

# MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION

## FAQs

Do I have to use MFA? Yes. This is not an optional program.

Do I have to use my personal phone? You are not required to use your personal phone. However, opting to not do so means having to use a less efficient method to verify your identity.

What if I lose my phone or forget to bring it in? We advise you to set-up multiple MFA options in your account, with at least one being the phone in your room/office.

What if I don't have a room/office and therefore have no phone? If you choose to not use the Authenticator app on your personal phone, you'll have to receive a call to a phone in a predefined location to complete the MFA sequence.

Does this give FCS access to my phone? No.

Does this make my phone susceptible to an Open Records Request? No



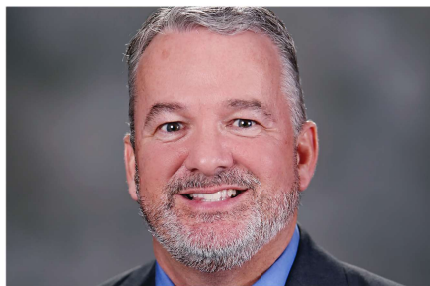
## What is Multi-factor Authentication (MFA)?

Many of you may have heard about the upcoming rollout of multi-factor authentication for all Forsyth County Schools employees and have questions, concerns, or irritation about what it is, what it does, and why we're doing it... and why you might be asked to use a personal device to facilitate this. We hope that this document can answer those questions for you and put any concerns to rest.

Accounts are secured by one of three methods: 1. something you know (like a password), 2. something you have (like a smartphone), or 3. something you are (like facial recognition).

The method that FCS (Forsyth County Schools) has been using since we had an integrated network in 1997 is the first: something you know.

Unfortunately, that is also the least secure method since a



"Protecting our staff, students, and data is a key component of our operations." – Dr. Jeffrey Bearden, Superintendent

## Why is FCS doing this?

In a word: security. Criminals have become ever craftier, hackers have become ever sneakier, and students have become ever more capable. That, coupled with an overworked staff, integrating digital learning, and many people working from home, makes for an environment ripe for technological exploits.

## FAQs (cont'd.)

How will this ultimately make things better? First, it greatly improves security on your account. Second, once you are configured for MFA, you will NEVER need to change your FCS password. Last, it is the next step on the process to remove the password from the authentication process altogether.

Should I use SMS (text messaging) as an option? Not recommended. Cell service is poor inside many of our schools and is not encrypted.

password can be easily stolen, guessed, or attacked through brute force (trying combination after combination until successful).

Multi-factor authentication, often shortened to just 'MFA,' is the second step in the security hierarchy and a key part of keeping your account secure. With MFA incorporating something you know PLUS something you have, the likelihood that your account can be compromised is greatly reduced. This makes YOUR students safer. This makes YOUR district safer. This makes YOU safer

## What does MFA do?

MFA provides an added layer of security to your account. With the first layer – your password – still forming the foundation of your authentication process, MFA enhances that foundation by

providing a second, stronger layer by requiring physical access to a second authentication method to prove your identity.

Integrating MFA into the process can be an incredibly lightweight, and low-invasive procedure to prove your identity. For instance, you'd still



login to ClassLink, Infinite Campus, itsLearning, etc., with your FCS username and password. Once that part has been confirmed, you'll be required to pass the MFA hurdle by either approving via a smartphone-based app or supplying a 6-digit code. This process can occur as few as one (1) time per 12-hour period.

## What are my options?

We understand that everyone may have different comfort levels with how to integrate this new process into their workflow. Knowing that, we have a few different choices from which to select.

## FAQs (cont'd.)

How many times per day will I have to authenticate? Ideally, only once. The MFA timeout period is 12 hours. So, provided you don't close or sign-out of your browser, you should only be prompted one time during the workday. However, closing your browser – or signing out of Classlink – may trigger an MFA event the next time you try to use FCS resources. Additionally, changing networks – such as when you leave FCS and go home – may also trigger an MFA event.

What if I share my account with someone else? How will they be able to get in? Sharing accounts is not allowed and is a breach of the Responsible Use Policy.

Does this collect any personal data? Yes and no. It will note the MFA session, along with the username, time, date, and device type (phone, browser, etc.). This is only in relation to activity with FCS services and has no access to anything on the device.

What are some other benefits? If you choose the more secure options on your smartphone, you're eligible to have a lifetime password (you'll never have to change it) and it's compatible with a future passwordless option (meaning no password required).

The first - and best - option is to use a smartphone for the MFA process. Installing the Microsoft Authenticator app on a smartphone offers the quickest and most secure method to authenticate your account.

To be clear, we certainly understand that some may feel that employer-required use of a personally paid resource is undesired. To that person, we would still recommend the use of the Authenticator, but with a twist – the app can generate a six-digit code that can substitute for the 'tap-to-authenticate' process and uses NO DATA. Ever. You must still have the app installed on your phone, but no data is consumed. It's not as fast as 'tap-to-authenticate' but can still complete the authentication sequence in a few seconds (as fast as you can read the code on your phone and type it on the computer).

One can also receive a text message (SMS) with a code. Though this is supported, we don't recommend using it because cell service can be spotty in the schools, meaning it may be difficult to receive the code. Additionally, SMS is not encrypted and can be easily hacked.

The last - and least desired - option is to have the MFA service call you at a predefined phone number to read out a code. This phone can be your room/office phone, or a cellphone, or even a landline. This process can take considerably longer than using the app-based options.

Since it ties your MFA sequence to a physical location, it means that you cannot complete MFA if you are not at that location (such as when working from home but the call goes to your room phone at school). You could set multiple contact phones but would need to actively set the preferred location whenever your location changes. We feel this will be disruptive to an efficient workflow, but it is the only option left for people who do not have a smartphone or choose to not use one.

Using the Authenticator app with the 'tap-to-approve' setting, though, streamlines the steps and can complete the process in as little as five seconds. If data consumption on your smartphone plan is a concern, be aware that if your phone is connected to a WIFI network (like BYOT or your home network), NO DATA is used. If you're on a cellular connection, the MFA process uses less than 2 kilobytes of data.

Considering that the average user has 3 (or fewer) MFA events per day, that's less than 180 kilobytes per month – or 4.5 percent of the size of a single song. FCS recommends - but does not require - the use of the Microsoft Authenticator app.

	Phone Call	Text Msg	6-digit Code	App Approve
Requires any Phone	Y	N	N	N
Requires Basic Cell	Y	Y	N	N
Requires Smartphone	N	N	Y	Y
Requires App	N	N	Y	Y
Ease-of-use				
Uses Cell Data	N	N	N	2kb per
Uses Cell Minutes	Only Cell	N	N	N
Uses Text Allowance	N	If metered	N	N
Flexiblity				
Supports Passwordless				
Supports Lifetime Password				
Security Level				
Works with Apple Watch				

Note: If a cell is shaded in a color, green = best, yellow = moderate, red = worst. Y/N text denotes whether or not that item is required for that function. Some fields may include both shading and text.