

Approved, 1/21/15

## **Achievement First Bridgeport Academy**

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

November 17, 2014, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

529 Noble Avenue, Bridgeport

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

#### **Board Members**

Andy Boas

Marlene Macaуда

Jim Bennet

Ed Raice

Chris Kunhardt

Harold Kammins

Max Perez

Dick Kalt

Cornelius Medas (joined at 6:35)

#### **AF Staff**

Ken Paul

Sarah Blanton

Laurie Bussmann

Christina Pares

Soren Guterrez

Heather Wachter

Florisca Carter

Scot Kerr

#### **Guests**

Xander Bennett

Carol Boas

Lauren Patalano (Candidate for Teacher Representative)

#### **I. Call to Order & Attendance**

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 pm by Andy Boas.

Andy Boas introduced Laurie Bussmann to discuss teacher certification. Laurie introduced herself as the VP of Operations, formerly VP of Technology, and a 10 year veteran of Achievement First. In her

new role she is leading the effort to secure certification for 100% of the Bridgeport Academy staff. Ms. Bussmann indicated that there are two initiatives that will be addressed over the course of the year:

1. Working to support existing staff who are uncertified on their path to certification, and
2. Working with Team Recruit to increase the number of candidates that have certification.

Ms. Bussmann reported that there is a significant effort underway including the following steps:

- Inventory of staff complete and tracking processes are in place
- Personal emails to all of the uncertified staff notifying them of the requirements
- Network support is funding any tests, fees, and prep lessons that encourage staff to complete required steps to certification.

At the conclusion of Ms. Bussmann's report, Mr. Boas then asked interim principal of Bridgeport Academy Middle, Christina Pares, to give her report. Ms. Pares reported that kids are very engaged, having participated in a city-wide scavenger hunt in the last week. She encouraged board members to visit the Facebook page to see a video of the kids performing.

A key priority is to develop the staff culture and insure that there is the strongest possible onboarding procedures for the new staff. She and Director of School Operations, Soren Gutierrez, are taking steps to improve morale among returning teachers.

Regarding interim assessments, the staff knew that the first interim assessment scores were going to be low with the amount of transition in the building, but staff felt very strong coming out of the data day, that they understand what is happening. Coaching has gotten underway and the staff is very encouraged and motivated by those professional development opportunities.

Ms. Pares indicated that the top academic priority is to get scholars speaking up in class and discussing the things that they are reading. Mr. Medas stressed that it is important for the school to communicate with parents about the increased importance of class participation.

Mr. Paul indicated that initial studies of the SBAC results suggest that only 50% of the students across all of the Connecticut may be proficient.

Mr. Kunhardt thanked Ms. Pares for her commitment to the school's scholars in returning to cover during the maternity leave of Principal Challa Flemming. The board all concurred in expressing thanks to Ms. Pares.

Ms. Wachter gave her report on the elementary school and shared four bright spots and two growth areas.

#### Bright Spots

- Staff culture is very strong with all staff are referencing the value of "team and family"

- Academic rigor including reading and speaking throughout the day and learning the most efficient way to solve problems (math) rather than just getting to the right answer. Reading is shifting to word and world knowledge.
- Social and emotional learning and aligning our REACH values with the work of the Tauck Foundation.
- Claudia Phillips has joined as Operations Associate and is focused on parent engagement.

Two growth areas:

- Staff certification percentages. Continued effort required.
- Removal and suspension numbers. Leadership has established incentives for teachers to lower the removals and staff is also required to write a reflection to their dean if targets are exceeded. Ms. Wachter identified three actions as suspension worthy: Fleeing (walking away from adult staff), aggression (toward staff or fellow students), and tantrums. 1 - 3% of the students are chronic challenges.

Mr. Boas asked Directors of School Operations Florisca Carter and Soren Gutierrez if they had things to add. Ms. Carter explained that parent engagement is a major focus and the additional staff member will be leading those efforts and championing participation in the upcoming rally on December 3rd.

Mr. Gutierrez also emphasized parent engagement as a major priority for school operations. Deans have returned to coaching, and are out of the classrooms. He also praised Ms. Pares as having done an outstanding job and that the school has turned the corner.

Mr. Bennett suggested that perhaps parent leaders could be utilized to speak to the parents of children with chronic behavior issues, to offer peer-peer support.

Mr. Gutierrez and Ms. Carter discussed the efforts that the schools are taking to support the rally for great schools that will take place on December 3rd in New Haven.

Mr. Boas began the business portion of the meeting by asking for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 18th, 2014.

RESOLVED, the AF Bridgeport Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from September 18, 2014.

Motion: Ed Raice

Second: Chris Kunhardt

All in favor

Mr. Raice gave the financial report indicating that there is a slight surplus forecasted for the year and the balance sheet looks good. The audit call is scheduled for later this week and indications are that they will be free of comments. We expect to receive the year-end financials on time. Mr. Bennett

questioned the YTD shortfall, and Mr. Raice explained that the shortfall is result of timing of expenses and that it is normal and acceptable at this point in the year.

Mr. Boas introduced Lauren Patalano from the elementary school as the teacher representative nominated by the staff of Bridgeport Academy Elementary. Ms. Patalano shared with the board that she grew up in Trumbull, attended Keene State University for her undergraduate work, and received her Masters Degree in education from Sacred Heart University. She did her teaching practical work at Daniels Farm School in Trumbull and was attracted to Achievement First Bridgeport Academy where she currently serves as the 2nd Grade Chair.

Mr. Boas asked for a motion to elect Lauren Patalano as the teacher representative.

RESOLVED, that Lauren Patalano is elected as the Teacher Representative, a non-voting seat on the AF Bridgeport Board of Directors, serving a two-year term expiring on 6/30/16.

Motion: Ed Raice  
Second: Max Perez  
All in favor

Mr. Boas discussed prospects of various facilities in the city that would be suitable for the expansion of existing grades. Mr. Paul indicated that depending on where facilities can be secured, expansion could require us to increase our catchment area, ultimately enabling AF Bridgeport Academy to serve the entire city.

Ms. Blanton asked board members to review the conflict of interest policy and to complete and return the disclosure form. She also called directors' attention to a college survey in their package asking them to share information about where they attended or have connections. She explained that this information will help us in serving our college-bound scholars by identifying board members connected to various institutions.

Mr. Paul indicated that we will take delivery of the new high school in the beginning of December and that students will attend classes at the new facility when they return from winter break. Mr. Kunhardt reported out to the board regarding his meeting with Adam Kendis and that he will be leading the efforts to secure internships for high school students this year. Mr. Bennett asked for Adam's contact information as he has a business in Monroe that could accept several interns. Mr. Boas thanked Ken and Sarah for their efforts in development in supporting the high school building project.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 by Andy Boas

Minutes taken by Scot Kerr, Achievement First