

Board of Directors Regular Business

APPROVED MINUTES



Meeting Date: March 13, 2025

Draft Posted: March 19, 2025

Approved Posted: April 11, 2025

Present: Dale Bernardoni, Chester/Grades K-6; W. Scott Brown, Lyme & Old Lyme/Region 18; Katherine Ericson, LEARN; Jennifer Favalora, Killingworth/Region 17; Elizabeth Fernandes, Westbrook; Katie Gauthier, Stonington (Zoom); Mary Harris, Ledyard (Zoom); Nancy Johnston, Essex/Grades K-6; Cindy Luty, Preston; Robert Mitchell, Montville; Beverly Washington, Groton; and Laurie Wolfley, Waterford (Zoom)

Not Attending and Not Represented: Eric Bauman, East Lyme; Alisha Blake, New London; Mary Ann Connelly, Madison; A. Terri Garrity, East Haddam; Kristen Peck, Guilford; Gregory Perry, Norwich; Sean Reith, Salem; Chet Stefanowicz, North Stonington; Jane Wisialowski, Old Saybrook; Vacant, Chester, Deep River, Essex Region #4; Vacant, Clinton; Vacant, Deep River/Grades K-6; and Vacant, East Hampton

Guests: Christopher Drezek, Superintendent of Old Saybrook Public Schools; Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial Officer; Kristin Gemaly, Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) Literacy Coach & LEARN LEA President (Zoom); Joanne Lund, LEARN Assistant Director of Business; and Elizabeth McCaffery, LEARN Director of Human Resources (Zoom)

Meeting began at 9:01 a.m.

- 1. Call to Order:** Pledge of Allegiance
- 2. Audience and Guests:** Introductions
- 3. Public Comment:**
- 4. Reading and/or Review of Correspondence:** LEARN Executive Director, Katherine Ericson, shared an email from the U.S. Department of Education regarding the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) Grants. LEARN has received two grants under this program.
- 5. Superintendents' Perspective:** Superintendent of Old Saybrook Public Schools, Christopher Drezek, presented to the board on recent developments and ongoing initiatives within the Old Saybrook District, highlighting a new mascot, steady enrollment, the district's commitment to diverse career pathways, and the ongoing re-evaluation of the district's strategic plan.

6. Consent Agenda:

- 6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—February 13, 2025
- 6.2 Approval of Budget Summary as of February 28, 2025
- 6.3 Approval of Grant Applications—Public Educational & Governmental Programming & Education Technology Investment Account (PEGPETIA) to support a new sound system for MSMHS, mobile carts for digital signage and classrooms, and firewall security for LEARN in the amount of \$39,354.02.

Motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

- **Presented by W. Scott Brown**
- **Second Cindy Luty**
- **Motion passed with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

7. Information from the Executive Director:

- 7.1 Hiring— LEARN currently has 37 active vacancies and 8 candidates, and is actively recruiting for open positions, while working with professional organizations to attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates. LEARN will also be attending upcoming recruitment events at the University of Connecticut (UCONN) and Central Connecticut State University (CCSU).
- 7.2 Distributions— The Executive Director distributed recent correspondence and testimony to the Connecticut Education Committee, highlighting key concerns regarding funding for magnet schools, the Connecticut Teacher Residency Program (CT TRP), and Special Education (SPED).
- 7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—February 28, 2025 — The Executive Director informed the Committee of the new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the teachers' union to address a payroll anomaly.
- 7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes—February 28, 2025 — The Early Childhood School project is moving forward with the architects, and schematics are in development.
- 7.5 Legislative Updates —The Executive Director continues to advocate on behalf of the RESC Alliance, recently meeting with legislators to discuss key funding priorities, including magnet school funding and the CT Teacher Residency Program. Additionally, the Board was informed about raised Bill 1393.

7.6 LEARN Agency Updates – The recent community event at The Friendship School was a Success; LEARN welcomes two new Board members; McREL leadership training was completed; The infant/Toddler program hired a new Site Coordinator; The Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS) hosted a regional summit, and its teachers presented at the international aquaculture conference.

8. Old Business: None.

9. New Business:

9.1a Public Schools Participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)—Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for 2025-2026: *To be eligible for HFC during SY 2025-26 (July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026), the Board must conduct the HFC votes by July 1, 2025. The Connecticut State Department of Education requires all district governing boards to vote “yes or no” on the following 2 motions as written by the State:*

Motion 1: Required vote for participation in healthy food option of HFC

Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the LEARN Board of Directors certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

- **Presented by Beverly Washington**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed with 11 Yes votes in favor and 0 No votes against**
- **Motion passed unanimously**

9.1b Food and Beverage Exemptions

Motion 2: Required vote for food and beverage exemptions for BOEs voting “yes” to the healthy food option of HFC

The LEARN Board of Directors will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

- **Presented by W. Scott Brown**
- **Second Dale or Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed with 11 Yes votes in favor and 0 No votes against**
- **Motion passed unanimously**

9.1c Approval for the Executive Director to sign the 2025-2026 Healthy Food Certification Statement

Motion to approve LEARN Executive Director, Katherine Ericson, to sign the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2025-2026

- **Presented by Beverly Washington**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

9.2 Non-renewals of Non-tenured Certified Staff *(Executive Director to read the following)*

Per Article IV – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Item. 2, of the LEARN Membership Agreement and Constitution; In my capacity as Executive Director, I recommend that the Board of Directors non-renew the teaching contracts of those named in the motion below at the end of the 2024-2025 school year, in accordance with the provisions of the Connecticut General Statutes 10-151, and that the Board accept, adopt, and ratify my determination that the contracts be non-renewed. I am making this recommendation for the following reason(s), any one or all of which I view to be a sufficient basis for the recommended action:

1. Elimination of position or loss of position to another teacher.
2. Other— due and sufficient cause
 - a. budget considerations
 - b. contract reduction in force procedures
 - c. legal requirements in accordance with 10-151 of the Connecticut General Statutes
 - d. failure to meet our minimum standards for continued employment

Any requested hearing on the non-renewal of a non-tenured teacher must be held before an impartial hearing panel. It is my recommendation that you vote to have the hearing held before the Board so there will be no procedural misunderstandings in the event a hearing is necessary. I also recommend that I be authorized and instructed to communicate notice of this action in writing to the affected party and to respond for the Board to any appropriate requests which may be forthcoming from the teachers, or their representatives as provided in the Teacher Tenure Law.

(Board Chair to request the suggested motion for non-renewal of non-tenured certified staff):

MOTION

Move that pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 10-151, the LEARN Board of Directors non-renew the teaching contracts of those named as follows, at the end of the 2024-2025 school year, as recommended by the Executive Director; and ratify, adopt and, accept the Executive Director’s determination that the contracts be non-renewed:

1. Baker, Tony
2. Ballantyne, Sarah
3. Cauley, Crista
4. Costa, Sophia
5. Gatheral, Abby
6. Krawiec, Kathleen
7. Lippold, Danielle
8. Nintean, Ashley

9. O'Brien, Jessica
10. Pearson, Elisa
11. Schenk-Belisle, Julia

Further move that the Executive Director be directed to communicate this action of the Board in writing to those named in this motion, and that the Executive Director be authorized to respond on behalf of the Board of Directors to any requests for a hearing or for other data which may be forthcoming from those named in this motion and/or their representative pursuant to applicable provisions of Connecticut General Statutes 10-151; and further move that the Executive Director be further directed that any response to a request for a hearing, if a hearing is required by law, indicate that such hearing is to be before the Board of Directors.

Motion to accept the non-renewals as presented.

- **Presented by W. Scott Brown**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

9.3 New Policy #4158.2, Personnel (Certified), Series 4000; "Code of Ethics", First Read

9.4 Revised Policy #4159/4259, Personnel (Certified/Non-Certified), Series 4000; "Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens"

Motion to approve Revised Policy 4159/4259, Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens, as presented.

- **Presented by Cindy Luty**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

10. Educational Perspective: None

11. Roundtable Discussion: The Board discussed district cell phone practices and policies, and provided updates on their respective home district budgets.

The Executive Director acknowledged Board Appreciation Month, thanking the Board for their dedication and contributions to the agency.

12. Future Roundtable Topics: None

13. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn at 11:00 a.m.

- **Presented by W. Scott Brown**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 11 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>

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