LEARN BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING– DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting Date: November 12, 2026
Draft Posted: November 17, 2026

Present: Kathleen Balestracci, Guilford (Teams); Eric Bauman, East Lyme; Dale Bernardoni, Chester (Grades K-6); Galen Cawley, Madison (Teams); Katherine Ericson, LEARN; Jennifer Favalora, Haddam & Killingworth (Region 17); Elizabeth Fernandes, Westbrook (Teams); Katie Gauthier, Stonington (Teams); Mary Harris, Ledyard (Teams); Robert Mitchell, Montville; Beverly Washington, Groton; and Laurie Wolfley, Waterford (Teams)

Not Attending and Not Represented: Thomas Danehy, Clinton; Courtney Ennis, Preston; Scott Garbini, New London; Terri Garrity, East Haddam; Marijke Kehrhahn, Old Saybrook; Gregory Perry, Norwich; Jennifer Scoggins, Guilford; 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, Essex (Grades K-6); and Vacant, Salem

Guests: Michael Belden, LEARN Chief Financial & Operations Officer; Joanne Lund, LEARN Assistant Director of Business; Patrice McCarthy, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Executive Director and General Counsel; Elizabeth McCaffery, LEARN Director of Human Resources (Teams)

Meeting began at 9:01 a.m.

AGENDA

1 CALL TO ORDER: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2 AUDIENCE AND GUESTS: INTRODUCTIONS

3 PUBLIC COMMENT

4 READING AND/OR REVIEW OF CORRESPONDENCE

5 SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE – Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Executive Director and General Counsel, Patrice McCarthy, to speak about Connecticut's Blue Ribbon Commission and legislative updates.

CABE Executive Director and General Counsel Patrice McCarthy provided the Board with an overview of current statewide education initiatives, including the Blue Ribbon Commission on K-12 Education Funding and Accountability, the Career Pathways

DRAFT

Commission, and anticipated legislative priorities for the upcoming session. Discussion focused broadly on education funding, special education, career pathway opportunities, regional collaboration, and emerging policy issues. McCarthy also discussed the importance of continued advocacy and keeping legislators informed of the needs and challenges facing local school districts.

6 CONSENT AGENDA

6.1 Approval of the DRAFT Minutes, Regular Business Meeting of October 8, 2026

6.2 Approval of Budget Summary as of October 31, 2026

6.3 Approval of Grant Applications: None

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

- **Presented by Beverly Washington**
- **Second Dale Bernardoni**
- **Abstain, Kathleen Balestracci**
- **Motion passed unanimously with 10 votes in favor, 0 votes against, and 1 abstention**

7 INFORMATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

7.1 Hiring (resignations and new hires, including trend reports): Executive Director Ericson reported on agency-wide recruitment and staffing, noting that LEARN has hired 79 employees since the beginning of the year and currently has 45 active vacancies. Recruitment and retention continue to present challenges, and efforts to address staffing needs across the agency remain ongoing.

7.2 Distributions - None

7.3 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

DRAFT

7.3.1 Regular Business Meeting of October 23, 2026

7.4 LEARN Building Committee Meeting Minutes

7.4.1 Supplemental Business Meeting of October 8, 2026

7.4.2 Regular Business Meeting of October 23, 2026

7.5 Legislative Updates

7.6 LEARN Agency Updates: Highlights from Executive Director Ericson included preparations for the March 2027 DisABILITY Summit, progress toward opening the Early LEARNing Campus, and continued community partnerships supporting student and family services. The Board also received updates on agency goal-setting and instructional progress, including encouraging early literacy results, as well as the development of a new regional mathematics professional learning initiative in partnership with Brown University's Annenberg Institute. Financially, LEARN has begun its annual budget development process, with anticipated challenges related to the conclusion of federal grant funding and projected deficits across several school programs. Executive Director Ericson also discussed anticipated supplemental funding and ongoing advocacy for increased state education support. Additional updates included continued outreach to member district superintendents, a leadership transition within the Special Education Department, recent school choice and community engagement activities at Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS), and the receipt of a $130,000 early childhood grant to support regional initiatives. Finally, Executive Director Ericson shared LEARN's participation in a

DRAFT

national leadership collaboration through the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA), providing opportunities for professional exchange and collaboration with educational service agencies across the country.

8 OLD BUSINESS

9 NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Updated Drone Footage: Early LEARNing Magnet School Project 10/8/26: Executive Director Ericson provided a construction update on the Early LEARNing Campus in Hartford, noting that the final major furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E) package has been submitted to the State. The project remains on schedule and is currently projected to be approximately $10 million under budget. Executive Director Ericson also reported progress in securing outstanding state reimbursements.

9.2 Review of Executive Director's Goal Setting: Executive Director Ericson presented her goals for the 2026-2027 year, organized around three primary areas: strengthening relationships and advancing LEARN's vision, operational management, and community and Board engagement. Key priorities include continued improvements in literacy and mathematics instruction, expansion of dual-language programming, early childhood initiatives, regional collaboration, and stakeholder engagement. Operational priorities include completing outstanding facility projects, preparing for the transition to the new Early LEARNing Campus, advancing RMMS renovations, and addressing emerging areas such as artificial intelligence and instructional technology. Executive Director Ericson also highlighted opportunities to

DRAFT

expand LEARN's L.I.L.A. language acquisition program. Discussion included regional educational collaboration, magnet school advocacy, increasing public awareness of LEARN's services, and strengthening relationships with member districts and community partners. Executive Director Ericson emphasized the importance of continued Board engagement, communication, and collaboration in advancing the agency's goals.

10 EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

11 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: Board members briefly discussed the requirements for providing remote participation opportunities during executive sessions, including considerations related to maintaining confidentiality and the integrity of executive session discussions.

12 FUTURE ROUNDTABLE TOPICS - None

13 ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting at 10:37 a.m.

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

Respectfully submitted by:

Jamella A. A. Etienne

DRAFT