

message from me



Message from Me Instructions

Welcome

Welcome to Message from Me! The Message from Me technology consists of two parts, the website and the iPad app. The Message from Me website is where you will configure and manage all of your center’s information including users, contact information, and message archives. The app will be used in classrooms to record and send messages. This document will walk you through the basics of both the website and the app as well as provide a few pointers for classroom integration.

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Website Use

Teacher & Administrator Registration

- Go to www.messagefromme.org
- Register.
 - Enter your login information, center info, contact information, and picture.
 - Note: Under the second registration step, “center info”, please check the list of existing centers carefully to see if your center is already listed. If multiple teachers from your center are registering at the same time (i.e. during a training session) it is best to choose one teacher to create the new center, wait for this teacher to be verified, and then have the other teachers register.
 - Forgot your password? Visit www.messagefromme.org and click “Log in” button on the top right hand screen. Then, click on the “Forgot Password?” This will generate an email with a temporary password to access your Message from Me account.
- **Your account will need to be verified before you can continue.**
 - If there are no teachers or administrators registered for the center, the website will email Emily Hamner at the Carnegie Mellon University’s CREATE Lab. She will verify the first user at the center.
 - Subsequent verification requests will be sent to already verified teachers or administrators. They will verify the additional teachers and administrators.
 - For more details on the verification process see “Understanding Verification & Designated Approver” in part 4 below.

Add a New Classroom

You will need: class roster, family member contact information, digital photos of students, and digital photos of family members (optional).

Enter Student and Family Data

- Adding a new classroom is the easiest way to configure Message from Me when you have a group of new students and new parents. This method should only be used to create a group with no existing students or parents, i.e. a new incoming class of students. (See the section below on Helpful Website Features for other ways to manage enrollment.)
- Begin on your center’s homepage. This is the page you will see when you first log in or you can access it by clicking “My Center” at the top of the page.
- Click the “Add New Classroom” link under manage enrollment.
- Enter the classroom name. This will become the group name for sending group messages. Something parents will recognize as their child’s classroom is ideal. Click the “Continue” button.

- Click the “Add/Remove” button to add teachers to the classroom. (Any teachers added here will belong to the classroom and will be a part of the group created for the classroom. If your teachers haven't registered yet, you can edit the group to add teachers later.)
 - In the popup window, click the “Not Connected” button next to each teacher you wish to add to this group. Click the grey and white “X” in the upper right corner of the popup window when you are done selecting teachers.
 - Click the “Continue” button.
- Enter the names of all children in the group. Use the “+ Add another Student” link on the right to make space for additional names. After you have entered all the names, click the “Continue” button.
- Enter family member information. There are 6 pieces of information for each adult:
 - *First name*
 - *Last name*
 - *Child* – By default no children are connected. Click the “Edit” link to connect a child to this adult. In the popup window, click the “Not Connected” button next to the child(ren) who should be connected to this adult. Click the grey and white “X” in the upper right corner of the popup window when done selecting children.
 - *Label* –The label is the name the child calls the adult (for example Dad, Grandma, Aunt Mo). This is the label that will appear on the app to identify this user to the child.
 - *Email address* – Users can have an email address, cell phone number, or both. If families at your center change phone numbers frequently, we highly recommend including an email address.
 - *Cell phone number*
- Click the “+Add another User” link to make space for additional names. After all parent information is entered, click the “Create Classroom!” button.
 - You have now created an account for each adult and student in the list, as well as a group for group messages.
 - Any adult for whom you entered an email address will receive a welcome email with their username and password.
 - At this point you could technically begin to use the iPad app, however, the app will work best for children after you add pictures of both the child and the adult. Children will use the pictures to identify themselves and their family members in the app. When adult photos are available, there are less opportunities for misdirected messages.

Add Photos for Students

- Navigate to the “Students” page found under “My Center” at the top of the page.
- Click the “Edit” button for the student you wish to add a photo to.

- Click the “Choose File” button on the left side of the page under the child’s name. Navigate to the saved image file or choose “Take a Photo” option if uploading photo on an iPad.
- Click “Save Changes” at the bottom right of the page.
- The page will refresh and you will see the student’s image.

Add Photos for Family Members

- Navigate to the “Adults” page found under “My Center” at the top of the page.
- Click the on the user you wish to add a photo to.
- Click the “Choose File” button on the left side of the page. Navigate to the saved image file for the adult and click open.
- Click “Save Changes” at the bottom right of the page.
- The page will refresh and you will see the adult’s image.

(Note: When accessing their Message from Me account, adults have the option to add their own photo to the website. Be mindful of monitoring the appropriate nature of the photos).

Helpful Website Features

Manage Enrollment

Navigate to your center’s home page by clicking on the “My Center” link at the top of the page. Under the manage enrollment section you will see links for several other common management tasks.

- There are times when you may wish to add students or adults without creating a new classroom. For example, a new student joins a class mid-year, parents wish to add grandparents as contacts for their children, or families already in the Message from Me system have a second child starting at the center. Use the links here to add new students, add adults, or add center staff.
- You can also create additional groups. For example if students within the class work regularly in the small groups, you could create a group for each set of children. Children can belong to more than one group.
- At the end of the school year you can use the “Delete Graduating Students” link to quickly delete students and family members leaving your center. (Note: While this selection deletes the child’s information from the center/school’s account, the family member still has access to the child’s messages on their account).

Monitoring Student Usage

- Click on the “My Center” link.
- Click the “View detailed center statistics” link under center accounts. (Note: This page may be slow to load). You can view charts showing the number of messages sent by month, by each student, or by each group.

Keeping Accounts Up-to-Date

- To change an adult’s phone number
 - Navigate to the “Adults” page (located under “My Center” at the top of the page).
 - Select the adult and click.
 - Scroll to the notifications section and update. Remember to click “Save Changes”.
 - Use this section for any changes in adult information.
- To change a connection for a child
 - Navigate to the “Students” page (located under “My Center” at the top of the page).
 - Select the student and click “Edit”.
 - Click the “Add/Remove” button.
 - To disconnect an adult click the “Connected” button. To connect an adult enter a title and click the “Not Connected” button. Click the “X” in the upper right corner of the box to return to the student’s profile page.
 - Remember to click the “Save Changes” button.

Alternate Signup Method

Most centers and schools prefer to collect family contact information and then accounts as described above. However, family members can also sign up directly through the Message from Me website by clicking the “register” link on the homepage. If you ask families to sign up in this way, you will need to verify their accounts before they can receive any messages.

Understanding Verification & Designated Approver

- The verification process is designed to protect student confidentiality. Each user registering through the website must be verified before they will be able to receive messages or access site features.
- When a user (for example a teacher or family member) registers through the website, the site sends an email alert so the user can be verified.
 - If there is a *designated approver* set for the center, the email goes to her.
 - If there is no designated approver, the email goes to all teachers and administrators registered for the center.
 - If there are no teachers or administrators registered for the center, the email goes to Emily Hamner at the Carnegie Mellon University’s CREATE Lab.
- To assign a teacher as the designated approver for your center:
 - Log in.
 - View the teacher’s profile page.

- Click the checkbox next to “Designated approver”.
- Click “Save Changes”.

Verifying Accounts

- Responsibilities of the Designated Approver:
 - Confirm that the user does belong with your center.
 - Click the verification link in the email. This will take you to a verification webpage.
 - Verify that the student pictured matches the adult/family member.
 - If the student does not match the parent, click the “Choose from Roster” button and select the appropriate student. Click the “X” in the upper right corner of the pop-up box to return to the verification page.
 - Teachers and administrators will not have any students listed.
 - Click the “Verify” button to verify the user.
- In addition to clicking on the verification email link, you can also access the verification page as follows:
 - Navigate to the “Adults” page (located under “My Center” at the top of the page).
 - Scroll to the bottom of the page where you will see a list of unverified users.
 - Click the “Verify” link under the adult you wish to verify.

App Use

Launching the App

- If the app is not already downloaded, go to the Apple App Store and download the “Message from Me” app. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/message-from-me/id588816459?mt=8>
- Launch the “Message from Me” app.
- Enter your Message from Me website username and password.
 - (Note: This is only required the first time the app is launched. After this the app will automatically connect to the center associated with the username entered).

App Features

- Check the network connection
 - When the iPad has a network connection you will see a small icon in the upper left corner. (Note: Wireless internet is required.)
 - The app cannot send messages or sync with the website without a network connection. Check your iPad’s settings if you do not see a network icon.
- Send a message from a student
 - Tap the student’s image to begin. Follow the prompts to choose a recipient, take a picture, record a message, and send.
 - Note: The first time you use the app, you may receive a prompt asking if you want to allow the app to access the iPad photos and use the microphone. Please say yes.
- Switch between the whole center and a group
 - Tap the word “Groups” in the upper left corner. Select your desired group from the drop down menu.
- Send a group message
 - Scroll down below the images of the students to the “Groups” subheading. Tap the group image and follow the prompts to send a message to all members of that group.
- Sync the app with the website
 - Tap the circular arrow in the upper right corner. This will refresh the data in the app with the current data from the website (student names, user images, recipients, etc.).
 - Note: The app will automatically sync the first time it is run after the iPad is powered on. You need to manually sync if you update information on the website such as student names, images, or connected adults and the iPad has not been turned off recently. You do not need to sync when you update parent contact information (e.g. email address or phone number).

Classroom Integration

Message from Me can be incorporated in to the classroom in a variety of ways depending on the characteristics of your individual classroom environment. Listed below are some suggestions.

Individual Messages

- Try to have each child send at least 1 – 2 messages per week.
- Keep in mind that it is ok for the teacher to send messages or to assist children in sending messages.
 - Capture a photo of a child transitioning in the classroom or when a milestone is achieved to share the positive message with a family member.
- Use the Educator’s Guide when creating lesson plans for ideas on how to incorporate Message from Me into your daily learning experiences.
 - The Educator’s Guide contains over 125 activity ideas. Created and designed by educators.
 - Share your own activity ideas and we will incorporate them into future versions of the guide. Email Katie Gullone at katie@tryingtogether.org to share your ideas.
- Message from Me can be incorporated into structured activities such as a classroom job.
 - Some suggestions include a classroom Message from Me monitor, mentor, or as a turn in child directed play or other part of the day.
- Remind families of forms or paperwork due back to the center/school; for example, a field trip permission form.

Group Messages

The group message feature will send the same message to the contacts of all students in the group. Sometimes it is not feasible to have each child send an individual message, however you can use the group message feature to help keep all families informed.

- Share a class activity. Introduce families to daily routines, share fun activities, or communicate about current learning themes.
- Share tips with families on how to engage children in conversations around classroom activities or extend learning at home.
- Improve average daily attendance (ADA) through the promotion of an upcoming activity; for example, a special visitor in the classroom or activity happening tomorrow which children will not want to miss.
- Use a family engagement tool. Encourage families to attend upcoming school events.

Help

We are excited that you will be integrating Message from Me into your classroom environment! Please contact us with technical support needs, issues with the iPad app, or questions regarding the website. We also can provide support in the development of strategies, overcoming challenges when integrating Message from Me into your classroom, assessment and documentation use, or supporting family engagement.

- **Contact for Message from Me Support:** Katie Gullone, Program Associate for Educational Projects at Trying Together, 412-421-3889, katie@tryingtogether.org
- Our online FAQ provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions: <http://messagefromme.org/faq>