Finding Community in Chaos

CoSN 2021 to December 2022

This CoSN annual report describes our path of moving beyond the pandemic and our work to reimagine, redesign, and renew education.

In spring of 2021, our members began to plan for the transition from remote emergency learning to in-person learning in classrooms. Mask or no mask, temperature checks, and social distancing were all key questions in providing a sense of safety while getting students back in school.

In the fall of 2021, as students returned to the classroom, we talked about their resilience, the novel ways teachers had found to connect with students and families, and how technology had provided access to most students, yet too many remained unconnected outside of school. Many students, teachers and families experienced trauma from losing family members, jobs, and house insecurities. Our school systems were now attending to the social-emotional well-being of our students, educators, and families.

Similarly, CoSN underwent a process of reinventing itself during the pandemic, and we continue to strive to be agile in responding to our members' evolving needs. The purpose of this annual report to CoSN members is to remind us of our agility and how we found community in chaos.

Special thanks to our talented Board of Directors and dedicated staff who led us during this uncertain time, as well as the multiple volunteers and corporate partners who ensured that we emerged stronger. Together we are better.

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

Keith Krueger, CAE, CoSN CEO, Washington, DC

CoSN's Annual Conference – Amplifying the Power of One

Celebrating 30 Years!

Since CoSN's founding 30 years ago, the annual conference has been our signature event. There was great excitement at CoSN2022, held April 11-14 in Nashville, TN, as many CoSN members were attending the first face-to-face conference since before the pandemic. Our partners were thrilled with the engagement and ability to connect with district members. CoSN had approximately 1000 registrants in-person and another 150+ virtually.

Coming Soon: _CoSN2023 in Austin, TX (March 20-23, 2023). Reimagine. Redesign. Renew._

Looking Forward as We Look Back

The past few months CoSN has begun working to update our Strategic Plan, the core vision for achieving our mission. CoSN begins this strategic planning process at a time of internal strength and external challenges. How will we adapt to this new world and gain greater clarity about directions for the future of learning? The 2023-26 Strategic Plan will be launched mid-year 2023.

Our current Strategic Plan provides the foundation for all our work:

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

Meeting our Members' Needs

This is why membership associations exist. CoSN is here to support/tackle the ever-changing professional needs you face. This year, cybersecurity was the #1 concern of K-12 school systems.

Spring 2021 Member Ask	CoSN Response
School districts are a soft target for cyber criminals. What can we do?	• *Cybersecurity Staffing Resource for K-12* • *Cybersecurity Leadership Game* • *Making the Case for Increased Investment in Cybersecurity (Blaschke Report)* (free, login required) • *Blogs on Current Cybersecurity Issues* (filter for Cybersecurity) • *Webinar recordings* on Cybersecurity Issues • *Future Webinars* on Cybersecurity • *2021 State and Federal Cybersecurity Policy Trends: Insights for Education Technology Leaders & Policymakers* • *Conducting a Cybersecurity Risk Assessment* • *Risk Methodology for K12* • *Securing the Cloud Part I* • *Securing the Cloud Part 2* • *K-12CVAT*

In-person state chapter clinics increased as the cadence for the school year returned to a more familiar landscape. We have again been able to offer our CTO Forums at the CoSN and ISTE annual conferences. Additionally, after offering several virtual forums throughout 2021, we will continue with a new cadence to offer two additional virtual CTO Forums throughout the year since the previous virtual forums proved successful.

We have witnessed our members' appetite for long-term professional growth opportunities return. Our year-long Early Career Academy helps prepare district technology leaders in their early years and has a record-breaking cohort of 31 participants. The new model is mostly virtual and the culminating capstone project has proven valuable. We have also increased our mentoring opportunities for long-standing district technology leaders willing to help this next generation of leaders.
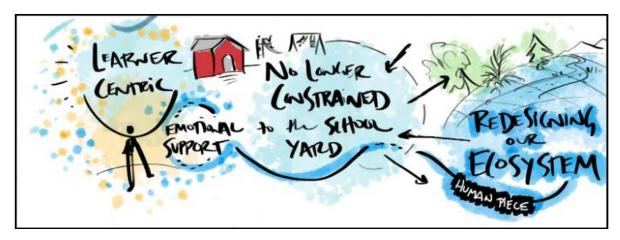
For example, as a result of feedback on the the highly rated Project Management course, we are flipping the course and presenting content as individual work so participants can discuss their chosen work project and collaborate with the other participants and instructors during their online time together to inform their process. CoSN is committed to providing high quality professional learning opportunities that meet your needs throughout your career.

Finally, 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 896 K-12 school district leaders have now achieved the CETL® certification. CETL® is the global gold standard for defining school system education technology leadership skills.

GOAL 2: DRIVE INNOVATION
Provide thought leadership to incubate and drive innovative practices.

For the past 15 years, CoSN has produced Driving K-12 Innovation, our annual global trends research to help education leaders invent the future. Based on this innovative initiative, CoSN hosted two innovative Summits in early 2022 for CoSN members and partners to explore these trends. We used illustrative note-taking to capture big ideas and enhance our final product.

CoSN's Thought Leadership Initiatives

A graphic facilitation image created live during one of the Advisory Board's synchronous discussion calls (Driving K–12 Innovation • Tech Enablers 2022 • CoSN).

CoSN's Thought Leadership Initiatives (Cybersecurity, Digital Equity, Network and Systems Design, Student Data Privacy, and EmpowerED Superintendents) result in a variety of high quality resources that support our members. CoSN has been providing an amazing breadth of tools and resources.

For example, we have engaged in a statewide cohort cybersecurity training model with the Georgia State Department of Education. We have trained two cohorts and have plans to train another three cohorts encompassing the entire state.

> "The training we received from CoSN in improving our districts' cybersecurity skills was invaluable. It gave us skills in prevention and reaction, but also the confidence and framework to prioritize the work in improving our Incident Response Plans. Beyond the skills we gained, we were able to connect with our peers and gained a network of ongoing support, which includes our neighboring school districts, Department of Education, and CoSN."
> *– Mike Afdahl, Coordinator of Technology Services Northwest RESA (GA)*

In North Carolina, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction facilitated the purchase of CoSN membership for all K-12 institutions in the state. This ensures that even the smallest school systems have access to CoSN technology resources.

Our Digital Equity Initiative created various resources to support district leaders in their continuing efforts, including using data to support equity, starter conversations for school leaders, and showcasing equity in action. The Network and Systems Design Initiative has created resources for districts on Esports, IoT, and Lifecycle Replacement planning. Check the website for additional resources as we are only able to mention a few here.

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. Our seal recipients have increased with more in the pipeline and different models have been created. For example, a new model to engage districts through a statewide subscription with the ability to provide state level dashboards given enough participation.

In line with the additional focus and growth in these important Thought Leadership Initiatives, we have updated our *Digital Leap Success Matrix* to reflect the best practices for school systems to implement technology solutions to address their evolving needs and realities. The Matrix is at the core of the CoSN Peer Review and helps a district align with best practices identified by peers who have successfully converted to a digital environment.

The new CoSN Podcast series continues to grow, providing new topics and offering our webinars as podcasts and nearly weekly CoSN blogs from education leaders on the CoSN website. Plus, CoSN does a superintendent's edLeader panel series conducted in partnership with the School Superintendents Association (AASA) on edWeb. We have created an extensive library of EmpowerEd Superintendent's one-pagers. These resources help you, your team, your school board and your superintendent understand the fundamentals of strong technology systems and teams.

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. Additionally, we have created a district-led self review online course to support smaller districts unable to participate in our complete peer review process.

Research Efforts

Year two of the ground-breaking *Student Connectivity Study* continues to explore how connectivity impacts students post-pandemic both at-school and at-home. Although data indicated home connectivity had improved slightly since 2021, there are still major gaps in reliable home access to high speed connectivity, especially for our ethnically diverse and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Despite students mostly being at-school, home connectivity continues to be an essential equity concern.

Preparations for the *2023 State of EdTech Leadership* national survey are underway. For nearly a decade, CoSN has conducted an annual survey of U.S. K-12 IT leaders. The results from the 2022 survey indicated major concerns continue around home connectivity, modernizing infrastructure, staffing diversity and retention, as well as cybersecurity. The survey results provide a font of information that informs all our work each year and is highly referenced by policymakers and the media.

CoSN has also taken important steps to help provide a safe digital learning environment for our students, including a new report on challenges facing school districts on Social Media. In partnership with the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and other leading organizations, we have documented the challenges around verification of official social media accounts, ability to report fake/mock accounts, and a way for educators to report bullying and harassment of students. This work has been covered in *Forbes*, *THE Journal, Ed Week*, and other national publications and websites. This work is just the start of ongoing and critical research.

Policy, Advocacy, and Funding

CoSN has been and continues to be a trusted source of information for policymakers. We work with our members, state chapters, and other organizations to educate policymakers and amplify your voices about the need for federal and state funding of cybersecurity protections, closing the Homework Gap, and protecting student data.

In the spring of 2022, our cybersecurity Subject Matter Expert, Amy McLaughlin, represented CoSN and testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee. Read her *amazing testimony*.

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

CoSN has continued to lean into ensuring that our community is more inclusive. We know we have much work to do, but our active Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee has been utilizing and sharing the Board-Approved *Call to Action Continuum*. We are proud that we are leading efforts to ensure that all students belong and that our IT teams reflect the diversity of our student populations. And we are exploring how we design our technology systems to be more inclusive and ensure that all students belong.

First ever, Network Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion *Meet-Up, CoSN2022 in Nashville.*

Coming – At CoSN2023, we will continue the popular Network Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Meet-Up and the *Where Are We in the Struggle for Equality for LGBTQ+ District Leaders Forum & Reception*. In addition, there will be a first-ever *Women in Technology Breakfast* and a *Male IT Leaders: Up Your Allyship* event.

New – We have launched an enhanced CoSN Network that highlights member resources and encourages increased member collaboration and sharing. The new member community highlights CETL® certification discounts, location of state chapters, direct links to publications and resources, and other benefits of CoSN membership, as well as regular Chapter Leader Meetings, the Member Spotlights, and Member Newsletters. all designed to keep you updated and engaged.

New – We are excited to share the *K-12CVAT*, based off the Educause Higher Education Community Vendor Assessment Tool – Lite (HECVAT-Lite), but geared specifically towards K-12 education – *Download it now*.

Never Doubt That a Small Group of Thoughtful, Committed Citizens Can Change the World; Indeed, It's the Only Thing That Ever Has. – Margaret Mead

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

Please be sure to see our *Corporate Partners*.