



Seattle Tacoma-Area School Districts Adopt Parent Notification Programs to Better Connect With Families

Selected Area Districts

Districts using, starting or expanding their SchoolMessenger service include:

- Seattle Public Schools
- Puyallup School District
- Bethel School District
- Bainbridge Isl. School District
- Shoreline School District
- Central Kitsap School District
- Hockinson School District
- Peninsula School District
- South Kitsap School District
- **Dozens More...**

Together, they represent more than 300 schools serving nearly 250,000 students.

Districts place a premium on direct-to-parent communications

As students throughout the greater Seattle Tacoma-area return to school, many families will be met with news from district officials that new or expanded parent notification programs have been put in place for the school year. These systems will enable district and school officials to reach parents quickly in the event of an emergency, and also improve the quality and frequency of communications with families throughout the year.

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Reports show that when notification solutions are used in schools, parents report improved peace of mind and attendance rates increase. In addition, with school

continued from page 2





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Superintendent*

Bainbridge Island School District

SchoolMessenger

continued from page 1

closings and delays commonplace in the Northwest due to unpredictable weather conditions, many district officials consider them vital.

Last July, the Puget Sound Educational Service District (ESD), Washington’s largest educational service district, partnered with SchoolMessenger, a leading U.S. parental notification company, to enable its 35 school districts to more easily adopt communications solutions designed to notify large groups of parents in a short amount of time. The service expands the ESD’s SchoolReport.org emergency communications system.

After several ice, wind and snowstorms required emergency calls during one school year, the Tahoma School District placed a

priority on getting a rapid communications program in place for the next school year. “At times our region can be a meteorologist’s nightmare,” said Kevin Patterson, Tahoma School District public information officer. “With microclimates that develop and change very rapidly, parents who commute out of the valley very early in the morning may not be aware of sudden changes in local conditions that could affect bus transportation for their children. Our goal was to put a system in place that could alert families immediately as emergency situations occur, and then keep them updated as changes develop.”

Inclement weather conditions are an annual concern for the Orting School District as well. With five schools located near the base of Mount Rainier and surrounded by two river systems, the district also faces flood

concerns. “Although sirens are in place to provide an emergency warning system, they often go off by mistake,” said Jeff Davis, superintendent of Orting School District. “With SchoolMessenger we can quickly inform families of real threats, but also reduce unnecessary panic in the event of a false alarm.”

If an emergency occurs, massive calling capabilities allow thousands of messages to be placed in a matter of minutes. District or school officials simply log-on to access SchoolMessenger’s Web-based service, or in the event of a power outage call a toll-free

continued on page 3

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*-- Beverly J. Cheney
Superintendent
South Kitsap School District*

SchoolMessenger

continued from page 2

number from a cell phone anywhere, anytime. Each notification is delivered in the family’s language of choice using a voice message, email or text message. The system saves administrators countless hours of staff time when sending routine attendance alerts or community announcements, and allows them to deliver a clear, personalized message quickly and reliably.

In addition to weather-related closures, several threats of violence on its campuses last year helped propel Bainbridge Island School District to adopt a parent notifica-

tion system. “We want to be partners with parents in the education of their children,” said Dr. Ken E. Crawford, superintendent of Bainbridge Island School District. “Safety is of primary importance to us, as is opening up the lines of communication.

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Several districts have also explored ways to use their investment in notification systems to the community’s greater good. South Kitsap School District, which launched a pilot program for 16 learning centers last spring, assisted the County Health Department this summer by calling thousands of K-5 parents to let

them know about a low cost immunization clinic.

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To learn more about SchoolMessenger’s parent notification systems, call 888-527-5225 or visit schoolmessenger.com. ■

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