

Date:

NEW

To the Parents/Guardians of
Address

Re: Preventing and Reducing Incidences of Sexting

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Many parents are unfamiliar with *sexting*. It is generally defined as sending, sharing, viewing, receiving or possessing *indecent visual depictions* of oneself or another person using a cell phone. A student will be disciplined for sexting at school.

Discussing sexting and its legal and social consequences with your children may prevent and reduce incidences of it at school and elsewhere. A recent survey revealed that about 20 percent of teen boys and girls have sent sext messages. It can cause enormous emotional pain for the students involved, often with legal implications. The following talking points from the American Academy of Pediatrics may help start the discussion:

- Introduce the issue as soon as a child is old enough to have a cell phone. Even if the issue hasn't directly impacted your school building's community, ask "have you heard of sexting?" "Tell me what you think it is." Learn what your child's understanding is and add an age appropriate explanation. For more information about starting age appropriate discussions, see *The New Problem of Sexting* subhead on the American Academy of Pediatrics website at: www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/june09socialmedia.htm.
- Make sure children of all ages understand that the District's student discipline policy prohibits sexting at school, and that it is further punishable in Illinois through the Juvenile Court Act and The Criminal Code of 1961.
- Collect cell phones at gatherings of tweens and teens. Experts have noted that peer pressure can play a major role in the sending of texts, with attendance at parties being a major contributing factor.
- Monitor the media for stories about sexting that illustrate the consequences for both senders and receivers of these images. Ask "Have you seen this story?" "What did you think about it?" "What would you do if you were this child?"
- Rehearse ways your child can respond if asked to participate in inappropriate texting.

For more information on sexting and how to talk to your children about it, please see the following links:

www.connectsafely.com/Safety-Tips/tips-to-prevent-sexting.html;
www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/june09socialmedia.htm; www.education.com/magazine/article/child-sexting-parents/?page=2;
www.athinline.org.

Sincerely,

Superintendent