Digital Learning Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
April 22, 2024

Attendees

- Nick Caruso — Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)
- Doug Casey — Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology
- Jonathan Costa — EdAdvance
- Larry Covino — Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education
- Josh Elliott — Fairfield University
- Shaune Gilbert — ReadyCT
- Jody Goeler — Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)
- Jim Mindek — Connecticut Technical High School System
- Karen Skudlarek — University of Connecticut (UCONN)
- Josh Smith — Region 15 Public Schools
- Chinma Uche — CREC Aerospace Academy
- Scott Zak — Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

Artificial Intelligence Policy and Practice

Nick Caruso, Commission member and Chair of the Digital Learning Advisory Council, welcomed Council members and began the meeting at 2:04 PM. He noted that Doug Casey had shared an outline of guidance for schools around the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and handed the floor to Doug.

The Commission plans to provide high-level guidance to school administrators this spring, highlighting these points:

- Context and Relevance to Teaching and Learning
- Definitions of Artificial Intelligence
- Applications for Schools (e.g., classroom instruction, decision-support systems, professional development, assessment, etc.)
- Best Practices for Review and Selection of AI Tools
- Risks
- Policy and Legislation
- Resources

The above topics come from a review Doug conducted of **guidance** that other states have provided to date. With the goal of developing similar guidelines for Connecticut institutions, he opened the floor to discuss the above content areas.

Several members called for any guidance around AI to reinforce existing best practices around technology use, regardless of the evolution of tools. For example, AI policy and practice should fit with existing responsible use, data privacy, and plagiarism policies. Jonathan Costa encouraged forward-thinking guidance not tied to specific technologies to ensure that policies "go where the puck is" rather than focus on specific use cases. Josh Smith shared several model policies, including one from **Milford Public Schools**.

Outside of the K – 12 environment, Larry Covino discussed the importance of AI in adult education circles. The most recent conference of the Connecticut Association for Adult & Continuing Education (**CAACE**) included a speaker who addressed the need for all residents to understand the fundamentals of AI tools and how to use them for learning and in their careers.

At the state level, Doug pointed to draft legislation in Senate Bills 2 (**An Act Concerning Artificial Intelligence**) and 5 (**An Act Concerning School Resources**). Both contain provisions that address AI, with SB 5 calling for the provision of an AI tool for use in classrooms as well as training for teachers. At the time of this writing, both were in draft status. At the local level, regardless of legislation, many districts are already providing professional development for teachers. Such is the case for CREC Schools, which asked Chinma Uche to provide an overview of AI tools and possible applications. She, Jim Mindek, and others discussed the risk of students using AI tools to bypass the process of learning fundamentals of mathematics, for example.

Members provided several resources that the Commission could include in its guidance. Jonathan Costa shared information about a new **community of practice** that his organization, EdAdvance, is convening around AI in education. EdAdvance has also launched a podcast, "ChatEDU," that addresses educational uses of AI. Shaune Gilbert offered research on **how teachers can use AI** to engage students and support project-based instruction. That research specifically addresses the use of AI "tutors."

Other examples that members see in the application of AI in education include differentiating sets of math problems, assisting teachers in building lesson plans, and drafting press releases for communication departments. Students can also use large language models effectively. The shared concern, however, is that students may bypass basic understanding of concepts if they skip directly to using technology tools, whether AI-powered or more basic, such as calculators. For students and teachers, Josh raised concerns that it will become harder to identify bias in digital tools if AI becomes more embedded and less obvious in apps that support learning and decision making.

Nick reiterated previous concerns around teacher training and ongoing support, calling for a relief in mandated professional development and the addition of new instructional requirements each legislative session. Without affording educators more time for training, he felt it was unfair to expect them to become comfortable integrating

technology into their planning and instruction. Jody reiterated this pedagogical gap and called for a shift away from technology-related policies that seek to avoid risk toward language that encourage productive use of digital tools. He also posed the question of how organizations such as CABE and the Commission help position mental health concerns in the context of emerging technologies.

Nick thanked the members for their insights and summarized next steps, including the development of draft guidance and resources to assist districts in the use of AI in teaching. He called the meeting to a close at approximately 3:20 PM.