

Bond Case Briefs

Municipal Finance Law Since 1971

Schools Brace for More Cyberattacks After Record in 2020.

Reported hacking incidents have increased nearly fivefold since 2016. Virtual learning during the pandemic created even more access points for attackers.

Cyber criminals are targeting U.S. schools at an increasing rate after remote learning during the pandemic left them more vulnerable to hacks, and the risk shows no sign of abating as students and teachers head back to the classroom this month.

The number of publicly disclosed computer attacks on schools has exploded since 2016 to a record 408 in 2020, according to the [K-12 Security Information Exchange](#), a nonprofit that tracks such incidents, and those figures are almost certainly an undercount because many go unreported. While schools are opening back up across the country for in-person instruction, many are expected to retain virtual learning as an option and that means more access points for potential intrusion with financial consequences for districts that are already facing increased costs to bring students back.

The growing frequency of hacks — averaging more than two per school day last year — has school officials worried about the potential for the theft of students' identities and the added cost to insure against attacks and repair breaches. In Del Rio, Texas, the district comptroller mistakenly wired more than \$2 million to a hacker's account. About 170 miles (274 kilometers) away, a district in Live Oak, Texas, paid an undisclosed ransom amount to regain control of some computer platforms, and in Broward County, Florida, thousands of stolen files, including some confidential information, were published after district officials refused to pay a \$40 million ransom, according to [local reports](#).

[Continue reading.](#)

Bloomberg CityLab

By Nic Querolo and Shruti Singh

August 9, 2021, 12:06 PM MDT