

K-12 Cybersecurity Statistics

IMPACT AND COSTS OF CYBERATTACKS AND THREATS ON SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS



Education is a growing—and sustainable—target of cyberattacks and threats. Often, schools and districts are understaffed, have limited people and leaders dedicated to cybersecurity, use outdated software and systems, and, most importantly, possess valuable student and financial data that cyber criminals want to get their hands on. Understanding the reality of threats and attacks occurring every day is an important part of improving your ability to protect your student, staff, school, and district data and privacy.

So Many Attacks on Schools and Districts

- In 2021, 162 school districts in 38 states suffered cybersecurity incidents³
- 2 million students have been affected by ransomware attacks from 2018-2022²
- In 2022, data was exfiltrated in at least 58 school incidents²
- Globally, 56% of K-12 schools experienced a cyberattack from 2021-2022⁴
- 1,331 cybersecurity incidents impacted schools from 2016-2021 (more than one K-12 cyber incident per school day)⁵
- Ransomware accounts for 30% of all school breaches⁵

Rising Preventative Costs

- Cybersecurity insurance premiums are rapidly rising as the number of attacks and threats increase⁸
- Cyber insurance rates have increased from 25-300% from 2021 to 2022¹¹
- Some school districts are paying 334% more for cybersecurity insurance this year¹²

Learning Loss due to Cyberattacks

- A single cyberattack creates a loss of student learning of up to 3 weeks⁵
- Overall recovery time for cyberattacks is 2-9 months⁵
- 287 days = average recovery time for a ransomware attack⁵

“Routinely, cyberattacks compromise confidential student and employee information, disrupt classroom instruction and administrative functions, and rob taxpayers. The problem plagues the entire education sector, including schools located in the smallest rural communities and the most sprawling suburban and urban areas.”¹”



- In 2022, ransomware attacks impacted 45 school districts—representing 1,981 schools²
- At least 3 organizations paid a ransomware demand²

Source: The State of Ransomware in the US: Report and Statistics 2022

“Increasingly, school or school district systems have been breached, with data deleted, misused, or even held for ransom. This trend has continued throughout 2022, and leaders across the K–12 community are coming to recognize that no school, district, or organization is immune from cyber intrusions.”⁶”

Protection Our Future: Partnering to Safeguard K-12 Organizations from Cybersecurity Threats, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, January 2023

The Financial Costs of Attacks

- \$4.24 million = average cost of a data breach (all industries)⁷
- \$268,000 = average ransomware payment by schools⁸
- \$250-\$300 = price of a student record on the black market⁹
- Class-action lawsuits over data breaches will increase because they no longer require proof of actual harm¹⁰

Importance of Edtech Vendors Security Features

- School districts and their vendors regularly fall victim to cybersecurity threats, placing millions of students and teachers directly in harm’s way⁵
- 55 percent of all data breaches at K-12 schools from 2016-2021 were carried out on schools’ vendors³
- In January 2022, a ransomware attack on a single vendor of website hosting services disabled websites of 5,000 schools across the U.S.³

¹ "State and Federal Education Cybersecurity Policy Developments," CoSN, January 2023

² "The State of Ransomware in the US: Report and Statistics 2022," Emsisoft Malware Lab

³ "Partnering to Safeguard K-12 Organizations from Cybersecurity Threats Online Toolkit," Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency

⁴ "The State of Ransomware in Education 2022," Sophos, July 2022

⁵ "The State of K-12 Cybersecurity: Year In Review—2022 Annual Report," K12 SiX

⁶ "Protection Our Future: Partnering to Safeguard K-12 Organizations from Cybersecurity Threats," U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Jan. 2023

⁷ "IBM Report: Cost of a Data Breach Hits Record High During Pandemic," conducted by Ponemon Institute and sponsored and analyzed by IBM Security, July 28, 2021

⁸ Paul Bischoff, "Ransomware attacks on US schools and colleges cost \$3.56bn in 2021," Comparitech, June 23, 2022

⁹ Sean Cavanagh, "Q&A: How to Bolster Cybersecurity in Your Schools," Education Week, April 30, 2019

¹⁰ Kristal Kuykendall, "Federal Appeals Court Ruling Means Class-Action Suits Over Data Breaches No Longer Require Proof of Actual Harm," THE Journal, Sept. 27, 2022

¹¹ Kevin Beer, "Perspectives: New lessons for K-12 schools on cyber security, insurance cover," Business Insurance, Feb. 16, 2022

¹² Bill Toulas, "School District reports a 334% hike in cybersecurity insurance costs," Bleeping Computer, Jan. 22, 2022

Find out how PowerSchool can help protect your data through industry-leading compliance, security measures, and infrastructure. [Learn More](#)

