



Important Details and Frequently Asked Questions

How is AlertNow used?

AlertNow allows the district to send important information quickly – not only to parents but to staff as well – via phone and/or e-mail about emergency situations and school delays or cancellations due to inclement weather. During the 2009-2010 school year, *AlertNow* will allow every school to contact parents about important school information and events, testing schedules, report card distribution, open houses, delayed buses, field trips, and more.

As a parent or guardian of a student enrolled in School District 62, will I need to register or sign-up to receive messages from AlertNow?

If you are a parent or guardian of a student enrolled in School District 62, you are not required to register for the *AlertNow* parent notification system. ALL parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school division are automatically enrolled in this wonderful communication system. A parent test message was conducted on November 10, 2008 to ensure we have the correct information for contacting parents. After the test, letters were sent to homes where telephone numbers were disconnected. The letter directed parents to contact their school secretary to update their contact information.

As a staff member, how do I update my AlertNow emergency and non-emergency notification information?

Updating your *AlertNow* information can be accomplished by emailing alertnow@d62.org with your primary telephone number, secondary telephone or cell number and personal email address. Your information will be forwarded to Human Resources.

As a parent/guardian of a student, when will I receive my first AlertNow call?

Prior to the District's first *AlertNow* message, a letter was sent home with every student notifying parents of the district's "test" date. This test date allowed the district to launch a message and introduce parents to this new communication system. As a reminder, the first test call was sent to the primary phone number that was submitted on a student's registration form. The first "live" message, if needed, should be sent to your home phone after Monday, November 10.

How will *AlertNow* notify parents/guardians?

As the parent/guardian of a student, it is important to understand how messages are delivered to you.

- ✓ In addition to being notified by phone during a school emergency, you will also receive messages via email, if it is listed.
- ✓ This new notification system has the capability of calling five of your phone numbers (home, alternate or cell, and work) and sending messages up to five different email accounts for parents/guardians identified as residing with the student or identified as receiving copies of student reports.
- ✓ Multiple phone numbers and email addresses will only be used to notify you during a school emergency, closing, or cancellation.

How are *AlertNow* messages delivered to staff?

AlertNow is used to communicate with staff in a timely manner during an emergency, school closing, or cancellation due to inclement weather. For all staff members, *AlertNow* messages will be delivered as follows:

- ✓ Emergency, cancellation, or delay messages - you will receive multiple messages that will be sent to your home phone, cell phone, and personal e-mail (if provided). In these cases, such a message would be district generated. If you have Caller ID, the number 411-000-0000 will appear in the display.

How will I know that I have received a message from *AlertNow*?

Here is what you need to know about receiving a phone call via *AlertNow*:

- ✓ If you have Caller ID, for school closings, cancellations, or delays due to inclement weather 411-000-0000 will appear in the display.
- ✓ *AlertNow* will leave a message on any answering machine or voicemail.
- ✓ If the *AlertNow* message stops playing, press any key 1-9 and the message will replay from the beginning.
- ✓ If an email is sent the subject line will read School District 62.

As a parent of a student, what should I do if I did not receive a phone call on the *AlertNow* "test" date?

Since the 2008-2009 school year is the first year the district is using this communication tool, we ask for your patience and understanding. One of the reasons you may not receive a phone call is that your information may be outdated. If you did not receive a call via your home phone, on the "test" date, please contact the office staff at your child's school to ensure your phone number is current.

An *AlertNow* message was delivered to my phone, I said "hello" and no message played. Why?

The *AlertNow* system plays the message as soon as the phone is picked up or answered. However, errors can occur if the person repeatedly says "hello" or answers in a noisy environment (i.e. traffic, children playing, loud music or television, dogs barking, etc.). Generally, if a person offers an extended greeting such that it overlaps the *AlertNow* message, the system pauses, waits for silence, and replays the message from the beginning. If there is background noise, it is possible that the system is unable to detect the end of the "greeting" and thus the message did not initiate. In a noisy environment, call recipients can press any number (1-9) and the message will play from the beginning without interruption.

How does the *AlertNow* system distinguish a live person from an answering machine?

In short, *AlertNow* utilizes the industry's most Advanced Answering Machine Detection (AAMD) software. The system starts the broadcast immediately upon telephone pickup; simultaneously, it is listening for interruptions. If noise or someone speaking within the first 3.5 seconds does not interrupt the system, the message is delivered in its entirety. If the system detects a greeting longer than a few seconds, the system treats this as an outgoing message from an answering machine and will wait for a pause (usually after the beep) before delivering the message to be recorded.

What if the line is busy or there is no answer?

The *AlertNow* system will make up to four attempts (depending on account settings) to reach each number, with three minutes in between each call. If the message is not delivered by the fourth attempt, it is considered a failed number. Failures happen when a phone number is busy, disconnected, invalid, etc. If you are aware of a message that was delivered, but you did not receive a call, please contact your school.

Why is my answering machine recording only half of the *AlertNow* message?

If your answering machine greeting is sporadic with varied periods of silence, the system will read this as a live person and begin playing the message, even though the machine has yet to start recording. This will result in a recording of silence (if the *AlertNow* message finishes playing before the machine begins recording) or if just the last portion of the *AlertNow* message runs over, this will also result in message cutoff. The recommended solution is to have parents set their machines to record for a longer period.

For voice mailboxes where it is necessary to enter a mailbox number, *AlertNow* is unable to leave a message.

If the message is considered an emergency, please check the home page of the district's web site www.d62.org for additional information.

My Caller ID showed that the district had called but there was no voicemail/message? Why?

If there is a break or a substantial silence in the outgoing message, the system determines it has reached a live person and begins the message prior to the voicemail recording is engaged. Please make sure that the greeting is seamless to facilitate successful message delivery.

If the message is considered an emergency, please check the home page of the district's web site www.d62.org for additional information

Are there other reasons why I did not receive a message on my answering machine?

AlertNow will leave a message on the contact's voicemail or answering machine. However, the system is set to ring each line six times. If your answering machine is set to pick up on seven or more rings, the message may not be delivered to your machine. Therefore, we encourage you to set your machine to six rings or fewer.

Why doesn't the district's phone number appear on the Caller ID of my phone?

AlertNow passes the caller ID information to the local telephone carriers, but it is up to those carriers to pass it along to their customers. Furthermore, different local telephone companies process Caller ID information differently. Some provide the name associated with the number, while others do not. For example, a telephone company may require an individual to subscribe to "Advanced Caller ID" in order to receive the school name along with the phone number. Unfortunately, we have no control over this feature.

Will the *AlertNow* system call phone numbers with extensions?

The *AlertNow* system only works with direct-dial phone numbers. The system is unable to navigate menus or extensions.

I have a telemarketer-screening device. How will that affect the call?

If a contact has a device on their telephone line designed to prevent automated phone systems from connecting (e.g. TeleZapper, privacy Manager, Privacy Director, etc.), they may not receive the call. For example, with Privacy Director all unidentifiable incoming calls are rerouted and the callers must identify themselves for the call to go through. Because our system is automated, it will not identify itself; thus the call will not get through to the recipient. For screening systems that are dependent on Caller ID's, recipients can authorize access for their school's phone number through their device. Note that calls identified with

the school's number on the Caller ID generally have no trouble getting through Privacy Manager type systems.

[Have a question, suggestion, or comment about AlertNow?](#)

It is important for us to hear from parents and staff about how we can improve the delivery of this notification system. As a parent or staff member, it is important that you contact us when things go as planned and when we need to make adjustments. Should you have a question, suggestion, or comment about *AlertNow*, please e-mail us at alertnow@d62.org.