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Digital Learning Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

April 28, 2023

Attendees

- Nick Caruso — Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
- Doug Casey — Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology
- Kevin Corcoran — Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
- Jonathan Costa — EdAdvance
- Larry Covino — Bristol Adult Education
- Andy DePalma — EASTCONN
- Josh Elliott — Fairfield University
- Barbara Johnson — Colchester Public Schools
- Laura McCaffrey — Archdiocese of Hartford
- Jim Spafford — Manchester Adult Education
- Chinma Uche — CREC Aerospace Academy
- Scott Zak — Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

Discussion

Advisory Chair Nick Caruso called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 AM. He welcomed members and provided remarks to frame the conversation. To guide the Commission as it revises its state educational technology plan, Nick suggested that the Advisory Council develop a schedule for future meetings to draft goals for the Commission's consideration. In advance of the meeting, Doug had provided a high-level list of priorities that Commission members had identified previously, listed in alphabetical order below:

- Data Privacy
- Digital Equity
- Digital Literacy
- Online Learning
- Open Education
- Sustainability
- Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)



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The underlying reasons for these priorities include the following goals:

- Equity of access to high-quality, personalized learning
- Preparation for college, career, and life
- Flexibility in learning design and modalities (e.g., co-teaching, online and hybrid learning)

Members of the advisory council underscored the importance of professional development for teachers to support all of these initiatives. Scott Zak stated that flexibility remains a cornerstone of effective teaching in the classroom and online. Chinma Uche concurred and called for rigorous pre-service and in-service support to equip teachers for the changes that will likely come in teaching and learning. On a related topic, Jonathan Costa directed members to [House Bill 6879](#), which would create the Commission to Modernize the Educator Workforce. The proposed legislation would provide more flexibility than currently exists for teachers to serve across grades and subjects. He strongly suggested that the Commission engage with that group to ensure that new educator certifications and standards reflect the need for teachers to understand and use technology effectively for instruction.

In addition to teacher training and support, Andy DePalma asked the Commission to prioritize mental health as an outcome of its work. He underscored the need to teach and model healthy use of technology, especially social media, a concern that many superintendents have expressed.

To help establish priorities for future planning, Doug asked advisory council members to rank the topics shared earlier by importance and urgency. Responses were fairly consistent and are reflected in the table below:

| Importance | Urgency |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital Literacy• Digital Equity• Online Learning• Data Privacy• Sustainability• Open Education• Use of AI | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital Literacy• Digital Equity• Use of AI• Online Learning• Sustainability• Data Privacy• Open Education |

Doug also suggested that the members provide thoughts and details around the following criteria for each topic:

- Why: importance in teaching and learning
- How: steps the Commission and its partners can take
- Barriers: existing practices, policies, laws, or other constraints
- Resources: partners, funding, or legislation



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- Priority: overall importance
- Urgency: time-sensitivity

In addition to these criteria, Jonathan suggested the Commission for Educational Technology consider how likely a given topic will be over time, rather than simply whether it is currently time sensitive. The Commission and other leadership organizations should focus on policy and programs that will best prepare students for college and career (i.e., each district's portrait of the graduate). Nick agreed and highlighted sustainability as essential to ensuring the effective use of technology for years to come.

Barbara saw digital literacy as an evergreen and essential topic, one that could include emerging technologies such as AI. Nick and Chinma agreed and suggested that the Commission consider a broader definition of "Digital Literacy" to include tools, design, and mindsets.

Andy suggested adding the criterion of risk, that is, considerations for technologies that threaten current best practices in learning. Nick agreed, focusing on the "why" topics are important, defining the problem and challenge first before the solutions.

The group discussed commonalities and differences across education environments. Larry Covino and Kevin Corcoran, representing adult and higher education, respectively, agreed that sustainability and digital literacy are important to learners beyond K – 12. Kevin pointed to the need to raise awareness of new technologies, articulating how they can be used, the risks and opportunities for educators and administrators, and recommendations.

From the feedback he had received from Commission members, Doug offered the following possible activities for Advisory Council and Commission members to undertake:

- Conducting a Delphi or other public study of technology uses and trends
- Establishing a test lab for emerging technologies
- Setting standards and best practices
- Identifying and addressing resources and constraints
- Integration of work with other non-Commission plans and resources

Doug suggested that developing briefs on emerging technologies as well as an overview of the Commission's recommendations could inform policy and legislation in bodies such as the General Assembly. Nick agreed and encouraged the development of these types of briefs in advance of future legislative sessions.



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The group concluded the meeting with a brief discussion of next steps. Doug suggested collecting feedback asynchronously, by topic and criteria (e.g., barriers, next steps, partners, etc.). This work could take the form of a matrix of topics, some possibly nested in others. This work could guide future meetings.

Jonathan agreed and suggested an in-person retreat of Advisory Council and Commission members, accelerating the development of a comprehensive plan across topics. Pre-planning could include the sharing of background reading, research, and the polling of participants. The retreat could include a general session, with introductions and a common approach for detailing each content area. Breakout sessions would allow for the development of action plans across topics. The group welcomed this idea, which Nick and Doug would share with the forthcoming Infrastructure Advisory Council in May.

Nick thanked the members for their insights, as always, and called the meeting to a close at 11:30 AM.