DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
BUREAU OF ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY
1:00 – 3:00 PM

M I N U T E S

March 7, 2022

Commission Members in Attendance

Mundrane, Michael — Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, University of Connecticut (UCONN)

Bailie, 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)

Dumais, Chip — Executive Director, Cooperative Education Services (Office of the Governor)

Elsesser, John — Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)

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)

Provencher, Maura — Vice President of Research and Administration, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC)

Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library

Smith, Josh — Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)

Thomas, Molly — Education Policy Consultant, Office of Economic and Community Development

Uche, Chinma — Math and Computer Science Teacher, CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering (Connecticut Education Association)

Williams, Holly — Section Director, Education and Workforce Development, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)

Zak, Scott — Senior Director of Learning Technologies, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

Others in Attendance

Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network

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

Welcome
Commission Vice-Chair Michael Mundrane opened the meeting, mentioning that Chair Mark Raymond could not attend because of a legislative appropriations hearing.

Approval of Meeting Minutes
Michael welcomed a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2021 Commission meeting, shared in advance with Commission members. Burt Cohen moved to approve the minutes, and Nick Caruso seconded. With no discussion or abstentions, the motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Executive Director
Michael asked Doug to share highlights from his March Executive Director's Report:

- Technology Planning and Sustainability: The Future Ready Framework (www.FutureReady.org) serves as the benchmark for K – 12 school technology planning, and the Commission encourages districts to participate in a statewide cohort beginning this spring. Doug hosted an informational session on March 2, during which Future Ready leaders provided an overview of the technology planning process and toolset, with an invitation to join other schools in collaborating over the coming months to develop district technology plans. The fee of $5,000 allows district leadership teams to participate in the cohort. Doing so provides access to in-person and virtual planning sessions and customization of the framework to accommodate specific Connecticut needs around innovation and sustainability.

- Data Privacy Compliance: Given the ambiguity of Connecticut's student data privacy law, Doug initiated conversations with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) counsel, which then engaged the Attorney General's office to help streamline compliance for schools and educational technology providers. The result of those discussions is a new set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that Doug released during a brief presentation on February 24. The FAQs make it clear that vendors who sign the Commission's Connecticut Student Data Privacy Pledge via LearnPlatform comply with the law. The document also identifies penalties for non-compliance, clarifies key definitions in the statute, and allows the terms governing State contracts to apply to schools as well. Attendees of the February 24 session appreciated the clarifications, which should further reduce district compliance burdens. Deborah Schander welcomed the guidance, especially for schools that use the Connecticut State Library's researchIT services.

- Open Education Resources Pilots: Use of the Commission's open education resources (OER) site, www.GoOpenCT.org, continues among schools and universities, with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) leveraging the platform to publish its forthcoming course materials. To help districts leverage the platform, Doug is preparing outreach to schools to use GoOpenCT for summer curriculum development. These activities take place in dozens of districts each year, and the platform will facilitate curriculum writing across academic departments, schools, districts, and regions.

  On the topic of content creation and publishing via GoOpenCT, David Hayes asked about the process for posting lesson and unit plans, specifically around the vetting of content. Doug clarified that only teachers or professors — as defined by their use of an educational email (e.g., jdoe@district.k12.ct.us or rgonzalez@ucnn.edu) — can create accounts. General users of the platform cannot publish content sitewide without administrative approval, though they can create internal groups for the purpose of collaborating and authoring. Doug shared that these checks and balances should help ensure proper review and control over the intellectual property of content developed in school districts and universities.

- Remote Learning Standards: Pursuant to Public Act 21-2, the CSDE has formed a Remote Learning Commission and released standards for online learning. The document includes sections that define professional standards, student expectations, and curriculum design, among other focus areas.

Digital Learning Advisory Council Report
Nick Caruso, Chair of the Digital Learning Advisory Council, provided background on a draft resolution shared in advance of the meeting. During the summer of 2021, the Advisory Council conducted a survey to ask members of the education community for input on what practices worked well during remote learning that schools should continue. Given the small number of responses to that survey and limited takeaways, Advisory Council members saw a need to write a wider set of recommendations for the Commission to consider. Nick noted progress in student device and broadband access as a result of relief funding and called for sustained supports around these essential conditions for learning, in addition to proper levels of teacher training and support. The resolution also ties responsibilities to various State agencies and organizations, with the goal of identifying partners to provide sustainable resources for digital learning. The final resolution language can also serve as the basis for the Commission's state educational technology plan, scheduled for a refresh by 2023. Nick opened the floor for input from Commission members.

Chinma Uche, who also serves on the Digital Learning Advisory Council, highlighted the disparities in digital skills among students that she sees as an educator and the need for teacher supports. Sharing his perspective as a public school superintendent and member of the Advisory Council that drafted the resolution, Josh Smith called remote learning the last two years a "grand experiment," with lessons learned and a need to codify what worked and how to support best practices. Another contributor to the resolution, Barbara Johnson highlighted the shared responsibility of local schools, state agencies, and regional groups to ensure all students have access to personalized learning opportunities made possible through technology.

Burt Cohen highlighted the strong cross-agency collaboration behind the Everybody Learns initiative to provide students with computers and home Internet connections. He recommended clarifying the role the State has played in addressing the digital divide. Doug welcomed that input and asked Commission members to suggest the groups, agencies, and institutions that might play a role in addressing the long-term education technology goals articulated in the resolution. On that topic, Nick suggested that the CAPSS Technology Committee, co-chaired by Commission members Chip Dumais and Josh Smith, consider the resolution as part of its work to address the sustainability of education technology investments and practices.

Nick also shared highlights of two other topics from the February 3 Digital Learning Advisory Council meeting. Members discussed ways to support the development of digital literacy skills among adult learners. Avenues to accomplish that goal include the development of a digital skills "badge" or credential that individuals could earn and share with current or potential employers. The group also addressed the practice in some districts of eliminating the use of student personal devices during school hours. Perhaps as part of the resolution or future work of the Commission, Advisory Council members encouraged a statement and outreach efforts to encourage the appropriate and continued use of technology in schools, rather than prohibiting the use of devices.

Infrastructure Advisory Council Report
Following Nick's report, Tom Dillon spoke to the minutes of the February 1, 2022 meeting of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, which he chairs. That meeting addressed two areas of concern: measuring and addressing the digital divide, and the expansion of the Community Wireless initiative.

Tom noted that during its December 6, 2021 meeting, the Commission discussed different approaches to equipping students with Internet access outside of school. Both the Commission and Advisory Council members argued against mandates to measure gaps in access but instead to issue best practice guidance for schools. Tom mentioned the framework of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) for measuring broadband access as just one resource that the Commission could endorse. The

Advisory Council members agreed that the best course of action would be to include this and other resources in an updated version of the [Digital Equity Toolkit](#), which the Commission published in 2017. Much has changed since the release of that guide, including the establishment of national funding to offset the costs of home broadband. Doug will work on an updated version of the Toolkit over the coming weeks.

The Community Wireless project, funded through Governor Lamont's Everybody Learns initiative, will expand through funds allocated in 2021. Tom highlighted the success this program has had to date, with CEN installing [more than 160 hotspots](#) statewide to allow residents to get online at libraries and other community anchors. Those access points allow students to log in via Eduroam, making authentication through their school-issued credentials seamless.

Expansion of the program comes from a $10 million investment as part of the 2021 implementer bill (see [Public Act 21-2, page 460](#)). The Commission will provide general oversight of the program, and Tom welcomed input from all members on program design and promotion. Unlike the first phase of the initiative, with CEN managing all procurement and installations, the next will operate as a grant. Communities will apply for funding and manage the installation of access points and direct connections to CEN. During the February 1 Infrastructure Advisory Council meeting, members of that group provided initial ideas on the program design, from eligibility to elements of the funding application and ways to ensure maximum benefit of the funds across Connecticut's neediest communities.

Commission and Advisory Council member Colleen Bailie noted that libraries benefitting from wireless access through the first wave of installations have seen a growing number of patrons accessing the service, which helps them understand firsthand the benefits of getting online. Tom echoed that enthusiasm and shared high-level timing for the next phase of the program, the design of which requires approval by the United States Department of the Treasury before funds may be released, hopefully this spring.

CEN Updates

Ryan Kocsondy, CEN's Director, continued the discussion of the Community Wireless program as part of his [quarterly updates](#). He encouraged input from Commission members in the program design as well as the scoring of applications. On the topic of funding, the [Governor's 2022 – 23 proposed budget](#) includes broadband provisions that would benefit CEN members. A proposed grant program would expand Network access to towns and libraries, another would help connect charter schools, and a third appropriation would address much-needed upgrades to CEN. Ryan encouraged members to learn more about and advocate for these proposed investments to make the final budget. John Elsesser noted that the Connecticut Council of Small Towns

(COST) and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) have already endorsed these proposed investments to expand broadband in the state. He mentioned that CCM is working with an external consultant to develop a survey of residents to help measure Internet access and connection speeds.

Current network expansion efforts continue through the Connecticut Library Fiber Consortium. This work includes connections to individual libraries as well as a new program, with funding to support upgrades to libraries' internal networks. A total of 41 libraries have applied for funding to cover internal upgrades through this initiative, with on-site assessments likely taking place in April 2022. Deborah Schander called attention to the importance of this work, helping to address the technical and other inequities that exist across libraries.

The 2022 CEN Annual Member Conference will take place on Thursday, May 5. The organizing committee received dozens of high-quality proposals and has posted the session schedule on the event Web site. Ryan noted that the event is scheduled to take place in person at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. Admission includes access to all presentations and poster sessions as well as breakfast, lunch, and a happy hour. This year's conference will also highlight winners of the CEN Outstanding Leader Awards. Nominations are open through March 15 to acknowledge exemplary service and leadership by members of the CEN community.

Public Comment
Following the CEN report, Michael issued a call for public comment, with none given.

Scheduled 2022 Meeting Dates
Michael noted the upcoming meeting dates:

- Monday, June 6
- Monday, September 12
- Monday, December 5

Doug mentioned that, with the decrease in COVID positivity, future meetings may take place in person. He stated that conversations with Chair Mark Raymond have explored the possibility of having one or two in-person meetings per year, with others held virtually. Given the changing nature of the pandemic, a number of options exist to accommodate both member and public participation in future meetings.

Adjournment

Michael closed the meeting by thanking members for their continued engagement and advocacy on behalf of students and educators across the state. He entertained a motion to adjourn, offered first by John and seconded by Chip. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting concluded at approximately 2:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Casey
Executive Director
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