

# The LEARN Leader



LEARN Celebrates 50 Years of Educational Excellence and Equity



LEARN is a regional educational service center working with and for its member school districts to improve the quality of public education for all learners. The agency is dedicated to innovation, collaboration, and service.



[learn.k12.ct.us](http://learn.k12.ct.us)



# LEARN: Committed to Innovation, Collaboration, and Service

Dear Readers,  
LEARN has been the Regional Educational Service Center for southeastern Connecticut and shoreline educators, school districts, and communities for over 50 years. We are a school-based partnership governed by board members from our local school districts. LEARN has a proud history of serving, innovating, and collaborating with the educational community. LEARN's fundamental purpose is to ensure that every child has access to high quality public education.

We provide leadership for teaching and learning, offering professional opportunities for educators, parents, and community members. Our skilled educators offer highly specialized programs for students with complex special needs. Our early childhood programs provide supports for parents and create community connections. We constantly seek to promote collaborative partnerships and regional opportunities to increase efficiencies and high quality programs. LEARN also operates seven magnet schools of choice, offering students the opportunity to engage in robust, innovative, and theme-based learning experiences in a richly diverse public school setting.

I am proud of the role LEARN plays in our region. Come learn and work with us.

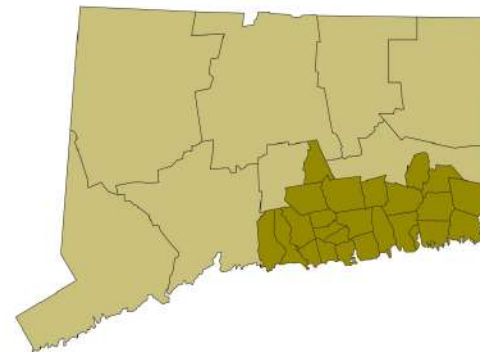
Sincerely,

Dr. Eileen Howley,  
LEARN  
*Executive Director*



## WHO WE SERVE: Our Towns and School Districts

Chester	New London
Clinton	North Stonington
Deep River	Norwich
East Haddam	Old Saybrook
East Hampton	Preston
East Lyme	Salem
Essex	Stonington
Groton	Waterford
Guilford	Westbrook
Ledyard	Region #4
Madison	Region #17
Montville	Region #18



## Young Children and Families: DEDICATED TO SERVICE

From educational expertise to customized care, The LEARN Department of Children and Young Families (YCF) has positively impacted thousands of Southeastern Connecticut families over the course of more than 20 years.

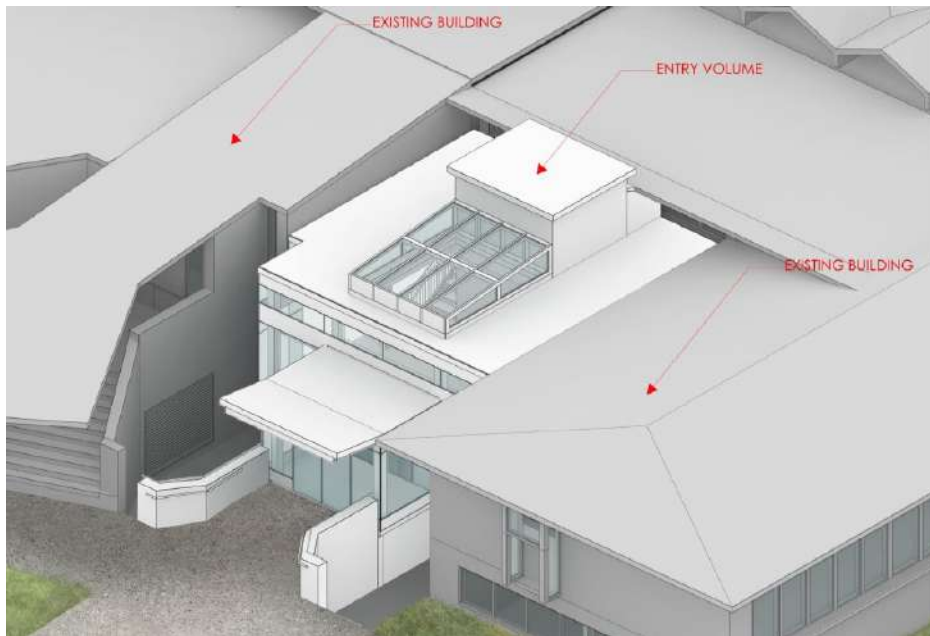
The multidisciplinary team prides itself on using a coaching model and working in children's natural learning environments – primarily their homes- to build caregiver capacity and achieve developmental goals. Additionally, LEARN coordinators have been providing trainings and support to programs and districts on behalf of the Office of Early Childhood.

YCF has added a new component through its partnership with Read to Grow. With every home visit, LEARN provides a new book to the family. As a result, the family's library of books continues to grow and children have access to great stories.

Other YCF partnerships are likewise benefiting educators throughout the state and beyond. On March 2, YCF co-sponsored a sold out conference on attachment bonds and future sessions are being planned.



# Districts, Special Needs Families to Benefit from LEARNing Academy



Tecton Architects vision of the building renovation.

[www.learnstudentsupportservices.org](http://www.learnstudentsupportservices.org)

LEARN has established itself as a provider of high quality service and care for students with special needs and their families. Now, the agency is moving forward with plans to open a facility that consolidates programs in a warm, state-of-the-art environment.

The Beth El Synagogue in New London is being renovated to the Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy and Center of Excellence. It will serve as a school and centralized hub for Student Support Services (SSS), which specializes in care for high need students.

Once complete, the facility will house the majority of LEARN's special education programs, including a diagnostic wellness center. It will become an important resource for districts in caring for students with autism and developmental disabilities, and will provide a permanent home for many of LEARN's most critical services that the RESC supplies to students and towns.

The building is expected to open in the fall of 2018.

SSS creates safe and nurturing educational environments to foster the individual growth of all students.

## International Collaboration Brings LEARN Expertise to China

LEARN is establishing itself on the international front.

LEARN and the Vermont International Academy (VIA) have created a footprint in China for delivering an accredited western style curriculum. LEARN and VIA are collaborating to create opportunities for LEARN magnet high schools to host Chinese high school students.

Additionally, Dr. Tina Mannarino, LEARN's Director of Young Children and Families, is working with VIA and Yale to establish an early childhood program in China. Plans are in the works to host a training symposium in June for Chinese early childhood teachers and administrators. They will be visiting

LEARN's early childhood magnet programs and attending workshops conducted by Dr. Mannarino, Dr. Tong Liu, and Dr. Walter Gilliam from Yale's Ziegler Center.

LEARN's Student Support Services Director Bridgette Gordon Hickey and Assistant Director Sarah Moon have been invited to explore how the department might support the development of special education training for teachers in China. VIA is working on a program sponsored by the Chinese Education Ministry with a focus on the growing needs for special education support and is hoping to include LEARN in this project.



LEARN is partnering with the Vermont International Academy (VIA) as well as Goodwin College on elements for international collaboration with China. Pictured: Dr. ZJ Chen, Executive Director, VIA; Dr. James P. Cross, President, VIA; Dr. Eileen Howley, Executive Director, LEARN; and Mark Scheinberg, President, Goodwin College.

### Did you know?

In 2016-17, LEARN vehicles traveled more than 777,000 miles in service to students. That's enough miles to circle the earth more than 31 times!



# The Friendship School: Where Curiosity Drives Exploration

With a brand new playground, a wide variety of enriching classroom activities, and lessons built around students' interests, The Friendship School (TFS) invites students to play, imagine, and explore.

The school is now accepting applications from all children entering pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. Students living throughout Connecticut can apply online until March 31.

As an inquiry-based school, TFS encourages students to explore their imaginations and ask questions about the things they find interesting. Teachers build their curriculum to help children understand the world around them.

During the winter, students in the classrooms of teachers Jessica Zdanys, Ruth Toledo, and Nancee Terracciano grew interested in learning about the weather. The teachers created a unit to help students explore meteorology and track patterns. The unit wrapped with a visit from Channel 3 meteorologist Scot Haney.

TFS regularly reaches out to the community for visitors. Recent guests have included Waterford Police Chief Brett Mahoney, Officer Patrick Flanagan and his canine partner, Tonka, and the U.S. Coast Guard.



In the fall, TFS opened its brand new upper playground. Childscapes Playgrounds built the equipment to be accessible to students of all abilities. It features a large new primary playscape, complete with slides, climbers, and other equipment, as well as a canopy covering much of the structure.

In addition to the new structure, the school updated the lower playground with rubberized flooring. Now both playscapes offer safe spaces for students.



## Accepting applications through Saturday, March 31!

Join us for a guided tour on dates throughout March and early April! Visit our website for all tour dates and we look forward to seeing you.



[thefriendshipschool.org](http://thefriendshipschool.org) • (860) 447-4049  
24 Rope Ferry Road • Waterford  
f @thefriendshipschoolct

## Join the LEARN team!

LEARN has a number of vacancies available for drivers, instructional aides, specialists, and more! A full list of positions are available at [learn.k12.ct.us/employment](http://learn.k12.ct.us/employment)





# RMMS Committed to Diversity, Character, and Culture

Few schools in Connecticut can rival the sheer breadth of cultural experience that Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) provides. Now, the school is enhancing its theme by bringing an International Baccalaureate (IB) program to its students.

RMMS is an IB candidate school, which aligns its curriculum with schools from 109 countries around the globe. IB schools encourage students to think for themselves and take responsibility for their learning through exploration of real world issues.

The IB mission meshes with the curriculum and multiculturalism in place at RMMS. A recent photo exhibit, "Beauty in Diversity," is a perfect illustration of what the school values.

The moving and emotional collection of images and histories of students, staff members, and families. Each photo tells a different story of perseverance and culture, reflecting the worldly nature that defines the school. Some of the children and adults are refugees, having escaped natural disasters in Haiti or warfare in Sudan. Other photos feature military families who found their way to the region as a result of service.

RMMS students and staff also recently demonstrated their global mission by raising more than \$950 for Puerto Rican residents still displaced and without basic services following the devastation of Hurricane Maria.



Photos by Kelley Norcia Photography.



## Accepting applications through Saturday, March 31!

Why is RMMS a good choice for your child?  
See for yourself at a daytime tour on  
March 16 or 20 or at our Open House  
on Wednesday, March 28.  
Visit [rmms.k12.ct.us](http://rmms.k12.ct.us) for more!



[rmms.k12.ct.us](http://rmms.k12.ct.us) • (860) 437-7775  
One Bulkeley Place • New London  
f @RMMS7775

The Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) is an International Baccalaureate (IB) candidate school for the Primary Years Programme. RMMS is pursuing authorization as an IB World School. These are schools that share a common philosophy—a commitment to high quality, challenging, international education that RMMS believes is important for our students.



# LEARN Professional Development an Asset to Local Educators

As public school districts tackle deep budget cuts, LEARN has become more important than ever as an affordable and effective resource for educator professional learning opportunities across the region and the state.

LEARN's Educator Professional Development and Services meets the immediate learning needs of its member districts while also providing cutting edge ideas from experts.

"In 11 years of PD, this is the only time I've ever truly enjoyed, learned from, and was glad I participated," one educator wrote of a recent session.



Two LEARN physical education teachers tackle a lesson.



LEARN's Scott Brown leads a professional development session.

LEARN is not wedded to the workshop model for professional learning and can customize learning opportunities such as coaching, lesson study, book studies, or professional learning communities. LEARN connects educators around common goals through content councils, administrator roundtables and their curriculum network.

Services go beyond educator training. LEARN offers programs for students and families through state grants and the staff is highly skilled at grant writing. As a result, students enjoy rich and rigorous learning experiences grounded in core subjects that bring the material alive.

LEARN also helps districts implement plans that meet state mandates. Districts receive invaluable support in such areas as aligning curriculum, new teacher induction, teacher evaluation, grading reform and assessment.

## Professional Development by the numbers:

500+

Educators Served

Types of customized,  
in-service offerings

20

42

Districts participated in  
development services

Workshops  
Offered

15

6 LEARN Facilitated  
9 Outside Presenters



**Regional solutions  
to health care needs  
By districts, for districts**

[learn.k12.ct.us/about\\_us/echmc](http://learn.k12.ct.us/about_us/echmc)

*ECHMC is a regional solution supported by LEARN*

## What is the cooperative?

- Small group of school boards & municipalities established in 2013 to consolidate medical health plans and creating cost-effective coverage options for employees
- A self-insured health and medical insurance group
- Open to all local Boards of Education and municipalities

## What is the purpose?

- Achieve efficiencies through plan design and group purchasing
- Contain and manage cost fluctuations in medical premiums
- Create wellness programs to improve employee health

# LEARN Lends Educational Expertise to Coast Guard Museum

The National Coast Guard Museum Association (NCGMA) is enlisting LEARN's help for educational support and expertise as plans for the world-class facility take shape.

Plans and fundraising efforts are underway for the pending museum, which will be built along the New London waterfront within walking distance from the local train station. The museum is expected to a boon for the region, with estimates of up to 300,000 visitors a year to the state-of-the-art facility, which will honor the heritage of the U.S. Coast Guard and provide to the public a gateway to discover Coast Guard life.

"We think we have something special that we can do for our region," said Captain Wes Pulver, NCGMA Executive Director. He touted the project as a "National Museum" for Connecticut, on par with the Smithsonian Institute experience in Washington D.C.

The NCGMA is conducting a six-month Museum Education Initiative to define concepts, physical requirements, and enable STEM educational components into building and exhibit designs. Planners want a museum that will be a premier learning destination for schools and students and has contracted with LEARN to develop educational components of the project, which looks to include interactive exhibits and leadership training opportunities in addition to STEM-based, engaged-learning options.

"This is an extremely exciting opportunity for us to partner with the Coast Guard Museum in furthering its critical mission to develop an educational space for the region and the nation," said LEARN Development Director Jack Cross.

In January, LEARN hosted and coordinated workshops with local educators to help guide the NCGMA's mission. Teachers, administrators, and theme coaches from several schools and districts met to discuss what concepts would engage students. Such ideas included an exercise regimen to help students grasp the physical requirements of enlisted Coast Guard members, the ability to navigate and pilot flight simulators in coastal rescues, and oceanographic study and experimentation.



At the new museum, Coast Guard officers will work closely with students.  
Photo courtesy of coastguardmuseum.org.



A student checks data during a class.

## WormED a Living Experiment for Special Needs Students

Worms might make some people squeamish, but to LEARN Student Support Services (SSS), the creatures represent a great learning opportunity.

"WormED" has become a composting lesson for students. The program seeks to reduce organic waste in the community school system, bakeries, restaurants, and grocery stores through vermicomposting – a process where earthworms digest the materials and produce highly effective fertilizer.

SSS is LEARN's special education division, and the students involved in WormED are enrolled in the Transition Program, designed to educate special needs students ages 18-21 with the skills they need to join the workforce. Teacher Tim Doyle and staff member Paul Magoulas head the vermicomposting effort, which has utilized grants and other funds to purchase thousands of red wiggler worms and other necessary resources.

"This is a new way to introduce fundamental and vocational skills," Doyle said. "We are preparing our students for life after school and the benefits to a program like this are endless."

Every day, Doyle said that the worms consume about four pounds of composting. By weeks end, they produce two to four pounds of waste.

In January, the Walmart Community Foundation joined the effort through a \$900 grant, which will be used to purchase three additional bins of worms.



# Dual Language Electives Highlight School's Purpose



Video games are no trivial matter at Dual Language and Arts Magnet Middle School (DLAMMS). Not only are the students the players, but they are learning how to design and code their own games.

The History of Video Games is one of many electives that students may choose as part of their experience at DLAMMS, a school that draws students from throughout the region. The electives are a regular part of the experience, with a variety of options in sports, the arts, science, technology, gaming, the humanities, and many more.

## LATIN DANCE

Latin Dance is one of the most popular electives at DLAMMS. The class brings students of all grade levels and backgrounds for a lessons in Salsa, Samba, and a number of other dance styles from Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Students learn by movement. They listen to music from several cultures and learn to move to the beat.

*The arts are a major component of many of the DLAMMS electives.*

*Right: Photo by 8th grader Arellis Caballero during photography class.*

*Above: A student practices her moves during Latin Dance.*



## HISTORY OF VIDEO GAMES

The History of Video Games takes students through 40 years of gaming. They examine design elements and gameplay of classic and modern games, then learn to code by creating their own games and collaborating.

## DISSECTION

It may not be for the squeamish, but students learn plenty in the Dissection elective. Under the supervision of science teacher Lauren Kershaw, students examine the internal and external anatomy of creatures like frogs and starfish. They also learn how organs work by studying brains and hearts of farm animals, all while using the same tools and instruments as biologists.

Accepting  
applications  
through  
Saturday,  
March 31!



[languagesandartsmagnetmiddle.org](http://languagesandartsmagnetmiddle.org) • (860) 446-9380

51 Daniels Avenue • Waterford

[@duallanguageandarts](https://www.facebook.com/duallanguageandarts)

## Did you know?

Since its founding in 1967, LEARN has grown from a handful of employees to well over 600 full and part-time employees.





# Credits in Hand, TRMC Students Ready for Future

With the rising cost of college, the prospect of earning free credits while still in high school is too good to pass up for many area students. Two Three Rivers Middle College students are taking it a step farther: they'll graduate high school with an associate degree in hand.

Alexi Switz, of Stonington, and Jaedan Spitalo, of Baltic, have worked hard to earn their credits at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich. LEARN runs TRMC in a program that allows high school students to take college classes and earn transferable credits toward their college degrees. Now, after several semesters in a row of taking 12-15 credits, Switz and Spitalo are on the verge of earning degrees.

"It is very difficult and a lot of work, but the staff and teachers at TRMC really prepare you well," said Switz. "Once you get into your full college schedule, you're not going to drown. The staff here makes all the difference."

Spitalo was intrigued by college level courses in criminal justice and sociology, as well as the significant money he will save. "We are earning free college credits and leave with a college degree. Seeing that goal keeps you motivated."

Switz fell in love with the TRMC program and enrolled, finding there was a "quick learning curve" to adapt to college habits and schedule. The classes were harder and more advanced, but she found allies in her classmates and support from her teachers. Now she feels fully prepared for a pre-med track in biomedical engineering.



Alexi Switz and Jaedan Spitalo are ready to graduate from TRMC with their associates degrees in hand.

Accepting  
applications  
through  
Saturday, April 6!



threeiversmiddlecollege.org • (860) 215-9055  
574 New London Turnpike • Norwich  
f @Threeiversmiddlecollege



In 2016-17,  
TRMC students  
earned

830

COLLEGE  
CREDITS.

LEARN is always looking for great teachers to come join our team. With our network of schools, programs, and services, LEARN is in demand as an employer. For a list of vacancies, visit [learn.k12.ct.us/employment](http://learn.k12.ct.us/employment).



# A Reggio Emilia Success Story at Riverside Magnet School

The milestones keep coming for Riverside Magnet School (RMS), a Reggio Emilia school run cooperatively by LEARN and Goodwin College.

In February, RMS learned that it is one of seven schools in the state to earn the Department of Education's distinction of "Greatest Improvers." The honor recognizes significant improvement in test scores and reflects the school's achievement level across all categories, including high needs students.

Dr. Jasdeep Singh, RMS principal, called the results a great achievement for a magnet school that accepts students from more than 40 public school districts.

Located on Goodwin's East Hartford campus, RMS brings together students of all backgrounds and income levels. Singh said that the school's improvement demonstrates the power of magnet schools and the Reggio Emilia model, which builds curriculum around students' curiosity and the natural world. He credited the students, staff, and families who have been present at the school since its inception in 2013.



*A scene from RMS's first ever Field Day, held last Spring.*

"Their cohort's journey truly is the journey of our school from its beginning as Goodwin College Early Childhood Magnet School to the Riverside of today," Singh said.

The state's recognition is the latest in a series of milestones for the school. Originally built as pre-kindergarten and kindergarten program, RMS has expanded annually to become a pre-kindergarten through grade five school. The expansion has necessitated a major renovation, with a neighboring building currently being reconstructed.



[riversidemagnetschool.org](http://riversidemagnetschool.org) • (860) 709-6800  
29 Willowbrook Road • East Hartford

LEARN is a proud member of the RESC Alliance, comprised of the six agencies that provide services, resources, and support to all Connecticut public school districts. The Alliance is united in its commitment to Connecticut schools and the needs of children, families, and educators. To learn more, visit

[rescalliance.org](http://rescalliance.org)





# Grant, New Facility Set CTRA Students on Manufacturing Pathway

As the result of grant funding and cooperation between LEARN and Goodwin College, students at the Connecticut River Academy (CTRA) have a crucial pathway into the field of high tech manufacturing.

CTRA was one of six schools to benefit from LEARN's Equity, eXcellence, & Pride across Eastern Connecticut (EXPECT) project, which was awarded a \$15 million federal grant in 2017.

LEARN and Goodwin jointly operate CTRA on the college's Riverside Campus and CTRA students can take college classes for credit. Goodwin's manufacturing programs provide students and workers with the skills to seize careers in the industry.

CTRA is revising its curriculum to incorporate manufacturing into its sustainability theme and continue its pathway to Goodwin.

"It opens students' minds to different kinds of careers they might not have been thinking about before," said CTRA Principal Tara



Amatrudo. "If there are students who are interested in high tech careers, this is a different way to get a hands-on education and build a pathway into college and career."

In January, CTRA began its first classes in manufacturing. Students utilize equipment such as 3-D printers, lasers, and industry-grade woodworking and metalworking machinery.

Classes are taking place in a 6,000 square-foot incubator space that Goodwin provides. In the spring, the College expects to break ground on a new \$10.4 million, 14,700 manufacturing annex for CTRA. Amatrudo said the school hopes the facility will open by the fall of 2019.



**CONNECTICUT  
RIVER ACADEMY  
AT GOODWIN COLLEGE**

[ctriveracademy.org](http://ctriveracademy.org)  
(860) 913-2200  
9 Riverside Drive  
East Hartford

*CTRA Students work in new incubator space for high tech manufacturing.*

In 2016-17,  
CTRA students  
earned

# 1,401

**COLLEGE  
CREDITS.**

## Did you know?

In more than 50 years as a Regional Educational Service Center, LEARN has had only three Executive Directors.



# Marine Science Continues Legacy of Academic Success and Distinction

GROTON – For the third time in its short history, Marine Science Magnet High School (MSMHS) has earned status as a School of Distinction for Overall from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE).

LEARN administers MSMHS, a high school that has frequently drawn high praise from the state as well as national publications for its curriculum, rigor, and administration. The CSDE uses results from the Next Generation Accountability System which is comprised from a set of 12 indicators based on school and district performance. Six Connecticut high schools received the honor this year.

“All great schools have three components,” said Dr. Nicholas J. Spera, MSMHS principal. “First, they must have a group of caring and motivated teachers willing to go above and beyond for their students.

Second, a student body that is willing to create a strong culture and climate conducive to learning along with the belief that effort creates ability. Lastly, it is essential to have the unwavering support of the parents and



community. I am blessed to be in a school where all three components exist.”

In 2017, MSMHS recorded the highest science performance scores in the state amongst all public high schools, based on standardized testing for the 10th grade. MSMHS was also awarded maximum points in the Next Generation Accountability Report for student enrollment in AP and Early College Experience courses, postsecondary college entrance, physical fitness, graduation rate, and percentage of students on track to graduate.

Over the past two years, MSMHS has received several honors and awards including being named the 7th Most Challenging Public High School in Connecticut by the Washington Post; a Silver Medalist by US News & World Report. Spera was awarded the Northeast Principal of the Year Award by the Magnet Schools of America.



msmhs.com • (860) 446-9380  
130 Shennecossett Road • Groton  
@DocSperaMSMHS

99%

of MSMHS graduates go on to attend college, including several top tier institutions across the country.

In 2016-17, MSMHS students earned

1,289

COLLEGE CREDITS.



learn.k12.ct.us