

City Schools of Decatur

DECATUR, GEORGIA / 2,911 STUDENTS

City Schools of Decatur (CSD), just outside Atlanta, Georgia, was already a Campus customer and needed a voice messaging service to provide emergency notification. CSD chose Campus Messenger with Voice. Shortly after installation, severe flooding required CSD to send emergency messages to families and staff. Within minutes, everyone was notified and contingency plans were made. Campus Messenger with Voice handled the crises effortlessly.

Eliminating the "Calling Tree"

As a Campus customer since 2006, CSD was looking for a faster and more comprehensive notification process. They did not start using Campus Messenger (part of the core product) until recently to distribute email messages, but they also needed a better way to distribute emergency notifications.

CSD became a pilot district for Campus Messenger with Voice, powered by ShoutPoint, in spring 2009. Previously, it relied on a "calling tree" to distribute emergency information. Staff members called selected parents who, in turn, called a few additional parents in a spreading pattern of communication until information about school closings, emergencies and school activities was broadcasted through the district. It was an antiquated and ineffective way to communicate.

Since adopting Campus Messenger with Voice, CSD is able to make a large volume of calls simultaneously for

emergencies. For non-emergency messages, they offer a choice of communication options: email, voice, or both.

Emergency Calls That Work

There are occasions when staff, parents and students have to be reached immediately. Emergencies ranging from dangerous weather conditions to crises such as the unthinkable, but real, Columbine disaster all call for immediate parental notification.

When there is no time to lose, Campus Messenger with Voice uses dedicated ports to prioritize emergency traffic. Parent and guardian telephone numbers are extracted from Infinite Campus using existing filters and calls go out en masse. Parents are notified immediately and can make informed decisions about their children.

CSD had a need for urgent communications. "The floods in Georgia during September 2009 were fierce and we were forced to close school quickly," said Dr. Thomas Van Soelen, CSD Associate Superintendent. "We were confident Campus Messenger with Voice would be able to send this message out to all our families in a matter of moments. In fact, after the decision was made to close school, our families received the automated call before the television and radio stations were able to broadcast the news."

ShoutPoint telephony service incorporates interconnected voice-over Internet protocol (VOIP), telecommunications service with high-volume call

routing. This service provides dedicated ports that expand as needed and prioritize emergency traffic. Regardless of the district size, Campus Messenger with Voice delivers a 30 second message in less than 15 minutes.

Before purchasing Campus Messenger with Voice, calls were a time consuming part of CSD staff's daily activity, with the potential for missed or late calls. Having communication options expanded opportunities to reach everyone. Now CSD communication is fast, efficient and reliable.

Efficiency Pays Off

Campus Messenger with Voice is fully integrated with CSD data in real time, so there is assurance that phone records are accurate.

"During the first month of school, administrative assistants and the HR office teamed up to make sure that all staff phone numbers were correct in Infinite Campus. Staff updates required one person and little time," said Van Soelen. "It is such a pleasure to not engage in the age-old practice of a phone tree late at night."

The safety of staff and students during times of emergency cannot be given a price tag. As was demonstrated during the September 2009 flooding, the ability to get high priority information to parents and staff is invaluable, potentially saving students and staff from injury.

"The peace of mind that comes from knowing that concurrent phone calls are being made -literally hundreds of them in a minute - is calming in an emergency situation," said Van Soelen.

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*Dr. Thomas Van Soelen
Associate Superintendent
City Schools of Decatur*

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► **K-12 Solutions**, an Infinite Campus Channel Partner, designs, builds and deploys technology solutions for all aspects of education.

► **Infinite Campus** is the largest American-owned student information system, managing 7 million students in 43 states.