

Dear Parents,

For the past two years, Waldorf School of Princeton subscribed to an emergency notification service known as ParentReach. More commonly referred to as the "phone blast," this service contacts parents, faculty, and staff efficiently in the event of an emergency situation or a school closure.

We will be subscribing to this service again for the 2009-2010 school year and are asking families to submit contact numbers to be called in the event the ParentReach system is utilized. In the past, the success rate of message delivery was less than perfect. To ensure you receive important messages from the school, please keep the following in mind when submitting your contact numbers.

Generally, the system works as follows:

In an emergency or weather-related situation, a staff member from the School will call into the ParentReach system to record an informational message. Once in the system, they will have the ability to choose which distribution list (parent, faculty/staff, all numbers, etc.) they would like to receive the recorded information. The message is then immediately broadcast to the selected list.

You will recognize an informational call as coming from ParentReach by the displayed Caller ID: 411-411-4111. **Please be sure to answer the call as a normal call and then be silent.** The automated system needs to "hear" your response to determine whether it has reached a live person or an answering machine. If "Hello?" is spoken more than once it may assume a voice mail system has been reached and will wait for a "beep" that will never arrive. In this case a partial message, a long pause before the message, or no message at all will be delivered. **If there is no answer or the system detects a busy signal, it will redial up to ten times in three minute intervals until it connects with a live person or a recording device.**

Inevitably, because phone technology is constantly evolving, other problems may arise when we use the service. A voicemail system, wherein the owner has recorded music rather than a pre-recorded invitation to leave a message, is one of those complications. "Ringback tones" also fall into this category. Anything that does not follow the standard procedure (phone rings x amount of times, voice mail asks caller to leave message, voice mail beeps) can be a potential complication. Depending on the length of the message recorded by the School, a limited amount of time given to the caller to record a message may also interfere. In many cases, these problems are unique to the specific voice mail and ParentReach may be able to compensate for a particular circumstance. If you experience one of these issues, please email jalfaro@princetonwaldorf.org or call (ext. 110) with the phone number in question and I can work with ParentReach to find a possible solution.

Note: Phones that "Block" callers cannot receive messages from ParentReach. There is no way that they are able to compensate for this complication.

ParentReach has also found that some cell phone carriers are more dependable than others. Sprint and Verizon are two carriers that seem to be particularly unreliable. In my case, my phone received the call from 411-411-4111 and left a message. But I did not receive that message for over 24 hours after the original delivery. According to ParentReach, the system had left a message. According to my cell phone, the system called and never recorded a message.

In most cases, problems are few and the service is of enormous benefit to us. To further enhance the efficiency of the process, I ask you to fill out the attached form keeping the problems mentioned above in mind.

This year, we will also have the option to send a text message to your cell phone in addition to the phone broadcast. **Please keep in mind that the messages will be delivered immediately but because of complications with cell phone carriers or poor service areas, there may be a delay in the delivery to your phone.**

The decision of whether or not to cancel school due to weather will be made by 6:00 am, at the very latest. At that time, the phone blast will be utilized. When completing the attached form, please be sure to specify which numbers should be called in a snow emergency (possibly very early in the morning or the previous evening) by checking the box next to the number. In the event of an emergency at any other time during the day ALL numbers (home, work, cell) will be called.

If you ever feel the roads are unsafe but have not received a call from the ParentReach system, please call the School's number and listen to the main greeting. If there is a weather-related message, it will immediately follow, "Thank you for calling the Waldorf School of Princeton." Snow cancellations and delays are also broadcast to 101.5 FM (www.nj1015.com) and 94.5 PST.

Thank you for your patience while we work to resolve any complications to ensure efficient communication in the future!

Sincerely,

Jessica Alfaro
Office Manager
(609) 466-1970 ext. 110
jalfaro@princetonwaldorf.org

Students Name(s): _____

Phone Number

Snow Number?

Cell number to receive a Text Message
(Text messages will be sent in the event of ANY emergency.)

(Please fill out one per household. Email jalfaro@princetonwaldorf.org to submit electronically.)