



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
March 5, 2026

MINUTES

On March 5, 2026, the EdAdvance Board of Directors held a Zoom online meeting during which a quorum was present. President John Kissko called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM and recorded the following members in attendance:

1. Roll Call:

Name (District): Deb Bell, Region 7
Amy Bennett, Norfolk
Kate Conetta, Danbury
Sarah Ethier, Thomaston
John Kissko, Torrington
Penny Miller, New Hartford
Nora Mocarski, Winchester
Alison Plante, Newtown
Brenda Reed, Bethel
Sarah Robichaud, Colebrook

EdAdvance

Personnel: Lisa Bowden, Assistant Executive Director
Richard Carmelich, III, Chief Operations Officer
Tracey Lay, Chief Talent & Development Officer
Annette Miserez-Dillon, Director of Special Education
Carol Montory, Board Clerk

2. Approval of January 8, 2026 Minutes

Upon a motion by Kate Conetta, duly seconded by Deb Bell, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the January 8, 2026 meeting.

3. Approval of February 5, 2026 Minutes

Upon a motion by Kate Conetta, duly seconded by Penny Miller, the Board approved the minutes of the February 5, 2026 meeting with one abstention.

4. Questions and Comments from the Public: None

5. Old Business: None

6. New Business:

a) Action Item: Healthy Food Certification - Healthy Food Option

Upon a motion by Amy Bennett, duly seconded by Deb Bell, the Board of Directors unanimously approved of EdAdvance's *Healthy Food Certification - Healthy Food Option* pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, EdAdvance certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

b) Action Item: Healthy Food Certification – Food and Beverages Exemption Option

Upon a motion by Penny Miller, duly seconded by Kate Conetta, the Board of Directors unanimously approved of EdAdvance's *Healthy Food Certification – Combined Food and Beverage Exemption* as stated: EdAdvance will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

c) Presentation/Approval: Board Meeting Schedule for FY 2026-2027

The 2026-2027 Board meeting schedule was presented to the Board. We will have all virtual meetings except for the annual meeting in October and the budget meeting in May. The August and December meetings are provisional, and we will hold them only if necessary.

The Board of Directors unanimously approved the meeting schedule as presented for FY 2026-2027.

d) Presentation/Approval: Addition of Regional School District #10 as an EdAdvance Member District

Lisa spoke about the transfer of Regional School District #10 from being a CREC member district to an EdAdvance member district. The conversation for this transfer began in December 2025 with Regional School District #10's desire to join our catchment area. At their January 12, 2026 meeting, Regional School District #10 unanimously passed a motion to affiliate with EdAdvance and terminate their membership with CREC. Since we are structured to work with smaller districts, this transfer is an ideal fit. EdAdvance will write a letter to the Commissioner of Education informing the department about this change.

Upon motion by Kate Conetta, duly seconded by Alison Plante, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the addition of Regional School District #10 as an EdAdvance member district.

e) Update: Status of Current Budget FY 2025-2026 and Preliminary FY 2026-2027 Budget Planning

Rich spoke about the status of our current budget and our budget strategies for 2026-2027. The budget that was included in the Board packet showed a projected surplus of \$218,761 for the agency. While this is a slight decrease from the \$261,952 projected in October, we remain optimistic about the current trajectory. Programmatic performance has seen marked improvements, particularly in Transportation due to lower fuel costs and new pricing software, as well as in Early Childhood services. While funding for College and Career Accelerator (CCA) was previously reduced, the program has secured some new revenue through a \$125,000 Department of Labor contract and an additional \$165,000 in funding. However, a \$280,000 deficit was noted in Administration and Operations, shifting from a previous surplus, following an auditor-recommended change to charging the 14% indirect program fee monthly based on actual expenses. With the WorkspaceCT sale closing tomorrow and the board set to adopt the new budget in May, the agency remains optimistic about its financial direction.

f) Presentation: Audit Report for FY 2024-2025

Rich spoke about the results of the Financial Statement, the State Single Audit, and the Federal Single Audit completed by our auditor, King, King, & Associates. Our cash and cash equivalents have decreased due to losses in the past few years. Our fixed assets increased to \$21,168,238. Fixed assets include land, building, vehicles, furniture, and equipment. Our notes payable increased to \$12,955,512 due mainly to the changes/additions in completion of construction projects at the Early Childhood Learning Center and the purchase of new vehicles for our transportation fleet. Our auditors indicated a deficiency related to our Food Services department. The incorrect application of the indirect to food expenses was identified by the state audit team and corrected immediately in the spring of 2025.

7. Reports/Updates:

a) Special Education – *Annette Miserez-Dillon*

- Annette reported that the snow days are impacting the program. We are looking at the possibility of taking days from the April vacation. As of now, the last day of school for one of our schools is June 23 with the other three being later in June.
- We are already more than half-way through the school year with our high school students thinking about graduation and some of our other students transitioning back to their school districts.
- We have already started planning for Extended School Year (ESY) services this summer and the start of the next school year.
- Annette stated that the schools are getting ready for the state testing that will be taking place this spring.

b) Talent and Development – *Tracey Lay*

- Tracey reported that our Human Resources department is keeping busy preparing for our health benefits renewal and the installation of a new human capital management module in our Munis software suite.
- We will be renewing our partnership with Post University and their employer paid tuition program. EdAdvance will pay up to \$5,220 for the tuition of eligible employees for up to 18 credits. A tuition discount is also offered.

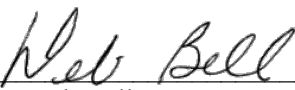
- We have partnered with Associates for Training and Development (A4TD) to place a Senior Community Service Program worker as a support person in our reception area at the Litchfield office. This is a federally funded job training program for low-income, unemployed adults age 55 and older who face barriers to employment. In exchange for their work here, we provide them with new skills and work experience so they can transition into unsubsidized employment.
 - Our Marketing and Communications department has been assisting Region 15 with their website. Region 12 has also reached out to us to redesign their website.
 - We continue to work on accessibility with our agency communications to be compliant with the ADA guidelines.
 - BASES received an \$18,000 NPAL grant for Torrington Middle School to be used for mentoring.
 - We have been busy for the last two months with many staff activities. In January, we held a successful Stock the Shelves food drive to support the food banks and community soup kitchens throughout Northwest Connecticut. We also held our agency Winter Brunch with over 100 staff in attendance and food provided by our Food Service staff.
 - We continue to hold yoga classes for staff. We also introduced our monthly Wellness Wednesdays with bonus grant money that we received. Four staff are randomly chosen and the staff picked will receive up to \$50 reimbursement for a health/wellness activity or item of their choice.
 - The agency is having an outing to the Hartford Wolf Pack hockey game on Friday, March 13. Tickets are available to staff at a discounted group rate with a portion of each ticket sale going to the agency's Charitable Giving Fund.
 - The week of March 23-27 will be our 3rd Annual EdAdvance Spirit Week for staff. Each day has a different theme, and departments are encouraged to participate and share their photos.
 - We are holding an American Red Cross Blood Drive on March 30 from 1 pm to 6 pm in Litchfield. It is open to staff and the entire community.
- c) Business and Operations – *Richard Carmelich*
- Rich reported that our facilities department is anticipating some additional expenses this fiscal year. Snow removal expenditures this winter are 3 times over the allocated budget. Additionally, the propane rooftop heating units at the Dr. Jeffrey C. Kitching Regional Learning Center malfunctioned this winter, so we will need to have them serviced; the underground oil tank in Litchfield will need to be addressed; and the kitchen at the ACCESS school in Danbury needs to be expanded.
 - We finally received \$6.2 million from the IRS, marking the conclusion of the “COVID-era” Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) process. This includes \$1.7 million in interest, significantly higher than the \$500,000 originally anticipated. These funds will be used to replenish agency reserves.
 - The sale of WorkspaceCT is scheduled to close tomorrow, yielding us \$1.2 million. We had a great buyer. He allowed us to take the commercial stove out of the building to replace the aging one in Litchfield. Displaced staff have already secured new office space on the same road.
 - The School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) grant originally faced a funding cliff on December 31, which led to the loss of 17 counselors and subsequent layoffs. Following an \$830,000 allocation from Governor Lamont, the agency has begun rehiring staff. Federal funds are confirmed through December 31, 2026, though funding for 2027 remains uncertain.
- d) Professional Learning Services – *Lisa Bowden*
- Lisa reported that Senator Chris Murphy, Congresswoman Jahana Hayes, Congressman John Larson, and State Senator Paul Honig will be visiting the Early Childhood Learning Center in Torrington tomorrow to discuss the impact of the federal funding disruptions on our BASES, Head Start, School Based Mental Health, and McKinney Vento programs.

- The Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) continues to be a highly impactful program. LEAP is an attendance program that fosters strong parent relationships including home visits designed as a targeted intervention for students who have missed or begun to miss too much school. Talk Tuesdays are biweekly virtual gatherings that bring together educators, school staff, community partners, and leaders from across the state to explore practical, research-based strategies for improving student attendance and engagement.
- Our professional learning specialists continue their work on teacher evaluation, math, and ELA throughout the state.
- The RESC Alliance staff developers continue to work on statewide CSDE collaborations including teacher evaluation.
- We continue our work on the Teacher Education and Mentoring Program (TEAM). This is a two-year program for new teachers that includes mentorship and professional development support around five modules. It pairs beginning teachers with trained mentors to improve retention.

8. Adjournment

Upon a motion by Penny Miller, duly seconded by Nora Mocarski, the meeting was adjourned at 5:02 PM.

Minutes recorded by:
Carol Montory, Board Clerk



Deb Bell, Secretary