



Welcome Back to School; Here's Your Student REAL ID Card

In what reads like a passage from George Orwell's 1984 or Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, the government public school district for New Canaan, Connecticut, is considering a proposal from SecureRF, a local digital security company, to tag and track school property, such as textbooks, laptops — and also students — whether they are on or off campus.

The students would be tagged via a radio frequency identification, commonly known as RFID, chip embedded in each student's school ID card. The proposal would essentially mean REAL ID for public school students, in New Canaan.



The proposal came after officials from New Canaan schools entered into negotiations with SecureRF, which recently applied for \$100,000 research grant from the National Science Foundation.

As can be imagined, the proposal has already alarmed some students and parents fearing for their privacy.

When a reporter from local ABC affiliate [News 8](#) asked a parent if she thought this represented an invasion of privacy the parent responded, "I think it's my business to know where he is. The school only needs to know, to some extent, where he is when he is there."

SecureRF Founder and Chief Executive Officer Louis Parks made the case that the RFID tags are for the students' safety and security in the event of an emergency: "In an emergency they would be able to take attendance and know which students were where in a matter of seconds."

According to the [SecureRF website](#), their "secure RFID solution" includes the following:

- RFID tags with the SecureRF's Algebraic Eraser security protocol and optional sensors
- EPCglobal Class 1, Gen2 compliant readers
- SecureRF's interface between the readers and the business network, called the Secure Reader Host

The company produces a version of RFID called the LIME Tag, which stands for Lightweight, Multistream Encryption. This lightweight version, aside from being much more portable, is supposedly very secure and able to provide data verification "at the RFID reader, RFID tag, and date level," according to the website. These LIME tags, which are perhaps the most practical to be embedded in student ID cards, use "unique session keys and a self-contained public key (asymmetric) cryptographic system."

Other features of the LIME Tag RFIDs are:

- The LIME Tag with optional sensors enables temperature tracking, tamper indication, shock sensing



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on August 26, 2010

and other functions.

- No requirement for storing passwords or private keys
- Energy-saving power management that extends battery life
- An extended user memory.
- A long read/write range.
- Ability to operate with currently installed EPCglobal Class 1, Gen 2 UHF readers without the need for firmware upgrades; a significant implementation advantage.

While SecureRF makes a compelling case about how its technology cannot be tampered with by unauthorized persons or that it is “uncloneable,” neither the company’s website nor the New Canaan school district mentions anything about tampering from authorized personnel. Who is to say that students will not be spied on when they are off campus? That question remains unanswered as the New Canaan Board of Education has not yet finalized any decision on whether it would go through with this proposal.

RFID technology, such as the proposed federal REAL ID cards, has caused an uproar among citizens concerned about their privacy and its misuse by an overbearing and all-intrusive federal government.

Concerns of its implementation on the federal level resulted in the introduction of the [Opting Out of the Real ID Act \(H.B. 325\)](#) in the Utah state legislature, in 2009. The Utah resolution was originally sponsored by Republican State Senator Mark B. Madsen, the grandson of former Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson.

Most parents and students have mixed feelings about the proposed RFID student IDs, and officials from New Canaan school system remain open to the opinions and suggestions of parents before making their final decision.

Photo: Dawn and Mike Cantrall’s daughter, a seventh-grader at Brittan Elementary School, poses at her Sutter, Calif., home, wearing the Radio Frequency Identification tag that the school asked her to wear on Feb. 8, 2005: AP Images



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