

Los Angeles Unified School District

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

333 S. Beaudry Ave., 24th floor

Los Angeles, CA 90017

Phone: (213) 241-6766

FAX: (213) 241-8952

www.lausd.net



News Release

Contact: Holly Priebe-Sotelo (213) 241-6766

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LAUSD Launches Anti-Sexting Campaign Develops Video and Resources to Teach Students

LOS ANGELES – In response to a growing use of social media by students to post or send photos or videos of a sexual nature, the Los Angeles Unified School District launched today an anti-sexting campaign.

The 'Now Matters Later' initiative teaches students about the dangers of sexting, and the possible social, disciplinary and criminal consequences. The video will be shown to students in grades six through 12 to introduce the concept of sexting, encourage healthy boundaries and highlight the risks. Additional resources include classroom lessons that help teachers instruct students on how to say no if asked for a picture or video of a sexual nature. The lesson plans also will show: how to problem solve, and how to explore risks and responsibilities in a digital world.

Board of Education President Steve Zimmer said, "We are bringing resources not only to our students, but to our teachers, parents and administrators. We want to help students be responsible when they use social media. Most importantly, we want to keep our students safe."

Zimmer and others participated in a news conference held at the Los Angeles School Police headquarters. "Teaching teens to understand that Now Matters Later when it comes to their behavior in the digital world is of paramount importance," says Merve Lopus, Western Regional education director, Common Sense Education. "That's why Common Sense is committed to providing our research-based resources, K-12 curriculum and full support for the LAUSD as it empowers its K-12 students to be safe, smart and responsible digital citizens."

Tracy Webb, deputy city attorney, is passionate about this issue. She is counsel for the Cyber Crime, Child Abuse Policy and Children Exposed to Violence Initiative, Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

She said: "The bottom line, I think, is there is no way we are going to arrest and prosecute ourselves out of the issue of sexting. The only way we're going to stem the tide, get through to the kids and send the message is to partner. That means, law enforcement partnering with nonprofits, partnering with LAUSD, partnering with anybody and everybody in the community, who can help send the message to stop the behavior, who can protect kids now, and protect kids in the future as far as their digital reputation is concerned."

Two students, who are seniors at the Roybal Learning Complex, explained their perspective. When asked about how prevalent sexting is among teenagers, Mileidy Maldonado said, "I believe a lot of teenagers do it, and they don't know the consequences. They should know that it can affect them in the long run."

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Alexandra Hernandez, another student added: "This campaign is important because most students tend to not know better, so they tend to sext inappropriate pictures. They do not know this could affect them in the future."

Alvero Alvarenga, a parent administrator with the District's Parent, Community and Student Services branch, said, "As a parent, I think this campaign really brings home the dangers of sexting, and it makes me more aware. I have two students, a middle schooler and a high schooler. Now, I'm really concerned, and it is making me more aware of what they are doing online so I can start a conversation with them, and monitor them more."

Starting next week, the positive behavior support team at every middle and high school will determine the timing of implementing the program.

"We want young people to have a fighting chance to grow up and not be hurt by their social media past," said Holly Priebe-Sotelo, intervention coordinator, Human Relations, Diversity and Equity for L.A. Unified. "Our parents play a critical role in the lives of their children, and they should not be afraid of social media." Students, parents and teachers are invited to visit the website, <http://achieve.lausd.net/nowmatterslater>.

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