



# Board of Directors Regular Business

# MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

**Meeting Date: March 12, 2026**

**Draft Posted: March 17, 2026**

**Approved Posted: April 9, 2026**

**Present:** Eric Bauman, East Lyme; Dale Bernardoni, Chester (Grades K-6); Galen Cawley, Madison (Teams); Thomas Danehy, Clinton (Teams); Katherine Ericson, LEARN; Jennifer Favalora, Haddam & Killingworth Region #17; Elizabeth Fernandes, Westbrook; Katie Gauthier, Stonington (Teams); Marijke Kehrhahn, Old Saybrook; Robert Mitchell, Montville; Nancy Johnston, Essex/Grades K-6; Beverly Washington, Groton; and Laurie Wolfley, Waterford

**Not Attending and Not Represented:** Scott Brown, Lyme & Old Lyme Region #18; Scott Garbini, New London; A. Terri Garrity, East Haddam; Mary Harris, Ledyard; Gregory Perry, Norwich; Chet Stefanowicz, North Stonington; Vacant, Chester, Deep River, Essex/Region #4 (Grades 7-12); Vacant, Deep River (Grades K-6); Vacant, East Hampton; Vacant, Guilford; Vacant, Preston; and Vacant, Salem

**Guests:** Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial & Operations Officer; Kristin Gemaly, Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) Literacy Instructional Coordinator & LEARN LEA President (Teams); Joanne Lund, LEARN Assistant Director of Business; and Maryann O'Donnell, Superintendent of Clinton School District

**Meeting began at 9:00 a.m.**

- 1. Call to Order:** Pledge of Allegiance
- 2. Audience and Guests:** Introductions
- 3. Public Comment:** None
- 4. Reading and/or Review of Correspondence:** None
- 5. Superintendents' Perspective:** Superintendent Maryann O'Donnell presented to the Board on the Strategic Plan and Key District Initiatives of the Clinton School District, highlighting a decade-long effort to balance academics, growth, and community engagement. Superintendent O'Donnell emphasized that teachers are the district's most important asset and described strategic objectives focused on enhancing learning, supporting student development and maintaining clarity, actionable goals, and alignment across budgeting, instruction, and programming. Superintendent O'Donnell also noted strong partnerships with families, community partners, local industries, and town leadership, ensuring district programs remain responsive to student needs, post-COVID challenges, and evolving workforce demands.

## 6. Consent Agenda:

- 6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—February 12, 2026
- 6.2 Approval of Budget Summary as of February 28, 2026
- 6.3 Approval of Grant Applications—None

### Motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

- Presented by Beverly Washington
- Second Dale Bernardoni
- Motion passed unanimously with 12 votes in favor and 0 votes against

## 7. Information from the Executive Director:

- 7.1 Hiring—Resignations and new hires, including trend reports: Executive Director Ericson reported that LEARN currently has 25 open positions, primarily for physicians, medical assistant physicians, and associate instructors for pre-K classrooms. Special education teacher positions remain challenging due to a statewide shortage. She highlighted the Teacher Residency Program (TRP), which allows LEARN to develop its own special education teachers by mentoring existing staff through a year-long certification program.
- 7.2 Distributions — None
- 7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—February 27, 2026: The Executive Committee received several updates, including new leadership appointments for Jen Cimmino, who was promoted to Supervisor of Special Education, and Pamela Santerre who was promoted to Educational Consultant for the Office of Teaching and Learning. Also highlighted for the committee was the RMMS Parent Academy, offered in partnership with the Child and Family Agency, which provided families with practical guidance on topics such as social media and child development.
- 7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes—February 12, 2026 and February 27, 2026
- 7.5 Legislative Updates: Executive Director Ericson informed the board on several key bills under consideration, House Bill 5002 which proposes a consumer price index (CPI) increase for districts, benefiting magnet schools, while Senate Bill 7 suggests a \$1,000 increase to the foundation level for ECS funding. Magnet operators are also advocating for a \$12 million restoration to last year’s budget, along with the CPI and foundation increases, to ensure consistent and equitable funding. Concerns were raised about homeschooling legislation (HB 5468), which could create additional administrative work and affect military

families. Education leaders continue to engage legislators and provide testimony, with final funding decisions expected from the Appropriations Committee by May 6th.

- 7.6 LEARN Agency Updates: Executive Director Ericson shared that the Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy (OALA) received a \$50 gift card from Stop and Shop in January. LEARN is set to receive \$87,838 through the District Repair and Improvement Project (DRIP), which funds building maintenance projects, including recent elevator repairs, and annual expense reports are due by September 1. The Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) hosted its March Curriculum Night, featuring art projects from 4th graders at the Lyman Allen Art Museum and a piano recital by 5th and 6th graders. Next month Executive Director Ericson will attend the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs) Leadership Academy International Trip, with visits to Portugal and Spain. LEARN has been finalizing budgets for May board review. Additionally, the disABILITY Summit will be held on Saturday, March 14, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Great Wolf Lodge Conference Center in Mashantucket, Connecticut, and the board members were invited to participate in the EASTCONN and LEARN Regional Practices Event on Friday, March 20, 2026.

## 8. Old Business:

- 8.1 Office of Teaching and LEARNing (OTL) Consultant Rates

**Motion to Approve the increase of Office of Teaching and LEARNing Consultant Rates as presented.**

- **Presented by Laurie Wolfley**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

## 9. New Business:

- 9.1 Healthy Food Certification (HFC)

- 9.1a Public Schools Participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)—Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for 2026-2027: To be eligible for HFC during SY 2026-27 (*July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027*), the Board must conduct the HFC votes by *July 1, 2026*. 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, 2026, through June 30, 2027. 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 Robert Mitchell**

- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

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 Robert Mitchell**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

9.1c Approval for the Executive Director to sign the 2026-2027 Healthy Food Certification Statement

**Motion to approve LEARN Executive Director, Katherine Ericson, to sign the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-2027**

- **Presented by Beverly Washington**
- **Second Robert Mitchell**
- **Motion passed unanimously 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 2025-2026 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 2025-2026 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. Ballantyne, Sarah
2. Folden, Nichole
3. Grills, Lynn
4. Hernandez, Elda
5. Hibson, Robert
6. Holley, Pamela
7. Jacksin, Reide
8. Jouver, Mariah
9. Krawiec, Kathleen

10. Ludington, Kelsey
11. Overcash, Kevin
12. Schenk-Belisle, Julia
13. Swanson, Karli
14. Troutman, Merin
15. Van Pelt, Kelly
16. Young, Tara

**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 Robert Mitchell**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

9.3 Approval of 2026 Graduation Date – Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS)

**Motion to approve June 16, 2026 as the official graduation date for Marine Science Magnet High School seniors as presented.**

- **Presented by Marijke Kehrhahn**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **\*Motion passed unanimously with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

*\*Administrative Note: Subsequent to the Board's approval of the MSMHS graduation date, the Principal notified LEARN administration that the ceremony would be moved to June 17 due to scheduling considerations.*

9.4 Approval of 2026 Graduation Date – Three Rivers Middle College Magnet High School (TRMC)

**Motion to approve June 17, 2026 as the official graduation date for Three Rivers Middle College Magnet High School seniors as presented.**

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

*\*Administrative Note: Subsequent to the Board's approval of the TRMC graduation date, the Principal notified LEARN administration that the ceremony would be moved to June 18 due to scheduling considerations.*

**10.** Educational Perspective: None

**11.** Roundtable Discussion: Board members discussed artificial intelligence (AI), and student cell phone policies, noting the importance of balancing student access with classroom focus, especially for students with medical needs, and how districts are reviewing policies and possible legislative guidance. Budget considerations were also discussed, including the impact of rising healthcare costs, staffing challenges, and funding for support positions such as paraprofessionals. The need to prioritize resources thoughtfully while maintaining quality programs and instructional support was also emphasized.

**12.** Future Roundtable Topics: Regionalized Student Skill Programs Discussion

**13.** Adjournment:

**Motion to adjourn at 11:00 a.m.**

- **Presented by Eric Bauman**
- **Second Beverly Washington**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 11 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

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

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**Meeting ID: 217 352 681 153 1**

**Passcode: CP7Vs2gH**