

Palo Alto Unified School District Protects Student Data with YubiKeys



PALO ALTO
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Case Study



Industry

Public Education

Benefits

- Best security / price ratio available on the market
- More cost-effective than other solutions to deploy and maintain
- A product from a renowned company in the space, offering a label of trust
- Very difficult to forge, and can be used for identity management beyond the District's initial purposes

Deployment Info

- Type of YubiKey(s): YubiKey 5 Series

About the organization

Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) is a Silicon Valley school system that's been awarded the designation of the #1 School District In California, serving 12,000 students in K-12 and adult education classes. According to PAUSD, "Parents, businesses, government, agencies, community organizations, and local colleges and universities actively participate in the educational process through collaborative programs, public and private partnerships, and significant volunteer contributions."

The challenge

PAUSD, located in the technology hotbed of Silicon Valley, had an incident where student grade information was being exposed on a third party website. As soon as the IT department received notice, they immediately invoked their data breach response protocol and began investigating the report. After validating the information, staff worked to determine the scope and composition of the breach, and took steps to ensure any potential attack vectors were addressed. The source of the exposure was the result of compromised credentials of a teacher's account.

YubiKeys now stop breaches of their online student information system, and protect other application identity at PAUSD

The solution

Yubico worked with the PAUSD to implement YubiKey authentication to easily and securely protect access to sensitive data, deploying more than 3,000 YubiKeys to its staff. Initially, a roadblock to adoption was lack of iOS support for hardware security keys, however, the YubiKey 5Ci, the industries first dual-connection, multi-protocol security key, quickly solved this issue as it compatible with both lightning and USB-C smartphones.

As the IT department implemented the mandatory roll out of YubiKeys to their staff, they continued to fine tune the process, including provisioning the keys for users before distribution.

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The results

The YubiKey 5 Series prevents staff account breaches by requiring an additional layer of authentication with a hardware security key. The student information databases are protected by the YubiKey at the staff level, as well as personal data at the parent and guardian level.

Today, all PAUSD staff are issued and use YubiKeys in their daily computing activities. Furthermore, an increasing number of parents are now using YubiKeys for personal authentication needs such as Google accounts and other WebAuthn/FIDO2 supported services and applications.

Deployment Info

- YubiKey 5 Series

About Yubico Yubico sets new global standards for easy and secure access to computers, servers, and Internet accounts. Founded in 2007, Yubico is privately held with offices in Australia, Germany, Singapore, Sweden, UK, and USA. Learn why nine of the top 10 internet brands and millions of users in more than 160 countries use our technology at www.yubico.com.

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