

How to Improve Communication with All Families

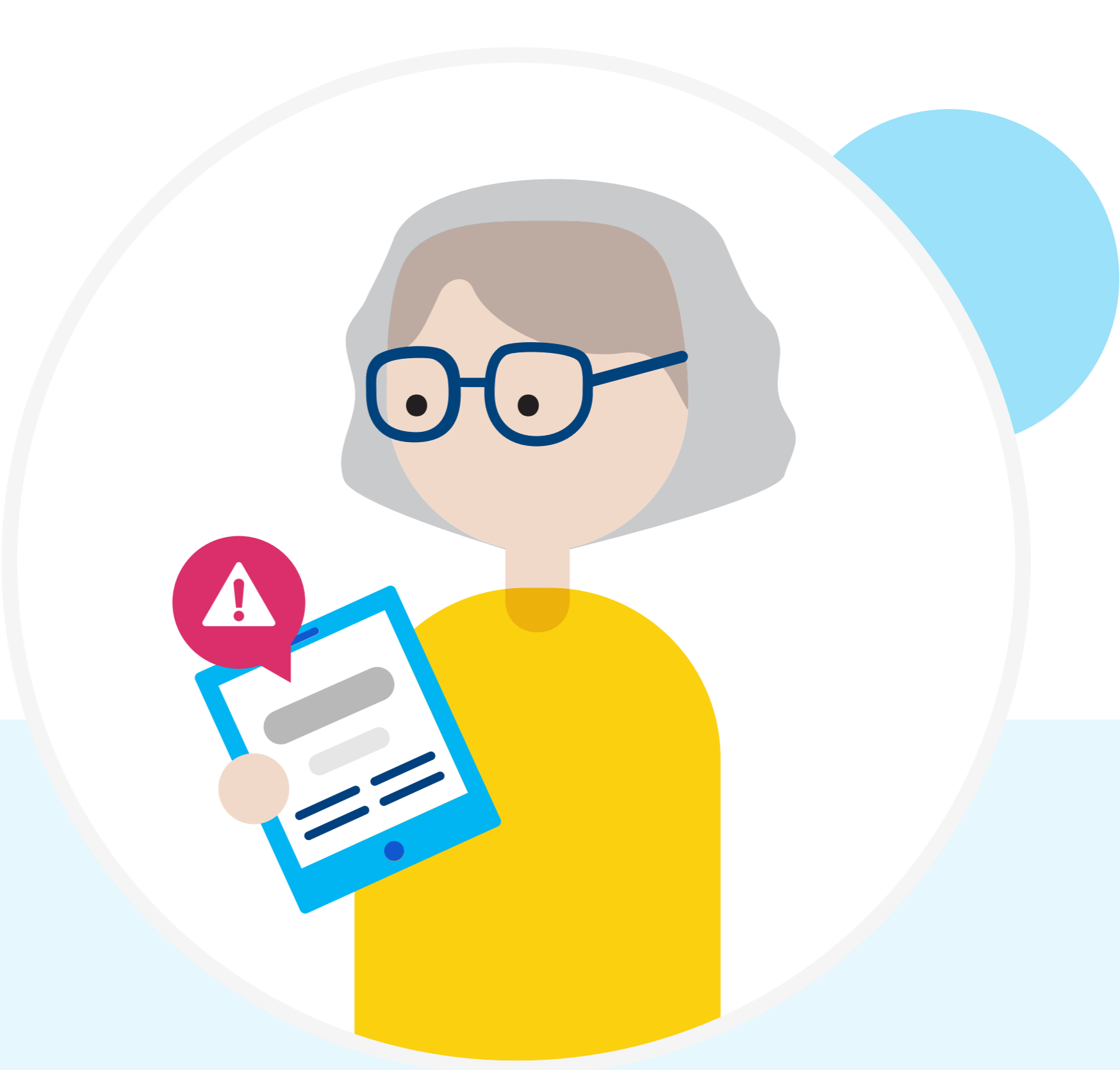
Tips for reducing absenteeism by 40% and other benefits through better engagement between home and school

Great things happen when families engage in their children's education. Research shows that when parents are involved, students earn higher grades and test scores,¹ graduate from high school, and attend post-secondary education.² Plus, when schools nurture family connections and build strong school-family relationships, you can reduce absenteeism by 40%.³

Communication gaps among school staff, students, and families can be hard to bridge, especially if families have irregular schedules, language barriers, and other unavoidable impediments. Here are tips you can implement to improve the communication lines between school and home.

1 Identify Incorrect Family Phone Numbers and Email Addresses

Inaccurate or missing contact information is one of the largest barriers to engagement. It's critical to have updated contact information, both for day-to-day connections and for sharing vital news.

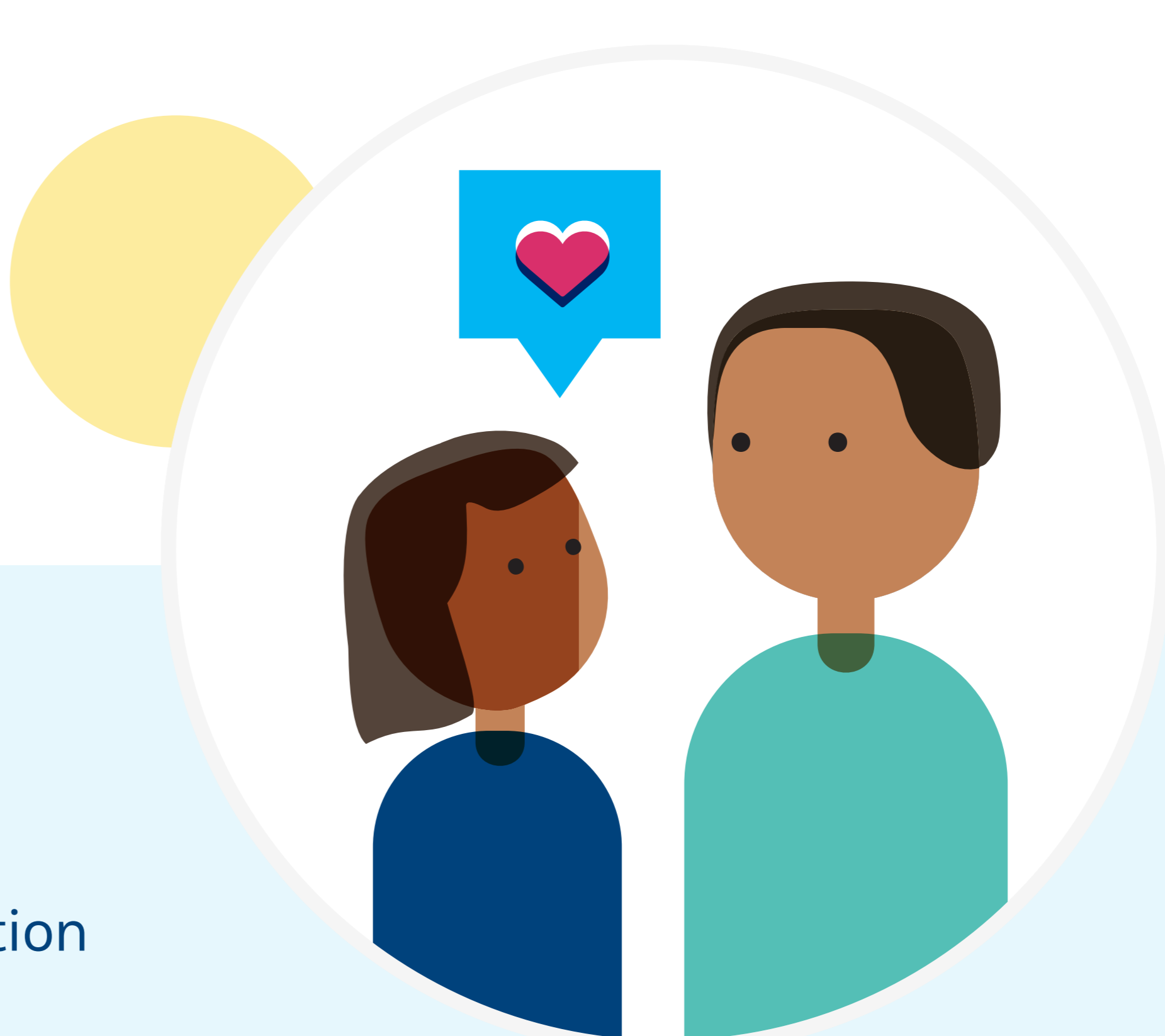


IN PRACTICE

- Use social media, website alerts, apps, and other communications to encourage families to update their contact information
- Optimize your registration processes using online enrollment to gather multiple ways to contact families
- Early in the school year, work with your team to create a list of students and families with whom you have not spoken. After the list has been compiled, ask your team to review it for accuracy
- For families proving more difficult to track down, enlist the help of a PTA or other parent groups

2 Proactively Connect with All Families

Connecting can be as simple as seeing how families and students are doing at home.



IN PRACTICE

- Include the student's name in the message with personalization features in your communication tool
- Create a monthly newsletter and use social media to keep families informed about school activities, events, and volunteer opportunities
- Share your engagement goals for the year and let families know you're there to help

3 Reach Out to Families by Students' Most Recent Attendance Status

A communication tool can help you quickly identify chronically absent students. We recommend that you filter for your Tier 3 students who are missing more than 20% of the school year and contact their families first.



IN PRACTICE

- Start with positive communication. You can build better relationships with mostly positive messages, balanced with messages addressing the challenges
- Identify students and families who are most at risk for falling out of touch and have a plan to check in regularly
- Customize messages by attendance tier to offer different resources or ask different questions
- After reaching out to these families, review your insights to identify outdated contact information

4 Send Families a Survey to Assess Needs

Family engagement is key to battling chronic absenteeism. Once you have contact information for students and families, plan to use it regularly.



IN PRACTICE

- Use surveys throughout the school year to gather feedback and other valuable data
- For back-to-school planning, use an [online survey and data collection tool](#) to learn how students and families feel about the upcoming year, if they need additional help, and to update contact information

5 Check Families' Ability to Access Communications

To ensure equitable communication with all families, you can work to understand their access or type of communication preference. As examples, send out a PDF of your newsletter, event flyer, or policy updates to see which families are engaging, and which need help to access the communication.

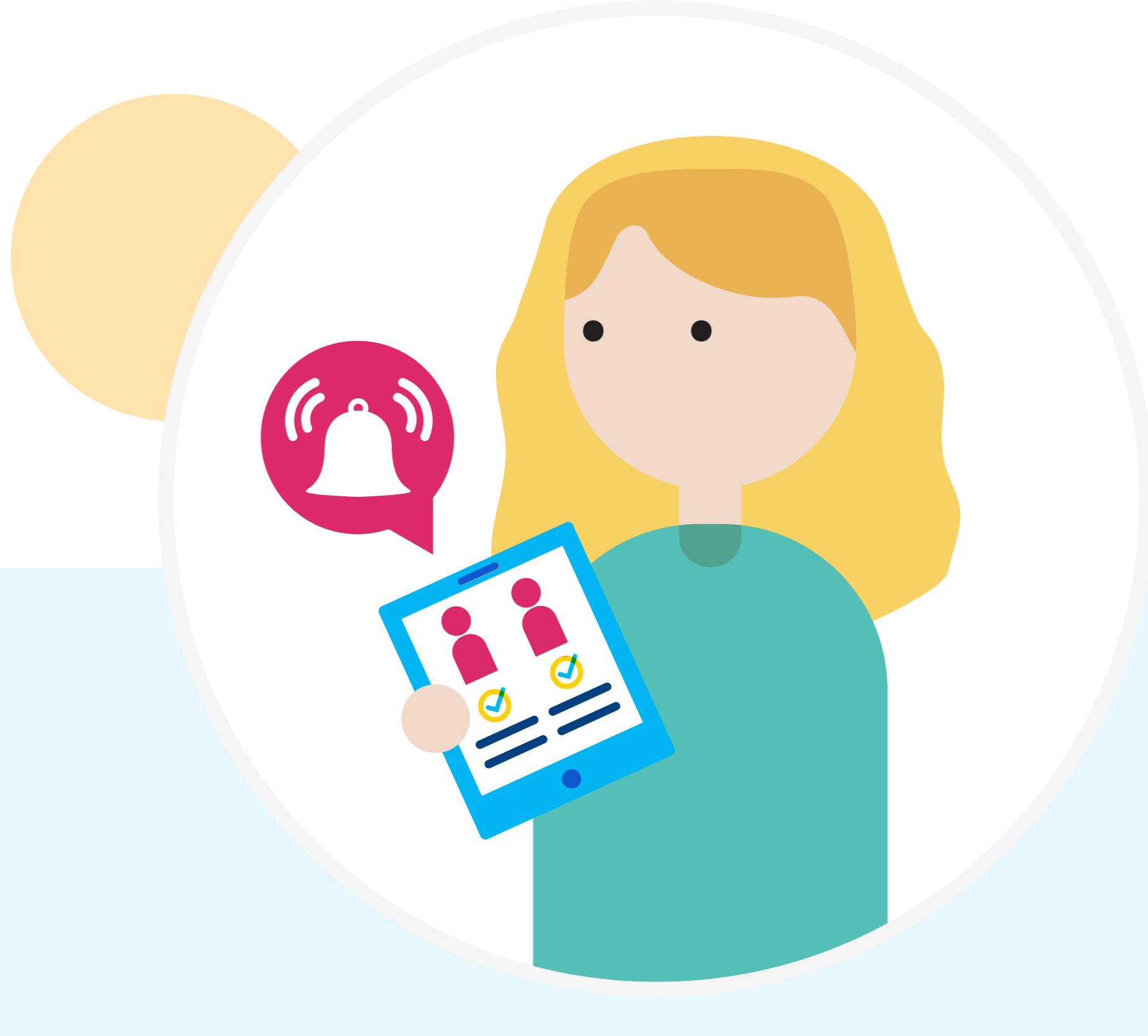


IN PRACTICE

- Review the number of read, bounced, or open messages and then follow up with families
- Make sure to include several translations in the PDF
- Teachers can adjust their method of communication based on which works best for parents
- Repeat messaging consistently across multiple established communication channels

6 Leverage Technology

School staff shouldn't spend their valuable time manually tracking down absent students or struggling to find ways to reach families.



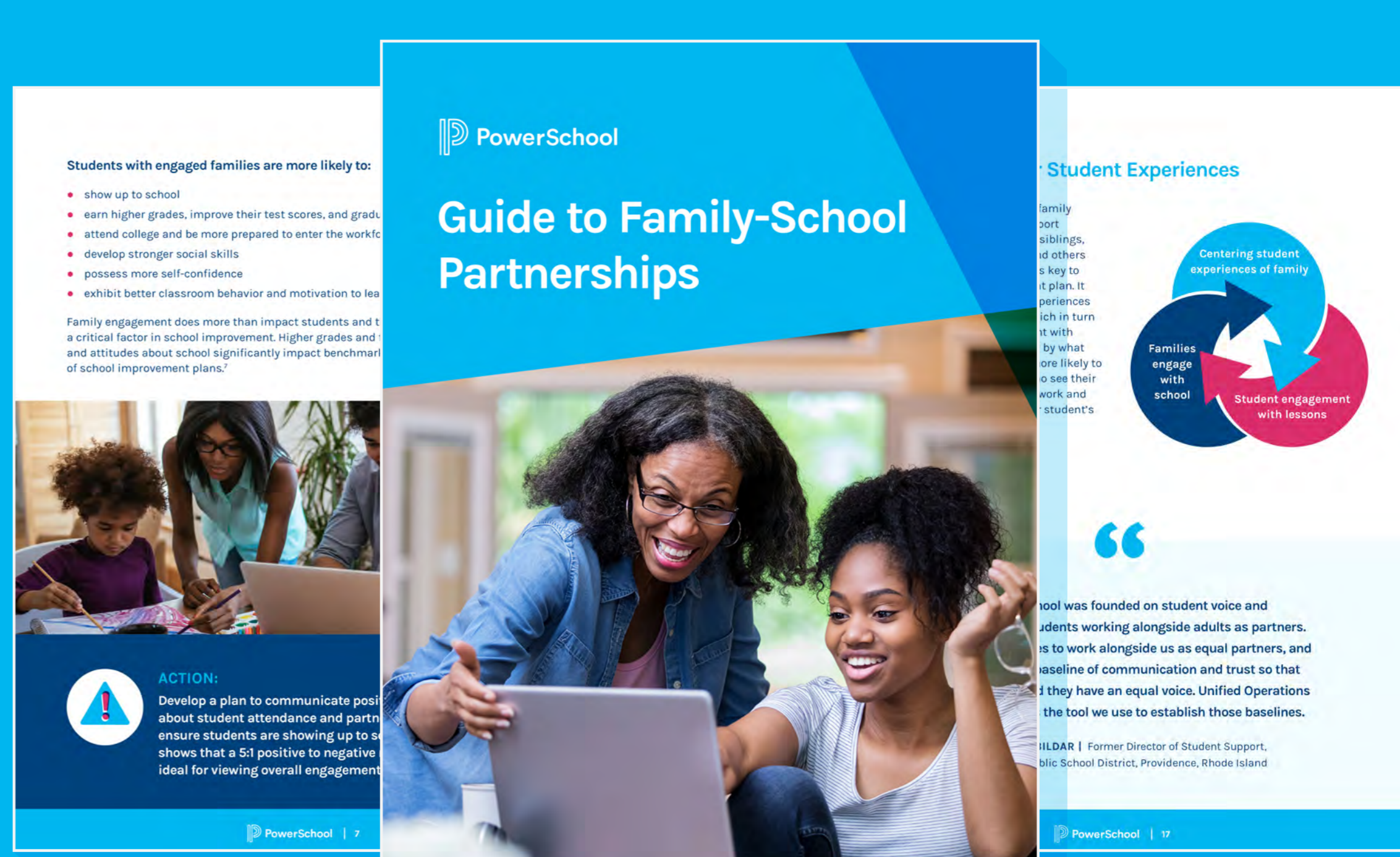
IN PRACTICE

- Automate notifications based on your attendance tiers with a communications tool
- Start the school year with more frequent attendance notifications to drive engagement and set expectations
- Help your teachers make connections and build relationships with families from the very start of the school year with a communication tool that helps with outreach and creating partnerships between school and home

Guide to Family-School Partnerships

Download the eBook to learn seven actionable strategies to improve family engagement in your school or district, including how to turn involvement into active engagement.

Get Your Copy



¹American Psychological Association. "Parent Engagement in Schools."

²Waterford.org. "How Family Engagement Leads to Student Success"

³Attendance Works, "Writing truancy notices that can improve attendance," Sept. 25, 2019.