



Customer Success Story

Lake Oconee Academy

Ensuring Student and
Faculty Safety With
Emergency Notification



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number one priority of schools is to ensure the safety of students and faculty. While school safety plans are required for all schools, many schools are left with faculty members who are unaware of how to utilize them. Lake Oconee Academy enrolls approximately 815 students each year, therefore they have a huge responsibility in keeping all of those students safe.

When a teacher's disgruntled ex-husband threatened to show up at the school to see her, the safety of faculty and students was a major concern so the school was put on a lockdown for the most of the day as a precautionary measure. Though the man did not show up, the school decided that they wanted to implement a better communication system as well as a more efficient way to deal with emergency situations to better protect their students, faculty and staff.

COMMUNICATING DURING A CRISIS

Similar to many schools, Lake Oconee Academy found it challenging when trying to communicate appropriately with staff, parents and crisis team members during an emergency. The school also wanted to learn more on how they could improve the way they were currently managing critical situations. The communication plan and software that Preparis combined really made those pieces fit together.

CHALLENGE

- Ensuring students' and faculty's safety.
- Timely and efficient communication among the faculty, students and their parents.

SOLUTION

- Agility's Preparis tool, offering a communication plan and software.

RESULTS

- Quick communication ceased to be an issue.
- Students provided with safety precautions.
- Flexibility of Preparis supported multiple means of communication, such as email, phone and text secured to stay in constant contact with students during an emergency.
- Access to a ready-to-use database of trainings and tabletop exercises for the faculty and staff.
- Continued trainings for students as leaders of incident response and disaster recovery.
- Parents and faculty members get peace of mind knowing the students are safe.

TESTING PLANS

Regularly testing Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) and emergency messaging systems is often overlooked, especially when you have so many other responsibilities. However, testing plans and notification systems is part of ensuring the safety of students. Lake Oconee Academy found that they are able to quickly and efficiently ensure that the system is running smoothly by sending out test messages. It gives them peace of mind that during an emergency they will be able to immediately alert crisis team members, faculty and parents.

Last year, Lake Oconee Academy sent out a test message to all parents, which included over 1,000 contacts using all three channels (voicemail, text and email). The message delivery rate was a lot higher than the crisis team at the academy had anticipated, giving everyone involved confidence in knowing that Preparis is a reliable solution for a school.

"Preparis is a good, usable device. It really has a fit in schools, because it's quick and easy. It's nice to just be able to carry it around on your phone and use it if you need it."



Otho Tucker

Ph.D. CEO
Lake Oconee Academy

STAYING PREPARED WITH PREPARIS

Since making the decision to trust Preparis with their communication efforts, Lake Oconee Academy has found that "emergency preparedness doesn't have to be so difficult."

Over the past year, Lake Oconee Academy has used Preparis multiple times for various incidents, such as lock-downs and several storms.

By using Preparis, they were able to send out a text to parents letting them know that due to the storm, they wouldn't be bringing kids out for carpool. In another similar incident, a tornado warning occurred while children were being loaded in carpool line and they had to take kids back inside to shelter in place.

Dr. Tucker expressed how pleased he was with Preparis when discussing how there had been a robbery at a nearby bank and the school had to go on lock-down. He was driving back from a meeting in Atlanta at the time and through Preparis he was able to stay in control of the situation.

Preparis has been working with Lake Oconee Academy in order to help navigate them in a direction that would meet not only their immediate needs, but also help guide them into a state of constant preparedness, so they are always prepared for the unexpected.

With communication as the school's number one issue, Preparis has been able to bridge that gap by providing school faculty and parents with peace of mind and demonstrating that safety is the school's number one priority.

USING THE PREPARIS PORTAL TO KEEP EMPLOYEES INFORMED

Similar to many of Preparis' clients, Lake Oconee Academy finds that using the Preparis Portal is an efficient way to communicate during a disruption. In fact, that's their favorite feature. As a school, communication is crucial and there are many people who have to be alerted during a crisis. Being able to send different messages to their staff, parents and crisis team members gives Lake Oconee Academy more flexibility. Lake Oconee Academy has found many opportunities to use the Preparis Portal as their faculty members begin to familiarize themselves with it more.

When Lake Oconee Academy first implemented the Preparis Portal, many of their staff members were confused on how Preparis was going to work with the notification system the school already had in place. The staff soon realized that Preparis was for the quick notification of parents during critical emergencies. When parents see an alert from Preparis, they know that there is a significant issue.

GOING FORWARD

Implementing Preparis' emergency messaging system has changed the way Lake Oconee Academy is able to communicate with their staff, crisis team members and the parents of their students. It has proved to be more efficient because of how reliable Preparis is when it comes to delivering messages quickly.

Lake Oconee Academy feels confident in using Preparis as a solution and is excited to learn more about new features from Preparis, such as the Preparis Mobile App and while they have not made the training courses within the Preparis Portal a requirement for staff, they feel like it's definitely an idea for the future.

"There is a lot of situations that happen in schools and you think that they will never happen to you, but you really have to prepare for if it did."

Otho Tucker

Ph.D., CEO Lake Oconee Academy

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS SUCCESS STORY

- **Always be prepared.** Recognize that “this won’t happen to me” mindset is not accurate. There’s always a chance that your organization can encounter an unpredicted incident and the only way to mitigate damage and downtime is to prepare.
- **Use all communication channels.** Make sure to implement an emergency messaging system that does more than just send out an email. Agility Recovery offers an emergency messaging system where you are able to easily send a text, email and phone call at the same time in the event of a crisis.
- **Test your emergency messaging system** or EAP at least once a year to ensure that everything is working smoothly.
- **Perform tabletop exercises** to ensure that everyone at your organization knows exactly what to do during an emergency. Trainings and tabletop exercises are a great, interactive way to ensure that employees don’t “freeze up” during a crisis. Tabletop exercises are also great for finding gaps in your plans.



With an end-to-end solution, such as Agility Recovery, businesses can recover **4 times faster** than with no BCM solution.