



Board of Directors Regular Business

MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Meeting Date: October 9, 2025
Draft Posted: October 15, 2025
Approved Posted: November 13, 2025

Present: Eric Bauman, East Lyme; Dale Bernardoni, Chester (Grades K-6); Scott Brown, Lyme & Old Lyme Region #18; Katherine Ericson, LEARN; Jennifer Favalora, Haddam & Killingworth Region #17; Elizabeth Fernandes, Westbrook; Katie Gauthier, Stonington (Teams); Mary Harris, Ledyard (Teams); Cindy Luty, Preston; Robert Mitchell, Montville; Anthony Paolitto, Madison; Beverly Washington, Groton; and Laurie Wolfley, Waterford (Teams)

Not Attending and Not Represented: Alisha Blake, New London; Thomas Danehy, Clinton; A. Terri Garrity, East Haddam; Nancy Johnston, Essex/Grades K-6; Gregory Perry, Norwich; Sean Reith, Salem; Chet Stefanowicz, North Stonington; Jane Wisialowski, Old Saybrook; Vacant, Chester, Deep River, Essex/Region #4 (Grades 7-12); Vacant, Deep River (Grades K-6); Vacant, East Hampton; and Vacant, Guilford

Guests: Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial Officer; and Elizabeth McCaffery, LEARN Director of Human Resources (Teams)

Meeting began at 9:02 a.m.

- 1. Call to Order:** Pledge of Allegiance
- 2. Audience and Guests:** Introductions

Recognition of Board Member Cindy Luty

Following the introductions, Executive Director Ericson presented long-time board member Cindy Luty with a gift from the Agency in appreciation of her 12 years of dedicated service. The Executive Director acknowledged Cindy’s consistent attendance, passion, and contributions to LEARN. As Cindy’s term will officially end next month, the agency and the board took the opportunity to express their gratitude for her commitment and service.

- 3. Public Comment:** No Public Comment
- 4. Reading and/or Review of Correspondence:** No Correspondence
- 5. Superintendents’ Perspective:** Mr. Brian J. White, Superintendent of Regional School District #4, to present on the Strategic Plan and Key District Initiatives of the district.

Superintendent White provided an overview of the district’s structure, challenges, and strategic priorities. Region 4 serves the towns of Chester, Deep River, and Essex through five schools and a shared-services governance model, including the Supervision District. With a total PreK–12 enrollment under 1,300 students and ongoing enrollment decline, the district is navigating complex issues of operational efficiency, aging facilities, and governance limitations.

Key topics discussed included:

- **School Consolidation & Grade Reconfiguration:** The district is exploring the potential realignment of grade levels—particularly moving 6th grade to the middle school—to address declining enrollment and rising capital costs (estimated at \$100–\$120 million to maintain current facilities). Any such move would require approval via town referenda due to governance structures.
- **Governance & Financial Complexity:** Region 4 consists of five independent boards and multiple labor contracts, with over 145 meetings annually and a collective education budget of ~\$46M. Governance and financial structures create challenges for shared decision-making, budget allocation, and staff reassignments.
- **Instructional Initiatives:** Despite structural hurdles, Region 4 continues to advance its educational programming. Key efforts include:
 - Multi-Tiered Systems of Support across all schools.
 - A district-wide curriculum review process launching this year.
 - Ongoing expansion of universal pre-K, currently serving ~70 students with plans to add another section.
 - Strengthening special education services through a cost-effective, inclusive cohort model across towns.
- **High School Programs:** Valley Regional High School offers a robust academic experience, including:
 - International Baccalaureate (IB) and AP courses.
 - Early College Experience (ECE) programs.
 - A unique engineering pathway in partnership with a local manufacturing firm (Whelen Engineering).

Superintendent White praised the dedication of staff and leadership in maintaining high-quality educational services amidst ongoing operational and political challenges.

6. Consent Agenda:

- 6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—September 11, 2025
- 6.2 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Special Business Meeting—October 2, 2025
- 6.3 Approval of Budget Summary as of September 30, 2025
- 6.4 Approval of Grant Applications—None

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

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

7. Information from the Executive Director:

- 7.1 Hiring—Resignations and new hires, including trend reports/ LEARN continues to experience challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, particularly in specialized roles. Staffing shortages are a primary limitation to program growth. The agency provides centralized support and training to ensure quality services across its regional districts. Leadership development remains a key focus to strengthen administrative capacity. Efforts are ongoing to expand and improve programs to better meet the diverse needs of students.
- 7.2 Distributions — CUBE 2025 Law Summaries, RESC Alliance Letter to Governor Lamont's Staffers, Advocacy Materials for SECT Legislators
- 7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—September 26, 2025/ In September, LEARN leadership attended a training in Washington, D.C. to learn how to better work with lawmakers and advocate for their programs. They met with several members of Congress and learned how community support can help influence decisions. LEARN received a major grant of \$18 million to support its magnet schools over the next ten years, which will help keep important programs and staff in place. LEARN is also working with the state on the Tri-Share childcare program that helps families, businesses, and the state share the cost of childcare.
- 7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes—September 26, 2025/ Progress is ongoing with the acquisition of the property at 51 Daniels Avenue. LEARN expects to finalize the purchase soon. Early access to the site was granted, allowing preliminary safety measures to be put in place. The town and all parties involved have worked cooperatively to support this process.

- 7.5 Legislative Updates—LEARN has been hosting legislators for site visits to its magnet and regional programs as part of an ongoing effort to enhance understanding of the distinct roles these programs serve and to offer firsthand insight into the diverse and complex student needs, the staffing requirements involved, and the benefits of regional programming.
- 7.6 LEARN Agency Updates—As of October 1st, student enrollment for LEARN’s magnet schools was finalized in accordance with state requirements. Enrollment numbers are close to targets across programs, with some schools near or at capacity. The Office of Teaching & Learning continues to support multilingual learners by providing consistent assessment and targeted language development services, helping students progress toward English proficiency. Professional development efforts include ongoing leadership training for administrators to strengthen systemic improvements. Early childhood programs are also evolving, with regional collaboration growing through new governance structures involving local officials and providers. LEARN’s infant/toddler program is expanding to meet high demand, with plans to further increase capacity in the future. All early childhood staff positions are funded through state grants, reflecting a strong partnership with the Office of Early Childhood.

8. Old Business:

8.1 Approval of Official Resolutions for Land Acquisition — 51 Daniels Avenue

Motion:

RESOLVED, that **LEARN**, a body corporate and politic established pursuant to Section 10-66a of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, having an address of 44 Hatchetts Hill Road, Old Lyme, Connecticut 06371 (“**LEARN**”), be, and it hereby is, authorized and empowered to purchase the real property commonly known as 51 Daniels Avenue, Waterford, Connecticut (the “**Property**”) from the **TOWN OF WATERFORD**, a Connecticut municipal corporation having an address of 15 Rope Ferry Road, Waterford, Connecticut 06385 (the “**Seller**”), in accordance with the terms and conditions of that certain Purchase and Sale Agreement by and between LEARN and Seller dated as of December 13, 2023, as amended by that certain First Amendment to Purchase and Sale Agreement dated as of August 1, 2024, as further amended by that certain Second Amendment to Purchase and Sale Agreement dated as of July 25, 2025, as further amended by that certain Third Amendment to Purchase and Sale Agreement dated as of August 26, 2025, as the same may be amended from time to time (as amended and modified, the “**Purchase and Sale Agreement**”), for the sum of SEVEN HUNDRED SEVENTY THOUSAND and 00/100 DOLLARS (\$770,000.00), in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Purchase and Sale Agreement; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that Katherine Ericson, Executive Director of LEARN (the “**Executive Director**”), or any individual acting at her direction, be, and hereby is, authorized and empowered in the name of and on behalf of LEARN to execute any and all documents necessary to effectuate the above-referenced Purchase and Sale Agreement and the transactions completed thereby; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the said Executive Director, or any individual acting at her direction, be, and hereby is, authorized and empowered in the name of and on behalf of LEARN to negotiate the terms of and to execute and deliver for and on behalf of LEARN, each of the instruments, documents and agreements as may be necessary or convenient to carry out any of the foregoing resolutions, all with such changes, and in such form, as she may approve, the execution and delivery of each document to be conclusive evidence of said approval; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the said Executive Director, or any individual acting at her direction, be, and hereby is, authorized to do and perform all such further acts and things as may be necessary or convenient in order to consummate the transactions authorized in the foregoing resolutions, and any actions heretofore or hereafter taken by the said Executive Director, or any individual acting at her direction, in carrying out the purposes of these resolutions are hereby confirmed, approved and ratified in all respects.

- **Presented by Robert Mitchell**
“The Board Chair read the Attorney’s resolution aloud and noted a typographical error, which was corrected during the reading.”
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed with 12 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

9. New Business:

9.1 Overview of The LEARN Project, Inc

The Executive Director provided an overview of The LEARN Project, Inc., a nonprofit entity established in 2003 to support charitable, scientific, and educational purposes. While not part of LEARN's agency structure, the nonprofit allows the agency to receive and distribute certain grants, acting as a fiscal intermediary when needed.

Though the nonprofit has remained active with required state filings, it has not held an annual meeting in several years. The Executive Director acknowledged the oversight and noted that regular meetings will resume, with the next scheduled for October 24. The Executive Director will appoint directors as outlined in the bylaws, including the current members of the Executive Committee and business office leadership. Going forward, the annual meeting will be added to the agency's master calendar.

9.2 Overview of the CHEFA Bonding Process

The Executive Director and Chief Financial and Operations Officer provided an overview of the anticipated bonding process to support the agency's upcoming school construction project. Since LEARN does not have taxing authority, external financing is required to cover the non-reimbursable portion of the project cost, as well as to maintain consistent cash flow during the state reimbursement cycle.

To facilitate this, LEARN is working with the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) and a partnering financial institution to access tax-exempt bonds. This approach will allow LEARN to manage construction expenses in a timely manner, with short-term borrowing structured around state reimbursement schedules. Once the project is complete, the agency will convert this to long-term bonding.

To meet nonprofit borrowing requirements, the borrowing will be processed through The LEARN Project, Inc. The agency is working with legal counsel to finalize documentation and compliance procedures. A resolution related to the bonding process is expected to be presented at an upcoming board meeting.

10. Educational Perspective: **Dr. Linda Darcy, LEARN Director of Teaching and Learning, to present on using the Business Strategy Framework to design products that support improved student outcomes.**

The Executive Director tabled Dr. Linda Darcy's presentation. The Board was informed that the presentation will be prioritized at the next scheduled meeting.

Motion to move Dr. Linda Darcy’s presentation to the November board meeting as presented.

- **Presented by Scott Brown**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed with 12 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

11. Roundtable Discussion: Board members engaged in a discussion about the potential for collective advocacy at the state level, including how regional educational service centers (RESCs) might influence legislation or policy. Topics included the legislative process, the role of RESCs in advocacy efforts, and how statewide collaboration may amplify impact. The Executive Director provided context on existing advocacy strategies and shared that the RESC Alliance continues to coordinate with state leaders and lobbyists to advance shared priorities.

12. Future Roundtable Topics: Members were encouraged to submit topics of interest for future roundtable discussions.

13. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn at 11:14 a.m.

- **Presented by Cindy Luty**
- **Second Robert Mitchell**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 10 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

**Respectfully submitted by:
Jamella A. A. Etienne**

[Click Here to Join the Meeting via Teams](#)

Meeting ID: 263 567 013 638 0
Passcode: ca3pb7rp