

Manchester offers message service

Jen Gibson

Times-Union Staff Writer

2/20/2008 7:00:00 PM

NORTH MANCHESTER - Students' families, faculty and staff at Manchester Community Schools now have an additional way to get messages from the school corporation.

The school corporation recently subscribed to School Messenger's service to deliver important messages via phone messages to families and staff at the school.

Tuesday night at the regular meeting of the Manchester Community Schools Board of Trustees, Manchester High School Assistant Principal Randy Self demonstrated the system.

Self programmed the school board members' cellular telephone numbers into a group list and then demonstrated the process for recording and sending a message.

So far, the school corporation has used the messenger system to alert families, teachers and staff of school delays. In the future, the system can be used to send messages to specific groups, such as sports teams or specific grade levels.

The messenger system also can be used to deliver information instead of mass mailings or sending letters home with students. It has a multi-language function, text-to-voice translation, and message-back capabilities.

Once a message is sent, the selected telephone numbers are called. The messages are voice-activated, and if the call is not answered by a person, voice mail or answering machine, the system continues to call up to four times until there is an answer. If a voice mail or answering machine is reached, the system leaves a message and does not call back.

Eventually, the school plans to integrate the program into its current attendance system as well as the school lunch accounts.

In the event of an emergency at the school, the system will contact all numbers listed for a child to relay the message.

"Hopefully, we never have to use that feature," Self said.

When the system was used to inform parents of a weather delay earlier this month, it took about 15 minutes to contact students' families. It took approximately two minutes to notify teachers and staff.

"So far, people seem really happy with it," Self said.

In other business, the board:

- Approved changing the name of Laketon Elementary School to Manchester Intermediate School.

- Accepted a \$100 donation from David and Patty Grant for the MCS transportation department.
- Approved a Sunday activity request from Nancy Alspaugh and Jim Myer for after-prom activities May 18 from 1 to 4 a.m. in the high school gym.
- Approved professional leave requests for Susan Warren and Margie Miller to attend the Indiana Association for the Gifted Conference Feb. 11-12 in Indianapolis, and Michelle Smith to attend the Physics Field Trip March 5-10 at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla.
- Approved hiring Dan Jones as junior varsity baseball coach at Manchester Junior-Senior High School; Sandy Shipley, varsity assistant softball coach at MJSHS; Laura Mooneyhan, junior class sponsor, MJSHS; and Nate Grotrian, assistant track coach, MJSHS.
- Accepted the resignation of Tom Skaar, assistant track coach at MJSHS.