



## [Judge Limits Access to Lower Merion School District Webcam Photos](#)

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**by KYW's Brad Segall**

A federal judge in Philadelphia has issued an order restricting access to any photos that were captured from the Lower Merion School District's laptop tracking program.

The judge ruled Thursday on a motion filed on behalf of Harriton High School senior Evan Neill and his parents. Neill says his school-issued laptop was on and connected to the Internet regularly in his home over the last two years.

Their attorney, Stephen Shapiro of the law firm Schnader Harrison, says the judge's order limits access to pictures and other information collected by the district only to attorneys for the school district: "If that data and materials ended up in the hands of anybody else and was circulated around, that would simply compound the privacy violations."

Blake Robbins and his parents filed a lawsuit in February claiming that administrators had spied on him through a camera on a school-issued laptop.

Investigators hired by the school district are expected to release their findings in the next couple of weeks.

## [Judge restricts access to L. Merion laptop photos](#)

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By John P. Martin – *Inquirer* Staff Writer

Responding to parents' concerns, a federal judge on Wednesday barred anyone from disseminating photos or screen shots captured by the Lower Merion School District's laptop-tracking program without his permission.

The order, from U.S. District Judge Jan E. DuBois, followed a conference with lawyers in the lawsuit over the program, and representatives of parents who wanted the protective order.

"It severely limits the universe of people who have access to the photographs and other data collected by the district," said Stephen Shapiro, lawyer for Richard and Elaine Neill and their son, Evan, who asked for the ban.

The order was faxed to 17 lawyers - a reflection of how the case has grown since Blake Robbins and his parents, Michael and Holly, sued in February, saying Harriton High School administrators had spied on him through a camera on a school-issued laptop computer.

Once turned on, the camera - intended to track lost or stolen laptops - secretly snapped a photo, captured an image of the computer's screen, recorded the laptop's Internet address, and repeated these events every 15 minutes until it was turned off.

District officials have acknowledged activating the tracking system 42 times this school year. The Robbinses' attorney, Mark Haltzman, said he and district lawyers had already informally agreed to limit access to such evidence, but said the judge's order would extend to school employees and anyone else.

"Everybody thought that this kind of information shouldn't be easily disclosed to anybody at this point unless there was a specific need," Haltzman said.

District officials have not said exactly how many students were photographed or monitored, or how often. That sort of detail might show up when investigators hired by Lower Merion release their report. According to the judge's order, the investigation should be complete by May 4.

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