



FCPS Audit Report: 24-1004 – IT Systems Access Audit

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The Office of Auditor General's (OAG) completed the performance audit of IT Systems Access in accordance with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 audit plan approved by the Fairfax County School Board. The scope of this audit includes an evaluation of FCPS IT systems access processes for FY23 and FY24 (through February 29, 2024) with a focus on the current processes implemented in FY24.

The objectives of this audit were to:

1. Select specific IT applications that capture, process, and store sensitive data per the FCPS data classification policy and evaluate the operating effectiveness of the access controls at the application level,
2. Evaluate the compliance with applicable laws and regulations, such as Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) with a focus on data handling across FCPS, and
3. Evaluate the user access controls over FCPS systems and data such as (a) physical access controls to safeguard physical IT assets (data centers and servers) and (b) logical access controls to properly (i) assign access privileges to users based on their roles and responsibilities, (ii) validate user identities and (iii) manage changes in access.

Systems access is a security technique that regulates who and what can be viewed or used in a computing environment. The Department of Information Technology (DIT) serves the diverse technology needs of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) staff, students and central office teams managing information resources and ensuring security and integrity for FCPS systems.

DIT is responsible for providing design, installation, maintenance, and support services for all parts of the FCPS information technology infrastructure under its purview. The system application owners are responsible for the appropriate execution of the information technology infrastructure. It is important to note that not all technology systems used at FCPS are operated by DIT. Some are developed and operated by business IT teams across the division.

The Office of Public Records, within the Office of Division Counsel (moved from the Office of Communications as of April 1, 2024), is responsible for documenting, tracking, coordinating, and responding to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requests received.

Based on our risk assessment, the audit focused on the following key systems with sensitive data (a) Student Information System (SIS), (b) Special Education Administrative System for Targeting and Reporting Success (SEA-STARS), and (c) Lawson, human resource management system.

In accordance with Virginia Code Section § 2.2-3705.2(14)(b), "Vulnerability assessments, information not lawfully available to the public regarding specific cybersecurity threats or vulnerabilities, or security plans and measures of an entity, facility, building structure, information technology system, or software program," is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law.

Further, in accordance with Virginia Code Section § 2.2-3711(A)(19), public bodies may hold closed meetings for "Discussion of plans to protect public safety as it relates to terrorist activity or specific cybersecurity threats or vulnerabilities and briefings by staff members, legal counsel, or law-enforcement or emergency service officials concerning actions taken to respond to such

matters or a related threat to public safety; discussion of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 2 or 14 of § 2.2-3705.2, where discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the safety of any person or the security of any facility, building, structure, information technology system, or software program; or discussion of reports or plans related to the security of any governmental facility, building or structure, or the safety of persons using such facility, building or structure.”

With the above Virginia Code Sections, the results of this audit will not be shared publicly.