

Amistad Academy
Joint High School Committee Meeting
September 16th, 2015, 2014, 4:30 – 5:30 pm,
403 James Street, New Haven

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 pm by Caroline Williams.

The following board members and Achievement First Staff were in attendance:

Lorraine Gibbons, AA Board - Yes	Carolyn Greenspan, AA Board - Yes
Caroline Williams, AA Board - Yes	Patricia Pierce, ECCP Board - Yes
Reginald Simmons - AA Board - Yes	William Heins, ECCP Board - No
Andrew Lachman, AA Board - Yes	Richard Ferguson - ECCP Board - Yes
Cornelius Medas, AFBA Board - Yes	Jane Levin - AA Board - Yes
Max Perez - AFBA Board - No	Cassie Crockett - AA Board - Yes
Chris Kunhardt - AFBA Board - No	Claire Polcrack, School Leadership - Yes
	Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes
	Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes
	John Furniss, AF Network Support - Yes

Later arrivals (between 5:00 - 5:30pm):

Carlos Torre, ECCP Board - Yes
Patric Gregory - ECCP Board - Yes
Lystra Richardson - ECCP Board - Yes

II. Open Session For Public Comment

No public comment.

III. Reports

A. School Report

Ms. Claire Polcrack introduced herself and spoke about how Amistad High School is doing thus far in the new school year. Student population is the highest it's ever been with over 500 students and a larger staff than ever before, including numerous new staff members and leadership team members.

Ms. Polcrack explained that staff has three main goals for the year: Reading, Joy, and Community. One of the main foci is building scholar voice and leadership. The new facility has made building community and joy much easier, as scholars and teachers are excited about the space and the opportunities afforded by having a gym and playing field have created an athletic program that everyone is proud of. Ms. Polcrack detailed to the Committee how they are moving towards the Reading goal, including Book Clubs on Fridays.

The school is seeing increasing growth in their merit ratio. The goal was to grow from a 2:1 merit:demerit ratio to a 3:1 ration. So far, 85 percent of students are already at goal of 3:1 merit ratio.

Ms. Polcrack then went on to explain how the Leadership Team looks at data on student grades through Gradebook. Data is broken down by student and teacher, and coaches use tool in coaching conversations with their teachers. Gradebook also tracks detention along with grades, allowing Leadership Team to look at correlations between teachers, grades, and detention rates. Ms. Polcrack also detailed the different ways that the school supports students who need extra help and provide bussing for students who wish to stay after school. Ms. Polcrack explained the tracking of school attendance, goal is 97%. 9th-11th grade are very close (~96%), 12th grade is meeting goal (97.1%). Attendance Team meets once a week to determine if any scholars might need extra support.

There are eight new 9th graders who have entered AF Amistad High from the community. Most of the students (7) started early in year, although the most recent student has had more difficulty with the late transition. Upon entry from non-AF school, they take an initial assessment and are placed into either a reading intervention or intensive math class - taught by two of the strongest teachers in 9th grade. Over enrollment in 9th grade means that school in its entirety is overenrolled, thus they are not backfilling in 10-12th grades. 9th grade staff is the largest grade team, and resources have been allocated accordingly. Middle schools are sending increasing numbers of students.

Ms. Polcrack detailed her school's tactics to increase teacher retention. She led focus groups of experienced teachers to determine why the start of year is challenging, and what the school can be doing to make sure the staff feels successful. Many of the new teachers are spending a significant amount of time after school, Ms. Polcrack is trying to work with individual teachers to make sure that they are balancing their personal lives. She has been checking in with every new teacher for 15 minutes this week.

Ms. Polcrack then went into a detailed explanation of the school's academic and cultural work in responding to questions from the Committee, including literature styles (APA, MLA) and homework expectations.

Ms. Polcrack explained the largest challenge - two teachers (one with 30 years and another with 12 years of experience) quit via email (one after the first day of school). He never actually brought his challenges to anyone on staff or his coach. They have already filled the position. The second teacher quit this week, determined that she could not teach the writing course. Decision was a combination of level of investment/preparation, family/health/life issues, and the amount of work that it takes to give 90 students feedback on their writing. There are two other composition teachers who have flagged that they are struggling, and Ms. Polcrack is looking for alternative solutions.

IV. Board Business - The Committee did not have quorum and therefore did not conduct any business.

- A. **Resolution to approve Previous Meeting Minutes**
- B. **Resolution to approve Financial Report**

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 by Caroline Williams.