



**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
BUREAU OF ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY**

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

March 1, 2021

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST
Mundrane, Michael — Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, University of Connecticut (UCONN)
Baillie, Colleen — Director, West Haven Public Library
Caruso, Nick — Senior Staff Associate, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
Casey, Doug — Executive Director, CT Commission for Educational Technology
Cohen, Burt — Staff Attorney, Office of Consumer Counsel
Dillon, Tom — Independent (Minority Leader of the House)
Dumais, Charles — Executive Director, Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) (Office of the Governor)
Elsesser, John — Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)
Provencher, Maura — Vice President of Research and Administration, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC)
Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library
Stanco, Bart — Vice President, Gartner (Office of the Governor)
Thomas, Molly — Education Policy Consultant, Office of Workforce Strategy, Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)
Williams, Holly — Section Director, Education and Workforce Development, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)
Zak, Scott — Senior Director of Learning Technologies, Board of Regents

Others in Attendance

Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
La Valle, Dawn — Director, Division of Library Development, Connecticut State Library
Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST

Meeting Format

The March meeting took place by Web conference to protect against the spread of the Coronavirus. The Connecticut Network (CT-N) has provided a [recording of the meeting](#).



Welcome

Commission Chair and State Chief Information Officer Mark Raymond brought the meeting to order at approximately 1:05 PM and welcomed three new members. As Connecticut's State Librarian, Deborah Schander joined state service in early 2021, bringing to her position extensive leadership experience in higher education, most recently at Seton Hall University and Vanderbilt University. She expressed enthusiasm to join the Commission as a named member and welcomed the opportunity to lend her experience and perspective to the Commission's work.

Next, Mark introduced Holly Williams, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) Section Director for Education and Workforce Development. Prior to her work at OPM, Holly served with the Connecticut General Assembly's Office of Fiscal Analysis. She, too, welcomed the opportunity to serve.

Finally, Mark welcomed Kelli-Marie Vallieres, the Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) in the Department of Economic and Community (DECD). New to state service, Kelli, brings more than 20 years of experience as the CEO of two manufacturing companies in Connecticut, has a PhD in adult experiential learning, and served as the vice chair of the Governor's Workforce Council. In her absence, Molly Thomas represented OWS as an Education Policy Consultant. Originally an educator through Teach for America and with an extensive background in education policy research and development, Molly addresses topics at the intersection of workforce and education. She shared her concentration at OWS on career pathways, sector- and school-based training, dual-credit programs, computer science education, and teacher training.

Mark thanked the new members for their time and insights. On behalf of the Commission, he acknowledged the contributions of Susan Shellard, the outgoing member representing DECD, as well as John Vittner, who served as both a Commission member and in pivotal leadership roles in the launch and operation of the Connecticut Education Network (CEN).

Mark concluded his welcome by remarking on the role of technology to support online and blended learning. Devices and digital tools provide some advantages to learning but not in themselves represent a solution to the challenges that institutions face in the midst of a pandemic. He stressed the importance of face-to-face learning and work, the power of human interaction. Access to technology plays a key role in learning for students, teachers, and the broader workforce. The use of digital tools will continue to play a role in helping students connect with learning and their teachers and to minimize learning loss. In the end, technology can only support core teaching and learning, not replace in-person activities that support academic advancement as well as social and emotional wellbeing. He expressed his appreciation for the Commission members'



efforts over the past year and looked forward to many more years of making a positive difference for learning in Connecticut schools, libraries, and universities.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission members received [the minutes of the December 7, 2020 meeting](#) prior to today's gathering. Mark welcomed a motion to approve the minutes, which Michael Mundrane made and Nick Caruso seconded. With no call for discussion or revisions, the Commission approved the document unanimously.

Governor's Broadband Bill (HB-6442)

With the Connecticut General Assembly in session, lawmakers and state agencies have proposed many pieces of legislation pertaining to education and technology. Mark welcomed Burt Cohen of the Office of Consumer Counsel to discuss one bill of particular interest to the Commission's work, Governor Lamont's Act Concerning Equitable Access to Broadband ([HB-6442](#)).

Burt provided a pithy summary of the proposed legislation, which has several goals: providing universal availability of broadband, consumer protections, clarifications of existing statutes, and standards. By September of 2022, cable Internet providers would need to offer broadband to any residence in their service area, made easier by provisions for "one-touch make-ready" as well as "dig once" requirements. By 2027, all providers would need to offer download speeds of 1 gigabit per second. The bill also calls for detailed and accurate broadband maps to provide transparency around service availability and provides insights to consumers on quality of service. Finally, the draft statute requires the Commission by 2023 to assess and report to the General Assembly on the availability of broadband Internet and computers for students.

John Elsesser suggested that the Commission provide a statement of support for the bill, given its goals of providing universal availability for all Connecticut residents. He noted that the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (his appointing organization) as well as the Connecticut Council of Municipalities have endorsed the draft legislation. Burt supported the idea of endorsing the bill, especially given that it assigns activities to the Commission. Mark noted that the Department of Administrative Services will likely provide testimony, and that he and Doug have assessed the proposed law's impact. He welcomed discussion around the topic. He did express concern that the Commission members have full opportunity to discuss and make a motion on the bill, given the limited time allotted for the March 1 meeting. Nonetheless, he acknowledged John's motion to support the bill, seconded by Nick Caruso, and opened the floor for discussion.



Michael Mundrane asked for a written statement of support to clarify the proposed motion. John indicated that the motion was to provide a simple statement in support of the bill as written on the day of the meeting, acknowledging that the bill's language would likely change during the legislative session. Nick indicated that the Commission could request that the Chair or Executive Director draft and submit language on behalf of the Commission. Michael opposed this idea, stating that language drafted outside of the meeting may not reflect the viewpoints of the Commission members. Mark offered the option of crafting a statement for the Commission members to review in a special meeting. He also put forth this statement: "The Commission for Educational Technology supports the intent of the Act Concerning Equitable Access to Broadband to improve Broadband services in the State of CT." John and Nick agreed that this statement accurately reflects the prior motion. John also noted that this statement endorses the language in its current state on March 1, 2021 and cannot reasonably account for possible changes to the draft legislation. Mark called for a vote to adopt the language, which the Commission members approved unanimously with no abstentions.

Report of the Executive Director

Following the vote to approve language supporting the Governor's broadband bill, Mark invited Doug to share highlights of his previously posted [quarterly report](#).

- **2020 Annual Report**

Doug invited members and attendees to share the Annual Report (www.bit.ly/2020_CET_Report) with their stakeholders as well as the organizations and agencies that appointed them to the Commission. The document celebrates tremendous cross-agency and statewide action in a year of unprecedented progress and challenges in digital learning. He briefly reviewed highlights from the executive summary, including cost avoidance and direct benefits to students, educators, and leaders.

- **Everybody Learns Initiative**

Updates since the last Commission meeting on Governor Lamont's Everybody Learns initiative include delivery of the last of 142,000 computers purchased to ensure all students have a device for at-home learning. Doug noted that work continues in partnership with school districts and cable Internet providers to get students online. He directed Commission members to the recently published report, "Home Internet Connectivity: Barriers and Opportunities for K – 12 Students" (<https://bit.ly/CET-Remote>). That document includes estimated current home connectivity levels, challenges in connecting students, and initiatives to engage families around the benefits of broadband. He noted that the State's next set of efforts will bolster local and community outreach programs to increase participation in remote learning.



- **Open Education Resources**

To ensure equitable access to high-quality, standards aligned instructional materials, the Commission will launch an open education resources (OER) site this coming summer. This Web-based platform will enable the creation, curation, and sharing of digital learning materials across schools, colleges, and libraries. Doug is leading the design and planning of this work in partnership with the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education ([ISKME](#)), the platform provider, Commission members, and other stakeholders (e.g., State Department of Education, State Colleges and Universities, etc.). He expects a beta of the site, hosted at www.GoOpenCT.org, to go live in June, with a full site launch in the fall of 2021.

- **Technology Efficacy and Use**

For several years, the Commission has directly supported the work of teachers and leaders to identify effective and compliant software for instructional purposes using the LearnPlatform site. Most recently, Doug worked with the LearnPlatform team to help districts leverage their shared “libraries” of educational apps to encourage peer-to-peer sharing of information about software costs, effectiveness, and ease of use. In the next several months, LearnPlatform will enhance these sharing features to make peer review more efficient for school leaders and teachers.

- **Education Technology Policy Briefs**

Doug concluded his report by directing members to review and share a [Compendium](#) of briefs prepared through a partnership of several leadership organizations regarding educational technology programs and funding. The compendium includes highly accessible briefs on E-rate, education “Title” funds, the homework gap, data privacy, and pandemic relief funding.

Following the report, Mark welcomed any questions or comments from the Commission. Burt offered his appreciation to Doug and Ryan for their work on the Everybody Learns initiative, and Bart thanked Doug for putting together the Annual Report. Mark encouraged members to read and share the document, which captures the substantive work of the Commission over the past year.

Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

Nick opened his report by summarizing the goals and activities of the Advisory Council, which includes representatives from schools, regional service centers, libraries, colleges, and adult education programs. The group includes many individuals who teach and provide recommendations to the full Commission. Past work of the Digital Learning Advisory Council includes adoption of the ISTE standards, helping to make Connecticut



the first state to adopt the Student, Teacher, and Education Leader frameworks (see www.CT.gov/ISTE for details).

The February 5 meeting, [minutes](#) from which the Commission members received in advance, addressed some of the ongoing challenges that teachers face in supporting online and blended instruction. The group also discussed the need to address the basic maintenance issues with running 1:1 computing programs, given the State's delivery of devices to make sure every student has a computer.

One suggestion that came from the group, and which Nick proposed to the Commission, is the creation of an online instrument to collect feedback from education stakeholders on what worked well during remote learning. Jonathan Costa proposed the idea, specifically using the Thought Exchange platform he has used for similar feedback exercises on behalf of the RESC Alliance. Doug explained that the tool collects free-text ideas from participants and then allows them to vote on the best proposals, such as having a statewide, virtual school that offers online courses to K – 12 students. Commission members received a [sample report](#) for review.

Holly Williams asked if Thought Exchange allowed for the collection of feedback in multiple languages, that the Commission should ensure that any widespread collection of feedback come through inclusive tools and processes. Mark echoed this suggestion, noting that any information-gathering exercise may contain biases, and the Commission should make every effort to increase the accessibility of the chosen tool. Nick noted that Thought Exchange does support multiple languages. He thanked the members for their input and confirmed that he and Doug would move forward with the development of a Thought Exchange initiative to collect and highlight promising practices in digital learning gleaned from the pandemic.

The group also discussed digital inclusion efforts, and Nick asked Dawn La Valle to provide the Commission with an overview of the Digital Inclusion Task Force convened through the Connecticut State Library's Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development (ACLPD). She explained that the work came out of a need to address not just the connectivity but also the skills gaps that exist in Connecticut. The Task Force will address all of the components that the [National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#) (NDIA) identifies, including affordable, robust Internet service; Internet-enabled devices; training; technical support; and applications and content designed to enable self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

Work of the Task Force will concentrate on launching and building the capacity of "digital navigator" programs through libraries and other community partner organizations. Digital navigators provide hands-on, peer-to-peer assistance to members of the community to help them get online and develop their digital literacy skills. The



group will also work with media outlets to highlight the benefits of being online and where residents can access digital navigator programs near them. Doug commended the work, acknowledging the key role of libraries in modeling this type of support.

Infrastructure Advisory Council Report

Tom Dillon, Chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, provided a brief report on that group's February 11 meeting, [minutes of which](#) were shared with Commission members in advance. He explained the purpose of the Advisory Council, to address issues pertaining to connectivity and devices as well as networking concerns, especially those pertaining to CEN. As with the Digital Learning Advisory Council, the Infrastructure group discussed lessons learned from the shift to remote learning and highlighted the opportunities that broader access to technology may afford.

Members of the Infrastructure Advisory Council also discussed and underscored the non-technology aspects of connecting and equipping learners of all ages to make effective use of online resources. Tom noted the current gaps in access and the key role that libraries and other community organizations can have in helping residents get online. He asked Colleen Bailie, who serves on the Advisory Council, to speak to the impact of libraries in particular in this work. She highlighted the key opportunity that libraries have to disseminate information and provide support to patrons. As community anchors, they speak to the specific needs of adult learners, who often have fewer dedicated resources to help with connectivity and digital literacy training than do students in public schools. She offered the example of local libraries helping residents with essential activities during the pandemic, such as searching for and securing vaccination appointments.

Tom concluded his remarks by highlighting again the impact that education-centric, community wireless networks enabled by Eduroam have had in the State. In addition to the New Haven launch this fall, the community wireless access points CEN is installing across Connecticut will come with an Eduroam SSID to provide seamless access for students of all ages using this system. The solution represents a sustainable, relatively low cost approach to maximizing recent investments by the State to equip learners with devices for school.

CEN Updates

Ryan Kocsondy, Director of the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) provided highlights of his quarterly report, posted to the [Commission's Web site](#). He called the Commission members' attention to the CEN Annual Report and the significant cost avoidance that the Network provides. The difference between the value of services that CEN provides — including Internet access, filtering, and cybersecurity protections



— purchased in aggregate versus through individual institutions approaches \$40M annually.

On the topic of cybersecurity, Ryan noted the decrease in distributed denial of services (DDoS) attacks over the past year, mostly because of reduced school and university network activity with the switch to remote learning. Even with the reduced volume of attacks, Mark underscored the value of DDoS mitigation in indirect as well as direct costs. Tom agreed and described scenarios in which teachers and staff would be unable to teach effectively if school networks became unavailable because of DDoS attacks. Michael encouraged Ryan to define in qualitative terms the value of DDoS mitigation alone. He cautioned against quantifying this benefit, given that it would likely invite arguments about the specific estimated value. Focusing on estimated costs savings would detract from the core message, which is that cybersecurity protections at the network level provide significant benefits to all CEN members.

Ryan concluded his report by noting the addition of new institutional connections, bringing the total number of members to 649. He encouraged all CEN members and Commission members to attend the annual conference, taking place May 11 – 14, featuring 28 breakout and keynote sessions.

Public Comment

Following the CEN report, Mark issued a call for public comment, with none given.

Scheduled 2021 Meeting Dates

Mark noted the remaining scheduled meeting dates for the year:

- Monday, June 7
- Monday, September 13
- Monday, December 6

Before adjournment, Nick asked about the reinstatement of former Commission seats, with representation from teachers' unions, CAPSS, and the Connecticut Educators Computer Association. Doug confirmed that the Department of Administrative Services had put forth this request, in the form of [House Bill 6573](#), as part of the current legislative session.



Adjournment

With no further questions or discussion, Mark called for a motion to adjourn. Burt provided the motion, Nick the second, and the members voted unanimously to conclude the meeting at approximately 2:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Casey
Executive Director

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Casey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' and 'C'.