

Reading Leadership Implementation Council Meeting  
February 24, 2026  
Meeting Minutes

**Connecticut Department of Education**

Reading Leadership Implementation Council Virtual Meeting

450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT

February 24, 2026

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

**Present:**

- 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 December 16, 2025**

E. Stoltz opened the floor and made a motion for approval of the minutes from December 16, 2025. A. Oldham approved the motion and S. Hernández 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. *Bridging Plans to Practice: A Process to Self-Assess Full Implementation of CT Approved K-3 Reading Curriculum Models or Programs Curriculum***

Dr. Hickey shared updates with the Council on the mandated Implementation Review Process. Dr. Hickey stated that at a previous meeting M. Conway shared that Derby is willing

to pilot the drafted review process, she shared that two more districts are needed, Dr. Lucero volunteered that Stamford can be a part of the pilot. No questions were asked.

**V. Comprehensive Literacy Framework**

Deirdre Savarese and Erin Edwards, Associate Education Consultants in the Center for Literacy Research and Literacy Success, shared with the Council the Comprehensive Literacy Framework and the Statewide Literacy Survey. The Center asked the Council members to share the link to the survey.

**VI. Science of Reading and Students Receiving Special Education Services**

Dr. Ellen Stoltz and Dr. Ashley Oldham shared with the Council a presentation entitled *The Science of Reading: Accessible Instruction for Every Student*. E. Stoltz shared that she has provided a series of virtual trainings to the CAPSS coaches of the Connecticut Science of Reading Masterclass. The Council presentation focused on embedding and practicing executive functioning skills to support the Science of Reading elements, thereby making reading instructions more accessible for students with and without disabilities. E. Stoltz discussed the alignment of executive functioning skills to the Science of Reading. A. Oldham shared her educator preparation experiences with teaching executive functioning skills at the University of Saint Joseph.

**VII. Meeting Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

The next Council meeting will be held virtually on March 17, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. –2:30 p.m.