



## New era of communication: Data points to decline in phone call effectiveness

The world is changing, and one of the greatest skills a district can have is the ability to adapt to new challenges. This is especially true when it comes to communication.

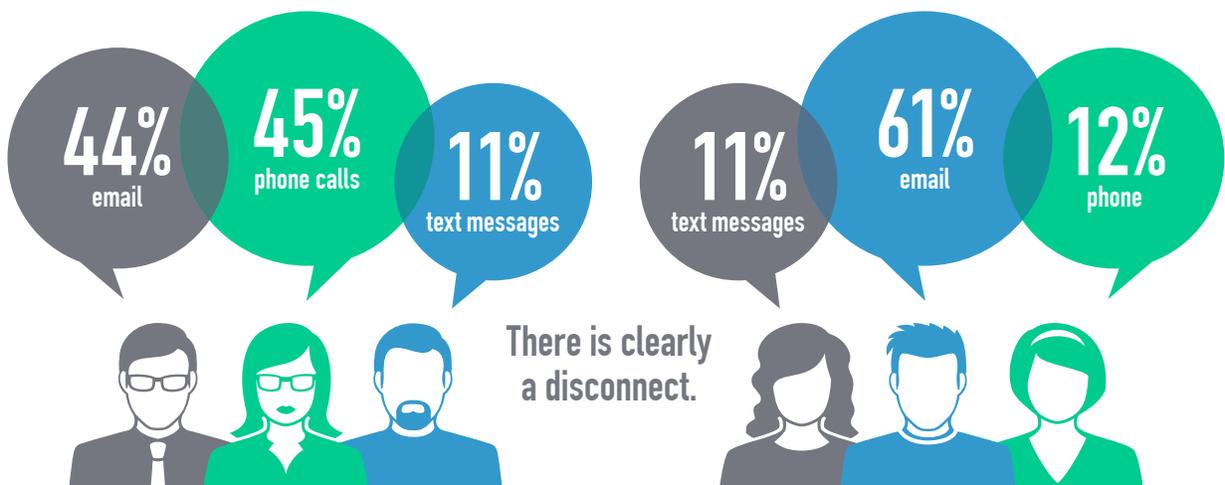
Phone calls have been the standard method of communication for over a century. They were, at one time, the pinnacle of modern technology. But as the internet proliferated, bringing with it easy access to websites, cell phones, social media, and mobile apps, people suddenly stopped answering phone calls and started dodging voicemails.

**What does this mean for districts who want to communicate with parents and the community?**

### THE DATA DOESN'T LIE

Top district communication channels

Parent's preferred communication channels



## Phasing out phone calls

Important information can't be communicated to parents effectively if it isn't reaching them on the channels they use. Only sending a message out into the world and hoping recipients pay attention can hurt community engagement and a district's reputation. Understanding what happens to phone calls after the send button is pushed, is the first step to learning why there is a need for change.

## Hangup rates

Within the last few years, parents have begun dismissing automated phone calls or "robo-calls" coming from districts. In fact, hang-up rates average around 10%, while some go as high as 23%. These stats show parents view phone calls as bothersome as opposed to engaging. If parents are receiving phone calls about every school update, they will eventually begin to tune the calls out.

## Voicemails

When parents aren't answering their phone at all, they're letting it ring through to voicemail. Studies show an average call goes to voicemail about 40% of the time. A recent study by eVoice<sup>1</sup> found only 33% of voicemails are listened to. That number drops to 18% if the recipient doesn't recognize the phone number.

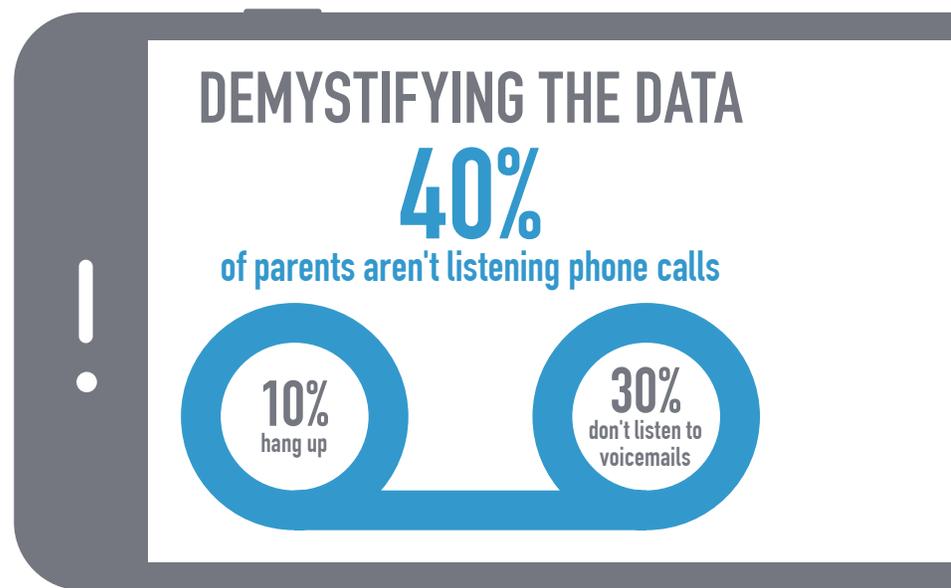
Voicemails also come with an adverse psychological effect. In a study by Nuance,<sup>2</sup> 27% of people felt burdened by the prospect of listening to a voicemail. 23% of those surveyed felt anxious when they receive one and worry something is wrong. Parent engagement is the goal, not burden and anxiety.

## What do all of these numbers and percentages mean?

**Bottom line—40% of parents are not listening to phone calls.<sup>3</sup>**

**If phone calls aren't as effective as they once were, then what is?**

**The data clearly points to text messages and emails.**



## Text messaging

Text messaging provides many of the same benefits of a phone call. They are disruptive, timely, fast and visible, without the drawbacks of being ignored or causing anxiety. In fact, the average parent receives around 55 text messages a day.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, text messages have terrific open rates. 99% of text messages are opened, with an open rate of 90% within the first three minutes of delivery.<sup>5</sup> Of course, text messaging is limited in the amount of information it can convey, but for major events and emergencies, text messages are the ideal form of communication.

## Emails

Email stands out as another the top preferred method of communication for parents. Here are a few reasons why:



**Nonintrusive**



**Detailed communication channel**



**On-demand retrieval of information**



**Easy to share**



**Recipients control what they open**



**Provide record of communication**

Email addresses are also not migratory, which means they don't change owners like phone numbers. That kind of consistency is essential for districts when maintaining accurate contact information. The caveat to email communication is only about 22% of emails are actually opened.<sup>3</sup> Recipients have a choice in what they read. They can filter their incoming emails based on the title or subject line of the message. This makes it even more important to craft messages that are succinct, to the point, and engaging.

## Do parents ever want phone calls?

Absolutely! Phone calls should not be completely removed from communication strategies just yet. They are still a prime channel during emergency and crisis situations. In fact, during an emergency, 72% of parents want a text message and 67% want a phone call.<sup>6</sup> Both are interruptive and gain immediate attention of the recipient, which is always the desired outcome in an emergency situation.

Remove mass phone calls from everyday communications so parents will know calls are important and respond at higher rates. In a crisis, it's a best practice to communicate via every channel.

## Forward thinking

There is a need for a paradigm shift around mass communication in K-12.

- Email should be the go-to for engaging parents.
- Texts should be used for major announcements such as classroom schedule changes, parent teacher conference reminders, and snow day notifications.
- Phone calls should be a supplementary method for communication—mainly used in emergencies.

**Discover how your district can communicate more effectively, and save valuable resources.**

**Digital Mass Notifications**

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