

Digital Learning Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2019

Attendees

- Nick Caruso — CT Association of Boards of Education
- Doug Casey — Commission for Educational Technology
- Kevin Corcoran — Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
- Jonathan Costa — EdAdvance
- Andy DePalma — EASTCONN
- Josh Elliott — Fairfield University
- Karen Kaplan — Hamden Public Schools
- Shannon Marimón — Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER)
- Laura McCaffrey — Archdiocese of Hartford

Agenda

- ISTE Standards Implementation
- Lamont Administration and Digital Learning
- Social Media Monitoring
- Data Privacy
- Strategic and Technology Planning Templates and Resources
- Measuring Statewide Technology Needs and Capacity

Meeting Notes

The issues and conversations summarized below represent an assimilation of ideas rather than a strict verbatim or chronological record of points shared.

Welcome

The meeting convened at 10:00 AM with a welcome by Nick Caruso, Digital Learning Advisory Council Chair, and Doug Casey of the Commission.

ISTE Standards Implementation — Lamont Administration and Digital Learning

A number of organizations and agencies have either promoted or provided direct support for the adoption of the ISTE competency standards in Connecticut. Andy DePalma asked if there was a broader plan to provide supports to schools that have interest in adopting the standards. Doug summarized some of the progress to date, with the Commission adopting the ISTE Student, Educator, and Education Leader standards.

He worked with the State Department of Education (SDE) and the State Board of Education around their adoption of the Student standards for digital learning. The SDE did provide a Web-based presentation of the ISTE standards and Computer Science standards, both adopted at last June's State Board meeting. To support adoption of the standards, the Commission has engaged in a number of initiatives, including a Webinar series with presenters from across the state and the development of [digital learning policy recommendations for boards of education](#). Two of the RESCs, EASTCONN (Andy's organization) as well as Cooperative Education Services (CES) will offer [ISTE educator certification](#) in the spring.

Given the "local control" aspect of public education, Jonathan Costa commented that schools have the responsibility for determining how they adopt the standards. The group discussed the various stakeholders in Connecticut that might provide supports for standard adoption, including the Connecticut Educators Computer Association (CECA), the state ISTE chapter; Connecticut Educational Technology Leaders (CTETL), the state chapter of the Consortium of School Networking (CoSN); as well as professional organizations such as CABE and CAPSS.

Karen Kaplan raised the issue of funding to support adoption, noting the scarcity of resources for public schools except those to support Alliance Districts. The group addressed the recommendations from [Governor Lamont's Transition Policy Working Group](#), which include uniform curriculum across districts. To see coherent adoption of the ISTE standards, the Council members encouraged districts to look at common aspects of the Common Core (Connecticut Core), Next Generation Science, Computer Science, and other sets. Each points to the need for students to gain critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, communication, and other high-level competencies beyond subject-matter mastery. Jonathan pointed to the "profile of the graduate," that is, preparing students for college and career.

The group agreed that the ISTE competencies remain difficult to articulate because they are abstract and might have better adoption if aligned with broader education goals. Karen and Jonathan summarized some of the 2010 and 2012 legislation that defined expectations of high school graduates. Shannon Marimón pointed to [House Bill 6832](#) in the current (2019) session, calling to "expand the charge of the Planning Commission for Education and to ensure implementation of the strategic master plan for public education in Connecticut." For guidance on such legislation concerning standards and performance, districts have historically turned to an agency (usually the SDE) for guidance and support.

Getting back to the original call for more supports for ISTE standard adoption, Doug noted a number of resources from ISTE (www.iste.org), including online professional networks with shared lesson and unit plans, online courses with graduate credit, publications, and an implementation guide (<http://bit.ly/ISTE-Guide>) that the Commission has provided to districts at no cost.

Members of the Council agreed that to bring about real adoption of the ISTE standards requires district to include digital learning best practices in their strategic plans. This takeaway led to a discussion of strategic planning tools and approaches.

Strategic and Technology Planning Templates and Resources

Doug opened the topic by highlighting the components of the Future Ready framework (www.FutureReady.org), an online planning toolset that many districts use. Leaders from Future Ready have offered to customize the platform for Connecticut and offer events that help districts understand how to use the Framework. Many districts have already taken the Future Ready pledge as an endorsement of the framework. Doug asked Jonathan, who has consulted with well more than half of Connecticut districts around strategic plans, about his approach. Jonathan has shifted to a backward design process, starting with the portrait of the graduate and limiting the focus of each plan to a few outcomes to provide coherence in efforts across a given district.

Kevin Corcoran suggested that the adoption of universal design for learning (UDL) methodology might draw a more direct line between the ISTE standards and district strategic plans, which focus on student outcomes. Jonathan agreed that focusing on student achievement outcomes (the "what") resonates with district leaders, rather than the "how," such as personalized learning or collaboration. He shared highlights from the McKinsey report released this summer, "[Skill shift: Automation and the future of the workforce](#)," as they relate to district efforts to prepare students for future learning and work.

Andy, Shannon, Nick, Jonathan, and others offered examples of skills needed in lean manufacturing firms in our state, pointing to transferable competencies such as troubleshooting and critical thinking. Doug shared some takeaways on the future of work from *The Economist* report, "[Learning and earning](#)" as well as America Succeeds' [Age of Agility](#). In sum, to avoid becoming victims of automation, students' success — and schools' obligation to prepare them for the future — will depend on their ability to create value through the mastery of constantly evolving skills and ideas. Andy tied this to the concept of "time to market" for students, the challenge of predicting the competencies students will need in time for them to be still valuable by the time they enter the workplace. This points back to the need for agility and adaptive, high-level competencies rather than specific skills.

The group noted the changing landscape of accountability, with the current [Next Generation Accountability System](#) against which districts gauge longitudinal progress. Increasingly, districts are pursuing efforts to strengthen students' social and emotional learning (SEL), though many struggle with finding a clear definition of SEL. Jonathan mentioned the free resources available to districts at the SEL 4 CT Web site (sel4ct.org). Many also use the fee-based resources provided as part of the RULER program from Yale's Center for Emotional Intelligence (<https://ei.yale.edu>).

Social Media Monitoring

Andy introduced the question of schools' responsibilities to track social media posts for potential threats to students. Whereas many districts use services such as Gaggle and Securly to monitor activity taking place on school networks, what obligation do administrators have to track off-site and off-platform content and postings? How should school leaders communicate this accountability to the broader community?

Karen shared her experience in using monitoring software, which has produced far more false positives than revealing issues of real concern. In addition to an algorithmic approach to detecting threats, many districts have utilized anonymous online reporting services, where students can share issues of concern (e.g., threats to school safety, bullying, etc.).

Andy raised the possibility that students and parents may derive false assurances from announcements of social media or other online monitoring. Given the limits of current technology to detect and flag risks, families should not see such services as providing accurate and comprehensive oversight of online activities. For now, districts will continue to decide to what degree they wish to leverage such monitoring technologies as part of efforts to establish and foster safe and healthy school climates.

Data Privacy

Doug provided a few updates on the state's student data privacy law. He noted the upcoming meeting on February 15 of the Task Force that will address concerns outlined in the original law ([PA 16-189](#)). Anyone interested in learning more about the Task Force (meetings, minutes, etc.) may visit the General Law Committee's Web site at www.cga.ct.gov/gl/. He also noted at least one bill presented in this session ([HB 5242](#)) that concerns changes to the student data privacy law.

Karen asked about the number of districts that have reached 100 percent compliance with the law. Doug did not have concrete data to share but indicated that most districts have put forth significant efforts to reach compliance and have prioritized efforts to ensure protection of the most sensitive student and employee data. Regarding the exemption for software used in IEP and 504 plans introduced through last session's [PA 18-125](#), which requires reporting from districts to the Commission, Doug noted that about 40 districts had registered to report, with eight having submitted the report, due by the end of the school year. He shared plans to post the reporting data to the Connecticut Open Data portal (data.ct.gov) to provide the Legislature as well as the public with access to the submitted report data.

Measuring Statewide Technology Needs and Capacity

The last topic of the meeting relates to the frequent requests that technology leaders pose via listservs and at meetings for recommendations on various forms of educational technology. Doug shared the example of the Commission's K – 12 Technology listserv, where members ask for advice regarding educational and operational software as well as networking equipment. The group acknowledged the need and suggested that perhaps a statewide survey would provide value. This type of instrument would likely take some time to complete if it included a breadth of information about technologies in use at each district. However, those who completed the survey would have access to searchable insights that would help with decision-making. Karen also expressed the value of having salary data for technology positions collected and shared, though variations in position descriptions and responsibilities make comparing survey responses challenging. Andy mentioned the recent technology survey issued by CTETL.

Jonathan Costa made a separate suggestion that the Digital Learning Advisory Council develop a position paper on how the availability of 5G connectivity will impact education. As with the Advisory Council's [Guidance on District Policy Revisions to Support Digital Learning](#), he suggested that the group issue a brief that will address five or six key issues districts could consider in advance of 5G network rollouts. The intent would be to stimulate thinking and planning for a time when many students will access the Internet through their own devices rather than via a filtered school network. Nick acknowledged the importance of this topic and promised to share it with the broader Commission members at the upcoming March 4 meeting.

The group discussed possible topics in the brief, including policy decisions around whether to require students to use school networks rather than personal devices for connectivity. Districts that allow students to use their own devices, however, might consider the impact of this decision on their need to invest in wired and wireless networks. There could even be long-term impacts on the largest provider of Internet service to Connecticut schools and libraries, the Connecticut Education Network (CEN).

Adjournment

Nick thanked the group for their time and input and concluded the meeting at approximately 12:00 PM.