

Topic:	Home Notification System (telephone and/or email messages)
Effective:	September 2010, 2016
Review/Revision Date:	September 2020
Responsibility:	Communications Manager, Superintendent of Education (IT)

INTENDED PURPOSE:

The Halton District School Board is committed to providing timely, effective communication to parents/guardians students and staff concerning school-related issues.

Use of the Home Notification System – an automated system that sends an email and/or a telephone message to parents/guardians or staff members (email only) – is one method used by the Halton District School Board to support that communication.

PROCEDURES:

The Home Notification System is available to elementary and secondary schools as well as central offices of the Halton District School Board.

Home Notification System messages can be sent by individual schools or centrally through the Communications and/or Information Technology Department(s).

Guidelines for Use of the Home Notification System:**1. School-based messages:** *(Messages sent by individual schools)*

Note: All messages sent by the Home Notification System must be approved by the school administrator

Nature of message:

Messages must be relevant to the entire school community or targeted to a specific audience, as determined by the school administrator.

Examples of school-based messages:

- School closure due to facilities problems (ie: fire, broken boiler, burst pipes, etc.)
- School council events, reminders of special events at school
- Reminders about cashless account balances
- Dangerous stranger letter (police letter attached to email)
- Notification of a Lock-down or Hold & Secure/Shelter in Place situation at school
- School newsletters emailed to parents (with attachments)
- Field trip information and permission forms emailed to parents
- To explain to parents the potential of a school re-organization.

- Best Practices for School-based Messages:

- Use telephone or email but not both (most schools use the telephone messages for urgent/safety messages only).
- Don't use for "marketing" or "fundraising".
- Schools may use the "If no email, then telephone" function as not all parents provide email addresses
- Target the message to the specific audience (ie send to Grade 5 parents only if the message concerns a Grade 5 field trip).
- Telephone messages should be short (approximately 20-30 seconds). Direct parents to the school's website for more information. Email messages can provide more

detailed information than telephone messages. If attaching a document to an email message, the message will take longer to send. A limit of 2 MB required.

- Messages (email or telephone) should be sent once per week. It is best to establish a specific day of the week so parents expect the message.
- For telephone messages, the familiar voice of the principal or school secretary is preferred over the automated voice.

2. System-wide messages: (*Messages sent through the IT Dept and/or Communications Department*)

Carefully consider the use of the Home Notification System for system-wide messages. Is this the most effective way to communicate this information? What other means of communication have been utilized (radio & television, Halton District School Board website, school websites, newspaper advertisements, school newsletters, outdoor school signs, backpack flyers etc).

System-wide messages must be either:

1. Security/safety related
2. Inclement weather
3. Critical or Urgent communication
4. Important learning/educational opportunity (if approved by the Director of Education)

Best Practices for System-wide Messages

- School closure due to weather and if appropriate, transportation cancellations.
Note: Staff members are not contacted using the Home Notification System about school closures.
- Sending a message by both email and telephone is only done in the most urgent of situations
- Urgent health communications
- Target message to the specific audience (i.e. all JK/SK parents or all Grade 8 parents in the Board)
- Advise administrators and school office staff of all system-wide messages prior to sending.

Note: The Director of Education, Communications Department, and/or the Superintendent of Education (School Programs) must approve the use of the Home Notification System for promotion of system-wide learning events or activities.

3. Training

Training for the Home Notification System is available for school staff so schools may become self-sufficient. Training information is available online through myHDSB > Resources>My Application Help

4. Support for the Home Notification System

For support, contact the Information Centre at 905-333-4372 or informationcentre@hdsb.ca
The Information Centre will direct your call to the appropriate staff member.

For assistance with sending an emergency message

If your school needs assistance sending an emergency message please contact the Information Centre at 905-333-4372

For non-emergency messages

For system-wide messages (intended for audiences beyond a single school), contact Marnie Denton (Communications Department) at 905 335-3665 ext. 2227 or dentonm@hdsb.ca