Subscribing to Alerts and Feeds
(RSS and iCal)

Some website features, such as Calendars and News pages, change frequently with new and timely content. Alerts and Feeds are both ways to stay up to date with this new content via emails and SMS (text) messages to your phone, or a third party service of your choice.

The primary difference between them is that alerts are active: once you've subscribed to alerts for a specific page or type of content, you'll automatically receive an email or text message about any updates as soon as they go live on the website.

Feeds are not as immediate, and are not actively broadcast to users. You have to visit a website or open an app to see feeds that you've subscribed to. The nice thing though is that you can subscribe to multiple feeds from as many different websites as they like, and view all of your updated content in one place.

Feeds come in two varieties: RSS (which stands for "really simple syndication") is for written web content such as blog posts or News announcements. iCal feeds are technically very similar to RSS feeds, but are focused exclusively on calendar event data rather than written content.

This document will explain when and how Alerts, RSS feeds and iCal feeds are used on the school's website. We'll also cover how to add your cell phone number to your account profile so that you can receive alerts via text message.

Alerts

Alerts automatically let you know when a particular piece of web content has been updated. You can use subscribe to alerts for Athletics team events, school Calendars, News categories, blog posts, discussion forums, or any other web feature that features updating content. If any of the content sources you subscribe to is updated, you'll receive an email notification, a text message, or both.

Before you can subscribe to alerts, you must have at least one email address associated with your website profile. You can only receive text messages if you add a mobile phone number to your profile and verify it with a test message.
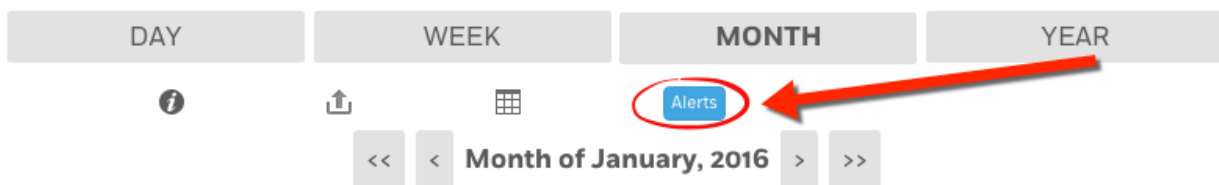
Subscribing to Alerts

To begin receiving updates for a calendar, blog, etc., you must subscribe to alerts for that content by clicking on the corresponding "Alerts" icon. Look for it near the top of the page or page element you usually visit to find content.

On this page, the "Alerts" feature is indicated with a blue button. Some calendar pages use a small icon to indicate alerts.

You can find Alerts icons on Calendar, Athletic Events, and News pages, as well as some Blog and Discussion Forum pages. Click on it to open up a Subscriptions window where you can subscribe to new alerts from this page.

This user can sign up to receive alerts from four different calendars. She can choose which of her profile's email addresses to use, as well as opt into receiving advance reminders and event update alerts.

If a calendar displays events from more than one category, you'll have the option of signing up to receive alerts for events from just one category, or any of the other available categories on the calendar.

You can also edit all of your Alert subscriptions collectively – click on your name on the account bar after signing into the website, and in the menu that pops up, select "Subscriptions."
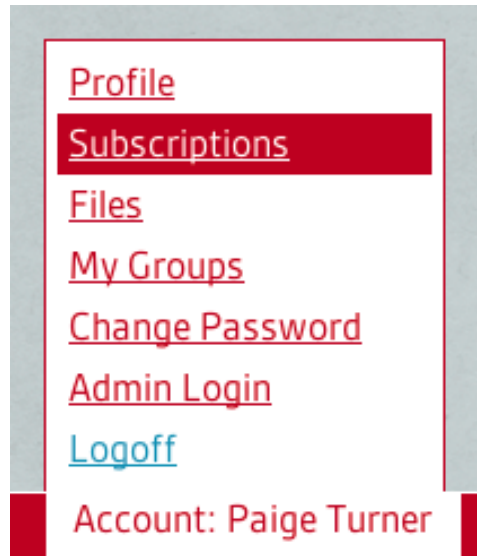
The window that pops up will show all of the Alerts that you've setup previously, as well as your mailing list subscriptions and Calendar event reminders.
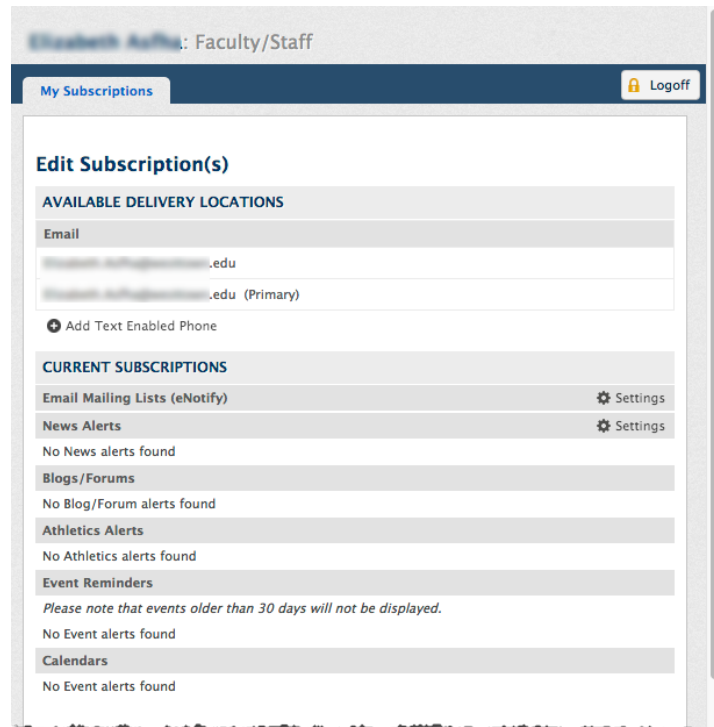
Click on "Settings" to the right of News Alerts to edit News subscription properties. You can also edit Email subscriptions by clicking the associated "Settings"

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button for Mailing Lists.

Customizing Alerts

Some alerts give you unique options for customizing the messages you receive.

Calendar events, for instance, allow you to set how far in advance you'd like to get a reminder for an event. You can also opt into receiving Cancellation, Postponement and schedule change alerts (if applicable).

Athletics event alerts offer those same advance-warning features, as well as the option to receive a subsequent alert when the score and results are posted for that event.

You can subscribe to receive alerts whenever **News** items are posted. News items are sorted by category, and just as with calendars you can elect to subscribe to some categories but not others. Click on the alerts icon on a News page to bring up the Manage News Alerts window.
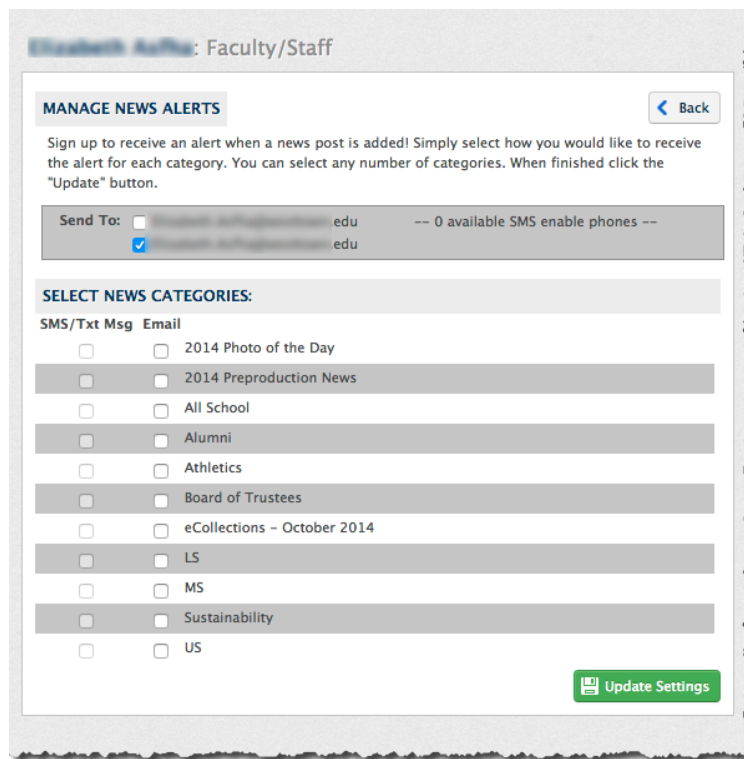
From here, you'll be able to select which categories you wish to follow, and whether you'd like to receive text message or email alerts for each.
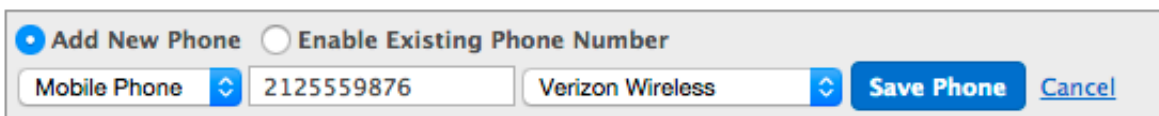
With **Blog** and **Discussion Forum** posts, you can simply sign up to receive an alert when new posts are created.

Activating SMS Alerts

As long as your website account has an associated email address, you can sign up to receive email alerts. Similarly, you can signup to receive SMS (text message) alerts if you've added a mobile phone number to your account.

To add a mobile phone to your account:

1. Login to the site, then click your username in Account Bar
2. Click the "Subscriptions" option on the fly-out menu
3. Click "Add Text Enabled Phone"
4. Click "OK" on the popup window to accept the notification about text messages
5. Click on the "Add Text Enabled Phone" button
6. Enter your phone number and cell service provider (or use the "Enter existing phone number" radio button to select a phone number that's already associated with your site account, if applicable)
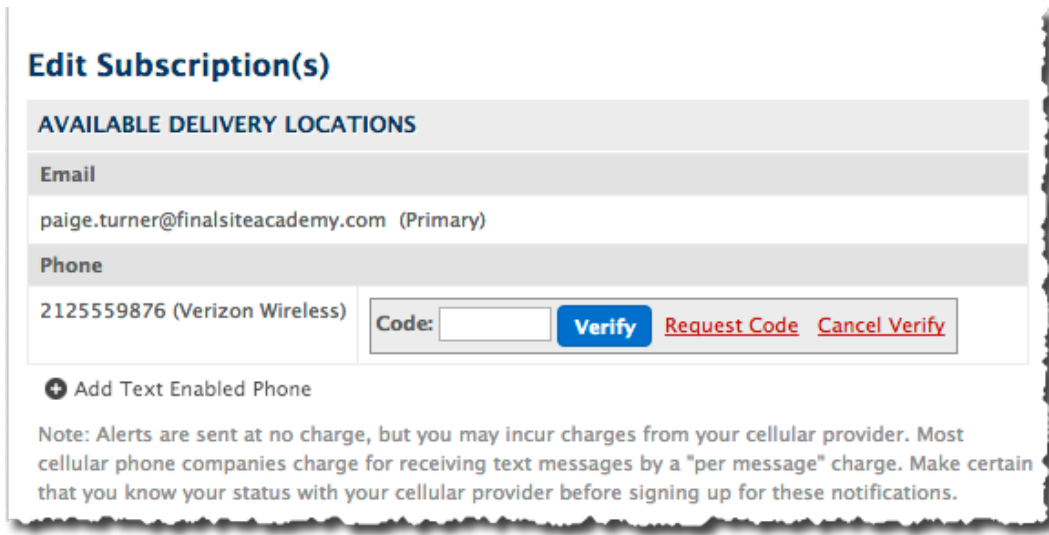

   Click "Save Phone" when finished.
7. Click the "Verify" link on your profile page

8. Click "Request Code" – you'll receive a test message with a 6-digit verification code. Enter that code in the field shown, and click "Verify"
9. When the confirmation code is accepted, your cell phone will be activated to receive SMS alerts

After activating a phone, when you next go to subscribe to an alert you'll have the option to select "text message delivery" in addition to "email delivery."

> Note that the site must be configured to send text messages out to users; if you don't see the option to add a text-enabled phone, contact a site admin.

RSS Feeds

RSS Feeds let you keep track of updates to many different websites in one place. Before we discuss how to use the RSS feeds on the website, we need to talk about software. You'll need something called a "feed reader" to take advantage of RSS feeds.

Feed readers come in many different forms, with different features. They can be standalone apps, they can be plugins to a browser (such as Firefox, Google Chrome, Microsoft Internet Explorer), or they can simply be webpages that you visit and log into in order to see your feeds.

One of the more popular feed readers is [Feedly](), which has the benefit of being completely free. It's a website, so there's no additional software to download and keep updated. Simply go to the webpage and sign in (you can use an existing Google or Facebook login, if you want). You'll be ready to start adding RSS feeds to Feedly right away.

If you use an iOS device like an iPad to browse the website and wish to use a feed reader, check the App Store for the associated app, or find another feed reader that meets your needs.

Once you're up and running with a feed reader, you can add as many RSS feeds to it as you like. This is very helpful if you follow a number of blogs and other regularly updated content across a variety of websites. All of the various content pieces published to each different site can be collected in your feed reader. This way, you can check your feed reader to keep on top of all the new content you're interested in, rather than having to visit each site individually.
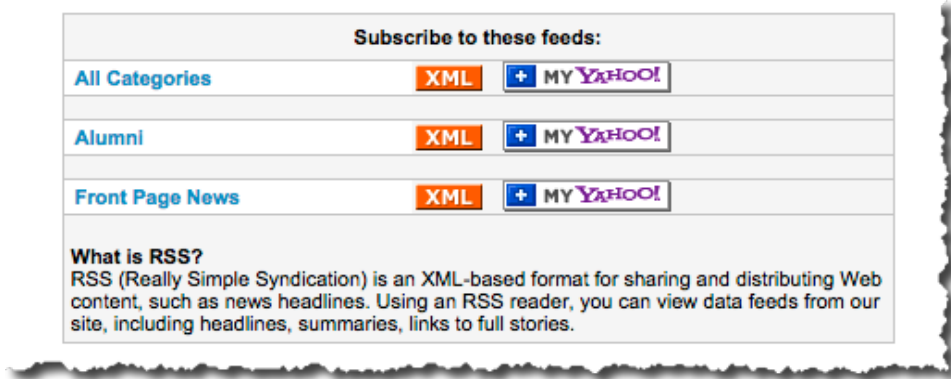
Subscribing to RSS Feeds

On the school website, RSS feeds are integrated into News pages, Blog pages and Calendars. You can access an RSS feed for dynamic content wherever you see the RSS icon.
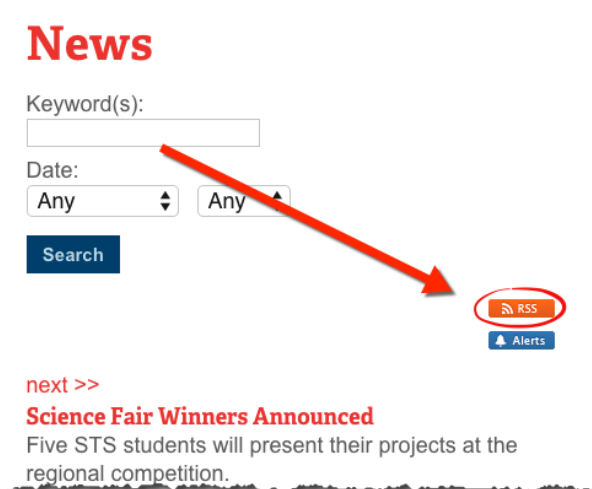
The RSS icon on this News page is an orange button.

1. Click on the RSS feed icon brings up a list of available RSS feeds on the current page:

This example News page features the News categories "Alumni" and "Front Page News." Users can also subscribe to "All Categories," which would include content from both of the categories on this page.

2. From here, choose the individual category of news content that you want to follow, or select "All Categories" to get updates about every News post that gets added to this page. Right-click (or long-click on a touchscreen device) on the corresponding "XML" button, and select "Copy Feed URL" from the menu.

3. Go to your feed reader of choice and find the "Subscribe" command (it's usually a button that's easy to spot). Click on it it, and paste the feed address that you just copied into the field. Save your changes, and your RSS reader will now begin following any updates made to that section of the website.

New content will be displayed in your feed reader shortly after it's published to the host website. You'll be able to click on the headline in your reader to jump directly to the source (in this case, the source would be a page on the school's site).

You can repeat this process for as many RSS feeds as you like. Many RSS feed reader apps allow you to create custom categories for your feeds, to make it easy to follow RSS feeds from all sorts of different websites. Look for an RSS icon like the one shown to the right to find RSS feeds on other websites.

Subscribing to iCal feeds

iCal feeds are similar to RSS feeds – they both allow you to use an external program to keep track of dynamic content. In the case of the iCal file though, the content being tracked is calendar data: event start times, end times and other relevant details.

Calendar pages will display an iCal feed button.
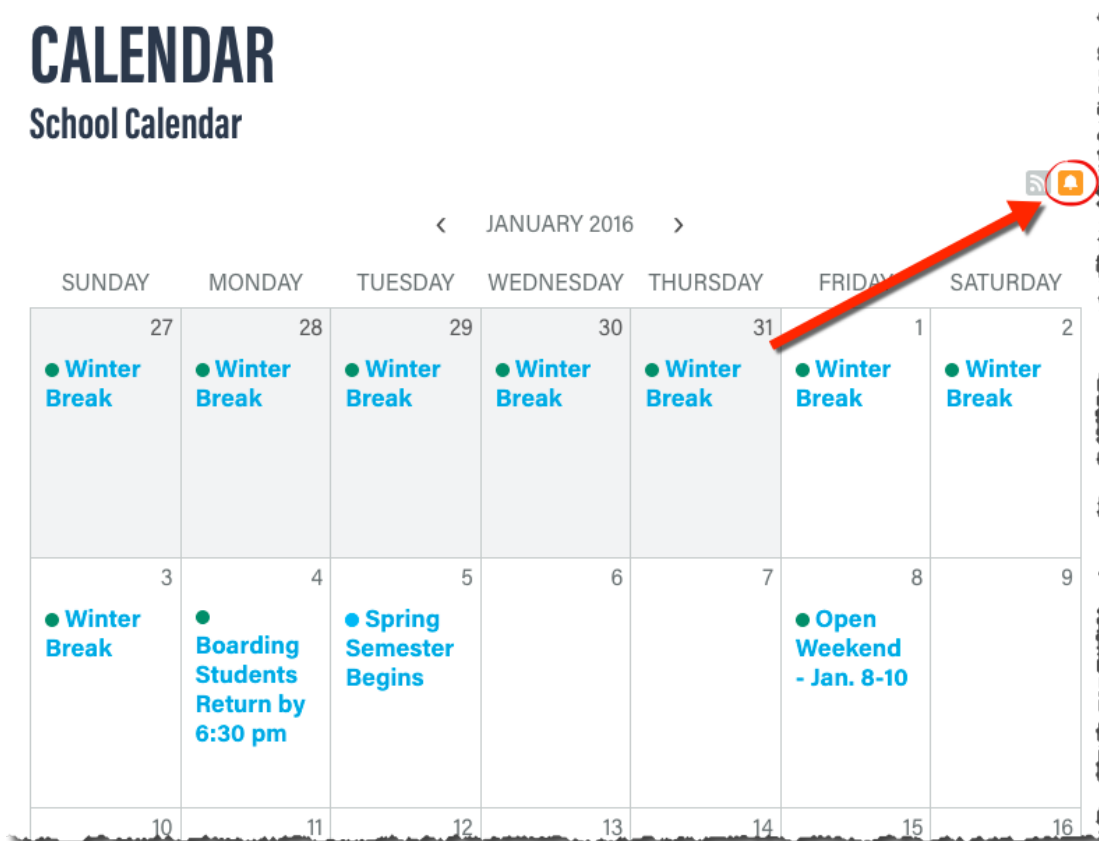
Some sites may have a slightly different icon, but a bell is common for iCal feed links.

1. Click this will pop open a new menu. Just as with News alerts, you can subscribe to any or all of the calendar categories that are available by clicking on the corresponding "ICAL" link.

2. Select which type of iCal feed to subscribe to:

Select the one that most closely matches the calendar-management software that you have. (There are slight differences in how various calendar-management software programs handle iCal feeds, which is why you need to make this choice.)

- Use the "Get Standard iCal URL" option if you're using an iPad, iPhone or other Apple device
- Use "Get Google iCal URL" if you're on an Android phone or tablet
- If you already use a Calendar app on your computer, use "Add to Default Calendar App…"

3. Copy the provided URL into your calendar software.

iCal feeds are generally updated hourly, meaning changes made to the calendar on the website may take up to an hour to reach your own device (there may be an additional delay, depending on how frequently your calendar software checks the iCal feed for updates).

> Note that following an iCal feed from a particular calendar will NOT automatically subscribe you to alerts for events on that calendar.