



2025-26 Annual Report
CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION
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The Connecticut Association of Schools established the Center for Leadership and Innovation to address the professional learning and related needs of aspiring and practicing school leaders. The work of the Center is guided by an advisory board of active principals and assistant principals.

Based on the annual member survey, and feedback from our elementary, middle, and high school boards, and *Connections* networks, CAS staff worked collaboratively with the CLI Advisory Board to design professional learning opportunities around the topics that were most important to our CT leaders. We hosted both in-person and virtual events in alignment with members' expressed preferences regarding structure and content of offerings. CAS staff have successfully continued to partner with educational organizations (noted below) to ensure that our members receive expert guidance and facilitation.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFERINGS: 2025-26

- Meriden Leadership Academy
- Waterford Leadership Academy
- The 2025 Legislative Session: A Webinar for School Leaders
- Legal Insights for Administrative Assistants
- Summer Unconference Sessions (Elementary, Middle and High School)
- Restorative Practices (numerous sessions- beginner, advanced, trainer of trainers, certified and non-certified staff)
- Legal Session: What School Leaders Need to Know about School Climate Plans
- AI FOR ADMINISTRATORS: Leveraging "Gems" & "GPTs" for Observations and Coaching
- AI in Education Workshop – partnership with NEASC
- School Climate (numerous sessions)
- Restorative Conferencing
- Teenage Brain Workshop (3-part series)
- The Breakthrough Coach (2-day workshop)
- Legal Summit
- New Administrator Leadership Series (4-part series)
- Coaching for Growth: Expanding Your Tools for Building Capacity (2-part series/3-offerings)
- CAS Leadership Exchange (multiple sessions for Middle and High School)
- Bringing Your Vision of Graduate to Life – partnership with NEASC
- Strategies for Making Challenging Decisions – partnership with UCONN's Executive Leadership Program (3-part series)
- AI for Administrative Assistants
- 4 Essential Roles – partnership with Franklin Covey
- Six Bricks Training

- Lead with Your Voice: Communication Strategies for Today’s School Leader
- Play with Purpose: Aligning Play-Based Learning with the Vision of the Graduate
- The Urban Leaders Action Network
- CT LeadHERship Fall and Spring Events
- School Law Seminar – in partnership with Pullman & Comley

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

As part of our continued commitment to strengthening schools through meaningful partnerships, the CLI expanded its work during the 2025–26 school year to include Family and Community Engagement. Under the expert leadership of Marissa Cardona, we hosted a number of successful events designed to help school and district leaders build authentic relationships with families and community partners, including:

- *Financial Literacy Implementation for School Leaders*, a hands-on workshop designed to help principals bring engaging, real-world financial education to their students and families – December 8, 2025
- *Building Bridges: From Confusion to Clarity*, a session offering practical strategies and actionable tools to strengthen partnerships with multilingual families – January 13, 2026
- *Debt-Free Tuition at CT State Community College Information Session*, a workshop providing guidance on how the program works and how to support students through the application and enrollment process – March 13, 2026
- Mock interviews for high school students were held in spring 2026, providing feedback to prepare students for job, college admissions, scholarship, and audition opportunities
- A workshop designed for district leaders, department leaders, social workers, and counselors, *Weaving Connection into the District Fabric*, is scheduled for the fall and will highlight best practices for implementing culturally responsive strategies that meaningfully engage students and families.

OTHER PROGRAMS/INNOVATIONS

CT LeadHERship Collective

The CT LeadHERship Collective is a newly established member-driven network for women leading CT’s schools - built on purpose, connection, and collective power. In its inaugural year, the CT LeadHERship Collective sponsored four events!

Linking Leaders PodCAST

The *Linking Leaders* PodCAST explores innovative strategies, shares inspiring stories, and engages in insightful conversations that empower school leaders to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of education. Further, it is a way to recognize and share best practices associated with leadership success.

CAS Connections

CAS Connections are informal networks intended to connect like-level school leaders from across the state. This year, the CAS Connections were facilitated by member principals and assistant principals. *CAS Connections* sessions are held monthly via Zoom to discuss member-generated topics. The networks include:

- High School Principals/Assistant Principals
- Middle Principals/Assistant Principals
- Elementary Principals/Assistant Principals

On April 23rd the CLI Advisory Board, along with interested participants from the high, middle, and elementary school boards engaged in a **CLI Planning Summit** to reflect on professional learning offerings from 2025-26 and strategically plan for 2026-2027.