



18. Let's Talk About Sexting

Sexting, which is “**the sending OR receiving of sexually suggestive, nude, or seminude images, videos, or messages**” is a serious digital age issue and in many states, individuals who distribute, possess or produce a sexually explicit image of a minor could be charged under the state’s child pornography statutes. Thankfully, sexting amongst youth is less prevalent than what many believe. A [2019 study](#) published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior* finds **the vast majority of students were not participating in sexting**. Approximately 14 percent of middle and high school students had received a sexually explicit image from a significant other, while 13.6 percent said they received such an image from someone who was not a current romantic partner. But **because of the severity of getting caught sexting, it is important for all youth to understand its potential serious consequences**.

Key Standards—Common Core ELA, Grade 8: RI.8, RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.4, W.8, W.8.2, W.8.2.b, W.8.4, SL.8, SL.8.1, SL.8.1.a, SL.8.1.b, SL.8.1.c, SL.8.1.d, SL.8.2, L.8, L.8.1, L.8.1.d, L.8.4, L.8.4.a, L.8.4.d, L.8.6. ISTE: 2a, 2b, 2d, 3d. CASEL: 2a, 2c, 3d, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f.

Learning Objectives

Students will...

- ✓ Learn and understand the definition of sexting.
- ✓ Become aware of the possible serious legal consequences of sending or receiving a sexual image, message, or video.
- ✓ Reflect on both the legal and social impact of being involved in a sexting incident.



Introducing The Lesson

Since students just completed lessons on “stereotypes and media representation” and “visual literacy” conduct a quick review. Ask: *Who can post images online? Are there any restrictions as to what people can post? Do people sometimes post provocative images, or even images that include nudity? What do you think are the possible implications of doing this?* Discuss.

The Lesson

1. Ask students if they know the definition of the word “sexting.” Have students tell you what they think the word means (chances are students know it as “sending nudes”).
2. Screen [Video 1].

The Lesson, continued...

3. Underscore the fact that sexting includes both sending AND receiving images, videos, and messages that are “sexually-explicit” or “sexually-suggestive.” Explain that in plain language “semi-suggestive” means semi-nude (i.e., topless). Have students record the following definition:

- **SEXTING:** The sending or receiving of sexually-explicit or sexually-suggestive images, video, or messages, usually via a cell phone.

4. Be sure students understand these important points:

- Sexting includes images that are partially-nude.
- Sexting includes videos and pornography (printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity).
- Text messages that propose sex or refer to sexual acts are considered sexting (this includes emojis).
- Sexting can happen on any kind of device (cellphone, computer, tablet) or network (texting, social media, games).
- Sexual images sent or received accidentally are considered sexting.
- Anything and everything sent or posted via a digital device is permanent and public. It can be copied and shared by anyone and everyone.

5. Explain the possible consequences of getting caught sexting. Tell students that from the perspective of the criminal justice system, **sexting could fall under existing child pornography laws** and thus result in long-term criminal consequences. For example, a minor who takes a nude picture of themselves has **created child pornography** and if they send this image to someone it is considered **distribution of child pornography**. The recipient would then also be considered **in possession of child pornography**. In some cases, this can result in either felony or misdemeanor criminal charges. Sentencing for felony charges can result in heavy fines from \$500-\$1,000 and/or a prison sentence of at least one year. Misdemeanor charges can result in fines of hundreds of dollars and/or one year maximum in jail. While many states are re-evaluating existing laws in order to take into consideration how easy it is for minors to send and receive photos and video, some states have not yet updated their laws. For the status of current sexting laws in your state, please visit: <https://cyberbullying.org/state-sexting-laws> Talk to students about the law in your state.

6. This is the most important take-away for students. Have students record:

If you are under 18 and you take, send, or receive sexually explicit images of another minor (this includes taking a picture of yourself), under current federal laws, it could be considered child pornography and result in long-term criminal consequences.

The Lesson, continued...

7. Because this is a lot of information that may not fully sink in, illustrate the severity of sexting by screening [Video 2]. Break students into small groups, distribute the article that follows (also in the Student Packet), have each group discuss and answer the following questions:
- *Why do you think so many students got caught up in this?*
 - *Do you believe **recipients** of a sext should be held to the same accountability as **senders**? Why or why not?*
 - *Do you think the school handled the situation appropriately? Explain.*
 - *What impact do you think being involved in this situation might have on a student's digital reputation?*
8. Conduct a class-wide discussion surrounding each group's responses to these questions. It is important for students to know what the consequences may be of sending or receiving sexting messages, both legally and socially. Tell them that in the next lesson you will discuss what they can do if they are ever asked for a sexual image or are the recipient of one.

Goal

Students know what sexting is, and understand its possible consequences.

Nearly 50 students caught up in sexting scandal at north Georgia high school

By: Rikki Klaus

Updated: Mar 14, 2019 - 7:02 PM

UNION COUNTY, Ga. - Dozens of students at one Georgia high school have been caught up in a sexting scandal, officials said.

Union County Schools Superintendent John Hill said around 50 of the 850 students at Union County High School in Blairsville were caught sending naked pictures of classmates over their phones.

That's nearly 6 percent of the school's population. Hill said the students range in age from 14 to 18.

Channel 2's Rikki Klaus was in Union County, where Hill said most students didn't realize what they were doing is illegal and could have led to child pornography charges.

"It's just a very large problem," Hill said. "This has been very disturbing to our high school and to our school system, and I think it's impacted our community."

Hill said a parent brought the issue to the principal's attention a few weeks ago. Officials have since determined that at least 46 students were involved in the illegal exchange of nude photographs of each other.

The Union County Schools Police Department is investigating the situation.

Hill said the school district could have filed felony child porn charges, but decided against it.

"In Georgia, if you're under the age of 18, that's actually manufacturing and distribution of child pornography," Hill said.

Instead, Hill said the punishment has ranged from short-term suspension to alternative school, based on the severity of each student's actions, per the student code of conduct.

The district is also trying to educate parents and students about the dangers of sexting.

"We feel like it's important to educate the children and educate the parents about the seriousness of the crime," Hill said.

"Once it's out there, you can't control it. You can't get it back," Hill said. On Wednesday, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the district attorney made presentations to Union County High School and Middle School students about sexting, emphasizing that nude photos could get into the hands of child predators.

The district also plans to hold a community meeting on sexting, led by the GBI, at Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

Hill said that next year, the district will be looking to implement a curriculum on cyber safety.

Hill said there's no indication any child predators have gotten their hands on the photos.

NAME _____

Answer and explain your response to each question:

Why do you think so many students got caught up in this?

*Do you believe **recipients** of a sext should be held to the same accountability as **senders**? Why or why not?*

Do you think the school handled the situation appropriately? Explain.

What impact do you think being involved in this situation might have on a student's digital reputation?

SEXTING

The sending or receiving of sexually-explicit or sexually-suggestive images, video, or messages, usually via a cell phone.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF SEXTING

If you are under 18 and you take, send, or receive sexually explicit images of another minor (this includes taking a picture of yourself), under current federal laws, it could be considered child pornography and result in long-term criminal consequences.