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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SchoolMessenger App FAQ

What is the SchoolMessenger app?

The SchoolMessenger app is the next generation of the app that has been known as SchoolMessenger InfoCenter. The SchoolMessenger app includes new features and options, and is for both families and teachers.

How is the SchoolMessenger app different from SchoolMessenger InfoCenter?

The SchoolMessenger app adds a significant new feature: teacher-initiated messaging. This allows teachers to communicate with parents/guardians and students, individually or in groups, and to exchange files (such as permission slips, photos from field trips, etc.) all from within the app.

The SchoolMessenger app allows for the addition of new modules as they are developed, all operated within the same app and with functions that will be seamless to teachers and families.

How is the SchoolMessenger app different from SchoolMessenger CustomApp?

SchoolMessenger CustomApp is the basis for district-branded custom mobile apps. The free SchoolMessenger app is not district-branded and is offered at no charge to all SchoolMessenger Communicate customers.

We already have a SchoolMessenger custom mobile app. Do the features of the new SchoolMessenger app work with our SchoolMessenger CustomApp?

Yes. Much like how the Facebook and Facebook Messenger apps work together, a district-branded SchoolMessenger custom mobile app and the SchoolMessenger app work together.

Families continue to use your branded mobile app and, if there's a function they need that's provided by the SchoolMessenger app, the SchoolMessenger app is automatically launched from within the custom mobile app. After the SchoolMessenger app's functionality is no longer being used, families are returned to the district-branded app. The individual starts and ends what they do with your custom mobile app.

(This is slightly different than how additional functionality has worked before, when the custom mobile app automatically launched a web browser, instead of a linked app. Linking app-to-app provides a smoother and more consistent user experience.)

If staff, parents, or students already have InfoCenter installed, what do they need to do?

Nothing, if their smartphones are set to automatically update their mobile apps. The new SchoolMessenger app will replace the SchoolMessenger InfoCenter app during an update.

If a smartphone is not set to accept automatic app updates, they will be prompted to download the new SchoolMessenger app, or update their existing app, when it is available.

What tools do you have to help us tell staff and families about the new SchoolMessenger app?

We have a district toolkit with the following tools:

- Teacher and Family FAQs to explain the new app that you can distribute as-is, or customize;
- An HTML email template notifying families of the new app, why it's useful, and how to download it;
- Suggested language for district/school websites and newsletters (which also can be customized) describing the new app, why it's useful, and how to download it.

Is there any cost to upgrade to the new SchoolMessenger app?

No. The standard app, even with new teacher-initiated messaging, is free and the rest of its features are equivalent to InfoCenter. There are still optional add-ons for additional functions.

How does a teacher or family member get the new SchoolMessenger app if they don't have InfoCenter?

The SchoolMessenger app will be available on the Android Google Play and Apple iOS app stores under the name "SchoolMessenger."

Are the web app features the same as the mobile app?

Yes. For teachers or family members who prefer to use a website instead of a mobile app (or who don't have easy access to a smartphone), the SchoolMessenger app's functions will be available online at <https://app.schoolmessenger.com>.

Teacher and family member accounts will work on both the web app and the mobile apps.

How can the district enable/disable features of the SchoolMessenger app that are available to teachers?

All districts that are using the SchoolMessenger app will automatically get access to the new teacher-initiated messaging capabilities. Teacher-initiated messages will only flow when either districts have enabled access by synchronizing teacher/classroom data with their SIS, or by asking teachers to invite their students and/or parents to register using a classroom registration code.

When teacher and classroom information are loaded from the SIS, classroom groups and contacts will already be available for teachers. This is a way that districts can simplify the process of providing access for teachers and their students. Teachers can alternatively invite groups of students and/or parents to download the app or access the web version via email using a class invitation code.

Why was teacher-initiated messaging added to the app?

Districts have expressed concerns about app proliferation – that both teachers and families were having to download and install multiple apps for similar school-to-home communications tasks. Adding teacher-initiated messaging from teachers to either individual parents or students, or groups of parents and students, reduces the number of apps to manage and places to look for information.

What are some of the main capabilities of the new teacher-initiated messaging?

New capabilities include both individual and group (e.g., classes, sports teams, PTO groups) two-way messaging; the ability for teachers and families to exchange files, images, and videos (e.g., photographed permission slips); and the ability for family members to review all notifications and messages related to their schools and district in a single, scrollable, "stream" view.

How do teachers get families connected to them through the app?

Districts can ask West to have student information system data loaded and synchronized with SchoolMessenger Communicate to identify teachers and their students. Or, teachers can send out invitations to students and parents with a class code, which then allows family members to be tied to a specific teacher.



Can the SchoolMessenger app be extended with add-on modules?

Yes. Two add-on subscription modules are available for the free app. One module, **Plus**, provides individual student information alongside the district and school broadcast notifications, including grade threshold alerts and viewing of bus route, lunch balance, and other information.

Another module, **SafeArrival**, provides student absence management for both parents and districts, such as giving parents the ability to submit absences in advance by phone or app, or to rapidly provide reasons for absences directly from the app. SafeArrival also seamlessly ties into SchoolMessenger Communicate and adds an absence management dashboard for school staff for quick review and automated follow-up on student absences.

What happens to SchoolMessenger InfoCenter Plus?

InfoCenter Plus, an earlier add-on to the InfoCenter app and custom mobile apps, has been updated and replaced by the new SchoolMessenger app **Plus** module.

What happens to Classroom Messaging?

The Classroom Messaging feature of SchoolMessenger Communicate is still in place for districts that use it.

What is happening to the SchoolMessenger Admin sender app?

The sender app – for use by district and school staff to send notifications – will continue to be a separate mobile app for now. It can be found in the Apple iOS and Android Google Play app stores under the same name for both platforms, SchoolMessenger Admin.

