Re-Imagining the After-School Dismissal Process

Parents and schools generally use note-based communications to manage the after-school dismissal process. With parents and schools busier than ever, and student schedules growing more complex every year, it's time to re-think this approach and seek out a better solution. Recent technological advances in mobile communication, cloud computing and web application design make it possible to provide simple, effective tools to improve the after-school dismissal process. By taking advantage of these tools, schools can save valuable time, improve parent satisfaction, and most importantly, be sure that students safely reach their after-school destinations.

Note-Based Communication – Isn't It Time For a Change?

For over 100 years parents and schools have relied on note-based communications to manage the after-school dismissal process. When a student has a change to their default after-school transportation plan a parent writes a note to the student, the student delivers the note to the school and the school combines this information with standard transportation plans so that students are sent to the correct bus line, car line, etc., after school. This process is not only inconvenient for parents, it can be extremely hectic and time-consuming for school office staff. Notes must be manually gathered and compiled into lists for teachers and phones ring with last minute changes, adding to the chaos.

> The average school processes more than 15,000 dismissal plan changes every year! Manually managing this process can take more than 45 days of a school secretary's time each year.

Parents are busier than ever and need convenient ways to communicate with their school about matters pertaining to their children, such as after-school dismissal plan changes. Schools are constantly asked to do more with less, even as the complexity of after-school dismissal increases. Students are involved in more activities than ever and the number and frequency of plan changes is only accelerating

It's Not Just About Convenience

While convenience, efficiency, and time-savings are compelling reasons to explore alternatives to the note, by far the most important consideration is student safety. It seems that not a week goes by without the media reporting a mishap in a child's after-school transportation. Notes are lost, forgotten, or there are mix-ups in handling. Children end up on the wrong bus, brought home when they should be sent somewhere else, or even sent home with the wrong person. Our school secretaries do a heroic job day after day to manage this process and keep children safe, but we are asking them to deal with a 21st century challenge using 19th century tools.

Worse yet, sometimes other, less desirable solutions will be tried in an attempt to solve the problem. Schools may prohibit dismissal plan changes completely, release students to fend for themselves at the end of the school day, or even allow direct texting of plan changes from parents to teachers. These are clearly not appropriate solutions, but they demonstrate that a problem exists. We just need a better approach.

We Have the Technology

The good news is the technology exists to solve the after-school dismissal challenge. With advances in mobile communications, cloud-based computing platforms, and web user interface design focused on simple, highly usable applications, it is now possible to provide robust, secure, and simple systems to make dismissal plan changes easier and safer for both parents and schools.

Many parents now carry a smartphone or use a personal computer and routinely use apps to simplify day-to-day tasks. They have come to expect that they can take advantage of these tools to make life easier, whether making reservations at a restaurant, checking airline flight statuses, or arranging car transportation. They would like to have this same convenience when communicating with their school on matters pertaining to their children, such as dismissal plan changes.

Schools also take advantage of technology for many aspects of their educational mission. Registration systems streamline annual student registration, school lunch systems manage student funds and purchases, and notification systems alert parents of late-start days. Wise application of appropriate technology solutions can allow schools to focus on their true mission – providing excellent education opportunities for students.
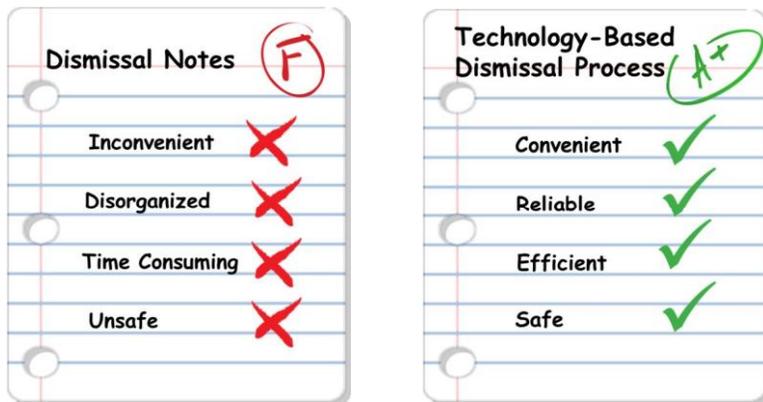
By utilizing a technology-based approach to managing after-school dismissals, schools can improve efficiency and make the best use of their limited resources while providing parents with a convenient tool and peace of mind.

Streamlined After-School Dismissal

In the end it comes down to this. We've relied on notes hand-delivered by children for over 100 years to relay important information between parents and schools. Isn't it time for a change? The technology now exists to revolutionize the process of after-school dismissals and schools should explore these new options. Embracing a technology solution to this problem offers many benefits, including better use of time and resources for schools, improved parent satisfaction and, most importantly, a safer, more reliable way to make sure kids get where they need to be after school.

About PickUp Patrol

PickUp Patrol is a leading provider of parent-school communication solutions. The company's unique, cloud-based platform provides simple, effective tools for parents and schools to coordinate and communicate regarding their students. PickUp Patrol simplifies after-school dismissal process, providing a better, safer way to get kids home from school. The company is headquartered in Mont Vernon, NH. For more information, visit the PickUp Patrol website at www.pickuppatrol.net.

Streamlining School Dismissals
No notes. No phone calls. No problem.
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