



Columbia Heights Educational Campus

Washington, D.C.

Columbia Heights Educational Campus Makes KiNVO Key Part of Digital Family Engagement Strategy



“Social justice is an integral part of our mission, and we use equitable communications and family engagement to help elevate the voices of our community to ensure every student is supported.”



— Joseph Lewis,
Assistant Principal of 7th
and 8th Grades

Columbia Heights Educational Campus Profile

ENROLLMENT

1,400

ENGLISH LEARNERS

31%

INCREASE IN EXCHANGED MESSAGES

34%

Columbia Heights Educational Campus (CHEC) is an integral school community in the District of Columbia’s public schools. A bilingual campus that serves grades 6 through 12, CHEC students and families come from over 50 countries making it one of the most diverse communities in Washington, DC.

The school has always fostered a robust sense of community and supported it with a strong family engagement foundation. Home visits, parent-teacher conferences, and parent engagement events have provided regular opportunities to build the school-home relationships.

Because of this work, the community buy-in has historically been strong. However, always looking to improve, the CHEC team wanted a way to build upon their success and communicate with families on a more regular basis on a larger scale.



We have a student whose family speaks Vietnamese, ...KiNVO makes it possible for us to regularly communicate with them

— Joseph Lewis

When they implemented KiNVO at the beginning of SY 2019–20, they noticed an immediate change in the way they were able to interact with their families. Joseph I. Lewis, the Assistant Principal of 7th & 8th-Grade, said, “It allowed me to develop relationships with parents more quickly because they suddenly had more access to me. Before, they had to call the front office, talk to the secretary, leave a message, wait for me to call them back, and hope that we could connect at the same time. It was a process. With KiNVO, they can reach out to me directly and let me know that their child is sick or whatever update they have. Because I am more easily accessible, they are more prone to keep me in the loop.”

Beyond the ability to quickly communicate with families and build relationships, it also

helped them contact parents who they previously struggled to communicate with. In such a diverse community, instant two-way translations have been a significant help.



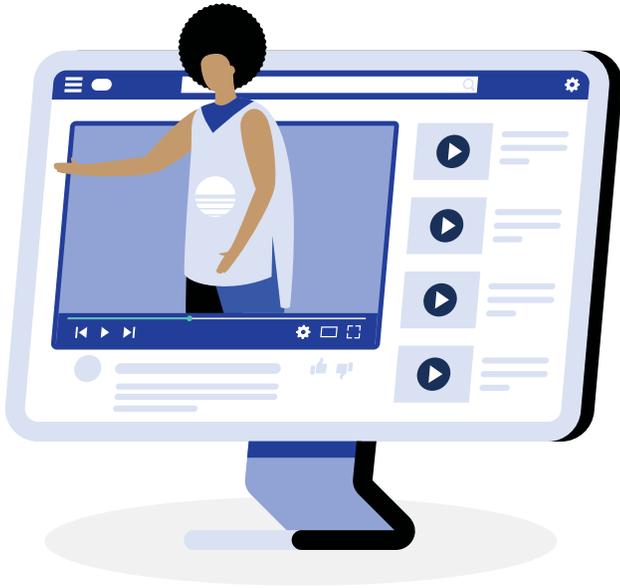
Lewis said, “We have a student whose family speaks Vietnamese, but we don’t have anyone on staff who speaks Vietnamese. KiNVO makes it possible for us to regularly communicate with them.”

The school has also seen the positive impact of personalizing messages. Jacqueline Vialpando, an Instructional Coach at CHEC, said, “One of our special ed students was away prior to COVID-19 for a couple weeks. We reached out with personalization through KiNVO, got in contact with the parent, began working with the parent, and then managed to get the student back to school just before we closed.”

When COVID-19 came, the school setting changed dramatically as CHEC closed its doors, but KiNVO remained a critical part of the school-home relationship.

Vialpando recalled, “We had a week off for spring break, but our teachers didn’t really take that week off. It’s heart-warming to me because they actually took that week to prepare themselves and get ready for what was coming. As soon as that week was over, they were reaching out to families immediately through KiNVO.”

“During the first couple of weeks of COVID-19 closure, we were sending messages to make sure everyone was okay and see if they needed anything,” said Roman Smith. “By week three, we were providing them with



resources so they would understand how we were providing education. If students didn't have technology, we were working through KiNVO to set up ways for them to get the technology."

Despite the distance and language barriers, students and families have regularly been in consistent contact with their teachers and administrators during remote learning. Nearly 80 percent of all parents have replied to a KiNVO message. This is in large part due to the teachers at CHEC.

Mohammad Rahman, a 7th and 8th Grade English teacher, said, "We sent out a tech survey to evaluate what type of technology students had so that we could help fill in the gaps. One of the questions in the survey included an option for students to submit their cell phone numbers. The school SIS didn't have those numbers, but they're a direct way to reach a student if they aren't showing up to class so it only makes sense to have them."

Desepe DeVargas, a Visual Art teacher at CHEC, then took those updated numbers and set up recurring messages to remind students and families about class. She said, "Students were adjusting and missing class the first couple weeks, so I set up recurring messages to go out to students just before my classes." The automation improved attendance—kids who might have forgotten they had class suddenly received a reminder to log on and followed instructions.

After class, DeVargas would send a message to the parents of the students saying it was great to see them in class, and another message to the parents of students who didn't show up—or showed up only to quickly drop off—saying that she missed them in class. "I've had parents respond and say they thought their student attended, so it definitely helps keep them informed and hold their child accountable."

Moving forward, the CHEC staff is excited to continue using KiNVO as its central communications tool to keep students and families engaged whether attending class in person, virtually, or some combination of both.