

# Onward

## CoSN From 2020 to Now

April 2022



This CoSN CETL Immersion Course was one of the many CoSN professional learning activities that continued to take place during the time of COVID. – North Carolina, Nov. 2021. Photo credit: Zack Sheppard



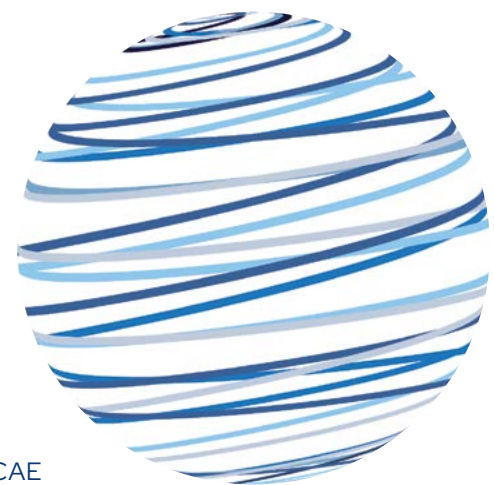
Fall 2021 CoSN Board meets in Washington, DC for the first time since COVID began. Photo credit: Diane Doersch

This special CoSN report tells our story of the past two years. Since March 2020, our members transitioned literally overnight to new learning environments for their students, physical distancing, vaccines, and the realization that millions of students did not have robust home access during this moment of remote emergency learning.

As the world turned upside down and required reinvention, so did CoSN. When the staff said “See you in two weeks,” to each other on March 13, 2020, no one could have imagined 24 months later how much our world would change. It has been challenging, but the purpose of this special report to CoSN Members is to remind us of our victories.

Special thanks to our Board of Directors and the two amazing CoSN Chairs who lead us during this uncertain time, as well as the multiple of volunteers and our many corporate partners who ensured that we emerged stronger.

### Enjoy CoSN’s story.



**Pete Just, CETL**  
Chief Technology Officer  
MSD of Wayne Township (IN)  
*Chair 2018-2020*

**Steve Langford**  
Chief Information Officer  
Beaverton School District (OR)  
*Chair 2020-2023*

**Keith Krueger, CAE**  
CoSN CEO  
Washington, DC

# Enjoy CoSN's story.

## Meeting our Members' Needs

This is why membership organizations exist. If the pandemic has shown us anything it's that the future is impossible to predict. What worked in the past may not meet today's challenges.

Spring 2020 Member Ask	CoSN Response
HELP! Resources & Community!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developed a webpage specifically devoted to all sort of pandemic related resources for members.</li><li>• Hosted a weekly evening online chat –for members to share their concerns, suggestions and wins. No agenda, no commercials. Just conversation. This continued through the summer.</li><li>• We created CoSN resources related to ed tech leadership during the pandemic. We know our members were hard at work, and we needed to to meet their needs and make the most of their time.</li></ul>

## CoSN's Annual Conference – What was Next?

Since CoSN's founding nearly 30 years ago, the annual conference has been our signature event. The 2020 conference was scheduled to start on the weekend of March 14, 2020. With the announcement of the World Health Organizations Pandemic Declaration and DC's State of Emergency, the CoSN Board approved plans for our meeting to go fully virtual in May 2020. The coordination of the logistics was massive. CoSN staff banded together and broke new ground, not only in the edtech world, but in the overall association community. We reduced registration fees, offered quality sessions carried via Zoom and archived them for future reference.

By September of 2020, it was clear that the 2021 conference would also be transitioned to an entirely virtual format and require an even better virtual event. Our planned location, Austin TX, agreed to push our contract to 2023. As it turned out, devastating storms in Austin caused massive power outages and travel delays when we would have been there. We can probably file that away under "things happen for a reason."

As virtual conferences evolved over the fall, we were able to offer a more robust online experience to attendees. Most attendees acknowledged it was not a replacement for in-person, but appreciated the interactions CoSN was able to enable. The satisfaction rate of our attendees returned to pre-COVID levels. And it was the best attended CoSN conference ever – nearly doubling the number of attendees!

**And we were able to access deeper into the edtech team by offering team pricing.** A true benefit to smaller districts who never have the budget for registration/travel for their teams.

In April 2022 we will be in-person in Nashville AND we will be offering virtual participation also based on the feedback we received from the last two years.

It's also important to note how CoSN remains committed to our strategic plan and goals:

- 1 Goal 1: PERSONALIZE MEMBER LEARNING**  
**Develop and deliver timely programs, products, and services to meet members needs.**



## Transitions & Trends in Professional Learning

During Fall of 2020, we saw tremendous changes in the professional learning landscape. As our members grappled with issues in their school/school system, time for professional learning was at a premium. In-person state chapter clinics were scaled back or canceled through fall 2021. Many chapters worked hard to develop new offerings in the virtual environment. Since our CTO Forum are typically held in-person at the CoSN and ISTE conferences, those opportunities were no longer available. So we offered several virtual forums throughout 2021.

We also saw member's appetite for long term commitments change and decision-making became more of a 'last minute' commitment.

CoSN put together new offerings – and we **learned** from everything we did. People became more comfortable with shorter commitments, more in-depth/focused workshops (i.e., cybersecurity content was organized based on level of expertise). These new offerings were well attended and received high evaluations as being relevant and timely. There is also a growing desire for informal unscripted conversations. The message we took away is: CoSN must continually evaluate not only our content, but how we deliver it.

Our year-long Early Career Academy continues to help district technology leaders in their early years and during the pandemic we moved this to a fully virtual offering. Going forward we will develop a hybrid model leveraging face-to-face gatherings and ongoing monthly virtual connections, culminating with a capstone project. Plus, we offer mentoring opportunities for long-standing district technology leaders who are willing to help this next generation of leaders.

Finally, over the last two years we have continued to make a difference for our community by offering the first-in-the-world certification for school system education technology leaders. Over 700 K12 school district leaders have now achieved the CETL certification. CETL is the global gold standard for defining school system education technology leadership skills.

## Policy, Advocacy, and Funding

Given the key role that our members were playing during the pandemic, CoSN had a seat at the policy table. We educated policymakers about the need for closing the Homework Gap and advocated for funding to address digital equity. We worked hard to ensure that ALL students have access to robust connectivity and tools to enable their learning. We were pleased that Congress and the Administration heard and responded – dedicating \$7 billion to the Emergency Connectivity Fund, as well as passage of a historic bi-partisan infrastructure investment of \$65 billion to connect the unconnected. And, we raised awareness about the growing challenge of cybersecurity in K-12. We were successful in securing passage of the K-12 Cybersecurity Act which was signed into law. We were YOUR voice.



### Goal 2: **DRIVE INNOVATION** Provide thought leadership to incubate and drive innovative practices.

For the past 14 years, CoSN has produced Driving K12 Innovation, our annual global trends to help education leaders invent the future. This important work continued and grew during the pandemic. We provided value to our members with invitational, innovative Summits to explore these trends.

Likewise, CoSN provides many other top quality **thought leadership resources**.

**Cybersecurity** is the #1 concern of district tech leaders, and we have been providing amazing tools like: Getting Started with Cybersecurity, a robust Toolkit, a free K12 Risk Assessment and lots of professional development opportunities, including at this conference. Plus, with the help of the Gates Foundation, we have issued year reviews in 2020 & 2021 on state and federal cybersecurity legislation.

Our break-through **Student Home Internet Connectivity Study**, funded by CZI, used data from 750,000 students learning from home. This research showed that existing standards for home broadband connectivity were simply inadequate for video conferencing, the heart of remote learning. Likewise, our **Digital Equity** Initiative created a variety of resources to support district leaders in their continuing efforts to close the Homework Gap.

During the pandemic we have continued to grow our privacy work through the **Trusted Learning Environment** Seal... the premier way of showing your community that you are protecting student data.

Similarly, CoSN's **interoperability** resources, such as the Interoperability *Maturity Model* and the *Cost Calculator* are helping districts move up the continuum and demonstrate the cost of lack of interoperability. These are actionable and making a difference.

Annually we conduct the State of Ed Tech Leadership national survey (2022 results available this April). The survey results provide a font of information that informs all our work each year.

We have also created **Member-only Exclusive Briefs** on a range of key topics like Thinking Beyond Hotpots, Device Requirements for Video Conferencing and much more. And members have just received a new **EdTechNext** report on *Integrating Permanent Ed-Tech Solutions in a Post-Pandemic Educational Landscape*.

Members and non-members can access all these incredible resources through the CoSN Store/Resource Library. You'll need to log in – but help is available through [membership@cosn.org](mailto:membership@cosn.org). During the pandemic we also started the amazing new **CoSN Podcast series** and nearly weekly CoSN **blogs** are on the CoSN website from education leaders. Plus, CoSN does a superintendents webinar series we do in partnership with AASA on edWeb. These resources help you, your team and your superintendent be leaders.

Finally, CoSN continues to offer virtual and face-to-face Peer Reviews for your district to have a high quality external review of how your district is leading on using technology to transform learning.



### **Goal 3: FOSTER EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION** Address systemic barriers by leading and inspiring change.

Last, but certainly not least, CoSN has been leaning into how we ensure that our community is more inclusive. We know we have much work to do but an active Diversity Equity & Inclusion Committee has shaped a Board-Approved **Call to Action Continuum**. This is informing all the work of CoSN.

We have begun benchmarking ourselves around diversity of our membership, our speakers and those who become CETL certified leaders.

We have organized several CoSN CTO Forums and webinars around recruiting and retaining a diverse district IT team. To help you on this journey for a more inclusive community, we have assembled examples from the research, leading school districts and our corporate partners.

At the CoSN 2021 and 2022 conferences we focused on ensuring that new and more diverse voices were heard, especially with thoughtful keynotes. In Nashville there will be a first-ever Network Meet-Up to help you think through personal strategies to advance DEI. We are hosting discussions around *Where Are We in the Struggle for Equality for LGBTQ+ District Leaders*.

## **Despite the many challenges of the last two years, CoSN is working with you to build a brighter future.**

One that innovates and iterates.

One that is inclusive of all voices.

One that meets your needs as K12 edtech leader.

**Onward.**

**Thank you to all our wonderful corporate partners for all their amazing support of CoSN throughout the years.**

**Please be sure to see our current list at**  
**[cosn.org/about/partner-wtih-cosn/corporate-and-media-partners](https://cosn.org/about/partner-wtih-cosn/corporate-and-media-partners)**