



# Launching an Effective SMS Text Message Opt-In Campaign

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## Launching the SMS Text Message Opt-In Campaign

SchoolMessenger Communicate uses a true SMS protocol developed by the telecommunications industry specifically for mass text messaging. This is different than sending individual text messages between two phones (mobile-to-mobile) or from email-to-text (SMTP). Referred to as “short code” texting, this method is highly reliable and fast because it is strictly regulated by the wireless carriers themselves and allows only approved providers direct connectivity to the wireless carrier networks. Short code texting does however require that certain standards are met by message senders. This document is intended to familiarize you with the terminology, concepts and requirements associated with sending mass text messages via short codes.

Similar to a 10-digit phone number, “short codes” are five or six digit numeric identifiers that are used when sending text messages which allow a wireless carrier to determine that the message(s) is coming from an authorized sender. If you’ve ever texted a vote on a TV show or signed up for department store sales texts with a short number instead of a full 10-digit phone number, then you have used short code texting.

Unlike email, where unwanted spam is rampant, wireless carriers tightly control access to their SMS networks by only issuing short codes after a rigorous approval process. The Common Short Code Administration and Neustar are responsible for overseeing Common Short Codes on behalf of participating U.S. wireless carriers. To protect consumers, The Wireless Association and the Mobile Marketing Association have established guidelines for use.

And not to fear, SchoolMessenger Solutions has developed a number of features that simplify your compliance with the guidelines.



**Important:** This document is for short code 61659. Please verify with SchoolMessenger Solutions Support which short code you will be using to communicate with your recipients prior to launching your opt-in campaign.

## SMS Terminology

You will find it helpful to familiarize yourself with the following terms:

- **SMS** – This stands for “Short Message Service”, and is a system that enables cellular phone users to send and receive text messages.
- **Common Short Code** – A short code is similar to a phone number, but shorter. Typically, short codes are five or six digits and can only be used to send or receive SMS messages. The term “common” refers to the ability of a single short code to work across all major wireless carriers.
- **Opt-In** – Direct permission from a recipient that they are willing to receive your SMS text messages. This must come in the form of a response text sent from the recipient’s wireless device using an opt-in key word.
- **Opt-In Invitation text message** - Guidelines allow for you to send one, very specifically worded SMS text message per number, asking recipients to reply that they are willing to receive further text messages from you. The SchoolMessenger Opt-In Invitation message is as follows:

“<<your school name inserted here>> messages. Reply Y to confirm, HELP 4 info. Msg&data rates may apply. Msg freq varies. schoolmessenger.com/tm”

- **Opt-In Day** – This is the day that all recipient numbers which have not pro-actively opted-in will be sent the “*Opt-in Invitation text message*”.

## SMS Text Messaging Requirements

There are only two requirements for a recipient to receive messages from you via SMS text:

1. *The recipient’s wireless number must be imported into your Communicate account.*
2. *An opt-in confirmation receipt sent from the recipient’s wireless device. (See the following for additional details.)*


### Device phone numbers imported into account

In addition to getting an opt-in confirmation from each recipient’s wireless device, each device phone number must also be included in your SchoolMessenger Communicate *Data Import* and mapped to an *SMS data field*.

### Opt-In device confirmation

Each mobile device number from which recipients wish to receive text messages must be opted-in to the Communicate service. This is as simple as texting an opt-in key word (Y being the most commonly used) to the short code assigned to your account (61659).

The wireless carriers require that common short code providers have the capability to verify that a particular phone number did indeed agree to allow you to send them text messages. The recipient’s text of “Y” (or “yes”) to your accounts short code is this verification.

 **Important:** Mapping and importing SMS phone number data will start the automated Opt-In Invitation message process outlined below. We strongly encourage you to communicate the content of the Opt-in Invitation message and Opt-In date with your recipients prior to the SMS phone numbers being imported into your account. Please coordinate with SchoolMessenger Solutions Support to ensure the proper setup to launch your opt-in message campaign on your preferred date.

## Managing your SMS Phone Number Data

It is important to determine which phone number fields from your source data system(s) (i.e. Student Information System, HR System, etc.) are the most likely to include mobile/cell phone numbers. Numbers that are most often associated with land lines (e.g. work numbers, home numbers) should not be used. In some cases, existing data exports/imports must be altered to ensure the best text device numbers are imported into your Communicate account. We strongly encourage you to work with support to configure and confirm your data imports are properly configured prior to Opt-in day.



**Important:** Mapping and importing your SMS phone numbers will initiate the sending of the automated Opt-in Invitation texts, and should not be done ahead of schedule.

## Configuring User Profiles and System Settings

Access to the SMS sending features is controlled using profile settings and you should enable permissions for the users to whom you wish to grant access for sending SMS messages. These are located in the “Admin” tab under the “Profiles” subtab by clicking “Edit”. In the *Messaging Options* section of the “Profile Access Controls”, enable the “Send SMS txt messages” option for each access profile you want to have access to send SMS messages.

You should also verify that the broadcast type settings have the appropriate defaults configured for all SMS phone number fields for each broadcast type. These settings are located under **Admin > Settings > Broadcast Types**.

## The Opt-In Campaign

The purpose of an opt-in campaign is to encourage as many of your recipients as possible to confirm their willingness to receive ongoing SMS messages from your organization by opting in from their device(s). Recipients opt-in by texting “Y” to the SchoolMessenger Communicate short code 61659 from each device they wish to receive SMS text messages on (see *Opt-in device confirmation* above for more info).

A thirty-day campaign, consisting of two phases, is an effective way to encourage recipients to opt-in to receive your text messages. The first phase proactively encourages recipients to opt-in. The second phase informs them that they will be receiving an **Opt-in Invitation text** on a specified day, *if* they haven’t already opted in from their device, *and* that device number is on record with the district.

If you have enabled the SchoolMessenger app (formerly Infocenter), recipients may configure their SMS contact information and preferences through the Contact Manager web interface. This meets the opt-in requirement and should be included in any recipient communications you send.

## Days 1-14: Initial Communication

1. Notify your community that text messaging is coming!
  - Communicate multiple ways – via the Communicate program, through local media, signage, flyers, or even newsletters - request an opt-in QR code by emailing support@schoolmessenger.com.
  - Recipients that wish to receive text messages need only ensure their number(s) are on record and that they have sent “Y” (or “yes”), via text message, to short code 61659.
2. Distribute Staff Info & FAQ (see below) to internal stakeholders; don’t forget receptionists.

## Days 15-29: Secondary Communication

Notify your community that text messaging is coming **and** you have a SMS text-capable device number on record that has not already been opted-in to receive our text messages, you will receive an invitation.

Sample message:

*If we have an SMS text phone number for you on file AND you have not already opted-in by texting “Y” to #####, on <<Insert Date for your Opt-In Day >> you should receive the following text from ##### requesting you to opt-in to continue receiving important informational text messages from your child’s school:*

*“<<your school name inserted here>> messages. Reply Y to confirm, HELP 4 info. Msg&data rates may apply. Msg freq varies. schoolmessenger.com/tm”*

## Day 30: Opt-in Day

1. Re-distribute SMS Staff Info & FAQ (see below)
2. Confirm with SchoolMessenger Solutions Support that they are scheduled to map and import the SMS phone number data into your account. Any SMS device number in Communicate that hasn’t pro-actively opted-in by texting “Y” (or “yes”) will then automatically receive the Opt-In Invitation text message during normal business hours, your local time.

## Staff SMS Information

It is recommended that you communicate the following information to your site staff in order to equip them with the information they will need to adequately address parent requests:

To All Staff,

We are adding text messaging capability to SchoolMessenger Communicate, the system we use now for phone calls and emails. The system will be configured to send text messages to cell phone numbers whose recipients have agreed to receive them. Over the next weeks, we will be encouraging stakeholders to confirm we have accurate phone numbers and encourage them to participate.

There are only two requirements for a recipient to receive messages from you via SMS text: *the recipient's wireless number imported into Communicate* and *"Opt-In Confirmation" from the recipient's wireless device*. These requirements address any concerns related to the accuracy of the database and costs associated with receiving text messages.

Recipients can easily opt-in by simply sending "Y" (or "Yes"), via text message, to our Communicate Short Code number. We will be inviting recipients to do this over the next several weeks and continue throughout the year.

The wireless number(s) must be in the Communicate database associated with a student or staff ID number; these numbers are updated nightly. If a recipient's number SMS Text number is changed, or a new number added, in our student information system database, the new number will automatically be sent an Opt-In message.

Below is a list of the fields from which phone numbers for text messages are being pulled.

*Enter the field labels from your database below to indicate which numbers are used for SMS text.*

Parents / Students
#1
#2
#3
#4
#5
#6

Staff
#1
#2

## FAQs

### How do recipients “Opt-In” to receive text messages?

1. Confirm the text device number(s) are imported to Communicate.
2. Text “Y” to 61659 from each wireless device they wish to receive texts on.



**Note:** Depending on the data synchronization configuration, it may take 24 hours or more for numbers to be updated from the district SIS database.

### How do recipients opt-out of receiving text messages?

Recipients not wishing to receive text messages to a particular number can simply do one of the following:

1. Don't opt-in and don't reply to the opt-in invitation message.
2. Text “STOP” to 61659 (or whichever is correct for your account) at any time.
3. Opt out online at <http://schoolmessenger.com/txtmsg>.
4. Request that your organization's Communicate system administrator add the number to the account's phone number block list.

### Can the text messages come from a district phone number, instead of the short code?

No. Short codes are the industry standard, and the only fast and reliable way to deliver mass text notifications.

### I received a text message that says it's from SchoolMessenger? What does it mean?

If it was from 61659, that was most likely the Opt-In Invitation message sent by Communicate.

To continue receiving informational text messages from the school(s) reply with “Y”.

If you do not reply, you won't receive any future texts from our schools.

### I “Opted-In”, but I'm not receiving texts?

Ensure that the district has your correct device number in the database (Student Information System or HR System), and that it is located in the SMS phone field(s) that are synchronized with Communicate. It may take 24 hours for a number to become active after being changed or added to the district's system.

Send a text with “Y”, from that specific device, to 61659. You should receive an opt-in confirmation message from the service.

If you want to receive texts on multiple devices, each device number must complete the Opt-In process.

Confirm that the district has actually attempted to send a Communicate broadcast which includes an SMS text message to your mobile phone number.



## How do I know if it worked?

After you text one of the key words to the short code the system will ALWAYS respond back with one of three messages:

**Opt-in Response:** *You're registered 4 SchoolMessenger notifications. Reply STOP to cancel, HELP for help. Msg&data rates may apply. msg freq varies. schoolmessenger.com/txt*

**Opt-out Response:** *You're unsubscribed from SchoolMessenger. No more msgs will be sent. Reply Y to re-subscribe, HELP for help. Msg&data rates may apply. schoolmessenger.com/txt*

**Help or Unknown Key Word Response:** *SchoolMessenger notification service: Reply Y to subscribe or STOP to cancel. Msg&data rates may apply. Msg freq varies. Visit schoolmessenger.com/txt for info*

**Any other response – or no response:** indicates the recipient should contact their wireless device provider to have SMS messaging/premium content enabled (see below for more details).

## What does it mean if I texted “Y” or “yes” and I received some sort of error message back?

If you receive what appears to be an error message, similar to one of the following, it most likely means that short code text messaging is not enabled on your wireless subscription plan:

- *Service access denied*
- *Message failed*
- *Shortcode may have expired or shortcode texting may be blocked on your account*
- *Does not participate*

These replies DO NOT indicate that the wireless provider cannot receive messages from Communicate. Rather, they are an indication that the specific mobile device *does not have short code SMS texting enabled* for that number (this is sometimes disabled by default on company provided cell phones). To address this, contact your wireless provider.



**Note:** Providers sometimes use various names for this type of texting service (e.g. short code, SMS, premium, etc.). If you simply ask about text messaging, your carrier may assume you are referring to person-to-person. Therefore, be very clear to refer to “short code” text messages. Most TV programs that have a voting component use short code SMS messaging (e.g. American Idol, Dancing with the Stars). In addition, many department or grocery stores use SMS to distribute coupons and deals. Using an example such as this can be helpful in clarifying the type of texting service you want to enable.

## Will I be charged for the text messages that I receive from Communicate?

Communicate does not charge recipients for the text messages that they receive or send to the short code; however, wireless providers may charge for individual text messages, depending on the plan associated with the wireless device. Please consult your carrier if you are uncertain.

## Questions?

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact support.

### SchoolMessenger Solutions Support

800-920-3897

[support@schoolmessenger.com](mailto:support@schoolmessenger.com)