



Executive Committee

MEETING SUMMARY

Date: September 26, 2025
Time: 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.
Location: LEARN, Room 216/ 44 Hatchetts Hill Road, Old Lyme, CT 06371

Present: Robert Mitchell, Chair; Jen Favolora, Fiscal Officer; Beverly Washington, Secretary; Dale Bernardoni, Vice Chair; Dr. Cynthia Ritchie, Superintendent of Schools New London; Maryann O'Donnell, Superintendent of Schools Clinton; and Kate Ericson, LEARN Executive Director

Not Attending:

Meeting began at 8:32 a.m.

1. Review October 9, 2025 Board of Directors' Agenda

The committee reviewed and discussed the October Board Agenda.

2. Washington D.C. Federal Advocacy Update

Executive Director Ericson provided the Committee with an overview of her participation in the AESA Advocacy in Action Conference. She was joined by Ms. Bridgette Gordon-Hickey, LEARN Deputy Executive Director, and Dr. Ryan Donlon, LEARN Associate Executive Director, as they traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate on behalf of Connecticut's students and schools.

Together with colleagues from ACES, the LEARN team met with Congressional staffers from the offices of Senator Blumenthal, Senator Murphy, Representative DeLauro, Representative Courtney, Representative Larson, and Representative Hayes. During these meetings, the team emphasized several key priorities: the critical need for full federal funding of IDEA, the protection of Magnet School Assistance Program funding, and the preservation of Medicaid funding for public schools.

Additionally, the team spotlighted the RESC Alliance's impactful efforts to strengthen the educator workforce through the Connecticut Residency Program.

3. Early Access Agreement for 51 Daniels Avenue

Executive Director Ericson reported to the committee that the Town of Waterford and LEARN have secured an agreement that would permit LEARN's construction company to begin the staging for demolition at 51 Daniels Avenue. This agreement was necessary until the final closing date on the property can take place.

4. Magnet School Assistance Program

Executive Director Ericson was thrilled to share that LEARN has received conditional approval for both Magnet School Assistance Program grants from the federal government. This means that the millions of dollars applied for were awarded and will be accessible for this fiscal year.

5. State Advocacy

Executive Director Ericson provided an overview of the ongoing advocacy efforts on behalf of LEARN. In September, LEARN hosted several legislators for visits to the LEARN Transition Academy (LTA), the Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS), and The Friendship School (TFS). To date, Representative LaMark Muir, Representative Menapace, Representative Bumgardner, and Representative Ryan have accepted the invitation to tour these schools.

The purpose of these visits is to highlight the urgent challenges facing LEARN's magnet schools and to underscore LEARN's critical role in supporting districts through its regional special education programming.

Additionally, the RESC Executive Directors jointly submitted a letter to the Governor's staff, emphasizing the severity of the situation and advocating for immediate attention to the funding and sustainability of magnet schools.

6. Tri-Share Program

Executive Director Ericson relayed a recent update on the status of CT's Tri-Share Program. Electric Boat has committed \$500,000 to their employees to help defray the cost of childcare. These funds will be utilized to pay one third of a family's childcare costs. Another third of the cost will be contributed to the Childcare Center on behalf of the family from the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. LEARN's role in this program is to act as the fiduciary to ensure Childcare Centers receive funds in a timely manner.

7. Vacancy Update

LEARN is still reporting 29 vacancies across the agency. A variety of positions are vacant, including an accountant, an early childcare head teacher, Early Childhood Coordinators, Intervention Specialists, Registered Behavior Techs, and a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst.

8. Early Childhood Endowment

Executive Director Ericson reported on Connecticut's Early Childhood Endowment. These funds have been set aside for the Office of Early Childhood to subsidize childcare across Connecticut.

9. Office of Teaching and Learning: Multilingual Screeners

Executive Director Ericson shared out LEARN's latest new tool to support districts with screeners that can be translated into over 14 languages. The goal of the tool is to support districts' ability to properly assess the academic level of students in their home language. The Executive Director shared that she has invited the Office of Teaching and Learning Team to share where they are in the design of this product with the full Board of Directors.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Jamella A. A. Etienne