

IBM Selects Six School Districts to Receive a Total of \$3 Million in Education Security Preparedness Grants

School Districts Selected in New York, California, Texas, Florida, Georgia and Colorado

ARMONK, N.Y., June 2, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- IBM (NYSE: [IBM](#)) today announced it has selected six school districts to receive its IBM Education Security Preparedness Grant, which totals \$3 million. The in-kind grant was created to help United States K-12 public school districts proactively prepare for and respond to cyberattacks. With nearly [1,700](#) schools, colleges and universities in the U.S. impacted by ransomware in 2020, cyber preparedness is needed more than ever.¹ Each grant will sponsor IBM Service Corps teams to deploy to the selected districts and provide in-kind security services with a value of \$500,000.

After careful review of applications, IBM selected recipients based on their cybersecurity needs and experiences, community resources and potential risks. The six school districts that will be receiving the in-kind grants are:

- Brevard Public Schools – Viera, Florida
- Poughkeepsie City School District – Poughkeepsie, New York
- KIPP Metro Atlanta Schools – Atlanta, Georgia
- Sheldon Independent School District – Houston, Texas
- Newhall School District – Valencia, California
- Denver Public Schools – Denver, Colorado

After announcing the grant last February, IBM received more than 250 applications from U.S. K-12 school districts seeking to strengthen their security postures in response to the growing threats on the education space. In total, the applications represented more than 7,800 schools and more than 4 million students and provided noteworthy insights from school districts across the nation.

Key findings from the applications included:

- **Disparity in cybersecurity budgets:** 50% of the districts had less than \$100,000 for cybersecurity spending – for the entire school district. This is in comparison to larger school districts that cited cybersecurity budgets in the millions.
- **Ransomware attacks:** More than 40% of applicants experienced a ransomware attack.
- **Security training:** More than 55% of school districts are operating without security training.

The grant, created as part of IBM's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, will be an in-kind contribution in the form of resources and hours performed by IBM Service Corps teams of 6-10 people per district. Deployments will begin this summer and services will span developing incident response plans, providing basic cybersecurity training such as password hygiene, implementing strategic communication plans to use in response to a cyber incident and more.

"It's extremely encouraging to see how many school districts are taking an active role in trying to better their cybersecurity," said Christopher Scott, Director of Security Innovation, Office of the CISO, IBM. "This is not only an important decision as schools continue to operate remotely, but also as students look to get back to the classroom. We're excited to get to work with winners of the grants, and even more proud to be helping the various other districts that reached out for assistance."

IBM Education Security Preparedness Events

While six districts will receive the grants, IBM also created interactive cybersecurity preparedness events for all school district applicants to lend a helping hand in addressing their cybersecurity concerns.

- **Education Security Assessment Event:** The event provided schools with the opportunity to identify their security pain points in a discussion with IBM Security experts who offered best practices and suggested courses of action.
- **Virtual IBM Cyber Range Experience for Public Education:** During these events, school participants will simulate what it's like to respond to a cyberattack via the IBM Security Command Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

How Schools Can Prepare for Ransomware

IBM Security X-Force suggests all educational institutions consider the below recommendations to help better prepare for, and respond to, cyberattacks:

- **Prepare and budget for cybersecurity** by creating incident response plans and exploring resources like cyber insurance.
- **Train** staff, students and parents and provide clear guidelines for device usage, passwords, secure Wi-Fi connections and video conferencing.
- **Test and patch** critical systems, especially those used across multiple schools to avoid widespread impact and make use of the cloud to help securely store and backup data.
- **Embrace the Cloud**, use cloud and SaaS tools, and backup files offline to help ensure their recovery.
- **Stay educated and collaborate** through information sharing to be aware of potential threats and vulnerabilities and build relationships with law enforcement for further collaboration.

For more resources for schools looking to improve their cybersecurity visit: ibm.biz/security-grant

About IBM Security

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¹ Emsisoft, [The State of Ransomware in the US: Report and Statistics 2020](#) (2021)

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