



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

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

December 4, 2023

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS
Mundrane, Michael — Commission Vice Chair and Vice Provost/CIO, University of Connecticut
Baillie, Colleen — Executive Director, West Haven Public Library (Connecticut Library Association)
Caruso, Nick — Senior Staff Associate, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
Casey, Doug — Executive Director, Connecticut 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 Education Services (Office of the Governor)
Elsesser, John — Independent Consultant (Connecticut Council of Small Towns)
Gopalakrishnan, Ajit — Chief Performance Officer, Connecticut State Department of Education
Salvatore, Tony — Co-President, Connecticut Federation of School Administrators (Speaker of the House)
Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library
Suh, Grace — Chief of Staff, Office of Workforce Strategy (Department 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)
Wyskiel, Michelle — Fourth Grade Teacher, West Haven Public Schools (American Federation of Teachers)

Others in Attendance

Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS
Thompson, Lauren — Digital Equity Program Manager, Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology



Welcome

Commission Chair and State Chief Information Officer Mark Raymond called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM, welcoming members, other attendees, and those watching remotely through the Connecticut Network video service. Readers of these minutes may watch the recording at <https://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=22383>.

In offering opening comments, Mark acknowledged the pivotal topics on the agenda for this meeting, including the review of the next five-year state educational technology plan. He welcomed the input of all members on the plan and the key considerations leading the Commission's work: where learning happens (in schools, universities, libraries, the workplace); who are the learners (K – 12 and higher education students, adults pursuing advanced degrees, individuals looking to advance their careers); how the Commission and its partners can prepare students for the future; how to ensure equity of access; and how to accomplish shared goals within the constraints that govern this collective work.

Mark welcomed two new members to the Commission. Michelle Wyskiel, appointed by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) — Connecticut teaches fourth grade at Savin Rock Community School. She graduated from Central Connecticut State University with a degree in Elementary Education, with a focus in Mathematics, and is pursuing her master's degree in instructional technology from the University of Saint Joseph. She described every teacher's role as helping children develop their own potential and learning styles.

In addition to Michelle, Mark welcomed Toni Boucher, appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, who serves as the First Selectman in the town of Wilton. Because she could not attend in person, Mark deferred a formal introduction until the March meeting. He also welcomed back Commission member John Elsesser, who retired from his position as Town Manager of Coventry in June and who has been re-appointed to the Commission on behalf of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST).

Approval of Meeting Minutes

As the first action item on the agenda, Mark welcomed a motion to approve the [minutes from the September 11, 2023 meeting](#). Burt Cohen offered the motion, with a second from Nick Caruso. John Elsesser abstained, and the motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Executive Director

Doug Casey began his [quarterly updates](#) by noting the upcoming annual report of the Commission's activities. He welcomed input from members on topics they would like to see included in that document to highlight the Commission's work in 2023.



On the topic of artificial intelligence (AI), Doug reminded members of the upcoming conference December 11, "AI and Its Impact on K – 12 Education." Space was still available at the event, featuring keynotes by Dan Fitzpatrick and Mary Strain as well as a panel discussion on the opportunities and risks that AI poses to the future of learning.

As required by statute, the Commission collects and publishes data on schools' use of the data privacy exemption to support individualized education plans. Doug referred members and meeting attendees to the reports now published on the [Connecticut Open Data portal](#).

The Commission staff have spent the past year developing a five-year State Digital Equity Plan. Doug noted that the plan reflects intensive research through surveys, focus groups, and collaboration with State agencies whose work contributes to and benefits from access to technology. He handed the floor to Digital Equity Program Manager Lauren Thompson to provide additional updates on the draft plan.

Lauren reminded members of the Digital Equity Program's goal of equipping all residents with affordable Internet and devices as well as the skills and support they need. The plan, scheduled for release the week of December 18, includes baseline measures of digital equity statewide and within subgroups, or "covered populations." The plan also includes six key goals with measurable outcomes for improving these baseline measures across access and skills.

She encouraged Commission members to share the draft plan across their professional networks during the period of public comment. Residents may access the draft plan and submit feedback at www.CT.gov/DigitalEquity. Starting in early 2024, Lauren, Doug, and research fellow Sarah Ullom-Minnich will be attending public events to present the plan and enlist comments. They will consolidate feedback, set revisions, and submit the final plan by February 13, 2024. Funding to implement the plan should be available in late 2024 or early 2025.

As the state's Broadband Policy Coordinator and a reviewer of an early draft of the Digital Equity Plan, Burt commended the digital equity team for their work in preparing the document. He described it as "superb" and noted that it met all of the requirements of the program. Mark welcomed the feedback and noted how many aspects of "digital equity" exist, from connections to computers, skills and technical support. He noted the dozens of State agencies and other leaders who contributed to the plan and encouraged Commission members to share the draft plan through their professional networks.



Draft 2024 – 2028 Strategic Plan

Mark introduced the next topic, a discussion of the draft [State Education Technology Strategic Plan](#). Members of both the [Digital Learning Advisory Council](#), chaired by Nick Caruso, and the [Infrastructure Advisory Council](#), chaired by Tom Dillon, played a key role in setting priorities for the plan. Nick reminded the Commission members of the work leading up to the draft presented to them. In 2021, the advisory council members put together a statewide survey to enlist input on the future of educational technology, followed by a resolution from the Commission and a planning retreat in August 2023 to frame the next plan. Tom thanked the advisory council members, who represent a diversity of roles and perspectives. They have empowered the Commission to set bold and achievable goals in the draft plan.

Doug offered a few introductory remarks before opening the floor for comment. He directed Commission members to consider the main goals of the plan:

- 1) Technology-Enabled Learning: The tools and processes to accelerate, scale, and personalize learning
- 2) Digital Equity: Affordable devices, connections, training, support, and services to provide learning and advancement opportunities
- 3) Competencies: The skills and mindsets that students, educators, and leaders need to use technology effectively in education
- 4) Sustainability: The programs and policies necessary to ensure that institutions can maintain the technology-related costs of education
- 5) Data Privacy and Security: The infrastructure, tools, and behaviors necessary to protect against the misuse of personal and educational data and information

Each goal includes details on its priority, based on Commission input from the September meeting, the likely partners to complete the work, and measures of progress.

Following these introductory remarks, Nick offered a motion to adopt the draft plan; Tom seconded the motion. Mark then welcomed discussion of the proposed strategic plan. Holly Williams asked that the plan specifically address the importance of safe and appropriate use of technology by students. She also underscored the concepts of equity in access to technology and the potential of digital tools to help close learning and achievement gaps. The pandemic impacted all students, especially those most at risk, and technology can address the erosion of learning that happened during remote learning.

Ajit Gopalakrishnan agreed with these points. As an expert in achievement data, he noted the continued impact on learning caused by the pandemic in student



achievement and attendance. He called for changes to language in the plan to emphasize online learning as a means to augment, not replace, in-person instruction.

Chinma Uche underscored the importance of ensuring the safe use of technology through teacher training and modeling of responsible use to students. She reflected on the close connection between computer science and digital literacy. Both in formal coding as well as the use of online apps, students are and will continue to be creators.

Michael Mundrane pointed to learning during the pandemic as an experiment, with students of all ages experiencing negative consequences, especially those who were already at risk. He supported the distinction between the terms “digital equity” and “digital literacy.” He asked for clarification between what the draft plan terms as “competencies” and “digital literacy.” Doug noted that State statute defines digital literacy (see [CGS § 289](#)), and the Commission’s plans and initiatives have pointed to other defined terms, such as the [ISTE standards](#). He offered that the term “competencies” speaks to skills and mindsets that vary by role, such as those of leaders, teachers, and students. “Digital literacy” remains a broader term, applicable to those in education as well as general residents in their use of digital tools and resources.

The Commission members addressed the topic of how to promote the plan and build support for its implementation. John Elsesser called on the Commission to share the plan with city and town leaders, perhaps through a workshop or other event organized in partnership with the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) and Connecticut Council of Municipalities (CCM). Engaging municipal leaders will help engage them as partners, underscoring the importance of technology to support learning. Ajit concurred and suggested engaging with the General Assembly to address fiscal concerns that districts face in sustaining technology.

Mark agreed with these points, with the Commission's role as an advocate for the schools, universities, and libraries it serves. He summarized the comments by emphasizing “focus.” With all that leaders, educators, parents, and students are asked to do with technology, the Commission is providing value by articulating priorities in digital learning through the plan. How we talk about the work can be just as important as the plan itself, to bring about positive impacts for learning.

To move the plan forward, Mark asked if formal revisions were necessary before a vote. Burt called for an amended motion that the Commission adopt the plan with the changes suggested in this meeting. Nick and Tom, as leaders of the motion, agreed with this proposal. Mark called for a vote, with unanimous approval of the plan pending the changes noted. Mark thanked the Commission members, advisory council members, and Doug for their work in presenting and adopting the new plan.



CEN Updates

Following adoption of the strategic plan, Mark asked CEN Director Ryan Kocsondy to provide highlights from his [quarterly report](#), posted to the December 4 meeting Web page. He noted the benefit of distributed denial of service (DDoS) mitigation provided to all CEN members. Without this service, affected locations would see outages lasting a day or more.

On the topic of Network expansions, the Connecticut Library Fiber Consortium — a partnership between the Connecticut State Library (CSL) and CEN — has reached its completion after launching in 2016. A total of 150 of 191 libraries statewide are now connected to CEN through the program. Libraries not connected through the program can apply for funding through the new suite of programs known as CEN Connect. Funded through the American Rescue Plan Act with funds authorized by the Office of the Governor and the Connecticut General Assembly, CEN Connect will allow for substantial upgrades to the Network. All locations by 2026 should have 400 gigabit connections, effectively removing speed barriers for these institutions. Other components of CEN Connect include buildouts to towns and charter schools as well as the tenfold expansion of the Community Wireless initiative.

Deborah Schander commended Ryan and her colleagues at the CSL for the Connecticut Library Fiber Consortium and the plans to connect more institutions through CEN Connect. She celebrated the expanded use of existing infrastructure by connecting more locations and discovering new ways of using these high-speed connections. John Elsesser concurred, noting that towns should be leveraging CEN to take advantage of off-site storage and cloud-based applications such as Munis, which most towns use, rather than purchasing on-premises appliances.

Burt commented on the importance of connecting libraries, given the threat to the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP provides subsidies to qualifying households for Internet connections and devices. If ACP funds run out, as projected, by the first quarter of 2024, libraries will play an even more critical role in connecting residents who cannot afford home Internet access. Colleen Bailie underscored this point, noting the volume of people who visit the West Haven Public Library and other locations to get online and receive training on the use of digital tools.

Mark commended Ryan and his team for their continued efforts and encouraged members and attendees to see the [CEN Annual Report](#). He spoke about the emerging need for broadband. Connecticut's public health laboratory requires high-speed connections for the exchange of large amounts of data for the genomic sequencing of diseases. In the criminal justice system, digital evidence in the form of video has a high demand for broadband connections.



Public Comment

There was no public comment offered.

Scheduled 2023 Meeting Date

Mark noted the remaining meeting dates for 2024:

- Monday, March 4 (Virtual)
- Monday, June 3 (In Person)
- Monday, September 9 (Virtual)
- Monday, December 2 (In Person)

Adjournment

Mark welcomed a motion to adjourn, offered by Ajit and with a second from Burt. With a unanimous vote to conclude the meeting at approximately 2:45 PM, Mark thanked the Commission members for their contributions to the thoughtful and engaging discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

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