

Using AlertNow to Communicate and Grow



A pair of private Montessori schools in New Jersey wanted to improve communications with parents, along with developing opportunities to fund expansion. Having utilized a variety of conventional communication tools and services, the school leaders decided to investigate a mass notification service for streamlining communication with parents. With a robust feature set and an online parent portal, AlertNow enables school administrators to communicate directly with their families, supporting efforts to maintain current operations and sharing plans for growth.

Challenge:
Improve Parent Communication While Developing Expansion Funding

The Raritan Valley Montessori Academy in Bridgewater, N.J., and the Cherry Blossom Montessori School in Flagtown, N.J., serve approximately 90 students each. In an effort to increase parental involvement, these private schools identified a need to keep parents better informed about upcoming events and activities through increased communication. The organization’s leaders also wanted to use targeted, strategic messages for effectively developing sources of expansion funding by sharing their vision with parents.

Solution:
Replace Conventional Communication Tools with AlertNow

School leaders turned to AlertNow, a service of Blackboard Connect, to overcome challenges and foster a better relationship with parents through regular, routine outreach. Using the AlertNow service has provided many opportunities for the schools to engage with parents. “Now that we have AlertNow, we’re implementing a new



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calling group called “Reminders,” said Tina Paccione, Director of Development for Raritan Valley and Cherry Blossom. “Anyone who wants to be reminded about items, such as due dates for lunch balances, deadlines for field trip permission slips, and upcoming meetings, can opt in to receive a reminder call. Using AlertNow Access, parents can pick and choose the phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and mobile numbers where they want to receive calls, e-mails, and text messages.”

Result:

Improved Parental Communications and Involvement

As private schools, Raritan Valley and Cherry Blossom depend on consistent enrollment to maintain services. “The challenge of many private schools at this time is enrollment,” said Paccione. “And of course, we always want to make sure our classrooms and our students have what they need.”

Keeping parents involved in the day-to-day activities of the schools is a key to success according to school officials. “Parent communication is a big challenge. Getting them to read, getting them to know what is happening on campus, getting them involved in their children’s school even though they are working full-time can be difficult,” said Paccione. “They want to know how can they become a part of their child’s education, how can they make a difference, and how can they feel a part of something that they aren’t there for every day. Volunteerism is more of a challenge because some of the parents have to go back to work or have a bit less time or they’re overstretched. Keeping them and maintaining them, maintaining that excitement, and keeping them drawn into the school has been challenging.”

Raritan Valley and Cherry Blossom see opportunity in parental involvement. “Connection and parental involvement are huge opportunities for us,” said Paccione. “Taking our program and expanding it to a new building and a bigger facility are dreams that we have. At this point, we have to get fundraising going. Right now, the mindset of our parents is that ‘we pay tuition, why do we need to raise money?’ It’s a large hurdle for us to overcome.” With the help of AlertNow, administrators can easily communicate their vision to parents and provide examples to support their development needs.

The AlertNow online parental portal, Access, allows parents at both schools to control how they receive information. “We’re starting to get feedback, such as ‘Oh, great! I get to manage my own account,’ or ‘I get to manage the way I get the information,’” said Paccione. “We’re working to reach our parents

and encourage them to sign in to Access, which allows them to tell us how they prefer to receive messages from our schools.” They can also listen to missed messages and send a message back to the school through the Access portal.

Implementing AlertNow in the schools has been smooth and seamless as traditional communication processes are updated with the utilization of the mass notification system. In addition to rich features and functionality, AlertNow provides superior customer service throughout the implementation process and beyond. “Nothing can take away the 24-hour support, the live answering, the live feedback, said Paccione. “When I say that we’re taken care of, I know without a doubt that whatever it is we need, someone will find an answer, and if they don’t know, they will go to someone else who finds the answer and gets back to us. We’ve had a few questions that I don’t know if anyone has ever asked before. I felt good knowing that if something wasn’t planned for, or had never been asked before, that it could be implemented based on the questions I had. There’s so much power in partnering with somebody who accepts that and who says ‘That’s probably something we can do.’ It was never, ‘No, we don’t do that.’ Working with AlertNow is a wide open partnership, as I view it.”

“During the entire implementation process, I felt taken care of. No matter what else happens, nothing can replace that feeling.”

Tina Paccione
Director of Development
Raritan Valley Montessori Academy and
Cherry Blossom Montessori School

