

North Boone to set up automated notifications

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POPLAR GROVE — A new automated system will speed up North Boone's parent-school communication, officials say.

The district will implement School Messenger, which provides automated notification for emergency broadcasts, parent outreach and student attendance communications.

"When we go to close school early, it is a really quick, easy way to notify parents and not tie up the phone lines that we have here at the building," said North Boone Upper Elementary Principal Mike Greenlee.

The system is programmed to contact parents immediately when the district has news it wants to spread quickly.

"It can be really challenging to be able to contact all the parents and to do it quickly. This system will allow us to do it in minutes, in what sometimes will take up to two hours," said North Boone Middle School Principal Jeremiah Auble said. "It's just one more way for us to enhance communication from school to home."

It can be great for emergency situations, but that isn't its only use, Superintendent Rita Brodnax said.

Schools eventually will use it to send automated absence notices, conduct surveys and inform parents about upcoming school events, such as statewide testing and parent-teacher meetings, Brodnax said in a letter to staff and parents.

"We think it will serve a variety of purposes," Brodnax said. "A teacher can use it for field-trip reminders, we can do surveys, or if students are absent, it can call home and say, 'John Smith didn't arrive at school today.'"

The system also can recognize different languages "so when the message is recorded in alternate languages, parents always get the message in the language they prefer," according to a letter to parents.

The messenger won't replace person-to-person communication. Paper notices still will be sent home, and principals, teachers and staff still will be available for parents to talk to.