



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Henrico County

Program Title: SchoolMessenger: Staff and Parent Communication

Program Category: Communications (Public Relations)

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Cristol Klevinsky

Title: Management Specialist

Department: County Manager's Office

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: John A. Vithoukas

Title: County Manager

Signature: 

## **Short Overview**

SchoolMessenger School Notification is a product of Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) that assists the school division with simplifying communication to parents and staff members. It combines a notification system, a mobile application and Web-based content management with an easy-to-use interface.

It provides an efficient, automated way to communicate things like student absences, late openings, snow days, urgent calls to parents about campus issues and general news.

Product users can create customized recipient lists, define call types, generate computer-messages or record personal messages. They can designate what method (call or email) will be used for sending the communication. SchoolMessenger features analytics-reports that can be emailed to the user or generated manually.

To summarize, this system is reliable, easy to use and provides the flexibility to effectively communicate with our community. It's proven capable of successfully delivering high volumes of calls or messages efficiently with reliability and speed.

## **The Problem/Challenge/Situation**

Our division – as well as our 72 individual schools – needed a quick, efficient, automated way to communicate messages about student absences, late openings, snow days, urgent calls to parents about campus issues and general news. There was a time that messages to the parent/guardian of our students and even our staff was delivered home through a memorandum via the student backpack, U.S. Mail or if urgent in nature, through the local media. With the

desire for a more automated delivery, we needed a way to relay messages through computer generated calls, emails and text messages.

### **How the Program Was Carried Out**

SchoolMessenger is a product that assists the school division with simplifying staff and parent communications. It combines a notification system, a mobile application and Web-based content management with an easy-to-use interface.

School notifications can cover students, parent/guardian and even staff. The messages can include information regarding school emergency alerts, as well as attendance and lunch balance notifications. Communications can be sent through voice, text, email, social media, web and push notifications. The school system can customize it to meet their needs.

Users can create and store templates for repeat messages. Districts can customize email templates to include their logo or custom statements to share with their parent/guardian or staff communities.

- Our division office uses this product to communicate new processes, changes to school or after school activities, school closings or emergency/critical notifications.
- Our school principals use this program to send out weekly updates to parents about the things happening within the school for the upcoming week. This replaces a paper newsletter and saves work effort and dollars on paper and mailings.
- Our school nutrition office has a feed of all students with a negative balance and a call and email goes home every Sunday to allow parent/guardian to update the student's lunch account to ensure they have enough money for school breakfast and lunch or they bring their lunch.

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- Our school transportation office uses this product to notify parents of a late bus and/or a change in the bus schedule.

We are currently working on a review of other manual efforts to see if SchoolMessenger could be a potential replacement to those paper communications. For example, we have a process now for all of the Specialty Center Applicants (high school centers) where acceptance packets are handled through the mail. We would like to share the acceptance packets with the parent/guardian and student through a link that is emailed home. Parents would then be given a link to the online documentation tool to review and complete the online packet.

#### Objectives:

- Deliver messages quickly and easily
- Create custom recipient lists
- Create custom broadcasts
- Design custom message types (non-emergency, emergency, attendance, et al)
- Customize delivery method (call, email, text)
- Create reports

#### Time frame for development and implementation:

- Summer
  - Set up administrative users by school using imported PowerSchool data from human resources department
  - Trained users
  - Communications began in early August
- Ongoing maintenance:

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- Update data for school administrative changes
- Train any new users
- Clientele:
  - Staff
  - Parents
  - Students

County's role in implementation:

Henrico County Public Schools provided resources to assist with the product's adoption, including a project manager, two lead implementation specialists and a database administrator.

Technology implementation included the following products:

- SchoolMessenger website customized for HCPS  
<https://asp.schoolmessenger.com/henrico/index.php>

#### **Financing and Staffing Cost**

Annual cost: \$64,990

Operating costs: none, although the implementation and training required some HCPS staff resources.

HCPS staff time required to implement program:

Implementation:

- HCPS Department of Operational Technology implementation team: 100 hours

- Project manager: 10 hours
- Two lead implementation specialists: 25 hours
- Database administrator: 40 hours

Support and maintenance:

- Support for training and maintenance: 10 hours per month
- Database administrator: 20 hours per year

### **Program Results**

SchoolMessenger allows our users to deliver messages quickly and easily through an intuitive interface using just a few clicks. Users have the ability to send messages by computer, phone call-in or a mobile app. Because users can create custom recipient lists, messages can be targeted to specific groups of parents or staff. This makes communication more effective and reduces unwanted notifications to recipients.

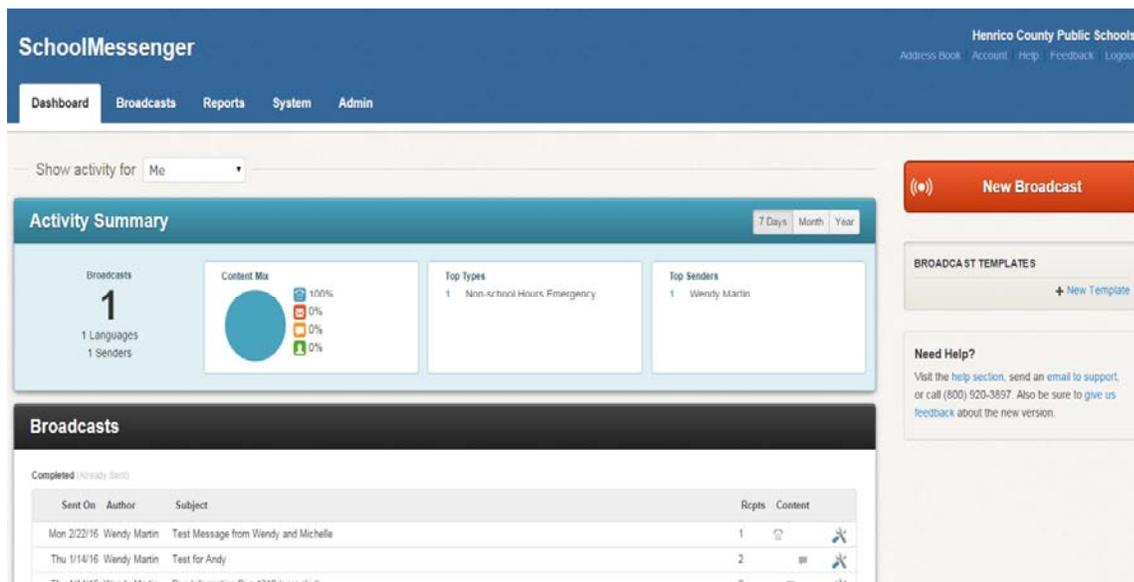
Messages or broadcasts can be customized and delivered through a phone call or via email. We have also created a plan to begin text messaging in 2016. The system offers senders the option to record a message in their own voice or to type the message and select a computer-created male or female voice to deliver the message. Messages can be labeled with a particular message type, differentiating critical messages from more general communications. Users can decide whether they want to receive analytics reports about their messages via email or export reports using the interface. Call reports show whether or not a person or a machine answered the call, and email reports show whether an email message was read, skimmed or deleted.

### Brief Summary

SchoolMessenger has become a critical part of Henrico Schools’ ability to efficiently deliver messages to staff and parents, both at the level of our 72 schools and division wide. SchoolMessenger lets us reach out to staff and parents directly without having to rely on the media. It significantly increases the confidence that our stakeholders are receiving crucial communications.

### Supplemental Materials

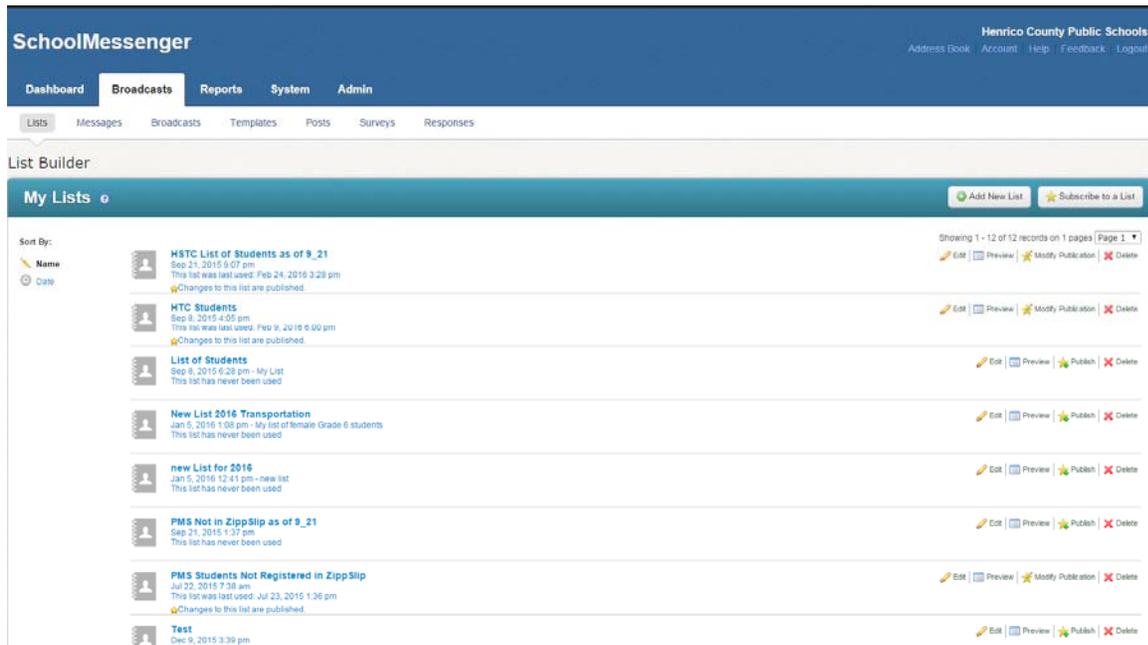
A test-user sample of the SchoolMessenger dashboard: this is the first page a user sees upon login. The dashboard summarizes messages sent using a particular user name. Users have four or five menus available, depending on their role and assigned rights.



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The SchoolMessenger custom lists feature:



Also available are various templates for creating analytics reports:

