



CONNECTICUT COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

June 2, 2025

Legislative Office Building Hearing Room 1B

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS
Baillie, Colleen — Director, West Haven Public Library (Connecticut Library Association)
Caruso, Nick — Associate Executive Director for Field Services and Technology, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)
Casey, Doug — Executive Director, Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology
Cohen, Burt — Staff Attorney, Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel
Elsesser, John — Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Ghaemolsabahi, Haleh — Interim Associate Vice President for Information Technology & Chief Information Officer
Huang, Billy — Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Workforce Strategy (Department of Economic and Community Development)
Lussier, Jennifer — Library Media Specialist, Region 13 Public Schools (Connecticut Association of School Librarians)
Parisi, Irene — Chief Academic Officer, Connecticut State Department of Education
Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library
Smith, Josh — Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)
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)

Others in Attendance

Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
Thompson, Lauren — Digital Equity Program Manager, Commission for Educational Technology

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Welcome

State Chief Information Officer and Commission Chair Mark Raymond welcomed attendees and acknowledged the Connecticut Network for covering the meeting via recorded stream (<https://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=24948>). Following introductions of all members in attendance, he welcomed Jenny Lussier, an educator who has served for nearly 30 years and recently joined the Commission as the Connecticut Association of School Librarians (CASL) appointee. For the past 17 years, she has been an elementary school library media specialist in Regional School District 13. Jenny has worked to integrate technology and computer science into the classroom for her entire career and has presented at the state and national levels on topics as varied as guided inquiry, robotics, and global connections. She served as president of CASL for the past two years, was the 2023 Teacher of the Year for Region 13, and was a 2016 ISTE Librarians Network Primary Award winner. Most recently, she helped develop the Connecticut computer science standards and worked on the Digital Citizenship Model Curricula Design Leadership Team this past winter.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

As the first order of business, Mark welcomed a motion to approve the [Commission's March 3 quarterly meeting minutes](#). Nick Caruso offered the motion, with a second from Burt Cohen. Jenny Lussier and Deborah Schander abstained because they were not at the March meeting. The motion passed.

Report of the Executive Director

Doug Casey shared highlights of his [quarterly report](#), which was shared before the meeting through the Commission's website, www.CT.gov/EdTech. He encouraged school districts to apply for support through a grant the Commission is leading with funding from the Ballmer Group, awarded by the Council of Chief State School Officers. Awarded districts will participate in a cohort led by learning scientists at LearnPlatform to identify shared instructional needs and the most effective tools to address those goals. This "rapid-cycle evaluation" (RCE) process — tied to State [Ed Tech Plan Goal 1.6](#) — will result in districts receiving detailed reports that link ed tech usage to student learning. The RCE approach will serve as a model for data-driven decision-making on the use of technology, helping districts consolidate their ed tech libraries and costs. He welcomed interested school leaders to join an information session now available as a [recorded video archive](#).



A second initiative that Doug highlighted is a study on the use of online courseware (see [State Ed Tech Plan Goal 1.1](#)). With the assistance of Governor's Fellow Sana Shaikh, the Commission engaged in several in-depth discussions with school leaders regarding their use of third-party solutions as well as inter-district collaboratives to enroll students in classes for credit recovery, offering classes not available within their district, and to accommodate scheduling challenges. Doug noted that approximately a third of all districts responded to a detailed survey on the topic. He expects to have a full report on the study by the September Commission meeting. Irene noted that access to technology is a core requirement for enabling distance learning, and Doug confirmed that interviews and survey data would address this topic.

Doug concluded his report by highlighting a few pieces of draft legislation as the Session draws to a close. Topics include artificial intelligence ([Senate Bill 2](#)), school and public libraries (various), broadband affordability ([Senate Bill 514](#)), and E-book licenses ([Senate Bill 1234](#)). Deborah Schander confirmed that SB-1234 was signed into law and contains "trigger language," whereby Connecticut would adopt the law if another state with more than 7 million residents passed a similar statute. She indicated that New Jersey is close to doing so.

Doug noted language in [House Bill 7009](#) that would eliminate the requirement for schools to report to the Commission on their use of a student data privacy law exemption, given the lack of evidence that these reports have been utilized for decision-making (see [September 9, 2024 minutes for additional details](#)).

Digital Equity Program

Mark provided a recap of the recent events about the federal Digital Equity program, which the Commission administers on behalf of the state. On May 9, the U.S. Department of Commerce notified the Commission that its award was cancelled because of program termination. Since then, Mark has received general guidance on closeout activities, with more details expected in the coming days and weeks. To frame the news as "disappointing" was a grave understatement. Connecticut has strong availability of technology, with significant needs in skill development and technical support. Research that guided "Everybody Connected," the State Digital Equity Plan (CT.gov/DigitalOpportunity), underscores these needs. Residents need digital skills to engage in learning, work, state services, and all forms of citizenry. Mark shared that the Office of the Governor and Attorney General's office are considering next steps in response to the program termination.



He acknowledged the contributions of Lauren Thompson, Digital Equity Program Manager, in managing the development of the plan and launching a suite of initiatives funded through the first of three expected awards through the federal program. Lauren will be transitioning onto the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) team to support efforts around the [Community WiFi program](#), which has a related goal of connecting residents.

Doug provided high-level detail on the first wave of planned projects — many of which could continue with reduced funding — including digital navigation services at several locations statewide, the development of shared curriculum materials, establishment of regional training collaboratives, integration of digital equity resources into the 211 response system, and launch of a \$5M statewide competitive grant program. He reiterated the underlying goals of these programs to address the statewide needs of all residents, not any particular group of individuals.

Mark opened the floor to suggestions on potential next steps for the Digital Equity program. John Elsesser characterized broadband and technical support as essential, similar to transportation and power. In that light, he encouraged some means of using tax dollars to continue the planned Digital Equity program work. He stated, “In our state, we believe in people,” which should drive investments in supporting residents. Burt seconded this recommendation and cited [HB 24-5446](#) from the previous legislative session as a model. That bill called for levies on telecommunications services to support digital skills training and would have addressed inconsistencies in taxation across different types of providers.

Burt addressed developments in the national Universal Service Fund (USF) program for schools and libraries. Funding decreased nationwide by \$15M in the last quarter. The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to decide a case this month challenging the constitutionality of how the USF is administered. He saw a bipartisan congressional consensus on the need to continue funding the USF to keep schools and libraries connected to the Internet.

Colleen Bailie spoke on behalf of libraries, which have provided training and support to their patrons since the Internet's inception. West Haven Public Library suffered from the end of Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) digital navigator funding, which would have helped 200 residents get the skills they need. Deborah indicated that



funding for the IMLS grant has been temporarily restored, given recent court actions, though she cautioned not to count on the funds long term.

Irene highlighted the needs of adult learners, citing the more than 30,000 residents receiving instruction through adult and continuing education centers. The adult learning system needs additional resources and can serve as a lever for advancing digital skills as part of any digital equity strategy. She highlighted the regional education service centers (RESCs) as another group that currently provides and can help expand access to skills training.

Josh Smith noted that public schools serve 15 percent of the state population and have been addressing digital access and skills for decades. While the vast majority of people who need training and support fall outside of the public school system, ensuring that students have strong skills and a mindset to learn new technologies will help address some of the root causes of the current challenges. He charged the Commission and its partners to focus on skill development with an eye to the rapid pace of technology innovation, rather than showing residents how to solve “the problems of today” alone.

Holly Williams addressed the general accessibility of materials and services that State agencies offer. She underscored that as part of a Digital Equity strategy, the State should continue to make materials resident-friendly, with language, instructions, and supports that demystify the process of requesting State services.

Carol Quinn Toomey described the [Opportunity Centers](#) as in-person facilities where residents can get help across multiple agencies. She saw appointments at the centers as strong opportunities for State employees to help residents navigate digital access and skills gaps. Mark agreed, noting that one such center has opened, with another planned to launch soon. Colleen appreciated having a part-time case worker at her library, assisting residents with tasks such as applying for benefits. Nick Caruso highlighted the time sensitivity of training and support, given recent disruptions to federal relief programs and how residents can access them.

On the theme of addressing residents where they are, John Elsesser asked about building capacity within churches and other places of faith. Doug reiterated this as a key strategy in the Digital Equity Plan: going where people are and partnering with organizations that have their trust. Mark noted that while Internet service providers (ISPs)



do not necessarily have the trust of a local parish, ISPs do interact with residents and are already addressing affordability and skills provision through various programs.

Ryan Kocsondy pointed to the strong network of CEN member institutions as a resource the Commission can tap in considering the capacity to offer training and support. Holly encouraged a similar approach, whereby the State considers the many networks of service provision — from housing to healthcare, education and transportation — as well as average citizens to communicate best practices in using technology.

Mark concluded the discussion by noting the historic levels of investment in artificial intelligence (AI). While the use of AI can serve as an equalizer, making services more accessible to residents, it can also accelerate the skills divide. He reiterated the group's mission and history of addressing the digital divide. He pointed to CEN's creation and successful operation for the past 25 years as an example. The State saw a need to connect and protect educational institutions, supported CEN's launch, and still contributes to its operation. The same could be true for digital equity initiatives.

Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

Co-Chair of the Digital Learning Advisory Council Josh Smith provided highlights of that group's meeting on April 30, [minutes of which](#) were circulated previously. Advisory members discussed early results from the online courseware study, primarily focusing on the benefits of using platforms to expand course offerings, accommodate scheduling conflicts, and offer opportunities for students to complete courses.

The group also discussed the use of AI in teaching and learning. Examples include the selection and use of apps that model effective prompt design by students (e.g., Magic School), as well as the need for teachers and students to understand basic concepts behind the use of large language models. Josh also touched on the integration of AI into decision-support systems and other tools in ways that may not be obvious to education leaders and teachers.

Beyond the current focus on AI, Josh encouraged the Commission to develop recommendations that balance student protection with innovation. He cited the [Guidance on District Policy Revisions to Support Digital Learning](#) (2018), developed in partnership with CAFE. Mark also noted the need for schools to share their lessons learned in the use of technology for learning and saw the Commission helping them tell those stories. The State Department of Education will have insights to share, as Irene

noted in describing the AI pilot taking place this year. Six districts from across the state are taking part in the pilot. High-level recommendations from that work include the need to enlist all stakeholders' efforts and develop and adopt a locally developed and adopted AI position statement. She expressed the great promise of this work and the potential to scale and share such takeaways as the pilots continue in the 2025 – 26 school year.

Infrastructure Advisory Council Report

Doug referred attendees to [the minutes of the April 26 meeting](#) of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, which addressed opportunities to appreciate cost savings for schools (see State Educational Technology Plan [Goal 4.0 on Sustainability](#)). He has convened a small number of K – 12 technology leaders to review budgets and other data for potential cost savings through collective action. This work remains important, especially given the end of pandemic relief funding. Despite inconsistencies in budget documents and categories, the group of leaders identified student computers as an area of potentially enormous cost savings, given the volume of units purchased for one-to-one device programs annually.

Doug also mentioned that Kerri Kearney, Co-Chair of the Advisory, identified a need for a list of resources for school technology leaders who are new to their role, work in the state, or both. She drafted a list of links and resources, which Doug pledged to review and post to the Commission's Website.

CEN Report

Mark turned the floor over to Ryan Kocsondy, Executive Director of the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), to provide highlights from the [detailed quarterly report](#) he shared with Commission members:

- CT Library Fiber Consortium: Completed program in partnership with CT State Library to support connections to and within public libraries.
- New Members: With the addition of multiple libraries and town halls, the number of CEN member institutions has exceeded 700.
- Annual Conference: Ryan and team have received strong feedback on *CEN Connect*, with a two-thirds increase in registrations over the past seven years. Nick Caruso commended the CEN team and the many CEN advisory members for an outstanding event.



- CyberNutmeg: CEN is partnering with the Connecticut National Guard to hold this event on October 10 at Central Connecticut State University. Details are available at ctedunet.net/cybernutmeg.
- Outstanding Leader Awards: Cathie Drury of Coventry Public Schools, Jason Healy of Suffield Academy, and Michael Mundrane of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities have received CEN Outstanding Leader Awards.
- 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/>.

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:

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

Adjournment

Mark welcomed a motion to adjourn, offered by Deborah and seconded by Holly. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Casey', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Douglas Casey, *Executive Director*

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