

New Phone System for Coffee BOE to Provide Emergency Notification

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Parents, students, teachers, administrative personnel and each member of the Coffee Board of Education can now be alerted by phone in case of an emergency situation in the schools.

Board members adopted a new automated phone system, which includes both cell and home phones, for uses in emergencies, inclement weather days, absentee students and reminders for school organizational meetings.

Superintendent Linda Ingram, along with county school technology specialist Golda Donaldson, demonstrated the phone system in Thursday's meeting of the board, alerting board members by cell phone of the next BOE meeting by messaging.

"Let's say if we had bad weather overnight and we had to call school off the next day," Ingram explained. "We can send by phone a message to parents on their cell phone or home phone starting at 5 a.m. that morning and if the parents don't answer the phone, then the system automatically dials again until it gets the parent. By computer, it tells us who missed the messages."

The School Messenger phone system will also alert faculty members and parents in case of an emergency situation at the schools and if a child is absence, the phone system can notify the parents.

"Parents can even call and leave a message for us in English and in Spanish and the messages we send out can be in both languages," Ingram said.

Reminders of Band Booster meetings, PTO meetings and any school function can be sent to parents.

"This is the best way to get the word out quickly and efficiently for all of our school employees and parents to be notified," she added.

In other business addressed by the board, salaries for substitute teachers will be increased with the start of the new school year.

An adoption of a salary schedule for the increase was approved with a substitute's salary changing from \$50 a day to \$55, based on the state's schedule.

An increase in lunchroom meals was also approved, per the state's recommendation, with breakfast meals adding 15 cents and lunch, adding 25 cents. Adult meals, regular \$2.50, also increased by 25 cents by \$2.75. Free and reduced lunches are set by federal standards and will not change with the new school season.

A Parents, Students Informational Guide for the 2008-2009 school year had few changes with the exception of an update on diploma choices. The First Choice diploma option will be discussed in meetings with parents over a period of the next several months. No changes were set for the dress code or cell phone policies.

A countywide school Open House is scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 5, from 5-7 p.m. A ribbon cutting for the newly refurbished Kinston School is at 6 p.m. with a reception and Board of Education meeting following.