

# Board of Directors Regular Business Meeting

## APPROVED MINUTES



**Meeting Date:** October 10, 2024  
**Draft Posted:** October 16, 2024  
**Approved Posted:** November 15, 2024

**Present:** Sara Baker, Stonington (Zoom); Eric Bauman, East Lyme; Dale Bernardoni, Chester/Grades K-6; W. Scott Brown, Lyme & Old Lyme/Region 18; Kate Ericson, LEARN; Elizabeth Fernandes, Westbrook; A. Terri Garrity, East Haddam (Zoom); Nancy Johnston, Essex/Grades K-6; Robert Mitchell, Montville; Beverly Washington, Groton (Zoom); and Laurie Wolfley, Waterford

**Not Attending and Not Represented:** Steve Beeler, Old Saybrook; Mary Ann Connelly, Madison; Jennifer Favolora, Killingworth/Region 17; Mary Harris, Ledyard; Cindy Luty, Preston; Kristen Peck, Guilford; Gregory Perry, Norwich; Sean Reith, Salem; Christine Wagner, North Stonington; Vacant, Chester, Deep River, Essex Region #4; Vacant, Clinton; Vacant, Deep River/Grades K-6; Vacant, East Hampton; and Vacant, New London

**Guests:** Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial Officer; Jill Bessette, LEARN Systems Developer; Liz Binger, LEARN Assistant MSAP/LEAP Project Director; Dr. Ryan Donlon, LEARN Associate Executive Director; Joanne Lund, LEARN Assistant Director of Business; and Elizabeth McCaffery, LEARN Director of Human Resources

**Meeting began at 9:00 a.m.**

- 1. Call to Order:** Pledge of Allegiance
- 2. Audience and Guests:** Introductions
- 3. Public Comment:** No public comment
- 4. Reading and/or Review of Correspondence:** No Correspondence
- 5. Superintendents' Perspective:** Jill Bessette presented to the Board an overview of the [Parent Bill of Rights for English Learners and Multilingual Learners](#). Jill explained that the Multilingual Bill of Rights was legislation passed in July 2024, in the state of Connecticut. The Top five themes of the Bill are (1) Educational Equity; (2) Federal and State Law Compliance; (3) Linguistic Rights of students; (4) Supporting Student Educational Success; and (5) Promoting Family Involvement. The Bill of Rights are not new and can be traced back to previous efforts such as the Dear Colleague Letter of 2015 from the Office of Civil Rights and the 2015 Office of English Language Acquisition Toolkit. In relation to federal legislation and related case law, Jill pointed out that she recently learned that **Plyer v. Doe, 1982** is currently being challenged, which is affecting school districts in the West. The Northeast and Connecticut are keeping an eye on developments and what this means. There are 15 Bill of Rights that can be divided into three different areas of programming: (1) Translation and Interpretation, (2) Equity, and (3) Programming. Jill pointed out that a main concern is equitable access to academic learning and instruction in the schools. Translation services are costly and the state has been able to translate about 97% of languages. It also lists about 30 languages on CSDE website. Jill clarified for the Board the correct terminology usage, stating

that since 1968, when the federal government acknowledged bilingual students needed services, the terminology has evolved. Currently, we are shifting to multilingual learner because many of our students are coming in where English is their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> language. The term Multilingual learner is more inclusive. Jill stressed that training and family engagement are extremely important in making sure that systems and services are truly effective.

## **6. Consent Agenda:**

- 6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—September 12, 2024
- 6.2 Approval of Budget Summary as of September 30, 2024
- 6.3 Approval of Grant Applications

### **Motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.**

- **Presented by Dale Bernardoni**
- **Second W. Scott Brown**
- **Motion passed with 9 votes in favor, 0 votes against, and 1 abstention**

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

- 7.1 Hiring—Resignations and new hires, including trend reports: Executive Director Ericson reported on the recent resignation of the LEARN Director of Development. The philosophy of this position will be carefully vetted prior to any potential replacement efforts.
- 7.2 Distributions — [CABE 2024 Law Summaries](#)
- 7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—September 27, 2024, *Attached in the agenda packet.*
- 7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes—September 27, 2024, *Attached in the agenda packet*: Executive Director Ericson reported that we currently have two building committees. The SSS Building Committee, for Ocean Avenue, has five remaining punch list items to complete prior to closing out in the next three months. The LEARN Building Committee has collaborated with the architects to conduct multiple feedback sessions. The Town of Waterford has been extremely supportive and responsive of the new Early Childhood School building efforts.
- 7.5 Legislative Updates: Executive Director Ericson reported that the RESC Alliance collectively met with Secretary Jeffrey Beckham of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) on September 25th, in Hartford, and discussed magnet funding and support of the CREC Teacher Residency Program. To date, 130 teachers of color have been hired through the program and placed in districts across the state. The current ask by the collective group is for \$1.3 million.
- 7.6 LEARN Agency Updates— Executive Director Ericson shared the ***LEARN News for Families***, [September 2024 Edition](#): An e-newsletter resource for parents, guardians, and

caregivers of students enrolled in LEARN's Family of Schools. This new resource is intended to support the reimagining of LEARN's magnet schools and to make LEARN more visible to families in the region. As a member of Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker's Advisory Board, Executive Director Ericson participated in a meeting Commissioner Russell-Tucker held with Superintendents in September. The state is making a big push to help people understand the many benefits of partnerships with the national guard, including their mobile STEM lab, district and adult leadership activities at Camp Nett in Niantic, and 5th grade programming. Another issue raised, concerned nine students in Connecticut who took their own lives and what role the schools can play in improving systems to support students. On Wednesday, Executive Director Ericson returned from attending the National Summit for Courageous Conversation® in Chicago. The focus of this year's Summit was "Learning, To Be Free," and emphasizing the need to redefine educational approaches for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Summit Goals included, transforming our understanding of history, institutions, and the costs of system participation and empowering individuals to navigate and challenge these structures. On Tuesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, student awardees Raidy Cabrera, Jr. and Layan Faraj, both of Marine Science Magnet High School, will be celebrated at the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship Trust Fund dinner. Executive Director Ericson and Human Resources Director Elizabeth McCaffery updated the Board on the progress of the regional collaborative of districts to offer combined course programming to students in the region. The program is 2 ½ years in the making and is very close to possibly launching. Five Courses are currently on the table and are slated to be provided as a blend of three available formats: Synchronous, Asynchronous, and in-person learning. Once the program is built, other districts will be able to join in the future. Executive Director Ericson concluded the Agency update with LEARN's preparation to apply for a license for the new Infant/Toddler Program which will be piloted in two renovated classrooms at the Friendship School. If all goes well, the program will create new jobs, which the Board will have to approve within the next month to allow for a January 20th open. The new state mandated ratio is 1 to 5. Executive Director Ericson will confirm enrollment requirements but expects that it will be on a first come first serve basis and not lottery based as it is not intended to be connected to the magnet programs. Although the program will be located at the school, it is not a feeder program.

**8. Old Business:**

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

**Motion to approve New Policy 3314, Travel Reimbursement, as presented.**

- **Presented by Dale Bernardoni**
- **Second Eric Bauman**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 10 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

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

**Motion to approve New Policy 3520.13, Student Data Protection and Privacy, as presented.**

- **Presented by W. Scott Brown**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 10 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

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

**Motion to approve New Policy 4118.51/4218.51, Social Media, as presented.**

- **Presented by A. Terri Garrity**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**

**Prior to completing the vote, Executive Director Ericson requested that the Board table this policy to allow the teacher’s union an opportunity to provide input.**

**Motion to postpone New Policy 4118.51/4218.51 until the next meeting.**

- **Presented by Laurie Wolfley**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed Unanimously with 10 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

**9. New Business:**

- 9.1 Revised Policy #5005, Students, Series 5000; “*Student Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, Including Sex-Based Harassment*”

**Motion to adopt Revised Policy 5005, Student Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, Including Sex-Based Harassment, as presented.**

- **Presented by W. Scott-Brown**
- **Second A. Terri Garrity**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 10 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

- 10. Educational Perspective:** Executive Director Ericson announced that LEARN received the national Magnet Schools Assistance Program Grant for \$9,125,042.00 on Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. This is a five-year grant in partnership with New London Public Schools. This is a Federal Program and only magnet schools are eligible to apply. Executive Director Ericson took this time to acknowledge Liz Binger, LEARN Assistant MSAP/LEAP Project Director for providing more than 18 years of grant writing expertise and service to LEARN. LEARN has been awarded a total of \$45,936,400.00 through Liz Binger's grant writing. Dr. Ryan Donlon, LEARN Associate Executive Director, and Liz Binger presented to the Board an overview of the **Magnet Schools Assistance Program, titled Southeastern Connecticut Sustainable Outcomes by Advancing Regional Solutions or SECT SOARS**. The Idea of sustainability has always been key to MSAP applications. The federal government wants to make sure that this is an investment. The grant invests in building capacity so that when the grant cycle is over, the work can continue. Regional solutions is another important aspect of this grant and LEARN's cross-regional partnerships make its grants unique. MSAP is the only grant that has a relationship with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Approved grant submitters must be in alignment with federal law to submit. The grant funding is split evenly across C.B. Jennings International Elementary Magnet School in New London, LEARN's Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS), and regional solutions. The MSAP Grant goals are: To reduce and prevent minority and racial isolation, To Reduce socioeconomic isolation; To improve student outcomes; Ensuring equitable access to magnet programming; and Increasing and deepening parent engagement.
- 11. Roundtable Discussion:** Meeting attendees discussed other districts and student cell phones. Although some districts enact measures to control student cell phone usage, students are finding ways around these measures. Therefore, district efforts continue.
- 12. Future Roundtable Topics:** State involvement and management of Special Services; Cell Phones; Student Suicide; Disengaged Youth; Youth Mental Health Issues; and Educating Students on Social Media.
- 13. Adjournment:**

**Motion to adjourn at 11:13 a.m.**

- **Presented by Laurie Wolfley**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 10 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

**Respectfully submitted by:**  
**Jamella A. A. Etienne**