

Frequently Asked Questions About Texting With Athena's Workshop

What is Athena's Workshop?

Athena's Workshop's is a texting application for educators. The services we offer include: a self-service texting application and Present180 which is a full service texting solution designed to address chronic absenteeism and improve school attendance. Some of the key features of both products are:

- masking of all cell phones such that the phone captures the person's name, but not their cell phone number when texting,
- a permanent message log,
- Spanish-English translation,
- easy uploading of names using an Excel spreadsheet, and
- unlimited two-way texting.

Why would we need Athena's Workshop when we can just text message directly?

Athena's Workshop keeps your phone number private and also creates a permanent message log of all text messages so that they can be reviewed for appropriateness and in response to an intervention. We believe this protects all, parents, teachers and students.

Why not use Twitter?

Twitter does not create a permanent message log as messages can be deleted, so that they can be reviewed later and Twitter does not maintain a walled garden so that only students, parents and instructors can communicate with each other. Twitter allows messages to be forwarded on to others.

Do I need a smart phone?

No. Athena's Workshop works on any cell phone that is text enabled, whether it be basic feature phone or smart phone. Teachers can also access all functions from a computer Web browser.

How do students/parents sign up?

Your school administration will often begin the process for you up using their Student Information System (SIS). You will need to reply "yes" to a single validating text message to complete the sign-up process. You may also sign up from the link on the home page. In that case, ask the instructor for Athena's Workshop's for your class code. Knowing the class code is important to make sure you are in the correct class or group. For a student to sign-up, he or she will complete the online form with their first and last name, cell phone number, class code, student's birth month and year (to determine if the student is 12 or younger). A parent will also need their student's name and possibly the student's cell phone number if they will be texting using the system. You will receive a confirming text message at the end.

Will Athena's Workshop share my phone number?

We do not sell or rent our database of phone numbers. Our policy is to not reveal phone numbers of students, instructors, administrators or anyone else signed up to Athena's Workshop. Unlike our competitors, this is a permanent promise.

I am an instructor: Will students see my number?

No. All students, parents, or instructor's phone numbers will NEVER be revealed, only your name.

I am an instructor: I don't want to add names and numbers one by one. Can I enter my entire class at one time?

For our paid customers, we offer use of an Excel spreadsheet to load names and numbers into the system. We will send them a validating text message to which the parent and/or student reply "yes" or "si" at the day and time you request.

I am an instructor: The cell phone coverage in our building is very poor.

Fortunately, it does not matter. Teachers can send and reply to messages from the website portal that you can access from your computer.

I am an instructor: How many classes can I add?

You can add as many classes as you want to with our plan.

I'm a parent: Can the instructor see my phone number?

No. The instructor will not see your cell phone number. The instructor will only see your full name.

I am a parent: My child is 12. why do you require me to also sign up?

As part of our Federal Child Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) compliance procedure, we require that parents of children younger than 13 also receive all messages. This federal law is to protect young children and make sure that parents are aware of their child's online activity. If your child is 13 or older, parental sign-up is optional.

Can parents reply?

Yes. The beauty of Athena's Workshop is that parents or students can reply in same way they currently text back, but their phone number will not be revealed, only their name.

I am a student or parent, please just put me on the list.

Unfortunately, we cannot do that. By law, all recipients of text messages must choose to receive them. That law is to protect you from telemarketers and spammers. Obviously we do not want to be associated with unwanted messages, so we require that you personally send a single confirming text message, "yes" or "si".

I am a student or teacher: How do I opt out of receiving messages?

Students or parents should send a text back "Stop." Or, the instructor can edit each student's profile to delete the student and the student or parent will no longer receive messages.

Are class codes case-sensitive?

No.

How much does it cost?

Our texting platform is generally purchased by the school administration. It is free for parents, students, and teachers to use. The rates for administrators are \$1 per student per year for English, \$3 per student per year with Spanish translation for self-service texting. For Present180, the rate is \$20 per student per year. For all clients, there is a one-time set-up fee of \$500 and 100 student minimum.

Do you support international messaging?

Unfortunately, right now we only support US texting.

I have more questions or found a bug.

Send an email to hlevy-myers@athenasworkshop.com, or call 703.615.4429.

What if I have question about a message? I want to reply to a message.

Send the instructor a reply text message and the instructor will get it, without also getting your cell phone number. You will be identified only by your name.

Frequently Asked Questions About Present180

What is Present180?

Present180 improves student attendance. It is a full-service weekly text messaging campaign designed to engage parents in their child's education which academic research shows increases school attendance 3.2 percent with at-risk students in as little as 4 weeks. Present180 will send a customized message to parents about their student's previous month's attendance, performance on standardized tests, a tip about how to improve in the classroom and information about how important school and attendance are.

We already send out text messages daily when kids miss school, how are you different?

Research shows that parents do not add up how small absences develop into chronic absenteeism problems. Present180 believes that daily notification is part of the problem as it makes each absence seem small. We send parents reports monthly showing how much time their child has missed over a large amount of time AND we include a comparison of their child and the average child at their school, making it clear to parents what is acceptable and what are too many absences. If parents do not know what an acceptable rate of absences is, they will mistakenly believe that their child has not missing too many.

We have weekly meetings and an attendance dashboard to address chronic absenteeism. Wouldn't Present180 just be repeating that?

Not at all. Present180 adds capabilities to your current efforts. Present180 engages all parents in their child's education, not just the students identified as being at risk. Research shows that students who are missing too much classroom time (more than 3 percent absent), but not enough to be chronically absent (10 percent or more), graduate from high school 24 to 45 percentage points LOWER than those with good attendance (miss less than 3 percent). Present180 provides Tier 1 and Tier 2 services to those unidentified students with an affordable and scalable solution.

We have signs all over the school and billboards on the highway to address chronic absenteeism. What do you offer that is different?

We deliver the messages in the most accessible and comfortable method – text messages. Research shows that 97 percent of text messages are open and read within five minutes. By contrast, less than 30 percent of email messages in the education and training category are open and read at all. Of course, if the parents do not come into the building they do see the signs inside the building. If they do not drive down the highway, they may miss the billboards.

Our teachers are really busy. Asking them to send a weekly text message would be a lot of extra work.

We are keenly aware of this potential problem and so we designed Present180 to avoid it. We send the weekly messages out in the teacher's name for them. Teachers only need to respond to parent's questions using our web interface or from their personal devices. Only once a month we ask teachers to provide us with a single sentence with an actionable item about how the student can do better in the classroom. Successful examples include: "Johnny fell asleep in class twice this week. "Please go to bed earlier". "Mary forgot to turn in her homework three times this month. I know she can do better". We then send the message at the right time.

I find attendance statistics confusing. For example, our average daily attendance is 94%, but 19% of our students are chronically absent. How is that even possible?

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) measures how many students are in the school building each day, 940 students out of 1000 enrolled would be 94% ADA rate. But the 60 absent students on Monday are not the same 60 missing students on Tuesday or the 60 missing on Wednesday and Friday. If a student misses just 2 days a month, for 9 months of school, or 18 days in a school year, that student missed 10 percent (18 days) of the 180 day school year, which is the definition of chronic absenteeism.

A lot of our families with attendance issues speak Spanish at home. Can you help us with that?

We offer Spanish translation of all messages sent with Present180.

What is the basis for these reports?

We have used research reports from the Ad Council to understand how to send messages to parents on the importance of attendance. Research from Todd Rogers, of Harvard University, Matt Kraft of Brown University, Peter Bergman of Columbia University and the World Bank to learn the kinds of messages that engage parents and improve attendance. [Click here to download our white paper on chronic absenteeism.](#)

Our parents switch cell phone numbers regularly. Help!

Every time we load a message into our system, we generate a list of numbers that are disconnected, landlines or typos. We send our customers a list weekly of numbers that have been disconnected. Unfortunately, there is no national phone directory to look up new numbers so the school will have to reach out to their students and parents to get new numbers. Reloading new phone numbers and sending out new validating messages is included in Present180 at no additional cost.

What if I want to reply to a message?

Reply like you regularly do. Send the instructor a reply text message and the instructor will get it, without also getting your cell phone number. You will be identified only by your name.

How much does it cost?

For Present180, the rate is \$20 per student per year. For all clients, there is a one-time set-up fee of \$500 and a 100 student minimum. Usually, it is purchased by the school district or principal.

I have more questions or found a bug.

hlevy-myers@athenasworkshop.com, or call 703.615.4429.