

Achievement First Hartford Academy

Board of Directors Meeting

May 18, 2015, 5:00 – 7:00 pm

305 Greenfield Street, Hartford

The following board members, constituting a quorum, and Achievement First Staff were in attendance:

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 5:09 pm by John Motley.

Barry Jacobson, AFHA Board - Yes
Lankford Wade, AFHA Board - Yes
John Motley, AFHA Board - Yes
Nyema Pinkney, AFHA Board - No
Marshall Ruben, AFHA Board - No
Angela Scott, AFHA Board - No
Nancy Zwiener, AFHA Board - Yes
Jean LaVecchia, AFHA Board - Yes
Colleen Palmer, AFHA Board - No

Emily Banks, School Leadership - Yes
Benjamin Cruse, School Leadership - Yes
Ernest Peterson, School Leadership - Yes
Sorby Grant, School Leadership - Yes
Nick Lebron, AF Network Support - Yes
Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes
Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

II. Open Session For Public Comment

No public comment

III. School Reports

A. Ernest Peterson, AF Hartford Elementary School

Mr. Ernest Peterson, Principal, AF Hartford Elementary School shared that they are currently working on their budget and is confident that everyone is agreement for next year. Salaries are increasing for teachers, in proportion to what is being experienced in the district. This, he believes is helping with retention although there are a number of teachers not returning for the 2015-16 school year.

On school culture, Mr. Peterson spoke about hosting Town Hall meetings in the mornings on Fridays. They have been helpful in building a stronger sense of community. Suspensions have been reduced but part of that trend has included an increase in detentions but the school is pleased with fewer suspensions. Overall, Mr. Peterson shared that there seem to be more scholars smiling both in classrooms and around the school and that the joy-factor seems to be improving.

B. Sorby Grant, AF Hartford Middle School

Ms. Sorby Grant, Principal, AF Hartford Middle, updated the Board on staff culture. All but three staff members are intending to return for the 2015-16 school year and those three are leaving for a variety of reasons. Recently, the other AF Middle School principals visited AFHA MS which created excitement for all the school staff.

There has been lots of hype for the upcoming SBAC testing but students are feeling the pressure. School culture data shows that suspension rates are not coming down as they had hoped. This has been due to incidents which are not flexible in how they are handled (for example, physical aggression). This remains a top priority and the school is focused on reducing the incidents that trigger suspensions and creating a vibrant school culture for all scholars.

Ms. Grant is looking for a speaker for the Middle School graduation ceremony and asked the board for recommendations should they have any.

C. Ben Cruse, AF Summit Middle School

Mr. Ben Cruse, Principal, AF Summit Middle School reported that he's pleased with how reading is going at the school and that scholars' GPAs have been gradually increasing. He hopes that on June 17th some Board members will be able to attend the Honor Roll Assembly. Staff retention is another area of strength. 100 percent of staff who were offered positions to return for the 2015-16 school year have accepted.

Mr. Cruse discussed the challenges around working to keep suspension numbers low and the Board discussed ways in which the Achievement First Network can provide support and assistance in this area. Mr. Ken Paul shared that there has been a significant reduction of suspensions across the network, year-over-year and the school leaders discussed some concrete examples of different techniques they've used to help drive suspensions down through positive peer pressure (making it cool to do well in school).

D. Emily Banks, Joint High School Committee

Scholars have completed AP exams and Ms. Banks spoke of the particular successes on the National Latin Exam where the AF Hartford High Scholars outperformed their peers at AF Brooklyn High who have had a Latin program for a longer time. Ms. Banks expressed a concern of the amount of testing that the 11th grade is experiencing as they prepare for the SBAC testing (coming off the heels of the AP exams and SAT).

Staff retention is strong - two teachers are leaving due to personal reasons. There are efforts to hire a more diverse staff and they have been successful in doing so, thus far.

Next year the school will have a Dean of Students which has been a vacant position all year. The staff have covered well but Ms Banks looks forward to the 2015-16 school year to have a leader who can help the school address and prioritize current social and cultural events, like Baltimore, and race

relations broadly.

IV. Community Engagement Report (Nick Lebron)

Enrollment - the goal is three applications per available seat. Currently 87 open seats, 90 applications both pre and post lottery. In Hartford, there is the Regional School Choice lottery (Magnet Schools) then there is the Hartford Public School lottery (just for Hartford residents). 21,000 in the HPS System. Only 950 filled out lottery applications for all the schools in Hartford. 5,000 students filled out the Regional School Choice Lottery. Parents can fill out both applications. If a student doesn't get into a magnet, the district places them. Each year the district places thousands of families. All charter schools in Hartford are on the Hartford Public School Lottery - NOT the Regional School Choice Lottery.

As a kindergarten parent, you have 40 options of schools to choose from (including magnets). All of the choices tend *not* to get effectively communicated to families. Friday was the Regional School Choice Lottery. Two weeks from now, we have the HPS Lottery. Families first decide if they want to do the Magnet school, THEN decide whether they want one of the HPS or AF. Mr. Nick Lebron has negotiated for post-placement forms.

Grades of concern: AF Summit 5th grade - currently we have 60 applications for 90 open seats, 6th grade has 15 applications for 25 open seats.

We were #2 in popularity. Global has a brand new facility and they were #1 (they are attached to AF Summit). There is also a community misperception that students can qualify for a college scholarship through Global (which is no longer the case).

Recruitment strategies:

- Continued canvassing efforts, focusing on Summit
- Community based presentations
- Collaborations with day care centers and churches
- Concerted efforts to create awareness at big community events (Puerto Rican Parade, West Indian Parade, Safe Night, etc)
- Mailings specifically for 5th grades

The rally was successful. Having learned from the New Haven rally, we held it later in the day so kids didn't lose time in class. Governor Malloy spoke in support of charters.

V. Board Member Metrics (John Motley)

Mr. John Motley expressed the importance of reaching 100 percent participation in board giving.

VI. Summer Retreat (John Motley)

The retreat is August 13th which will be in New Haven. Agenda items will include:

- A presentation from Dacia

- AF alumni currently in college speaking about their experiences.
- Regional Superintendents discussing individual school strengths.
- Governance

If Board members want to add agenda items or discuss topics, please contact Sarah.

VII. Financial Report (Lankford Wade and John Motley)

Mr. Lankford Wade, Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report highlighting the need for philanthropy to cover additional costs associated with two growing schools and one with significant supplemental help needed to address particular challenges.

VIII. Board Member Resignations

Jean LaVecchia and Nancy Zweiner shared that they will be resigning following the adjournment of this meeting. The board thanked them for their outstanding service.

IX. Board Business

Resolution 1:

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 22, 2015

Moved by Jean LaVecchia

Seconded by Barry Jacobson

All in Favor

Resolution 2:

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Board of Directors hereby approves the financial report as presented.

Moved by Barry Jacobson

Seconded by Jean LaVecchia

All in Favor

Resolution 3:

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Board of Directors hereby approves the financial budget as recommended by the Finance Committee and prepared by Achievement First for the 2015-16 fiscal year.

Moved by Lankford Wade

Seconded by Barry Jacobson

All in Favor

Resolution 4:

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby renews the Cooperative Arrangement Agreement by and between Achievement First Hartford Academy, Inc. and Jumoke Academy, Inc. for one (1) year

Moved by Jean LaVecchia

Seconded by Nancy Zweiner

All in Favor

Resolution 5:

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby ratifies the re-appointment of CohnReznik to perform the financial audit of the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Moved by Barry Jacobson

Seconded by Lankford Wade

All in Favor

X. Board Discussion

No additional discussion.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40pm by John Motley.