



Local

[\[Print\]](#) [\[Email\]](#)

[Share](#)



Sexting raises new problems for cops, schools

By: [Freeman Klopott](#)
Examiner Staff Writer
April 18, 2010

Sexting, kids sending naked pictures of each other through cell phones, has left law enforcement agencies and school officials struggling with how to punish or prevent the phenomenon.

Last week, police and school officials busted a Pyle Middle School boy who was renting out his iPod Touch so other boys could view images of middle school girls exposing themselves.

The case highlighted a dilemma for police who often have only child pornography laws to address the new category of crime. And for schools, the case illustrates the difficulty in convincing adolescents sexting is a serious matter, officials said.

Sexting "couldn't have been brought up more than it has been at Pyle," said Montgomery schools spokesman Dana Tofig. "They've talked about it, they've had assemblies, the principal wrote an article about it in the school newsletter."

None of that stopped the episode that led to last week's arrest.

The children involved in the Pyle incident "could be charged with child porn distribution, manufacturing or possession" said Montgomery County police Sgt. C. Thomas Jordan. "It's a mess to figure out, and once it is, it'll be up to prosecutors to determine how to proceed."

Child pornography laws in Maryland and Virginia, as well as federal laws, treat all images of the underaged as child pornography. If prosecutors chose to move forward with the charges Jordan listed, the adolescents would face stiff penalties: A minimum of 10 years in prison for manufacturing or distributing. The kids could spend their lives on a sex offender registry mixed in with rapists and pedophiles. "We have to find a way to distinguish between bad judgment and intentional criminality," said David Rittgers, a legal analyst at the Cato Institute. Vermont recently changed its child pornography laws by creating a separate charge that sends convicted sexters to juvenile courts. "That may still be a bit much," Rittgers said, "but [the new law is] a step in the right direction." Last year, Virginia lawmakers



(Andrew Harnik/The Examiner)

pondered taking a similar step, but chose not to because it was "too dangerous," said Del. David Albo, R-Fairfax, who heads the House's Courts of Justice Committee. "If we make exceptions, then we may be setting up a road map for a 35-year-old man to take pictures of an 11-year-old girl and get away with it," Albo said. Maryland lawmakers proposed a bill that would have classified sexting as harassment, but it didn't make it out of committee.

In the meantime, school districts are searching for lesson plans to inform students about sexting's dangers without alienating them with the eternally uncomfortable scenario of teachers talking about sex.

Much of the responsibility, however, will fall to parents -- where many believe it belongs.

"The schools are doing what they can, and I think it is more about parents being aware of what they can do," said Michele Menapace, president of the Fairfax County Council of PTAs. "It's appropriate for parents to ask questions, and to monitor their children's behaviors. Because the

alternatives can be awful."

fkopott@washingtonexaminer.com

lfabel@washingtonexaminer.com

More from Freeman Klopott

- [Chinese man trafficked drugs, smokes to pay back smugglers](#)
- [Polygraph expert named Md.'s top trooper](#)
- [Sexting raises new problems for cops, schools](#)
- [Police: Va. woman stole identity, bought 3 luxury cars](#)
- [5 cops sidelined in student-beating probe](#)

Topics

[Washington Examiner](#) , [Sexting](#) , [iPod Touch](#) , [Montgomery County](#)



To view this site, you need to have Flash Player 8.0 or later installed. Click [here](#) to get the latest Flash player.

MOST POPULAR STORIES

[Tea parties fight Obama's culture of dependence](#)

[How Clinton exploited Oklahoma City for political gain](#)

[An alarming outbreak of 'regime' amnesia](#)

[The illusion of green jobs in Maine](#)

[Bill and Hill would both turn down Supreme Court if Obama offered](#)

[Gene Healy: Chris Christie takes on the situation](#)

[Hating the government finally goes mainstream](#)

[In Iran, adultery causes earthquakes. In the West, it's Global Warming.](#)

[Hugh Hewitt: Choices for Charlie Crist and Lindsey Graham](#)

['Gangster Government?' Please, that's Michael Barone's phrase.](#)

WeeklyStandard.com

Coats Leads Ellsworth, 54% - 33%

Will Rossi Put Washington Senate Seat in Play?

Mullen's Myth of Geostrategic Equivalence

Crist Pulls TV Ads

Earthquake in Tibet

.submission { display: none; } .submission { display: none; }

Reader Comments

All comments on this page are subject to our Terms of Use and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Examiner or its staff. Comment box is limited to 200 words. Warning: If you comment, the Disqus platform default is set to email you when other reply to it. If you do not want to receive these replies to your comment, please uncheck the box.

[blog comments powered by Disqus](#)

Local

[Sexting raises new problems for cops, schools](#)

Sexting, kids sending naked pictures of each other... [Full story](#)

Economy

[Goldman may face U.K., German probes](#)

Goldman Sachs Group Inc. faces a regulatory probe in... [Full story](#)

Sports

[Back with Shanahan, Portis is a believer](#)

Redskins running back says he's committed ASHBURN -... [Full story](#)



[RSS](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Intern](#) | [Video](#) | [Maps](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Rack Locations](#) | [Advertise](#)

Find this article at:

http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/local/Sexting-raises-new-problems-for-cops_-schools-91101994.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.