARZINIA GILL

Principal, Del Sesto Middle School

platform as a "game changer." DelBarone jumps in to say, "Right now, I'm looking at our year-to-date attendance tiers, and I love seeing how our targeted attendance work during distance learning has increased our green and decreased our red, and I love how we're able to send out specific, personalized messages to students in the different tiers. I can't imagine going back to not having attendance and communications together." Bernardo adds, "It empowers us to have specific conversations about the actual data. The fact that we can access an attendance report card for a specific student and pull that data straight into a conversation is really helpful."

Despite the curveballs and challenges that came with the 2019–20 school year, Principal Gill and her team found their investment in attendance and family engagement work paid off when they were able to transition to distance learning quickly and successfully, aided by strong communications and actionable attendance data. Principal Gill recalls, "We were one of the first schools in PPSD to pilot Attendance Intervention Suite," and after years of use and stress testing the software during COVID-19, she says, "Attendance Intervention Suite is essential for us in so many ways."

Learn how Unified Operations™ Attendance Intervention Suite enables you to make data-driven interventions that improve student attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism.

Visit www.PowerSchool.com or call 1-877-873-1550 to learn more.