



How Varonis Helps a U.S. School District Protect Data On Prem and in Google Drive

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About this case study:

Our customer is a Midwest U.S. school district that needs to protect the data of thousands of users. We have happily accommodated their request for anonymity.



Highlights

Challenges

- Protecting sensitive data on prem and in the cloud
- Mitigating the risk of data loss and reputational damages
- Proactively defending hybrid data against ransomware

Solution

Varonis Data Security Platform:

- **DatAdvantage** gives complete visibility and control over your critical data and IT infrastructure
- **DatAdvantage Cloud** protects data in mission-critical SaaS and IaaS platforms
- **Data Classification Engine** finds and classifies sensitive data automatically
- **DatAlert** monitors and alerts on abnormal behavior on critical systems

Results

- Proactively defend hybrid data from ransomware
- Achieve PII, PHI, and GLBA compliance
- Pass state audits with confidence

Challenges

Managing risk to hybrid data

School districts have a reputation to protect. This is especially true for top-ranked districts that take pains to protect student information, including one Varonis customer (anonymous by request).

As the school district's IT Director explains:




“Our school district’s reputation is a really coveted thing. So protecting student data is super important to us.”

Cybersecurity is always a concern, but COVID-19 made it a bigger priority than ever. With many K-12 classes held virtually, the school increased its reliance on Google Drive. This presented a huge challenge: Enforcing data security for thousands of students on premises and in the cloud.



“Without a solution like Varonis, the only way to know about issues would be to log in as that person using their credentials and do a manual investigation. Obviously, that would be pretty disruptive and not realistic with thousands of users.”

The IT Director was also very concerned about ransomware. School districts are prime targets because they're often understaffed and underfunded. And IT attacks have increased year after year.



“Ransomware is on everybody’s radar and school districts are always being targeted. That’s why we purchased Varonis—the landscape is changing every minute and you need to constantly be on guard.”

Solution

Putting data first with Varonis

The Varonis **Data Security Platform** takes the onus off of small IT teams trying to get a handle on data protection, data compliance, and threat detection and response.

Automation is the secret sauce that enables this school district to stay ahead of potential threats despite a lean IT team.



“It took us longer to make the decision to purchase Varonis than it did to actually clean up the problems once we had it.”

The biggest game-changer is **DatAdvantage Cloud**, which provides data-centric security for the school's mission-critical data on Google Drive.

The school also has **DatAdvantage** for Windows and Directory Services, providing the same visibility for on-prem data stores and Active Directory.

With DatAdvantage monitoring their hybrid environment, the IT team can visualize and prioritize their biggest risks first. Now they can quickly answer critical questions, including:

- Who has access to our most sensitive data?
- Are any privileged users logging in without MFA (multi-factor authentication)?
- Is anyone making unauthorized configuration changes?



“Google makes it very difficult to investigate what’s in a folder. Varonis solves that by allowing you to easily go in and search for key terms and look at files to see what’s going on with them. You can see if they’ve ever been shared on social media or elsewhere, or if an unauthorized person was added to the document. Without Varonis, I couldn’t see any of that.”

Data Classification Engine for Windows, SharePoint, SharePoint Online, and OneDrive augments DatAdvantage by finding and classifying sensitive data wherever it lives.

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“During an audit, we learned that a nurse was leaving some potentially sensitive files open to everyone. We went through the process of removing permissions and, of course, we wouldn’t have been able to do that without Varonis.”

Finally, **DatAlert** monitors the school district’s hybrid environment 24/7 and alerts on any new threats—including potential ransomware attacks.

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“A lot of issues are caused by a lack of education on how to safely share data. But the bad guys are always doing whatever they can to get that data, so don’t make it easy for them. When we get alerts we turn them into learning moments for our team.”

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Results

Fortified hybrid environment

The IT Director says that most school districts are playing a dangerous game when it comes to data privacy and security.



“I’ve been in this industry for a long time and I can tell you that it’s better to stop something proactively than to have to tell someone that you have a leak.”

Thankfully, this school district is now prepared to meet tomorrow’s threats head-on. Adding Varonis to their tech stack enables them to address issues with confidence.

This is especially important when it comes to compliance. With Varonis, the school district passed its state audits with flying colors. It can easily report on how it’s protecting:

- Personal identifiable information (PII)
- Protected health information (PHI)
- Other data protected under regulations like the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA)



“We’ve had quite a few inquiries about data security. All we have to do is give them a report out of Varonis. If an issue ever pops up, we can show them the process we went through to make sure that security hole was fixed.”

And as the school increases its reliance on Google collaboration tools, the IT team is glad to know that Varonis is available to help.



“The two things I love most about Varonis: (1) DatAdvantage Cloud. We use Google Drive a lot and it helps us protect our data in that environment. (2) Varonis’ team. It’s the smartest bunch of top-level, high-end engineers, and those team members are there to help us and educate us. It’s a real partnership.”

Now, the IT Director recommends Varonis to all of their peers.



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Fight security threats with confidence, no matter how big your IT team is.

Stay on top of data protection and compliance with Varonis.

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