



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 622-2224
www.ct.gov/ctedtech

Joint Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

July 15, 2024

Attendees

- Burt Cohen — Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel
- Colleen Bailie — West Haven Public Library
- Nick Caruso — Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)
- Doug Casey — Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology
- Larry Covino — Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education
- Andy DePalma — EASTCONN
- Josh Elliott — Fairfield University
- Jody Goeler — CABE
- Ryan Kocsondy — Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
- Kerri Kearney — Manchester Public Schools
- Laura McCaffrey — Hartford Archdiocese
- Jim Mindek — Connecticut Technical High School System
- Michael Mundrane — University of Connecticut (UConn)
- Karen Skudlarek — UConn
- Rick Widlansky — Libraries Online (LiON)

Welcome and Introductions

Nick Caruso opened the joint meeting of members of the Digital Learning Advisory Council, which he chairs, as well as those serving on the Infrastructure Advisory Council, led by Tom Dillon, who was unable to join the meeting. Nick welcomed members to introduce themselves before he asked Doug to address the first agenda item.

Guidance on Artificial Intelligence

Over the past several months, members of the Digital Learning Advisory Council have provided input to Doug on the development of guidance and resources on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in K – 12 schools. In late May, the Commission published this guidance, available at www.CT.gov/AlforSchools. Doug shared a brief overview of the resources, posted on that Web page, including definitions, instructional best practices, risks and mitigations, statute and policy, and resources. He underscored that AI will continue to play a role in teaching and learning as well as school operations and decision-making.

On the topic of integrating AI into instruction, Andy DePalma described efforts among educators and leaders to define the point at which AI tools stop becoming a means of



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 622-2224
www.ct.gov/ctedtech

enhancing learning and become a way to bypass it (i.e., cheating). He called for educators at all levels to create assignments that “scaffold,” or call for proof of learning and mastery from learners at various stages. Kerrie Kearney described a shift among educators and leaders to address the use of AI broadly through policy to efforts to partner with instructional designers to integrate AI thoughtfully into the curriculum. She referred to a [schematic depicting the continuum of technology adoption](#), regardless of the specific type of technology, from laggards to innovators. Such applications include student use of AI for homework and classroom activities as well as teachers’ use of AI for lesson planning and professional development.

At colleges and universities, Josh Elliott described a similar dynamic. Fairfield University’s Center for Academic Excellence addresses requests from professors on the effective use of AI in teaching. Michael Mundrane has issued guidance to the UCONN community on the use of CoPilot and other tools. In his experience, providing faculty with a rationale set of applications has resulted in successful implementation of these tools. He reminded Advisory members that similar concerns have arisen with other forms of new technology, even dating back to handheld calculators.

Jim Mindek pointed to efforts by the State to identify and address uses of AI tools. For example, the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) asks staff to share potential uses of AI tools. This vetting helps identify the sharing of potentially sensitive data as well as bias in the use of operational and decision-making systems. On a related note, Jody Goeler shared the recent publication from the US Department of Education’s Office of Educational Technology, “[Designing for Education with Artificial Intelligence: An Essential Guide for Developers](#).” The resource includes best practices for developers to minimize sensitive data collection and bias in designing algorithms.

Nick welcomed members’ input and called for specific recommendations for the Commission. Andy suggested the Commission consider policies, practices, or even statute that would help minimize bad actors from leveraging AI tools to scrape student personal data. Because such tools aggregate many diverse data sets, bad actors can use them, for example, to identify likely student whereabouts on a given day. Michael agreed and noted that such scraping has taken place using non-AI tools, just not at the scale and speed that AI affords. Colleen did not offer specific recommendations but did point to ongoing privacy concerns that patrons have around the collection of personal data. Rick Widlansky noted that LiON has started an AI working group.

Nick welcomed the input and encouraged thoughtful outreach and information gathering from practitioners as the foundation to establishing policy or new legislation. As one of the statewide leaders in school policy, Jody Goeler agreed with Nick’s point. Districts should establish and follow effective antibullying, technology use, and other policies — expanding them to include emerging technologies — rather than establish new guidance. Kerri agreed and noted the protections afforded through [Connecticut’s student data privacy law](#) as well as federal statute such as [FERPA](#) and [CIPA](#).



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 622-2224
www.ct.gov/ctedtech

Guidance on Technology Sustainability

Members of the [Infrastructure Advisory Council](#) have provided input into the Commission's recently published guidance, [K – 12 Technology Sustainability: Guidance for School and Community Leaders](#). Doug provided background on the publication, which includes the most recent data sets and research on school technology from the Commission. Especially with the expansion of digital learning during the pandemic — and the end of relief funding to pay for computers, software, and training — the Commission issued this guidance to underscore the benefits and critical nature of technology to support virtually every aspect of education. The document includes an “Anatomy of a K – 12 Technology Budget,” highlighting less obvious aspects of technology, from back-office systems that help manage finance, human resources, and payroll, to critical infrastructure and operational systems that run transportation, food services, and heating. Educational leaders can leverage the best practices included in the guidance, especially those that highlight federal and state programs that provide cost offsets.



Advisory members recommended the types of stakeholders who should read and consider the guidance. Kerri pointed to town leaders, such as board of finance members, and Nick suggested town council members. The Connecticut Association of School Business Officers (CASBO) came up as a likely partner to help increase awareness of the resources and recommendations outlined in the report. Doug thanked Commission member John Elsesser for helping to facilitate [a presentation to the Connecticut Council of Municipalities \(CCM\)](#).

In terms of messaging, the group encouraged using language that accurately frames the critical nature of technology for schools, colleges, and libraries. Despite competing priorities, most leaders can agree on the common goal of providing a high-quality learning environment for all students. Stakeholders who can influence investments and budgets include administrators as well as members of the public — in the case of schools and libraries — given that they vote to approve budget referenda. Michael and Jody both framed technology as a utility, as essential as electricity, heating, and sanitation. Burt pointed to similar arguments that drove funding for home Internet access through the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which became the now-defunct Affordable Connectivity Program.

Ryan Kocsondy and other members pointed to the need to identify and share baseline best practices for technology investments when speaking about funding with leaders and the general public. Jim suggested leveraging the data that the Connecticut State



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 622-2224
www.ct.gov/ctedtech

Department of Education collects through the [Education Financial System](#). Reports submitted through this system from local schools include expenditures categorized as "Technology Related Purchased Services," "Technology Related Supplies," "Technology Software," and "Technology-Related Hardware." Examples of other data-collection systems and best-practice benchmarking exist in other states, resources Doug has tapped through SETDA.

Prior to adjourning the meeting, Nick thanked members for their continued engagement and looked forward to sharing their valuable recommendations with the full Commission at its September meeting.