

Are pre-school webcams giving children the wrong message? [CA] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

Even if she's at work, Lindsay Whitten is just a click away from her preschool daughter.

The oil and gas lab manager can check on how three-year-old Sydney is doing by accessing her preschool's security camera online.

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Opened in March, Jump Start Preschool says it's the first child-care facility in Calgary and the second in Canada to install a web-friendly surveillance system.

"We're really proud of what we do here," said owner Marla McKay, 28. "So we're happy to show everyone."

But critics say the cameras provide a poor example for children.

Installing cameras in a preschool is sending the wrong message to youth, said Stephen Jenuth with the Civil Liberties Association.

"It's a question of privacy and setting boundaries," he said. "Having web cameras is an invasion of privacy and it leads to more and more... It's taking away people's expectation of privacy and teaching young people it is OK to watch them with hidden cameras."

Instead of cameras, Jenuth encourages parents to go spend time at preschools themselves. Visits can reassure them about the environment their children are in, and kids can both see that someone is watching and learn that their privacy is valuable, he said.

The camera at Jump Start provides a 360-degree view of the entire facility - except bathrooms - complete with the power to zoom.

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Web-surfing parents can control the camera for a maximum of five minutes at a time. They can even snap a few pictures and have them sent to their e-mail accounts.

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- reprinted from the St. Catharines Standard

Region: Canada ^[2]

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