

Enhancing Data Accuracy and Streamlining Attendance Reporting

NIAGARA CATHOLIC'S SUCCESS WITH POWERSCHOOL SCHOOLMESSENGER SAFEARRIVAL



Improving Attendance Management, Enhancing Student Safety With SchoolMessenger SafeArrival



22,000
Students



61
Schools



3,000
Staff

Ted Farrell, Superintendent of Education for the Niagara Catholic District School Board in Ontario, Canada, recalled a day when he was still a high school principal:

"We had a student walk in the front door at 8 a.m., walk through the long hallway of our high school and leave out the back door. The first period teacher didn't get attendance done. The second period teacher got it done late. It was a busy day and by the time the school secretary called the student's home and left a message, it was noon. The parent didn't find out that her child wasn't in school until almost 4 p.m."

This example illustrates the attendance reporting and tracking challenge that Niagara Catholic District School Board wanted to resolve when it turned to PowerSchool SchoolMessenger SafeArrival.

SchoolMessenger SafeArrival is the student attendance management tool built to help schools save time and money on attendance reporting and follow-up while enhancing student safety.

AT A GLANCE



Challenges

- Inadequate Attendance Reporting
- Time-Consuming Manual Processes
- Communication Gaps with Parents



Solution

- [PowerSchool SchoolMessenger SafeArrival](#)



Results

- 36% reduction in the time taken before the first call-out for unreported absences
- 43% improvement in the speed of accounting for all students
- More accurate and comprehensive data collected
- Decrease in late student arrivals
- Notable time savings for school secretaries

When schools add the SchoolMessenger SafeArrival capabilities to the SchoolMessenger Communicate notification service and the SchoolMessenger mobile and web apps, parents have two powerful ways to communicate with schools about a child's attendance. Parents or guardians can either notify the school in advance about an upcoming absence or rapidly respond to give a reason for an absence after the fact. In both scenarios, parents can send attendance alerts to schools for all their children and provide details about each absence.

The Niagara Catholic District School Board serves 22,000 students from 49 elementary and eight secondary schools, and four continuing education sites, with approximately 3,000 staff.

Farrell said, "Attendance is extremely important and directly affects student achievement. Students learn best when they are in school. Home and school have to work together to ensure that students are there. It is incumbent on the school to report promptly when a student isn't at school."

Yet, with a manual system and 5-10 percent of absences unreported by parents, school secretaries were spending countless hours making—often repeated—calls to parents.

"We turned to SchoolMessenger SafeArrival for a convenient way for parents to report absences and, in the process, created more time for school secretaries who were spending up to three-quarters of their day making calls to home," he added. "Now we are reporting more promptly and have improved our parent communication."

Continuous Communication and Training: Key to Successful Implementation

The team at Niagara Catholic District School Board field tested SchoolMessenger SafeArrival in two elementary and two middle schools during late spring and, based on that experience, rolled it out district-wide the following fall.

Key to the success of that implementation was effective communication and training for school staff and reculturing parents who were used to sending in handwritten notes or calling absences in to the school.

The Board communicated with parents in many ways. Letters were sent home, and information was posted on the Board web site. Individual schools were encouraged to publish information about SchoolMessenger SafeArrival in their newsletters.

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TED FARRELL

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Niagara Catholic District School Board

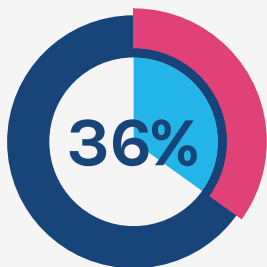
Families were provided with small business cards with the SchoolMessenger SafeArrival information on them for placing on their fridge or keeping in their wallets. Direct links to the app were also sent out to all parents via email as well as information about where to find SchoolMessenger SafeArrival on the App Store for iOS devices, on Google Play for Android devices, and on the web portal.

Communication with staff and faculty was carefully planned as well. To meet its overall goal of more efficient attendance and absence management, the Board also moved to an online attendance system.

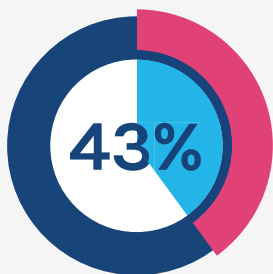
Diane van der Veldt, the Board's Coordinator of Student Information Systems, led the SchoolMessenger SafeArrival training during implementation and continues to on an ongoing basis.

She said, "I see the secretaries two or three times a year and go over SchoolMessenger SafeArrival, and cover anything new that might help them get those calls in as

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quickly as they can. It is important that anyone who takes calls from parents in the school understands how it works."

Farrell said, "We worked hard to overcome the perception among the school secretaries that we were trying to reduce their hours or replace them. Our goal was for us to be able to contact the parents in a timelier manner and for school secretaries to have more time to do other things."

He added, "We want unreported absentee calls to go out from the elementary schools in the first 20 minutes and from the high schools in the first 30 minutes."

With SchoolMessenger SafeArrival, we have the data to know if a school isn't following up on their attendance and can provide support."

Absences Are Resolved More Quickly, Communication With Families Improved

Niagara Catholic quickly resolved daily absences to boost student safety within 6 months of using SchoolMessenger SafeArrival. Niagara Catholic District School Board realized a 36 percent reduction in time before the first parent notification (reduced from 61 minutes to 39 minutes). There was a 43 percent improvement in speed of accounting for all students (down from 120 minutes).

In evaluations by other schools and districts, SchoolMessenger SafeArrival has resulted in an average time savings of 15-30 minutes per day for a smaller school, and 45-60 minutes per day for a larger school.

The Board has also seen a decrease in late students, said van der Veldt. "Parents just don't want to get that call."

John Crocco, the Board's Director of Education and Secretary/Treasurer, said that SchoolMessenger SafeArrival has also helped manage weather events, "We don't get a lot of snow days, but we do get days when bus transportation is cancelled and 80 percent of students don't report to school. The calls checking on those students that used to go out manually can now go out within five minutes with SchoolMessenger SafeArrival."

Finally, he added, "The use of SchoolMessenger SafeArrival has also allowed us to clean up our data. We've convinced parents of the need to provide their email addresses and cell phone numbers so that they can receive prompt notifications from us at home, mobile or email contacts. It has significantly improved our overall communications with families."

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JOHN CROCCO

Director of Education and Secretary/Treasurer
Niagara Catholic District School Board

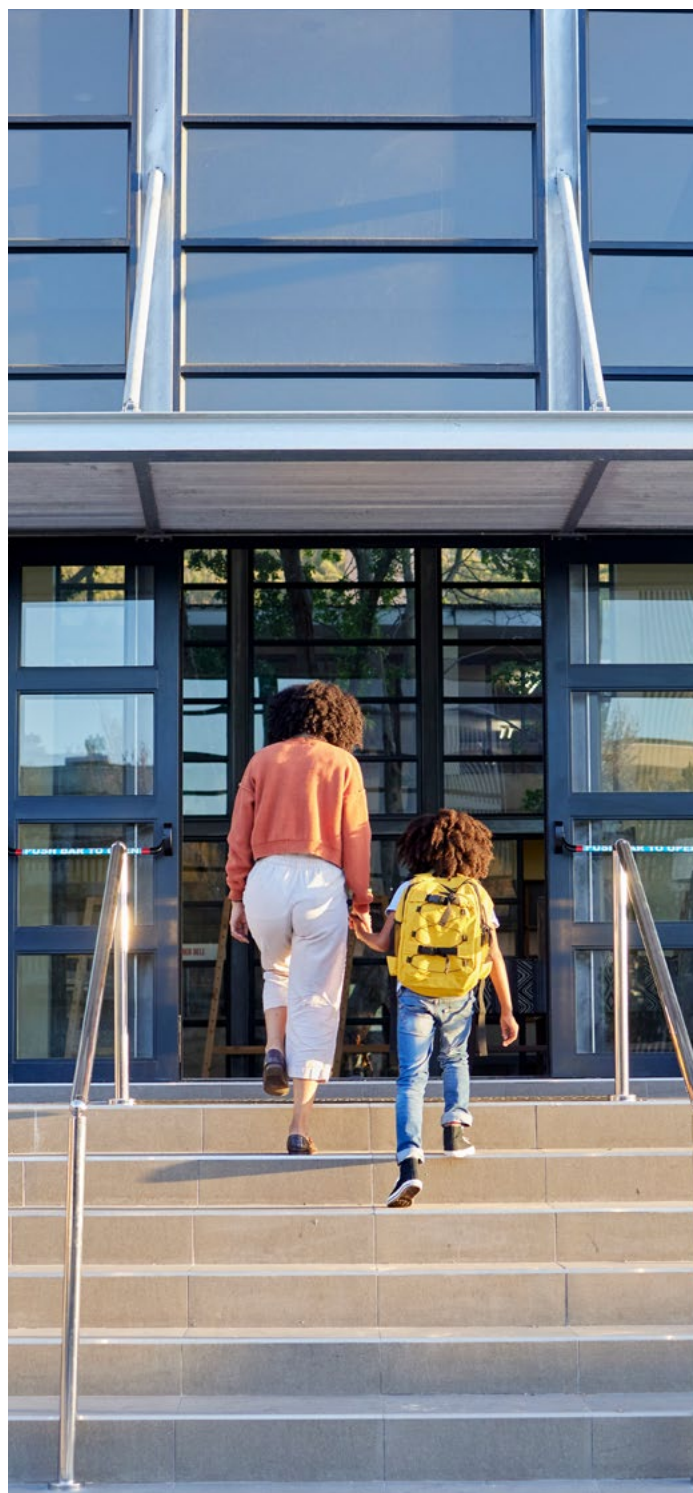
Conclusion

After implementing SchoolMessenger SafeArrival at the Niagara Catholic District School Board, the district saw significant improvements in attendance management and student safety. SchoolMessenger SafeArrival enabled the district to streamline attendance reporting processes and promptly track and address student absences. With quicker identification and timelier follow-up, the overall safety of students within the school environment was enhanced.

Moreover, SchoolMessenger SafeArrival saved staff time. School secretaries could allocate their time more efficiently, enhancing operational productivity. The system's effectiveness in managing weather-related disruptions and improving communication with families further underscored its value in streamlining school operations and fostering parental engagement.

Overall, the successful implementation of SchoolMessenger SafeArrival at the Niagara Catholic District School Board exemplifies the transformative impact of technology-driven solutions in addressing longstanding challenges in educational administration.

As schools continue to prioritize student safety and operational efficiency, SchoolMessenger SafeArrival stands as a testament to the positive outcomes that can be achieved through innovative approaches to attendance management.



Ready to Learn More? See how SchoolMessenger SafeArrival improves family-school engagement.

Visit www.PowerSchool.com or call 1-877-873-1550 to learn more.