Chapter 3
The Laptop Tracking Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A school was able to receive the "Technology for All" grant to issue a large number of laptop computers for students to check out and use at home. A policy for checking out the laptops was developed that included a software utility to keep track of the amount of time students may keep the laptop, the implantation of antitheft tracking software to minimize loss, the maintenance plan of the laptops, how they were to be insured, and other information. Later on, the school principal had to devise a new plan so that the laptop checkout policy would not escalate into damages and possible lawsuits.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Edison Elementary is a school that is located in the suburbs of a major US city. The district itself boasts of being one that is more suburbia than urban but this particular school lies right on the border of the two. The physical building is located in a suburban neighborhood but its' students actually live in urban areas and are bused in to attend class.

The school received unique funding from the state for offering education to students from/in urban areas, which the district enjoyed greatly. Because the students bused in are classified as being from urban and socially disadvantaged areas, the district was able to apply for funds that would not otherwise be available. As

a result of the school having a large number of students with low socio-economic status the school was able to apply for and receive the "Technology for All" grant.

The school administered a survey to assess student and community needs. After administering the community survey, the school discovered that many students did not have computers to use at home. The school technology committee decided that the best way to use the grant money would be to purchase student laptops. The committee came to a consensus that it would be most beneficial for students to be able to check out these laptops from the school library and use them at home. A policy for checking out the laptops was developed. This policy included the amount of time students may keep the laptop, the implantation of antitheft tracking software to minimize loss, the maintenance plan of the laptops, how they were to be insured, and other information. The response by the students and community was overwhelming. The laptops were continually checked out. The laptop program was proceeding as planned until it was found that student privacy might be in jeopardy due to the antitheft tracking software.

THE CASE

Edison Elementary officials were very proud that, thanks to the Technology for All" grant, they were able to give each of their 900 students, a laptop computer to "ensure that all students have 24/7 access to school-based resources."

One afternoon, Principal Skinner rushed into the library asking for both the librarian, Ms. Trang, and the media specialist, Mr. Larson, at once. He asked them about the laptop tracking software. Both Ms. Trang and Mr. Larson were unsure of what the principal wanted to know about the software. Mr. Skinner asked Mr. Larson to show him how to look up a checked out laptop computer. Mr. Larson then quickly logged into the network and under administrative tools used the "locate" option to find laptop "XM616". The principal was horrified to see this. He instructed Mr. Larson to shut this portion of the tracking software off immediately. He then instructed Ms. Trang to suspend all laptop check out until further notice. Mr. Larson and Ms. Trang began to question the principal when he explained that the recording or viewing of others' information without consent is considered illegal. Since parents and students were not made aware of this and it was not in the signed form students were required to have in order to check out the laptops, that portion of the software must be disabled. Even with prior knowledge, viewing the information was still a sticky situation. He called for an emergency after-school staff meeting to devise a plan to prevent the laptop checkout policy from escalating into damages and possible lawsuits.

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