LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Regional School District #18

A Private School Experience ***in a Public School Setting***

Regular Board of Education Meeting
June 4, 2025

Board Present: Jason Kemp, Chair; Anna James, Vice Chair; Christopher Staab, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Scott Brown; Laura Dean-Frazier; Susan Fogliano; Gavin Lodge; Alexander Lowry

Administration Present: Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Mark Ambruso, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School; Sean Kennedy, Assistant Principal of Mile Creek School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School

Others Present: Isabella Presti and Ainsley Rinoski, student representatives to the Board; 55 community members from LOL

I. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Jason Kemp. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. Consent Agenda
MOTION: Mrs. Fogliano made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lowry, to approve the consent agenda which included the following items:

- Participation in State and Federal Grants
  To authorize the Superintendent of Schools to apply for, receive and otherwise act as the legal representative of Regional School District No. 18 in connection with the following State and Federal Grants along with any other grants he deems appropriate:
  Adult Education
  Handicapped Preschool Incentive – Section 619 Education of the Handicapped Act
  National School Lunch Program

Open Choice Attendance
Title I Improving Basic Programs
Title II Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting
Title VI Part B of the Education of the Handicapped Act PL 94-142
Carl D. Perkins
School Transportation
Science and Technology
Investing and Personal Finance

- Superintendent Appointment of Designee(s) per Policy 2131.1
  To designate Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum, and Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services, as the designees to act in the absence of the Superintendent per Policy 2131.1.

- Food Service Management Contract
  To approve the Food Service Contract between Regional School District #18 and Chartwells for the 2025-2026 school year.

- Approval of Minutes
  To approve the minutes of District Budget Meeting of May 5, 2025; Regular Meeting and Executive Session of May 7, 2025; and Special Meeting of May 13, 2025

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

III. Visitors

1. Recognition of Crew Team – State Champions

Members of the boys and girls crew team and their coaches (Paul Fuchs-girls crew and Leo Pelletier-boys crew) were recognized by the Board for their state championship season.

2. Recognition of Unified Sports Team – Michael's Cup Recipient

Members of the Unified Sports Team and their coaches, Christine Corah and Eilis Welsh, were recognized by the Board for receiving the Michael's Cup. The is an honor bestowed upon schools by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) for their commitment to sportsmanship. This award recognizes schools that demonstrate a strong commitment to sportsmanship, encourage student involvement in promoting a positive school environment, and actively support community service initiatives.

3. Recognition of Girls Track Team – State Champions

Members of the girls track team and their coaches, Jan Merrill-Morin and Alyssa Mercaldi, were recognized by the Board for their state championship season.

4. CABE Communications Awards

Jaime Shelburn, a representative from CABE, presented communication awards on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education.

Award Winner for Budget Book and Focus on Education Newsletter

Honorable Mention for Website, School Calendar, Staff Profiles and Social Media

5. VFW Recognition of Jeanne Manfredi

Susan Lessard, a representative from the VFW, presented Jeanne Manfredi, who is retiring in June, with a plaque for her work with the VFW.

6. Recognition of Retirees

The following staff members, who are retiring this year, were recognized for their years of service to the district:

Jeanne Manfredi – 30 years
Rebecca Bocian – 36 years
Marianne DeBruyn – 20 years
Thelma Halloran – 17 years
Bruce Hrozenchik – 32 years
Susan Whritner – 38 years
Jeanne DeLaura – 34 years
Regina Wohlke – 12 years

7. Report from Student Representatives

Newly appointed student representatives, Ainsley Rinoski and Isabella Presti, reported on the following activities taking place at the schools:

At LOLHS: May at the high school was a fantastic month. The girls crew and track teams won their state championships, with many other sports still competing in tournaments. May was also a month of recognizing accomplishments of the underclassmen and senior awards nights as well as the Youth Art Show, World Language Honor Society's Induction Ceremony and Senior Banquet. Students involved with this year's play and musical went to the Halo Awards where they won three awards including best contemporary musical. We also celebrated the end of school with spirit week and field day. Although field day had to be inside due to weather, students still had a great time. Seniors begin finals on June 5 and are looking forward to graduation on June 12. Underclassmen begin finals next week which will continue through the week.

At LOLMS: At the middle school, students worked diligently on both the SBAC and NGSS assessments, showcasing a year's worth of hard work and dedication. The final school dance of the year was held with over 80% of students in attendance and a special recognition for the outgoing 8th graders taking place. The band and chorus each performed their final concerts of the year, and we look forward to the upcoming Music Festival for 7th and 8th graders, which will be followed by a celebratory trip to Six Flags. As part of the 5th grade transition program, students from Mile Creek School and Lyme School

visited the middle school and participated in a morning of engaging stations designed to help them feel safe, comfortable and excited for their transition. Last week, the 8th graders marked the end of their middle school journey with the annual Lock-In event. They are also looking forward to their 8th Grade Orientation or EGO Day at the high school. Next week, students across all grades will enjoy a variety of field trips including the highly anticipated school-wide field day and ice cream social. We look forward to celebrating the 8th grade students during the Promotion Ceremony, which will be held on June 17 at 8:30 a.m.

At Lyme Consolidated School and Mile Creek School: Many end of the year activities and celebrations are taking place at both elementary schools. Students participated in the 39th annual Youth Arts Show. Kindergarten orientation for the parents of incoming kindergarten students will be held at each building. Students in grade 3 at both buildings are invited to an evening "Instrumental Carnival" to explore instrumental options for fourth grade. The fifth-grade promotion ceremony at both buildings will take place on June 16. Mile Creek School held a summer reading pep rally. The PTO is sponsoring the end of the year picnic for families and staff. Next week we will be holding field day and the fifth-grade picnic at Lyme School. We had over 50 students run the final mile of the Kids Marathon on the Lyme-Old Lyme High School track. It was a wonderful event, and families lined the track to cheer the kids on. We will enjoy a culminating chorus concert performed by our third and fourth grade students. Fifth graders enjoyed a pancake breakfast this morning before they headed off to Hammonassett for their fifth-grade trip.

In the Preschool Program: May was a busy month at the preschool. We welcomed representatives from the Audubon Society who taught us a lesson about how birds build nests, feed their young and fly. We reviewed the alphabet with an alphabet picnic during which families contributed snacks that started with the same letter as our name, and we were able to bring our favorite stuffy to share our snacks. We took our monthly walking field trip to the Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library. Our parents are excited to attend the kindergarten orientation to learn all about the exciting things we will experience next year. We are looking forward to the end of the year celebration, which is planned for Friday, June 13. Thank you for providing us with a wonderful preschool experience at Center School.

8. Public Comment

Emily Bjornberg, a former Lyme resident, addressed the Board to express deep concern about issues of elitism, classism and racism in the Lyme-Old Lyme School District. Her statement, in its entirety, is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

Mr. Staab questioned the accuracy of Mrs. Bjornberg's public comments accusing students of racist behavior at a high school basketball game. He expressed concern that falsehoods were being recorded without also documenting the district's response. He emphasized that the district took the allegation seriously—reviewing game footage, reaching out to the Hartford School District, and interviewing staff and other adults present. According to Mr. Staab, no one except the individual making the accusation witnessed any racist behavior. He defended the district's policies and actions, stating they were properly

followed. Mr. Staab concluded by asserting that while public comment is respected, unsubstantiated claims should be countered with the facts on record.

Mrs. Dean-Frazier voiced that she concurred with Mr. Staab's comment.

Student representatives to the Board, Isabella Presti and Ainsley Rinoski, expressed confusion and concern over a community member's repeated use of a racial slur during public comment. Isabella stated that she had never heard the slur used in school and that this was her first time hearing it spoken aloud. Ainsley Rinoski agreed, referencing public comments made by Mrs. Bjornberg about racism at the high school and noting that students are aware of the situation but do not support or agree with the portrayal presented in those comments.

IV. Correspondence

Mr. Kemp reviewed a summary of the correspondence that the Board received over the last month. The correspondence is attached to the minutes for informational purposes. *The opinions expressed in the attached correspondence are solely those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the position of the Regional School District #18 Board of Education or its employees.*

Sender	Date	Subject
Emily Bjornberg	May 22, 2025	Freedom of information request.

V. Administrative Reports

1. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the June personnel report which reflected the following:

Vacancies 2025-2026	
Preschool Teacher	Center School (.5 FTE)
Special Education Teacher	LOLMS (.5 FTE) and Mile Creek School (.5 FTE)
Special Education Teacher (long-term substitute position)	LOLHS
Secretary (full-time)	Mile Creek School
Secretary (part-time)	Mile Creek School
Instructional Assistants	PreK, Elementary, Middle and High School levels

Appointments			
Name	**Position**	**Location**	**Effective Date**
Thomas Abatemarco	Science Teacher	LOLHS	August 22, 2025
Kristen Furano	School Nurse Supervisor	Districtwide	July 1, 2025

Ian Boss	Custodian	LOLHS	June 16, 2025
Michael Vitale	Custodian	Mile Creek School	June 9, 2025
Paige Rooney	Admin Assistant to Superintendent	Central Office	July 1, 2025

Retirements			
Name	**Position**	**Location**	**Effective Date**
Regina Wohlke	Instructional Assistant	LOLHS	June 17, 2025

Resignations			
Name	**Position**	**Location**	**Effective Date**
Luke Alexandru	Science Teacher	LOLHS	June 17, 2025
Erin Mohn	Instructional Assistant	Center School	June 17, 2025
Ed Jamerson	Instructional Assistant	LOLHS	June 17, 2025
Laura Nelson	Instructional Assistant	Center School	June 17, 2025

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the June enrollment report which reflected a total of 1,277 students in-house, an increase of one student from last month this time.

2. Business Manager's Report

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Executive Budget Summary as of May 31, 2025. Fluctuations of note: As previously reported, Special Education overage is based upon student need and stipulated financial obligations. Support Services is over budget due to contract for nursing services to cover for an extended medical leave. Administrative Services overage is mainly due to the builder's risk insurance policies for the four-school project that the Board approved at December's meeting. Debt service is over due to an interest payment on the four-school project note, covered by funds from the premium. The total percent spend to budget is slightly to budget as last year for the same time period.

	2024-2025 Received YTD
Town of Old Lyme	$26,432,880
Town of Lyme	$5,949,748

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Contingency Maintenance Report. There was no new spending. Balance stands at $106,565.

VI. Educational Presentation

There was no educational presentation scheduled.

VII. Chairman & Committee Reports:

a. Facilities. No report.

b. *Finance*. No report.

c. *Communications*. Mrs. Dean-Frazier reported that Bridget Compagno, Director of Communications and Marketing, is working with a Mile Creek parent who is willing to take photos of the students for media purposes. At their last meeting, Mrs. Compagno discussed her struggles with finalizing a promotional video, i.e., challenges in scheduling interviews with parents and students. Mrs. Compagno also touched on the importance of building trust through consistent communication and transparency, as emphasized at a recent conference on school communication she attended. Mr. Neviaser gave some background information on the creation of the video and how it is used as a promotional tool.

d. *Policy*. Mrs. James reported that there will be a first reading of the suspension and expulsion policy focusing on new legislation that states that districts cannot expel students from grades PK-2. She also reported that the Superintendent is developing a new policy on maintaining the undesignated fund.

e. *LEARN*. Dr. Brown distributed a brochure explaining LEARN's restructuring of their magnet schools. The brochure is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

f. *LOL Prevention Coalition*. Mr. Kemp reported that he recently attended a meeting of the coalition. Besides discussion of a grant application, Old Lyme Police Officer Stephen Hackett discussed starting a D.A.R.E. program next year.

g. *PreK-8 Building Committee*. Mrs. Fogliano gave the following report:

Construction is proceeding as well as can be expected given the rainy spring weather. Downes Construction and SP&A Architects are working hard to ensure that the upcoming eight weeks of summer without students and staff in the buildings is as efficient as humanly possible.

That brings me to one important notification: All of our summer staff and administration will be moving to the high school once school is out, with the exception of Lyme Consolidated School. The construction folks were able to carve out a space for Lyme School administration to stay in their building. Everyone else, including Central Office Staff, will move to the high school. At Center School, in particular, there will be abatement of old plaster above the ceiling line that has asbestos in it, as well as considerable work on the roof. At Mile Creek School, the work on the expanded vestibule and the addition make leaving staff on site difficult. A similar situation occurs at the LOLMS as well.

The boilers were turned off in early May to allow them to cool down (which takes a considerable amount of time) and to drain the glycol from the pipes (which takes a considerable amount of time). This will position Downes to go straight to demo of all the boiler rooms and installation of new boilers and water heaters this summer where applicable.

Both masonry and roofing materials for the Mile Creek School addition will be delivered by the time of the Board meeting. The last few weeks have been devoted to pouring the slab and setting the structural steel, as well as pouring the generator pad. Once again, the mission is to allow Downes to be ready to pounce on closing in the addition itself once school is over for the summer.

De-humification units will be installed in our libraries (except the high school) over the summer to ensure our books do not get moldy while cooling systems are offline.

The above ceiling work at the three HVAC schools is continuing through each phase, once again to ensure we maximize use of the summer months to integrate piping, ductwork and VAVs with the rooftop units. As you are all aware, Downes Construction understands that it is critical that the HVAC systems on these buildings are complete by December 2025 in order to receive our State reimbursement for the HVAC portion of the project. Downes has been meeting with its subcontractors to prepare a focused summer schedule to accomplish this.

The existing building at Mile Creek School has met an important milestone. All of the design work and financial adjustments associated with removing the fire sprinkler system and adding back all necessary code work for fire suppression has been completed. Precision ductwork fabrication will come next. The "change order" you will be asked to approve at the meeting prior to the high school graduation will not add cost to the project. It is administrative in nature, moving those fire suppression costs from an "allowance" line onto a budget line to make applying for State reimbursement clearer.

Work at the security vestibules for all the schools will proceed over the summer.
As always, feel free to contact me or the Superintendent should you or any community member have any questions. We are happy to answer them.

VIII. New Business

1. Policy Update

Mr. Neviaser reviewed a newly constructed Policy 5114 *Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process* explaining the new verbiage required by a change in legislation.

MOTION: Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Shoemaker, to waive the second reading and approve Policy 5114 *Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process* as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

IX. Old Business

There was no old business to report.

X. Executive Session

Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Staab, to move into executive session for the purpose of discussing the superintendent's evaluation and the Central Office administrative contracts. Mr. Neviaser was invited to attend the executive session.

XI. Adjournment

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m. upon a motion by Mrs. Shoemaker and a second by Mr. Staab.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary

Good Evening. Thank you for the opportunity to once again address this Board. I know there are members of the board who share my desire for an inclusive, respectful school system and I appreciate the ability to continue the dialogue.

Two months ago, I spoke to you about my own personal experience with racism as a student in this school district in the 1990's.

Last month, I talked to you about the experiences of both of my children in this school district, who faced down brutal and consistent racism without reprieve through the 2024 school year.

Tonight I will speak to you about the events of the basketball game on March 4, 2025, when the Lyme Old Lyme high school boys basketball team played Hartford Public in a CIAC tournament game in our gym. It was this night that prompted my battle cry before this board.

I attended this game, and I was genuinely excited to go. As you know, I grew up in this community. I am a proud graduate of this high school. Many of my family members and friends still live here. Basketball games are a community event in this town. It feels like everybody comes. I get to see lots of people I love and respect. But this night felt extra special because we were playing Hartford Public. "The Pub," as it's known in Hartford, educates many of the children who belong to my new church, the AME Zion church on Main Street. So not only was I excited to see friends from childhood, I was super pumped to introduce my new friends to my beloved hometown. I went into that game feeling very proud of my home.

Now we can sit here and argue all night long about what signals and words were used by the children of Old Lyme at that game. My experiences have already been well documented by the press, and I have watched the predictable and sad response from Old Lyme: "It didn't happen." They claimed at first. And later: "Well maybe it did happen, but the Hartford kids started it." I've already heard it all and I have no interest in arguing.

Instead, I will highlight the singular point that matters the most to me.

The game went just fine. Old Lyme was up by nearly 20 the entire time. It was not close. The gym was packed with Old Lyme fans, as it always is for these games. Everyone was cheering and I thought all was well. And then I looked over at the Hartford cheerleaders. It took me a moment to figure out what I was seeing. And for me, this is the only point that matters from that whole terrible night:

Those cheerleaders had fear in their eyes. They were afraid. It was unmistakable. They were afraid in our gym. Here. In our community we failed to keep other people's children feeling safe. Their eyes were wide with confusion. They looked to the adults in their group to stop the name calling. They looked confused and lost. Hurt and scared. In our gym. In our house. They feared for their physical safety.

It is an incredibly low bar to pass - that one school system would expect another to keep their children feeling safe. And yet we failed to clear it. Failed. Those kids left our building feeling scared and confused. They drove home talking about the behavior they had just witnessed in our gym. They debriefed with their parents, coaches and administrators. They told heartbreaking stories about how this town made them feel. And they are children. Legal minors. Under our care for a basketball game

they had to hear the word "nigger" spit out at them repeatedly with absolutely no explanation or apology TO THIS DAY.

My next presentation, at your August meeting, will outline the response to March 4th by this school district. I will detail my call directly to your superintendent, in which I was informed in no uncertain terms that he was unwilling to address this issue and that further more he owed me no explanation. That's right. Despite my tax dollars going to his paycheck, he told me that he owed me no explanation for the events that unfolded in my high school gym on March 4th, 2025. I've never known another public servant who does not believe they are beholden to taxpayers. Lyme Old Lyme knows better, but it chose to follow his lead down a path of silence anyway.

I suspect our response was actually fairly typical for a small town. Rather than taking responsibility, we circled the wagons and denied the problem. Our elected officials went silent. Our keyboard warriors denied anything had gone wrong. Our schools refused to stand up any response. Our moral leaders went blind. We became immediately incapable of honest discussion. This is precisely how white supremacy gets perpetuated, and thanks to Old Lyme it remains on display for the whole world to see. I sure hope that changes soon.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your August meeting.

Emily Anne Bjornberg

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Summary of Communication to Board of Education
June 4, 2025

Sender	Date	Subject
Emily Bjornberg	May 22, 2025	Freedom of information request.

Delaura, Jeanne

From: Emily Bjornberg <emilyabjornberg@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2025 11:14 AM
To: Kemp, Jason (BOE)
Cc: Delaura, Jeanne
Subject: FOI

Dear Chairman,

I hereby make a Freedom of Information request for copies of all electronic correspondence regarding the March 4, 2025 CIAC basketball game between Lyme Old Lyme High School and Hartford Public. This comes from Chapter 14 of the CT state statutes: Freedom of information act.

Please include any electronic communications of all board of education members, basketball coaches and administrators of the LOL school system, including the superintendent, principals, vice principals, and the Athletic Director, Hildie Heck between the dates of Monday March 3, 2025 and Monday April 7, 2025 that discuss any aspect of the March 4th basketball game. These would include the use of the words: basketball, monkey, racism, racist, race, Hartford Courant, inappropriate behavior, Jen Hockenhull, Elvis Minga, Diane Callis, Hartford, as well as any other references to the basketball game on the night of March 4th or the aftermath of the game.

As specified in Sec 1-200 (11-13) please provide the cell phone records of the Athletic Director, Hidie Heck, between Monday March 3, 2025 and Friday March 14, 2025.

As specified in Sec 1-200 (11-13) please provide the cell phone records of the Superintendent, Ian Nevisiar, between Monday March 3, 2025 and Friday March 14, 2025.

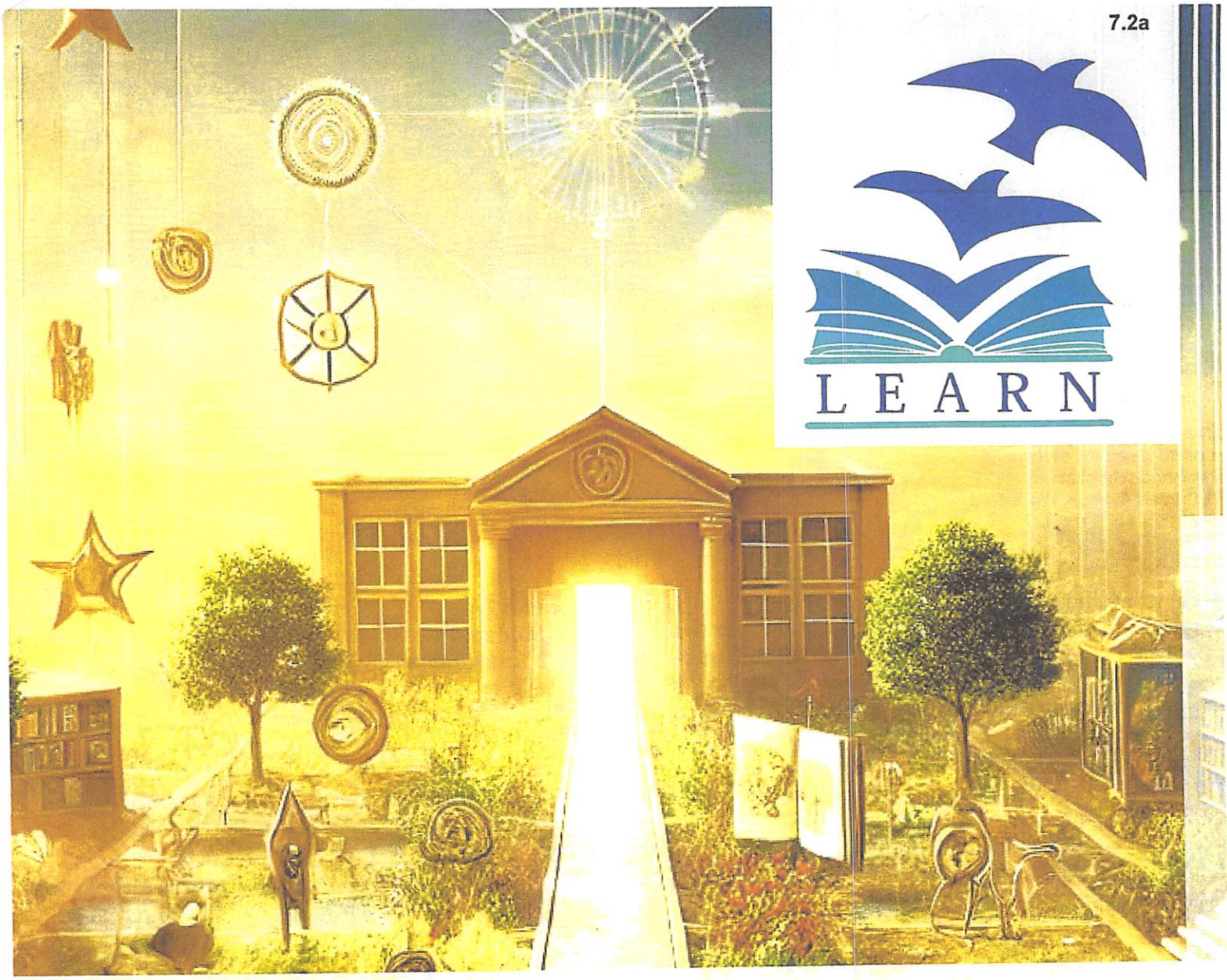
As if specified in Sec 1-212, please provide records in an electronic format.

As specified in Sec 1-206, please acknowledge receipt of this request and provide the records within 4 business days.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Emily Anne Bjornberg
860-575-1127
EmilyABjornberg@gmail.com
Sent from my iPhone



LEARN

LEARN'S FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

Igniting Passions, Inspiring Purpose

Structural Shifts

- New Early Childhood School will be located at 51 Daniels Avenue, Waterford. *The Friendship School will close in the fall of 2027.*
- Regional Multicultural Magnet School, One Bulkeley Place, New London



EARN is transforming its early childhood and elementary school magnet programs to build a nified, high-impact educational pathway from prekindergarten through Grade 8. This isionary pathway will provide families in the region with two exceptional options:

- a LEARN early childhood school (Prekindergarten-Grade 2) on our 51 Daniels Avenue, Waterford campus and
- a LEARN elementary/middle school (Grade 3-Grade 8) on our New London campus.

2025 is year one of a three-year structural revision to LEARN magnet schools.

Enrollment

	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
The Friendship School soon-to-be a new early childhood school at 51 Daniels Avenue, Waterford	360 Prekindergarten 100 Kindergarten 460 Total Students	240 Prekindergarten 100 Kindergarten 100 Grade 1 440 Total Students	200 Prekindergarten 100 Kindergarten 100 Grade 1 100 Grade 2 500 Total Students
Regional Multicultural Magnet School	Grades 1-6 85 Students per Grade 510 Total Students	Grades 2-7 85 Students per Grade 510 Total Students	Grades 3-8 85 Students per Grade 510 Total Students

- LEARN's early childhood school in Waterford (currently The Friendship School) and the soon-to-be elementary/middle school in New London (currently Regional Multicultural Magnet School) will begin transitioning their grade levels one grade at a time starting in the 2025-2026 school year.
- The target enrollment and grade level distribution will be fully implemented by the 2027-2028 school year.
- LEARN's total enrollment will remain within the overall allocated slots currently approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education.
- Tuition for The Friendship School kindergarten in 2025-2026 will align with the Regional Multicultural Magnet School kindergarten tuition for 2024-2025.

Thematic Shifts

- The Friendship School is in Year 3 of its transition to a ***museum*** theme and will introduce a dual immersion Spanish program in 2025-2026.
- Regional Multicultural Magnet School began its shift from International Baccalaureate to a ***multicultural*** theme with ***project-based learning approach*** this year.

Operations

- The new early childhood school at 51 Daniels Avenue is set to open in 2027-2028.
- Starting in 2025-2026, LEARN will introduce regional hub bus locations for The (current) Friendship School.
- Until 2027-2028, The Friendship School will hold a lottery for kindergarten admission, after which kindergarten admission will be guaranteed.
- Students transitioning from The Friendship School to Regional Multicultural Magnet School for grade 3 will have guaranteed admission, while those moving to Marine Science Magnet High School for grade 9 will receive lottery preference.