



APPROVED MINUTES
LEARN Board of Directors
REGULAR/BUSINESS MEETING
Thursday, September 12, 2024
Approved Posted: October 11, 2024
Draft Posted: September 18, 2024

Present: Eric Bauman, East Lyme; Dale Bernardoni, Chester/Grades K-6; Kate Ericson, LEARN; Jennifer Favalora, Killingworth/Region 17; Elizabeth Fernandes, Westbrook; A. Terri Garrity, East Haddam (Zoom); Cindy Luty, Preston; Robert Mitchell, Montville; Beverly Washington, Groton; and Mary Ann Connelly, Madison (Zoom)

Not Attending and Not Represented: Sara Baker, Stonington; Steve Beeler, Old Saybrook; W. Scott Brown, Lyme & Old Lyme/Region 18; Mary Harris, Ledyard; Kristen Peck, Guilford; Gregory Perry, Norwich; Sean Reith, Salem; Christine Wagner, North Stonington; Laurie Wolfley, Waterford; Vacant, Chester, Deep River, Essex Region #4; Vacant, Clinton; Vacant, Deep River/Grades K-6; Vacant, East Hampton; Vacant, Essex/Grades K-6; and Vacant, New London

Guests: Tara Amatrudo, LEARN MSMHS Principal; Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial Officer; Javen Benitez, LEARN IT Tech; Dr. Ryan Donlon, LEARN Associate Executive Director; Christina Golgozeanu, LEARN ELL Systems Developer; Eric Litvinoff, LEARN Teacher of the Year; and Elizabeth McCaffery, LEARN Director of Human Resources

Meeting began at 9:02 a.m.

1. **Call to Order:** Pledge of Allegiance
2. **Audience and Guests:** Introductions
3. **Public Comment:** No public comment

*Request Motion to move agenda item 9.1 Teacher and Para Educator of the Year presentations to precede regular business meeting agenda items.

Motion to move agenda item 9.1 Teacher and Para Educator of the Year to precede agenda item 4

- **Presented by Cindy Luty**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed unanimously**

4. **Reading and/or Review of Correspondence:** Executive Director Ericson shared email correspondence from the (4.1) Office of Civil Rights confirming receipt of LEARN's FY2024 MSAP grant application and a (4.2) 2024-2025 Letter of Approval, received via email on 9/10/2024, from the State of Connecticut Department of Education for LEARN's revised Leader and Educator Evaluation and Support Plan.
5. **Superintendents' Perspective:** LEARN Associate Executive Director, Dr. Ryan Donlon, shared that the 2024-2025 school year began with a smooth opening of all LEARN Magnet Schools. [Dr. Donlon's presentation](#) focused on building out the future of LEARN's Family of Magnet Schools as well as continuing LEARN's strategic mission of unification. He began his presentation with some history of LEARN partnerships and programs, including HILL For Literacy, McREL, and LEAP. He provided insight into the process for curriculum review, that we are in our second year of partnering with McREL to further boost our leadership and produce effective development plans, while expanding the leadership teams at the schools and developing common language around leadership to make the change successful. Dr. Donlon also offered an enrollment review of The Friendship School (TFS), Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS), Marine Science Magnet High School, and Three Rivers Middle College (TRMC), and clarified that magnet student lottery selection is not driven by race or ethnicity but is based solely on an algorithm that uses census block data to increase potential for having a diverse pool of students. Dr. Donlon noted that over time, current research has proven that this method helps to produce racially and ethnically diverse student bodies.



In addition to the opening of schools, Dr. Donlon provided an overview of the [Magnet Schools Operations' Plans](#) for The Friendship School (TFS), Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS), and the Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS). All interdistrict Magnet School operators must complete and submit the required compliance plans within the timeframe set by the Connecticut State Department of Education to receive approval from the Commissioner and remain eligible for the operating grant(s).

6. **Consent Agenda:**

- 6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—June 13, 2024
- 6.2 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Special Business Meeting—July 16, 2024
- 6.3 Approval of Budget Summary as of August 31, 2024
- 6.4 Approval of Grant Applications—5yr EIR AI² project: Enhancing 5th Grade Algebra Instruction with Artificial Intelligence to Improve Math Identity and Performance for 50 schools and 10 public school districts in SECT, including New London Public Schools; and 3yr State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP)

Motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

- **Presented by Beverly Washington**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed unanimously**

7. **Information from the Executive Director:**

- 7.1 Hiring—Resignations and new hires, including trend reports: *Attached in the agenda packet.*
- 7.2 Distributions— *Will be made available online* (2023-2024 LEARN Annual Report) and the Connecticut State Department of Education Commissioner's [2024-2025 Annual Back-to-School Memo](#)
- 7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—August 23, 2024: *Attached in the agenda packet.*
- 7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes—June 25, 2024 and August 23, 2024: *Attached in the agenda packet.*
- 7.5 Legislative Updates: Executive Ericson shared upcoming scheduled meetings with Secretary Jeffrey Beckham of the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) in September to talk about magnet funding with the RESC Alliance, and Representative Jeff Currey and the RESC Alliance in October. The Executive Director also received a call from Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood regarding the new Tri-Share Program.



7.6

LEARN Agency Updates – Executive Director Ericson commented on staffing for the upcoming year, as Human Resources successfully hired and onboarded seventeen certified educators, 20 non-certified staff, and one Special Education Supervisor for the LEARN Schools (Please note that the LEARN - Goodwin Schools Partnership concluded as of September 1, 2024). Also, the New Educator Orientation was a successful, two-day event. Currently, there are 42 ½ LEARN vacancies. The Board was updated on LEARN’s successful August events, including the Administrative Retreat and 2024 Convocation. LEARN has acquired a new Cyber Security partnership with Pentera, as the contract was unanimously approved by the Executive Committee at the August meeting. Newman/RDG Architects toured the property and are currently in the process of building out the project timeline, while continuing to meet with various school groups and stakeholders, as the Early Childhood School design process evolves. LEARN was contacted by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to partner in a statewide initiative to implement a new Tri-Share Program that has \$1.8 million in funding this year. LEARN will pilot a new infant/toddler program in two renovated classrooms at the Friendship School in the upcoming year. Executive Director Ericson shared about the AESA Summer Leadership Conference and new Youth Mental Health Navigator position, as well as LEARN’s Speech Language Pathologists are scheduled to present at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s National Conference. LEARN continues to expand its programs and services reach within the region. The Communications team rolled out a new website in July, and IT, HR and School Administrators collaborated to produce a new Teacher Evaluation Feedback App. LEARN’s new electric charging stations are now fully installed at Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy (OALA), Hatchetts Hill (HH), and Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS). The renovations at Hatchetts Hill are fully underway and proceeding to the second floor. Executive Director Ericson concluded updates with the current partnership with the Waterford Public Works department to provide storage space at The Friendship School ahead of the Southwest School demolition.

8. Old Business:

- 8.1 Approve Executive Director’s Authority to Draw on Established Line of Credit. This is an annual request and would only be used in an emergency to meet payroll. The average bi-weekly payroll is approximately \$1.5 million. This line of credit has never been used to date.

Postponed from May 9 and June 13 meetings, vote pending additional information.

Motion to rescind original motion, RESOLVED, that Katherine Ericson Executive Director, is authorized to approve and draw on the established line of credit, effective through June 30, 2025.

- Presented by Dale Bernardoni
- Second Beverly Washington
- Motion passed unanimously

9. New Business:

- 9.1 Teacher (Eric Litvinoff) and Para Educator of the Year (Sonia Rivera)* *Moved to top of the agenda.*



- 9.2 Accounting firm, CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP (CLA) Annual Governance Memo to the Board regarding the 2023-2024 audit

Motion to acknowledge receipt of the annual “Governance Memo to the Board” from accounting firm, CliftonLarsonAllen’s regarding the 2023-2024 audit process

- **Presented by Cindy Luty**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed unanimously**

- 9.3 New Policy #3314, Business and Non-Instructional Operations, Series 3000; “*Travel Reimbursement*,” First Read

- 9.4 New Policy #3520.13, Business and Non-Instructional Operations, Series 3000; “*Student Data Protection and Privacy*”, First Read

- 9.5 New Policy #4118.51/4218.51, Personnel (Certified/Non-Certified), Series 4000; “*Social Media*”, First Read

10. Educational Perspective:

11. Roundtable Discussion: Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education - Christina Golgozeanu joined the discussion and spoke to the ability of teachers to effectively engage students utilizing AI to promote connecting students with their classwork. Christina recommended the efficacy of Brisk Teaching. Board member Bauman asked if it would be possible for the state or RESCs to come together and pool some students and teachers and possibly pilot looking at what works and what doesn’t in relation to AI? Javen Benitez suggested that consideration be given regarding the ability of AI to be customized for an organization, as well as to suit an organization’s particular need(s), and is not restricted to one-size-fits-all.

12. Future Roundtable Topics: Cell phones.

13. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn at 11:12 a.m.

- **Presented by Jennifer Favalora**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed unanimously**

Respectfully submitted by:

Jamella A. A. Etienne