Weekly Ethicacy

Presenters: Michael Randazzo (For) and Katherine (Kate) Maschmeyer (Against)

Topic: Digital surveillance of students on school devices

Primary Source(s):
- https://www.wired.com/story/student-monitoring-software-privacy-in-schools/

Summary of Issue:

      This issue has developed over the past few years due to school districts installing software on devices which allow surveillance of students' browser activity on those devices. The percentage of teachers who reported their schools had provided their students with such devices doubled from 43% before the pandemic to 86% during the pandemic, a September 2021 report shows. In some cases teachers during classes are able to see active school browsers and close student tabs remotely (GoGuardian). There are many who believe that this is a breach of student privacy. Districts will claim that this is allowable because the activity is occurring on their devices, account, and network and they are obligated to preserve those services for students. The issue can be summarized by these essential questions:

- Should a school or district be able to reserve the right to install device management software on a school-owned digital device in order to ensure its reliability and intended service to the borrower?
    - What can schools see or do and when can they see it?
    - Who is responsible for the surveillance (administration/teachers)?
- Does the fact that the students are using a school owned device or account allow teachers to view their browsers? (Or in some cases, into the area surrounding the student's device?)
- If a website is not blocked by the district, why should a student not be able to access it?
- Should teachers be able to remote into student devices without their consent? If so, when is that appropriate and not?
- Is it morally correct to monitor student accounts for harmful or illegal activity both during or after school hours?
- Should schools be required to reveal what surveillance technology is being used on student devices to students and parents?

Supplementary Materials:

- Students perspective of the pros and cons of GoGuardian:
  https://studentnewspaper.rectoryschool.org/7385/student-life/a-deep-dive-into-the-pros-and-cons-of-goguardian/
- North Carolina Schools District announcing that they are dropping device surveillance program Gaggle:
  https://nsjonline.com/article/2022/08/wake-county-public-schools-ended-its-student-device-monitoring-program/
- Report on Monitoring of School issued devices:
  https://cdt.org/insights/report-online-and-observed-student-privacy-implications-of-school-issued-devices-and-student-activity-monitoring-software/
- Article discussion how student device surveillance may do more harm than good:
  https://theconversation.com/school-surveillance-of-students-via-laptops-may-do-more-harm-than-good-170983