SafeGov Boston Parents Survey

Views on technology in the classroom from Boston’s parents
Research Methodology

Who – Parents of School-Age Children in Boston
• 308 parents of children currently in school, living in Boston
• Children must be in Elementary School through High School

How
• Telephone and online survey representative of the parental population of Boston

When
• Data collected between January 23 and February 5, 2015

Margin of Error
• ± 5.5% at the 95% confidence interval
Executive Summary
## Executive Summary

1. Parents in Boston see a wide array of potential benefits stemming from providing in-school Internet access, with an emphasis on developing skills for a global economy and employment after finishing school.

2. Less than half of parents in Boston are aware that their children’s in-school Internet use can be data-mined, but concern grows once they learn about the types of tracking that can take place in schools.

3. Parents’ comfort with enhanced technology in schools can be increased if appropriate safeguards are in place, but parents in Boston are also willing to take personal action, often in support of dramatic restrictions of in-school technology, to regain control of private data.
Anticipating benefits

*Parents believe in-school Internet access will help equip students with a variety of skills, including skills for a global economy and gaining employment after school.*
Parents see a range of benefits from in-school Internet access, with an emphasis on acquiring skills for the global economy

- Acquire 21st century skills necessary for the global economy: 83% Agree
- Acquire skills needed to gain employment after finishing school: 82% Agree
- Acquire learning skills like creativity, problem solving, critical thinking and similar: 79% Agree
- Gain a better knowledge of science: 77% Agree
- Gain a better knowledge of history and literature: 76% Agree
- Obtain better results on college entrance exams: 74% Agree
- Be more likely to go on to college: 70% Agree
- Gain a better knowledge of foreign languages: 64% Agree

QUESTION: Do you believe that if children are allowed to use Internet applications at school (with proper protections against online tracking and ad targeting), they will be more likely to:
While parents connect in-school technology to preparing students for employment, they do not strongly link it to skills for college

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Acquire skills needed to gain employment after finishing school: 82% Agree

Acquire learning skills like creativity, problem solving, critical thinking and similar: 79% Agree

Gain a better knowledge of science: 77% Agree

Gain a better knowledge of history and literature: 76% Agree

Obtain better results on college entrance exams: 74% Agree

Be more likely to go on to college: 70% Agree

Gain a better knowledge of foreign languages: 64% Agree

QUESTION: Do you believe that if children are allowed to use Internet applications at school (with proper protections against online tracking and ad targeting), they will be more likely to:
Data mining awareness

Fewer than half of parents in Boston are aware that their children’s in-school Internet use can be data-mined, but concern grows once they learn how students are targeted.
A majority of parents are unaware that Internet companies may be tracking their child’s Internet habits at school.

**Question:**
Today some large Internet companies offer free Internet applications such as email for schools. Often these applications are bundled with low-cost ad-subsidized laptops or tablets. Nearly all companies promise not to track children for ad-targeting purposes. Of important note is that this promise generally applies to a specific suite of online services and not to services considered “outside” of the suite. Thus, some Internet companies may still track what children do on the Internet at school – perhaps to target them with ads or for other commercial purposes. This practice is sometimes known as “data mining”. Whether or not you are familiar with the term “data mining”, please indicate how much you have seen, read or heard about this kind of Internet tracking in schools. Have you seen, read, or heard a great deal, some, a little, or nothing at all?

**Results:**
- **48% aware**
- **52% unaware**

**Age Distribution:**
- **46%** Age 18-39 vs. **45%** Age 40-49 vs. **58%** Age 50+

**Income Distribution:**
- **41%** Less than $49,999 vs. **48%** $50,000-$99,999 vs. **62%** $100,000 or more

**Additional Observations:**
Older parents and parents who earn a higher income are more aware of Internet companies potentially tracking their child’s online behavior at school.
Nearly all parents say they would be concerned if Internet companies were tracking their child’s online habits; Concern is more intense among parents initially unaware of the practice.

92% of parents are “very” or “somewhat” concerned about the tracking of their child’s internet practices at school.

QUESTION: As a parent, please indicate how concerned you would be if Internet companies were tracking the email and web browsing habits of your child at school in order to target them with Internet advertising. Would you be very concerned, somewhat concerned, not so concerned, or not at all concerned?
Parents in Boston strongly disapprove of tracking students’ online activity, unless it is used solely to improve learning.

| Internet companies that use software to read children's email in order to build profiles of them for advertising or other commercial purposes | 96% 7% 3% 9% 79% |
| Companies that profile children or track their Internet activity in school for commercial purposes not related to education | 85% 5% 5% 9% 78% |
| Internet companies that use video sharing or social networking to build profiles of children for advertising purposes | 3% 9% 6% 16% 66% |
| Laptop computers or tablets where all of the software is controlled by a single company whose primary business is Internet advertising | 3% 11% 9% 19% 58% |
| Laptop computers or tablets that require schools and students to agree to advertising as a condition for using the device | 9% 15% 8% 21% 47% |
| Companies that use software to build profiles of children strictly for the purpose of improving their academic performance | 38% 33% 8% 8% 13% |

QUESTION: The following statements describe practices that some Internet companies providing email services or other apps to schools sometimes engage in. For each statement, please indicate if you strongly approve, somewhat approve, neither approve nor disapprove, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove the practice described:
Not only do parents disapprove of in-school advertising, they see it as being harmful to children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Content</th>
<th>Very harmful</th>
<th>Somewhat harmful</th>
<th>Not too harmful</th>
<th>Not at all harmful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Websites that could expose them to sexual attention from adults</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites that display adult sexual content</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic beverages</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites that could expose them to identify theft or financial fraud</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightening images or violent content</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medications such as pain relievers, diet drugs, or steroids</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medications for psychological conditions such as hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, or depression</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foods or beverages with high amounts of sugar</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video games</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**QUESTION:** The following are some kinds of Internet ads or content that children might be exposed to if companies are allowed to read children’s emails or track their Internet activity while in school. Please indicate how harmful or not harmful you feel each type of advertising or content would be to children in schools.
Intensity of concern grows after parents learn more about the types of online tracking and profiling that can take place in schools, even among those initially aware of the practice.
Taking action

While a strong majority of parents look to schools to limit data mining practices, more than four in five are likely to take action against data mining themselves.
Nearly all parents say they are likely to take action against data mining.

91% likely

Parents with younger students are more likely to take action.

Very likely: 75%
Somewhat likely: 17%
Neither likely nor unlikely: 4%
Somewhat unlikely: 4%
Very unlikely: 3%

Elementary school:
75% Very likely
17% Somewhat likely
4% Neither likely nor unlikely
4% Somewhat unlikely
3% Very unlikely

Middle school:
71% Very likely
20% Somewhat likely
3% Neither likely nor unlikely
4% Somewhat unlikely
3% Very unlikely

High school:
64% Very likely
26% Somewhat likely
5% Neither likely nor unlikely
4% Somewhat unlikely
4% Very unlikely

QUESTION: Please indicate how likely you would be to take action, such as speaking out at a Parents and Citizens meeting or calling a school official, if Internet companies were tracking the email and web browsing habits of children at school in order to target them with Internet advertising. Would you be very likely, somewhat likely, neither likely nor unlikely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely to take action?
Parents hold schools most responsible for protecting students’ privacy

**QUESTION:** When the school arranges to have an outside company provide an Internet service such as email, who should take primary responsibility for ensuring that your children’s privacy is protected while using this Internet service?
Nearly all parents support Boston schools requiring vendors to pledge they will not use student data for non-educational purposes.

Older parents are more likely to support a Student Privacy Pledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTION: Recently many providers of educational apps have agreed to a Student Privacy Pledge stating they will not use student personal information for any non-educational purposes such as user profiling for ad targeting. Do you agree that Boston schools should require all vendors to add this Pledge to their contracts with the school district and make it legally binding on them?
Giving parents the opportunity to opt out or control what information is collected about their child is most effective in restoring comfort with in-school Internet use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>5 - Much more comfortable</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1 - Much less comfortable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You were allowed to <strong>opt out completely</strong> from having your children profiled or their Internet activity tracked in school for purposes not related to education</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Congress or the State Legislature</strong> passed much <strong>stricter laws</strong> giving parents <strong>complete control</strong> over what information if any can be collected by Internet companies about children while in school</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were allowed to see exactly <strong>what information these companies are collecting</strong> about your children</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your children’s school adopted <strong>rules of conduct forbidding outside companies</strong> to profile children or track their Internet activity in school for advertising or other commercial purposes</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**QUESTION**: Knowing that some Internet companies build profiles of children or track their Internet activity in school for commercial purposes such as advertising, would you as a parent feel more comfortable if:
Further, parents agree that schools that use free applications from Internet firms should demand restrictions on data mining.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools that accept free Internet applications or purchase ad-subsidized devices should require the companies to offer privacy policies that guarantee there will be no user profiling or web tracking for any purpose not strictly related to education</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools that purchase ad-subsidized laptops or tablets should require that all ad-related functions be completely removed from the devices (not merely turned off)</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools that accept free applications from Internet firms or purchase ad-subsidized devices should require contracts that ban any tracking of children’s Internet activity for advertising or other commercial purposes</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools should be allowed to accept free applications from Internet firms even if children are sometimes tracked for advertising purposes</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**QUESTION:** Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement?
Nearly nine in ten parents agree that children’s personal data deserves higher levels of protection than ordinary consumers’

QUESTION: Do you agree that children in schools using Internet services chosen by their school, government or other authority deserve higher levels of protection for their personal data than ordinary consumers who agree to use an Internet service of their own choosing for their personal use?

89% agree

Parents who earn a higher income are more likely to agree that children’s data deserves greater protection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $49,999</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$99,999</td>
<td></td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>98%</td>
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About this survey
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This survey was commissioned by SafeGov.org, an online forum for IT providers and leading industry experts dedicated to promoting trusted and responsible cloud computing solutions for the public sector. By fostering a more comprehensive understanding of cloud technologies, including their benefits, capabilities and limitations, SafeGov.org works to empower government users to make well-informed procurement choices from the growing universe of marketplace offerings.

The survey was conducted by Brunswick Insight, the research and consulting arm of the Brunswick Group, an international corporate communications partnership that helps businesses and other organizations address critical communications challenges. Brunswick is an international team of more than 600 people based in 22 offices in 13 countries.

For more information about this survey please contact:

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Respondent Demographic Profile

Gender
- Female: 71%
- Male: 29%

Child’s Grade Level*
- Elementary: 48%
- Middle school: 37%
- High school: 47%

Parent’s Age
- 18-29: 8%
- 30-39: 23%
- 40-49: 42%
- 50+: 21%

Education
- High school: 19%
- Vocational graduate: 17%
- University graduate: 31%
- Masters degree: 23%

Employment status
- Full-time: 61%
- Part-time: 14%
- Unemployed, looking: 7%
- Unemployed, not looking: 11%

Marital Status
- Married: 55%
- Single: 25%
- Separated / Divorced: 11%
- Domestic Partnership: 2%

Annual Household Income
- Less than $25,000: 13%
- $25,000-$49,999: 23%
- $50,000-$74,999: 14%
- $75,000-$99,999: 14%
- $100,000-$149,999: 11%
- $150,000+: 10%

*Totals add to more than 100 since respondents were allowed to select multiple responses in the event they have multiple children.