



Board of Directors Regular Business

MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Meeting Date: May 14, 2026

Draft Posted: May 18, 2026

Approved Posted: June 11, 2026

Present: Eric Bauman, East Lyme; Dale Bernardoni, Chester (Grades K-6); Scott Brown, Lyme - Old Lyme (Region 18); Thomas Danehy, Clinton (Teams); Katherine Ericson, LEARN; Jennifer Favalora, Haddam & Killingworth (Region 17) (Teams); Elizabeth Fernandes, Westbrook; Scott Garbini, New London (Teams); Nancy Johnston, Essex (Grades K-6); Marijke Kehrhahn, Old Saybrook; Robert Mitchell, Montville; Beverly Washington, Groton; and Laurie Wolfley, Waterford

Not Attending and Not Represented: Galen Cawley, Madison; A. Terri Garrity, East Haddam; Katie Gauthier, Stonington; Mary Harris, Ledyard; Gregory Perry, Norwich; Chet Stefanowicz, North Stonington; Vacant, Chester, Deep River, Essex/Region (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; Dr. Ryan Donlon, LEARN Associate Executive Director; Kristin Gemaly, Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) Literacy Instructional Coordinator & LEARN LEA President (Teams); 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:** None
- 4. Reading and/or Review of Correspondence:**
 - 4.1 Workers' Compensation Trust Safety Grant Award
 - 4.2 Three Rivers Middle College Magnet High School (TRMC) FY25 Audit Conclusion
 - 4.3 FY 2023 State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program - Notice of Selection
- 5. Superintendents' Perspective:** LEARN Chief Financial & Operations Officer, Michael Belden, to present
The Fiscal Year 2026-2027 LEARN Proposed Budget

LEARN's budget process differs from that of a traditional school district due to reliance on variable enrollment, state funding allocations, grants, contracts, and tuition-based revenue. The proposed budget was developed conservatively using March projections and lower-end revenue estimates, reflecting continued uncertainty in enrollment and funding levels.

The proposed operating budget reflects an overall increase, with a total agencywide budget of approximately \$146 million, including \$54 million in operating funds and \$92 million in non-operating funds, while also reporting an unassigned fund balance of approximately \$10 million and outlining the agency's approach to minimizing reliance on fund balance.

Key budget assumptions included continued frozen local tuition rates under state law, increased state support through supplemental aid and Education Cost Sharing funding, projected salary and benefit increases, and continued investment in transportation, technology, and instructional services. Also reviewed was LEARN's Regional Shared Service Solutions (RSSS) model, which provides shared payroll, human resources, business office, information technology, and food service support to partner districts. Continued growth in these partnerships was noted, along with an emphasis on service quality and collaboration.

Updates were provided on capital projects, including the Early LEARNing Magnet School and planned improvements at Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS) and Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS), along with related state bonding and reimbursement processes.

6. Consent Agenda:

- 6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—April 9, 2026
- 6.2 Approval of Budget Summary as of April 30, 2026
- 6.3 Approval of Grant Applications—None

At our last meeting, the consent agenda was approved hearing no objections. Are there any corrections or objections to last month's consent agenda? There were no objections or corrections to the consent agenda from the previous meeting.

Motion to approve the current 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
- 7.2 Distributions — The Executive Director provided the Board with a draft revision of the regulation associated with Purchasing Policy 3323. (The regulation was not included in the original agenda packet as distributed in advance of the meeting.)
- 7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Regular Business Meeting—April 24, 2026
- 7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes—April 9, 2024 and April 24, 2026: Executive Director Ericson reported that ledge was encountered at the new Early LEARNing Magnet School site in Waterford, resulting in approximately \$778,000 in additional excavation and blasting costs. Despite this, the project remains under the overall budget and on schedule.
- 7.5 Legislative Updates: LEARN engaged in ongoing advocacy throughout the year, including school visits and regular communication with legislators. The final state budget included approximately \$12 million in additional funding for RESC magnet schools and Goodwin University programs statewide, with LEARN anticipating approximately \$1 million in additional support. Executive Director Ericson also noted continued state support for the Teacher Residency Program (TRP), which received \$750,000 in funding. student needs.
- 7.6 LEARN Agency Updates: Executive Director Ericson recapped her recent Leadership Academy trip to Portugal and Spain, which focused on international education systems, innovation, technology, and global partnerships and included meetings with European Union representatives, educational leaders, universities, and international school programs. She also noted potential opportunities for LEARN students and staff to participate in future international learning experiences and professional development focused on artificial intelligence and digital learning. The Executive Director additionally described a new partnership opportunity with Brown University’s Annenberg Institute to support regional professional learning communities focused on instructional practice and systems improvement, including mathematics instruction. The grant-funded initiative includes participation from multiple regional districts. To conclude, she announced the upcoming LEARN State of the Agency scheduled for June 11, which will cover updates on student performance, agency highlights, and organizational progress.

8. Old Business: None

9. New Business:

9.1 Presentation of proposed 2026-2027 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 14, 2026, meeting: Robert Mitchell (Montville), Dale Bernardoni (Chester/Grades K-6), Jennifer Favalora (Killingworth/Region 17), and Beverly Washington (Groton).
- Voting will occur at the June 11, 2026, 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 Regional Educational Service Center any and all contracts and amendments, excluding loans, effective through June 30, 2027.

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

9.3 Revised LEARN Educator Evaluation and Growth Plan

Motion to approve the revised LEARN Educator Evaluation and Growth Plan as presented.

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

- 9.4 Preliminary overview/discussion of the Evaluation of the Executive Director per [Policy #2400](#) and [Regulation](#), Administration; “Evaluation of Administrators and Administration” *(Executive Director’s Year End Evaluation provided with board packet)*

The Board Chair reviewed the process for gathering input from Board members, evaluating leadership performance across the established domains, and supporting the Board’s governance responsibilities. Following the meeting, Board members will receive an electronic evaluation survey from Human Resources. The survey will address key leadership areas and supplement existing evaluation materials. Board members were encouraged to participate, and the survey will remain open until May 21, 2026. Upon survey closure, the Executive Committee will review the results and finalize the evaluation. The completed evaluation, along with any related contract action, will be brought back to the full Board in June for consideration, in accordance with established practice.

10. Educational Perspective: None

11. Roundtable Discussion: Regionalized Student Skill Programs, Student cell phones, AI, and Budget

Board members discussed the importance of aligning policies and practices to support increased inter-district course access, including potential coordination around cell phone and technology use policies, scheduling structures, and instructional models. The conversation included interest in expanding shared or jointly offered courses across districts, particularly in areas such as career and technical education and advanced coursework. Members noted existing examples of regional collaboration, including select shared programs and courses that allow students from multiple districts to participate. Discussion also addressed structural barriers to expanded collaboration, including differences in bell schedules, block scheduling formats, transportation logistics, staffing models, and collective bargaining considerations. Board members suggested that identifying and mapping current scheduling models across districts could help clarify opportunities for alignment and shared programming. Further discussed was the potential value of regional collaboration in maintaining a broad course offering amid budget constraints and declining enrollment in some districts, noting that shared programming may support both cost efficiency and expanded student opportunities. Additionally highlighted was the importance of continued dialogue with state partners regarding innovative regional models, as well as the need to evaluate feasibility through data collection, pilot approaches, and consideration of both in-person and hybrid delivery options where appropriate.

12. Future Roundtable Topics: None

13. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn at 11:04 a.m.

- **Presented by Laurie Wolfley**
- **Second Eric Bauman**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 9 votes in favor and 0 votes against**

Respectfully submitted by:
Jamella A. A. Etienne

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