

## HISD Text Messaging -- FAQs for Parents

At the Houston Independent School District, communication is one of our top priorities. We all must work together to ensure our students are successful, which is why we believe it's so vital for our parents to stay informed.

This fall, we're taking another step toward achieving that goal by introducing a new communication tool — text message alerts.

Formally launching on Sept. 9, text messaging won't replace our existing means of communications — callouts, emails, letters sent home with students or notices posted on our website. Rather, it will be an additional way to quickly and efficiently contact you about campus emergencies and other important district and campus events.

Signing up for HISD's text message alerts is simple. See the frequently asked questions below for more information about the process.

**How do I sign up?** Text the word "YES" to 68453 from each cell phone on which you wish to receive text messages. Make sure all cell phone numbers are registered with the school your child attends.

**How will I know if it worked?** You will receive the following text message: *You're now registered with the SchoolMessenger notification service. Reply STOP to cancel, HELP for help. Msg&data rates may apply.3msgs/mo. schoolmessenger.com/tm*

### **What happens if I don't sign up?**

If you do not voluntarily sign up in advance, but your cell phone numbers are already listed in the district's School Information System, you will receive an invitation to sign up for the system via text message on Sept. 9. The message will say: *Houston ISD text messages. Reply Y for aprx 3 msgs/mo. Txt HELP 4info. Msg&data rates may apply. See schoolmessenger.com/tm.* If you would like to receive emergency text notifications from HISD, reply "YES." If you do not want to receive texts from HISD, ignore the text message or reply with "NO," and you will not receive any future texts from HISD.

**I signed up for the service, but no longer want receive text messages from HISD. What do I do?** Simply text "STOP" or "NO" to 68453.

**I opted into text messaging – sent yes to 68453 – but I'm not receiving any texts.** Check with your child's school to make sure that your cell phone number is listed correctly in the School Information System. It may take a while for your number to become active after being changed or added. Be sure you have texted "yes" from your cell phone. It is also possible that HISD has not sent any emergency texts.

**Who can text me messages?** School administrators are authorized to text important messages to you. You also may hear from the HISD central office if there is a districtwide emergency such as school closures due to inclement weather.

**What types of messages can I expect to receive?** Text messaging will be reserved for emergencies such as school closings, lockdowns and other important messages.

**If I have children at more than one school, how will I know who sent the text message?** The school will identify themselves in their message. Each principal can send messages only to the students at his or her school.

**If I don't participate, will I miss important messages? In most cases** no, because your principal will continue to send voice messages to your telephone, including emergency and informational messages.

**Is there a charge for the texting service?** You may incur text message charges from your cell phone company. We encourage you to check with your service provider to make sure that texting is included in your cell phone plan before signing up.

**What if both my husband and I want to receive texts?** Each of your cell phone numbers must be listed in the School Information System, and both of you must text "yes" to 68453. Your child's school is responsible for entering and updating your cell phone numbers in the School Information System.

**Can my child's grandparent receive texts?** Yes, as long as their cell phone number is listed in the School Information System.

**What if I would like my child to receive texts as well?** Contact your child's school and request that his or her cell phone number be added to the School Information System, and then text "yes" to 68453 from your child's phone. High school and middle school principals will be able to send texts to their students in emergency situations.

**I texted yes to 68453 but changed my mind. How do I turn off text messages?** All you have to do is text "STOP" to 68453.

**I am going on vacation and don't want to receive any texts while I am gone. What should I do?** You may opt-in and opt-out of the service as often as you like. Simply text "YES" or "NO" at any time to 68453 to toggle the service on and off.

**Can anyone receive messages from my child's school?** Messages from your child's school can only be sent to the cell phone numbers that you have authorized to be on file for your child. It is important to let your child's school know of any changes to your cell phone numbers.

**What if I have a cell phone but haven't give the number to my child's school?** You will not receive any text messages.

**I don't think this service works with my phone. I sent yes to 68453, and one of these messages came back:**

- Service access denied.
- Message failed.
- Short code may have expired, or short code texting may be blocked on your account.
- Does not participate.

These replies DO NOT indicate that your mobile provider can't receive messages from HISD. Rather, it is an indication that you do not have text messaging enabled for that number, and you will need to resolve it with your mobile provider. Additional helpful details:

- All cell phone service providers have a different response when short code messaging is blocked. The above are the most common.
- You may be able to enable text messaging by going online to your provider's website.
- Providers use various names for texting service, including short code, SMS (short message service), or premium. If you ask about text messages, they may assume you want person to person. Therefore, when you contact your service provider, be specific about wanting to be able to send and receive "short code/SMS/premium" text messages.
- Most TV programs with a voting component – American Idol, Dancing with the Stars, etc. – use SMS messaging. If you are having trouble describing the type of service you want, tell your provider that's the same thing you want to add to your cell phone.
- Some plans may not allow for "short code/SMS/premium" messaging but most frequently, it is disabled due to the account holder's preference and can be changed rather than getting a new cell phone service package.