

Request for Proposals

For Mass Communication Platform
For
Allentown School District

**Proposals Due
July 22, 2022, by 12:00 p.m.**

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Mass Communication Platform

Allentown School District (ASD)

Allentown School District (“the District”) is inviting proposals from qualified service providers to provide a mass communication and notification platform that can seamlessly connect the district to parents & guardians, teachers, students, and staff.

The district’s objective of this RFP is to find a unified solution that meets the needs of the various buildings and departments. Replacing and streamlining multiple communications platforms with one integrated system will be more efficient. An easy-to-implement, multi-purpose unified system also holds the promise of a more engaged relationship between schools and their families, where everyone works together to accelerate student achievement.

The selected solution provider will have a track record in service delivery, focused on improving equity, building positive relationships between school and home, and a grounding in products and services based in research.

This RFP is designed to provide interested parties with sufficient information to submit qualified proposals in which the district can determine which solution(s) to consider for implementation.

All proposals need to be sent electronically in PDF format by email with the subject line: *Mass Communications Platform RFP Submission* to the following: RFP@allentownsd.org

Proposals must be received no later than July 22, 2022, by 12:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time. The District is not liable for any cost incurred by any person or firm responding to the RFP.

Questions prior to the submittal of the RFP are to be directed, via email, to:

Melissa Reese
Communications Manager
RFP@allentownsd.org

Use the subject line: *Mass Communications RFP Questions*

Melissa Reese is the only contact for this project. Contacting other administrators, School Board Members, or staff members as part of this process is not acceptable and is grounds for potential elimination from consideration. All questions must be submitted via email.

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GENERAL RFP TERMS AND CONDITIONS

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Allentown School District (ASD) strives to be a leader in school district communications, providing meaningful two-way communication streams with all stakeholders.

The scope of services required also entails providing the district with a mass communication and notification system that can be used in the event of an emergency, but also allow for routine communication between the district, schools, and individual teachers to families.

Presently, different stakeholder groups have their own preferred method of communicating with staff and students' families. Teachers, principals, and the district utilizes a variety and combination of free and paid systems. This often results in conflicting priorities, and a coherent approach to how messages are sent or who sends them, leaving families with questions and concerns about what they do not know.

DISTRICT DATA OVERVIEW

Description	Data Point
School Buildings + Program Sites	25
Staff	2200
Student Count	16,600
Student Information System	Sapphire

RFP REQUIREMENTS

Administrative Capabilities

- Intuitive user interface
- Secure user access
- Customizable (granular) user access levels to allow for controlled levels of access for district users
 - i.e., teachers and coaches only have access to their students, admins only their building, etc.

Functional Capabilities

Overall System

- Voice, Email, and communications can be managed within the selected platform

- Ability for the district/building leaders to be able to manage sending/receiving messages from a computer and/or mobile device
 - Administrative mobile application preferred
- Scheduled (advanced) messaging
 - Scheduled messages must be editable at any time prior to sending
- Prepopulated recipient groups that are
 - Automatically updated through the SIS
 - Easy to use and update when student information
- Multi-language interface capabilities
 - Reliable auto-translation features
- Ability to connect to district or school social media platforms (ex - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) for further sharing of information

Voice Calls

- Voice communications should be sent from pre-determined phone number (NO USE OF PERSONAL PHONE NUMBERS)

Email Messages

- Mobile-friendly email format
- Messages can include images, attachments, and forms
- Templates for newsletters / branded communications from the district and/or buildings

SMS/Text Messages

- SMS communications should be sent from pre-determined phone number (NO USE OF PERSONAL PHONE NUMBERS)
 - IDEALLY – each site would have its own SMS “phone number” so families could identify the message as being from the district
 - Two-way “texting” capabilities
 - Generous or no character limit for SMS communications
- Email Messages
 - Mobile-friendly email format
 - Messages can include images, attachments, and forms

Audience interaction

- Mobile application or mobile-friendly portal for students, parents, and families to:

- Access and view all messages from their child’s teacher, school, and the district in one place
- Manage:
 - Personal Contact information
 - Communication preferences
 - Language preferences

Support and Training

- Provide a timeline for training and onboarding prior to the start of the 2022-2023 SY
- Provide or facilitate training to ASD staff at all levels (teachers, staff, administrators and/or families)
- Easy to access and understand “Help” database” / training videos
- Live technical support
- Templates that allow schools / the district to create branded communication newsletters, etc.
- User intuitive and mobile-friendly

EVALUATION CRITERIA

For district administrators and communications staff:

1. Does the tool offer one unified platform for all school-to-home messaging?
2. Does it involve all stakeholder groups from district administrators to building leaders/ teachers and parents?
3. Do the functions work together seamlessly?
4. Does it offer voice, text, app, and email communication tools?
5. Does it support equity by providing two-way instant translation and language preferences?
6. Does the platform embed interactive services, such as forms, conferences, attendance records, and progress reports?
7. Does it provide complete administrative oversight, security, and reporting?
8. Does it consolidate all parent contact information and preferences—voice, email, text, and app—into one login for contact data management, verification, and updates?
9. Can the district send emergency alerts to all contacts simultaneously?
Will all communication maintain consistent district branding?
10. Does the solution provide insight into how individual schools are communicating to stakeholders?
11. Does it report metrics on parent response and engagement?
12. Does it provide information on who is not receiving messages so contact information errors can be fixed?

13. Does it streamline the number of communication solutions the district has to manage and support?

For parents/guardians

1. Will parents/guardians be notified of updates only relevant to their child?
2. Are the platform functions easy to navigate?
3. Does it allow parents/guardians to select their preferred mode and frequency of communication?
4. Are real-time translations available for families who don't speak English?
5. Does the platform allow parents/guardians to securely verify their preferred contact details and easily update their school information if needed?
6. Does the platform also incorporate a web-based online presence, such as a website where people can engage with/manage the system, instead of just the mobile friendly end?

For Principals

1. Does the platform allow building administrators to address all stakeholders?
2. Does it include internal communication so the principal can communicate directly with various staff groups?
3. Can school administrators monitor and oversee communications coming from the district, school, teachers, and parents?
4. Can administrators delegate tasks by assigning special permissions?
5. Does it provide teachers / the school with accurate contact information by class, student, and grade that is automatically maintained through a connection with the SIS?

For teachers:

1. Does the solution provide classroom communication for teachers?
2. Will it free up teachers' time in their day-to-day schedule?
3. Will it make communications-based tasks, such as asking for classroom supplies and organizing parent-teacher conferences, easier?
4. Will teachers be able to communicate with families about classroom needs, particularly to parents who do not understand English?

For students:

1. Does the platform provide secure communications between students and teacher?
2. Does it allow students to receive push communications, text messages, emails, and alerts?
3. Can teachers reach students directly with messages or posts?
4. Can students engage with communications by commenting on posts?

5. Does the platform allow the creation of custom student groups – for example student-athletes, after-school clubs or groups, or students who ride a specific bus?
6. Can coaches create custom lists or student-athletes to communicate directly with their teams?

For data privacy and security:

1. Does the platform streamline IT support?
2. Does it offer Single Sign On Google Workspace, Microsoft Azure, and/or ADFS Based SSO (SAML) Enterprise Integration capabilities?
3. Does it reduce time-wasting manual account merges and password resets?
4. Does it adhere to student privacy principles and education privacy agreements?
5. Does the platform allow “SFTP” style (such as CSV or XLS) imports from SIS currently in use in ASD (Sapphire)?

SCORING

Awarding of this proposal will be based on a combined score consisting of ratings on all RFP requirements, evaluation criteria and total cost of services, all parts being equal, and nothing weighted. All proposals must include a proposed cost to complete each service involved in the support for Mass Communications / Notifications. Costs should be quoted as one-time or non-recurring costs (NRC) or monthly recurring costs (MRC) and include an explanation of the cost. Each of the requirements and criteria listed in this RFP will be scored individually.

SCHEDULE

2022-2023 School Year

First Teacher Day: August 22, 2022

First Student Day: August 29, 2022

Last Student Day: June 7, 2023

Platform Ready Date: August 8, 2022

Staff Training Dates: Week of August 22, 2022

SUBMISSION

- Proposals must be submitted by 12:00pm (EST) on July 22, 2022.
- All proposals need to be sent electronically in PDF format by email to RFP@allentownsd.org.
- Use the subject line: *Mass Communications RFP Submission*