

## Auburn school district launches 'Messenger'

**By Alyssa Sunkin / The Citizen**

**Wednesday, March 5, 2008 11:31 AM EST**

The Auburn Enlarged City School District officially has a new way to contact parents in emergencies.

On Monday, the district launched School Messenger, its new parent notification system that places phone calls to both land lines and cell phones and sends e-mails to parents in emergencies.

More than 3,500 contact numbers for parents and legal guardians were called in a test of the system Monday evening, said Sandy Wagner, technology coordinator and administrative intern. Calls began at 6:30 p.m. and within 17 minutes, School Messenger had tried to contact each number listed at least once.

Of the calls made, 2,262 were answered, 985 reached answering machines, 220 were unreachable due to incorrect information, and 77 either had no answer or busy signals for an hour, Wagner said.

E-mails were not sent in the test run because few parents have included them in the emergency contact sheet, he said. Beginning next year, the district will ask parents for a contact e-mail address.

"We're already receiving phone calls from parents who did not get calls to update and correct that information," he said. "We were very pleased with the number that were correct. Our data is very accurate, but we will strive to improve that as well."

Wagner said parents should contact the individual schools as soon as possible to update contact information.

The system is now fully operational to notify parents in times of emergencies. But that is not the limit of School Messenger's capability.

Wagner is working on integrating the school's attendance system with the notification solutions to place phone calls to parents when students are absent from school. He is anticipating this being ready within the school year. The system can also be used for communicating lunch account balances.

School Messenger is also powered to send text messages to parents. Wagner said sending them would only happen in a "severe emergency" because it costs parents money.