

EDUCATION

Illinois Schools Demand Students Hand Over Social Media Passwords

By Zaid Jilani / AlterNet
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Amid hysteria about social media and its potential for cyber-bullying, Illinois school districts have started to quietly eliminate their students' right to privacy. In 2013, Illinois passed a law requiring schools to ask elementary and secondary students to provide passwords to their social media accounts if they believe that they violated a rule or policy.



The policy went into effect this month, and one school district, the Triad Community Unit School District #2, already sent out letters to parents informing them of the new policy. "It's one thing for me to take my child's social media account and open it up, or for the teacher to look or even a child to pull up their social media account, but to have to hand over your password and personal information is not acceptable to me," said Sarah Bozarth, one of the parents in the district.

"The district understands student privacy interests," Superintendent Leigh Lewis told The Washington Post, "and will not haphazardly request social media passwords unless there is a need, and will certainly involve parents throughout the process,"

But opposition to the new law remains even among school administrators. The Illinois Principals Association's associate director Brian Schwartz told the paper that his organization isn't in favor of the new procedure. A number of lawmakers from other states agree. Bills prohibiting schools from accessing social media information have been introduced in Hawaii, Indiana, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Rhode Island. It should be noted that laws similar to this one in Illinois such as an anti-cyberbullying law in Albany County, New York, have been ruled unconstitutional.

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