

Press Release
January 14, 2008
Sevier County School System
Dr. Jack A. Parton, Director of Schools
Dr. Debra A. Cline, Media Spokesperson

The Sevier County School System has an emergency message system in place called PARENTLINK which is ready for use! This is good news for parents, students, and school employees as we plan for those difficult mornings with unexpected school closures caused by inclement weather. When unexpected school closures occur, a recorded message will be made by telephone to all emergency contact numbers listed for students during the school registration process in August, 2007.

School closure announcements will continue through area media outlets (radio, news websites, and television stations). Parents and students will want to listen to these sources for information. PARENTLINK will be used only for sudden closures or emergency announcements during the school day and for unexpected late evening/early morning closure announcements. For example, if a school closing is announced on the 6:00 p.m. news of area television stations, it will not be necessary for the district to use the emergency messaging phone system.

At the present time, PARENTLINK announcements will be between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. This will keep families from having a 7:00 a.m. phone call announcing school closure when they already have the information. PARENTLINK will attempt to contact each designated number up to six times. If an answering machine activates, PARENTLINK will leave a message, and no further contacts will be attempted. If a parent does not want a number called through PARENTLINK or if the parent wishes to add a phone number, he or she will simply contact the school where the child is enrolled and request that a number be deleted from or added to the student's emergency contact information.

Use of the phone emergency messaging service is simply an attempt by the Sevier County School District to make announcements in a more direct fashion when closings are so unexpected that students and parents may not realize a media announcement is likely. Be reminded that announcements about school closures are also posted on the school district's website at www.sevier.org.

Director of Schools Jack Parton states, "We are excited about the potential that this messaging service has for enhancing communications between the school district and families in emergency school closing situations. This process should be very helpful to parents when an unexpected weather related closure occurs or when events such as a power failure or lack of water service happen at individual schools which change the normal school schedule. We realize that we will need to work through some minor issues when we use the messaging service for the first time. However, in the long run, the service should be an asset to students, parents, and employees."