SCHOOLMESSENGER®

Getting Started
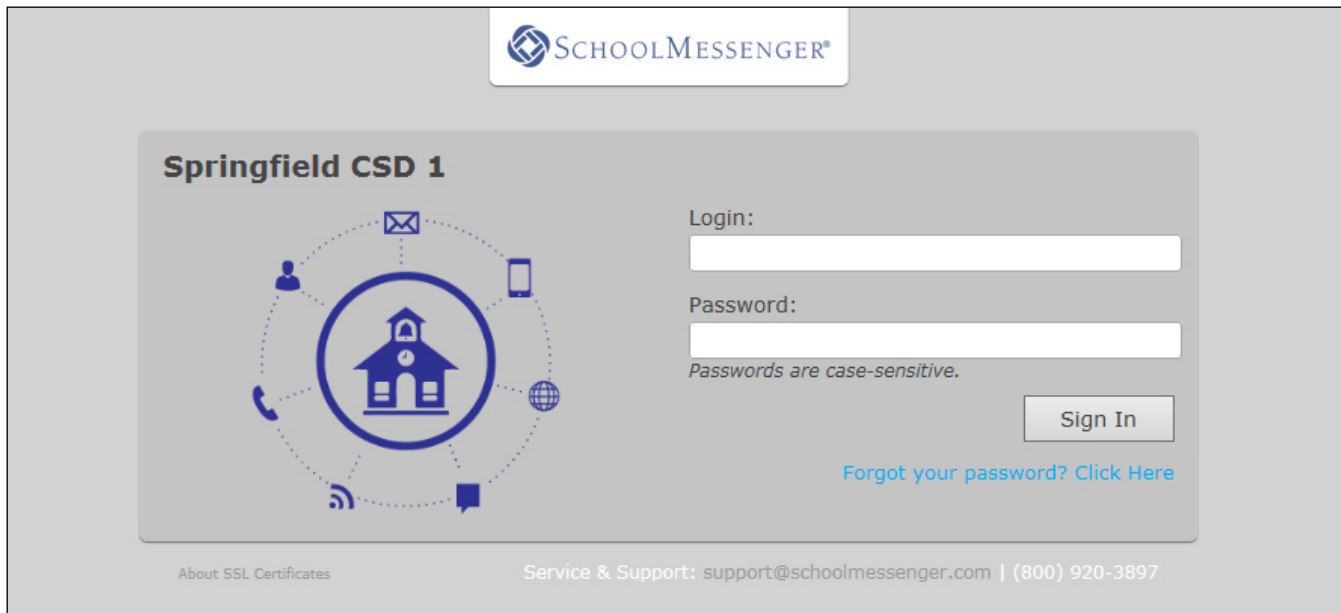
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Contents

Before you Begin

The intent of this training guide is to equip new users with the primary skills required to quickly and confidently broadcast voice, text, email or social media messages to hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of people. You will learn the basics of logging in, navigation, setting up and sending a broadcast notification, creating recipient lists, creating messages, viewing progress reports, your user account settings, as well as some great tips for making SchoolMessenger a big success for your school.

Once you are comfortable with the basic features of and the steps outlined in this guide, you can find more detailed guides, as well as in the *Advanced Training Guide*, in the *PDF Guides* section of the online help. The link to the online help can be found in the upper right of every page of your SchoolMessenger account, just below your school name.

Bookmark Your Login Page

Before you log in and start familiarizing yourself with the system, please take a moment to bookmark the login page for your school(s) on any computers you could potentially use to send notifications. You should also write down the web address and carry it with you in your wallet or purse. However, please do not write your password anywhere alongside your web address and/or login. Likewise, we strongly discourage allowing browsers to save your password on any computer or device that may, at any time, be accessible by anyone other than yourself.

- Enter the web address for your SchoolMessenger login page into any web browser.

- Add the login page to your bookmarks/favorites. Do this for any computer or device that you might use to send notifications.

Important: *Your accounts web address is unique! It cannot be found from the SchoolMessenger.com homepage or through an internet search.*
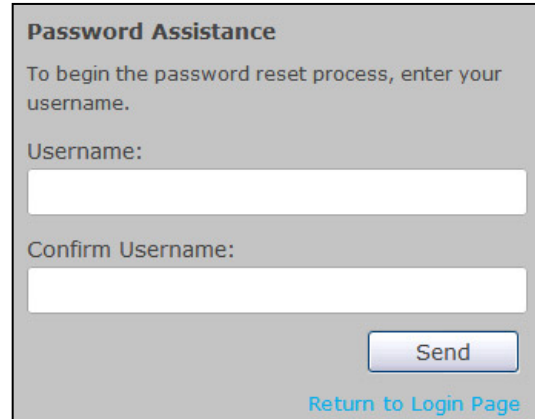
Note: *If you forget or do not know the web address of your login page, or forget your login or password, please contact your school's system administrator.*

Setting your Password

If you have a username, but either have no password or have forgotten your password, follow the steps below to set your password and log in.

If you have already created and know your password, skip this section and move on to "Getting Started" below.

- Click the *Forgot My Password* link. You will be taken to the *Password Assistance* screen.

- Enter your username (as provided by your system administrator) in both the *Username* and *Confirm Username* fields.

- Click the *Send* button. The system will send an email to the address associated with your username.

- Check your email inbox for an email with the subject "*Reset Password*."

Password Assistance

To begin the password reset process, enter your username.

Username:

Confirm Username:

Send

Return to Login Page

- Click the link in the email and you will be directed to a web page where you can reset your password.

- Enter and confirm your new password. *For rules regarding passwords, please see* Appendix B: Managing your Account Settings*.*

- Click the *Submit* button, and you will be logged into your account using the new password.

Getting Started

Now that you've bookmarked your login page and have logged in to the system, you're ready to take the first steps in learning SchoolMessenger.

A Quick Overview

SchoolMessenger is used to send mass notifications, also referred to as *Broadcasts.* We refer to our notifications as Broadcasts because of the massive number of destinations to which we can simultaneously deliver your message.
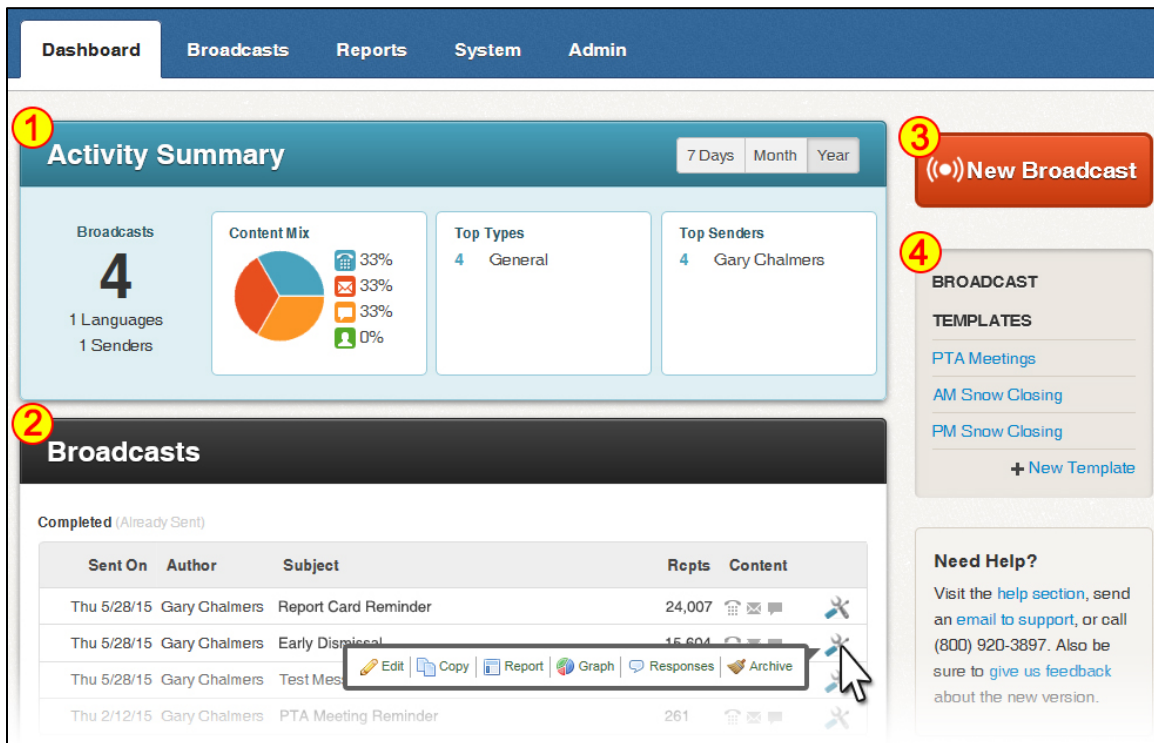
Available broadcast destinations include Phone, Email, SMS Text, Facebook, Twitter, RSS feeds and Push Notifications. It is just as fast and simple to send a message to a small group of people as it is to send one to hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of people. All the SchoolMessenger system needs is the appropriate contact data for what we refer to as your "Recipients".

Your recipients contact data comes from your school database system/Student Information System (SIS) and has been uploaded and configured into your account, usually by the fine folks in our Integration Team. This data will also usually be set to receive automated updates on a regular basis so that any changes to phone numbers, emails and contact preferences will be current on every broadcast.

The Dashboard

The *Dashboard* is the first screen you see when you log in to your SchoolMessenger account and gives a high level view of the activity on your account, as well as the ability to quickly send a new broadcast. You will find the following tools and information on your Dashboard:

1. **Activity Summary:** This section gives you an overview of how frequently your account is being used and what it is being used for. You can see the total number of broadcasts sent from your account, the mix of voice, email, text message, and social media (such as Facebook or RSS feeds). You can also see the most common types of broadcasts and which users are sending the most. You are able to filter whether the summary shows the last seven days, the last month, or the last year worth of results.

2. **Broadcasts:** This section displays Broadcasts which are currently in progress and those which have recently been completed. If you move your pointer over the tool icon next to a broadcast, a menu of common actions for Broadcasts pops up; including Edit, Copy, Report, Graph, Responses, Archive and Cancel, depending on whether the Broadcast is in progress or complete.

3. **New Broadcast:** Clicking the orange "New Broadcast" button takes you directly to the steps to begin creating a SchoolMessenger broadcast. It's the quickest way to get a broadcast configured and on its way. We'll be using this feature to send a message as part of this training guide.

4. **Broadcast Templates:** Broadcast Templates are pre-configured (by you) broadcast set-ups for messages which you might send frequently or wish to have instantly available for emergencies. These are covered in greater detail in the *Advanced Training Guide* as well as in the online help.

💡 *Note: The Dashboard will be referenced frequently throughout this guide. Whenever you need to return to it simply click the "Dashboard" tab near the top left of the screen.*

Creating a New Broadcast

This will take you through a simple, step-by-step, guided process to get your message sent by using the "**New Broadcast**" button on your Dashboard. This guide will explain each step in detail and, by the end of this tutorial, you will have successfully sent a test broadcast to yourself, with a phone, email, and SMS Text messages.

In the course of this tutorial guide, you will do the following:

Make a List

A list contains the contact information of all of the people to whom you want to deliver your message.
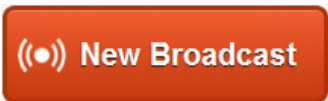
Create your Message

Record voice for telephone, compose an email, and type an SMS text message.

Send the Broadcast

View the configuration and settings for your Broadcast and either start delivering it immediately or schedule it for a later time.

To get started, click the *New Broadcast* button to the right on the Dashboard.

((•)) New Broadcast

Step 1: Subject & Recipients

The first step in sending a broadcast is to name it, define the type of message and, most importantly, deterimine "who" will be receiving it.

Subject: The Subject field is simply the name of your Broadcast, a way to distinguish it from others. It will also be used to automatically populate the Subject line for your email messages and will be used on any reports associated with your Broadcast.

Type: The Type menu works in conjunction with your contacts *notification preferences* (ie. where people have elected to receive certain types of broadcasts, like General announcements or Newsletters, on only certain phones or email addresses, but have elected to get Emergency and Attendance notifications at all points of contact). Make sure you think carefully about the content and urgency of your message, and select a type that is appropriate.

Recipients: The **Add Message Recipients** menu-button contains the various options for selecting your broadcast recipients. Normally, when sending a Broadcast, you'll either select a list you've already saved by clicking on "*Saved Recipient Lists*" or create a new list using "*Custom Rules*".

Saved Recipient Lists

You have the ability to configure and save custom contact lists in your SchoolMessenger account. Once a custom list has been saved, it can be quickly selected and used at any time in the future.

Custom Rules

This is the most common way to create lists of recipients. With rules, you are setting filters to isolate specific groups of recipients from your student database import files. You are able to stack rules to narrow down your contacts to be as specific as possible.

Quick Pick

This is a very basic way of creating a list by searching for specific individuals and placing a check in front of their record. You can search, narrow down the search using rules, or pick from a list of all contacts.

Upload List

Uploading a list requires that you have a CSV file of contacts saved on your computer. This is a more advanced way of creating a list (which is covered more in the online help within your account) which can be handy at times when the people to whom you need to broadcast are not part of your database import.
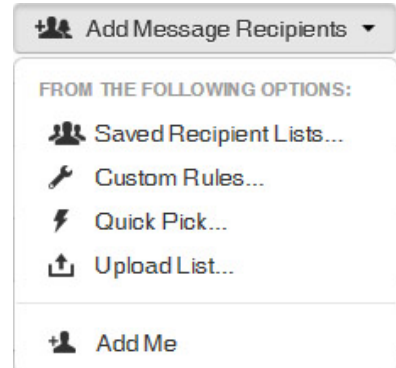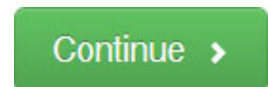
Add Me
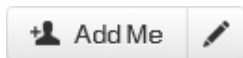
That's right, using this feature adds *your* contact information to the broadcast. You can either use the "Add Me" button or the link in the *Add Message Recipients* menu. If your contact information is not already in the system, or needs to be edited, click the pencil icon on the right side of the button and enter/update your information.

For the purposes of this tutorial, you will be sending a message to yourself only, so use the "**Add Me**" option and then click the "**Continue**" button on the lower right.

*Note: Building a list with rules is covered in detail, including examples of popular lists, in **Appendix A.***

Note: To learn more about the other options in the Add Message Recipients menu, please see the Advanced Training Guide *located in the "PDF Guides" section of the online help in your account.*

Note: To the left of each group of recipients, you'll find three buttons: ☒ ☁ ◉ . The X will remove a set of recipients, the cloud will save the group for later, and the eye shows you a view of the actual recipients selected.

Step 2: Message Content

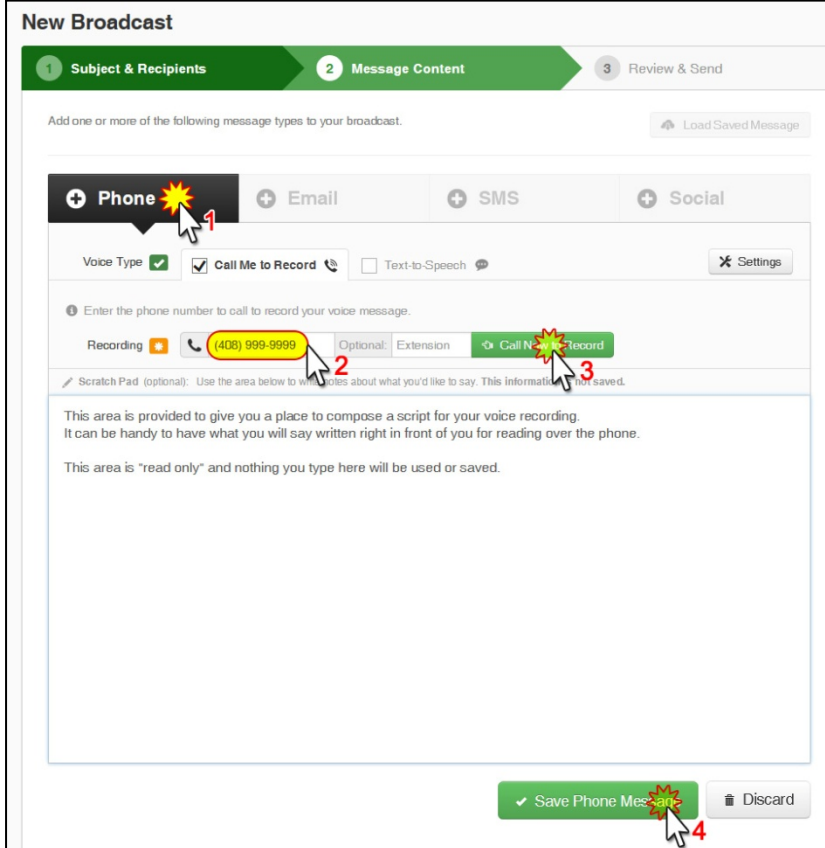The "**Message Content**" screen contains all the options for the various types of messages SchoolMessenger can deliver – **Phone**, **Email**, **SMS Text** and **Social Media**. For this tutorial, you will be creating a simple phone, email, and SMS Broadcast.

Phone

Telephone voice messages, in your own voice, are the most common, attention-getting, and memorable type of broadcast message. These can very easily be recorded via the default "**Call Me to Record**" feature.

1. Click the "**+Phone**" button/tab. The "**Call Me to Record**" tab in the "*Voice Type*" area will be selected by default.

2. The "Recording" phone field will be populated with the main phone number from your user profile. This is the number the system will call for you to answer and record your voice message. You may change this if needed.

3. Click "**Call Now to Record**" when you are prepared to answer you phone to record. *Your phone will ring promptly. Answer the call and follow the prompts carefully. Make sure to save your message before hanging up.*

4. Once you voice message for phone is complete, click on "**Save Phone Message**"

Note: If you have saved previously created messages, you can use the "Load Saved Messages" button, on the upper right, to save time by quickly retrieving and loading them into your existing broadcast.

Note: The Scratch Pad area is provided as place to type what you plan to say during your recording. This is just for convenience and nothing typed is either used or saved.

Note: If your account is set up for multilingual messages, the first voice message you record will be automatically be assumed to be in your accounts default language (typically English). After you've recorded your first message, you will see a drop down menu for recording other languages. You can repeat the above process for each language you need to send.

Email

Adding an email message to your broadcast is pretty much the same as composing any other ordinary email. The options in SchoolMessenger are just like those found in most email programs and can be used to compose as simple or as complicated an email as you deem necessary.

1. Click the "**+ Email**" button/tab.

2. Your name and email address will automatically be entered in the "**From**" fields, but you can change them if needed. Remember, this is the email address your message recipients will see and reply to.

3. For convenience, the "**Subject**" will be pre-populated with the name of your broadcast, but you may change it if you like.

4. You may include an unlimited number of hosted attachments (50MB limit per file).* & **

5. Enter your email message content in the "**Body**" field. Exercise caution if you are pasting your email message content from an external editor.***
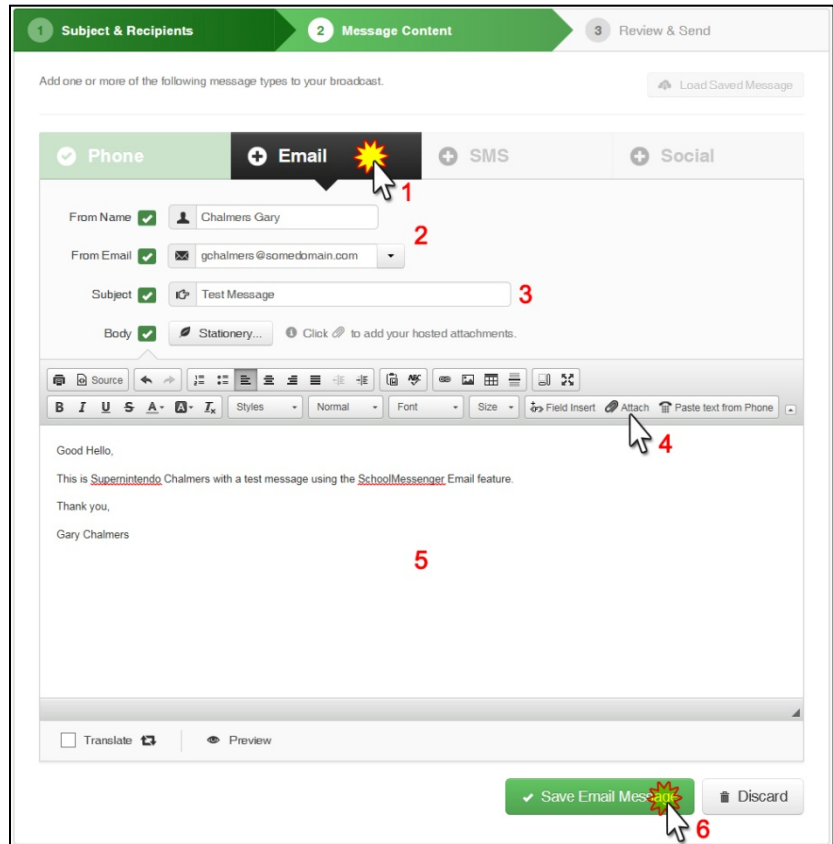
6. Once you are finished composing your email, click on the "**Save Email Message**" button below.

The SchoolMessenger Email editor has many advanced and powerful features not covered in this guide. Please see the online help for instructions on creating more complex and robust email messages with features like stationary, merge fields and more.

***Note:** _Hosted Attachments: All attachments sent through SchoolMessenger are saved on our servers. Attachments will be placed as **links** to the file, in-line with the body text in your email. This allows for larger files, helps prevent your emails from being blocked at the recipient end and the advanced features found in the Hosted Attachments Log in the Reports tab._

Important: _For security reasons, certain file types are not permitted._

*****Important**: _If you have already created a message using Microsoft Word and you want to paste that message into the HTML editor, you should be aware that messages which are copied and pasted from Word contain extra, non-standard information which may cause your message to not display correctly. The system will attempt to remove most of this information for you but, for best results, it is best to compose your message using the built in HTML editor whenever possible._

SMS Text Message

Adding an SMS Text Message to your SchoolMessenger broadcast is the simplest of all the types.

- Click the "**+ SMS**" button/tab.

- Enter your message in the "**SMS Text**" field. You may enter up to 160 characters.

- Click "**Spell Check**" on the lower left to help avoid awkward errors.

- Click "**Save SMS Message**" when you're satisfied with your message.
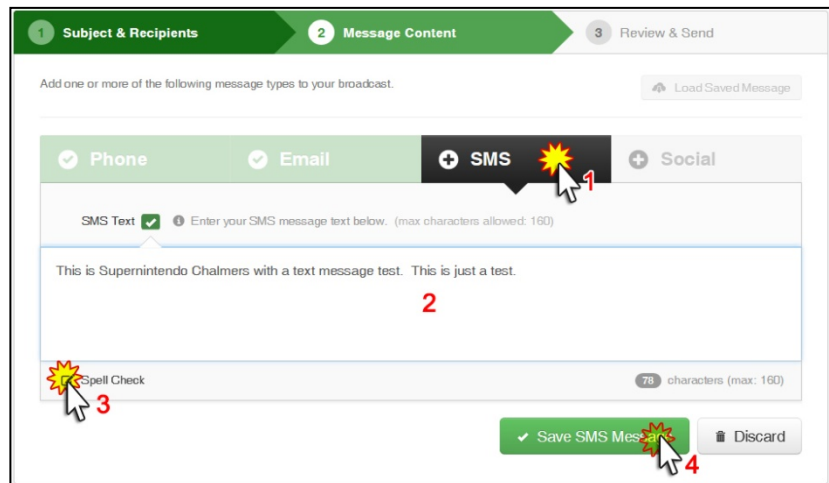
 Important: *Before sending bulk SMS messages, you should check with your system administrator to ensure that the SchoolMessenger SMS "opt-in" process has been completed. While SMS messages are an effective way to communicate with people who prefer to receive text information on their wireless devices, it is important to abide by the protocols established by the wireless carriers and industry regulators. If you would like to read more about this subject, please view the SMS Messaging content in the online help.*

Once you have configured all of the types of messages you want to include in your SchoolMessenger broadcast, confirm that there is a checkmark in front of each of those types and then click on the "**Continue**" button on the lower right of the New Broadcast screen.
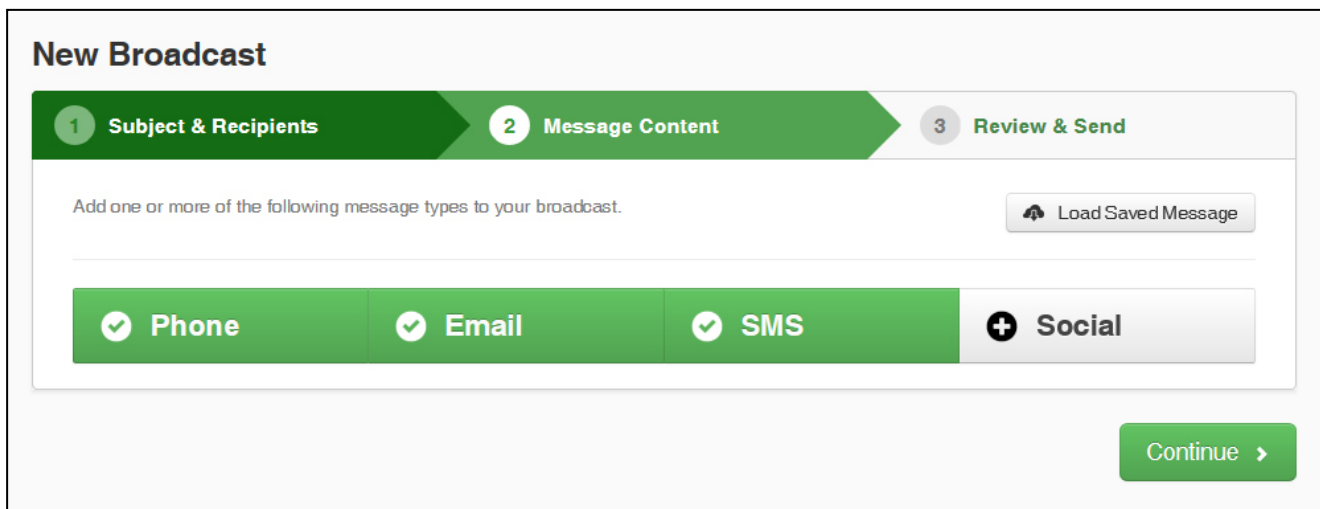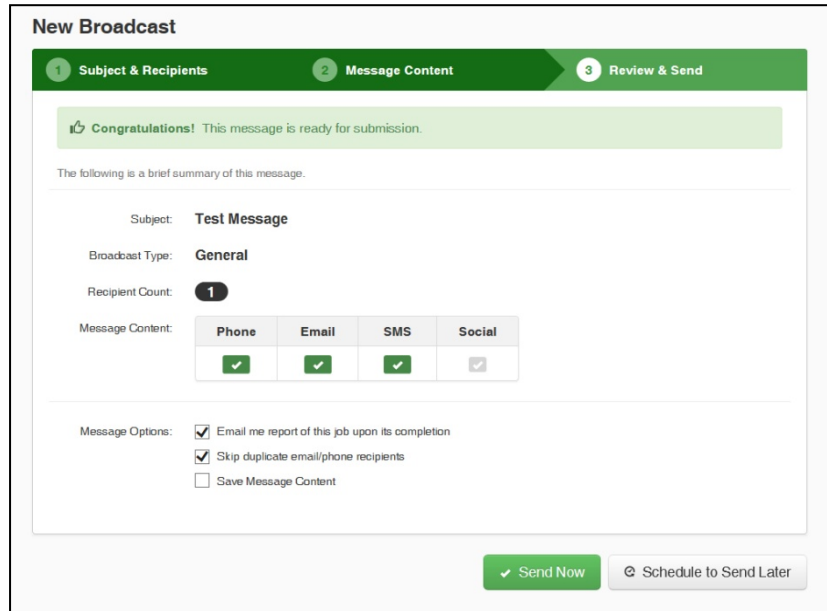

 Note: *If you would like to learn more about including social media content, such as Facebook, Twitter, RSS Feeds or Push Notifications please read the* Advanced Training Guide.

Step 3: Review & Send

After you've created your list and message, you'll arrive at the "**Review and Send**" screen. This screen will confirm the name (subject) of the broadcast, the broadcast type selected, the number of recipients, and what types of messages have been created.

1. Double-check the **Subject** and **Broadcast Type**.

2. Double-check the **Recipient Count**. *For this test broadcast, Recipient Count should be 1 (You).*

3. Ensure there is a green checkbox under each of the **Message Content** types you intend to deliver.

4. Make any desired adjustments to the default **Message Options** selections as described below.

🔴 *Important: If the **Recipient Count** number doesn't match the number of recipients you expect, click on the words "**Subject & Recipients**" in step 1, on the upper green bar, to go back and confirm your list choices. If you make **any changes** to your Subject, Lists or Messages, you must click the "**Continue**" and/or "**Save**" buttons on the lower right of each step until you are back at step 3, Review and Send. Do **not** click on "Review and Send" in the upper green bar to return to step 3, unless you have made no changes at all – doing so will delete all changes and revert to the original Lists and Messages.*

Message Options

There are 3 different Message Option settings to consider when preparing to send your broadcast.

1. **Email me a report of this job upon its completion**: After the broadcast has finished running, you will receive an email titled "**Job Complete: ……..**" with an attached PDF showing a detailed report and graph of the results.

2. **Skip duplicate email/phone recipients**: This prevents recipients who have their phone numbers or email addresses associated to multiple records in your list (like a parent who has two kids in the same school) from receiving duplicate phone calls, texts and emails of the same message. In almost all cases, this should be left checked.

3. **Save Message Content**: Checking this option means that the entire contents of step 2, *Message Content*, will be saved in the "**Message Builder**" under the Broadcasts tab of your SchoolMessenger account. This is helpful for messages that you will be using on a frequent basis, where the message content does not change. Most messages are unique and should *not* be saved for later use. You can still review the content of any broadcast, listen to voice, or read sms and email messages from the Broadcasts screen of your account at any time.

Sending Broadcasts

Once you are satisfied that your lists and messages are correct, there are two options for sending your broadcast on its way:

1. **Send Now** does just that – clicking it will set your broadcast up to immediately begin calling, texting and emailing the recipients on your list(s). *Note: If you are creating your broadcast outside of the hours your user account settings have been allowed, the broadcast will not begin until the time window opens again.*

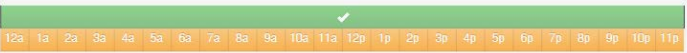2. **Schedule to Send Later** will provide you with the options to set a start date, start time and end time.

For the purposes of this tutorial, please choose "**Send Now**" and then "**Continue**" when prompted.

Be prepared to answer your phone, receive a text message and check your email - because this broadcast is on its way!
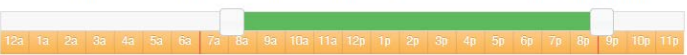
Receiving Messages

Phone

When you send voice messages, they will generally begin ringing all of the phones on your list within mere moments. Be prepared to answer the phone and say, "Hello" – this will tell SchoolMessenger that it has a real person on the phone and you'll hear a brief introduction message asking you to "Press 1 to listen." It will also give you the option to press "#" to place the call on hold while the appropriate recipient is located.

Note: SchoolMessenger uses a technology that determines the difference between a real person picking up the phone and an answering machine. To help ensure that the entire message is delivered, the system is listening for either a brief greeting such as "Hello." or "This is Jane, can I help you." to indicate a real person, or a "beep" to indicate that an answering machine is ready to record. Since many people choose to have long, humorous and/or musical answering machine greetings, try to avoid noisy backgrounds or talking during playback, as a noisy background might sound like a long answering machine greeting and the message will stop playing, then start over when it again detects quiet.

Email

Getting an email through SchoolMessenger is exactly like any other email. It will display the "From" address based on what you entered in the steps described above, on page 9. Just as with other email, if you do not see it in your inbox in a timely fashion, you should refresh your inbox and check to see if your email provider marked it as "junk" – especially if this is the first time you've ever received an email through the SchoolMessenger system.
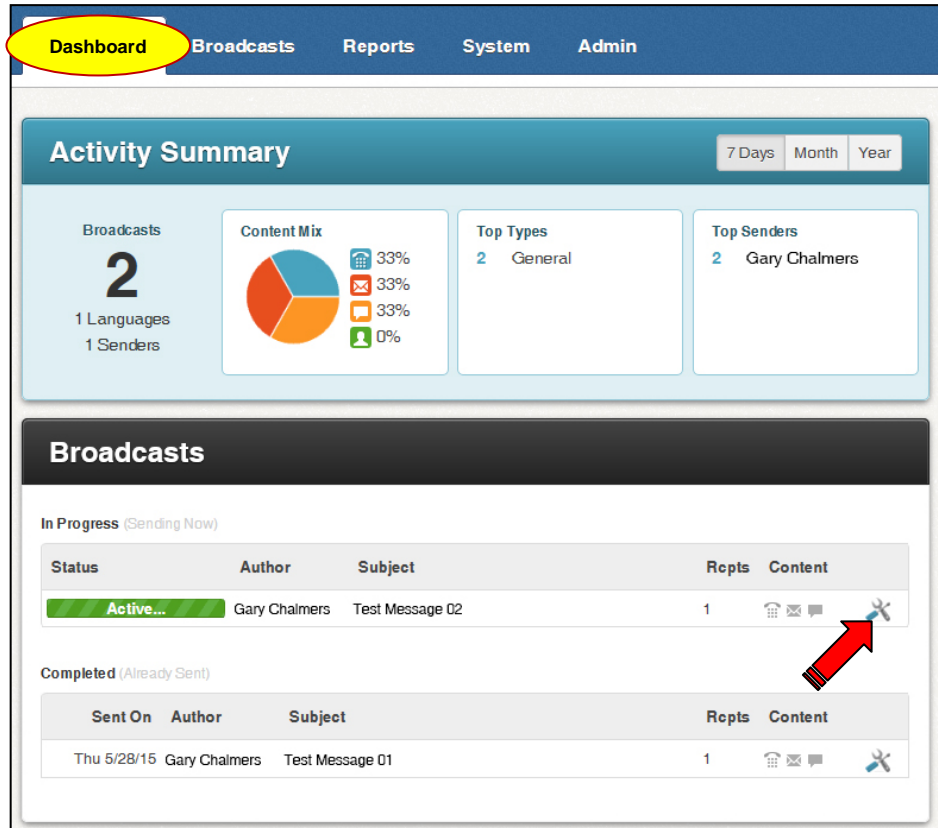
SMS Text

The first thing to remember about sending SMS text messages through SchoolMessenger is that recipients must go through an "**opt-in**" process before you can begin broadcasting to them. There are a few different ways to complete this process (described in the SMS Text Messages portion of your accounts online help), but a person must complete the opt-in process before they will receive your SchoolMessenger text messages. Once a recipient is opted in, they will receive your SchoolMessenger SMS messages just like any other text message. These messages will always appear to be coming from "**68453**".

Tracking Progress

After you have sent a broadcast, you can view it's progress and current status. You can view this by clicking the "**Dashboard**" tab on the upper left.

As soon as you clicked *Send Now*, your Broadcast was moved into the "**In Progress**" position in the Broadcasts section of the Dashboard. It is possible that your test Broadcast, since it only included one recipient, was sent so quickly that it already moved into the Completed area by the time you returned to the Dashboard, where a typical broadcast usually has many more recipients and will take slightly longer to reach everyone.

You can monitor delivery progress by pointing your cursor at the 🔧 tool icon next to your job and clicking on "**Monitor**" in the dialog bubble.

Broadcast Summary

Once a broadcast is complete, pointing at the ⚒ tool icon and clicking "Reports" will take you to the "**Broadcast Summary**" screen. This shows the delivery results and is divided into three sections designed to give you a quick overview of the broadcast results.

Related Links

Related Links provides access to download a PDF, view time details and create reports of recipients not contacted.

Summary

The Summary section shows a brief overview of the broadcast settings.

Totals

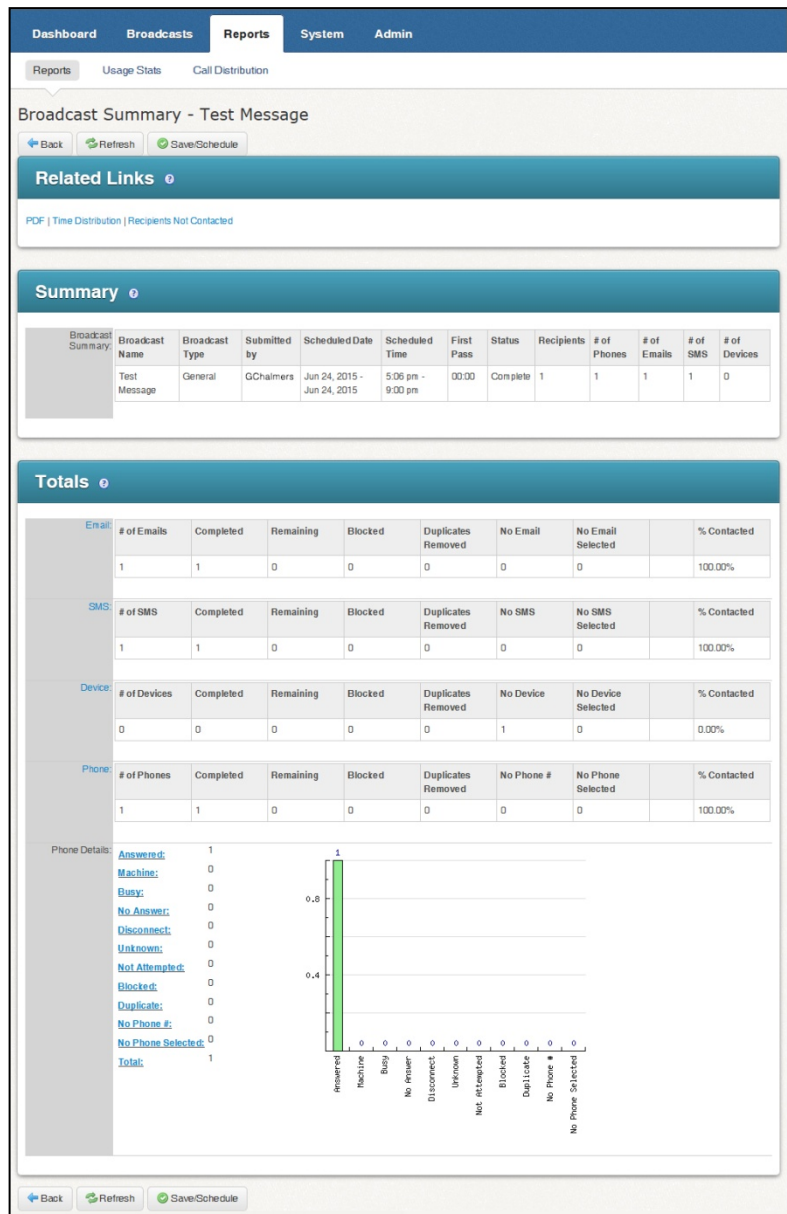The Totals section contains a breakdown of the total calls, emails and/or SMS text messages sent.

You can view a detailed report of each possible type of phone results by clicking the underlined links on the left of the *Phone Details* chart. (ie: To get a list of all of the phones which were answered by a live person, click the *Answered* link.)

Other Types of Reports

It is also possible to generate a custom report that includes more specific information by using the "**Report Builder**" found under the *Reports* tab. For example: with a *Contact History* report template, you can determine how many times a certain student was called specifically about attendance. Contact History reports also allow you to determine which student ID numbers are associated with a particular phone number.

Many types of reports can be scheduled to run automatically at certain times. An easily generated report using the *Phone Log* template is a great way to track regularly occurring data such as the *disconnected* results each month.

💡**Note:** *For more information on creating reports, see the* Reports *section of the online help or by reviewing the* Advanced Training Guide.

Appendix A: Creating Lists Using Rules

In this section, you will learn how to create a list using rules, including some popular list types. These lists can be made either in the Subject & Recipients step of creating a New Broadcast (just like you did in the main tutorial in this document) or from the "**Lists**" section of the "**Broadcasts**" tab.

Create a List Using Rules

From the *Lists* menu of the *Broadcasts* tab, clicking the ⊕ Add New List **Add New List** button on the right will bring you to the "**List Editor**".

The "**List Content**" section is used to create rules that filter the contacts from your database imports down to specific groups of people. Selecting which field of data to use (such as Grade or School), adding a criteria (such as "is/is not" or "equals/does not equal/starts with"), and then selecting the appropriate value allows you to create almost infinite combinations to target very specific contact groups. Once you've created a list using rules, you can save the list for future use.
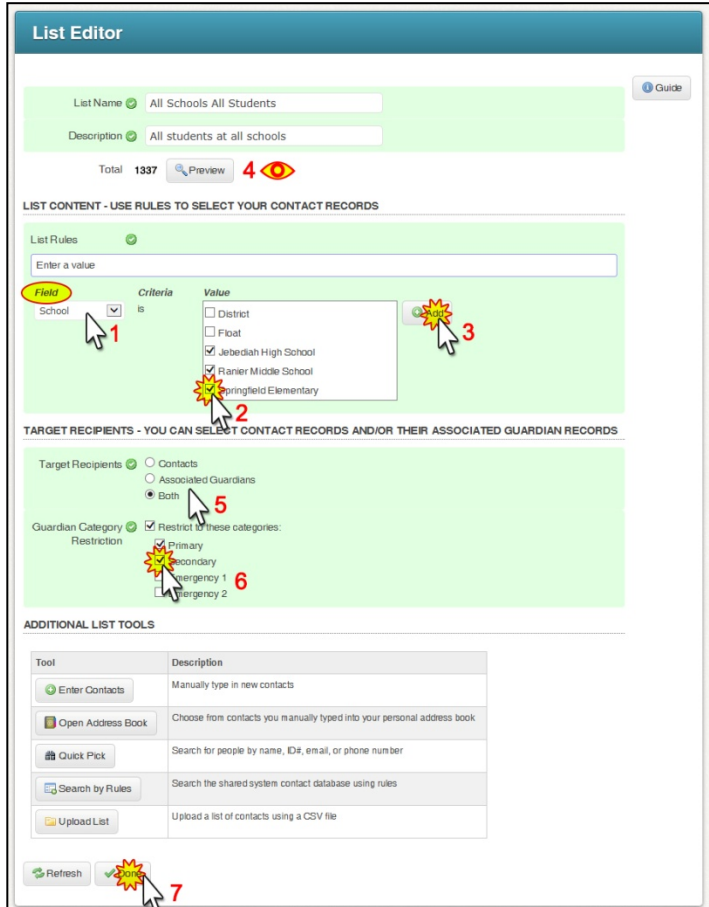
⚠️ *Important: When you create lists using rules, you are using contact information in your database which is frequently being updated automatically. This means you can save and reuse rule based lists and trust that they will always be up to date.*

Here are some detailed examples of using rules to create a few popular lists.

All lists begin with giving them a *name* and *description* that identify the contacts they will contain. This list will contain all of the contacts in the whole school district.

All School Student List

1. Select *School* from the *Select a Field* dropdown menu.

2. Click the checkbox next to all your schools.

3. Click the "**Add**" button.

4. Check the "**Total**" next to the *Preview* button to ensure that the number reflects approximately what you expect.

5. Select whether you want this list to broadcast to **Contacts** (students), their **Guardians**, or **Both**.

6. Select which **Guardian Categories** should be included.

7. Click **Done** at the bottom.

Staff List

1. In the **List Content** section of the List Editor, select "**Contact Type**" from the **Field** dropdown menu.

2. Select "**equals**" or "**contains**" from the **Criteria** menu (if your contact type field data potentially has more than one value, use "contains").

3. In the **Value** field, type "Staff" or whatever your school uses to identify them.

4. Click the **Add button**.

5. Confirm that the number of recipients is what you expected.

6. Click the Done at the bottom.

Grade Level List

Each rule you add to a list lets you further refine or add more recipients. You can add as many rules as you need to define a particular list. This example will give us a list of all the 6th graders at a specific elementary school.

1. After giving the list a name and description, select "**School**" from the **Field** menu, check off the school (or schools) you want to select, and then click "**Add**".

2. Select "**Grade**" from the new **Field** menu.

3. Select "**is**" under **Criteria**.

4. Check the desired grade(s) from the **Value** list.

5. Click the **Add** button.

6. Check the recipient **Total** above.

7. Set the options for **Target Recipients** & **Guardian Category**.

8. Click the **Done** button.

More List Building Options

While rules are a very powerful and often all you need, they are not the only way to create lists. For additional information on creating lists, please review the ***Advanced Training Guide*** in the online help by clicking the the blue "**Help**" link in the top right of the screen. There you will find additional information on advanced list building. This includes steps to add/remove individuals from your list rules, steps for uploading files, and more.

Appendix B: Managing Your Account Settings

You may edit your account preferences by clicking on the "**Account**" link, always located at upper right of any screen. You will be taken to the page shown below, where you can view or edit your account settings.

💡 *Note: You may be unable to edit certain fields If your account was added to the system using a data import or if your Access Profile does not include permission to do so.*

Remote phone access: Located at the top of the window, this is the phone number that you can use to access your SchoolMessenger account, from any touch-tone phone, in order to record a message and send a notification when a computer is not available. *To learn more about this feature, please view the* "Remote Telephone Access" *section of the online help.*

Account Information

First Name: Your first name.

Last Name: Your last name.

Username: The name you use to log into School-Messenger. Usernames are case sensitive and must be a minimum of 5 characters.

Password: Your login password. Passwords are case sensitive, must be a minimum of 5 characters, and must contain at least 2 different types of letters, numbers or symbols.

Phone User ID: Used to log in to *Remote Phone Access*. Must be a sequence of at least four non-repeating numbers.

Phone PIN Code: Also used to log in to *Remote Phone Access*. Must be a sequence of at least four non-repeating numbers. Your PIN cannot be the same as your *Phone User ID*.

Account Email: Usually your email address. This address will be used for auto reports. It is also the email address that will be used if you request a password reset.

Auto Report Emails: Any additional email addresses that should also receive job completion reports. Multiple email addresses can be used if separated with semicolons.

Phone: The phone number where you can usually be reached for recording voice messages.

Account Information: Chalmers Gary

Remote phone access #: 888-555-1234

User Information

ACCOUNT INFORMATION

First Name	Chalmers
Last Name	Gary
Username	gchalmers
Password	•••••••••••••• Password Strength:
Confirm Password	••••••••••••••
Phone User ID	4085551234
Phone PIN Code	•••••
Confirm PIN	•••••
Account Email	gchalmers@somedomain.com
Auto Report Emails	gchalmers@somedomain.com
Phone	(408) 555-1234

BROADCAST DEFAULTS

Default Start Time	6:30 am
Default End Time	9:00 pm
Call Attempts	3
Days to Run	1
Personal Caller ID	(888) 527-5225

SOCIAL MEDIA OPTIONS

Add Facebook Account	Connect to Facebook
Add Twitter Account	Connect to Twitter

DISPLAY SETTINGS

Action Links	Icons and Text
Hide Email Editor Tools	☐

Done   Cancel

Broadcast Defaults

Default Start Time & Default End Time: These settings are used to create a default for the earliest time of day and latest time of day you generally expect to begin and stop sending messages to recipients. Most accounts set these times to *begin* around 75 minutes before the earliest time students normally arrive at school and *end* by 9pm, as calling earlier or later could produce negative responses from recipients.

These two settings can be adjusted at the time you are scheduling a broadcast, but could be limited by your access profile so that you may not be able to send broadcasts outside of the times set by your account administrator.

Call Attempts: This represents the number of times SchoolMessenger will attempt to deliver a voice message to phones. If a call to a specific phone number produces a busy signal, is not answered within 45 seconds, or gets an operator message (ie: *"The number you have dialed is not a working number, please…"*), the system will try the call again later. This function could also be limited by your access profile.

Days to Run: The default number of days you would like the system to keep making attempts to send undelivered messages. This setting does not usually come into play unless a broadcast is scheduled to run very close to the above mentioned *End Time*, at which time any recipients to whom the broadcast has not been successfully delivered will be "paused" and then attempts will begin again the next day at the set *Start Time*.

Personal Caller ID: This is the number that recipients will see on their caller ID when you send a voice broadcast from your account.

⚠ **Important**: If your account has been set up for a "*Call-In Message Retrieval*" number, your caller ID will be automatically overwritten by the Call-In Message Retrieval number.

Social Media Options

Add Facebook Account: Using the provided tools, you can configure your SchoolMessenger account for including posts to Facebook in your broadcasts.

Add Twitter Account: Using the provided tools, you can configure your SchoolMessenger account for including Tweets in your broadcasts.

💡 **Note:** Your Access Profile may restrict you to only posting to very specific Facebook or Twitter accounts. Please see your account administrator for guidance on which social media accounts are authorized and for guidelines about posting. For more information about configuring your SchoolMessenger account for social media, please contact SchoolMessenger support at 800-920-3897.

Display Settings

Action Links: You can specify whether you want links in the user interface to display with icons or simply as text.

Hide Email Editor Tools: Check this if you would like the HTML email editor tools to be hidden by default when creating email messages.

Appendix C: Quick Tips for Voice Messaging

SchoolMessenger phone calls can be an effective instrument for building relationships with families, and the sound of familiar school official's voice can leave a lasting impression. The following tips can help ensure that your messages are easily understood and well received.

Be prepared.

Always take a moment to consider the purpose and goal of your message: Who is the message for, what are the important details, how you would like the recipients to react? If the message is intended or likely to require action by you or others within your organization, make sure you are all on the same page to avoid contradiction or lack of resources.

Type your message in advance.

Begin with your name, school and position with the school and then get right to the heart of what your message is about. Read it out loud to yourself and have a second person read it if possible. Make sure to repeat any important details such as an address, phone number, date, time or specific location.

Get to the reason for the call.

In this age of information overload our attention span isn't what it used to be. Make it clear why you are calling and Use brief, concise and simplified language and stick to the point. It's a fact: you generally have about 30 seconds (sometimes less) to convey your message before losing a listener's attention. Also be aware that many answering machines and voice mail systems will only record for 30 seconds or so before hanging up.

Create a good impression.

Messages are often your first and most frequent contact with people, so make it count. Smile when you speak; people can hear it in your voice. Take a deep breath before you start recording (you want to keep your voice from trailing off or sounding exerted) and speak up. Put some energy in your voice and change inflection along the way. Avoid sounding monotone - if you sound bored, your recipients will not pay attention. Don't speak too slowly or too quickly – find a realistic, conversational pace. Remember, *how* you say something can be just as important as *what* you say.

Avoid recipient fatigue.

Trying to cover too many complicated and/or unrelated issues in one phone message is a bad idea. Decide what is really important and, if you really need to cover multiple topics, consider how you can break them up into multiple calls – or even move some of the topics to an email. This improves the chances that recipients will pay attention, understand and remember your message.

Also, avoid sending messages too frequently. If people get messages from you all the time, they begin to stop listening and/or paying attention to them – your message becomes background noise. Some people may also begin to view messages as a nuisance. When this happens, people inadvertently miss important information.

Timing is everything.

When you send a message can be as important as the message itself. Consider when is too soon and when is too late for the information you're delivering. A message sent too many days in advance can become forgotten. A message sent too late may leave people with not enough time to act accordingly.