

Wow

A week ago (sadly, my most recent blog post) I blogged about a school district monitoring their students by remotely turning on the webcams of their school-issued laptops. This story has really ballooned. On one site I have been following a thread about it and many links have been posted. Here are a few—click the titles for the full articles:

[Lower Merion School District vs. Mike and Ikes](#)

...AP reports the FBI is investigating the school district's webcam program, and district spokesman Doug Young suggests without claiming that Harriton High School student Blake J. Robbins' webcam was activated only because the laptop had been reported stolen – in accordance with an established policy. The boy was charged with an undisclosed infraction based on an image the school picked up from his webcam. District superintendent Christopher W. McGinley, in an orotund statement, defends the program while canceling it. And just to make clear that we're still in high school, Master Robbins appears to have gotten in trouble when he was photographed eating Mike and Ikes...

[Federal judge orders Pa. schools to stop laptop spying](#)

...Yesterday, U.S. District Court Judge Jan DuBois issued a consent order that prevents Lower Merion School District of Ardmore, Pa., from "remotely activating any and all web cams

embedded in lap top [sic] computers issued to students ... or from remotely taking screenshots of such computers."

Lower Merion spokesman Doug Young said today that the district would fully cooperate with the court order...

The Spy at Harriton High (and more)

...The truly amazing part of this story is what's coming out from comments from the students themselves. Some of the interesting points:

- Possession of a monitored Macbook was required for classes*
- Possession of an unmonitored personal computer was forbidden and would be confiscated*
- Disabling the camera was impossible*
- Jailbreaking a school laptop in order to secure it or monitor it against intrusion was an offense which merited expulsion*

When I spoke at MIT about the wealth of electronic evidence I came across regarding Chinese gymnasts, I used the phrase "compulsory transparency". I never thought I would be using the phrase to describe America, especially so soon, but that appears to be exactly the case...

Software maker blasts 'vigilantism' in Pa. school spying case

The company selling the software used by a Pennsylvania school district to allegedly spy on its students blasted what

it called laptop theft-recovery “vigilantism” today.

Absolute Software said it dissuades users of theft-recovery software from acting on their own. “We discourage any customer from taking theft recovery into their own hands,” said Stephen Midgley, the company’s head of marketing, in an interview Monday. “That’s best left in the hands of professionals.”...

There is now a [Wikipedia page](#) about the ongoing investigation of this lawsuit, though the blogs and articles (full of even more links for your perusal by the way) are more interesting IMHO.

Next up, something about my own unexciting life. Hopefully. ☐