

TeleParent comes to Visalia Unified

System translates messages from teachers to parents.

By Susie Pakoua Vang / The Fresno Bee

02/19/07 05:11:23

A telephone- and Internet-based system that aims to open lines of communication between educators and parents is coming to Redwood High School.

TeleParent allows school teachers and administrators to choose from more than 700 translated phone messages informing parents about student behavior, upcoming tests and due dates for class projects.

The goal is to get parents more involved in their children's education. To do that, TeleParent offers a unique feature: Messages come in 22 languages.

The free six-month pilot program, approved last week by Visalia Unified School District trustees, is expected to be implemented at Redwood in about two weeks, Principal Todd Oto said.

"It allows for teachers to make a very simple, but power communication with parents," Oto said.

TeleParent, he said, is an especially important tool for his diverse campus.

About 41% of the 1,765 Redwood students come from households where English is a second language. He said the predominant languages spoken are Spanish, Hmong, Lahu, Lao and Mien.

TeleParent's 22 language options covers all those native tongues and more, including Ukrainian, Russian, Armenian, Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese and Creole.

To send messages, teachers must log on to the company's Web site and check the message they want for each child. That night a message -- which sounds more humanlike than the familiar robotic recordings -- would be sent home at random times between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.

The system allows teachers to give parents feedback on student progress before it's time for teacher conferences, said TeleParent CEO and founding member Matt Hartman.

"The idea is to let parents know anything that happens in the classroom specific to their child," Hartman said. "It's not just broadcast messages like: 'Next week is the bake sale.' "

Educators can choose from 700 messages, which range from praising students for good behavior to informing parents about student absences. The communications tool also allows physical education teachers to notify parents that their child did not change for class. Another message to parents: that their child was caught using an electronic device at school.

During emergency situations, Hartman said TeleParent has the ability to call about 2,500 parents in a matter of minutes.

The bill for use of TeleParent depends on several factors, including the plan and number of students receiving the service.

Late last year, Fresno Unified School District piloted TeleParent at 10 of its schools. A one-year contract agreement was just signed to expand services to the 75,000-student district, spokeswoman Susan Bedi said. She said the district will pay \$2.15 per student for the program.

TeleParent is used at schools in eight states, including Texas, Alabama and Utah. Statewide, the program is used as a trial run or with full implementation at 600 schools in 37 school districts.

Visalia district leaders said that while TeleParent could increase parental involvement, there is no guarantee the program would continue after the six-month pilot ends.

"Right now, we're looking at it as a wait-and-see approach," Superintendent Stan Carrizosa said.

But Redwood staffers still are excited about the new tool, Oto said.

One advantage of the program, he said, is students wouldn't be responsible for relaying important school information to parents.

"It puts kids in a tough situation when they have to do that kind of interpreting for the family," Oto said.

The reporter can be reached at svang@fresnobee.com or (559) 622-2409.

Search Archives, or

Search News

SEARCH

[News](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Life](#) [Entertainment](#) [Calendar](#) [Blogs](#) [Opinion](#) [Obits](#) [Classifieds](#) [Cars](#) [Homes](#) [Jobs](#) [Shopping](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Site Map](#) | [RSS](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Advertise](#)

REAL cities
VISIT OTHER REAL CITIES SITES

THE McCLATCHY COMPANY
Since 1857

[FresnoBee.com](#) | [ClovisIndependent.com](#) | [VidaEnElValle.com](#) | [SierraStar.com](#) | [FresnoFamous.com](#) | [Get Out](#)
© Copyright 2007 The Fresno Bee | [Help](#) | [Your Privacy](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Child Protection](#)