



Break-out Lessons for Back to School

K-12 has become a prime target for criminals. These resources can help you solidify your district's security posture before you become the victim of a cyber attack.

A YEAR AGO, IT PROFESSIONALS IN K-12 school systems became heroes to their communities when their skills and resourcefulness turned on remote learning for nearly all. But there has been no time for celebrations. While IT teams were enabling teaching and learning to continue uninterrupted in spite of everything else going on in the world, they were also seeing their systems beset by relentless attacks that wouldn't stop. More school districts than ever have been victimized by ransomware, data breaches, and other forms of digital malfeasance.

As the "[State of K12 Cybersecurity](#)" from the [K12 Security Information Exchange](#) put it, "2020 saw a record-breaking number of publicly disclosed school cyber incidents," many of which were major, "resulting in school

have long collected plenty of personal data, including student health and wellness information and family and staff financial details – targets for any cybercriminal.

But the pandemic also opened the floodgates, as people headed home to work and learn. As one analysis explained, "A greater reliance on home networks, a need to prioritize continuity over security, and a rapid increase in points of attack will always make an organization more vulnerable to cyber threats."

The education segment is awash with relief funding for investing in any number of initiatives, with money that's being spent under tight deadlines and not necessarily with the same care and controls district CFOs and financial managers are accustomed to using.


Yet, in spite of the many signals that education has become a prime target, most districts still tend to rely on "ad hoc" cybersecurity strategies, such as spreading responsibility for information security across multiple roles and people; outsourcing; or tackling problems as they surface. According to CoSN's 2021 "[State of EdTech Leadership](#)," this is "arguably the worst approach to adopt."

Stop Going It Alone

A "pulse survey" by THE Journal among IT leaders and professionals found that more students than ever before will continue to have school-provided computers enabling learning from anywhere. Also, more students will continue to have home internet access. At the same time, seven in 10 respondents believe they'll be better prepared this fall in their technology offerings than at any time in the past. The big question is how to make sure they use what they have most effectively and secure it most strategically.

Forward-thinking IT staff have learned that they don't have to go it alone. There are organizations and companies specializing in cybersecurity primed to help schools and districts formulate their response to the unique challenges they face. Many have hired top names with decades of K-12 leadership experience to influence the development of services and programs that will best serve the education segment specifically.

In "The Essential School Cybersecurity Service You've Never Heard Of," for example, you'll learn about a free



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closures, millions of dollars of stolen taxpayer dollars, and student data breaches directly linked to identity theft and credit fraud."

The assault on education seems unstoppable. While criminals in the past were most likely opportunists, taking advantage of whatever they could ferret out of unwitting users or from forgotten passwords written on sticky notes, now they attack with laser focus, targeting any entity they consider vulnerable. K-12 currently fits the profile: Schools

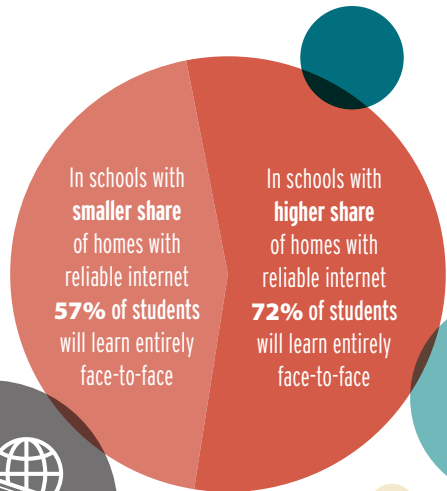
The Shape of K-12 This Fall

THE JOURNAL • PULSE SURVEY

How the pandemic has reshaped K-12 technology readiness

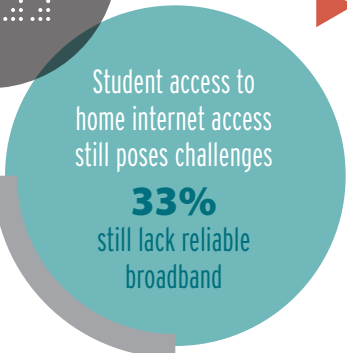
Number of schools that believe students will be:

- better prepared **7 in 10**
- about the same **2.6 in 10**
- less prepared **0.5 in 10**



1-to-1 device distribution has become the school district norm

- 61%** All students above grade 3 assigned computers
- 8%** 1/4 to 1/2 assigned computers
- 23%** 1/2 to 3/4 assigned computers
- 8%** Less than 1/4 assigned computers



In-person learning will rule for fall 2021

Schools predict that students will learn:



Source: THE Journal

membership that will assist you with cybersecurity emergencies as they happen and help you and your team prevent those break-ins in the first place.

“Closing in on Cybersecurity Stability” shares insights from the former CIO of Minneapolis Public Schools on the real mission of IT right now, which is helping schools understand how to gain balance in their pursuits of education safety, continuity, and enablement.

“Getting Away from the Ransomware Triple Threat” offers a simple, effective path for getting away from the threats of ransomware, developed by a former FBI security expert who has conferred with hundreds of schools and businesses.

“Greatness Awaits: Dump the Paperwork” lays out a compelling argument for adopting SaaS in place of paper-based processes for strategic areas, such as expense management. The benefits are enormous.

And “How to Tame the Cloud with One Call” provides a rundown on how a leading education nonprofit can help you

save money on the cloud purchasing you do in cybersecurity and any other aspect of K-12, while also making your buying more manageable and organized.

Hidden Heroes

Some heroes gain recognition because their extraordinary accomplishments become public. The move to all-digital teaching and learning was one of those times for IT. Others don’t get credit for what they’ve done because their actions have prevented something bad from happening, and the public will never know. Cybersecurity falls into that latter type of heroism.

While there’s no way to guarantee your schools will avoid all cyber incidents, the preemptive moves you take will make digital and online activities ever safer for your district users. You may not get the credit you deserve, but you will get the satisfaction of knowing you did the right things for the people who count on you, and that’s invaluable.