

Lawrence Schools Implement Emergency Notification System

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Would your child's school be able to reach you quickly in case of an emergency? Many school districts now have notification systems to communicate with parents.

It's more than just getting the equipment and setting up a system, just as important as spending thousands of dollars on the notification system is the ability to communicate with parents. That's why educators in Lawrence learned more about Communication 101.

Mass voicemail messages is just one example of how educators in the Lawrence School District plan to use its new SchoolMessenger system.

"In the context of emergencies, it's critical we get information to parents in a timely way," Superintendent Randy Weseman said.

Other schools and universities started a notification system last fall such as Park University, KU and several metro districts. It's used not to just notify in case of emergency, but also school closings or early dismissal.

It's something that's been in the works for several years in Lawrence but too expensive until now. Since the shootings at Virginia Tech last year, the need to reach parents and students quickly has become a priority with many schools.

Superintendent Weseman said they faced a threat several years ago where this system would have helped let parents know what was going on.

"What happened about a year and a half ago, there was a community-wide bomb threat called in where we had every school on lockdown and it became apparent to me that having a mass communications system was critical," Weseman said.

But it's more than just buying a system, it's making sure you know how to use it and that's why educators in Lawrence had special training Wednesday to make sure their message isn't lost when its notification system is used.

"No parent wishes to receive a two or three minute message or something in regard to multiple topics," Julie Abbott with Reliance Communications said.

The Lawrence School District currently is only using a mass voicemail message but plans to make text and email notifications available next year to parents.