

The Webster Central School District (WCSD) encourages the addition of telephone broadcast messaging to the list of services eligible for E-rate support.

The Webster School District included Connect-Ed (Blackboard Connect, formerly NTI Group) as part of its communication process in 2007. Educational research validates the importance of consistent communication between home and school and the role it plays in improving student achievement. Connect-Ed provides the district with the ability to record, schedule, send, and track personalized voice messages to its 9100 students, their parents/guardians, and its 1600 employees within minutes.

Since its implementation, WCSD has utilized telephone messaging to notify and inform parents of testing schedules, parent/teacher conferences, and other school related messages, and to otherwise increase participation by parents in their children's' education. Since its implementation, the district has also used this system to inform students and employees of weather related closings thus keeping roads clear during times of potential danger to students and staff. This system has the additional benefit of serving as an emergency response resource for other civil emergencies.

The WCSD has found telephone broadcast messaging to be more efficient and cost effective than traditional communications such as back-back flyers and/or phone tree messages. Connect-Ed's prompt reporting also notifies administrators when messages have not been successfully delivered increasing the district's ability to maintain current contact information.

In enacting the E-rate program in 1996, Congress recognized that schools often have limited resources to emerging technologies capable of enhancing and support their educational mission. Telephone broadcast messaging has allowed school districts such as Webster to more efficiently and effectively community with students, parents, and employees, and should be included in the E-rate program's list of eligible services.