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## CT Commission for Educational Technology 2020 Annual Report

### Executive Summary and Path Forward

The year 2020 marked a significant turning point for digital learning in Connecticut and across the world. The need for social distancing to protect against COVID-19 forced schools, colleges, and libraries to adopt flexible models of instruction and operation. These changes in turn led to the rapid adoption of and investment in technology to support online learning. As with education, nearly every aspect of daily life and society shifted and grew more dependent on broadband, devices, and digital literacy skills, from remote learning and healthcare to simply connecting with friends, loved ones, and members of the community. More than during any other year, 2020 saw technology become the foundation for modern society.

In many ways, the past year has seen tremendous progress in closing opportunity gaps for learning. Governor Lamont created the inter-agency Everybody Learns initiative to close the device and connectivity gaps among public-school students, investing \$43.5M in CARES Act funding to accomplish this goal. He also dedicated funds for libraries to reopen safely to support patrons' research and learning needs, as well as to deploy through CEN more than 150 community wireless access points across the state.

The Commission enthusiastically backed this work, and its individual members played significant roles in making Connecticut the first state to address fully its digital divide. Universities, libraries, and schools received a total of more than \$250M in relief, allowing institutions to invest in digital learning resources and training. The research and resources developed through the Commission's State Educational Technology Plan have informed these investments, helping to guide decisions around broadband access at home and in school, data privacy, educational software efficacy, open education resources, personalized learning, and competencies to ensure students and educators can fully leverage technology for learning.

Despite the availability of resources to support remote and blended learning, the constituents that the Commission represents continue to face enormous challenges. Many families have not completed the fulfillment steps to provide their children free Internet through Everybody Learns, bringing to light a host of cultural, experiential, and mindset barriers — human rather than technological — to closing the digital divide. Libraries and schools have demonstrated admirable creativity in supporting a diverse set of learning and research needs yet still struggle to provide the safe, physical spaces needed for full engagement. The pandemic has also revealed the serious need for continued training and professional development for educators at every level to provide high-quality online instruction and support.

The past year has brought to the forefront the issues that the Commission has championed for two decades. Lessons learned from this year will help inform the body's program and policy efforts, highlighting the innovative technologies and approaches that Connecticut should continue to leverage long after the pandemic ends.



## 14,000 Visits

To support the shift to remote learning, the Commission launched a robust set of Web-based resources for schools, colleges, and libraries. Educators from across the state, the U.S., and 34 other countries have visited the site more than 14,000 times.

→ See [Support for Remote Learning](#), page 14

## 52,000<sup>+</sup> Teachers

Funding secured in 2020 will allow the Commission to launch an open education resources (OER) portal for all teachers to share high-quality digital learning materials and to host State-approved curriculum.

→ See [Open Education Resources](#), page 15

## \$43.5 Investment

Various Commission members contributed to the work of Governor Lamont's Everybody Learns initiative, with a \$43M+ investment to purchase 80,000 computers and 57,000+ home Internet connections to close the digital divide in Connecticut.

→ See [Digital Equity](#), page 18

## 500 Students

In the short time since its launch this fall, the Eduroam system has connected nearly 500 public school students in New Haven. This sustainable, community-based connectivity solution will serve as a model for other towns and cities in 2021 and beyond.

→ See [Eduroam](#), page 19



## **80% Increase**

Districts can now use nearly 500 educational software titles listed as compliant in the Commission's Educational Software Hub, nearly doubling last year's total to support remote learning.

→ See [Privacy Compliance](#), page 20

## **\$3M+ Cost Avoidance**

Since its 2017 launch, the Commission's Educational Software Hub has saved districts an estimated 30,000 hours in staff time — not even including external legal fees — to comply with Connecticut's data privacy law. The Hub helps schools leverage innovative technology solutions that support personalized learning while remaining compliant with state statute.

→ See [Educational Software Hub](#), pages 20 – 21

## **\$40M+ Savings**

The Connecticut State Library continues to deliver exceptional value through researchIT, the digital library free to all Connecticut residents. This service delivered \$42M in digital content subscriptions at a cost to the state of \$1.5M.

→ See [researchIT CT](#), page 29

## **\$30M Cost Avoidance**

The Connecticut Education Network (CEN), launched in 2000 through the Commission, delivers Internet connections, federally mandated content filtering, and cyber protection services to schools, colleges, libraries, towns, and open access members at a cost that saved these institutions approximately \$25M this year alone.

→ See [CEN 2020 Annual Report](#)