



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

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

September 14, 2020

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
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 Educational Services (C.E.S.) (Office of the Governor)
Elsesser, John — Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)
Feinmark, Russ — Connecticut General Assembly
Gopalakrishnan, Ajit — Chief Performance Officer, State Department of Education
La Valle, Dawn — Director, Division of Library Development, Connecticut State Library
Mavrogeanes, Rich — President, Discover Video (President Pro Tem of the Senate)
Provencher, Maura — Vice President of Research and Administration, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC)
Shellard, Susan — Director of Administration, Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)
Stanco, Bart — Vice President, Gartner (Office of the Governor)
Stewart, Erin — Mayor, City of New Britain (Minority Leader of the Senate)
Stephanou, Steve — Deputy General Manager, Town of Manchester (Connecticut Conference of Municipalities)
Vittner, John — Director, IT Policy, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)
Zak, Scott — Senior Director of Learning Technologies, Board of Regents

Others in Attendance

Holahan, Evan — Major Accounts Manager, Verizon Wireless
Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST
Simmons, Nick — Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Office of Governor Ned Lamont
Sullivan, Maureen — Interim State Librarian, Connecticut State Library



Meeting Format

The September meeting took place via Web conference, given social distancing practices to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The Connecticut Network (CN-N) has provided [a recording of the meeting](#).

Welcome

Chairman Mark Raymond called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 PM. He noted that the agenda highlights many of the ways Connecticut is leveraging technology for teaching and learning and the Commission's role in that work. He also introduced the newest member of the Commission, Burt Cohen of the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC). Burt serves as both staff attorney and state broadband policy coordinator in the OCC. Mark noted Burt's extensive experience in the telecommunications industry and expressed his gratitude that someone with his depth of expertise has joined the Commission. Burt thanked Mark and shared his enthusiasm for serving with fellow members of the Commission, many of whom he knows well from past efforts to ensure equitable access to the Internet.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission members had the opportunity to review [the minutes of the June 1, 2020 meeting](#) prior to today's gathering. Mark welcomed a motion to approve the minutes, which Chip Dumais offered and Rich Mavrogeanes seconded. With no call for discussion or revisions, the Commission approved the document unanimously.

Everybody Learns Initiative

Doug Casey of the Commission welcomed Nick Simmons, Manager of Strategic Initiatives for Governor Lamont, to the meeting to share a few updates on the [Everybody Learns initiative](#) to provide K – 12 students with devices and Internet connections for remote learning. He noted that many of the Commission members have been actively participating in this effort since it began in March.

Nick began by sharing the Governor's commitment to addressing the digital divide by investing \$43.5 million in CARES Act funds to provide students with computers and Internet connections outside of school. The program includes the purchase of 80,000 devices, 60,000 Internet connections (cable broadband and cellular hotspots), community wireless hotspots, and software to support social and emotional learning. He thanked Ajit Gopalakrishnan and Doug for leveraging their district leadership contacts to identify needs across the state and for leading the procurement and fulfillment aspects of the program.



Nick Caruso noted the worldwide shortage of devices and asked about the timeline for computer delivery. Nick Simmons acknowledged these challenges and noted that this spring, the Partnership for Connecticut delivered 60,000 computers to students in the neediest districts. In addition to these computers, the 80,000 devices purchased under Everybody Learns have been procured, and many have been shipped. Ajit provided additional details, noting the delivery this week of many Windows laptops, with Chromebooks arriving in October.

Ajit also thanked Mark and the DAS Procurement team for their invaluable assistance with the significant procurement work required to ensure fulfillment of the devices. Mark in turn acknowledged the great work taking place across agencies, leveraging the skills and expertise of partners in equipping and connecting students for digital learning. On the topic of security, Bart Stanco asked whether the State had accounted for antivirus and content filtering for student devices and connections. Ajit noted that cellular hotspot connections, purchased through Kajeet, come with filtering capabilities. Districts with students connecting via cable broadband will provide filtering and antivirus via device-level client controls.

Report of the Executive Director

The digital equity discussion led directly into Doug Casey's quarterly [Executive Director's report](#), sent to Commission members prior to the meeting. Mark welcomed Doug to walk members through the report:

- **Everybody Learns Initiative**

Highlights of the Everybody Learns Initiative include the volume of connections and devices provisioned as well as the strong set of expertise on the planning team. Doug noted that several Commission members are part of the group, including Ajit, Burt, Ryan Kocsondy, and Doug. Others on the Everybody Learns team include Alexandra Daum of the Department of Economic and Community Development, Rachel Gretencord of AdvanceCT, and Rob Vietzke of Internet2 and formerly of CEN.

To address the home connectivity needs in Connecticut, Doug and Ajit are working with five cable broadband providers (Altice, Atlantic, Charter, Comcast, and Cox) as well as the cellular hotspot provider Kajeet. District orientation sessions take place this week to collect and review the addresses of disconnected families for serviceability. These steps will identify specific homes ready for the installation of services and help to identify gaps in connectivity by town.



The broadband planning team has also engaged in longer term planning to identify the policy and statutory barriers to connecting Connecticut students and residents to the Internet. At the national level, Doug continues to monitor and advocate for opportunities for federal funding and policy changes that would address the digital divide (e.g., [letter to Senator Blumenthal](#), April 6, 2020).

The Everybody Learns team has also developed a set of resources for members of the public at portal.ct.gov/getonline. Visitors can get information about their local Internet providers and explore the benefits of connectivity, including telehealth, employment and job searches, and lifelong learning. Specific to K – 12 education, Doug mentioned that the Commission's [Remote Learning page](#) has seen nearly 11,000 visitors since its launch in March.

Steve Stephanou expressed enthusiasm for the connectivity and device rollouts and asked whether the initiative will track student engagement and use of the technology resources provided. Doug acknowledged the importance of measuring impact and noted that agreements with every provider include provisions to collect aggregate information about usage. In addition, data collected through household Internet serviceability checks will help identify underserved areas.

- **Open Education Resources**

Doug provided updates on the scope, funding, and timing of the open education resources (OER) repository. The platform will provide an index of high-quality, standards-aligned, and free learning materials from Connecticut and other states. Teachers will also be able to log in to access a rich toolset to create, share, and curate their own collection of materials such as lesson plans, unit plans, instructional videos, and even tests. The procurement and launch of the repository follows last year's launch of Go Open CT (www.goopenct.org), featuring OER resources and an awareness campaign.

Doug shared that in April, the Commission received part of the allocation needed to launch the repository from the PEGPETIA fund. Since then the Department of Education allocated CARES Act funds to cover the balance of costs for the repository launch.

Mark raised the question of how the COVID-related increase in digital learning has led to an increase in OER creation and use. Doug noted that many other states have teams developing and sharing resources that Connecticut's repository will be able to access, and certainly teachers in Connecticut have been creating materials since the shift to remote learning in March. Chip acknowledged the benefits of sharing materials in modular pieces but raised



concerns about protecting materials intended to be used in their entirety and without alteration. He specifically pointed to the curriculum under development for an African American and Latino Studies course, resulting from [Public Act 19-12](#). Doug acknowledged this distinction and noted the ability of publishers to control how they share materials to ensure proper limits on original and derivative use to preserve the fidelity of such content. Maureen Sullivan commented that academic libraries provide important guidance on publication protocols and copyright around OER.

- **Technology Efficacy and Use**

Doug concluded his report by highlighting a set of enhancements scheduled for launch this spring to LearnPlatform. The Commission provides the service, known as the [Connecticut Educational Software Hub](#), free to districts and educational technology providers. The solution allows companies to list their products and educators to search for effective software solutions that comply with Connecticut's student data privacy law. [Flexibilities](#) to Connecticut's law enacted through [Executive Order 71](#) point to the Hub as the gateway to compliant software and so have led to an increase in its use and benefit to districts.

Over the next several months, Doug will work with local educational stakeholders and LearnPlatform to design and launch features that will enable districts to access teacher and student-level data on educational technology use. These features will inherently provide greater insights to leaders and educators. They will also open opportunities to assess the efficacy of software across districts and regions and explore collective efforts to solve learning challenges. District-level inventories of software in use will also allow for schools to appreciate cost savings through cooperative and volume purchasing of products used across districts.

Mark thanked Doug for his ongoing efforts and noted the rapid progress on the initiatives he covered in his Executive Director's report. He then invited Nick Caruso to share highlights from the August Digital Learning Advisory Council meeting.

Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

Nick provided a brief summary of the discussions that took place during the August 10 meeting of the Digital Learning Advisory Council. Commission members had the opportunity to read the [minutes of that meeting](#) in full. Nick reminded the Commission members that the Advisory Council is comprised of leaders and practitioners from K – 12, higher education, libraries, educational service centers, and adult education



programs. All of those individuals responded enthusiastically to news about device and connectivity delivery through the Everybody Learns rollouts. The group engaged in a spirited discussion around equity of access to skills and competencies, not just the “infrastructure” concerns of computers and connections. Many expressed concerns for parents, who in the shift to home-based learning did not have proper training to help their sons and daughters during school shutdowns. With a return to remote and blended instructional approaches this fall, those concerns persist.

Bart asked whether the Advisory Council's charge includes such interests beyond those of students, teachers, and professors, and education leaders. Nick argued that it does, with continued Commission efforts to support digital learning across all stakeholders, from formal institutions to other groups such as parents.

Doug pointed to the Commission's past endorsement and adoption of digital learning standards (www.ct.gov/iste) as excellent benchmarks to support parent understanding and support of digital learning best practices, to the benefit of their children. He also underscored the important role that community-based organizations and libraries play in supporting the Everybody Learns work and broader efforts to close the digital divide. A key part of expanding wireless access at libraries, for example, is to encourage patron engagement with those libraries, which continue to provide direct support to learners of all ages. He also mentioned the important work that schools have engaged in by reaching out directly to parents to assess social and emotional needs and equip caretakers with the support and resources they need to foster effective learning at home.

Infrastructure Advisory Council Report

Following Nick's report, Mark turned to Tom Dillon, chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, for an update on that group's efforts. Tom enthusiastically shared the significant updates in addressing digital equity and access, well underway even before the pandemic. Highlighting key takeaways from the [August 6 minutes](#) shared prior to the full Commission meeting, he provided details on the wireless networking deployment in New Haven Public Schools (NHPS). Outgoing NHPS chief information officer and Infrastructure Advisory Council member Sabina Sitaru has begun extending the wireless signal from 13 schools in the system, reaching several blocks into the neighborhoods surrounding those schools.

New Haven should also soon become the first district in Connecticut to deploy the [Eduroam](#) platform for getting students onto wireless networks across the city. Tom reminded members that Eduroam provides an authentication technology that allows students and educators to access wireless networks worldwide using the credentials provided by their local school or university. The Eduroam rollout across NHPS's network



has taken place through a strong partnership between NHPS — Sabina Sitaru, incoming CIO Gilda Herrera, and network engineer Bill Zesner — and Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) — CIO Dennis Reiman, systems administrator Ray Kellogg, and network engineer Jon Garbutt. When completed, the deployment will allow approximately 20,000 NHPS students to get online through thousands of wireless access points hosted by NHPS, SCSU, Yale, and other Eduroam partners. The Eduroam platform also provides detailed reporting on the number of connections by home school or institution across the city. Tom underscored the value of providing this robust educational network throughout New Haven, amplifying the value of device investments made this summer and fall. He concluded his remarks on Eduroam by welcoming any member, district, or institution of higher education to contact him with interest in deploying Eduroam in their community. Colleen Bailie noted that discussions are underway with the West Haven superintendent's office to bring Eduroam to that community.

Following Tom's updates, several Commission members had questions about the costs and benefits of using Eduroam. In response to Burt's question about startup and support fees, Tom underscored the relative affordability of providing the Eduroam service, which costs 10¢ per student per year, with low implementation costs. Burt saw Eduroam as an "infectious" solution that many communities would want to adopt once leaders could get a better sense of its benefits in the field. John Elsesser suggested that the Dalio Foundation may have interest in supporting Eduroam in Connecticut, and Doug confirmed that discussions are ongoing with the organization to help ensure alignment across digital equity initiatives statewide.

Michael Mundrane noted that Internet2 provides the platform for Eduroam, and Ryan added that CEN serves as the state connector for the service. Michael also pointed to Eduroam as a solution that might encourage host institutions to provide wireless access to visitors. Libraries, schools, universities, and other organizations have always had the option of providing open access. However, using Eduroam as an authentication gateway may provide stronger assurances to these institutions of educational use and so encourage them to offer guest access. As he stated, open access has always been possible, and Eduroam makes it more practical.

Mark agreed with this point and noted Eduroam's benefits to students and educators. As those in the education community, as well as general users of the Internet, develop stronger "cyber hygiene," they may feel more comfortable logging into an Eduroam-authenticated access point than an open network. He also called out the ancillary benefits of devices and Internet access by way of device and connectivity initiatives such as Everybody Learns and Eduroam. While benefitting students and teachers directly, they also serve other family and community members through applications such as telemedicine, leading to better healthcare outcomes. Such benefits remain outside the Commission's purview but are important to recognize.



CEN Updates

Continuing with the theme of equity and connectivity, Ryan provided highlights of his [quarterly report](#), aligned with [CEN's strategic plan](#). He began by briefly describing CEN's Bandwidth Bonus program, rolled out this spring to support the demands on schools and colleges to support online learning. For a one-time fee of \$500, CEN provides unlimited additional bandwidth for the 2020 – 21 academic year. To date, 40 districts have signed onto the program. Ryan called attention to the tens of thousands of new devices that school networks would need to support this fall, as noted in the discussion earlier, as well as likely increases in bandwidth — specifically upload demands, given the adoption of streaming technologies. Districts have also taken advantage of CEN's device protection solution through iBoss.

Under the "Foster Collaboration" set of initiatives in the CEN strategic plan, Ryan mentioned the recent consolidation of the Service Management and Technical Advisory Councils into one group, given their overlap in purpose and efforts. The concept of a CEN Cyber Corps and Mutual Aid Pact remains on hold, given that the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection has already established a similar group through the State Cyber Committee response team. The intent was to leverage the collective expertise and resources of CEN members to help other institutions recover from cyber-attacks.

Tom asked Ryan about the rollout of wireless access points at libraries statewide through the Everybody Learns initiative. Ryan shared that one site has already launched, providing both an open and Eduroam SSID for visitors inside and outside of the library. He did note the significant effort required to complete the initiative, including site surveys, hardware procurement during supply-chain delays, installation, and configuration across 200 locations. He expects many of the sites to launch in the winter and spring of 2021.

Public Comment

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

Scheduled 2020 Meeting Date

Mark reminded the Commission members of the final meeting date for 2020:

- Monday, December 7



Adjournment

Having addressed the agenda items, Mark called for a motion to adjourn. Nick provided the motion, Burt the second, and the members voted unanimously to conclude the meeting at approximately 2:30 PM.

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, flowing style.