



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DISTRICT 202 “CONNECT-ED” SYSTEM

Connect-ED is a powerful, effective and efficient communications tool that lets District 202 share all manner of district and building-level information through recorded telephone messages and e-mails.

Here are some of the most commonly asked questions about the Connect-ED system:

Q: What does Connect-ED do?

A: Connect-ED is a computerized “phone tree” system capable of sending messages to tens of thousands of phone numbers and e-mail addresses in minutes. Calls can be sorted by gender, building, grade, language, students/staff members, and special user groups.

Q: Where does Connect-ED’s data come from?

A: Connect-ED uses the district’s student/staff member data base as its data base. This is why it is essential that parents and staff members notify their school(s) and/or the Administration and Personnel department when they change phone numbers. If the information is wrong in the data base, it will be wrong in Connect-ED.

Q: Will Connect-ED call me at work?

A: Only in the case of emergencies, unless you have designated your work number as your “primary” phone number. Connect-ED makes two kinds of calls:

- **Non-emergency calls** go only to the primary number designated in the student/staff member data base. This is almost always the home number, or whatever number the family uses as its “main” contact number.

- **Emergency calls** go to every number and e-mail address in the student/staff member data base. This can be up to six numbers and two e-mail addresses per student. These numbers can include work, cell phones, alternate numbers, etc. at the family's discretion.

***The staff member data base includes only one number for staff members. This can be home or cell.

Q: What is considered an “emergency”?

A: For District 202, an “emergency” is anything that significantly affects normal school operations during the school day -- for example, a school evacuation that requires sending students home early, or a major traffic issue that significantly delays students getting home on time.

Both would be considered “emergencies,” because many parents are at work during the school day, may have to make alternate arrangements because of the change in school schedule, etc.

Such incidents would justify District 202 placing an “emergency” Connect-ED call to all phone numbers and e-mail addresses in the system.

Q: Is bad weather considered an emergency?

A: Not usually. Typical Midwestern weather that happens before school starts is not considered an emergency. For snow, for example, the district makes a “non-emergency” call by 5 a.m. to the “primary” phone number and e-mail address for each student/staff member.

However, if bad weather occurs and becomes bad enough during the school day to impact normal school operations, the district would make an “emergency” call to all phone numbers and e-mail addresses in the system.

Q: We use a cell phone as our home phone. Can I choose to have a cell phone as my “primary” number?

A: Yes. Many families are using cell phones now as their home phones. Connect-ED does not know the difference. It calls whatever number is shown in the data base as the “primary” phone number.

Q: My spouse and I are divorced, and we share custody of the children. Can Connect-ED call both of our home numbers for non-emergency purposes?

A: No. The system is set up to call only one primary number for non-emergencies.

Q: How do I change my/our family's phone number(s)?

A: Students/families: Call your child's school with new phone numbers and other personal information, or submit changes in writing as appropriate, as soon as possible, so that the changes can be made in the student data base.

***Parents/guardians with more than one child in District 202 do not necessarily need to call each of their children's schools. The student data base "links" and automatically updates information for all children in a family.

Staff members: call or e-mail the Administration and Personnel or the Community Relations departments to update your personal contact information.

Connect-ED updates several times a week. All new information entered in the student/staff member data base will be captured when the system is updated.

Q: Can I have my phone number removed from the Connect-ED service?

A: Yes. At the request of a parent/guardian or staff member, any phone number can be "blocked" from Connect-ED, and still remain in the student/staff member data base for other purposes not related to Connect-ED.

A legal waiver must be completed to block a phone number from Connect-ED. Please contact Director of Community Relations Tom Hernandez for more information.

****District 202 strongly discourages parents and staff members from blocking phone number(s) from Connect-ED because Connect-ED is used to convey so much important information.*

Q: Are there guidelines/limits as to the kind of information that should be sent through Connect-ED?

A: Connect-ED should be used thoughtfully and judiciously, so as to not “water down” its value by overusing the system.

However, District 202 intends to use Connect-ED proactively and aggressively to maximize communications. Connect-ED also saves taxpayers money that would otherwise be spent writing and mailing letters, and printing and sending fliers home with students.

In 2007-2008, District 202 made about 1,000 Connect-ED phone calls. That’s 1,000 “connections” with our families and staff members that did not require the extra expense of paper.

Q: Does Connect-ED replace any of the district’s other means of communication?

A: No. If you expect, but do not receive a Connect-ED call, you should still check the District 202 web site (www.learningcommunity202.org), listen to local and regional radio stations and watch the Chicago television stations for District 202 information.

Q: Sometimes the Connect-ED call seems to “skip”, or stop and start, or not start at all. Is the system broken?

A: No. Connect-ED uses sophisticated, sensitive “voice recognition” software that listens for a human voice to answer the call.

Sometimes the computer hears background noises – pets, children, or the television, for example. The computer thinks it has heard another greeting, gets “confused” and then re-starts the message.

This happens rarely. Yet it points up the importance of also including your e-mail address in the student data base, so that you can also receive and see the text of each call.