

Spring Grove gives test run to parental notification system

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The Spring Grove Area School Board got its first look last week at a new parent notification software system. The product, from Global Connect, provides the district the means to call several households in a short time span to communicate information on emergencies within the district, as well as other information. A database with parent/guardian contact information is plugged into the software and based on the nature of the information, a phone call with a recorded message goes out to the appropriate individuals.

Superintendent David Stricker said the program can be used for emergency situations, but also for weather notices, power outages at a particular building, or scheduling changes or cancellations for a particular sport. Only the people in the selected database will receive the call. Business manager Joseph Howlett said the program does not leave a message, but does keep track of how many calls were answered or not answered. The primary reason for not leaving messages through the system, he said, is that you can never be sure somebody got the message or received the call. Also, there is no way to track who got the message. "The preference is to speak to an actual person, which is why the system can make repeated calls throughout the night until a designated time until somebody does answer," Howlett said. The program will report which phone numbers went unanswered after several calls so that the district administration may follow up where needed. In addition, calls to notify parents of absences or tardies can also be made with this software.

The program will be used by the district on a trial 90-day basis and is then available for purchase for \$8,000. Stricker said the Dallastown Area School District has been using the program for the past year and is happy with the results. "It lets us look at district communication in a different way," said board member Janice Smith. "We can look into how we can use that to better promote events and opportunities."