



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

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

June 6, 2022

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS
Mundrane, Michael — Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, University of Connecticut (UCONN)
Aylesworth, Ryan — Town Manager, Town of Mansfield (Connecticut Council of Municipalities)
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)
Dumais, Chip — Executive Director, Cooperative Education Services (Office of the Governor)
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)
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)
Widness, Jennifer — President, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
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

Chair Mark Raymond welcomed members of the Commission to the June meeting. He expressed appreciation and encouragement for those serving in education as they approach the end of the academic year and reiterated the Commission's role in supporting their important work. He also welcomed a new member, Ryan Aylesworth, who serves as Town Manager for Mansfield, appointed by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. Mark briefly highlighted Ryan's background and experience in championing the environment and interests of rural communities. Ryan thanked Mark as well as John Elsesser for initially suggesting that Ryan serve on the Commission. Ryan underscored the importance of serving the needs of those living in rural areas, especially in Mansfield, which has strong ties to the University of Connecticut as one of the state's key anchor institutions.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mark entertained a motion to approve [the minutes](#) of the March 7, 2022 Commission meeting, shared in advance with Commission members. David Hayes moved to approve the minutes, and Chip Dumais seconded. The motion carried unanimously, with abstentions from Ajit Gopalakrishnan and Ryan Aylesworth.

Report of the Executive Director

Following approval of the previous meeting minutes, Mark welcomed Doug to share highlights from his [June Executive Director's Report](#):

- Federal Broadband Programs: In the fall of 2021, President Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which includes a number of programs will expand access to the Internet in Connecticut. The [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA) oversees these initiatives, including the [Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment \(BEAD\) Program](#), the [Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program](#), and the [Digital Equity Act](#). Doug explained that the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy will administer the BEAD and Middle Mile programs, which will receive 100+M for the buildout of broadband, focusing on the state's unserved and underserved areas. The Commission for Educational Technology will lead the Digital Equity work, which Doug promised to address in detail following his updates.



- **Everybody Learns Home Connectivity Transition:** To ensure remote learning options for all learners, Governor Lamont pledged \$42M in March 2020 for computers, home Internet, and community wireless service. The Office of Policy and Management extended support for home Internet in the 2021 – 22 academic year. Doug noted that State support for connectivity outside of school will end on June 30 for cable Internet and in November for wireless hotspots. Ajit and he have advised district leaders to leverage the Emergency Connectivity Fund to pay for student home access directly, and to encourage eligible families to take advantage of the Affordable Connectivity Program, which provides up to \$30 per month to offset the cost of Internet access.
- **Go Open CT:** Doug continues to promote use of the State's site for open education resources, www.GoOpenCT.org. Teams of school teachers and college professors will leverage the platform to create, curate, and search for high-quality, standards-aligned, and free learning materials during the upcoming summer curriculum-writing season. The site continues to grow, with more than 9,000 textbooks, courses, units of study, and lessons available for Connecticut educators. He also noted the CSDE's first wave of model curriculum, those for financial literacy and middle school mathematics, available through Go Open CT. Governor Lamont and Education Commissioner Russell-Tucker, among others, hosted an event April 20 to announce the availability of these courses through the site.

In addition to these updates, Mark noted the significant funds appropriated to the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) through the Governor and General Assembly. These State investments of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars will help ensure the health and stability of CEN, which provides essential connectivity and cybersecurity services to Connecticut's anchor institutions.

Digital Equity Act

Doug referred Commission members to the [overview from the NTIA](#) on the Digital Equity program, posted in advance of the meeting to the Commission's Web site. He underscored the program's intent, to identify and address gaps in technology access and digital skills. Closing these gaps will help ensure that all Connecticut residents can participate fully in society, leveraging technology for learning, civic engagement, telehealth, remote work, career advancement, tapping State services, and deepening social connections. As noted earlier, the Commission will lead this work on behalf of the State, working closely with the Office of the Governor, DEEP, OPM, the Office of Consumer Counsel, and other agencies.



The focus of the Digital Equity program, as defined in the IJA, is to serve the needs of “covered populations,” including, but not limited to individuals with disabilities (including children), the aging, individuals with language barriers, veterans, the incarcerated, those experiencing housing insecurity, civil rights organizations, workforce boards, adult education providers, and public housing authorities. The Governor's designation of the Commission to lead this work reflects the strong alignment of these covered population groups with the constituent leaders that make up the Commission.

Doug is currently developing the State's application to receive planning funds, due July 12. With awards expected in the early fall, the Commission will have a year to develop the state digital equity plan to assess broadband availability, affordability, and adoption as well as digital literacy skills, especially for members of the groups listed above. If approved, the plan will receive approximately \$3M in funding and enable the State to apply for support through a competitive grant program.

Doug underscored the strong work in digital equity that has taken place for years in Connecticut, including the connection of educational institutions via the CEN for decades. More recently, groups such as the State Library have formed collaboratives and partnerships to index and support the development of programs that expand access to technology and digital skills across the state. Doug asked each Commission member to provide him with details from their agency or organization's strategic plans that support equity of access. Mark also encouraged members to refer any individuals or groups already engaged in digital equity work to contact Doug.

Deborah Schander reiterated the essential role that libraries have played in addressing the access and education needs of the aforementioned covered populations. Colleen Bailie suggested that Doug attend an upcoming meeting of the Connecticut Library Association, where she currently serves as president, to increase awareness of the Digital Equity program. On the municipal side, Ryan described a digital equity plan that Mansfield has developed and inquired about federal funding to support this work. Other cities and towns likely have parallel efforts that the forthcoming Capacity Grant funds — available in 2023 — will help support.

Mark thanked the Commission members for their engagement and commitment to digital equity efforts. He noted the already strong network of libraries, schools, universities, private partners, philanthropies, and other groups, which the Commission membership already represents.



Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

Nick Caruso, Chair of the Digital Learning Advisory Council, invited the Commission members to consider adoption of the [proposed resolution](#) shared in advance of the meeting. As background, the Council members sought to identify practices adopted during remote learning that schools should continue leveraging. Council member Jonathan Costa of EdAdvance developed a survey to collect feedback from the broader education community to capture these recommendations. While the [ensuing report](#) did reflect a large number of responses or wide array of recommendations, the Council members nonetheless expressed a need to underscore the importance of supporting digital learning in the state. These discussions led to the development of an [initial resolution](#) shared at the March 2022 Commission meeting and since revised by the CAPSS Technology Committee as well as the Commission's Digital Learning Advisory Council at its April 28 meeting, [the minutes of which](#) Commission members had the opportunity to review.

The Commission members provided feedback on the updated resolution, addressing three general concerns:

- Schools: Nick expressed a desire on behalf of his organization, CABE, to change "schools" to "school districts" in the call for "... local schools ... to continue the use of technology in education." Brief discussion took place around this phrasing, but the Commission members did not offer a motion to make this amendment.
- Definition of Terms: Holly Williams provided written feedback on the draft resolution in advance of the meeting, which included suggested revisions in two areas. First, she encouraged the addition of definitions for the terms "digital literacy" and "digital equity." She acknowledged the purpose of the resolution, to drive policy at the legislative level. For that reason, she warned that without defining these terms, some might misconstrue the resolution as speaking too narrowly to full-time, remote learning adopted during the pandemic, rather than speaking to sustained, long-term support for digital learning.

Burt Cohen agreed and suggested adding the definitions already adopted into statute under [Public Act 21-159](#), "An Act Concerning Equitable Access to Broadband." Various Commission members agreed with making this addition to the resolution. Mark summarized the revision as the addition of the following language:

WHEREAS "digital equity" means a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for participation in society, democracy and the economy of the state, and "digital literacy" means the ability to use information and communication technologies



to find, evaluate, create and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

Michael Mundrane moved to adopt this motion, with John offering a second. With no further discussion, the motion carried, with no opposition or abstentions.

- Funding and Appropriations: Holly also suggested changing the resolution to include language that encouraged a joint commitment across stakeholders to support technology in education, toward the goal of developing policy that drives both State and local investments in education. She preferred phrasing that pointed to “adequate resources” in general, not just by State agencies. Ajit supported this recommendation and did not see it as the role of the Commission or other State agency to make specific appropriation requests. He did express support for the principles of the resolution, especially those that call for teacher training and resources.

John recommended adding private organizations to the list of stakeholders, given past investments by philanthropies to support education. Josh Smith suggested adding language that called for leadership in the use of technology in learning, in addition to funding. Mark welcomed this feedback and underscored the Commission's role, as defined in statute, to serve as the principal policy advisor to the Office of the Governor and General Assembly regarding educational technology.

Taking these points into consideration, Mark suggested changing the word “appropriations” to “leadership and funding (federal, state, local, and private)” in the following point:

“Provide adequate leadership and funding (federal, state, local, and private) to support digital learning resources and programs at the state level to appreciate efficiencies and equity of access across all learning institutions”

Nick moved to adopt this language, and Josh provided a second. The motion carried unanimously to adopt this revised language, with no abstentions.



Infrastructure Advisory Council Report

Following the adoption of the revised resolution, Mark asked Tom Dillon to share updates from the April 25 meeting of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, which Tom chairs. He covered two related topics, the promotion of Eduroam at the recent CEN conference, and the expansion of the Community Wireless program.

On May 5, the CEN conference took place, which included a session Tom facilitated on the Eduroam authentication system (www.eduroam.us). The workshop included testimony from Jonathan Garbutt of Southern Connecticut State University and Jason Healy of Suffield Academy regarding their deployment of the system, as well as Ryan Kocsondy of CEN and Mike Zawacki of Internet2 on the technical aspects of the platform. Mike in particular has proven instrumental in addressing questions from district leaders about enabling Eduroam with the Google directory system, which most schools use to manage student accounts. Mike is speaking with the Google team to design a standard deployment approach that will make getting online seamless for students wherever they can find an Eduroam-enabled hotspot.

Michael echoed the benefits of Eduroam to provide a smooth and safe means of getting online for members of the education community. He underscored that Eduroam's value resides not just in getting students connected in their schools but also doing so off campus, and in providing trusted, measurable authentication for visitors to a host network. John Elsesser appreciated the CEN session and shared his impression that many district technologists appear ready to deploy Eduroam. School leaders need to learn more about the benefits of the platform — for example, in eliminating the need for schools to create and manage accounts for interns and student teachers — to drive adoption. Mark thanked the Advisory Council members for their work and recommendations, acknowledging that the greatest hurdle to adopting new technologies is often getting people to understand the “why,” the benefits of doing so.

School leaders have expressed enthusiasm for adopting Eduroam but have identified the lack of non-college Eduroam locations as a barrier to adoption. The expansion of the Community Wireless program will help to address this concern. Tom noted that the first wave of funding for the initiative has resulted in the installation of more than 170 access points in high-needs communities across the state. Each access point provides access to the Internet via a “CT Public WiFi” and “Eduroam” option. The Advisory Council members discussed and provided recommendations for the design of the next phase of the Community Wireless program, which will receive an additional \$10M in funding. Details of the proposed application process and oversight appear in the [minutes from the April 25 meeting](#). At a high level, the Advisory Council members have worked to ensure that the program encourages and rewards communities that assemble cross-institution approaches (e.g., partnerships among local schools, libraries,



housing authorities, etc.) that promise the greatest and most equitable impact to connect the state's least-connected residents.

CEN Updates

Ryan provided additional details on the Community Wireless program during his quarterly updates and as posted to the [Commission's meeting Web page](#). The first round of awards totaled \$1.7M, which included the installation of access points through CEN as well as applicants such as Norwich Public Utilities and the Hartford Public Library. To help expand Eduroam, both through the Community Wireless initiative and in general, Ryan shared that CEN has been accepted as one of five institutions nationally to receive assistance through an onramp program provided by Internet2.

Ryan echoed the positive comments from various Commission members about the recent CEN conference, which took place in person for the first time since 2019. More than 500 school, college, library, and town leaders attended the conference and provided strong feedback through event surveys. This year marked the launch of CEN's Outstanding Leader Awards, which acknowledged the work of long-term advocates for the Network, including Nick Caruso, John Elsesser, and Tom Dillon, among others.

The approved biennium budget ([PA 22-118](#)) includes more than \$70M in funding to support four initiatives through CEN: the Everybody Learns wireless expansion, connections for towns and libraries, upgrades to the Network's core infrastructure, and charter school connections. Ryan welcomed any of the Commission members or their constituents to contact him with details of these allocations. Mark expressed his sincere gratitude to the Governor, General Assembly, and OPM for committing these investments of federal American Rescue Act funds to maximize the value of CEN to the state's communities and learning institutions.

Public Comment

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

Scheduled 2022 Meeting Dates

Mark noted the upcoming meeting dates for 2022 and shared that he and Doug are looking into in-person options as public health guidance allows:

- Monday, September 12
- Monday, December 5



Adjournment

Mark concluded the meeting by calling for a motion to adjourn, made by Michael and seconded by Nick. With a unanimous vote to conclude the meeting at approximately 3:00 PM, Mark thanked the members for their continued service to the Commission.

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.