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Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors Meeting

Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 3, 2013, 5:00 PM

A meeting of the Achievement First Hartford Academy was held on June 3, 2013 at AF Hartford Academy High School at 305 Green Field Street, Hartford CT.

The following board members, constituting a quorum, were in attendance:

Jean LaVecchia
Laura Estes
Nancy Zwiener
Tina Rendon
Colleen Palmer
Gretchen Unfried-English
John Motley
Marshall Ruben

Also in attendance:

School staff: Emily Banks, Jeff House, Claire Shin, Liz Ferguson

Achievement First staff: Kelonda Maull, Reshma Singh, Scot Kerr, Jeff Sudmeyer

Guests: Ja Hannah, Carl Hardrick, Bill Bouton

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 5:08 pm by Jean LaVecchia.

II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The Board of Directors reviewed minutes from the April 2013 meeting.

After discussion, Ms. Estes moved to approve the minutes as presented, and Mr. Ruben seconded the motion. Ms. Estes mentioned the AF Hartford High School Dashboard was incorrect. Mr. Kerr will send updated Dashboards following the meeting. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

III. Open Session For Public Comment

Community Engagement Report:

Mr. Carl Hardrick and Ja Hannah spoke to the board on community engagement and the importance of Achievement First Hartford Academy being involved directly in the communities it serves. This importance is in regards to understanding scholar's households, communities and the context of behavior that might stem from different circumstances. They proposed educating all teachers on the history of the surrounding communities. Mr. Carl Hardrick wants Achievement First to be a part of the Violence Free Zone in Hartford and thinks this is a great opportunity for partnership. Mr. Jeff House and Jeff Sudmeyer will discuss this more in depth

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and incorporate staff/teacher involvement in the community for summer professional development.

IV. Discussion of Principal's Report and Dashboard

Claire Shin, AF Hartford Academy High School:

Ms. Shin discussed some successes and challenges for the year. She expressed she focused on teaching scholars how to read at level and gear in on math related issues. She helped scholars with reading on level and discussed a process for this. She explained the importance that her scholars master the skill of math. The challenge in doing this is keeping school culture on track to master college readiness. Ms. Shin is excited about scholar's vocabulary and persistence outside of school. Ms. Shin expressed that scholars will have to work harder at home and we will need the motivation and support of parents. Ms. Shin has partnered with the Hartford Public Library and connected scholars to the community. Ms. Shin then opened for questions.

Jeff House, AF Hartford Academy Middle School:

Mr. House spoke to his recent visit to AF Hartford High School and discussed some challenges and goals. He is excited about reaching his attendance goals and IA goals. He then mentioned the importance of meeting CMT goals. He gave background to his social justice background and improvement on his discipline system especially regarding disability services. He spoke to not losing what's good, but increasing the liability and clearer systems for scholars with disabilities and for all scholars. He is resolving this by offering extensive tutoring and additional professional development and explained he has a large number of students with Autism and trauma, mood disorders and hypertension disorders. He expressed the importance of placing a fair and high bar regarding student behavior and incentive system for better rewards and positive rewards. Greater Hartford Legal Aid and AF have reached a settlement. He then opened for questions. Mr. House is excited for having 100% staff for next school year. He is focused across the board in Math, Lit, Writing, History and student enrollment is in a good place.

Four areas of improvement are academic intervention, school culture system, finding a positive balance in school and out of school community messages. 7th grade school culture was also a challenge this year and he has hired a whole new staff for next year. He expressed this year 7th grade class was the toughest year for 7th grade. The 7th grade program was the issue. The maturity level in 7th grade is challenging and we will need to support them as they move forward and transition. He then opened for questions. Ms. Shin mentioned she wants to meet with each scholar and family one on one as they transition into high school. Mr. House spoke to the boards regarding school suspensions and the reflection of student behavior and his rational adjustments that will need to be made to make a more positive school climate. Ms. LaVecchia mentioned it is detrimental to keep scholars in class. Mr. Motley mentioned that expulsions can hinder our expansion efforts and how will we deal with these numbers. Ms. Singh spoke to this and this can affect our education reform efforts. She mentioned to the board that AF will be working on this. The board discussed this more in depth. Mr. House spoke to the board on school suspension vs. out of school suspension. Ms. Ferguson spoke to the board regarding the elementary schools restart room and explained this room is a reflection room to support their students with the Dean of School Culture. Mr. House mentioned he will be transparent regarding data and school culture and relate the middle school with other AF Schools and will

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compare and work on improvement to ultimately help with setting goals. He then opened for questions.

Liz Ferguson, AF Hartford Academy Middle School:

Ms. Ferguson spoke to the board regarding goals for next year concerning school suspensions and the root problem this year as having a reactive approach to misbehavior. She expressed the elementary school moving toward to the positive points of learning and happy learning. She explained there is a lot of work to do and she is working to build her teachers skills e.g. something happened at home and knowing how to address it. Ms. Ferguson is working on proactive measures and a strong system to make sure they have routines and they are working with Miri Wexler from Leadership Development and getting our teachers ready to know what to expect for different times of the day. She is working to balance their discipline system and rewarding and recognizing scholars. Mr. Ruben asked if an imbalance of gender drives behavior issues. Ms. Ferguson will look into it as she is not sure if there are more boys vs. girls in the classroom and believes there is more of a balance. Learning is a fun process and scholars and should feel that way. Ms. Ferguson then opened for questions.

V. Board Business

Ms. LaVecchia spoke to the board regarding teachers and AF staff members driving students around in personal cars. Mr. Kerr spoke to the board regarding this and the insurance company's feedback. AF is working with the insurance company to have a more infinity answer. Mr. Kerr will follow up with the Board for their next meeting. The Board discussed this more in depth.

VI. Review and Approval of Financial Reports

Mr. Motley reviewed the Financials and all three schools are in great shape. Congrats to the finance team for managing the budget. The budget has been decreased but will go back up next year. The budget is proposed to include teacher bonuses and health care as an increase. Mr. Motley addressed there will be a minimum that will need to be raised for next year. He is projecting increases in enrollment and the difference from last year to this year. Mr. Motley spoke to the board regarding the Audit and he was pleased with the transparency and he gave some background to the board on small mistakes that were fixed. There were no issues in the reports, but this was a clean audit.

After discussion, Ms. Estes moved to accept the Forecasted Financials as presented, and Mr. Ruben seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

After discussion, Ms. Estes moved to approve the Budget as presented, and Mr. Ruben seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Directors of Achievement First Hartford Academy hereby approves the proposed budget for the 2013-2014 school year.

After discussion, Ms. Unfried-English moved to accept the Audit Report as presented, and Mr. Ruben seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Directors of Achievement First Hartford Academy hereby accepts the 2011-2012 Audit Report as presented by the Finance Committee.

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VII. Resolutions continued

Ms. LaVecchia asked the Board to review and approve the CT State Alternative Educator Evaluation Plan. After discussion, Mr. Motley moved to approve the CT State Alternative Educator Evaluation Plan as presented, and Mr. Ruben seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Directors of Achievement First Hartford Academy hereby approves the District Approved Alternative Educator Evaluation Plan herein attached.

Ms. LaVecchia asked the Board to discuss the Re-appointment of CohnReznick as independent auditors. After discussion, Mr. Motley moved to approve the Re-appointment of CohnReznick as independent auditors as presented, and Mr. Ruben seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Directors of Achievement First Hartford Academy hereby ratifies the re-appointment of the auditors, CohnReznick, of Farmington CT.

Ms. LaVecchia asked the Board to review and accept the PGP Committee Report. After discussion, Ms. Estes moved to approve the PGP Committee Report as presented, and Mr. Ruben seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Directors of Achievement First Hartford Academy hereby accepts the report of the PGP Committee.

2. Adjournment

After hearing no other discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm by Jean LaVecchia.

Minutes Taken By: **Kelonda Maul**