Reading Leadership Implementation Council Meeting
September 22, 2026
Meeting Minutes

Connecticut Department of Education

Reading Leadership Implementation Council Virtual Meeting

450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT

September 22, 2026

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Note: Due to technical difficulties the recording of the Reading Leadership Implementation Council Virtual Meeting started during the Council Roles, Responsibilities and Goals portion of the agenda.

Present:

- Dr. Matthew Conway, Superintendent, Derby Public Schools
- Dr. Michael Coyne, Professor, Neag School of Education the University of Connecticut
- Amy Dowell, Partner, Good Policy Partners
- 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
- Melvette Hill, Executive Director Connecticut General Assembly's Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity
- Yasmin Ithier-Vicenty, Teacher, Hartford Public Schools
- Dr. Ashley Oldham, Associate Professor of Education, Department Chair, University of Saint Joseph
- Shandra Scott-Brown, Principal, CREC Museum Academy

Facilitator:

Dr. Ellen Stoltz, Educational Leadership Consultant, ImproveYourSchools

I. Welcome, Roll Call and Introductions

E. Stoltz convened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. Council members formally introduced themselves. Dr. Hewes highlighted the Five-Year Comprehensive Plan for Education 2023–2028, entitled Every Student Prepared for Learning, Life, and Work Beyond School and the CSDE strategic focus areas.

II. Council Meeting Norms

E. Stoltz discussed the Council Norms: Equitable Participation, Active Listening, and Respect for all Perspectives. The floor was opened for discussion to keep or add to Council Norms. Dr. Hickey suggested adding a norm that all Council members keep their cameras on during the course of the Council meetings, all were in favor.

III. Council Roles, Responsibilities, and Goals

Dr. Hickey reviewed with the Council the K-3 Literacy Plan and shared the Center and Council webpages. Dr. Hickey and E. Stoltz compared the roles and responsibilities of the Director and Council members. Council members reviewed the 2024-26 Goals. Floor was opened for discussion. S. Hernandez asked if the 24-26 are the new goal setting. It was shared that the next meeting will include creating the new Council goals. S. Hernandez shared that he would like to lift implementation as it takes support and resources of both CSDE and State. A. Dowell asked what does "100% of percent of Connecticut districts and Charter Schools" look like. Dr. Hickey shared that it includes the delivery of evidence-based, comprehensive, core literacy instruction that promotes success for all students. This includes districts using the approved assessments, curriculum models, and programs with fidelity and integrity while providing educators with evidence-aligned professional learning.

IV. Director of the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success Updates

Dr. Hickey shared information on the following:

- **Statewide Literacy Conference−From Connection to Impact: Creating Stronger Early Literacy Outcomes Together:** The Center, in partnership with Central Connecticut State University and the University of Connecticut, are hosting a statewide literacy conference on October 29, 2026, at Central Connecticut State University. The conference will highlight Connecticut's K–5 literacy journey and efforts to strengthen early literacy outcomes.
- **U.S. Department of Education Innovation and Research Grant:** The Center, in partnership with the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education, HILL for Literacy, and Fordham University, was awarded a five-year, $10 million competitive grant to expand intensive, targeted reading interventions and integrated positive behavioral supports for K–3 students experiencing significant reading difficulties.
- **Connecticut Literacy Coach Expansion:** Governor Lamont allocated $2 million to establish a statewide network of K–3 literacy coaches as part of a broader budget package supporting education and workforce development priorities.

V. Council Meeting Schedule for the 2026-27 School Year

The Council agreed on the schedule below for next meetings in the 2026-27 school year.

- Tuesday, October 20, 2026 (1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.)
- Tuesday, November 17, 2026 (1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.)
- Tuesday, January 19, 2027 (1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.)
- Tuesday, March 23, 2027 (1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.)
- Tuesday, May 18, 2027 (1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.)

VI. Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

The next Council meeting will be held virtually on October 20, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.