

Board of Directors Regular Business

APPROVED MINUTES



Meeting Date: January 9, 2025
Draft Posted: January 13, 2025
Approved Posted: February 13, 2025

Present: Eric Bauman, East Lyme; Dale Bernardoni, Chester/Grades K-6; W. Scott Brown, Lyme & Old Lyme/Region 18; Mary Ann Connelly, Madison (Zoom); Kate Ericson, LEARN; Jennifer Favalora, Killingworth/Region 17 (Zoom); Elizabeth Fernandes, Westbrook; A. Terri Garrity, East Haddam (Zoom); Mary Harris, Ledyard (Zoom); Cindy Luty, Preston; Robert Mitchell, Montville; Chet Stefanowicz, North Stonington; Beverly Washington, Groton (Zoom); Jane Wisialowski, Old Saybrook; and Laurie Wolfley, Waterford (Zoom)

Not Attending and Not Represented: Sara Baker, Stonington; Alisha Blake, New London; Nancy Johnston, Essex/Grades K-6; Kristen Peck, Guilford; Gregory Perry, Norwich; Sean Reith, Salem; Vacant, Chester, Deep River, Essex Region #4; Vacant, Clinton; Vacant, Deep River/Grades K-6; and Vacant, East Hampton

Guests: Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial Officer; Joanne Lund, LEARN Assistant Director of Business; and Elizabeth McCaffery, LEARN Director of Human Resources (Zoom)

Meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

- 1. Call to Order:** Pledge of Allegiance
- 2. Audience and Guests:** Introductions
- 3. Public Comment:**
- 4. Reading and/or Review of Correspondence:**
- 5. Superintendents' Perspective:** Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial Officer, and Kate Ericson, LEARN Executive Director, presented the 2023-2024 State of the Agency, highlighting the agency's financial health and key achievements in which LEARN has shown consistent fiscal growth since 2013.
- 6. Consent Agenda:**
 - 6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—December 12, 2024
 - 6.2 Approval of Budget Summary as of December 31, 2024
 - 6.3 Approval of Grant Applications—None

Motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

- **Presented by Cindy Luty**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed with 14 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

7. Information from the Executive Director:

- 7.1 Hiring—Resignations and new hires, including trend reports: Executive Director Ericson reported LEARN currently has 47 vacancies and 6 candidates in the hiring process. Recent resignations were noted in December, and to better understand staff turnover, the agency conducts exit interviews, typically citing geographic or financial reasons. LEARN also tracks employee retention and attrition trends through annual data analysis.
- 7.2 Distributions —None
- 7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—December 18, 2024
- 7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes—No meeting held December 18, 2024
- 7.5 Legislative Updates: The legislative session begins this week, with a new bill introduced to increase resources for students and schools, including special education. Lawmakers acknowledge the urgent need for more educational funding, though challenges remain due to the end of federal funding and budget constraints. The upcoming session is expected to be competitive, with ongoing negotiations.
- 7.6 LEARN Agency Updates: LEARN has made several strategic investments and improvements across its programs. Two new vans were purchased for Student Support Services to enhance transportation. The Friendship School (TFS) hosted a successful Museum Night in December, drawing over 900 families, and is preparing for a Parent Academy in partnership with the Child and Family Agency. LEARN is also progressing with plans for an early childhood program, with construction set to begin by July 1. In terms of school structure, TFS will expand to include kindergarten next year, while Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS) continues its lottery process. The Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) will transition to a 3rd-8th grade model, and over the next few years, these changes will help create a seamless K-8 pathway.
- 7.7 Executive Director Mid-Year Review: The Mid-Year Review is included in the full agenda packet and outlines three key areas of focus: Educational Leadership, Operational Management, and Community and Board Relationships.

8. Old Business: None.

9. New Business:

- 9.1 Proposed Salaries & Benefits 2025-2026: LEARN's Chief Financial Officer, Michael Belden, provided a preview of the agency's proposed salaries and benefits for both certified and non-certified staff for the 2025-2026 FY. The proposal outlined the adjustments and considerations for compensation in alignment with LEARN's financial strategy and organizational goals.

Motion to approve 2025-2026 LEARN Salaries & Benefits as presented.

- **Presented by W. Scott Brown**
- **Second Cindy Luty**
- **Motion passed with 14 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

- 9.2 Proposed Executive Committee and Board of Directors 2025-2026 Meeting Dates

Motion to approve the 2025-2026 LEARN Executive Committee and Board of Directors meeting schedules as presented.

- **Presented by Eric Bauman**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed with 14 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

- 10.** Educational Perspective: Executive Director Ericson welcomed new board members and presented the 2025 Board Orientation, Leading LEARN. The orientation session covered key topics, including the role of a Regional Educational Service Center (RESA), LEARN's Theory of Action, and the responsibilities of a LEARN Board member.

- 11.** Roundtable Discussion: None

- 12.** Future Roundtable Topics: None

- 13.** Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn at 10:59 a.m.

- **Presented by Dale Bernardoni**
- **Second W. Scott Brown**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 14 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

Respectfully submitted by:
Jamella A. A. Etienne

JOIN ZOOM MEETING

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88179290855?pwd=L8ZTZ1TTOmeH7Xj47dwTVfgnSADbGa.1>

Meeting ID: 881 7929 0855
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