



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

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

June 12, 2023

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS
Aylesworth, Ryan — Town Manager, Town of Mansfield
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 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
Provencher, Maura — Vice President of Research and Administration, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
Salvatore, Tony — Co-President, Connecticut Federation of School Administrators (Speaker of the House)
Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library
Smith, Josh — Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)
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

Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS
Tarsa, Paul — Member Services Manager, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
Thompson, Lauren — Digital Equity Program Manager, CT Commission for Educational Technology



Welcome

Commission Chair and State CIO Mark Raymond convened the June 2023 meeting at the Legislative Office Building, where the General Assembly session had ended the prior week. He noted that the meeting was streamed and available to watch [via CT-N](#). He also welcomed the newest member of the Commission, Anthony (Tony) Salvatore. Dr. Salvatore brings to the Commission experience that includes 15 years as a public school administrator in Newtown and 20 years as a high school and middle school language arts teacher. He has shared his experience as the assistant principal at Sandy Hook Elementary School from 2011 – 12 to advocate for the basic human needs of students and adults in communities that have experienced school shootings. Dr. Salvatore has also served in a number of state and national leadership roles, including past president of the Connecticut Educators Computer Association. He thanked Mark for the warm welcome and looked forward to serving on the Commission to champion efforts to expand access to technology for teaching and learning.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

As the first action item on the agenda, Mark welcomed a motion to approve the [minutes from the March 6, 2023 meeting](#). Chip Dumais offered the motion, with a second from Burt Cohen. Deborah Schander abstained, and the motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Executive Director

Mark welcomed Doug Casey to share highlights from his [Executive Director's Report](#). Updates addressed progress on the State Digital Equity Program, which the Commission is leading for Connecticut. Two staff members have joined the Commission in support of this work. Lauren Thompson serves as the Digital Equity Program Manager, bringing with her a host of leadership and program design capabilities that she has developed through her service in Connecticut public libraries and in service with the US Department of Justice. For the coming year, Sarah Ullom-Minnich will serve as a Research Fellow, leading research efforts to identify and address inequities in access to technology. Sarah had recently completed her master of public policy at Yale and previously served with the Office of Workforce Strategy as an Impact Fellow.

Since the last Commission meeting, work has progressed toward the development of a five-year Digital Equity Plan, work supported through the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. In partnership with the University of Connecticut's School of Public Policy, the Commission has conducted focus groups to identify barriers to getting online and equipped with a computer and training. The research phase of plan development also includes a survey (www.bit.ly/CTDigEqSurvey), which Doug encouraged all Commission members to share with the residents they serve. He noted the outreach toolkit that Lauren had developed, intended to make sharing and data collection easy: www.bit.ly/CTDigEqSurveyToolkit.



The digital equity planning also includes “asset-mapping” work, collecting program information from agencies, community-based organizations, and other groups that help residents get online and trained. Organizations that complete this survey may be eligible for connectivity funds through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) oversees. Completing the partner survey will also help the Commission index those programs that have helped close the digital divide, and to contact those organizations when digital equity funding becomes available. Again, Doug asked Commission members to share the partner survey with their professional networks: www.bit.ly/DigEquityPartners.

Burt Cohen asked about long-term plans for the resulting “asset map,” with details about digital inclusion programs in the state. He indicated the Office of Consumer Counsel would want to see ongoing support for the map to help residents find resources that help them get online and receive training in the use of digital tools. Doug stated that the federal guidance required [the development of such a map](#) and did not speak to its sustainability. He acknowledged the value of such an index of programs and underscored the importance of keeping the map current. He cautioned against keeping the index live if information that it shared was not current or even misleading. The Digital Equity Plan would address the sustainability of the asset map.

The input of residents and partners, combined with formal analysis of existing data sets and broadband maps (<https://broadbandmaps.ct.gov>), will help identify those challenges that the digital equity plan will address. Doug indicated that the plan will be available this fall for public comment before the Commission submits it to the National Telecommunications and Infrastructure Administration (NTIA). If funded (likely in mid-2024), the plan should garner ~\$17M for the Commission to design and oversee digital inclusion initiatives over the course of five years. Doug concluded his updates by encouraging all Commission members and meeting attendees to reach out with questions by writing to DigitalEquity@ct.gov.

Advisory Council Reports

Following Doug’s report, Mark handed the floor to Nick Caruso, who chairs the Digital Learning Advisory Council, for updates from that group’s meeting on April 28 ([see minutes](#)). Nick began by stating that he and Tom Dillon, who chairs the Infrastructure Advisory Council, have met more regularly with Doug to look at opportunities to collaborate and align the work of these two groups.

Nick ceded the floor to Tom Dillon, who acknowledged the value of collaborating across groups and the excellent insights that all of the advisory council members contribute. At the May 8 Infrastructure Advisory Council meeting ([minutes available](#)



through the Commission's Web site), members of that group also discussed the proposed priorities for the Commission's next strategic plan. Both councils agreed that investing dedicated time through a retreat would enable them to develop more substantial recommendations for the Commission to consider. Nick and Tom both recommended this approach. Mark thanked Nick and Tom for their leadership and remarked on how the work of these two groups has begun to coalesce around common themes. He then asked Doug to lead the next topic around the Commission's strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning

Doug provided some context for the discussion around strategic planning. During the March 6 meeting, Commission members agreed to provide a list of priorities on behalf of each of their appointing agencies and organizations for the broader Commission to consider. Eight members provided input and suggestions, which Doug consolidated into a digest, shared with members separately, and provided a [one-page summary](#) of the recommendations. The common priorities, based on that feedback, include the following (in alphabetical order):

- Artificial Intelligence (AI): In instruction, software use (bias)
- Data Privacy: Student and school data (cybersecurity)
- Digital Equity: Broadband, devices, and support
- Digital Literacy: Especially social media, social and emotional
- Online Learning: Uses of remote and hybrid learning
- Open Education: Free, high-quality courses and materials
- Sustainability: Post-pandemic support of devices and software

Various Commission members provided their input on the list of priorities. Chip Dumais began the conversation by acknowledging the current and likely impact of AI in learning and encouraged a broader definition. He suggested the Commission look at the impact of "disruptive technologies," including AI, on learning. Ryan Aylesworth agreed, looking at the broader impact and potential of technology beyond just the classroom, looking at the role of technology in workforce development, civics, and other aspects of public and private life.

The topic of scope and mission came up, as Nick stated that the Commission's charge is to ensure the effective use of technology to support learning, not drive learning. He encouraged alignment of the Commission's work with that of other agencies, especially the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). John Elsesser agreed and encouraged recommendations that do not necessarily fit within the State Board's plans. Mark pointed to the broader mission of supporting schools, libraries, universities, among other institutions, and underscored the Commission's role in advising the Governor and General Assembly. Ajit Gopalakrishnan noted the broader set of



stakeholders in education, which includes the CSDE as well as, local boards of education, the legislature, and leadership organizations. The draft list of priorities are all topics that the CSDE has already supported in some manner. He welcomed collaboration with other agencies and groups.

Scott Zak questioned the scope of the Commission's work as focusing solely on educational technology (e.g., connections, devices, and software) versus education about technology through content, teaching approaches, and digital literacy standards. Mark welcomed the question and did not see the broader definition offered as beyond the scope of the what the [governing statute](#) defines the Commission's role to be. Doug echoed this perspective, encouraging all ideas that will accelerate learning through the use of technology, regardless of whether the Commission engaged directly in such efforts or influences change through partnerships.

The topic of mental health and wellbeing has emerged in the library and K – 12 communities, both as a direct result of remote learning during the pandemic as well as an ongoing, technology-related concern. Deborah Schander encouraged the Commission to look at the individual and societal impacts of technology use, both to help and impede wellbeing.

On the topic of agility, Holly Williams noted the accelerated pace of change coupled with the constraints of limited human, financial, and capital resources. She encouraged the development of guidance to help local schools especially embrace an agile mindset and operational model that leverages non-traditional partnerships. Legislation represents priorities that reflect a point in time, but the Commission should think differently and make broader recommendations that allow for flexibility to account for future disruptions as were experienced during the pandemic.

Josh Smith highlighted the power of technology to enable anytime, anywhere access to learning resources and tools. He called for sustainable models to support the cost of devices and circuits, as well as the subscription-based software that undergirds virtually every aspect of running schools (e.g., transportation, food services, business services, human resources, etc.). Mark agreed, stating that the original vision of what is possible with networked learning is not bounded by what happens in the physical school, via CEN, nor by limiting the potential of technology just to teaching and learning and not operational efficiencies.

CEN Updates

To provide a briefing of activities through the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), Member Services Manager Paul Tarsa highlighted several points in the [quarterly updates](#) shared in advance of the meeting.



The Network continues to expand, with a total of 146 libraries (76 percent of all libraries statewide) now connecting to CEN. Membership now totals 679 institutions, with steady growth year over year. One way that CEN Director Ryan Kocsondy and his team are ensuring sustainable growth is through the use of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocations. These include upgrades to the core network as well as funding to connect all municipalities, libraries, and charter schools not yet part of CEN. Investments through ARPA include an approximate tenfold expansion of the Community Wireless initiative to provide free, high-speed Internet in public spaces.

John lauded the CEN team for their outstanding customer service during the recent construction at the Coventry library and noted the importance of having a resilient network. He chairs the [Public Safety Data Network \(PSDN\)](#), a sister program to CEN that runs the 911 system and provides essential and secure connectivity across Connecticut agencies and towns. Mark welcomed these remarks and spoke to the resilience of fiber against inclement weather events and improvements in incident response across agencies. Burt Cohen welcomed the discussion as well, remarking on the importance of resilient communication networks as the hurricane season approaches.

The 2023 CEN Conference featured a keynote by [State Historian Walt Woodward](#). Deborah Schander welcomed his talk and noted its relevance to the topics the Commission addresses. The conference had more than 700 registrants, several dozen breakout sessions, and time to celebrate CEN Outstanding Leader Award recipients Christine Gauvreau of the Connecticut State Library, Karen Skudlarek of UCONN, and Karen Veilleux of Wallingford Public Schools.

Public Comment

There was no public comment offered.

Scheduled 2023 Meeting Dates

Mark noted the remaining scheduled meeting dates for 2023:

- Monday, September 11
- Monday, December 4

Commission members can expect the September meeting to take place virtually, the December meeting to be in person.

Following these reminders, John Elsesser announced his forthcoming retirement on July 1. He thanked members and provided a few highlights of his involvement in statewide and local technology initiatives through his service in the towns of Manchester, Wethersfield, Mansfield, and Coventry. He led the rollout of town-owned fiber in Mansfield and supported the connection of municipalities to CEN through the



Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP). He noted the enormous progress that the Commission and CEN have made in expanding opportunities for online learning during his time as a member. Mark thanked him for his service, acknowledging John as one of the first and historically most engaged municipal voices serving the State's technology initiatives. The Commission members thanked John with a hearty round of applause for his many years of service.

Adjournment

Mark concluded the meeting by calling for a motion to adjourn, made by Nick and seconded by Josh. With a unanimous vote to conclude the meeting at approximately 2:30 PM, Mark wished the Commission members a safe and enjoyable summer.

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.