Porn on Plainedge Chromebooks

Joseph Beyrouty　REDACTED

Fri 4/8/2022 3:11 PM

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Dear Dr. Le Vaillant,

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your addressing my concern last night that the 5th grade students were not able to access inappropriate content on their school-issued Chromebooks. Although I appreciated your assurances that the Chromebooks distributed to kids were secure and that they would be unable to view porn, I decided to test it out on my daughter REDACTE school-issued Chromebook. She's a 7 year old in Ms. Stenzler's first grade class and my assumption is that her device would have the strongest restrictions due to her young age.

TEST RESULTS

First test was to turn off Safe Browsing from the Google Chrome browser by going to Settings and selecting "No Protection". I was able to do this without issue; however, I did notice that Safe Search and Safe Image Search remained intact by examining the URL on Google.com. I was pleasantly surprised by this finding, but I would expect that I shouldn't be able to modify any setting within the Safe Search function area. I typed the word "sex" in the search bar and it returned regular search results. Clearly anything about sex is inappropriate for a first grader, but nothing rose to the level of being pornographic. With respect to image search, it was "clean", but I use that term loosely because the images would qualify as PG-13 through R. Definitely not something that is suitable for the eyes of a first grader and should not even be accessible.

I went to YouTube (i.e., *not* YouTube Kids), which in my opinion for a first grader should be an automatic block. I was able to find some disturbing videos using the search term "sex", but again nothing that would rise to the level of porn. The search auto-populated with several suggestions, as is typical with a Google-based product, with a video including the terms "sex" and "rape" in the heading. I clicked that link since it was the top of the list. There were videos about rape and other disturbing content with some very foul four-letter words being used in the video. I was able to watch Cardi B's music video WAP. Again, inappropriate for a 7 year old with explicit language and imagery, but it's not technically porn. I would classify the videos I was able to access as rated PG through R.

I tried a URL titled Sex.com and it was successfully blocked. I was happy to see that the filter was working in this instance as intended.

Last test was to see if I can access porn through Twitter, which is a public forum site and is well-known to be poorly and arbitrarily regulated. While on Twitter.com, I successfully created a profile using her school Gmail account. In fact, Chrome actually suggested I use it; it popped up on its own once the website finished loading in the Chrome browser and I accepted the suggestion. I didn't have to retype her login or password, I simply accepted the invite to use the user profile native to her Chromebook. I typed in a fake birthday to make sure I was over 21 when creating the profile, and then went to the search bar on Twitter and typed in "porn". Attached are snapshots of what I was able to see after clicking on their first suggestion as proof. All I had to do was simply consent to view sensitive content for this particular Tweet. Note that I blurred the screenshot to spare you from viewing what I was able to access for the sake of decency, but I assure you it was X-rated because it was a graphic video of a man and woman engaged in sexual intercourse. I didn't check other message board type sites and whether they are blocked or not (e.g., Reddit, Quora, etc.), but I am certain you can check on that internally. I had already seen enough.

CONCLUSION

I suggest you retest your setup protocols on these devices to personally determine if you are able to replicate the same results or if it was simply a bad setup on this one device. That said, my suspicion is that if I were to test the other three Plainedge devices in my home, I would experience the same thing. It's clearly very easy to circumvent your security protocols. Additionally, I'm sure that if I tried to further stress test your security measures, I can find additional weaknesses. I'm a 42 year old adult and am fairly tech savvy but not a computer science major or anything that would be considered a technically proficient professional. However, the kids today are even savvier than the adults. Knowing this, one begins to wonder what other security measures can they bypass?

The argument can be made that a 7 year old isn't capable of assembling these steps to circumvent your system's security protocols, and I would concur with that assessment. But can a 5th, 6th, 7th, or higher grade student replicate it? Obviously, we all know the answer is "yes", especially as their capabilities around IT grow as does their curiosity.

The next argument that can be made is that students at a certain age have internet accessible phones anyway, so why the "pearl clutching" about the school-issued Chromebooks? I would argue that a phone given to a child by their parents is private property and in those cases are the sole responsibility of the parent to provide the proper duty of care. However, the Chromebooks are not private property because they are provided by the school and are funded by the taxpayer; therefore, these school-issued devices must be better secured and proper duty of car lies with the administration.

I am at your disposal to discuss this concern further. I am hopeful that some sort of hotfix can be immediately pushed to these Chromebooks to address these clear flaws in their setup. In my humble opinion, there should be a limitation on the websites these Chromebooks can access just like the inability to download apps as you clearly claim. It's good to have filters that block inappropriate material; however, more needs to be done so that *only* appropriate websites are accessible. Only certain sites should be Whitelisted — or possibly internet browsing should be fully disabled for our youngest grades — that are deemed age-appropriate as determined by universally acceptable Plainedge community standards. Obviously, something like that would need to be better defined via community input. Then, as a child progresses through the grades and the need to access more information becomes greater to successfully complete school assignments, the list of acceptable sites can grow.

I have other ideas to further address concerns around the school-issued devices and ways to foster a safe internet browsing environment that is not covered in this email. I will gladly take up an offer to
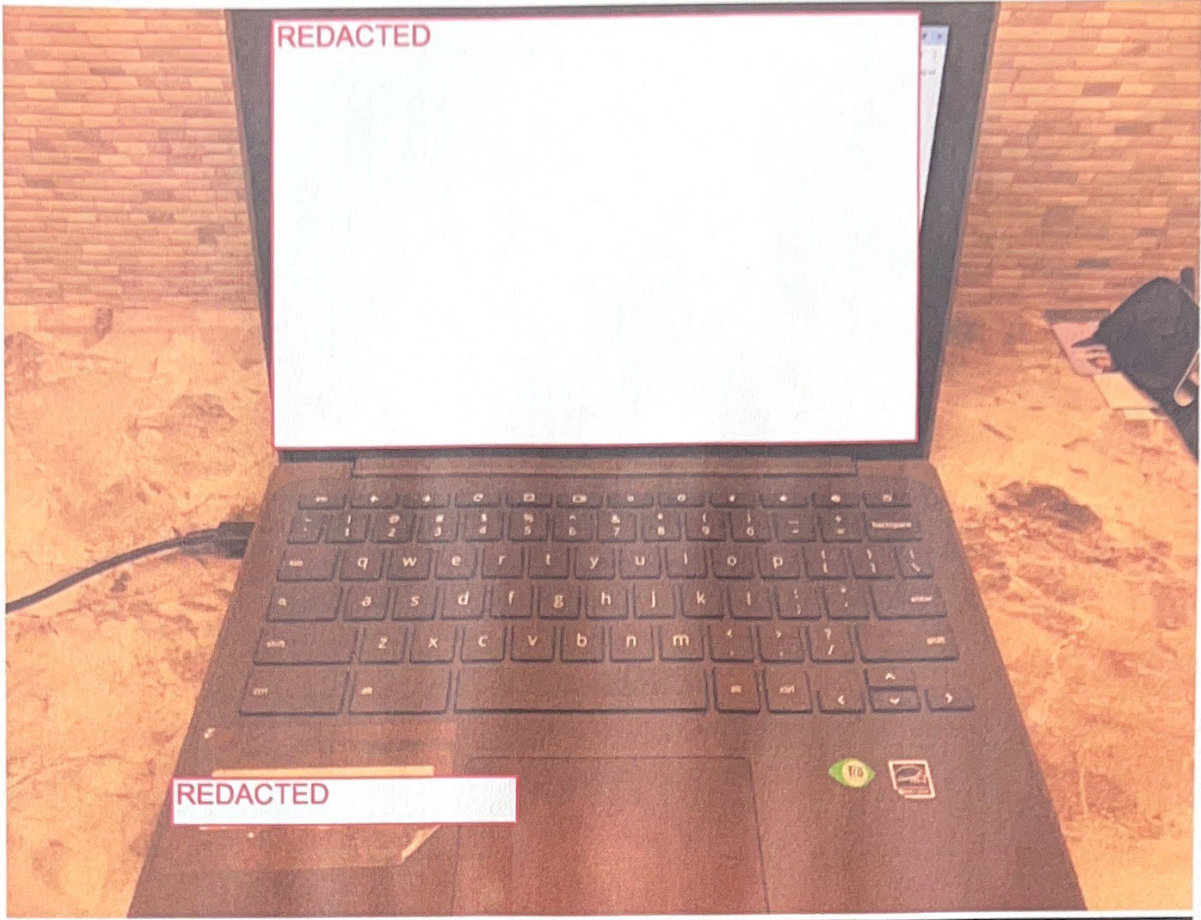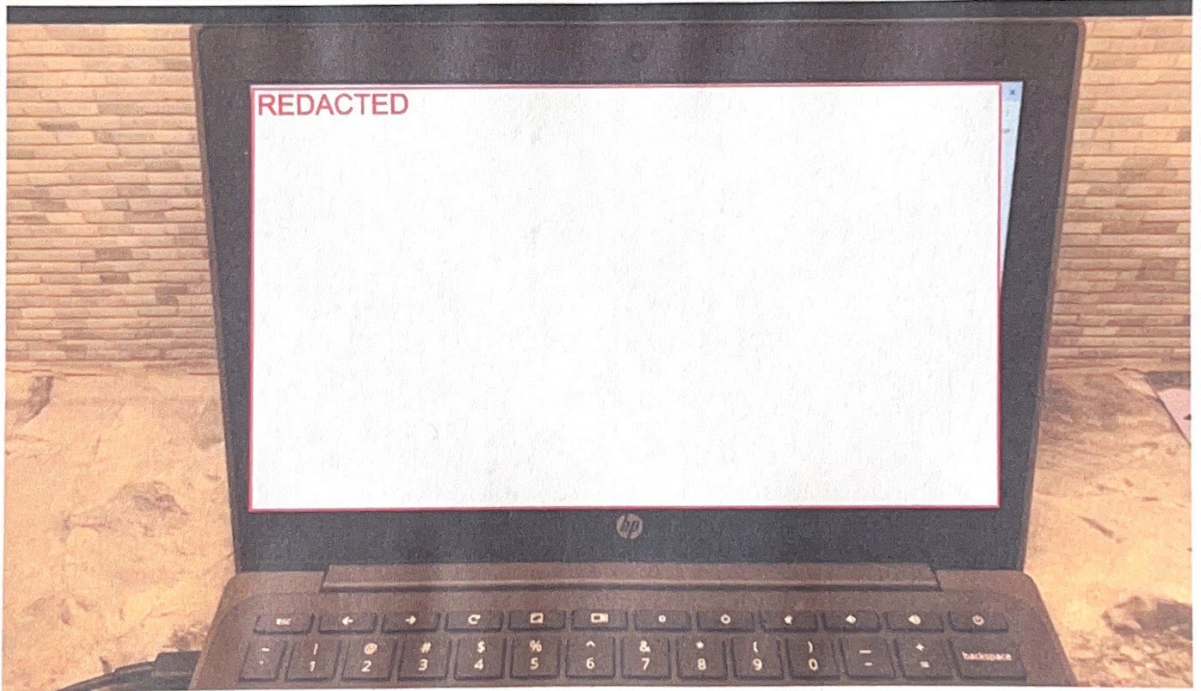
discuss anything herein in a constructive, respectful, and productive manner if you extend me the courtesy. As mentioned last night, I shared some of these ideas already with Mr. Maisano, but I would warmly welcome the opportunity to have the same conversation with you.

Best regards,

Joe Beyrouty

RE: Porn on Plainedge Chromebooks

Le Vaillant, Guy J <GLeVaillant@plainedgeschools.org>

Fri 4/8/2022 6:49 PM

To: Joseph Beyrouty   **REDACTED**

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Hi Mr. Beyrouty,

I am in receipt of your email and will be meeting with the IT group on Monday to review the additional information you have provided.

I will reach out to you during the week when I have further information to discuss and review with you.

Please know that the health and safety of all children is always our priority.

Thanks for reaching out.

Guy

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