



From the Cabinet

By Strategy and Innovation Officer Bill Westrick

Mass Communication System Update

For more than a decade, Fargo Public Schools has utilized the same mass communication system to update parents, students, and staff about important information like weather related school closings and other school announcements. Two years ago, this system was purchased by a new vendor, and the quality of service started slipping. We have worked with this vendor to try and give them time to improve their performance, but unfortunately, the issues we have been working around remain. Because of this, we have ended our relationship with the Mass Notification system and over the summer will be converting to a new system, BrightArrow Mass Communication.

BrightArrow brings us some immediate improvements over the previous system. It will not disable cell phone numbers when someone switches their phone from one service provider to another. It actively works with the largest email providers like Google and Microsoft to ensure that messages sent from the BrightArrow platform are not categorized as spam. It will not send duplicate messages for no discernable reason. And it will not block messages if a parent or staff member has registered themselves on the National “Do not call” registry (it will respect instead the choices people make within the platform).

BrightArrow integrates directly with PowerSchool, making it easier for schools to send messages to parents or students based on data within that system. BrightArrow also features a two-way texting option, which will allow schools to use the platform for one-to-one SMS messaging with parents, if that is their communication method of choice.

For our parents, student’s and staff, text messaging will be the biggest change associated with this new system. When you first receive a text message from BrightArrow, the system will send you the message along with a request to have you “opt-in” to receiving text messages from the system. IT WILL BE IMPORTANT that you respond with a Y (yes) to continue receiving text messages. Not responding or selecting N (no) as a reply will block your phone from receiving future texts, and leave you wondering on the next snow day why you didn’t receive a text message.

Efficient and effective communication with parents, students, and staff is critical to the day-to-day operations of Fargo Schools. Changing communication platforms is not a decision to take lightly. By switching our communication platform to BrightArrow, we will be ensuring a high level of service with minimal disruption, and an improvement over the current system. BrightArrow is currently being piloted at a few schools this spring, and will become the district platform for mass communication starting with the 2024-25 school year.

