Desi Nesmith
Executive Director
Capitol Region Education Council
111 Charter Oak Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

CREC
Council Meeting
10/21/2026
11:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
In-Person and via Teams (Link in Calendar Invite)

COUNCIL MEMBERS	CREC ATTENDEES
Leonard Lockhart	Desi Nesmith
Meg Scata	Heather Tartaglia
Joan Pina	Sasha Douglas
Kory Mills	Aura Alvarado
Christopher Campbell	Debra Borrero
Lou Daniels	Amy Karwan
Miriam Underwood	Carol Dewey
Tyron Harris	Julia Winer
Bobbie Granato	Mason Thrall
	Eddie Miranda

I. CALL TO ORDER and APPROVAL of MINUTES

A. 9/16/2026 Council Meeting at 11:30 a.m.

MOTION: A Motion to approve the September 16, 2026 minutes was made by Leonard Lockhart and motion was passed unanimously.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE

III. STUDENT SENATE LIAISON

This year's student senate liaison is Veronica Brunelle, who attends the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts – Full Day at Colt. She is in the 11th grade, and this is her second year as a liaison. Last year she was a parent Senate liaison. She stated that Student Senate is fun and very eye-opening opportunity. They do proposals and talk about things that are going on in the world. Last year, they had a fundraiser for the hurricane in Jamaica. At their last meeting, they voted on their president, vice president, and treasurer. She expressed excitement at being this year's student senate liaison.

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IV. PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL

Dr. Sasha Douglas presented to the council and provided an update on some of the things happening in magnet schools that are aligned with our strategic focus on high-quality instruction and student outcomes. She talked about early college access for all students. This is the primary focus of CREC magnet schools. This is something that we pride ourselves on, really making sure that all our students have access to high-level college courses. Those take a variety of formats. There are lots of different opportunities that students have in which to participate when they are in school daily. There are also opportunities that students participate in outside of school, after school, and in summer programs. A group of CREC students joined the meeting in person and one who joined virtually. Dr. Douglas turned the presentation over to the students to talk about some of their early college experiences, which were quite varied.

Presentations regarding student experiences with early college programs were made by Coco Echevarria, Cristina Browning, Anthony Witherspoon, Rishita Kulkarni, Noah Rivera, Amaya Simon and Audrey Oppong.

- Students described college readiness, career goals, and support needs.
- Students raised concerns about retake policies and special education inequities.
- Finance report included a $55,000 STRIVE van adjustment.
- Stronger Connections open choice budget proposed at $79,473.
- Annual audit report expected in November or December.

Key Discussion Points:

Welcome and Early College Access

Leonard Lockhart welcomed the student representative and encouraged participation in council discussions. The council moved to an update on early college access, describing it as a strategic focus and introducing student speakers.

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UConn Summer Public-Policy Program

Students from Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts described their UConn summer pre-college experience, including study of government, field visits, and community service. They discussed how the program affected their college readiness, leadership development, and plans for early admission.

CSU Culturally Responsive Teaching Course

Anthony Witherspoon described a CCSU course examining cultural context, equity, and racial bias, along with campus visits and guest speakers.

Advanced Coursework and College Preparation

Academy of Aerospace and Engineering students discussed advanced coursework, college applications, and the skills they gained through college-level classes. Rishita raised concerns about assignment retakes and described the time-management support she uses to handle a heavy course load.

Dual Enrollment and College Independence

Amaya Simon described a CCSU course taken on campus alongside college students and explained how it strengthened her independence and familiarity with college expectations. Desi clarified that on-campus dual enrollment can provide students with both college and high school credit.

Noah Rivera's Academic Program and Plans

Noah Rivera began describing his background, academic involvement, and plans to pursue a career in criminal defense or environmental work. He also reported taking a substantial number of college-level courses; his remarks continue at the end of the available discussion.

Early College Experience and Goals

Audrey explained how early college opportunities eased financial and practical barriers to higher education. She discussed her academic interests, future goals, and the courses that most influenced her.

Audrey's Coursework, Advocacy, and College Transition

Audrey described her early college coursework and its influence on her writing about special education rights and educational segregation. She shared her college plans and the academic outcomes she attributes in part to her accumulated credits.

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Influences Behind Students' Educational Paths

Bobbie Granato asked who influenced the students' decisions to pursue these opportunities. Students credited parents, teachers, and counselors, while Audrey named educators who supported her personally and academically.

When Students' Motivation Took Hold

Students reflected on when their motivation developed or returned, describing experiences from elementary school through high school. Their accounts included overcoming discouragement, discovering career interests, and finding inspiration in college programs and supportive school environments.

College Costs, Experiences, and Intended Majors

Chris Campbell advised students to consider the affordability of Connecticut State Universities and asked about their intended majors and college experiences. Students discussed plans spanning law, public service, health care, engineering, and education, while Audrey described her transition to Northeastern.

Student Recognition and Education Equity

Lou Daniels praised the students and reflected on how personal experiences with educational barriers can shape careers and public service. Sasha emphasized the importance of teachers, organizational support, and continued progress, proposed a March student follow-up, and said she would share students' written and project work with the council.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Meg Scata presented the committee's funding and audit updates, including the STRIVE van purchase, Title I grants, and the Stronger Connections budget. She reported that the annual audit was in progress and noted ongoing attention to program funding and legislative activity before inviting questions.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

A. 2026-2027 Revised Programs

1). STRIVE General Fund (**Attachment A**)

A. 2026-2027 New Programs

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1). Entitlement Grants – Division of Choice (**Attachment B**)
2). Entitlement Grants – Stronger Connections Grant (**Attachment C**)

B. 2026-2027 Approved Operation Budgets (Attachment D)

MOTION: A Motion to approve Attachments A through D of the Consent Agenda was made by Kory Mills and seconded by Bobbie Granato. The Motion passed unanimously.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Nesmith updated the council on several events since the September council meeting.

On September 24th, Charles Venatore Santiago served as keynote speaker in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. Sandy Cruz-Serrano presented on the State of Latinos at CREC, which is an yearly presentation during Hispanic Heritage Month.

On October 1st, he visited Polaris to attend the program's annual First Responder's Breakfast.

On October 5th, Maggie Taylor, of Interval House, presented Domestic Violence 101 as part of our Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Last week, Mr. Nesmith visited Rise Up, which is one of our community partners that supports our students over at Impact Academy.

In September, the 100 Men of Color event took place at The Bushnell Theater. Joseph Johnson, Miguel Pabon, Benjamin Aquilera and Mr. Nesmith were honor in the Men in Education category.

Last week, the 100 Women of Color event took place at The Bushnell Theater. Six CREC employees were recognized in the Women in Education category – Idalia Crespo, Crystal Hammer, Kathy Nazario, Gladys Rivera, Dr. Violet Jimenez Sims and Tyra Smith.

On October 19th, CREC held its 12th annual golf tournament. The date for next year will be shared with council members when it has been announced. Mr. Nesmith asked Aura Alvarado, Director of Communications, for an update regarding the tournament. Aura reported that we had 156 golfers, which was lower than last year and about 210 people for dinner. Mr. Nesmith thanked Bobbie Granato, Chris Campbell, and Lydia Tedone for joining us.

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VIII. COUNCIL CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Lockhart thanked Mr. Nesmith, CREC and council members for their time and continued support. He thanked Steven Tatum and Kory Mills for attending CUBE early this month in Chicago.

He reported on the Blue Ribbon Commission. They are in the phase of consensus. They are supportive of school choice and are working to protect the ECS funding and increase it. He believes that the consensus is leaning towards fully funding C as a viable option. This is a consistent building protocol where 75% of us around the table, it is 23 of us that have to agree on recommendations, no matter what recommendations come about. Mr. Lockhart stated that he will push that we will ask what public education looks like in the State of Connecticut in a perfect utopia world with all the resources, everything you need. Then we are going to understand the realities of those and then have an opportunity to really articulate to the legislators that are running for all 187 seats. We need to understand what their stance is on public education. We understand that they have to look at the whole of the state government. We want to know that there will be someone who will be an advocate for us and will fight with us.

Mr Lockhart knows that we are deep within the throes of the budget process and will be going through the budget assumption. It is going to be up to us to tell CREC's story, so if you need support from Desi and his staff to help with that narrative, please do not hesitate to reach out. **Mr. Lockhart emphasized that we are here to help you tell the story of what's going on in your district and why CREC is a supportive partner.**

Mr. Lockhart added that if people do not know who their legislators are or need some help in finding it, a link should be sent out. He did an area map of the districts to pinpoint the contenders and incumbents. Deb Borrero, Director of Legislative and Strategic Affairs, can provide information about who is running, partnerships and district information to anyone who needs it. We need to maintain strong partnerships with our districts.

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IX. DELIBERATED ACTION

A. Policy Approval (Attachment E)

The following policies/regulations were approved by the Policy Committee on September 16, 2026, as a first reading:

1. Proposed Revised Policy 3512P – Use and Disclosure of Medical Information (HIPAA)
2. Proposed Revised Policy 3523.1P – Acquisition and Updating of Technology
3. Proposed New Regulation 3523.1R – Acquisition and Updating of Technology
4. Proposed Revised Policy 4116P – Probationary/Tenure Status
5. Proposed Revised Policy 4117.1/4217.1P–Voluntary Separation–Retirement and Resignation
6. Proposed Revised Regulation 4117.1/4217.1R – Voluntary Separation – Retirement and Resignation
7. Proposed New Policy 4117.71P/4217.71P – Return to Work and Transitional Duty
8. Proposed New Regulation 4117.71R/4217.71R– Return to Work and Transitional Duty
9. Proposed Revised Policy 4118.21P – Academic Freedom
10. Proposed Revised Regulation 4118.21R – Academic Freedom
11. Proposed Revised Policy 4118.23P/4218.23P – Personal Relationships
12. Proposed Revised Policy 5141.21P – Administration of Medications
13. Proposed Revised Regulation 5141.21R – Administration of Medications

The following policies are presented by the Policy Committee for a ***second*** reading:

1. Proposed Revised Policy 3512P – Use and Disclosure of Medical Information (HIPAA)
2. Proposed Revised Policy 3523.1P – Acquisition and Updating of Technology
3. Proposed Revised Policy 4116P – Probationary/Tenure Status
4. Proposed Revised Policy 4117.1P/4217.1P–Voluntary Separation–Retirement and Resignation
5. Proposed New Policy 4117.71P/4217.71P – Return to Work and Transitional Duty
6. Proposed Revised Policy 4118.21P – Academic Freedom
7. Proposed Revised Policy 4118.23P/4218.23P – Personal Relationships
8. Proposed Revised Policy 5141.21P – Administration of Medications

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MOTION: Chris Campbell moved the council to approve Policies 1 through 8 as listed above. The motion passed unanimously.

X. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Desi mentioned visits will be set-up with legislators to visit schools and working with RESC Alliance to coordinate the visits.

Deb Borrero will be inviting legislators to build relationship. Talking points have been developed and will be distributed. Council members should contact Desi or Deb if there are any questions. The Blue Ribbon Commission allows RESC's to be a solution for school choice. Deb encouraged the council members to send letters to legislators.

XI. REPORTS

NONE

XII. COUNCIL COMMENTS

NONE

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: CREC council chair, Leonard Lockhart adjourned the meeting at 1:01 p.m.

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