Sponsored by:
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District 29 (Essex)
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District 40 (Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS
Requires school districts to include instruction on consequences of distributing sexually explicit images through electronic means as part of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/6/2018)
S2092 RUIZ, CORRADO

2 AN ACT concerning the public school curriculum and
3 supplementing chapter 35 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
4 Statutes.
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6 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
7 of New Jersey:
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9 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
10   a. The teenage practice of “sexting,” sending a sexually
11      explicit text message, is a nationwide problem that has perplexed
12      parents, school administrators, and law enforcement officials. A
13      Study by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned
14      Pregnancy released data which indicated that 19% of teens aged 13
15      to 19 had sent a sexually-suggestive picture or video of themselves
16      to someone via email, cell phone, or through another form of online
17      interaction, while 31% had received a nude or semi-nude picture
18      from someone else.
19   b. What many teens do not realize is that, by law, a sexual
20      image of any person under the age of 18 is child pornography.
21      Prosecutors in several states have charged teenagers who have
22      engaged in this behavior with criminal offenses, including
23      distribution of child pornography.
24   c. Pursuant to a law which became effective in April, 2012, the
25      New Jersey Legislature provided for a diversionary program for
26      juveniles who are criminally charged for “sexting” or posting sexual
27      images and permits them to participate in a remedial education or
28      counseling program as an alternative to criminal prosecution.
29   d. Beyond the legal consequences of this behavior, however,
30      sexting also has significant non-legal consequences including, but
31      not limited to, the effect on relationships, loss of educational and
32      employment opportunities, and being barred or removed from
33      school programs and extracurricular activities.
34   e. Because of the unique characteristics of cyberspace and the
35      Internet, a single sext has the potential to cause long-term and
36      possibly unforeseen consequences, and result in severe
37      embarrassment, ridicule, cyber-bullying, and lasting mental and
38      emotional trauma.
39   f. Teachers, guidance counselors, and school officials are
40      having to contend with and care for panic-stricken and depressed
41      victims of malicious sexts who will not return to class, and may
42      even resort to self-inflicted injury or suicide.
43   g. It is imperative that students understand at a young age the
44      severity of sending sexually explicit text messages and the impact
45      that these actions have on the students themselves, their victims,
46      and the community and that they receive instruction on how and
47      why to refrain from this very dangerous behavior.
2. A board of education shall include instruction on the social, emotional, and legal consequences of distributing sexually explicit images through electronic means once during middle school in an appropriate place in the curriculum as part of the school district’s implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. The Commissioner of Education shall provide school districts with age-appropriate sample learning activities and resources designed to implement this requirement.

3. This act shall take effect in the first full school year following the date of enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill requires a board of education to include instruction on the social, emotional, and legal consequences of distributing sexually explicit images through electronic means, a practice commonly referred to as “sexting,” once during the middle school grades in an appropriate place in the curriculum as part of the district’s implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education.