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New system keeps parents in touch

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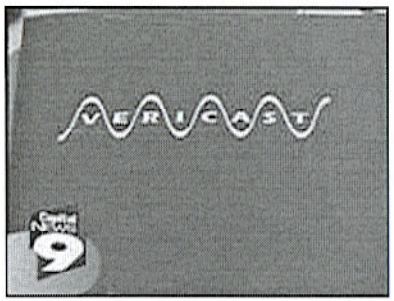

Imagine it's wintertime, and a snowstorm closes school in the middle of the day. How do parents find out about it? A new service called Vericast could do the job.

Douglas Hamlin, CEO of VersaTrans Solutions, said, "It's a way that we can offer a service to schools that allows them to get hold of parents in a way they're used to being contacted."

Here's how it works. Schools participating in Vericast can send instant messages to parents who subscribe on their cell phone or pagers, or through e-mail.

From PTA meetings to emergencies, parents can get information any way they want it. VersaTrans officials aren't marketing it just to schools, but they expect schools and parents of school children will be the most interested buyers.

Bettyjo Bouchey, Vericast Director, said, "It really gives the parent a window into the children's life during the course of the day. Sometimes parents don't know what's going on until their kids come home. Sometimes they come home and their kids are already sitting on the doorstep."

Versatrans Solutions, in the past, has primarily developed school transportation software. Company officials said this new venture is beginning to catch on.

So far, Christian Brothers Academy in Colonie plans to use Vericast and a public school district in Illinois has signed on as well.