

DAYSTAGE

School newsletters parents actually read

RESEARCH REPORT | 2026

The State of School-to-Home Communication 2026

What 500+ K-12 schools told us about how they communicate with families — and what families actually want

512 EDUCATORS SURVEYED

| 38 U.S. STATES

| JAN – MAR 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

5 Key Findings

67%

of teachers send parent newsletters less than once per month — far below what families say they need to feel informed.

28%

average school newsletter open rate in 2026, down from 35% in 2024 — even as email remains parents' most-trusted channel.

31%

of schools have a principal who sends a regular school-wide newsletter. Families at those schools report significantly higher trust in leadership.

42%

of schools with non-English-speaking families report that translated communications are delayed, shortened, or omitted — a persistent equity gap.

45 min

saved per teacher per week at schools using AI-assisted tools. Those teachers send 2.4x more newsletters than their peers.

Why this report exists

Parent communication is one of the most under-measured aspects of school operations. Principals know communication matters, but almost no one has data on how their school compares to others. This report gives school leaders the benchmarks they have been missing.

Who was surveyed

512 K-12 educators and administrators across 38 states. Survey conducted January-March 2026. Mix of urban, suburban, and rural schools. Elementary (47%), middle (31%), high school (22%).

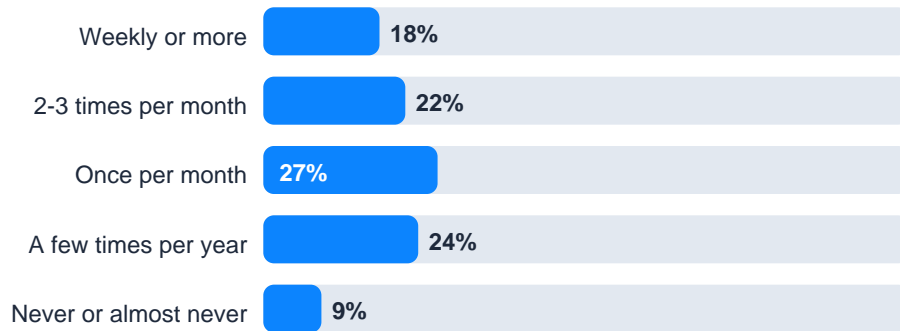
FINDING 1 OF 5

The Frequency Gap

Most Families Hear From School Far Less Than They Should

Teachers are communicating with families far less frequently than families say they need to feel informed about classroom life. The gap is widest at the middle school level, where family engagement is already most fragile.

How often teachers send parent newsletters



67%

of teachers send less than once per week. Only 18% meet what families say is the minimum for feeling informed.

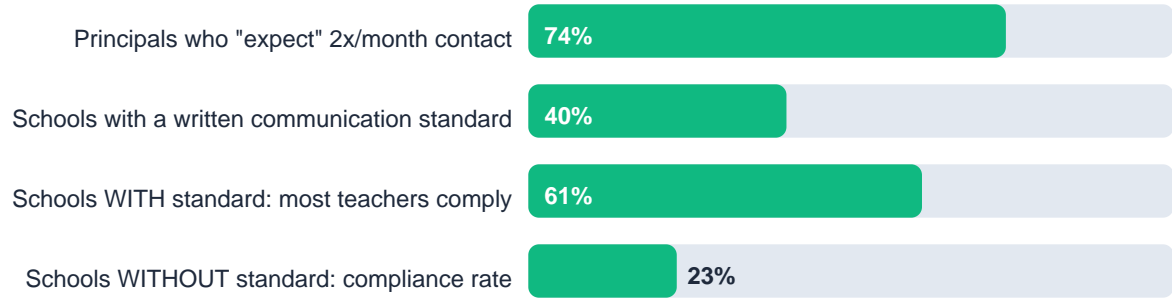
How this varies by school level

School Level	Avg. Newsletters / Month	Trend
Elementary	1.8x	Highest frequency
High School	1.1x	Middle range
Middle School	0.7x	Lowest frequency

Elementary parents also have the highest expectations for communication frequency, which may explain why elementary teachers feel more pressure to send.

FINDING 1 (CONTINUED)

What principals say they expect vs. what actually happens



KEY INSIGHT

A written standard doubles compliance. Principals who have committed the expectation to writing see dramatic

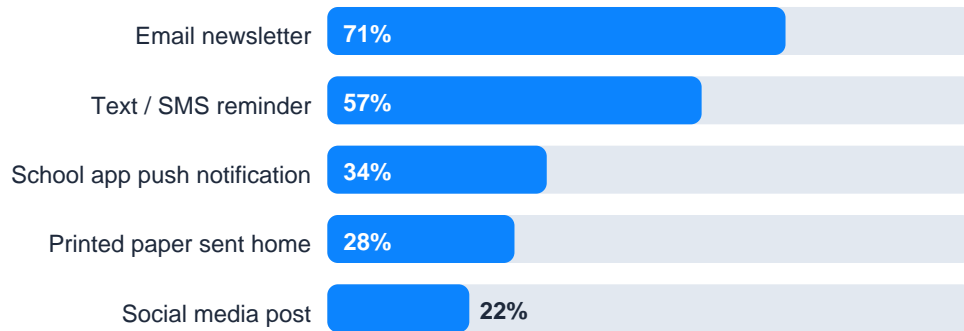
FINDING 2 OF 5

The Parent Attention Problem

Families Want to Hear From You — But You Are Losing Them at the Inbox

Email is still the dominant and most-trusted channel for school communication. The problem is not the channel. It is the quality, relevance, and predictability of what schools send.

What formats families say they actually read



KEY INSIGHT

Email is still dominant. The 'schools need to move to apps' narrative is not supported by this data. Parents prefer

Why families stop opening school communications

- 44% "They send too many messages and most of them are not relevant to me"
- 38% "The subject lines do not tell me if I need to act on anything"
- 35% "I cannot tell which messages are important and which are routine"
- 31% "The messages are too long to read on my phone"

FINDING 2 (CONTINUED)

2026 Open Rate Benchmarks by School Type

Newsletter Type	2026 Average	Healthy Range
Principal school-wide newsletter	51%	45–60%
Elementary classroom newsletter	42%	40–55%
Front office logistics email	38%	30–45%
Middle school classroom newsletter	29%	28–40%
High school classroom newsletter	21%	18–30%

-7pts

Open rates have declined 7 percentage points since 2024 across all categories. The sch

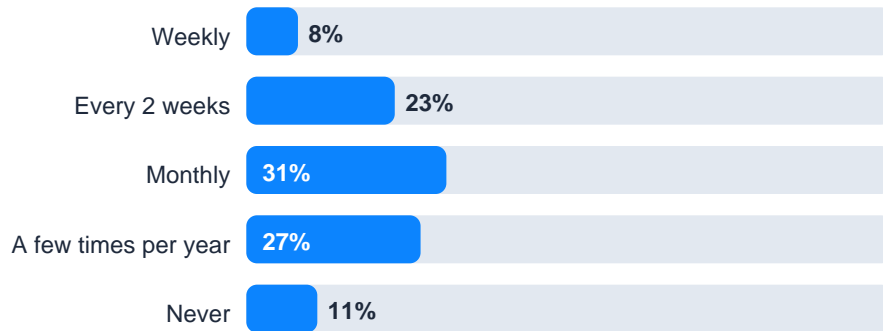
FINDING 3 OF 5

The Principal Visibility Gap

Families Want to Hear From You Directly

Parents distinguish between operational school communications and messages from building leadership. Hearing directly from the principal signals something different — it signals that someone is accountable for the school's direction.

How often principals send a school-wide newsletter



31%

of principals send at least twice per month. 38% send monthly or less. 11% never send a school-wide

FINDING 3 (CONTINUED)

What families say about hearing from building leadership

78% of parents agree: "I feel more confident in the school when I hear from the principal directly"

71% of parents agree: "When I do not hear from the principal, I assume things are fine. When something goes wrong, I wonder why I was not kept more informed."

64% of parents agree: "I can tell more about a school's culture from the principal's newsletter than from any other source"

KEY INSIGHT

78% of parents say they feel more confident in their school when they hear directly from the principal. A biweekly

What the 31% who send regularly do differently

- They treat the newsletter as a leadership tool, not a logistics update
- They write it themselves or closely edit a draft — not delegated entirely to office staff
- Average length: 250-350 words (short enough to read on a phone)
- They include: one thing they are proud of, one upcoming event, one call to action

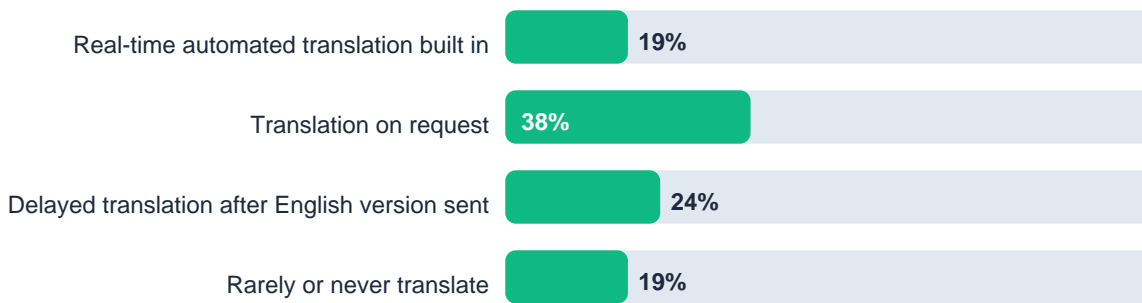
FINDING 4 OF 5

The Language Access Gap

For 42% of Schools, Communication Equity Is Still a Promise, Not a Practice

41% of schools in this survey have significant non-English-speaking family populations (25% or more of enrollment). For those schools, the question is not just whether they communicate — it is whether they communicate equitably.

How schools with multilingual families handle translation



42% of schools with significant non-English populations report that translated communications

FINDING 4 (CONTINUED)

The equity math

If a Spanish-speaking family receives a newsletter 48 hours after English-speaking families, they have missed the RSVP deadline for the event. Translation delay is not a minor inconvenience. It is systematic exclusion.

What administrators say about translation

52% "We want to do better but we do not have budget for a translator"

47% "Our bilingual staff are already overloaded"

39% "We use Google Translate and hope for the best"

KEY INSIGHT

What high-performing schools do differently: the schools in this survey with the strongest multilingual communi

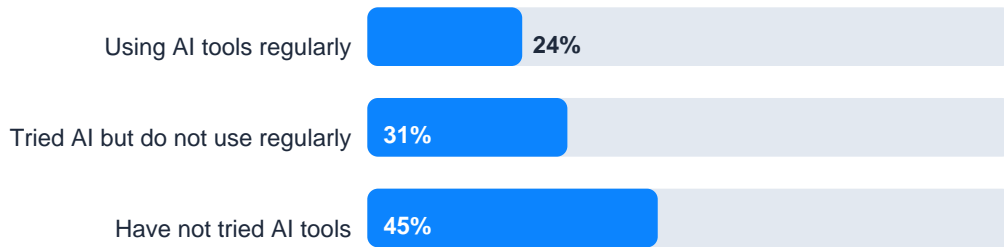
FINDING 5 OF 5

The AI Adoption Curve

Early Adopters Are Pulling Ahead — and the Gap Is Growing

24% of schools are now using AI tools regularly to draft newsletters. That number will grow. The question for school leaders is not whether AI belongs in the communication workflow — it is whether their school will lead or follow.

AI adoption rate in school communications (2026)



What early adopters report

- 45 min** average time saved per teacher per week
- 2.4x** more newsletters sent vs. non-AI users
- 71%** say their newsletters read better than before
- 83%** feel more confident sending with an AI-generated starting draft

FINDING 5 (CONTINUED)

What skeptics say — and what the data shows

Common concerns from non-adopters

CONCERN	% OF NON-ADOPTERS
<i>"It will sound generic and families will know it is AI"</i>	47%
<i>"I do not trust the accuracy of AI-generated content about my classroom"</i>	43%
<i>"My administration has not approved AI tools for this use"</i>	29%

KEY INSIGHT

Early adopters do not report that families notice or complain about AI-assisted newsletters. The key is using AI

SYNTHESIS

What High-Performing Schools Do Differently

Three Practices That Appear in Every High-Engagement School

These findings are not product-specific. They emerged consistently across all schools in this survey with open rates above 45% and strong family trust scores.

1

Standardize the template before you set the expectation.

High-performing schools did not tell teachers to communicate better. They gave teachers a template that made communicating better easy. The standard and the tool arrived together.

2

The principal models the behavior.

In every high-engagement school, the principal sends a regular newsletter. Not delegated to office staff. Written by or closely reviewed by the building leader. Families can feel the difference.

3

Measure and share the data.

High-performing schools track open rates and share them — not to punish low performers, but to make the impact visible. When a teacher sees that 47 families opened their newsletter, they send next week.

METHODOLOGY + ABOUT

Methodology

Survey conducted January-March 2026. 512 respondents (K-12 educators and administrators) across 38 U.S. states. Participants recruited via education professional networks and voluntary opt-in. Survey included 34 questions covering communication frequency, tools, family feedback, equity practices, and AI adoption. Data analysis conducted by Daystage Research, March 2026. Margin of error +/-4.2% at 95% confidence.

About Daystage

Daystage is a school newsletter platform built for K-12 teachers and administrators. We built this research because we wanted to give school leaders the data they needed to make the case for better communication — and to understand what 'better' actually looks like in practice. This report is free to share.

How does your school compare?

Run the free Principal's Communication Audit to score your school against these benchmarks.

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