



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
March 6, 2025

MINUTES

On March 6, 2025, 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 4:00 PM and recorded the following members in attendance:

1. Roll Call:

Name (District): Deb Bell, Region 7
Kate Conetta, Danbury
Roxy Fainer, Thomaston
Christine Faessa, Watertown
John Kissko, Torrington
Sarah Robichaud, Colebrook
Kelly Tilton, Plymouth
Deirdre Tindall, New Hartford

**EdAdvance
Personnel:**

Jonathan P. Costa, Sr., Executive Director
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 2, 2025 Minutes

Upon a motion by Deb Bell, duly seconded by Roxy Fainer, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the January 2, 2025 meeting.

3. Questions and Comments from the Public: None

4. Communications

a) Written

Jonathan spoke about the two Republican-American newspaper articles included in the communications packet. The first article was about students enrolled in the University Pathways Program (UPP), a partnership between EdAdvance and Post University. The UPP students took part in a mock police traffic stop which was designed to improve communication between motorists on the autism spectrum and police officers. The second article was about the use of AI in school districts and EdAdvance's leading role in that area. It included discussions about AI with

Matt Mervis, our Director of AI Strategy and Elizabeth Radday, our Director of Research and Innovation.

5. Old Business:

Jonathan reported that the Head Start materials that are included in the Board packet contain a lot of information and important updates. Our Head Start program met their enrollment target, so they will not need to return any federal money.

6. New Business:

a) Action Item: Eversource Easement

Upon motion by Deb Bell, duly seconded by Kate Conetta, the Board of Directors unanimously approved of EdAdvance's (the Center) request to grant and convey to The Connecticut Light and Power Company d/b/a Eversource Energy, a corporation chartered by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut and having its principal office in the Town of Berlin, in the State of Connecticut, its successors and assigns, permanent rights for the installation, maintenance and repair of electric (and gas) lines over, under and across land of the Center situated in the Town of Plymouth and State of Connecticut, as set forth in the proposed easement presented to this meeting, which is hereby ordered filed with the records of this meeting;

AND that Jonathan P. Costa, the Executive Director of the Center, be and he hereby is authorized to execute and deliver in the name of the Center an easement presented to this meeting and to do any and all other acts to effectuate the foregoing.

b) Update: Status of Current Budget FY 2024-2025 and Preliminary FY 2025-2026 Budget Planning

Jonathan shared a PowerPoint presentation on the status of our current budget and our budget strategies for 2025-2026. The budget that was included in the Board packet showed a loss of \$1,684,375 for the agency. Since that update, things have improved, and the current budget deficit is \$358,218 less than we projected. This is due to an increase in Special Education enrollments. Seventeen of our programs are operating at a positive balance with new programs and contracts underway. We have implemented immediate budget gap closing strategies including restricting unfunded travel and expenses, reducing salary exposure where possible, and delaying non-essential capital expenses.

As we start planning our budget for next year, we will produce a balanced budget for 2025-2026. We will be increasing our health insurance deductibles and providing a 1% COLA for line staff with directors and administrators remaining at their current salary. We are lobbying to secure funding for CCA and working with staff to mitigate losses in other areas.

c) Presentation/Approval: Board Meeting Schedule for FY 2025-2026

The 2025-2026 Board meeting schedule was presented to the Board. Jonathan proposed having all virtual meetings except for the annual meeting in October and the budget meeting in May. We will now have both the August and December meetings as optional.

Board member Kate Conetta noted that October 2, 2025 is Yom Kippur. We will move the October meeting to October 9 and put this item back on the agenda for approval at our April 3, 2025 meeting.

d) Discussion: Overview of the Process for Conducting the Annual Evaluation of the Executive Director

Jonathan shared a PowerPoint slide that detailed his evaluation process. He will be drafting a self-reflection and sharing that with the Board President in April. At the May Board meeting, there will be an Executive Session to discuss his self-reflection. Between the May and June meetings, Board members will review the information and submit feedback to the Board President, and he will meet with Jonathan to review these materials. At the June meeting, the Board will take action on his evaluation and contract.

7. Reports/Updates:

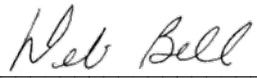
- a) Executive Director – *Jonathan P. Costa, Sr.*
 - Jonathan reported that the CSDE issued a request for a proposal for an artificial intelligence (AI) in education pilot program. We applied to be a pilot, but we were not chosen. However, five of the six districts that were chosen are using our materials and they are paying us to help with the pilot.
- b) Professional Learning Services – *Lisa Bowden*
 - Lisa reported that she changed her name back to her birth name, Lisa Bowden.
 - The Professional Learning Services team has been very busy assisting our districts. Caroline Calhoun and Liz Radday continued their work on the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP). Caroline has been recognized as a leader in the state for her work, compassion, and care for this program. The LEAP work will likely continue next year.
 - Abbe Waldron and Carrie Kilian-Sirois continued their work on the Commissioner’s Network Turnaround Plan for Canton Middle School. They are helping to identify issues in the school. Robin Moore and Andrienne Longobucco are providing coaching and math work.
- c) Business and Operations – *Richard Carmelich*
 - Rich stated that our Finance department is working to improve our internal processes. They have rolled out an improved purchase order process to better coordinate the flow of invoices and paperwork into the fiscal office. They will also be implementing the Content Manager Module in MUNIS, our financial software, to electronically capture, manage, and retrieve documentation to track expenses.
 - Rich reported that he and Tracey are looking at different software options in MUNIS for Human Resources functions.
 - Our health insurance renewal for the next fiscal year is 10% even though we had a good year. Also, we may be switching liability insurance as we are going out to bid.
 - The Transportation department is continuing to discuss with Region 20 the possibility of taking over their Special Education bus runs.
 - The Technology department is assisting Region 12 with their technology needs.
 - The 2023-2024 agency audit is late. After a few extensions, the financial report, federal single, and state single audits are done and will be presented at the next meeting.
- d) Talent and Development – *Tracey Lay*
 - Tracey reported that State Representative Joe Canino visited the Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC) on February 19. She also spoke about the Open House scheduled for April 10, 2025 from 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm at ECLC. Our community partners, state agencies, funders, and elected officials are invited and there will be tours, resource tables, and refreshments.
 - Our Human Resources department has been busy implementing the new Connecticut Paid Sick Leave Law that went into effect on January 1. They are also working on changes that have been made to Title IX.
 - Tracey spoke about the launch of a new internal staff directory that includes detailed employee information and a photo.
 - The agency’s Winter Breakfast was held on January 31. In conjunction with the breakfast, we also held a food drive for our partners at Stock the Shelves.

- The agency is having an outing to the Hartford Wolf Pack hockey game on Friday, March 21. Tickets are available to staff at a discounted group rate with a portion of each ticket going to the agency Charitable Giving Fund.
 - The week of March 24-28 will be our 2nd Annual EdAdvance Spirit Week for staff. Each day has a different theme, and departments are encouraged to participate and share their photos.
 - Our Workplace Wellness-Alignment Yoga program for staff will be starting again on March 11 for 6 sessions. These sessions are held in Litchfield and virtually at WorkspaceCT in Bethel.
 - We are holding an American Red Cross Blood Drive on April 9 from 1 pm to 6 pm in Litchfield. It is open to staff and the entire community.
- e) Special Education – *Annette Miserez-Dillon*
- Annette spoke about trying to develop ways to meet the needs of special education students in our districts. We have talented staff across our schools that can design, create, and implement special programs to help our districts service students appropriately. In smaller districts, we can create internal special education programs designed to maintain the child in their school.

8. Adjournment

Upon a motion by Kate Conetta, duly seconded by Deb Bell, the meeting was adjourned at 5:12 PM.

Minutes recorded by:
Carol Montory, Board Clerk



Deb Bell, Secretary