



Issued 4/20/17

EFF Says Google Chromebooks Are Still Spying on Students

Google still hasn't shed its "bad guy" clothes when it comes to the data it collects on underage students. In fact, the Electronic Frontier Foundation says the company continues to massively collect and store information on children without their consent or their parents. Not even school administrators fully understand the extent of this operation, the EFF says.

This isn't the first time the EFF has had something to say against Google on this topic. In fact, two years ago it even filed a federal complaint against the company, alleging that it was "collecting and data mining school children's personal information, including their Internet searches."

According to the latest status report from the EFF, Google is still up to no good, trying to eliminate students' privacy without their parent's notice or consent and "without a real choice to opt out." This, they say, is done via the Chromebooks Google is selling to schools across the United States. "Educational technology services often collect far more information on kids than is necessary and store this information indefinitely," the EFF said. The main issue, it seems, is the fact that the education system is changing the way it treats the students' privacy, mostly due to a rollout of low-priced Chromebooks that come with educational services. Often, they are available for a reduced price or even given out for free. "Educational technology services often collect far more information on kids than is necessary and store this information indefinitely," the EFF says in its investigation. In fact,

they tie personally identifying information, such as kids' names, birthdays, browsing history, search terms, location data, contact lists, and behavioral information.

The worst part is that some programs used on these school-issued Chromebooks upload student data to the cloud automatically and by default. This happens without the express consent of the students or their families or even their awareness of the situation. Many complaints about this situation were filed to the EFF by parents who found out schools have mass-enrolled their kids into Google email accounts, using their full names. Furthermore, they posted photos of them on social media sites and enrolled them into other services that collect data without any notification. To make matters even worse, the passwords students are assigned are easy to guess, featuring their birthdays or student ID numbers, which makes them extremely easy to guess. Students are also prohibited from changing their passwords.