



American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California

Policing Students Online: Threats to Students Rights & Well-Being Related to School Surveillance

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California Landscape

Online Filtering Programs

v.

Online Monitoring Programs
(Surveillance)

Online Filtering Programs

- Block access to websites that are obscene or harmful to children
- Schools are required to block online access to obscene or harmful content for children if they participate in the federal government's E-rate program for discounted telecommunications costs (Children's Internet Protection Act)

Online Filtering Programs:

Issues & Case Studies

- The filters are sometimes overbroad and can block access to appropriate content
- Case Studies:
 - Sex education provider
 - LGBTQ advocacy organizations

Online Filtering Programs: Policy Considerations

- Schools should review and remove proxy and browser settings that could potentially filter out LGBTQ resources and support hotlines or sexual health websites and services.
- Important to have safety guidelines that protect students and school staff, but also allow students to access this critical information.
 - Have a clear protocol for students and parents to ask school staff to remove overbroad filters.

Online Monitoring Programs

- Typically use a database of words or phrases to scan students' emails, messages, documents associated with a student's school-issued single sign on accounts & send flags to administrators and, in some cases, to law enforcement or family regulation services
- These programs are NOT required by the Children's Internet Protection Act

Online Monitoring Programs: Issues

- These programs are NOT required by the Children's Internet Protection Act
- Filters are overbroad & can sometimes disproportionately flag content from protected student groups or sensitive, but not problematic, content that should not be flagged

Online Monitoring Programs: Case Studies

- Unnecessary and anxiety-producing contact with law enforcement
 - Homework
 - Counselor shifting responsibilities to police
 - Video games
- Health research

School Surveillance Programs: Student & Parent Reactions



Online Monitoring Programs: Policy Considerations

- Schools should invest limited financial resources in personnel trained by state or school to work with young people & in programs that have a demonstrated track record of improving student wellness (peer counseling programs, wellness centers)
- Don't use surveillance tech
 - BUT if you already do: Notify families & provide easy way to opt-out of it; assess your processes/risks

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Resource

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TECH  BELONGING



Policing Students Online: The Increasing Threat of School-Sanctioned Digital Surveillance

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https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/tech_equality_school_surveillance_proof_1_0.pdf

