



In our efforts to improve communications between parents and school, on **February 1, 2008**, Washington County Schools USD 108 is instituting a telephone broadcast system that will enable school personnel to notify all households and parents by phone within minutes of an emergency or unplanned event that causes early dismissal, school cancellation or late start. The service may also be used from time-to-time to communicate general announcements or reminders. This service is

provided by SchoolReach, which specializes in school-to-parent communications. Washington County Schools USD 108 will continue to report school closings due to snow or weather on the usual radio and television stations and will use this system as an overlay to the public announcements.

When used, the service will simultaneously call all listed phone numbers in our parent contact list and will deliver a recorded message from Michael Stegman, Superintendent; Phil Wilson, JH/HS Principal; Ron Scott, Elementary Principal or other authorized school personnel. The service will deliver the message to both live answer and answering machines. No answers and busy numbers will be automatically retried twice in 15 minute intervals after the initial call

Here is some specific information you should know.

- **Caller ID.** The Call ID will display 785-325-2261, which is the main number for Washington County Schools USD 108.
- **Live Answers:** There is a short pause at the beginning of the message, usually just a few seconds. Answer your phone as you normally would "Hello" and hold for the message to begin. Multiple "Hello's" will delay message. Inform all family members of this process who may answer your phone.
- **Answering Machines:** The system will detect that your machine has answered and will play the recording to your machine. The maximum numbers of rings before hang up is 5. Make sure your machine answers after 4 rings or you may miss the message.
- **Morning & Day Calls:** In the event a cancellation decision is made the night before, or in the early morning hours, the broadcast message will be sent only to home phone numbers. In the event a cancellation decision is made mid-day, the broadcast message will be sent to home and cellular numbers. General announcements would be sent only to home numbers.
- **Message Repeat:** At the end of the message you will be prompted to 'press one' to hear the message again. This is very effective when a child answers the phone and hands it to a parent, who can then 'Repeat' the message in its entirety.
- **Emails:** An email option could be implemented at a later date. If you supply the school with your email address, you can be included in the email broadcasting service. The Principal can then send a text message to you or even attach a .wav file of the message sent home.
- **Attendance:** In the future, Washington County Schools USD 108 might begin using SchoolReach for daily attendance. Then you would be notified daily of your child missing a required amount of classes. To minimize these calls, make sure to call in and inform the school when you KNOW your child will miss classes on a given day.

NOTE:

- 1) **This requires NO registration by the parent on the SchoolReach website.**
- 2) **All information and contact numbers are strictly secure and confidential and are only used for the purposes described herein.**

SchoolReach, the service provider, uses the best available technology in the industry to detect the difference between human answer and machine answer.

How detection works:

1. The system detects and measures the voice energy when the phone is answered.
2. The system measures this energy in combination with the background noise and line impairments.
3. If the system determines that it is a "live" answer it will immediately start playing the message.
4. If the system determines that it is a machine it will wait for 3 full seconds of silence before playing the message with a maximum wait time of 20 seconds.
5. If the system cannot make a determination it will default to answering machine thus requiring three seconds of silence for the message to play. In this case, you may hear a prompt to "Press any key to hear the message immediately."

Some reasons for false detection:

1. Loud background noise; television, radio, general noisy environment.
2. Cordless phone that has static or other foreign noise.
3. Not saying hello or delaying saying hello.

What can be done to remedy this?

1. Do not say hello more than once, if the system detected your answer incorrectly all noise will reset the three-second counter.
2. If, after you answer, the message does not immediately play- you can cover the mouthpiece of the phone to cutout all background noise the message should then play after three seconds.