

Board of Directors Regular Business

APPROVED MINUTES



Meeting Date: May 8, 2025
Draft Posted: May 13, 2025
Approved Posted: June 12, 2025

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

Not Attending and Not Represented: Alisha Blake, New London; Mary Harris, Ledyard; 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; Vacant, East Hampton; and Vacant, Guilford

Guests: Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial Officer; Maria Cuadros, LEARN Business Associate; Dr. Ryan Danton, 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:**
- 4. Reading and/or Review of Correspondence:**

4.1 Executive Director Ericson shared the following correspondence: Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) Grant Award; Workers' Compensation Trust Safety Grant Award; the Connecticut Network for Children and Youth (CTNCY) Early Start CT Local Governance Partner (LGP) Grant Awards; LEARN Early Childhood Center of Excellence (ECCE) Approval Letter; and the Three Rivers Middle College Magnet High School (TRMC) FY25 Audit Engagement Letter

5. Superintendents' Perspective: LEARN Chief Financial & Operations Officer, Michael Belden, presented a high-level budget overview of The Fiscal Year 2025-2026 LEARN Proposed Budget highlighting the agency's continued strong financial standing. LEARN maintains a healthy fund balance, which contributes to the organization's overall fiscal stability and operational flexibility.

Recent capital investments, including the completion of the Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy (OALA), reflect a strategic approach to long-term infrastructure planning. LEARN operates with a lean debt profile and

leverages its fund balance judiciously to sustain operations, support essential but non-revenue-generating central services, and invest in necessary facility upgrades.

Administrative overhead is recovered through a standard fee structure, ranging from 10 to 12 percent, applied to schools and programs. Additionally, LEARN is actively expanding its external service offerings—including business, information technology, and human resources support—to partner districts. This expansion serves to both strengthen inter-district collaboration and offset internal operational costs.

LEARN remains committed to responsible financial management in alignment with its mission, and fiscal practices are designed to promote innovation, sustain essential services, and ensure resilience in an evolving educational landscape.

6. Consent Agenda:

- 6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—April 10, 2025
- 6.2 Approval of Budget Summary as of April 30, 2025 (Made available at meeting)
- 6.3 Approval of Grant Applications—LEARN Magnet School Capital Improvement 2025-2027

Motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

- **Presented by Beverly Washington**
- **Second Elizabeth Fernandes**
- **Motion passed with 13 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

7. Information from the Executive Director:

- 7.1 Hiring—Resignations and new hires, including trend reports (Made available at meeting):
Executive Director Ericson shared recent staffing developments, as LEARN recently welcomed several new hires, including educators and instructional staff in key areas such as language instruction and student support. LEARN also experienced a few staff departures, including a general education teacher and two intervention specialists.
- 7.2 Distributions — None
- 7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—April 25, 2025:
Attached in the agenda packet.
- 7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes—April 25, 2025: *Attached in the agenda packet.*
- 7.5 Legislative Updates: LEARN continues to engage in regional and statewide advocacy efforts focused on increasing support for educational services in southeastern Connecticut.

7.6 LEARN Agency Updates: LEARN’s Human Resources Director, Elizabeth McCaffery, provided an update on the regional remote learning collaborative involving East Lyme, Waterford, New London, Old Saybrook, and LEARN to develop a regional high school blended learning program slated to begin with the 2025–2026 school year. The LEARN Business Office recently attended the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) conference, and upcoming celebrations include the graduation ceremonies for Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS) and Three Rivers Middle College Magnet High School (TRMC).

8. Old Business:

9. New Business:

9.1 Presentation of proposed 2025-2026 Slate of Officers ([per policy #9200, Bylaws of the Board, “Election of Officers”](#))

- The Nominating Committee presents the following Slate of Officers to the board at the May 8, 2025, meeting: Robert Mitchell (Montville), Dale Bernardoni (Chester/Grades K-6), Jennifer Favalora (Killingworth/Region 17), Beverly Washington (Groton).
- Voting will occur at the June 12, 2025, meeting with any additional nominations, including self-nominations, taken **prior to voting**.

9.2 Authorization of Executive Director to Enter into Contracts.

- This is an annual request and is needed in order for LEARN to contract with various state agencies/departments and approved vendors. (*Board Secretary’s signature required*)

Motion: Resolved, that Katherine Ericson, Executive Director, is authorized to make, execute, and approve on behalf of LEARN, any or all contracts or amendments, excluding loans, effective through June 30, 2026.

- **Presented by W. Scott Brown**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed with 13 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

9.3 Preliminary discussion of the Evaluation of the Executive Director per [Policy #2400, Administration; “Evaluation of Administrators and Administration”](#) (Executive Director’s Year End Evaluation provided with board packet).

- 9.4 Approve the request for use of the Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy (OALA) cafeteria by New London Landmarks on June 30, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of hosting a community program, from 7:00-8:30 p.m., highlighting the history of New London's Jewish community. The event will include video excerpts from oral history interviews conducted as part of their ongoing preservation efforts. There are no admission or registration fees attached to the program, but the organization will have a donation jar available at a welcome table. Any donations will be used to cover New London Landmarks' general operating expenses.

Motion to approve New London Landmarks' use of the Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy Cafeteria from 4:00-9:30 p.m., on June 30, 2025, to host a community program as presented.

- **Presented by Cindy Luty**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed with 13 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

- 9.5 Graduation requirement regulation shift: LEARN Associate Executive Director, Dr. Ryan Donlon, provided an update on academic and programmatic developments at its magnet high schools, Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS) and Three Rivers Middle College Magnet High School (TRMC), in response to changes in state graduation requirements.

- 9.6 Final Report on Project #2 at Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy (OALA), as presented by Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial & Operations Officer: Closeout summary for the Student Support Services (SSS) Building Committee, active since 2017. The committee recently completed its second major construction project and as part of the final phase, documentation has been submitted to close out participation in the state's school construction grant program. The project was approved for approximately \$9.85 million, with an anticipated 80% reimbursement through the state's school renovation grant. LEARN worked closely with the project's construction and architectural partners to prioritize key components of the renovation, ultimately bringing the project in under budget.

- 10.** Educational Perspective: LEARN Associate Executive Director, Dr. Ryan Donlon, to present update on Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) 3-8 middle school design: Ongoing efforts continue to enhance the design and structure of LEARN's magnet school offerings, with a particular focus on middle-grade programming, including the long-term vision to create a more cohesive, interconnected network of schools that support students from early childhood through high school. This work reflects LEARN's commitment to greater alignment, access, and equity across programs, informed by community engagement, internal analysis, and lessons learned in the post-pandemic landscape. The initiative aims to strengthen continuity for families, improve student retention, and ensure that each school reflects a shared mission while preserving its unique instructional focus.

11. Roundtable Discussion: None

12. Future Roundtable Topics: None

13. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn at 11:22 a.m.

- **Presented by Cindy Luty**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 12 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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• +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)
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