

HWDSB

School Messenger SMS Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents

Why did I receive a text message from School Messenger?

HWDSB activated the text message function of its School Messenger communication system, making it possible for parents to opt in to SMS messages if they choose to register. Standard message and data rates apply.

The initial text was to engage parents in their consent. If you choose not to receive messages, you can ignore or delete this message. If you replied Y (yes), you confirmed that you wish to receive these messages.

Text Message
Friday 1:57 PM

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board messages. Reply Y to confirm, HELP 4 info. Msg&data rates may apply. Msg freq varies. schoolmessenger.com/smsca

There are three options to communicate using School Messenger, which accesses information from our student information system PowerSchool: phone, email and text. Before Feb. 7, 2020, we had only used the phone option. We have activated the text function and will be exploring the email option in the near future.

What will the service be used for?

We're focused on reaching parents and staff using the method they prefer to notify them about urgent issues and timely matters. Texting is a popular option as phone call communication is changing. Phone communication will continue if that is the way you wish to receive information. In time, this may be used for teacher-parent communication. A digital engagement committee will review these options.

Can you give me a couple examples of what types of text messages I would receive if I sign up for this service?

HWDSB and its schools would use the text function – if families have agreed to it – as one way to share messages about winter cancellations, school closures, event promotion, surveys and school emergencies.

Why does School Messenger have information about my children?

HWDSB uses School Messenger for its automated phone calls. The provider, Intrado, is also a partner to PowerSchool, our student information system, which means that information required to operate School Messenger (and student attendance program Safe Arrival) flows from PowerSchool. HWDSB has assessed Intrado, regarding its relationship with PowerSchool, to ensure that its operations meet relevant security standards and privacy legislation in Ontario. The legal authorization to disclose the personal information HWDSB collects from parents/guardians to third party service providers such as PowerSchool and Intrado comes from section 32(c-d) of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) which provides that school boards can outsource when required to complete necessary, school-related functions.

What if I deleted the message or changed my mind after saying no?

Parents can go into the School Messenger website or app, to select My Message Preferences and add SMS as their preferred option.

HWDSB

If I didn't get this message, how can I register my cell phone number?

If a parent did not receive this message, you can contact your school and they will add the number to your child's profile. Cell phone numbers cannot be added to your profile using the School Messenger app.

Why does the Board have permission to text parents?

The Board has the legal authority to outsource to a third-party provider when it comes to offering a service, such as communications, for its employees that we are unable to do in house.

The Board has the legal authority to provide to third party service providers the personal information in its custody that is necessary to provide the service. (i.e. employees or parents/guardians of children enrolled with HWDSB under the age of 18, students over the age of 18, etc.). Under the municipal privacy legislation, boards must have vetted the service and/or ensured through contract that privacy and security measures are in place.

We are obligated to maintain our relationship with third-party service providers with high integrity and to ensure our employee, parent/guardian and student information is protected and secure. The SMS service is for your convenience but is also completely optional, which is why you were provided with an opportunity to opt in.

How do parents ensure they don't get multiple phones calls, emails, etc.?

Parents can go into their accounts in the app or [website](#) and manage what numbers are called for what types of broadcasts.

Who can I contact if I have a question or concern?

Please contact your school office or principal if you have a concern about School Messenger. They will work with HWDSB support staff to resolve the issue.

If your concern is about privacy only, please contact Sally Landon, HWDSB Manager of Research and Analytics, by phone at 905.527.5092 x2303 or by email at slandon@hwdsb.on.ca