

## Staff Proposal: Digital Learning Specialist

As the organization designated by the State to establish and champion educational technology strategy for Connecticut, the Commission serves a critical role. The body establishes and executes the five-year State Educational Technology Plan, with initiatives falling under the following categories:

- Digital Equity: Ensuring that all students have access to broadband and devices to leverage technology for learning at all levels.
- Digital Learning Standards: Establishing and supporting the competencies needed by leaders, teachers, and students for online and blended learning.
- E-rate Maximization: Conducting research and developing guidance to help Connecticut schools and libraries tap the tens of millions of dollars in federal funding to offset the cost of Internet access and networking equipment.
- Open Education Resources: Launching a statewide repository of high-quality, standards-aligned, and no-cost learning materials for all students and educators at the K – 12 and college levels.
- Personalized Learning: Establishing research-based recommendations for fully leveraging digital learning tools and approaches to support the needs of every student.
- Remote Learning: Leading efforts to connect every learner to broadband outside of school, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, to support equitable access to learning.
- Student Data Privacy: Creating a scalable platform and guidance for districts and providers to streamline compliance with Connecticut's data privacy law.

The above efforts provide immeasurable value to Connecticut schools, libraries, and universities, with conservative cost avoidance totaling more than \$5M annually (see [2020 Annual Report](#)). In addition, legislation now calls on the Commission to provide data collection, reporting, and support around data privacy digital equity. Despite these new responsibilities and the current level of positive impact, the Commission remains limited with only a single staff member, its Executive Director.

The addition of a Digital Learning Specialist would provide enormous returns, including but not limited to the following:

- Digital Equity: Provide much-needed support to schools and libraries around federal connectivity programs, assist in brokering agreements and tracking impact with Connecticut carriers, and help expand efforts around Eduroam for statewide educational wireless access.
- Digital Learning Standards: Support the curation of best practices and resources to support the adoption of the ISTE standards for school districts.
- E-rate Maximization: Develop uniform service standards for E-rate consultants to improve accountability and increase utilization of federal funding.
- Open Education Resources: Address immediate needs around platform configuration, end-user training, import of collections from more than 200 institutions statewide, and serve as ongoing support to districts and universities.

- **Personalized Learning:** In conjunction with Digital Learning Standards, provide support and direction to schools around the effective use of online tools and instructional approaches to maximize the impact of educational technology on teaching and learning.
- **Remote Learning:** Partner with schools, libraries, universities, and community-based organizations to measure and address gaps in technology access, skills, content, and learning tools.
- **Student Data Privacy:** Manage statewide privacy portal, encouraging districts to take full advantage of free features such as ed tech usage dashboards, and provide direct support to companies and districts seeking clarity around compliance requirements.