BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

School Apps for Parents & Grandparents

ClassDojo, Remind, PowerSchool, bus, lunch and pickup apps — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for parents, grandparents and caregivers

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For ClassDojo, Remind, ParentSquare, PowerSchool, Google Classroom & more · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to the apps schools use to talk with families: class messages, grades, bus tracking, lunch money and pickup. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test. Every school district picks its own apps, so start with Chapter 3 to find out which ones yours uses, then jump straight to those chapters. Apps change their menus often; when a button has moved, look for the same words nearby.

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PART 1

Getting Started

Why schools use so many apps, how to find out which ones your grandchild's school uses, and the handful of words you'll see in all of them. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you've ever stood in a school pickup line wondering why the parent ahead of you is holding up a phone, or gotten a text from a number you didn't recognize saying "Field trip forms due Friday," this guide is for **you**.

Schools today talk to families mostly through apps: one for class messages, one for grades, one for the bus, one for lunch money, sometimes one for pickup. Parents get handed all of them at once in August. Grandparents who help with pickup, homework or lunch money are often expected to use them too — and nobody ever sat down and explained them.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help families here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything.

What this guide will do for you

- Help you find out which apps your grandchild's school actually uses — because every district picks its own.
- Explain who has to invite you, and why the school office (not the app) decides who may pick a child up.
- Walk you through the most common apps: ClassDojo, Remind, ParentSquare, Google Classroom, PowerSchool, Infinite Campus, Final Forms, bus trackers, lunch accounts and pickup apps.
- Show you how to keep notifications from taking over your phone, and how to read messages in another language.
- Teach you to spot the scam texts that pretend to be the school or the lunch account.

The big promise: you can't break anything

Looking around in a school app won't change your grandchild's grades or bus route. The worst that usually happens is you turn off a notification you wanted, and you can turn it right back on. If you get stuck, the school office has helped hundreds of families with the very same question.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

When you can see the class messages, the bus location and the lunch balance yourself, you aren't relying on a busy parent to forward everything. You'll know about the early dismissal, the field trip and the low lunch balance at the same moment they do.

GOOD TO KNOW

Each school is different

No two districts use exactly the same set of apps — even neighboring districts in Portage County can differ, and sometimes one school in a district uses an app the others don't. This guide covers the common ones so that whichever your school picked, you'll recognize it.

And I'm only a phone call away

If anything here leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question.

Let's start with why there are so many of these apps.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Why Schools Use So Many Apps

It can feel as though every school runs on a dozen different apps. Usually there's a reason for each one: they come from different companies, and each does one job. Once you know the jobs, the pile makes much more sense.

The six jobs school apps do

Job	What it's for	Common names
Class messages	Notes from the teacher, photos of class activities, reminders	ClassDojo, Remind, ParentSquare
Schoolwork	Assignments and what's due	Google Classroom (guardian email summaries)
Grades & records	Grades, attendance, report cards, contact info on file	PowerSchool, Infinite Campus
Forms	Sports and activity sign-ups, permission and medical forms	Final Forms (common in Ohio)
Buses	Where the bus is right now and when it's near the stop	Here Comes the Bus, Stopfinder
Lunch & pickup	Lunch money, and who is picking a child up today	MySchoolBucks, LINQ Connect, PikMyKid

Why your school picked the ones it did

Each district signs its own contracts. A district that uses PowerSchool for grades may use a different company's bus app than the district next door. Some apps, like ClassDojo and Remind, are often chosen by individual teachers, so two classrooms in the same building might use different ones. That's why the first and most important step is simply to ask (Chapter 3).

GOOD TO KNOW

Some apps are now one company

ParentSquare bought Remind in late 2023. Remind still keeps its own name and app, so you may see both names. Some districts have since moved their messages into ParentSquare.

TIP

You don't need all of them

A grandparent who only does Tuesday pickup may need just two apps: the pickup app and the class messages. A grandparent who pays for lunch might need only the lunch account. Pick the jobs you actually help with and ignore the rest.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing what each app is for lets you skip the ones you don't need and stops the "which app was that in?" hunt.

CHAPTER 3

Find Out Which Apps Your School Uses

Before you download anything, find out what your grandchild's school and teachers actually use. The school office is the place to ask — they get this question all the time, especially in August and September.

Questions to ask the school office

1. Which app or website do teachers use to send class messages?
2. Which parent portal do you use for grades and attendance — PowerSchool, Infinite Campus or something else?
3. Is there a bus-tracking app, and what is the district code?
4. How do families put money on a lunch account?
5. Do you use a pickup app, or is pickup handled by a list at the office?
6. Which sports or activity forms site do you use, if my grandchild plays a sport?
7. How do I get added as an emergency contact or authorized pickup person? (Chapter 6.)

Other places to look

- **The district website.** Look for a "Parents" or "Families" menu. Districts usually list their apps there, often with how-to sheets.
- **The back-to-school packet or email.** Parents often receive letters with access codes and links in August.
- **The parent.** Ask your son or daughter to forward the welcome emails, or to show you the apps on their phone.
- **The teacher.** For classroom apps like ClassDojo and Remind, the teacher is the one who sends invitations.

HEADS UP

Download only from the official app store

Once you know the names, get the apps from the App Store on an iPhone or the Google Play Store on an Android phone, or use the link on the district's own website. Never install a school app from a link in an unexpected text message (Chapter 25).

FROM BILL

Ask once, write it down

Use the "Write it down once" section of the cheat-sheet in Chapter 28 to record which apps your school uses and the codes they gave you. You'll be glad of it next August.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Five minutes on the phone with the school office saves you an evening of downloading the wrong apps.

CHAPTER 4

The Words You'll See

School apps use their own vocabulary. Here are the words that come up most, in plain English. Come back here whenever one puzzles you.

Word	What it means
Parent portal	A website or app where families see grades, attendance and school records. PowerSchool and Infinite Campus are the most common.
Guardian	The word many systems use for anyone officially responsible for a student — usually a parent, sometimes a grandparent or other relative.
Access ID / access password	Codes the school gives each family to link a child to a PowerSchool account. They are not your username and password.
Activation key	Infinite Campus's one-time code for creating a parent account.
Class code / parent code	A short code from the teacher that connects you to a class. Remind codes start with @; ClassDojo parent codes start with P.
District code / school code	A number the district gives out so a bus app knows which district you belong to.
Delegate	In pickup apps, a person the parent has allowed to pick a child up.
Emergency contact	A person the school may call if it can't reach a parent. Set by the school office, not by an app.
Authorized pickup	A person the school will release a child to. Also set by the school office.
Push notification	A message that pops up on your phone's screen from an app.
Digest	A once-a-day bundle of messages instead of one alert for each.
Program fee / convenience fee	A small charge some lunch-payment sites add to each card payment.

GOOD TO KNOW

Same idea, different names

"Guardian," "contact," "family member" and "household" can all mean roughly the same thing, depending on the app. What matters is whether the school has you on file, and in what role.

PART 2

Getting Added as a Grandparent

Who has to invite you, why the school office — not an app — decides who may pick a child up, what a grandparent is allowed to see, and how to get your own phone ready.

CHAPTER 5

Who Has to Invite You

Here's the single most useful thing to know about school apps: in almost every case, **you can't simply sign yourself up**. Someone has to invite you or give you a code. Which someone depends on the app.

App	Who adds you	What you'll receive
ClassDojo	The teacher (often at the parent's request)	An email or text invite, or a parent code starting with P
Remind	The teacher shares the class code	A code starting with @ to text to 81010
ParentSquare	The school, from the contact info on file	An email or text invitation
Google Classroom summaries	The teacher or school administrator	An email invitation to accept
PowerSchool	The school gives access codes to the family	An Access ID and Access Password, one pair per child
Infinite Campus	The school or district	An activation key
Bus apps	The district gives a code; Stopfinder sends invites	A district code, or an invitation email
Pickup apps (PikMyKid)	The parent adds you as a delegate	A text or app invite
Lunch accounts	Usually anyone with the student's ID can add money	Nothing — you look up the student

The easiest path

1. Ask the parent which apps they'd like you to have.
2. For class messages, ask the parent to tell the teacher, "Please add Grandma as a family member," and give the teacher your email address or cell number.
3. For school-wide messages and portals, the parent asks the school office to add you to the student's contacts, in whatever role is appropriate.
4. For pickup apps, the parent adds you from their own phone.
5. Watch your email and texts for invitations, and accept them within a few days — some expire.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why it works this way

Schools must protect children's information. Requiring an invitation from the teacher, the office or the parent means a stranger can't simply download an app and start reading a class's messages or seeing where the bus is.

TIP

Use your own email and number

Ask to be added with your *own* email address and cell number, not the parent's. Many apps allow only one person per email address, and sharing a login causes confusion about who said what.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing who to ask means one quick request to the right person instead of a frustrating evening trying to sign up on your own.

CHAPTER 6

Emergency Contact & Authorized Pickup: The School Office, Not the App

This is the chapter to read if you do pickup. Being in an app is not the same thing as being allowed to pick up a child. The list of who may take a child home lives in the school's own records, and only the school office — at the parent's request — can change it.

Two lists, two jobs

List	What it means
Emergency contact	Someone the school may call if a child is sick or hurt and a parent can't be reached.
Authorized pickup	Someone the school will release the child to at dismissal or during the day.

You might be on one list and not the other. Ask the parent to check both. Some schools combine them on one form; many ask families to update them every school year.

How to get added

1. The parent or legal guardian contacts the school office, or fills in the contact section of the district's yearly registration or update forms (often done online through the parent portal).
2. They give your full name, how you're related, and your phone number.
3. Ask whether the school wants a copy of your photo ID on file.
4. On your first pickup, bring your photo ID. The office may check it against the list.
5. If anything changes — a new phone number, a new address — ask the parent to update it with the office.

HEADS UP

A pickup app doesn't replace the office list

Pickup apps such as PikMyKid let a parent schedule you as a delegate for certain days (Chapter 20). That tells the school who is coming. It does not override the school's own rules, and it can't authorize you if a court order or the school's records say otherwise.

STAY SAFE

Custody situations

If there's a custody order or anyone who must *not* pick a child up, the parent should give the school office a copy of the paperwork. That's an office matter; no app setting handles it.

TIP

Last-minute changes

If you're picking up unexpectedly, the parent should call the school office directly as early in the day as possible. Many schools won't accept pickup changes by text or email alone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Getting on the right list ahead of time means no awkward wait at the office door, and no worried phone calls on the day you're picking up.

CHAPTER 7

Privacy: What a Grandparent Can & Can't See

Grandparents are sometimes surprised that the school won't tell them a child's grades, even though they do pickup every day. That's not personal. It's a federal privacy law.

The law in plain words

The federal student privacy law is called **FERPA**, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. It gives the rights over a child's school records to the child's **parents**. In general, a school may not share information from a student's records with anyone else unless a parent has given written consent.

- For FERPA, a "parent" includes a natural parent, a guardian, or **an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian**.
- The U.S. Department of Education says a grandparent or other caregiver who is acting as the parent, when the parents are absent, may be treated as a parent under FERPA.
- A grandparent who helps out while the parents are present usually isn't. Access comes through the parent's permission.

What that means in the apps

- **Class messages** (ClassDojo, Remind, ParentSquare): a parent can usually ask for you to be added as a family member. You'll see what the teacher sends families.
- **Grades portals** (PowerSchool, Infinite Campus): the parent may share access, or the school may set you up with your own limited account. Policies vary by district — ask the office.
- **Google Classroom summaries**: they show assignments and what's missing, but not grades.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you are raising your grandchild

If your grandchild lives with you and you are the one acting as the parent, tell the school office. Ask what paperwork they need — sometimes a guardianship or a caregiver form — so you can be listed with full parent access. Rules on paperwork are set by each district and by Ohio law, so the office is the place to ask.

TIP

Shared logins

A parent may simply give you their own login. It works, but it means any message you send looks like it came from the parent. Your own account, added by the school or teacher, is cleaner.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Understanding the privacy rule turns a frustrating "no" from the office into a clear next step: ask the parent to give permission or add you.

CHAPTER 8

Getting Your Phone Ready for School Apps

A few minutes of preparation makes every school app easier to set up and use.

Before you install anything

1. Make sure you know the password for your **email** on your phone. Almost every school app sends a confirmation email.
2. Know your **Apple Account** password (iPhone) or **Google Account** password (Android) so you can download apps.
3. Decide on one strong password you'll use only for school apps, or use your phone's built-in password manager to save each one.
4. Make a folder on your home screen called **School** and keep all the apps together.

When you first open each app

- The phone will ask whether the app may **send notifications**. Choose **Allow** for class messages, bus and pickup apps — that's the whole point of them. You can tune them later (Chapter 21).
- If a bus or pickup app asks for your **location**, choose **While Using the App**. Pickup apps use it to tell the school you've arrived.
- Check your **spam** or **junk** folder if a confirmation email doesn't arrive within a few minutes.

TIP

Bigger text helps

If messages are hard to read, make the text bigger for the whole phone: on an iPhone, **Settings** > **Display & Brightness** > **Text Size**; on most Android phones, **Settings** > **Display** > **Font size**. Most school apps follow the phone's setting.

HEADS UP

A computer can be easier for the first setup

Creating a PowerSchool or Infinite Campus account involves typing long codes. Several districts suggest doing the first setup on a computer, then signing in on the phone app afterward.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With your email and passwords ready, each app takes a couple of minutes to set up instead of stalling halfway through.

PART 3

Class Messages & Schoolwork

The apps teachers and schools use to send notes home: ClassDojo, Remind and ParentSquare, plus Google Classroom's guardian email summaries.

CHAPTER 9

ClassDojo

ClassDojo is popular in elementary schools. Teachers post photos and notes to a **Class Story**, send private messages to families, and sometimes share a running tally of a child's classroom points. The family app is free.

How you get connected

- **The teacher invites you.** The teacher can enter your email or phone number on the student's family connections and send you an invitation (on the web the button is **Connect another parent**).
- **A parent code.** Each student has a parent code, which starts with the letter **P**. A parent can pass it on to you, or the teacher can send it.
- **A class link.** Some teachers share a link for the whole class; you then pick your child's name.

Joining with a code

1. Install **ClassDojo** from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Tap **I'm a parent** (or Family) and create a free account with your email.
3. If you already have an account, look for **Add a child**.
4. Type the code that starts with **P**, exactly as it was sent.
5. If the teacher has to approve connections, you'll see the child as **pending** until they do.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **Limits worth knowing**
>
> ClassDojo says each student can have up to **four** family members connected. A parent code expires **30 days** after it's created and can be used only four times. If yours doesn't work, ask the teacher for a fresh code or a new invitation.

Reading messages in another language

ClassDojo can translate teachers' posts and messages. Look in your account settings for the language setting and choose the language you read best; a translate button then appears on posts and messages. Chapter 22 has more.

TIP

Four spots go fast

With two parents and two step-parents, a child's four family spots can fill up. If there's no room, ask the parent to share messages with you another way rather than asking the teacher to remove anyone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Photos of the class pumpkin patch trip and the teacher's notes arrive on your own phone, so you have something to ask about at pickup.

CHAPTER 10

Remind

Remind is a messaging service common in middle and high schools, coaches and activity leaders. Its big advantage for grandparents: **you don't need a smartphone**. It works by ordinary text message.

Join by text — the easy way

1. Get the class code from the teacher or coach. It starts with @, such as **@mathclass**.
2. Open your phone's text messages and start a new message to the number **81010**.
3. Type the code, including the @ sign, and send.
4. You'll get a reply text confirming you've joined. Follow any prompts, such as giving your name.

GOOD TO KNOW

Good to know

Remind says texting 81010 is for U.S. phone numbers and doesn't cost more than any other text message on your plan. You can also join on the web at **remind.com/join** or in the Remind app.

Using it

- Messages from the teacher arrive as texts (or in the app, if you install it).
- Read the confirmation text when you join — it explains how to stop messages if you ever want to.
- If you're in several classes, the app keeps each class's messages separate, which some people find easier than one long text thread.

HEADS UP

81010 is the real number

Real Remind messages come from short numbers such as 81010. A text claiming to be from "Remind" that asks for money, a password or a gift card is a scam. Teachers don't collect payments by Remind text.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Game times, late buses and "bring a coat tomorrow" reminders land on even the simplest flip phone.

CHAPTER 11

ParentSquare

ParentSquare is a district-wide messaging system. Many districts use it for school-wide announcements, emergency alerts, newsletters and teacher messages, all in one place. It's set up from the contact information the school already has on file.

Getting in

1. You'll be invited only if the school has your email or cell number on the student's record (Chapter 6). Ask the parent to make sure it's there.
2. Look for an invitation email or text from ParentSquare, and tap the link to register.
3. Or install the **ParentSquare** app and sign in with the email or phone number the school has on file.

The two settings that matter

Setting	What it does
Notification settings	For general announcements and messages, choose **Off**, **Instant** or **Digest** (one bundle a day). **School Alerts** can be on or off.
Language	ParentSquare translates school messages into your preferred language. Choose it from your name or account menu, then save.

GOOD TO KNOW

Emergencies still get through

Districts that use ParentSquare say urgent emergency alerts are sent instantly no matter how you've set your notifications. Choosing Digest won't make you miss a school closing.

TIP

Too many messages?

If several schools and teachers are messaging you, switch general messages to **Digest**. You'll get one round-up a day instead of a buzz every hour.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One app for the whole district: closings, the newsletter and the teacher's note all land together, in your language.

CHAPTER 12

Google Classroom Guardian Summaries

Many schools post assignments in **Google Classroom**. Families can't log into a child's Classroom, but they can get **guardian email summaries**: a regular email listing missing work, work coming up and what the teacher has posted.

How it works

- A **teacher or school administrator** invites you by email. Only one teacher needs to invite you.
- You get an email invitation. Open it and accept.
- Then choose how often you want summaries: **daily** (weekdays), **weekly**, or none.
- Summaries cover only classes where the teacher has turned summaries on.

What's in a summary

Section	What it shows
Missing work	Assignments not turned in by the time the email is sent.
Upcoming work	Daily emails show work due today and tomorrow; weekly emails show the week ahead.
Class activity	Announcements, assignments and questions the teacher has posted recently.

GOOD TO KNOW

No grades, and invitations expire

Google says guardians can't see Classroom itself, and summaries don't include grades. An invitation that isn't accepted within **120 days** expires, and the teacher has to send a new one.

TIP

Changing how often

To change the frequency you need a Google Account. If you'd rather stop, use the unsubscribe link at the bottom of any summary email.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A weekly email that says "Reading log missing" lets you help with homework on the right night, without having to ask a teenager what's due.

PART 4

Grades, Records & Forms

The parent portals where grades and attendance live — PowerSchool and Infinite Campus — and Final Forms, the sports and activity forms site many Ohio districts use.

CHAPTER 13

PowerSchool Parent Portal

PowerSchool is one of the most common student record systems. Its parent portal shows grades, assignments, attendance and the contact information the school has on file. There's a website and a phone app, and both use the same account.

What you need from the school

For each child, the school gives the family an **Access ID** and an **Access Password**, usually on a letter. These codes are *not* your username and password — they're used once, to link the child to an account you create.

Creating the account

1. Go to your district's own PowerSchool parent portal address (it's on the district website or the letter).
2. Click **Create Account**.
3. Enter your name and email, and choose your own username and password.
4. In the lower part of the form, enter each child's name, Access ID, Access Password and your relationship to the child. Type the codes exactly; they may be case sensitive.
5. Save, then sign in with *your* username and password — not the Access ID.
6. To use a phone, install PowerSchool's own parent app (published by PowerSchool) from the app store, find your district, and sign in with the same username and password.

HEADS UP

Codes come from the school, in person or by letter

If you don't have the letter, contact the school office. Some districts won't give out access codes by email or over the phone, for privacy reasons — you may need to pick them up in person with ID. Never type them into a site you reached from a text-message link.

GOOD TO KNOW

Each district runs its own PowerSchool

Every district's PowerSchool has its own web address and its own screens. If the steps above don't match exactly, follow the instructions on your district's website.

TIP

Grandparent access

Because the access codes go to the family, a grandparent usually gets in only if the parent shares them or the school sets up a separate account (Chapter 7). Ask before assuming.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can see attendance and grades for yourself — useful if you're the one helping with homework or getting a child to school on time.

CHAPTER 14

Infinite Campus (Campus Parent)

Infinite Campus is the other big student record system. Families use the **Campus Parent** app or website to see grades, attendance, schedules and messages, and many districts use it for yearly registration updates.

Getting your activation key

- Districts send it in different ways: in a back-to-school letter, by email to the guardian address on file, or in person at the school.
- Some districts have an online key lookup tool; others ask you to email or visit the office.

Setting up

1. Go to your district's Infinite Campus login page (linked from the district website).
2. Choose **Campus Parent**, then **New User?** or the activation-key link.
3. Enter the activation key exactly as given. One district notes keys contain zeros, never the letter O.
4. Create your own username and password.
5. Install the **Campus Parent** app, search for your district, and sign in.

TIP

Bus and lunch apps may need the student ID

Infinite Campus and PowerSchool both show the student's ID number. Bus-tracking and lunch apps often ask for it, so this is a handy place to look it up (and write it on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 28).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One login shows the schedule, attendance and grades — and often where to update the family contact list each year.

CHAPTER 15

Final Forms for Sports & Activities (Ohio)

If your grandchild plays a school sport in Ohio, there's a good chance you'll meet **FinalForms**. A great many Ohio districts use it to collect sports and activity sign-ups, permission forms, medical information and the physical. Each district has its own address, usually in the form **districtname-oh.finalforms.com**.

Signing up as a parent

1. Find your district's FinalForms link on the athletics or district website.
2. Click **Register** under the **Parent** icon.
3. Enter your name, date of birth and email, then click **Register**.
4. Open the confirmation email and set your password. Check spam if it doesn't arrive.
5. Add your student, choose the sports or activities, and complete and sign each form.
6. Upload or confirm a current physical if the district asks — Ohio high school sports follow OHSAA physical requirements.

HEADS UP

Don't create a second account

Accounts usually carry over from year to year. If the site says your email is already in use, sign in or reset your password instead. Some districts ask families of current students to contact the athletic office rather than make a new account.

GOOD TO KNOW

Who signs?

FinalForms forms are generally signed by a parent or guardian, and sometimes by the student too (the student gets a separate email). A grandparent can help fill them in at the kitchen table, but the legal signatures usually belong to the parent.

TIP

Medical information

Sports forms ask for allergies, medications and emergency contacts. This is often where coaches look first if a child is hurt at practice, so it's worth making sure your number is there if you drive to games.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

All the season's forms in one place, signed online — no lost paper packets in a backpack.

PART 5

Buses, Lunch Money & Pickup

Where's the bus? Is there money on the lunch account? Am I on today's pickup list? The apps that answer the questions grandparents ask most.

CHAPTER 16

Bus Tracking: Here Comes the Bus

Here Comes the Bus shows where your grandchild's school bus is on a map and can alert you when it's getting close to the stop — no more standing at the end of the driveway in the cold, guessing. It's made by a company called Synovia Solutions, and it works only if your district has signed up.

What you need

- Your district's **school code** (a number, different for every district — ask the district or see its transportation page).
- The student's **last name** and **student ID number**. The student ID is often the same as the lunch number, and it's shown in the parent portal.

Signing up

1. Install **Here Comes the Bus** from the App Store or Google Play, or use the website.
2. Tap **Sign Up**, then choose the option that says you have the code.
3. Enter the district's school code, your name and your email, and create a password.
4. Go to the students area (often **My Students**) and add your grandchild with their last name and student ID.
5. Turn on notifications so you're alerted when the bus enters the alert area around the stop.

TIP

Set a sensible alert distance

The app draws a circle around the stop on a map; when the bus enters the circle, you get a notification. Make the circle big enough to give you time to get your coat on and walk out.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some districts add a prefix

A few districts ask you to type letters in front of the student ID. If adding a student fails, check the district's own instructions.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

On a snowy morning you can watch the bus from the kitchen window seat and walk out with your grandchild just in time.

CHAPTER 17

Bus Tracking: Stopfinder

Stopfinder, from a company called Transfinder, is another common bus app. It shows the student's bus schedule, stop times, and in many districts the bus's live location. Unlike Here Comes the Bus, you don't type a code: you need an **invitation email**.

How the invitation works

- The district sends the invitation, usually only to the **primary parent or household email** in the student records system (PowerSchool or Infinite Campus).
- The email comes from a Stopfinder or Transfinder no-reply address. The exact address varies by district — check spam and junk folders.
- You must register through that invitation before you can see the student's schedule.

Getting a grandparent connected

1. The parent registers first, from their invitation.
2. Ask the parent whether the district's Stopfinder lets them share or invite another person. Many do; some don't.
3. If not, ask the parent to contact the district transportation office about adding a second contact.
4. Once you have your invitation, install **Stopfinder**, register from the email link, and turn on notifications.

HEADS UP

No invitation arrived

Check spam first. Then ask the parent to confirm the email address the school has on file — that's usually updated through the parent portal or the school office. The transportation office can resend the invitation.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The bus schedule and any route changes are on your phone, so a new stop time in January doesn't catch you out.

CHAPTER 18

Lunch Money: MySchoolBucks

MySchoolBucks lets families put money on a student's school lunch account, see what was bought, and get an email when the balance is low. Grandparents often help here — and this is one of the few school apps you can usually set up on your own.

Setting it up

1. Install **MSB Parent** (the MySchoolBucks app) or go to myschoolbucks.com — type the address yourself.
2. Create a free account with your email.
3. Add the student: choose the state, the district and the school, then enter the student's name and student ID.
4. Add money with a card or, where the district allows it, an electronic check.

Fees, honestly

Checking the balance and setting low-balance alerts is free. Adding money by card often carries a **program fee** set by the district — district pages show amounts from about $2.00 to $3.25 per payment as of November 2026. The fee is shown on screen before you pay. Some districts charge less, or nothing, for electronic checks, and most still take cash or a check sent in to the cafeteria.

TIP

Fewer, larger payments

Because the fee is per payment, adding $40 once costs less in fees than adding $10 four times.

GOOD TO KNOW

Support

For help with the account itself, use the help or support link inside the MSB Parent app or on myschoolbucks.com. For questions about meal prices or free and reduced meals, call the district's food service office instead.

SCAM ALERT

The "overdue lunch balance" text

In September 2026 an Arizona school district warned parents about a fake text claiming a student's meal account was overdue, with a payment link. The same trick can reach Ohio phones. Real low-balance alerts don't threaten you. Open the app yourself to check the balance (Chapter 25).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can make sure a grandchild never stands at the register with an empty account, from your own phone.

CHAPTER 19

Lunch Money: LINQ Connect

LINQ Connect is another common school meal system. Families use it to add money, see menus and nutrition information, and set low-balance alerts.

Setting it up

1. Install **LINQ Connect** or go to the address on your district's food service page.
2. Create an account and link each student (you'll usually need the student's name and ID).
3. On the home screen, choose **Add Money to Account** for a one-time payment, or set up a recurring **Auto Pay**.
4. Set up low-balance alerts by email, text or push notification.

Topic	What to know
Fees	Set by each district. Some charge a processing fee when you add money; some say no fees. Check your district's page before paying.
When money appears	Districts say funds are usually available right away.
Low-balance alerts	Free. One district sends them automatically at $5.00 or below, and lets families change the level.

HEADS UP

Two apps, one account

Some districts moved from an older lunch website to LINQ Connect. If a parent already has an account, ask before making a second one — you may end up with two half-set-up accounts.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You see this week's menu and the balance in the same place, so you know whether to pack a lunch.

CHAPTER 20

Pickup Apps: PikMyKid

Some schools manage dismissal with an app such as **PikMyKid**. Parents tell the school in the app how a child is going home each day, and when it's your turn, the app lets the school know you've arrived. If you do pickup, this chapter matters most.

How a grandparent gets added

1. The **parent** opens PikMyKid, taps the menu (three lines, top right) and chooses **Manage Delegates**.
2. They tap **Add Delegate** and enter your name and phone number. They can add your photo and your relationship to each child, and mark you as an emergency contact.
3. You install the **Pikmykid Parent** app on your phone and set up your account, following the invitation or the school's own guide.
4. The parent then **schedules** you for pickup on specific or recurring days.

HEADS UP

Being a delegate isn't standing permission

School guides say a delegate must still be scheduled for each pickup day. And the school's own authorized-pickup list still applies (Chapter 6). Schools can also restrict some options in the app.

On pickup day

- Open the app when you get close to school. Allow location if it asks — that's how it tells the school you're there.
- Follow your school's own dismissal rules: some use car tags, a car line, or a walk-up door.
- Bring your photo ID the first few times, or any time you're picking up somewhere new.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The teacher knows you're coming before you arrive, and your grandchild is ready at the door.

PART 6

Living with School Apps Day to Day

Keeping notifications under control, reading messages in your own language, juggling more than one grandchild or school, and what to do when an app just won't cooperate.

CHAPTER 21

Taming Notifications

School apps are only useful if you see the important messages — but five apps buzzing all afternoon can wear anyone out. The trick is to keep the urgent ones loud and make the rest quiet. There are two places to adjust: inside each app, and in your phone's own settings.

Decide what deserves a buzz

App type	Suggested setting	Why
Pickup app	Notifications on, with sound	Time-sensitive on the day you pick up
Bus app	On, with a sensible alert distance	You want to know when the bus is near
District messages (ParentSquare)	Digest for general news; alerts on	Closings still come through
Class messages (ClassDojo, Remind)	On, or quiet banners	Mostly friendly news, rarely urgent
Google Classroom summaries	Weekly email	A once-a-week check is plenty
Lunch account	Low-balance email only	You only need to hear when money runs low

Inside the app

Most school apps have their own notification settings, usually under your name, a gear icon or **Settings**. This is where you choose things like Instant or Digest in ParentSquare (Chapter 11) or the alert circle in Here Comes the Bus (Chapter 16). Start here, because the app knows which messages are urgent.

In your phone's settings

1. **iPhone:** open **Settings** > **Notifications**, scroll to the app's name and tap it.
2. Turn **Allow Notifications** on or off, and choose whether you want sounds, banners and badges (the little red number on the app's icon).
3. **Android:** open **Settings** > **Notifications** (on some phones, **Settings** > **Apps**, then the app, then **Notifications**).
4. Find the app and turn its notifications on or off. Many apps list several kinds of notification separately, so you can silence the chatty ones and keep the important ones.

HEADS UP

Don't silence the pickup or bus app by accident

If you turn on Do Not Disturb or a Focus mode in the afternoon, the pickup and bus alerts can be held back too. Either allow those two apps through, or check them yourself around dismissal time.

TIP

One quiet hour

If evening class messages keep you up, set your phone's Do Not Disturb or bedtime mode for the night. Messages wait quietly and are all there in the morning.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your phone speaks up for the bus at the corner and the early dismissal, and stays quiet about the spirit-week reminder until you have a moment.

CHAPTER 22

Reading School Messages in Your Language

If English isn't the language you read most comfortably, school apps can often help. Several of them translate messages for you, and your phone can translate the paper flyers that still come home in the backpack.

Translation inside the apps

App	How translation works
ParentSquare	Translates school messages into the language you choose in your account (Chapter 11). Choose it once and save.
ClassDojo	Choose your language in account settings; a translate button appears on posts and messages (Chapter 9).
Other apps	Many portals and messaging apps offer a language choice in their settings or at the sign-in screen. Look for a globe icon or the word Language.

Paper flyers and printed letters

1. Install the free **Google Translate** app from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Choose the language of the flyer (or let the app detect it) and the language you want to read.
3. Tap **Camera** and point your phone at the paper. The translation appears on the screen over the words.
4. To read a photo you already took, use the app's option to import a picture from your photos.

GOOD TO KNOW

Machine translation isn't perfect

Automatic translation gets the general meaning across well, but it can stumble over names, dates, abbreviations and school jargon. For anything important — a medical form, a discipline letter, a custody matter — ask the school for help in your language.

TIP

Ask the school for an interpreter

Schools often can arrange an interpreter for a parent meeting or a phone call, or a translated copy of important papers. Tell the school office which language you prefer, and ask that it be noted on the student's record.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The field-trip permission slip and the teacher's note make sense the moment they arrive, without waiting for someone to explain them.

CHAPTER 23

More Than One Grandchild, More Than One School

Grandparents often help with several children, sometimes in different schools or even different districts. The apps can handle that — it just takes a little organizing.

One account, several children

- **ClassDojo:** add each child to the same account with their own parent code or invitation (Chapter 9).
- **PowerSchool:** each child has their own Access ID and Access Password; enter them all on the same account (Chapter 13).
- **Lunch accounts:** add each student to one MySchoolBucks or LINQ Connect account, even if they're in different schools within the district.
- **Bus apps:** add each student under the same login, as long as they're in the same district.

Different districts

If two grandchildren go to school in different districts, you may need two different sets of apps, or the same app with two different district codes. Even districts that sit side by side in Portage County make their own choices. Ask each school office (Chapter 3) and keep a separate line for each one on your cheat-sheet.

Keeping it all straight

1. Make one **School** folder on your phone's home screen for all the apps (Chapter 8).
2. Put each child's school calendar dates — early dismissals, days off, conferences — into your own phone calendar as soon as they're announced.
3. Write each child's student ID and school phone number on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 28.
4. Each August, ask the parent whether anything has changed: a new school, a new teacher's app, a new bus code.

TIP

Name children clearly

Some apps let you give each child a nickname or color. If two cousins share a first name, use a nickname so you don't put lunch money on the wrong account.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Every grandchild's bus, lunch and class news lives in one tidy place, so nothing gets mixed up between schools.

CHAPTER 24

When an App Won't Cooperate

Most school-app trouble falls into a few familiar patterns. Here they are, with what usually fixes each one. Try the simple things first; you can't break anything by trying.

Problem	What usually fixes it
My code didn't work	Type it again exactly, watching for zeros and O's, ones and I's. Codes can expire: ClassDojo parent codes after 30 days, Google Classroom invitations after 120 days. Ask for a new one.
I never got the invitation	Check spam and junk folders. Then ask the parent to confirm the email or phone number the school has on file (Chapter 6).
I forgot my password	Use the **Forgot password** link on the app's sign-in screen. For a district portal, the school office or district help desk can reset it.
I'm locked out after too many tries	Wait a while and try again, or use the password reset. District portals sometimes need the office to unlock the account.
I can see one grandchild but not the other	Each child is linked separately. Add the second child with their own code (Chapter 23).
Messages stopped coming	Check the app's notification settings and your phone's (Chapter 21). A new phone or an app update can switch them off.
I made two accounts by mistake	Stop using one. Ask the school or app support to merge or remove the extra account rather than deleting things yourself.
I got a new phone	Install the apps again from the store and sign in with the same email and password. Your messages and links are kept by the app, not the phone.

TIP

The restart that fixes surprising things

Close the app completely, then open it again. If that doesn't help, restart the phone. It sounds too simple, but it clears up a surprising number of frozen screens and missing messages.

HEADS UP

Get help from the real source

If you need support, use the help link inside the app, the district's website, or the school office's phone number. Don't search the web for a "support number" for a school app — scammers place fake ones in search results.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the usual fixes turns a frustrating evening into a two-minute job — and you'll know exactly whom to ask when it really is the school's side.

PART 7

Staying Safe, Getting Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

The scam texts that pretend to be the school or the lunch account, simple habits that keep a child's information private, an honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary.

CHAPTER 25

Scam Texts Posing as the School or Lunch Account

Because families are used to getting texts from school, scammers copy them. The messages look official, use the school's name, and almost always push you to tap a link and pay or sign in right away. Here are the common ones and the simple rule that beats them all.

SCAM ALERT

"Your child's lunch account is overdue"

A text says the meal balance is negative or overdue and gives a link to pay. In early September 2026, an Arizona school district warned parents about exactly this text; a reporter noticed the word "school" was misspelled. Don't tap the link. Open the lunch app yourself, or call the food service office.

SCAM ALERT

Fake calls about a lunch or fee balance

Some districts have warned of calls saying a student owes money and asking you to "press 1" to pay, or callers pretending to be from the school's grades portal. Hang up and call the school office at the number on the district website.

SCAM ALERT

"Confirm your account" or "Your portal password expires today"

A text or email asks you to sign in to PowerSchool, Infinite Campus or ParentSquare through a link. The fake page steals your password. Sign in only through the app itself or the address on the district's website.

SCAM ALERT

"Pay now for the field trip / yearbook / fundraiser"

Real school payments go through the district's own payment site or the school office — never by gift card, a payment app to a stranger, or a link in an unexpected text. If in doubt, ask the teacher in the school's real app.

SCAM ALERT

"Your grandchild is in trouble"

A call or text says your grandchild has been hurt or arrested and needs money now, and not to tell the parents. Hang up and call the parent or the school office yourself. Real emergencies don't require secret payments.

The one rule that beats them all

Don't use the link or the number in the message. Go to the app or the school yourself. Open the real app from your home screen, type the district's address yourself, or call the school office at the number you already have. If the message was real, you'll find the same information there.

Reporting a scam text

1. Don't reply, and don't tap any link — not even "STOP."
2. Forward the text to **7726** (it spells SPAM). The FTC says this helps your wireless company spot and block similar messages.
3. Use the **Report Junk** or **Report spam** option in your messaging app, if it offers one.
4. Report it to the FTC at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.
5. Tell the school office. They may warn other families, as many districts have.
6. Delete the message.

STAY SAFE

If you already paid or typed a password

Call your bank or card company right away using the number on the back of your card. Change the password you typed, and any other account that uses the same one. Then tell the school office. Acting quickly makes a real difference.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One simple habit — go to the app yourself — protects your money and your grandchild's information from the most common school scams.

CHAPTER 26

Keeping Your Grandchild's Information Private

School apps hold a lot of personal information: names, photos, grades, bus stops and pickup times. A few simple habits keep it safe.

Everyday habits

- **Use a strong, unique password** for each school account, and let your phone's password manager remember it.
- **Lock your phone** with a passcode, fingerprint or face. Anyone holding an unlocked phone can see the bus stop and pickup schedule.
- **Sign out on shared computers**, such as at the library, and don't let the browser save the password there.
- **Don't share codes.** PowerSchool access codes and ClassDojo parent codes are meant for the family. Don't post them or send them to anyone the parent hasn't approved.
- **Remove old apps** when a child changes schools or graduates.

Photos from the classroom

Teachers often share photos in ClassDojo or ParentSquare that show other children too. Please don't repost class photos on Facebook or other social media without checking with the parent. Other families may have good reasons — sometimes safety reasons — for keeping their children's pictures private.

HEADS UP

Bus stops and pickup times are sensitive

Avoid posting where and when a grandchild catches the bus or gets picked up. Share that information only with family members who need it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Who decides what the school shares

Under FERPA (Chapter 7), the parent decides who sees school records. If you're unsure whether you should see something, ask the parent first.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your grandchild's school life stays between the family and the school, where it belongs.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time and worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Back-to-school setup** — getting the class, bus, lunch and pickup apps installed and signed in on your phone in one sitting, with the codes the school gave you.
- **Notifications are out of control**, or the important ones aren't coming through.
- **You got a new phone** and need every school app moved over and signed back in.
- **Text is too small or the screens are confusing** — I can set your phone up so it's easier to read and use.
- **You're not sure a message is real** and would like a second opinion before you tap anything.
- **Several grandchildren in several schools**, and you'd like it all organized in one place.

What I can't do is add you to a school's records or change who may pick a child up — that's always the parent and the school office (Chapter 6). I'm happy to help you prepare what to ask them.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, explain what I'm doing in plain words, and never talk down to anyone. I've been doing this kind of work for more than 30 years, and I serve Portage County, Ohio, in person, and folks farther away by remote help.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This guide is yours to keep for free; if you'd like a hand, I'm only a phone call away.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie first

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might be greeted by **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. A real person — me — does the actual help.

Thank you for showing up for the young people in your life — at the bus stop, in the pickup line and at the kitchen table. Take it one app at a time.

— Bill

CHAPTER 28

Your School Apps Cheat-Sheet

Keep this on the fridge or in your phone's notes. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
First step	Ask the school office which apps your school uses (Chapter 3).
Pickup permission	Set by the school office at the parent's request — not by any app.
ClassDojo	Invitation from the teacher, or a parent code starting with P. Up to four family members per child.
Remind	Text the @code to 81010. Works on any cell phone.
ParentSquare	Uses the contact info on file. Choose Digest; emergency alerts still come through.
Google Classroom	Guardian email summaries, daily or weekly. No grades.
PowerSchool / Infinite Campus	Access ID and password, or activation key, from the school.
FinalForms	Sports and activity forms; the parent usually signs.
Bus apps	Here Comes the Bus: school code + student ID. Stopfinder: invitation email.
Lunch money	MySchoolBucks or LINQ Connect. Fewer, larger payments mean fewer fees.
Pickup app	Parent adds you as a delegate and schedules you for each day.
Scam rule	Never pay or sign in from a text link. Open the app yourself.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
School name & office phone	_____
Class messages app & teacher	_____
Grades portal & web address	_____
Student ID number(s)	_____
Bus app & district code	_____
Lunch account site	_____
Pickup app & my pickup days	_____
On the emergency contact list? Authorized pickup?	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Close the app and open it again.
2. Check notifications in the app and in your phone's settings.
3. Check your email's spam folder for invitations.
4. Ask for a fresh code if yours has expired.
5. Ask the parent to confirm your contact info with the school office.
6. Call the school office or district help desk.
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

STAY SAFE

If a child may be in danger

Call 911 first. Then call the school office and the parent.