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Judge bans webcam spying on students

Friday, May 14, 2010



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AP Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA - May 14, 2010 -- A judge has permanently banned a suburban Philadelphia school district from secretly monitoring students with webcams on their school-issued laptops.

The ruling by U.S. District Judge Jan DuBols on Friday has been expected. It's similar to a temporary injunction the judge imposed in February after a student sued the district over privacy concerns.

The Lower Merion School District acknowledges capturing 56,000 screen shots and webcam images so it could locate missing laptops.

The new ruling says Lower Merion can use other kinds of technology to find laptops but only if parents and students agree to it.

The order also requires school officials to arrange for the nearly 40 high school students who were unknowingly photographed by their laptops to see the images, as well as their parents.

Action News spoke with Mark Haltzman, the lawyer representing Lower Merion student Blake Robbins and his family,

Mark Haltzman sees the ruling as assurance that no future students will be spied on.

"I think we've really reached the pinnacle of what it is we needed to reach to put this to rest," Haltzman said.

Haltzman's client is so far the only student identified as having been unknowingly photographed by district controlled cameras.

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