

Reading Leadership Implementation Council Meeting  
April 28, 2026  
Meeting Minutes

**Connecticut Department of Education**

Reading Leadership Implementation Council Virtual Meeting

450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT

April 28, 2026

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

**Present:**

- Dr. Matthew Conway, Professor, Superintendent Derby Public Schools
- Dr. Michael Coyne, Professor, Neag School of Education the University of Connecticut
- Dr. Margie Gillis, Founder and President, Literacy How, Inc.
- Steven Hernández, Esq., Executive Director, CONNCAN
- Dr. Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Director of the Center for Literacy Research & Reading Success (Center), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
- Gary Highsmith, Superintendent, Hamden Public Schools
- Yasmin Ithier-Vicenty, Teacher, Hartford Public Schools
- Dr. Tamu Lucero, Superintendent, Stamford Public Schools
- Dr. Ashley Oldham, Assistant Professor of Education, Department of Special Education, University of Saint Joseph
- Dr. James Zavodjancik, Chief Academy Officer, Fairfield Public Schools

**Facilitator:**

Dr. Ellen Stoltz, Educational Leadership Consultant, ImproveYourSchools

**I. Welcome and Roll Call**

E. Stoltz convened the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

**II. Minutes from February 24, 2026**

E. Stoltz opened the floor and made a motion for approval of the minutes from February 24, 2026. S. Hernández approved the motion and M. Gillis seconded.

**III. Council Member Comments and Insights**

No action or discussion occurred under this agenda item as Council members did not request to share comments or insights.

**IV. Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success Director Updates**

Dr. Hickey shared updates with the Council on the following information: Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success Website, Connecticut's 2026 Family Literacy Celebration, Connecticut K-12 Literacy Strategy, Connecticut's Literacy Farmwork, and Voluntary Family

Reading History Questionnaire. She reminded the Council that their two-year term is ending in June 2026. She mentioned, at the request of the Council, the Office of Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities will be presenting at the May 2026 meeting.

**V. Voices from the Field: District Literacy Journeys**

Cody Fusco and Candice LaConti, associate education consultants from the Center, shared district implementation journeys and district feedback regarding no-cost literacy professional learning opportunities provided by the Center.

**VI. Meeting Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

The next Council meeting will be held virtually on May 19, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.