Halton District School Board ***Administrative Procedure***

Number:	*To be determined*
Topic:	**Home Notification System (telephone and/or email messages)**
Effective:	**September 2010**
Cross-Reference:	
Review/Revision Date:	September 2011
Responsibility:	Communications Manager, Chief Information Officer

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 – 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 IT departments.

Guidelines for Use of the Home Notification System
In order to use this messaging system effectively, the following guidelines have been established:

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 may be relevant to 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 problem (i.e. fire, boiler broken, 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 after a Lock-down, Hold & Secure, or 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 either telephone or email but not both (most schools send telephone messages for urgent/safety messages only).

- Schools may use the “If no email, then telephone” function since not all parents provide email addresses
- Sending a message by both email and telephone is only done in the most urgent of situations.
- Target the message to the specific audience (i.e. send message 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, 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 or multiple schools messages:
(Messages sent through the IT Department in conjunction with the Director’s Office and/or Communications Department)

Nature of message:
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 and 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. School closures due to inclement weather
3. Critical or urgent communication.

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 (i.e. pandemic/H1N1 communication)
- Target message to the specific audience (i.e. all Kindergarten parents or all Grade 8 parents in the board)
- 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.
- *Education Matters* newsletter is emailed to parents in four times per year. Parents receive an email listing the articles in the issue and a link to its location on the Halton District School Board website. System-wide events may be promoted through this electronic version of *Education Matters* newsletter.
- Advise administrators and school office staff of all system-wide messages prior to sending.

TRAINING:

Training for the Home Notification System is available for school staff so schools may become self-sufficient. Training information is available on-line through

- MyHDSB under Resources and then My Application Help

SUPPORT FOR THE HOME NOTIFICATION SYSTEM:

For support contact the Information Centre at 905 335-3665 ext. 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 following people for assistance:

- Between 8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. call the Information Centre at 905 335-3665 ext. 4372. Information Centre will direct your call to the appropriate staff member.
- Between 7:30 – 8 a.m. contact Carole Betzold (IT Department) at 905 335-3665 ext. 2211.

FOR NON-EMERGENCY MESSAGES:

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

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.