

A new normal is here. Is our school prepared?

For young people growing up online, exposure to pornography is almost impossible to avoid. Pornography has become the most prominent sexuality educator for many young people. It is shaping their sexual understandings and experiences. But porn conveys a whole range of problematic messages – about bodies, gender, sex, consent, power and aggression.

Young people need help to navigate this new reality.

Many schools are looking for assistance to respond to incidents involving sexually explicit imagery among their students. More and more schools are also keen to implement a broad, proactive approach to preventing the harms associated with pervasive and often-aggressive pornography, and to equip students to navigate healthy development.

- Is our school equipping students for healthy, respectful relationships in the twenty-first century?
- Does our relationships and sexuality curriculum address the influence of pornography?
- Do teachers and wellbeing staff have access to relevant professional learning and resources?
- Does school policy address sexually explicit imagery?
- Does the school work together with parents and community organisations to support students to navigate the challenges of new technologies, including the impacts of pornography?

It's time we talked has developed a suite of resources to support schools to develop a whole school approach to addressing pornography's influence that is tailored to your community and context.

For more information see itstimewetalked.com.

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What you need to know about young people and pornography

Young people see pornography at a formative stage

48% of boys have seen porn by the age of 13.
48% of girls have seen porn by the age of 15.

Pornography can be difficult to avoid

46% of boys and
56% of girls first saw porn unintentionally.

Many young men see pornography often

56% of young men use porn weekly and 17% use it daily.	15% of young women use porn weekly and 1% use it daily.
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Pornography is not the centrefold it used to be

Mainstream pornography often depicts aggression and problematic messages about consent.

97% of the aggression in pornography is directed towards women.

46% of pornography includes incest themes.

35% of pornography includes non-consensual behaviour.

Pornography has become a default sex educator

Pornography is shaping young people's sexual understandings and experiences.

60% of young men and **41%** of young women have used pornography as a source of information about relationships and sex in the last 12 months.

Boys are increasingly asking or expecting girls to follow the porn script in real life.

Pornography's influence has serious implications for young people's capacity to develop a sexuality that is safe, respectful, mutual and consenting.

Young people need support to navigate pornography's influence

Pornography is a sensitive and challenging topic, but it has become an issue we cannot afford to ignore.

Parents, schools, teachers and a range of other professionals all have critical roles to play.

Sources with links:

Our Watch, 2020

Fritz et al, 2020

NZOFLC, 2019

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Why is pornography an issue for schools?

Schools are an important context for addressing the influence of pornography for a number of reasons:

Research identifies schools as an effective site for health promotion and a priority site for violence prevention education.

Schools are significant contributors to young people's sexuality education, a context in which many of pornography's messages – about, for example, gender, bodies, consent, and sexual safety – can be appropriately addressed.

Many schools are familiar with health promotion frameworks and are already engaged in related and complementary work, such as respectful relationships, online safety, violence prevention and sexuality education.

Schools can address the influence of pornography as part of a comprehensive curriculum, with the input of highly skilled professionals and access to quality resources.

Schools can develop partnerships with parents and community organisations to address these issues.

Principals and teachers have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect students from any harm that should have reasonably been foreseen, including harms that may be encountered within the online learning environment, and foreseeable harms now include exposure to pornography.

Increasingly, schools are required to respond to incidents related to explicit sexual imagery – including incidents in which sexual imagery of students has been circulated – that can affect student wellbeing and school engagement, as well as potentially having legal consequences.

It is now common practice in many schools for students to use computers or tablets. Schools' promotion of the types of technology through which young people are exposed to pornography brings accompanying responsibilities to limit young people's exposure and to support parents to manage the technology at home.

Schools can themselves be sites of young people's exposure to explicit sexual imagery.

For more information and resources see itstimewetalked.com



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