

When to Use a Smart Alert, Urgent Alert or Post

What is the difference between a Smart Alert and an Urgent Alert?

Smart Alert	Urgent Alert
Use for alert messages and short parent reminders; also used for immediate messages (coordinated with District).	Use for school/district-wide messages when there is a critical threat or when a natural disaster strikes and speed of delivery is most important.
Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scheduled school closure (holidays, in-service) • delayed opening • early dismissal • after-school or weekend activities cancellation 	Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency school closure (weather, other) • natural disaster • critical threat, etc.
Detailed message options for composing.	Limited options for composing, optimized for quick action.
Flexible recipient list.	Defaults to send to entire school /district.
Send instantly, save draft or schedule for a later time/date.	Can only send instantly .
Option to choose any or all send methods: text, voice and/or email .	Defaults to all send methods: text, voice and email .
Flexible communication modes use text and/or voice and/or email.	Select prerecorded message from Message Library or write a short message with text-to-speech that gets sent out through all communication modes : email, text and voice call. (Create in Message Library to record own voice.)

What is the difference between a Post and a Smart Alert?

Post	Smart Alert
Use for everyday outreach messages.	Use for alert messages and short parent reminders; also use for immediate messages (coordinated with District).
Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First day of school welcome message • Back-to-school night • Parent handbooks 	Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No water in the building, will be restored soon • Soccer tryouts have been canceled
Posts can be more detailed and are viewable to parents throughout the school year on website and app.	Alerts are short messages, typically for same day or next day events and only viewable to parents for 3 weeks.
Communication mode? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text, email, mobile app notification (controlled by parents) • School website posting, social media posting • No voice 	Communication mode? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text; if text fails, goes to voice • Can add email • Share on social media and Smart Sites website
Sent to parents via their chosen notification settings: email, text and/or app, and can be Digest (single daily digest of posts.)	Sent via the mode of your choice: email, text and/or voice. If you send a voice message, it will be delivered as a voice call to all parents. <i>Alerts override parent notification settings.*</i>
You can attach files and photos.	No attachments.
Encourage teachers and parent leaders to send posts at least once a week to keep parents informed about what's going on.	Reserve Alerts for important updates as non-emergency texts/calls can frustrate parents, resulting in parents ignoring messages.
You can allow parents the option to comment, reply or appreciate a post.	One-way notifications only.

It's time to send a message to families and you are confused. Should you create a Post or Alert?

The way ParentSquare is designed, you should use Posts more than 90% of the time. However, there are times when Alerts should be used instead. Help yourself decide by answering these questions.

1. Is this a short, point-in-time message that parents will not need to see after a day or two? If the answer is yes, alerts are more suitable. Examples include:
 - *Early release today. Pick up your child at noon.*
 - *Semester grades are now available. Please log in to see your child's grades.*
 - *School will be closed tomorrow due to snow.*
 - *Notification of possible close contact.*
2. Do you want the message to be delivered instantly and on all channels or just a single channel (like email only) overriding the user's preference for email vs text vs push notification? If yes, alerts are more suitable. Examples include:
 - *Final reminder to complete state survey, only 160 more responses are needed by tomorrow.*
 - *Send a message after hours: School will be closed tomorrow due to unexpected weather conditions.*
 - *Live streaming of the International Food Festival happening now.*
3. Is this a critical message where you want it to be delivered even to people who have unsubscribed from messaging? If yes, then use Urgent Alerts. Examples include:
 - *Flooding near the front entrance. Please pick up your child from the back entrance.*
 - *Shelter-in-place activated.*
4. Do you want to deliver the message as a voice call? If yes, think again :) Since most people prefer text over voice and voice calls result in many call backs to the office, it is better to use Posts. If the answer is still yes, Alerts must be used since posts do not support voice call delivery. Examples include:
 - *Send a message after hours: School will be closed tomorrow due to unexpected weather conditions.*
 - *Send a message after hours to families who may not have cell phone service or internet at home, but have a landline.*

5. Do you think new families and users added to the school (or the group) after you sent the message would benefit from seeing the message? If the answer is yes, you should not use Alerts. Alerts are point-in-time and are not available to be viewed by newly added users.
6. Do you want to send the message to a particular subset of people that share a common characteristic like zip code or language within a grade level but you do not wish to create a permanent group for them? If the answer is yes, you should use Alerts as they allow filtering recipients. Remember Posts are long-lasting and are meant to be viewed even by people you add to the school or group after you send the Post, whereas Alerts are point-in-time and will not be available to users you add later. Say for instance you want to send a message to all Spanish-speaking Kindergarten parents. You can create a group for these parents and send a Post if you want new families to be able to see the message even after it was posted. But you can skip creating a group and send an alert if it is a point-in-time message and not relevant later.
7. *Do you want to send out a message to the entire district or school but exclude just one family or a user? If the answer is yes, you should use alerts.

More on How Alerts Differ from Posts

Alerts	Posts
Alerts are only one-way. No comments are allowed on alerts.	While posts are usually two-way, you can turn off comments on posts.
Alerts do not reveal the author. The alert always comes from the district or the school.	Posts can reveal the author or you can choose to send from a department or the district/school.
Alerts are sent over channels preferred by the sender: email, text, push notifications, voice call. The sender decides how to deliver alerts.	Posts are receiver-preferred. Recipients decide if they want to receive posts via email or text or push notifications or all channels, and instant or digest. <i>(Note: Post author can override the digest setting.)</i>
Alerts do not allow attachments	Posts are very rich and allow attachments plus other add-ons.