

Fulton County Schools is committed to providing safe and secure learning environments for students. Our Board of Education makes ongoing investments that provide safety and security to our physical buildings as well as programs that focus on the social and emotional well-being of our students. This commitment continues with parent and community education about current student safety issues.

Most teens today are comfortable with documenting their lives online. Posting photos, updating their status messages, sharing rapid-fire texts, and being a click away from friends are the new normal for teens. But this “always on” culture also creates an environment where teens can make impulsive decisions that can come back to haunt them. One example of this has been in the news a lot lately: sexting.

Among 13-17 year-olds in the United States, a 2018 study “Social Media, Social Life” conducted by Common Sense Media found:

- Teens overwhelmingly choose Snapchat (41 %) as their main social media site, followed by Instagram (22%) and Facebook (15%)
- Social media use has increased dramatically by teens. 89% have a smart phone (compared to 41% in 2012), and 70% of teens are on social media multiple times a day (compared to 34% in 2012).
- 54% of teens report that if parents knew what actually happened on social media, they’d be a lot more worried about it.
- At least one in four teens are receiving sexually explicit texts and emails, and at least one in seven are sending sexts. More than one in 10 teens are forwarding these sexts without consent, the study found. And roughly one in 12 teens have had sexts they shared without their permission.

What is Sexting? When people take and send sexually revealing picture of themselves or send sexually explicit messages via text message, it’s called “sexting.” While experts differ on statistics, a 2010 study conducted by Pew Internet & American Life Project confirms sexting is a teen reality that’s here to stay. Kids “sext” to show off, to entice someone, to show interest in someone, or to prove commitment. Sending these pictures or messages is problematic enough, but the real challenge comes when this content is shared broadly. As far too many teens have found out, the recipient of these messages is in possession of a highly compromising image or message that can be easily posted on a social networking site or sent to others via email or text.

Why Sexting Matters? In a technology world where anything can be copied, sent, posted, and seen by huge audiences, there’s no such thing as being able to control information. The intention doesn’t matter — even if a photo was taken and sent as a token of love, for example, the technology makes it possible for everyone to see your child’s most intimate self. In the hands of teens, when revealing photos are made public, the subject almost always ends up feeling humiliated. Furthermore, sending sexual images to minors is against the law, and some states have begun prosecuting kids for child pornography or felony obscenity. There have been some high-profile cases of sexting. In July 2008, Cincinnati teen Jesse Logan committed suicide after a nude photo she’d sent to a boyfriend was circulated widely around her high school, resulting in harassment from her classmates.

Advice for Parents

Don’t wait for an incident to happen to your child or your child’s friend before you talk about the consequences of sexting. Sure, talking about sex or dating with teens can be uncomfortable, but it’s better to have the talk before something happens.

Remind your kids that once an image is sent, it can never be retrieved – and they will lose control of it. Ask teens how they would feel if their teachers, parents, or entire school saw the picture, because that happens all the time.

Talk about pressures to send revealing photos. Let teens know that you understand how they can be pushed or dared into sending something. Tell them that no matter how big the social pressure is, the potential social humiliation can be hundreds of times worse.

Teach your children that the buck stops with them. If someone sends them a photo, they should delete it immediately. It’s better to be part of the solution than the problem. Besides, if they do send it on, they’re distributing pornography – and may be against the law.

Check out ThatsNotCool.com. It’s a fabulous site that gives kids the language and support to take texting and cell phone power back into their own hands. It’s also a great resource for parents who are uncomfortable dealing directly with the issue.

All Information and data above obtained from <https://www.common sense media.org/>

Possessing, displaying, or distributing profane, vulgar, pornographic, obscene, or ethnically offensive materials is a violation of the Fulton County Schools Student Code of Conduct. Consequences typically range from local school consequences up to 10 days of Out of School Suspension; however, some violations could result in a referral to a disciplinary hearing and long-term suspension or expulsion from Fulton County Schools.