

SEXTING: Empowering Students to Engage in Positive Communication

Secondary Lesson 11

Lesson Title: Sexting Over The Net! STOP IT NOW

Description: This lesson discusses the embarrassment and harassment that can be associated with sexting

Objectives: The students will be able to:

- Consider what motivates young people to participate in online cruelty
- Develop strategies for resisting peer pressure and communicating in a positive way

Standards-Based Student Development Program Benchmark(s):

Benchmark PS 1.4

Identifying situations in which peer pressure might affect adherence to or violation of acceptable norms

Benchmark PS 1.0

Student accepts responsibility for personal behavior

Springboard Activity: Tell students that you are going to share an incident that happened to a real teenager named Linda in the recent past. Ask them to close their eyes as they listen to you read **Handout 1: Welcome to Linda's Website** and to imagine that they are a student at Linda's school. Discuss the following:

- How did it make you feel to hear about this incident?
- What do you think motivated the students to create the Web site?
- What about those who added comments or e-mails and those who chose not to tell anyone about what was taking place?
- What would you have done if you received a link to the Web site or a message inviting you to visit and join in?

FCAT Benchmarks:

LA.A.2.4.7 Analyzes the validity and reliability of primary source information

LA.C.1.4.3 Uses effective strategies for informal and formal discussions.

Accommodations: Teachers of students with disabilities are mandated by state and federal law to provide accommodations as stated on the students' IEP. General accommodations and best practices are listed in the introduction.

Instructional Time: One class period

Instructional Materials

- Dry erase board and markers
- **Handout 11.1: Welcome to Linda's Website**
- **Handout 11.2: Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty**

Instructional Lesson:

1. Ask students to consider if online cruelty, is a common occurrence in their lives.
2. Direct them to form a human continuum, standing to one side of the room if they feel it is extremely common, the other side if it is rare, or somewhere in-between that reflects their experience.
3. Ask for volunteers at different points in the continuum to explain why they chose their position.
4. Solicit specific examples from them, making sure that they respect the confidentiality of others and avoid stories that will offend or embarrass their peers.
5. Have students return to their seats.
6. Post a sheet of chart paper with the following question, "If you wouldn't say it in person, why say it online?"
7. Challenge students to articulate why cruelty is so common in an online environment and list their responses.
8. Consult **Handout 11.2: Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty**
9. Add some of these examples to the chart if students don't address them.

Assessment: Teacher observation, class participation and completion of activity.

Follow-up Activities/Home Learning/Parent: Ask students to research one other incident like the one involving Linda and bring it to the next class.

Handout 11.1: Welcome to Linda's Website

Linda is a sophomore in high school. She dated John for 9 months. They promised each other eternal love. During nine months, Linda allowed John to take pictures of her. At the beginning the pictures were innocent, they would exchange emails with the pictures. One day, John asked Linda to send him a naked picture of her as a proof of her love for him. Linda felt embarrassed, but John promised it was just for him. Linda accepted and took the picture. The relationship was going well. But after a month, John began talking to other girls. Soon after Linda found John kissing another student by the P.E. field. Linda broke up with John. He was very upset, he asked Linda for another opportunity, but she didn't want any part of him.

As a way of getting even for leaving him, John decided to post Linda's pictures on the web. John posted all of Linda's pictures, some dressed and others were naked. Soon other students at school joined in and shared nasty comments about Linda. They posted rude remarks that embarrassed Linda and destroyed her reputation. Some students used a link to Linda's e-mail address to send messages.

The abuse went on for months before the Web host agreed to take down the site. By that time, Linda felt so embarrassed that she decided to change schools.

John is now being investigated by the authorities for posting porn on the internet and for invading another person's privacy.

Handout 11.2: Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty

REASONS¹ for online social aggression	STRATEGIES for reducing online social aggression
1. I can't see you (invisibility lessens empathy).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visualize the person on the receiving end of the message and imagine how they will feel. ▪ Balance time spend online with activities that involve face-to-face interaction
2. You don't know me (anonymity emboldens people to say things they normally wouldn't).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Picture yourself saying this to someone in person. Could you? How would it feel?
3. See you later (communication that does not involve immediate, real-time feedback may reduce inhibitions).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Think about the response your message may provoke at a later time from the recipient, other peers and adults.
4. It's just a game (the Internet may seem like a world separate and apart, with different rules and norms).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the real-life outcomes and consequences that your actions could have. ▪ Never engage in fantasy play without others' consent and willing participation.
5. It's not me (responsibility for cruel behavior may be placed on an online persona or identity rather than on oneself).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask yourself if the person on the receiving end will experience your comments as part of a fantasy or role-play.
6. Look at me (personal attacks are an easy way to attract attention; negative attention may be better than no attention).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflect on how you really want others to view you. ▪ Consider behaviors that will lead to positive attention and friendships.
7. Don't mess with me (retaliation online is less threatening than standing up to a foe in person).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider whether revenge will actually solve your problems or make you feel better. ▪ Talk to a trusted adult about proactive solutions.
8. I'm one of you (participating in online cruelty may seem like a way to gain social acceptance; standing up to it may seem like it will bring ostracism).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask yourself if you really want friends who are cruel to others. ▪ Talk to an adult about ways to avoid online hostility and support those who are targeted.
9. You're not like me (the Internet may be a vehicle for expressing hate or prejudice that is socially unacceptable at school).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Imagine how it would feel if you were targeted for being different. ▪ Seek help from a teacher or counselor who can help you to deal with negative feelings.

1 Reasons 2-4 are from Suler, J. 2004. The Online Disinhibition Effect. *CyberPsychology and Behavior* 7: 321-326; reasons 1, 5 and 6 are from Willard, N. 2007. *Educator's Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats*. Center for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet. Retrieved from <http://www.cyberbully.org/cyberbully/docs/cbcteducator.pdf>.