

# Ideas in Action

## Innovative practices and strategies to take beyond the COVID era

### Involving parents as partners with Possip

The move to virtual learning surfaced many changes for students and teachers and diminished the opportunities for impromptu conversations between families, teachers, and school administration that often would happen during pick-ups, drop-offs, and school activities. To help fix this, MNPS expanded their partnership with Possip, a Nashville-based company aiming to make family communication easier and more effective for schools via regular "pulse-checks," brief surveys to garner quick feedback. What makes Possip unique is how easy it is to use for both families and schools and how frequently schools can gather actionable and targeted feedback.

Families are contacted via text or email and asked about their satisfaction with their child's school, and have the option to provide additional feedback or ask questions. They can remain anonymous if they choose. Possip then aggregates the data for the school through an easy-to-use dashboard. The dashboard shares the participation rate; overall satisfaction level; feedback and questions from families needing follow-up, organized by urgency; a question or challenge submitted by a family member with a proposed action step and the family member's contact information; and "Possip Praise," showing direct quotes about strengths in the school.

In addition to the weekly pulse-checks, Possip also helped the district gain insights on several top issues of the last year – identifying technology needs, helping students log into Schoology for virtual learning, and gauging comfortability returning to in-person learning.

**“A vital part of our work this year is making sure parents know we are listening to them.”**

**- Antioch Middle School Principal**

### Celebrating the positive

*Each data report features “Possip Praise” – aggregating responses where families give positive feedback for the school, often about particular teachers. Many principals have found this feature to be very helpful for quickly boosting teacher morale by sharing specific, individual positive feedback on a regular basis. Possip makes sharing positive feedback easy by collecting these types of comments all together in the school’s Possip dashboard. All the principal has to do is copy and past the praise into an email to the teacher or as a shout-out school-wide.*

*Not only do teachers feel appreciated and motivated by the positive comments, but schools are able to get a clear picture of what parents want to see most from teachers, and what they are specifically noticing. “Teachers don’t always get that type of feedback in their classroom, especially now,” shares Antioch Middle School Principal Brian Seay, “and it is helpful to know how parents are perceiving things.” As students are transitioning back to in-person learning, the touch-points from parents are particularly important for building community.*



## Addressing little issues before they become big problems



*One of Possip's biggest benefits is that it invites families to share feedback in a comfortable, low-confrontation setting on a regular basis – meaning that it tends to catch issues while they are still small, before they turn into big problems. Typically, for example, if a parent is emailing the principal, coming to the school in person, or scheduling a conference with a teacher, it is likely the issue has been going on for a while and gotten big enough to trigger a more formal, serious intervention. However, many principals, teachers, and parents alike would say that many “big” issues could have been resolved if they had been addressed sooner. Possip helps family members and schools easily communicate about what might become bigger problems and helps the school correct the situation earlier.*

*Possip regularly solicits feedback from parents, so it becomes a normal part of the weekly or biweekly routine. Family members get to provide feedback close to in-the-moment, but with enough time passed to reflect on things they may not have had time to address, or that may not have seemed like a big deal at the time. And Possip clearly aggregates data for schools, so the urgent issues don't get lost in the mix. Possip's dashboard collects all information necessary to help the school take action right away: the comment from the family member, a suggested solution, and the family member's contact information. Possip also categorizes comments as “hot,” “medium,” and “cool” according to their level of urgency, helping advise schools on where to focus time and resources.*

**“The difference with Possip is that it is a two-way channel for us to hear back from parents.”**

**- Head Middle Magnet School Principal**

## One tool in the toolbox

Possip is becoming a vital communication option for many schools – serving as a unique addition to the existing communications toolbox. “It's giving such a big value add and it's so easy to use, so it ends up not being a big lift,” says Inglewood Elementary principal Ashley Croft.

What also sets Possip apart is that it opens the door for two-way communication. Rather than an email or a call-out to family's homes, Possip directly asks families for feedback in a way that is friendly, frequent, quick, and non-confrontational. It also translates to over 100 languages, making it accessible for families across our district.

Possip bolsters a school's overall communications tactics by reinforcing key messages and assessing the effectiveness of other modes of communication. Head Middle Magnet School recently saw that parents were requesting homework help through Possip. The school's principal knew that information on Homework Hotline was included in each email newsletter she sent to

families. She realized that even though the information was available did not mean that all parents were easily finding it—so she moved the instructions for Homework Hotline to the very top of the next email. Possip allowed her to see how parents were perceiving other lines of communication—what was getting through best and what wasn't—and allowed the principal to make necessary adjustments.

With Possip in the toolbox, schools are able to amplify messages so that as many families receive pertinent information from as many streams as possible. As Head Magnet's principal says, Possip is “just another avenue for parents' voices to be heard, and that is so important for families especially right now.”



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