

**Amistad Academy & Elm City College Prep
Board of Directors Meeting
November 25, 2013, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
407 James Street, New Haven**

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Amistad Academy and Elm City Board of Directors was held on November 25 at 407 James Street, New Haven, CT.

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

Melinda Hamilton - yes
Michael Thomas - no
Michael D. Griffin - yes
Caroline Williams - yes
Paul McCraven - yes
Sheri Gellman- By Phone - yes
Lorraine Gibbons - yes
Howard K. Hill - yes
Dorsey Kendrick - no
Andrew Lachman - yes
Jane Levin- By Phone - yes
Katrin Czinger - yes
Alexander Troy - yes
Michael Van Leesten - yes
Bill Powers - yes

Khadijah Muhammad - yes
Kate Stasik - yes
Dick Ferguson - yes
William F. Heins - yes
Laura Saverin -yes
Lystra M. Richardson
Erik Clemons - no
Pat Sweet - no
Deb Quinsee - no
Patricia Pierce - yes
Sharon Oster- no
Marnie Halsey - yes
Carolyn Greenspan - yes
Magaly Cajigas- yes

Also in attendance:

School staff: **Andrew Poole, Shirley Harrell, Amanda Alonzy**

Achievement First staff: **Hillary Bridges, Kevin Taylor, Tony Siddall, Ken Paul, Max Polaner, Darryl Williams, Gaylord Bourne**

Guests: **None**

I. Call to Order & Attendance (Dick Ferguson)

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 by Dick Ferguson.

II. Board Dashboards & Elementary Principal Reports (5:35 pm)

a. (Amanda Alonzy and Andrew Poole)

i. Bright Spots from the data in the Dashboard

Andrew:

- Suspensions are down dramatically from last year

- Attendance is at goal – continue to message to parents the importance of attendance. Also using Kiddy Cab to pick up children to bring them to school if they're parents are unable to do so

Amanda:

- Really excited about the attendance rate
- Low attrition –spent a lot of time working with parents to make sure our school is a place that they want to keep their kids
- Suspension rates are really low this year

ii. 2 Growth Areas from the data in the Dashboard

Andrew:

- More work to be done in the rigor of our education to meet the common core bar
- Working hard with family engagement, working with the PLT – most recent event: reading mania night where parents came to learn how to teach reading at home, we have a few other ones planned for math, etc. Over 100 parents showed up for the first event. We are also doing a canned food drive, toy drive, and coat drive through December
- Michael Van Leesten asked about:
 - Suspensions – how are we making this better
 - Andrew: we are training our staff to be able to better handle behavior so that teachers can move from reactive to proactive strategies
 - Katrin asked a clarifying question about the difference between ISS and OSS
 - What it means to prepare elementary students for college?
 - Andrew: help kids get a passion for learning and building good habits for studying. The Common Core State Standards have created such a higher bar and we need to work backwards to figure out what it looks like in each grade.
- Magaly – discussed her own experience growing up in the New Haven public school system. She said that her daughter has been indoctrinated with the idea of college since she was young and every child needs that opportunity. She complemented the staff of ECCP Elementary and talked about how she really loves ECCP middle. She signed on to be an advocate to Achievement First because of the focus on college which is not present in other schools.

Amanda:

- Common core:
 - Writing about reading – something scholars are not that familiar with but will be tested on – everything on the common core is text based
 - Writing about math
- Melinda asked why the attendance and attrition are better
 - Hired a new teacher from the NHPS to give a fresh view on our existing policies so that we can re-evaluate
 - We are also trying to communicate to parents that sick children should stay home, trying to make sure the bus drivers don't change routes, and picking up kids who can't get to school through the kiddy cab
- Melinda also asked about highlights in the last Interim Assessment

- Expect to see growth in writing about reading
 - The piece holding back the scholars is the idea of writing everything out – currently they are getting pieces of it but not all of it
- Carolyn Greenspan – asked if kids are taking the tests on the computer
 - Not yet – kids take technology classes and soon, kids will take practice tests on the computer
 - In the future, the test will be adaptive so we can really challenge the high achieving students to see where they can go
- Magaly asked about different computer programs that they use
 - They are on the computer at least once a day working with math and English programs
 - They also have an additional computer class to learn to type, etc.
- Howard Hill – asked about diversity in teachers
 - Amanda: We are paying close attention to it – we don't recruit directly at the school but we are trying to make sure that it's a good place to work for all people
 - Howard suggested that we should make sure to teach black history to our students
 - Magaly commented that her daughter has learned more about Black History than her own history (Hispanic – Puerto Rican), which she teaches her at home. She believes that all cultures' history should be taught so that everyone learns about each other's history
 - Amanda – talks about celebrating black history month but also teaching our scholars that it's not confined to one month, and teaches our students about all important people in history, regardless of skin color

III. Joint Board Discussion (6:15 pm)

IV. Joint High School Committee report (Caroline Williams)

1. Facilities report – on schedule, budget – we are 100K over but things could still change, moved forward with a turf field
2. Financials report – see below
3. Principal report –
 - a. Report card – Amistad High ranked #1 high school in the network
 - b. Attrition issue – Attrition is 1.8% and students leaving are almost entirely Bridgeport students – potentially because of the commute and because of a new Magnet school (they were pulled off the waitlist). Also, Fairfield University is giving out scholarships to Bridgeport students who go to school in Bridgeport – we need to negotiate with Fairfield University to make sure that our Bridgeport students also receive this opportunity.
 - c. We have a budget deficit because of low enrollment and increased staffing - (\$91,000) deficit

V. Discussion of Active Committees (Scot Kerr)

- **Principal Committee** – formerly PGP committee, working groups from retreat identified a larger concern over hiring principals. Board members should be more involved in the process and have a window into the principal pipeline.

- **Governance Committee** – working groups acknowledge the complexity of the boards managing the relationship between schools and AF. Governance committee will focus on this aspect of the relationship and work to improve onboarding of directors and communication, working with Scot to discuss new governance strategies

Scot talked about how in the individual meetings, we will discuss forming these committees

VI. Report on the AF Report Card and School Bonus Plan (Scot)

There are 2 things that need to happen:

Scot explained that the AF Report card is an important tool that drives two things:

1. Boards need to consider the approval of school bonus plans for the prior year, which payments are determined by the AF Report Card results.
2. Board need to understand the AF Report card and do a deep dive on those results and what they mean at your schools – may not be best suited for a large discussion so we will structure a conference call with the regional superintendents to answer the questions prior to the January meeting.

VII. Advocacy & Community Relations (Tony Siddall)

- Briefly discussed NY politics: hopes that DeBlasio will move towards the center. A former AF board member is on his transition team
- CT advocacy:
 - On the state level, we are working to protect our per pupil funding with our advocacy partners
 - Bridgeport: due to a significant amount of uncertainty, we will not be able to open a second elementary school next year, but we are in conversations about the future. The newly elected board of education is not reform friendly. One of our green light criteria is free facilities and per pupil support for us to responsibly expand
 - Hartford: still on track to open the second K-8 school which received approval this summer. Initially proposed a location that was controversial (Clark School). HPS has taken that facility off the table and we are in continuing conversations. We are confident that we will secure the facilities
 - New Haven (report from Khadijah): organizing a campaign to influence Toni Harp
 - Toni Harp came to our school for a meeting with the parents
 - Raised 2 concerns
 - Supporting the growth of charter schools in New Haven – an addition of 3 schools – with the residents we have
 - Committing to unify new haven’s children – charter school kids need to be considered as public school students – working with business and parents to change the policies
 - Magaly also commented that charter school students should be able to access city wrap around services

Sharon Richards shared an update on AF's online College Book Scholarship Campaign and invited board members to join in the cause via the Fundly social media campaign. Scot will forward information and links as a follow-up.

Adjourn Joint Session (7:10 pm)

Transition to Individual Board Meetings

Amistad Academy – Community Room

Elm City College Preparatory – Large Conference Room (1st floor)

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

Melinda Hamilton - yes
Michael Thomas - no
Michael D. Griffin - yes
Caroline Williams - yes
Paul McCraven - yes
Sheri Gellman – Yes - Phone
Lorraine Gibbons - Yes
Howard K. Hill - Yes
Dorsey Kendrick - no
Andrew Lachman - Yes
John DeStefano, Jr. - no
Jane Levin – Yes - Phone
Katrin Czinger - yes
Alexander Troy - Yes
Michael Van Leesten - yes
Bill Powers - yes
Khadijah Muhammad - yes

Also in attendance:

School staff: **None**

Achievement First staff: **Kevin Taylor, Max Polaner, Gaylord Bourne, Sharon Richards, Ken Paul, Scot Kerr**

Guests: **None**

I. Individual Board Meeting - Call to Order (Melinda Hamilton, 7:20 pm)

II. Open Session For Public Comment

Board Business (8:50 pm)

III. Approval of Minutes of September 25, 2013 meeting (Resolution 1)

Lorraine moved to approve the Past Meeting Minutes presented, and Michael Griffin seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

IV. Authorize Attestation of Compliance with Meal Pattern Requirements (Resolution 2)

WHEREAS the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) requires an additional 6 cents per lunch reimbursement be provided to school food authorities (SFAs) certified by a State Agency to be in compliance with the new meal pattern requirements of the final meal pattern rule published in the Federal Register on January 26, 2012.

AND WHEREAS Amistad Academy's food service provider has prepared documentation that substantiates compliance with required meal patterns

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Melinda Hamilton as Chairman of Amistad Academy hereby is authorized to attest to the fact that Amistad Academy schools operating the National School Lunch Program authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq), and/or the School Breakfast Program authorized under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1773), are in compliance with the meal pattern requirements in effect for school year 2012-13, as set forth in 7 CFR Part 210.10 and 220.23, as applicable.

Caroline Williams moved to approve the resolution regarding Attestation of Compliance as presented, and Lorraine Gibbons seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

V. Approve School Bonus Plan (Resolution 3)

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board hereby approves the bonus policy covering performance from the 2012-13 school year. The Board further approves the AF School Report Card as the method for determining the amount of bonuses, and delegates to Achievement First co-CEO and Superintendent Doug McCurry the exclusive authority to award mitigating points in exceptional circumstances.

Paul McCraven moved to approve the School Bus Plan as presented, and Michael Van Leesten seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

VI. Nominate Principal Committee (Resolution 4)

WHEREAS the Board has historically formed an ad hoc "PGP Committee" to review the professional growth plan of school principals

AND WHEREAS the Board desires to replace the PGP Committee with a standing "Principal Committee" with expanded responsibilities in the areas of principal recruitment and development

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board forms the Principal Committee comprised of between 2 – 3 voting Directors, exclusive

of Parent and Teacher representatives, with initial members being: 1) Katrin Czinger; 2) Michael Van Leesten; and 3) Lorraine Gibbons;

Caroline Williams moved to approve Principal Committee as discussed, and Howard Hill seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

VII. Nominate Governance Committee (Resolution 5)

- a. WHEREAS the Board desires to form a standing “Governance Committee” with responsibilities in the areas of board governance including director recruitment, onboarding, evaluation, and insuring adherence to the By-Laws
- b. NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board forms the Governance Committee comprised of at least 2 Directors, with initial members being:

1) Bill Bouton; 2) Paul McCraven 3) Melinda Hamilton;

Andrew Lachman moved to approve the Governance committee as discussed, and Katrin Czinger seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

VIII. Financial Reports (Michael Griffin, 7:25 pm)

Michael Griffin gave a report that the 2012-2013 audit has been completed much earlier than last year, and all the material weaknesses identified have been remedied, although some work remains to be done. The issues identified in last year’s audit were:

1. Because Amistad is the first school, it generates more cash than some of the earlier schools so the cash is often moved to other schools
 - a. Amistad pays all the bills and the other schools were not paying Amistad on time, and philanthropy was not coming in until the end of the year. Amistad was financing the rest of the network. The lines of credit of the \$3 MM that we had have been paid down. The balances due to Amistad from ECCP and Bridgeport have been reduced substantial.
 - b. Mostly under control
2. Internal controls – make sure that funds are not misappropriated
 - a. We must quickly reconcile the bank statement every month to find out misappropriated funds
 - b. Amistad’s policy was to reconcile cash within 10 days but many were not reconciled for months
 - c. The accounting firm is going into the system to check the books on a continuing basis
 - d. Mostly under control
3. Reports – difficult to identify the problems because the reporting was not sufficient
4. Staffing – quality and number of people
 - a. Most vacancies have been filled and quality of staff has increased

- b. Pressed hard on the need for a VP of finance – hoping to fill this by last July, but we are now using a recruiting firm to get this person in place by March 1st
- 5. Planning for the future – do we have plans in place to staff up and accommodate system for the continuing growth
 - a. Working with a retire partner from PWC to provide consulting advice on our future planning

Progress has been made in all 5 of the above have been made but more needs to be done. Michael reviewed the important lines of the audit, findings, and opportunities for improvements during the meeting with all of the directors:

- We have eliminated the material weaknesses so that the financial reports are more reliable
- Money from other schools have been collected
- Team Finance provided copies of the details of the new systems being implemented

IX. Review and Accept YTD Financials (Resolution 6)

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Directors of Elm City College Preparatory hereby accepts the YTD Financial report dated 10/31/13 as presented.

Paul McCraven moved to approve the YTD Financials as presented, and Michael Van Leesten seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

X. Review and Accept 2012-2013 Audit Report (Resolution 7)

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Directors of Amistad Academy hereby accepts the report of the independent auditors CohnReznik prepared in relation to the fiscal year ended 6/30/13.

Paul McCraven moved to 2012-2013 Audit report as presented, and Caroline Williams seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval of the Board.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8 pm by Melinda Hamilton.

Minutes taken by Sharon Richards, Development Associate