CONNECTICUT Administrative Services

CONNECTICUT COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY
March 3, 2025
1:00 – 2:30 PM
MINUTES

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS

Aylesworth, Ryan — Town Manager, Town of Mansfield (Connecticut Conference of Municipalities)

Bailie, Colleen — Director, West Haven Public Library (Connecticut Library Association)

Boucher, Toni — First Selectman, Town of Wilton (Minority Leader of the Senate)

Casey, Doug — Executive Director, Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology

Cohen, Burt — Staff Attorney, Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel

Dumais, Chip — Executive Director, Cooperative Education Services (Office of the Governor)

Elsesser, John — Connecticut Council of Small Towns

Ghaemolsabahi, Haleh — Interim Associate Vice President for Information Technology & Chief Information Officer

Johnson, Barbara — Instructional Technology Coordinator, Colchester Public Schools (Connecticut Association of School Librarians)

McGowan, Carrie — Mathematics Facilitator, Savin Rock School, West Haven Public Schools (American Federation of Teachers – Connecticut)

Parisi, Irene — Chief Academic Officer, Connecticut State Department of Education

Salvatore, Tony — Co-President, CT Federation of School Administrators (Speaker of the House)

Smith, Josh — Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)

Stanco, Bart — CEO Advisor and Executive Partner, Gartner (Office of the Governor)

Suh, Grace — Chief of Staff, Office of Workforce Strategy (Department of Economic and Community Development)

Toomey, Carol Quinn — Managing Director, Connecticut Public Service, Accenture (President Pro Tempore of the Senate)

Uche, Chinma — Math and Computer Science Teacher, CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering (Connecticut Education Association)

Williams, Holly — Section Director, Education and Workforce Development, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)

Zak, Scott — Scott Zak, Senior Director of Learning Technologies, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

Others in Attendance

Castiglione, Paul — Associate Education Consultant, Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)

Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS

Shaikh, Sana — Governor's Fellow, Commission for Educational Technology

Thompson, Lauren — Digital Equity Program Manager, Commission for Educational Technology

Welcome

State Chief Information Officer and Commission Chair Mark Raymond opened the meeting by reiterating the group's mission to expand educational opportunities through the use of technology. He noted that the Connecticut Network was covering the meeting via live stream, now available as an archived video at https://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=24432.

Several introductions followed, as Mark welcomed three new Commission members. Irene Parisi, representing the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), has assumed the role of serving as that agency's Commission appointee. Irene joined the CSDE in April 2020, during the height of the pandemic, as the State's Chief Academic Officer and oversees standards Implementation, curriculum, and instruction. Mark thanked CSDE Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan, whom Irene replaced, for his significant contributions to the Commission's work over the years.

Mark also welcomed Carrie McGowan, the American Federation of Teachers Connecticut appointee to the Commission. Carrie has been an educator in West Haven Public Schools for 21 years. She has taught fourth and fifth grade and is currently the Math Facilitator at Savin Rock School. She has served as the Education Chair of the West Haven Federation of Teachers for the past five years and is a member of the statewide Connecticut Teacher of the Year Selection Committee.

Haleh Ghaemolsabahi joins the Commission in her role as Acting Chief Information Officer at the University of Connecticut (UCONN). She has spent 30 years with UCONN, starting as a graduate student working in Web development and learning management and then as the Director of Campus Technology. Mark acknowledged her extensive experience across leadership positions, which gave her deep institutional knowledge and a broad expertise in technology.

In addition to the new members, Mark thanked Tom Dillon, who left the Commission in January as the appointee of the Connecticut General Assembly's Minority Leader of the House. He chaired the Commission's Infrastructure Advisory Council for several years and powerfully advocated digital access across schools, libraries, and universities.

Approval of Meeting Minutes
As the first order of business, Mark welcomed a motion to approve the Commission's December 2 quarterly meeting minutes. Carol Quinn Toomey offered the motion, with a second from Burt Cohen. With no discussion, the motion carried with no opposition or abstentions.

Model Curriculum Presentation
One of the takeaways from the December meeting was to have Irene Parisi and Paul Castiglione provide a detailed overview of how the CSDE has leveraged the Commission's state open education site, GoOpenCT.org, to develop and share model curriculum. As background, Mark reminded Commission members and those in attendance that the site went live in 2021. Since then, the CSDE has proven an invaluable partner in the site's development. He invited those in attendance to learn more about the impact of GoOpenCT.org in the Commission's 2024 Annual Report. He then handed the floor to Irene and Paul.

To frame the conversation, Irene shared several slides on the model curriculum, noting the strong support of this work by CSDE Commissioner Russell-Tucker. Leadership at the CSDE believes that all 500,000+ public school students, 20,000+ teachers, and even parents need access to high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials. The model curriculum development supports the Connecticut State Board of Education's five-year plan. That document includes objectives to "elevate Connecticut's curriculum frameworks to support the development of rigorous, engaging instruction and the reliable assessment of universally required skills for life beyond school and a lifelong love of learning."

Within the GoOpenCT environment, Irene expressed a goal of fostering a community of practice and offsetting the costs of commercial materials. Doing so should also give teachers time for instruction and planning. Within the model curriculum hub (https://goopenct.org/hubs/ctmodelcurricula) are curriculum resources across mathematics, English language arts, science, social studies, and other subjects. Each has a "quick-start guide" to orient educators on the subject matter. The standard

approach to designing each unit — including links to free, third-party materials in multiple languages — helps teachers easily navigate and use the content. The platform's "Group" features enable teachers statewide or at the local level to collaborate around and create supplemental materials.

Irene closed the demonstration by encouraging members and attendees to explore the platform. She hoped districts would use GoOpenCT.org as a free resource to find, curate, build, and share high-quality materials. Mark thanked Irene and Paul for the presentation and welcomed questions. Grace Suh asked what subjects the CSDE would develop next on the platform. Irene shared that World Languages and Algebra I are the priority subjects to appear next on GoOpenCT.org.

Bart Stanco inquired about site measures and reach. Doug directed members to the 2024 Annual Report, which includes a summary of access data, including more than 26,000 annual visitors. The CSDE is aligning activity on the site with impact at the local (district) level. The CSDE further explored this question of impact and learned from conversations with school principals that using the model curriculum positively impacted student performance on high-stakes assessments (Smarter Balanced).

Josh Smith commended Irene for her ability to create, disseminate, and promote high-quality curriculum statewide. He noted past challenges in doing so over the past two decades. He sought clarification on the standards addressed in each unit. Irene clarified that the CSDE identifies all relevant academic standards in units and lessons, specifically emphasizing standards that will likely be assessed. Unit content and sequence changes occur annually to provide continuity throughout the academic year.

Executive Director's Report
Before highlighting elements from his quarterly report, Doug Casey welcomed back Lauren Thompson, Digital Equity Program Manager, from maternity leave. He also introduced Sana Shaikh, serving the Commission in 2025 as a Governor's Fellow. She contributes to the State's Digital Equity Program initiatives and projects in the five-year State Educational Technology Plan.

As mentioned previously, Doug encouraged members to share the Commission's 2024 Annual Report (executive summary and full version) with their professional networks and

appointing agencies. That report includes details on the Commission's progress across the areas of technology-enabled learning, digital equity, sustainability, and data privacy and security.

Since the Commission approved its Digital Equity Capacity application in late 2024, Lauren and Doug have been engaged in procurement activities to implement regional collaboratives, index training and technology access resources with the 211 system, and offer a digital literacy curriculum open to all residents. Most funds in this first of three expected waves of funding will go directly to community-based organizations for training. All updates on the Digital Equity Program are posted at www.CT.gov/DigitalEquity.

Doug shared recent reports from the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA), where he serves as a board member. The Universal Connectivity Imperative (January 2025) highlights the Commission's guidance to school districts on technology sustainability. In February, SETDA released its EdTech Quality Indicators guide, spotlighting the Commission's efforts to equip districts with free ed tech inventory tools for decision-making. Finally, the Connecticut OER Coordinating Council 2024 report highlights the critical importance of GoOpenCT.org in supporting access to free and open learning materials for college students and professors.

Doug concluded his report by highlighting topics such as artificial intelligence (AI), school and public libraries, and broadband access that bills in the legislative session address.

Mark thanked Doug for his report and welcomed questions from the Commission. Toni Boucher spoke to university students' challenges in paying for textbooks and commended the OER Coordinating Council for its work. Doug highlighted the significant return on investment of past state appropriations — now zeroed out — to the Council, as measured in student cost savings. Decisions about what courses to take or even majors to choose can hinge on the affordability of textbooks and other materials.

Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

Josh Smith, co-chair with Nick Caruso of the Digital Learning Advisory Council, provided brief remarks on the January 30 meeting of that group. Advisory members provided feedback to Sana on the landscape study she is conducting on using online courses. Examples of how this practice helps schools include the ability to offer classes that — especially small — districts cannot provide, flexibility in student scheduling, and providing learners with the chance to take courses at advanced (e.g., college) levels of education. Districts use third-party platforms such as Virtual High School as well as in-state solutions such as courses offered through EdAdvance, the regional education service center in Litchfield County. The Advisory members look forward to providing additional input on the forthcoming report.

Infrastructure Advisory Council Report

Mark thanked Josh for his updates and turned the floor to Colleen Bailie, who chairs the Infrastructure Advisory Council with Keri Kearney of Manchester Public Schools. At the January 31 meeting, members of that group reviewed funding opportunities through the CEN Community WiFi program. They also explored ways different educational institutions — schools, libraries, and universities — appreciate cost-savings in technology-related hardware, software, and service investments. She noted the efforts of a working group Doug is convening to explore collective needs and opportunities in this area. The Advisory members also discussed the implications of various pieces of draft state legislation session, especially Senate Bill 1234, concerning electronic book license costs.

CEN Report

Ryan Kocsondy, Executive Director of the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), provided highlights from the detailed report he shared with Commission members:

- CT Library Fiber Consortium: This program will connect 33 libraries to CEN and be completed by April 30.
- Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program: CEN has applied for funding through this DEEP-administered program to connect 263 eligible anchor institutions to high-speed Internet connections.
- CEN Connect: The annual conference will take place May 7 and 8, with details available at https://events.ctedunet.net/event/cenconnect/summary. Ryan welcomed Commission members to submit nominations for the CEN Outstanding Leadership Awards, part of the conference program.

- Community WiFi: The CEN team is accepting applications through this ARPA-funded program to build out high-speed wireless networks that tie into CEN and offer seamless authentication through the eduroam platform. Details are at https://ctedunet.net/cwifi/.

Mark reiterated the value of the conference, with opportunities to connect with others in the educational technology field and learn about emerging trends in digital learning.

Public Comment
Mark opened the floor for questions and comments from members of the public. None were offered.

Scheduled 2025 Meeting Dates
Commission members and other attendees received reminders of the remaining scheduled meetings in 2025, as follows:

- June 2 (In Person)
- September 8 (Online)
- December 1 (In Person)

Adjournment
Mark welcomed a motion to adjourn, offered by Josh and seconded by Tony Salvatore. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Casey
Executive Director
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