



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

**1:00 – 3:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

**September 13, 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 (Connecticut Library Association)  
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)  
Elsesser, John — Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)  
Gopalakrishnan, Ajit — Chief Performance Officer, Connecticut State Department of Education  
Hayes, David — Elementary Teacher, Bristol Public Schools (American Federation of Teachers)  
Johnson, Barbara — Colchester Public Schools (Connecticut Educators Computer Association)  
Mavrogeanes, Richard — Discover Video (President Pro Tempore of the Senate)  
Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library  
Smith, Josh — Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)  
Stanco, Bart — Vice President, Gartner (Office of the Governor)  
Stephanou, Stephen — Deputy General Manager, Town of Manchester (CT Conference of Municipalities)  
Stewart, Erin — Mayor, City of New Britain (Minority Leader of the Senate)  
Uche, Chinma — Math and Computer Science Teacher, CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering (Connecticut Education Association)  
Vallieres, Kelli-Marie — Executive Director, Office of Workforce Strategy (Department of Economic and Community Development)  
Williams, Holly — Section Director, Education and Workforce Development, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)

**Others in Attendance**

Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST



## Welcome

Chair Mark Raymond called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM. He began with a warm welcome to four new members, filling positions that were reinstated through [Public Act 21-76](#), which the Commission proposed during the last legislative session. These changes help ensure a membership that represents the interests of teachers and education leaders, who are vital to the effective use of technology in learning.

New members include David Hayes, who teaches 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Edgewood School in Bristol (representing the American Federation of Teachers); Barbara Johnson, a library media specialist at Jack Jackter Intermediate School in Colchester and president of the Connecticut Educators Computer Association, or CECA (representing CECA); Chinma Uche, who teaches math and computer science at the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering in Hartford (representing the Connecticut Education Association); and Josh Smith, Superintendent of Region 15 Public Schools (representing the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents). Mark provided a brief biography of each new member and offered them the opportunity to share any remarks.

He acknowledged the important work of the Commission and its 24 other members, a group of passionate educators, librarians, and town leaders. He closed his opening remarks by noting that the meeting was being covered by the Connecticut Network (CT-N) (<http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=18920>).

## Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission members had received [the minutes of the June 7, 2021 meeting](#) in advance, and Mark welcomed a motion to approve the document. Burt Cohen made a motion to approve the minutes, with a second from Michael Mundrane. With no discussion, the members approved the minutes, with abstentions from the four new Commission members.

## Report of the Executive Director

Mark asked Doug to share highlights from his September [Executive Director's Report](#), which he had shared with members in advance of the meeting:

- Closing the Digital Divide  
Doug began with an overview of several state and federal programs designed to make Internet access affordable for students and families. The Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) provides credits to qualifying households for Internet access. He shared that the Office of the Governor (OTG) and other agencies,



including the Commission, are working on a multi-lingual outreach campaign to increase enrollments in this program. He encouraged members to share EBB with their constituents using the tools at [www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit](http://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit).

For schools, the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) provides offsets to address student home connectivity needs. Doug shared that Connecticut schools and libraries submitted ECF requests totaling \$37M. A second round of funding will be available, with a window to file taking place between September 28 and October 13. The Everybody Learns initiative also continues this year, a state program that connects approximately 15,000 students to help close the homework gap.

On the legislative front, the Governor's broadband legislation ([PA 21-125](#)) will bring about statewide mapping of availability and speeds, along with incentives for carriers to build out to unserved areas. The law includes provisions for digital literacy programming, as does the pending federal [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#). That legislation would bring hundreds of millions of dollars in formula-based awards to Connecticut to support broadband deployment and cybersecurity protections at the state and local levels.

Burt noted that the Infrastructure bill includes the [Digital Equity Act](#), with a \$3.2B national appropriation and requirement that the State create a five-year digital inclusion plan. Burt expressed his desire to see the Commission have a voice in designing and stewarding such a plan, which would help ensure that residents could learn the skills necessary to use technology effectively for learning, work, and civic engagement.

- Accelerate CT  
Doug asked Ajit Gopalakrishnan to provide updates on the technology components of [Accelerate CT](#), a set of programs through the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and funded by the American Rescue Plan to support education recovery and acceleration. Ajit noted the State's partnership with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), with the provision of free access to the [ISTE Summer Learning Academy](#) for all teachers in Connecticut. More than 700 educators have enrolled in the Academy, and discussions continue with ISTE on the provision of more in-depth courses for teachers over the course of the next year. Ajit also shared the CSDE's support of the open education resources (OER) platform, Go Open CT, and the development of statewide curriculum resources on that site. Accelerate CT will also provide convenings of school technology leaders to share challenges and best practices. He pointed to these initiatives as a start to ongoing supports through Accelerate CT in the effective use of technology to support learning.



- **Open Education Resources**  
Doug thanked Ajit for the continued partnership with the CSDE and support of initiatives such as OER. On that note, he reminded members of the recent launch of [Go Open CT](#) to support the creation, curation, and sharing of high-quality, standards-aligned learning materials for schools and universities. The platform should enable innovative contributions from groups and individuals, such as Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) professor Nicolas Simon, who has developed an entire course using the free [OpenStax Sociology textbook](#) from Rice University. He has invited other professors to collaborate in the development of the curriculum and welcomed contributions now and into the future. The “soft launch” of Go Open CT this summer has provided plenty of opportunities for Connecticut educators to develop model applications such as that of Professor Simon, and a broader promotion of the site will take place once training for support staff and administrators takes place. He encouraged Commission members to explore the site and provide feedback.
- **K – 12 Technology Staff and Device Survey**  
Doug shared some of the high-level results from the recent survey of school technology leaders on their staffing levels by position and salary as well as the number of devices these districts support. The impetus for the survey came from a member of the K – 12 Technology Listserv that the Commission hosts, an active community of nearly 500 members who share best practices in using technology for learning. Doug underscored the importance and value of the results, given the expansion of technology to support learning and accompanying demands on school leaders to support staff, students, and families. He suggested that the Commission run the survey every year in order to help schools during the fall and winter months as they develop budgets for the coming academic year. The full report is available from the Commission's Publications page, [bit.ly/CET\\_Pubs](https://bit.ly/CET_Pubs).

Mark thanked Doug for his updates and welcomed comments from other members. As schools and other sectors depend increasingly on technology, he noted the span of initiatives that the Commission addresses, from broadband and device access to skills development and advanced applications of digital tools.

### **Digital Learning Advisory Council Report**

Nick Caruso, chair of the Digital Learning Advisory Council, began his report by welcoming the new members of the Commission and underscoring the importance of reinstating educator positions to the Commission. He noted that three of the new members — Barbara, Chinma, and Josh — have actively served on the Digital Learning Advisory for years.



As he had shared during the [June 7 Commission meeting](#) and as reflected in the minutes of the [July 29 Digital Learning Advisory meeting](#), Advisory members had designed a simple survey framed around one question:

"What about school during the pandemic is worth keeping as we return to in-person education?"

The survey will close September 17, with [preliminary responses](#) from parents, teachers, and administrators calling for the continued use of technology to address logistical challenges. For example, many parents asked for online, virtual conferences. Nick noted a number of comments on the need for flexibility in using technology to allow remote learning to take place on inclement weather days when school is closed. Josh echoed these sentiments, pointing out that distance learning has taken place for years, with sometimes the greatest challenge being scheduling and compliance with Connecticut's seat time requirements. Burt acknowledged these difficulties and welcomed current definitions of and approaches to effective distance learning.

Michael Mundrane referenced [recent assessment results](#) that indicate a correlation between student age and ability to learn in less structured, virtual learning environments. He predicted a forthcoming wealth of studies on remote learning during the pandemic that might help improve distance learning in the future. Doug reminded the group that the Governor's budget implementer bill calls for the establishment of a [Remote Learning Commission](#), which would conduct an audit of remote learning practices across schools, establish best practices, and assess the feasibility of a statewide online school. This last component could help expand educational opportunities for students across Connecticut, allowing students to take courses not offered at their local school district.

Nick encouraged Commission members to share the survey with their constituents, and Doug provided a [sample outreach letter](#) to help solicit additional responses. By the next meeting of the Commission, Nick hoped to have a formal report ready. He welcomed input from members on ways to elevate dialog on effective distance learning, suggesting that the Commission consider holding a press conference or other event to share the results and recommendations.

### **Infrastructure Advisory Council Report**

Tom Dillon, chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, provided updates from the August 3 meeting of that group, [minutes of which](#) the Commission received separately. He highlighted discussions about EBB outreach and shared ideas from the Advisory to move people from awareness to adoption. Comprised of subject matter experts from schools, universities, libraries, and education associations, the Advisory suggested that



capturing the voice of Connecticut residents remains key to building trust in the program. Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) CIO George Claffey, a member of the Advisory, suggested that CCSU students in media production classes could help film and distribute these testimonials in social media posts or longer-form public service announcements. Work on EBB outreach continues, leveraging the ideas of Advisory members in concert with a communication campaign coordinated through the OTG.

Tom also shared updates around [Eduroam](#), the global wireless authentication system that the Advisory and Commission have long promoted. He referred Commission members to CEN's new Web page on the technology, [www.ctedunet.net/eduroam](http://www.ctedunet.net/eduroam). Leaders in New Haven Public Schools have partnered with Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) to deploy Eduroam so that students in that city can get online through trusted school and university connections seamlessly. This work took several months but does not require significant technical resources if institutions have an enterprise wireless management system, a standard directory-management system, and a radius server.

Eduroam remains an ideal authentication system for towns and cities that have a college or university, school system, library, and other community-based organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, JCC, etc.). John Elsesser offered to speak to his colleagues in municipal organizations about Eduroam, noting that local leaders can help raise awareness of and encourage adoption of the platform in their towns.

Michael called members' attention to the difference between a public wireless network and Eduroam. Using the latter to authenticate guests provides a level of control and security — for the end user and institution — that an open network does not afford. He and Tom highlighted the strong reporting features in Eduroam, which provides aggregate guest access data for host institutions that helps quantify the impact of providing secure guest access. Mark thanked Tom for his continued leadership of the Advisory and the Commission members for the lively dialog.

## **CEN Updates**

Mark provided a few highlights from the [September CEN report](#) from Ryan Kocsondy and encouraged members to review the entire document. He underscored the extraordinary value that CEN provides in serving Connecticut's anchor institutions with safe and highly scalable Internet access. He also noted the estimated annual savings of \$25 – 28M when comparing the services that CEN provides to the cost of schools, universities, libraries, and other CEN members to purchase those services independently. Beyond those core offerings, CEN continues to connect libraries and expand wireless access from member institutions, enabling residents in those towns to get online for learning. Tom remarked on the dramatic increase in distributed denial of service (DDoS) mitigations through CEN over the past year, another measure of the





Network's value to its members. Mark agreed, noting the remarkable service CEN provides not only in providing high-speed Internet but also protected connections to guard against cyber-attacks that would otherwise take schools and universities offline for up to two weeks.

### **Public Comment**

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

### **Scheduled 2021 Meeting Dates**

Mark reminded members of the one remaining scheduled meeting of the year, on Monday, December 6. He held open the possibility of a hybrid (online and in-person) format for that gathering, based on public health protocols and members' preferences.

### **Adjournment**

With no further questions or discussion, Mark adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:30 PM. He wished the members an enjoyable fall and looked forward to reconvening in December.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Casey

*Executive Director*

**Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology**

55 Farmington Avenue

Hartford, CT 06105

(860) 622-2224

[Doug.Casey@ct.gov](mailto:Doug.Casey@ct.gov)

[www.ct.gov/ctedtech](http://www.ct.gov/ctedtech)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Casey". The signature is written in a cursive style.