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www.kinvolved.com   |   hello@kinvolved.com
INTRODUCTION

Whenever I meet an educator for the first time, I wonder where they are from, what they wanted to be when they grew up, why they entered the profession, and what inspires them to stay.

In high-need communities, the stakes are so high, and there is so much on the line for the students—what motivates educators who teach in these communities to get up each morning and get themselves to school?

As Kinvolved’s Chief Product Officer, it’s my job to empathize with the teachers, leaders, parents, and students we serve. Being driven by empathy, I’m incentivized to build and maintain strong relationships with our users, listen to their excitement and frustrations, celebrate their successes, and synthesize their feedback into innovation and action.

Empathy requires vulnerability; it forces us to admit we don’t have all the answers. I see that as a good thing, because it means our technology will always evolve to meet our community’s changing needs. Underlying every click of a button, every data point reviewed, and every message sent is a heartbeat—I listen for those heartbeats when designing features because I know how important they are, and I use that information to build better products and services for school systems.

This e-book showcases the voices, and heartbeats, of our educators, who share how they use our software and services to build relationships, have tough conversations, and celebrate bright spots. The teachers and leaders featured here face real challenges and save real lives every day, and the ability to see things from their perspective drives our work.

For chronically absent students, the more qualified hands on deck—those with watchful eyes, listening ears, and open hearts—the better the chance they have to succeed. We are proud to share through this e-book our educators’ stories of innovation, dedication, and love, and we know you’ll come away with tangible, realistic, and actionable ideas for using KINVO with intention, empathy, and success.

ALEXANDRA MEIS
Chief Product Officer & Co-Founder
Educators agree: positive communications between and among teachers, leaders, students, and parents have game-changing effects on student success, both inside and outside the classroom. However, adults and children alike often juggle busy days and competing demands, which can derail even the best-laid plans; rich, engaging, conversations quickly devolve into one-sided status reports.

We spoke with 55 KiNVO users leveraging our software to amplify their positive outreach efforts—read on to learn about their creative, time-efficient, and effective communications strategies.

“I like the connection with parents; it makes me feel I’m not alone and they’re on my side with regard to their child’s education.”

ASHLEY WILLIAMS
English Teacher,
Frederick Douglas Academy II
The Power of Positivity

1 ENCOURAGE WITH EFFICIENCY

The Problem

“So many students, so little time,” sums up Bronx high school teacher Ms. B. “I have only one day each week to do parent outreach; I can make some phone calls, but not nearly enough to reach my 150 students’ parents.”

Proactive, encouraging words from a teacher make students feel valued and elevate parents to the role of partners, and the strength of these relationships can be critical to resolving any issues that arise throughout the school year. With long rosters and limited hours, though, it’s tough for educators to stay in regular contact with students and their families.

How Kinvolved Helps

Ms. F., an afterschool program coordinator in Harlem, shares that she only offered positive feedback if she happened to see a parent during dismissal: “I rarely used email, and never used text messaging. KiNVO makes it easy and casual to send positive messages.”

For Bronx teacher Ms. S., having KiNVO technology at her fingertips helps positive communication flow naturally: “Sometimes I’ll be at home in my apartment and think, let me send these three kids’ parents messages to let them know their kids are doing a great job.”

Harlem Community Schools Director Ms. A. appreciates that now teachers connect with each other about student performance from class to class: “I can send a message to my colleague about a student we share, something like, ‘Aaron had a really good day in math. He completed all his questions. Keep it up.’”

Teachers also use KiNVO’s direct-to-student messaging to send quick, uplifting texts that show they care, and many teacher embrace the mass messaging feature to reach many students at the touch of a button. “I’ll text my students in the morning with something like, ‘It’s a beautiful day to come to school,’ or a motivational message,” says Ms. N. in the Bronx. “My students feel more connected than before; they know they can text me anytime and I will respond as soon as I see it. When they have that sense of belonging, I think it motivates them to come to school.”

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Set a positive tone for the day by sending a positive or motivational message to students who need extra support.

  Pro tip: Choose the “Recurring” option to automate messages and reminders.

• Develop a set of differentiated mass messages, separate students and/or parents into groups, then alternate which groups receive which message each week. This adds a sense of personalization to your communications.

  Pro tip: Set up a customized template with student names—like “{{Student}} did an awesome job in Spanish today!”—to easily show you care without an extra lift.

• Choose one student per class, per week and send to him or her a unique, non-mass message with a positive tone (e.g., highlighting an insightful comment made during discussion or wishing good luck on an extracurricular activity).

  Pro tip: To keep track, simply move down your roster in alphabetical order and mark in “notes” after you sent the individualized message.

2 REACH OUT WHEN IT COUNTS

The Problem

“Normally I wait until a Friday to call, but if things are going well for a student, I only reach out every other Friday,” says Ms. P., a Bronx middle school teacher.

An encouraging message, sent at the right moment, can make a world of difference. Unfortunately, positive messages are often the first item to get bumped lower on a teacher’s priority list, and for good reason: hectic schedules make it hard to prioritize authentic, of-the-moment outreach to
any but the neediest students. Positive communication becomes an activity reserved for teachers’ “free time,” and potentially falls through the cracks.

How KiNVO Helps
KiNVO allows teachers to quickly and easily send multiple messages, which means positive communication can become part of a teacher’s daily routine.

“We spend a lot of time focusing on not-so-great things that kids are doing, so great kids in great moments get looked over,” says Ms. S., a high school teacher. With KiNVO’s help, Ms. S. set a goal to be “equally communicative when students are doing right thing,” and it made a big difference for parents. She recalls, “One mother said, ‘Wow, this made my day.’”

Teachers also use KiNVO’s real-time messaging to reinforce positive behavior. Bronx teacher Ms. E. says, “If I have a student who is doing extremely well, right there in middle of class I will text their parents. That sort of communication is more meaningful than calling a few days later.”

Other teachers, like Mr. K., use KiNVO to keep students invested: “I tell them, if you maintain your focus, we’ll send a text together right now.” He describes this as “another tool in my toolbox to keep students motivated.”

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Schedule for students timely reminder messages for regularly occurring events, like weekly quizzes, to keep relevant ideas fresh in their minds.

Pro tip: Send an encouraging message to parents the night before an event, offering a positive reminder for students and parents to prepare: “I can’t wait for {{student}} to rock out his math test tomorrow.”
3 PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

The Problem
If schools only reach out to discuss problems, it's easy for parents and students to feel frustrated, powerless, and disengaged.

How Kinolved Helps
Positive messages provide a welcome bright spot that helps build trust and engagement in schools.

Mr. K. recalls that one student's mother was surprised to receive through KiNVO a text from him that commended her student's effort: "She told me that, in the past, when she received a phone call from class, it was never positive."

Research on positive/negative interactions reveals that educators who lead with the positive and continually send encouraging messages—rather than first reaching out about a problem or only initiating contact when something is wrong—have the best chance at building strong relationships.

For Ms. C., a Community Schools Director in Brooklyn, her team instructs teachers to be “very strategic around what we’re communicating with parents,” which is easy to track and evaluate through KiNVO’s reporting tools. She explains: “There is always something positive you can share with a parent. Send as many positive messages upfront as you can. When you do have to send a negative message, parents and students will better receive it because they’re used to you saying something kind and genuine—they understand you’re communicating because you need their support addressing an issue.”

PRO TIP: Use KiNVO’s Parent Communication report to compare how many Positive versus Needs Improvement messages you send—grade-level and content teams can set specific communications goals and check their progress each week.

PRO TIP: Start and end on a positive note, sandwiching in the middle any issues that need to be addressed.

PRO-TIP: Schedule positive-only periods at the beginning of the year and after long breaks.
Communication gaps among school staff, students, and parents can be hard to bridge:

- Parents are hard to reach due to irregular schedules, work commitments, language barriers, and other unavoidable impediments.
- Students have busy schedules before, during, and after school, and many teachers only see students for one period a day.
- Non-teaching school staff rarely have opportunities for engagement, even though some staff members are deeply aware of attendance, tardiness, and performance issues.

We asked KINVO users to share their recommendations on how to use the software to facilitate new connections and conversations—here’s what they had to say.

“Kin involved coaching has helped us build an attendance culture. Parents and teachers talk more about attendance than ever before—the conversation is no longer, ‘your student performed poorly,’ it’s ‘he missed five days this month; he has missed a lot of course material. How can I help?’”

HABIB BANGURA
Community School Director, Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing Arts
The Problem

While Ms. B.’s office is the first one visitors see as they enter Harlem Community School, proximity doesn’t matter if parents don’t bring their child to school. “I’m not able to speak to them because I simply don’t see them,” she notes.

It’s tough for working parents to stay in the loop about their child’s progress that day—or to even know whether their child shows up to school each day. Compounding the problem, evening work and activity schedules often conflict with parent-teacher conferences and other school events.

Even if school staff are able to reach parents and guardians, language barriers often mean that traditional forms of communication—like phone calls, in-person meetings, and letters home—may be inaccessible to families that don’t speak English. Ms. M., a Bronx high school teacher, shares the complications of working with students and families whose languages she does not speak: “I have to ask another staff member who spoke the student’s home language to make phone calls for me, and since I want to be respectful of my colleagues’ time, I don’t use that option very often.”

How Kinolved Helps

“KiNVO helps to break down typical communication barriers between staff and parents, and the text function makes it feel more effortless,” says Ms. F., an afterschool program coordinator in Harlem.

With automatic two-way language translation, pre-scheduling functions, and mass-sending capabilities, KINV0’s text messaging tool opens communications channels with families who have traditionally been left out of the conversation, all without adding time or stress to teachers’ busy days.

Using KiNVO messaging, Ms. B. cultivates relationships with parents who don’t pass by her office: “It feels good to be able to talk to those parents you weren’t able to reach before.”

Brooklyn Community Schools director Ms. C. shares, “Some parents at work can’t talk on cell phone but texting works for them.” Her colleague Ms. H. agrees, finding KINV0 messaging more effective than phone calls when scheduling home visits: “Some parents don’t have cell phone plans with enough minutes to talk, but are able to text.”

Harlem elementary school teacher Ms. D. texts parents to keep them in the loop on behavior and homework—information she used to send home in student backpacks. “It’s great for those parents who are so busy they don’t have the time to go home and look through the folder,” she says.

Communicating with families, regardless of their chosen language, helps strengthen the bonds between educators and families, raise awareness of attendance issues before they become unmanageable, and can even lead to improved performance. According to Ms. G., a high school teacher in the Bronx, the ability to send messages to parents and guardians in their language of choice led to “massive improvement” in student attendance—students who attended school one or two days a month were showing up multiple times per week.

“The ease of sending messages in languages other than English has been amazing,” says Bronx middle school teacher Ms. S. “I am able to write one message and reach all parents instead of using Google Translate and sending multiple renditions of a message.”

Users select within KINV0 the appropriate language(s) for each contact associated with a student, so every message is delivered in a readable language. When a parent writes back in their chosen language, KiNVO automatically translates that back into English.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- Send messages at a consistent time each evening so parents know when to expect them.

  Pro tip: Use KiNVO’s scheduling feature to pre-plan and automate message delivery.

- Set language preferences for every contact in a student’s account.

  Pro tip: Clearly communicate to parents that the system will automatically translate the messages they send into English.
2 REACH OUT WHEN IT COUNTS

The Problem
Teachers have many students, and students have many teachers. When teachers only see students for one period a day, it can be hard to have interactions outside of class time; it can be even harder to forge bonds built on trust, accountability, and support.

How Kinvolved Helps
KiNVO lets teachers connect with students via their cell phones. Educators find that students are more likely to respond to text messages over all other forms of contact. “It’s less invasive,” says Ms. W. “Even if you ask, ‘Hey, are you planning coming to school today?’ and the student says no, that’s more feedback than calling the student and not hearing back.”

Mr. G., a Brooklyn attendance coordinator, notes that his staff appreciates getting “more of a definite response” rather than waiting for students to “retrieve a voice message off their phone when they get home or read an email at an address they possibly don’t check.”

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Add as many contacts as you need per student, then customize which contacts receive which messages in which format.

   Pro tip: Be sure to customize the language settings for each individual.

• As you get to know your students, ask where they spend their evenings and mornings so you learn which family members are closest when students are doing homework assignments or waking up.

3 ACTIVATE HIGH-IMPACT INFLUENCERS

The Problem
Phone calls and letters get sent to a single designated contact that, even if up-to-date, might not be the most effective influencer to provide the support a student needs.

How Kinvolved Helps
Because KiNVO allows multiple contacts per student, teachers can loop in multiple relatives and guardians who may have substantial influence over the child.

Ms. N., a Brooklyn high school teacher, worked with one student’s grandmother to add more family members to her contact list. “If that student is out, it’s clear she’s cutting class—now, any available family member can help deal with it,” she explains. The expanded circle brought drastic results: “I sent two text messages, and suddenly she was getting to school before the first-period bell!”

For Ms. S., a high school teacher in Harlem, when she learned that a parent who was supposed to be receiving automated phone calls was deaf, she switched to text messaging and added another contact to the student’s account. Just by adding another family member, “the child’s attendance went from 38% to 68% in four weeks.”

4 ENGAGE PARENTS WITH NON-CORE TEACHERS

The Problem
When parents do get the chance to chat with teachers, they typically prioritize those who teach core academic subjects with high-stakes tests. As a result, specialists often miss the chance to connect with families. Says Ms. A. at a Brooklyn high school: “Being the music teacher, I’m not the first teacher parents visit at conferences. They’re usually more worried about Regents exams and performance in other classes.”
How Kinvolved Helps

Centralized contact info and instant accessibility enables communication with a broader circle of school staff who might not otherwise build relationships with their students’ families.

For Ms. A., KiNVO established a new communications pathway: “I’m able to have more contact with parents, to say, ‘You have wonderful kids,’ and to have more of a conversation.”

Harlem Community associate Ms. B. was thrilled when the physical education teacher requested KiNVO access. “Parents barely hear from the specialists,” she notes. “He uses KiNVO as way to send positive messages and reminders about trips or tryouts.”

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Send to families an introductory message before open houses and parent-teacher conferences inviting them to visit your classroom.

  Pro tip: Remind families they can stay in touch with you through KINVO simply by responding to your text—no login required!

• Send personalized shoutouts when a student excels in an elective course or extracurricular activity.

  Pro tip: Review “The Power of Positivity” for more tips on positive communication.
Using KiNVO data to inform personalized conversations is much better than having the same scripted conversations.

MS. D., Elementary teacher

Engage On the Go

The Problem

"If you call my desk, you’d never reach me," says Harlem dean Mr. W., who is constantly away from his office and walking around the building providing student support.

When parents try to contact a teacher or administrator over the phone, they’ll likely reach a phone ringing at an empty desk or have to leave a message that won’t be received until after dismissal. The resulting games of phone tag cause frustration and can undermine important relationships.

How Kinvolved Helps

KiNVO makes it easier for parents to reach school staff during their hectic days. For Mr. W., this close connection strengthens relationship: “Through text, I’ll get it and be able to text back. You’re not waiting until the end of the day to get what you need.”

Educators can also reach parents in real time, without being intrusive, via KiNVO text message. Parents get the information they need no matter where they are. Mr. G., a guidance counselor in the Bronx, described being able to get in touch with a mother as soon as he realized their child was cutting class. When the parent saw the text, she called Mr. G. “from her cell phone, while standing on a street corner”—solving the problem did not have to wait “until she got home and saw a missed call.”

With KiNVO, Ms. S. at a Brooklyn high school appreciates that she can ping parents when a tardy student shows up. “As soon as they come in, I take out my phone and send a quick message: ‘Just walking in.’ It takes ten seconds and it’s something I wasn’t able to do before.”

Teacher Ms. F. found KiNVO especially useful when leading a spring break field trip: “I was able to send updates to parents throughout the week about the students’ progress, and parents were able to let me know if they were running late to drop off or pick up students.”

Putting it into Practice

- At the end of each day, sort your KiNVO inbox (Kinbox) by unread messages to be sure you reply to anything that may have slipped through the cracks.

[Pro tip:] To save time, sign up for daily notifications of unread messages.

- Create in KiNVO a template bank of your commonly used messages, then simply customize your notes with the student’s name before sending.

- Perform and narrate your KiNVO activities, such as swiping to take attendance or texting a positive message to parents, in front of your class. This will help you develop a routine while also building student investment in what you’re doing.
As educators can attest, edtech tools are neither a cure-all nor a replacement for exceptional teachers and leaders. When used to supplement or complement instruction, however, edtech can supercharge the teaching and learning experience. That's why Kinvolved takes a holistic approach to boosting attendance and tackling chronic absenteeism, combining KiNVO software with educator coaching and community-wide events to give educators, kids, families, and communities research-based strategies to prevent student disengagement.

To ensure success, our team works closely with school systems to design, launch, and evaluate policies that build an attendance culture and ensure more students show up to school each day.

When you work in education you go through life thinking, ‘What else can I do?’ Kinvolved gives me hope that I can do something big and make a positive change. It’s an exciting feeling.

JESSENIA BORGES
Community Associate, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Elementary School
Building an Attendance Culture

1 UNDERSTAND KINVOLVED’S CAPACITY

The Problem

Educators enter the classroom with varied levels of comfort with technology. While many are software natives, those who feel less confident in their digital skills may experience hesitation or frustration when starting with a new system.

While a beginning-of-year kickoff professional development session can serve as a good crash course in the basics of a software tool, without ongoing support from a true partner it’s hard for teachers to find the time to explore any system’s full capabilities.

How Kinvolved Helps

Kinvolved coaching sessions expose teachers and leaders to KiNVO’s most powerful aspects, helping educators leverage the software to its fullest potential. “We want to make sure we’re using all the features—we don’t want to be using supercomputer as a word processor,” says Mr. D., the dean of a Bronx high school.

Brooklyn Community Schools director, Ms. S. attended a follow-up Kinvolved coaching session that invited teachers to “ask specific questions that led to purposeful feedback,” she said. As a result, utilization rates skyrocketed—teachers had learned new ways to use KiNVO to achieve the results they were looking for.

Kinvolved coaching also helps build an attendance culture by underscoring the importance of taking attendance. “Before, teachers knew how to take attendance, but now they know impact it has on our students’ achievement,” Ms. S. reflected. Through coaching, her team could better express how accurate attendance data helps form more effective interventions for at-risk students.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Leaders: Schedule ongoing coaching sessions with Kinvolved’s support team.

• Teachers: Reach out to your school’s point person if you and your colleagues could use a refresher with our team.

• All KiNVO users: Get in touch! Email support@kinvolved.com with questions big or small and a team member will get back to you ASAP.

2 MESSAGES THAT TURN PARENTS INTO PARTNERS

The Problem

There is a risk that some parents, after receiving the same daily attendance notifications, may become desensitized and tune out new messages.

How Kinvolved Helps

Once teachers become accustomed to taking attendance each period, coaching them to customize their parent messages can amplify impact and maintain an enthusiastic spirit of partnership. Varying the content of KiNVO messages helps parents view texts from school as an important information source.

Ms. S. realized that, although her staff was sending messages regularly, they were mostly attendance notifications. She and her coach brainstormed new topics for messages: “We started to think about what kinds of blasts we can send out—the PTA, parent-teacher conferences, snow days, Regents exams—things we want parents to know.”

Harlem Community associate Ms. B. worked with Kinvolved’s client success coordinator to design strategies that boost family engagement. Now she sends a personalized absence message each day—for example, “I saw Johnny was out today, is everything okay?”—which helps her build authentic connections. “It’s not like a robot speaking,” she says. “It’s an individual.”

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Work with a Kinvolved coach to learn time-saving personalization tips, craft tailored messages, and expand your outreach beyond attendance.

3 BOOST TEACHER USAGE

The Problem

When staff doesn’t use KiNVO take take attendance daily in every period, student attendance data is not as accurate as it could be. In some instances, teachers and leaders need training on proper KiNVO use, but
more importantly, staff can benefit from learning the benefits of taking attendance on a consistent basis.

**How Kinvolved Helps**

The Kinvolved team partners with school systems to strategize ways to boost utilization rates and make attendance data more accurate.

Ms. S. worked with her Kinvolved coach to send weekly emails to her teachers that include attendance rates, the effect of KiNVO usage on attendance, students who are improving their attendance, and teachers who take attendance in 100% of their classes each week.

As the result of a Kinvolved coaching session, Ms. B. now sends out monthly attendance newsletters: “I spotlight teachers with high utilization, and once other teachers see it, they think ‘OK, I want to use it too.’”

**PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE**

- **Teachers:** Participate in Kinvolved coaching sessions to increase comfort with KiNVO, learn its full feature set, use the software with fidelity, and increase your usage.

- **Leaders:** Work with a Kinvolved coach to understand the barriers that prevent teachers from taking attendance daily and hear tailored suggestions about how to boost teacher utilization.
Purposeful Messaging

Teachers using KiNVO love the fact that they can easily touch base with parents and students via text message without giving out their personal cell phone number. But effective communication and engagement is about more than sending messages—it’s about sending the right messages at the right times to the right people.

We spoke with KiNVO users who successfully use text messaging to build parent buy-in and motivate students to show up to class—check out their recommendations for effective messaging.

“

Our goal is to help families support students at home as we try to support them at school. We want them to reach their ultimate goals. Kinvolved has been very effective for us in that regard.

AUGUSTUS GRISSETT JR.
Attendance Coordinator, Research and Service High School

Teachers using KiNVO love the fact that they can easily touch base with parents and students via text message without giving out their personal cell phone number. But effective communication and engagement is about more than sending messages—it’s about sending the right messages at the right times to the right people.

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1  PERSONALIZE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

The Problem

While mass messages are a time-saver, sending too many can erode parent engagement. On the other hand, personalized outreach is proven to build trust and open communications pathways, but crafting parent-specific messages can drain teachers’ already limited time.

How Kin voyage Helps

KiNVO lets teachers create text message templates that auto-populate student names, making it easy to deliver individualized reminders and notes of encouragement that make students and families feel valued.

Mr. K., a high school teacher on the Upper West Side, uses templates to save time when sending student progress updates: “It saves me time and makes each text more personal.”

Harlem community associate Ms. B. sends a text each morning to absent students’ parents: “I created a general message template and I make minor tweaks to it every day. Parents know it’s not a robo-message because it’s a bit more individual, and the response rates have been great.”

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Create KiNVO templates for recurring messaging like quiz reminders and a weekly motivational message (Messaging > Access Templates > General Templates > +).

Pro tip: Even slight template tweaks help outreach feel fresh—include a different study tip each time; switch up the weekly message—and use “{student}” to automatically personalize your message with the student’s name.

• Be specific to show you notice and appreciate your students and to reinforce behaviors you want to see again. Rather than “Trina did well today!” share that “Trina impressed me by double-checking her algebra calculations!”

• Label your messages for easy access to specific message types, for example, “Great job on spelling quiz—send after period 3,” or “Core value shoutout—send when student shows responsibility.”

Pro tip: Set up on your phone or calendar an automated reminder to send a few messages each day.

2  HARNESS THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

The Problem

“We spend a lot of time focusing on not-so-great things kids are doing, so great moments get overlooked,” says Bronx teacher Ms. S.

Proactive and encouraging outreach makes students feel valued while signaling that parents are key partners. However, without a way for teachers to track the type of messages they send, it’s easy to lose track of the ratio between positive and neutral/negative outreach.

How Kin voyage Helps

KiNVO provides an automatic log of the type and volume of messages teachers send, helping them keep tabs on their outreach and make plans to improve engagement.

By analyzing the types of messages her staff sends, Brooklyn Community Schools director Ms. S. can spot patterns—for example, texts that express parent appreciation garner the greatest parent response. She leverages these insights into her school’s attendance outreach strategy.

• For students with 95%+ attendance, teachers send “thank you” messages to acknowledge parents’ support.

• For students with lower attendance, teachers frame the need for improvement positively. “We say ‘your child currently has 85% attendance and has the chance to win our competition by raising it,’” shares Ms. S.
Purposeful Messaging

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Use the Parent Communication report to look at the response rates to messages categorized as “Positive” versus “Needs Improvement.” If you notice “Positive” messages are more likely to get parents to write back, step up how many you send.

• Keep in mind the 5:1 “Magic Relationship Ratio.”

  **Pro tip:** Use the Parent Communication report (“Parent communication rate of receiving and replying to text messages”) to track the ratio of positive to improvement-oriented messages.

• When you reach out to motivate improvement, frame it in a positive light. Instead of telling a parent, “Calvin was present only 80% last month,” set up a fun challenge that shows you believe in the outcome. For example: “If Calvin gets to school 1 more day per week, he’ll be in our 90% club and get a special lunch!”

• Make it competitive: Compete against your colleagues to see which grade level or subject team can have the highest Positive-to-Needs Improvement message ratio each week.

Pave a Two-Way Communications Road

The Problem

Outbound communication is great for sending students and parents reminders and important notifications, but without an invitation to respond, teachers miss opportunities to establish stronger connections that encourage conversation.

How Kinvolved helps

At the beginning of the school year, Harlem Community Schools director Ms. W. encourages teachers to send a text message introduction: “Hi, I’m your child’s teacher and this is a free way to communicate with me.” This helps parents understand how they are getting texts and recognize there is a person behind the messages.

Queens high school teacher Ms. L. says that when she sends an assignment reminder, parents respond and even reach out for more ways to provide support: “They say ‘I will make sure it’s done’ or ‘I will make sure they study.’ Sometimes they ask me the specific topic so they can work with their child.”

As the assistant program director for a Bronx community-based organization, Ms. W. reviews message transcripts with her staff to coach them on stronger communication practices: “Someone might come to me and say, ‘I’m not really getting anywhere with this student.’ We can look at what they’re saying to find out if the tone isn’t quite coming across the right away. Then they can then revise the content and language to better encourage a response.”

KEEP IN TOUCH, EARN TRUST

The Problem

Even though teachers are eager to message parents when they first start using KINVO, some feel frustrated when the response rate isn’t as high as expected.

Communication breakdowns can happen when
teachers don’t establish routines around content and timing. While the content of each message is important, when you send them also counts.

How Kinvolved helps
In addition to saving time, KiNVO allows teachers to schedule message delivery at a convenient time for parents—even if that’s not when teachers have time to craft them. This helps teachers capitalize on prime engagement opportunities.

In addition to sending messages at high-impact times (like a morning wake-up reminder), teachers using KiNVO attribute high parent response rates with consistent outreach. Mr. K., a Manhattan high school teacher, says that once parents trust him to send messages about upcoming exams or projects, they are more likely to write back: “They respect and expect it from me.”

At back-to-school night, Harlem teacher Ms. A. sends a message, then asks parents to send her a quick acknowledgement in response, and she follows up if she doesn’t hear back. This persistence gets parents in the habit of responding—she now has a 95% parent reply rate.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Create a culture of consistent communication by sending messages on the same topics at the same time each week. If a parent knows you’ll send a reading log reminder at 6 p.m., they can carve out time to read with their child before bed.

   ☐ Pro tip: Use the recurring message feature to pre-set message delivery.

• Keep your Kinbox organized, and click on “unread” to review messages that need your reply.

   ☐ Pro tip: Sign up for a daily notification of your new and unread messages (Settings > Email Notifications > Receive daily digest of new or unread messages once per day > Save)

• To help parents feel heard, reply to your unread messages before settling in for the night.
5 USE GOAL-SETTING TO STAY ON TRACK

The Problem

Without systems for setting goals and tracking communications, even teachers with the best intentions for effective outreach can get derailed by unexpected challenges.

I don’t want to know on Friday that a child hasn’t been in school all week. KiNVO informs me right away.

MS. S., Elementary principal

How Kinvolved Helps

Robust parent outreach analytics help teachers and leaders quantify their communications goals and stay on track. Rather than setting vague objectives like “talk to parents more,” KiNVO reports let educators hold themselves accountable to specific metrics like “send 10 positive messages each week” or “get 50% of parents to respond to my testing reminder.”

After rolling out KiNVO, school leader Ms. C. started tracking the ratio of strengths-oriented messages to needs-oriented messages: “Teachers sent 75% negative messages and 25% positive messages, and that’s not going to bode well for the rest of the school year.” To restore parent relationships, her team began sending more positive messages. Armed with data, her entire team is now “very strategic around what we’re communicating with parents.”

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

• Use the Parent Communication report to track which parents are responsive and which may need a different approach.

**Pro tip:** Non-responsive parents may not understand KiNVO or know how to respond to messages—send an individual message to re-introduce KiNVO and invite them to contact you through text.

• Assign in KiNVO a role for the contacts associated with each student—contacts can be tagged to receive attendance notifications, message notifications, or both. This ensures you’re reaching the right person at the right time.

• If you catch yourself frequently sending positive notes to a few students’ families and skipping the rest, set a goal of connecting with the families you reach out to the least.

**Pro tip:** Find something positive to share, no matter how small—parents not used to hearing good news will embrace the pleasant surprise.