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CANNED ALERT HURRIES KIDS TO CLASS

By **JOHN SENA**
The New Mexican

As Capital High School students flooded the halls Monday during passing periods, they received a familiar message from an unfamiliar place. Accustomed to hearing the warnings of teachers and principals roaming the halls -- "Get to class" -- students instead heard a calm, female voice. "You have two minutes until your next class," it said in English and Spanish. The canned voice -- a la airport intercoms warning not to leave bags unattended -- is part of a new intercom system at Capital. Every class is outfitted with a speaker box that also displays the time. In addition to giving office staff a way to communicate with teachers, the system is supposed to reduce tardiness. So far, students and teachers have mixed reviews. "I don't know if all (students) hear it," said Stephanie Gurule-Leyba, a science teacher at the school. She said she doesn't usually have a problem with tardies because students know they'll get locked out if they're late for class and won't be admitted without a pass. "At least we're trying to give them that reminder." "If we're talking, and it says we have two minutes, then we'll end

the conversation," said Eric Tharpe, a junior at the school. Assistant Principal Michael Hagele said the system was added because the old intercom didn't work properly and didn't reach the entire school. The new one is similar to a system that Santa Fe High School used a few years ago, said Hagele, who was an assistant principal there before moving to Capital last year. "It's just meant to serve as a friendly reminder," he said, "and to help kids manage their time a little better." There was one consistent criticism of the voice. "During fourth period, some of us have class and some have lunch," said junior Melanie Rivera, explaining the school's split lunch periods, "and it can interrupt." School officials have not collected any kind of data that might show whether the new system is getting kids to class on time, but for some teachers, at least, it seems to be working. "When they hear that two-minute reminder," said English teacher Shawn Griffin, "they start scuttling off." Contact John Sena at 986-3079 or jsena@sfnewmexican.com.



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