Cyber-Security and Liability in Education: You're More Vulnerable than You Think

Cybercrime has now become the greatest wealth transfer mechanism in the history of the world! The global costs have well exceeded $3,000,000,000,000 – that's $3 trillion dollars! It is projected that this will increase to $6 trillion in 2021 and over $10 trillion by 2025*1. To put that in a little more perspective, the damage caused by all the disasters this year, worldwide, is, so far, at $75 billion. Of course, that's a lot, but it's only 2.5% of $3 trillion.

Clearly, we need to admit that cybercrime is a major problem that must be addressed by each one of us. In many, if not most, cases, the Covid-19 Pandemic has forced students and staff to quickly implement remote study and remote work activities. They've had to use laptops from school and personal computers with home and other potentially vulnerable public internet access portals. This has led to a perfect storm event for cybercriminals and those intent on mischief.

But, wait, there's more. These attacks are not coming from people just sitting at their computer and attempting to hack into yours, they are, now, on average, coming from automated artificial intelligent (AI) algorithms running on supercomputers day and night, 24/7/365 – and they no longer care if you're a one-person organization or a multinational – they are coming after your information, today or tomorrow.

What can you do to protect yourself, your staff and your students? Well, aside from someday adding AI and ML (machine learning) software and appliances aimed at detecting cyber intruders, you can learn about and implement Best Practices. That also means current ongoing training for staff and students, demanding better controls from 3rd parties and more.

The following Advisory, from the Federal Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)*2, will help you understand what is going on, a little bit about who is doing it and the Best Practices your school/school district should be following – and, then, share this with your IT Department: Cyber Actors Target K-12 Distance Learning Education to Cause Disruptions and Steal Data | CISA

*1 Cybercrime To Cost The World $10.5 Trillion Annually By 2025 - Cybersecurity Ventures, 11/2020
*2 Co-authors: FBI and MS-ISAC, 12/10/20
WSI-SJC, Dec.17, 2020