

Amistad Academy
Board of Directors Meeting
May 18, 2016
403 James Street, New Haven

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order by Carolyn Greenspan at 6:37 pm.

The following directors and staff were in attendance:

Carolyn Greenspan, AA Board - Yes	Reginald Simmons, AA Board - Yes
Caroline Williams, AA Board - Yes	Jennifer Connell, AA Board - Yes
Mike Griffin, AA Board - Yes	Katrin Czinger, AA Board - Yes
Lorraine Gibbons, AA Board - Yes	
Andrew Lachman, AA Board - No	Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes
Cassie Crockett, AA Board - Yes (Phone)	Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes
Daisy Gonzales, AA Board - No	Laurie Bussmann, AF Network Support - Yes
David Katzman, AA Board - No	Megan Tokarski, AF Network Support - Yes
Dorsey Kendrick, AA Board - No	Amanda Alonzy, School Leadership - No
Jane Levin, AA Board - No	Katie Poynter, School Leadership - Yes
Pat Sweet, AA Board - Yes	Gina Musumeci, AF Network Support - No

Member of the public: Khadijah Muhammad & Paul McCraven

II. Open Session For Public Comment

No public comment.

III. Reports and Discussion

A. Principal Reports

1. Amistad Academy ES (Amanda Alonzy)

Jennifer Connell summarized the Principal Report previously delivered by Amanda Alonzy. SBAC testing at Amistad Academy Elementary begins on Monday, May 23. The students are well prepared, and the school is on track to meet its goals.

The school recently hosted a new family orientation for 2016-17, which gave incoming Principal, Zack Vose, an opportunity to engage with families and begin communicating his plans for next year. Mr. Vose

has also been actively working on staffing for 2016-17.

2. Amistad Academy MS (Katie Poynter)

In her Principal Report, Katie Poynter shared that Amistad Academy Middle is finishing the 2015-16 school year strong. The school is administering the English Language Arts SBAC test this week and will administer the Math SBAC test next week. Staff has been messaging to students that the SBAC is a benchmark toward their larger goals, and they are using the test as an opportunity to teach transferable skills, such as stamina. The SBAC test is an untimed test, and students appear to be focused and taking their time.

In order to balance the rigor of testing, Amistad Academy Middle has implemented a variety of things to increase joy throughout the day, such as encouraging notes from student-to-student and teacher-to-student and a daily raffle for the privilege of walking downtown to get a cookie from a local bake shop. In addition, the final 30 minutes of every school day is dedicated to extracurricular activities, an increase from two days per week during the rest of the school year. End-of-year overnight trips are also upcoming.

Teacher retention from 2015-16 to 2016-17 is currently over 90%. In 2015-16, Amistad Academy Middle had nine first-year teachers, as compared to only one for 2016-17. Similarly, this year, the school had to fill 15 open positions, versus only three for 2016-17 (all of whom have been hired). Katrin Czinger asked about the diversity of the teaching staff, and Ms. Poynter reported that the staff is more than 50% minority.

Ms. Poynter provided an update about students who are promotion-in-doubt (PID) for 2016-17. With four weeks still left in the 2015-16 school year, Ms. Poynter predicts that Amistad Academy Middle will ultimately retain approximately 7% of students, which is within the target range (5-10%). The threshold for retention is failing two or more core classes.

There is a small group of students who cannot be retained because they are too old, which indicates that they have previously been retained. These students are largely academically capable, but they have significant motivation issues. Mid-year, Amistad Academy Middle carved out time in the middle of the school day for either study hall or intervention. Many of these students have benefitted from study hall, where they are in an environment where an adult is making sure they do their homework. Caroline Williams asked if we have any longitudinal information about what happens longer-term to students who have been repeatedly retained. Ms. Poynter does not have data, but anecdotally, middle school can be tough, and it's not uncommon for things to click for struggling students when they get to high school.

Lorraine Gibbons asked if Amistad Academy Middle students take the School Climate Survey. Ms. Poynter reported that students took the survey in March. When available, the data can be shared with the Board.

B. Board Chair Report (Carolyn Greenspan)

Carolyn Greenspan reported that it has been determined that the Amistad Academy Board of Directors has too many representatives serving on the Joint High School Committee. Ms. Greenspan, Caroline Williams and Reginald Simmons will continue serving as voting members of the Joint High School Committee, with all others welcome to participate as non-voting members.

The Principal Committee is scheduled to review Katie Poynter's Professional Growth Plan (PGP) on Tuesday, May 31. Board members not serving on the Principal Committee are also welcome to attend the meeting. Because they will not be returning as principals for 2016-17, the Board will not review PGPs for Amanda Alonzy and Claire Polcrack.

Ms. Greenspan reminded all board members to please make a donation no later than June 30, 2016. 100% board giving is required for eligibility for grants.

Amistad Academy's charter renewal is coming up in 2016-17. The charter renewal process includes the submission of an application in the fall, a hearing and site visit in the winter, and a final meeting and decision in the spring. AF staff will largely handle the charter renewal, but board compliance will be a factor, so all board members are urged to complete their background check and fingerprinting, if they have not done so already. There is also a requirement that all board members receive state-approved board training. A recent board training for the AF Hartford Board of Directors was recorded, and AF is seeking permission from the State to use the recording to fulfill the Amistad Academy Board of Directors' requirement.

The summer board retreat is scheduled for Tuesday, July 12, from 12:00 - 5:30 p.m.

With the handling of instances of sexual misconduct at the country's private schools recently coming under increased scrutiny, Ms. Greenspan reached out to Pete Cymrot to learn more about AF's sexual misconduct policies. Ms. Greenspan read aloud Mr. Cymrot's responses to her questions and concluded that sexual misconduct has not been a big issue at AF, but AF has appropriate policies and procedures in place to address it, if necessary.

Jennifer Connell offered additional insight about how AF trains staff in sexual misconduct policies and procedures. Reginald Simmons encouraged AF to also think more about how students are educated about what is and is not inappropriate and what they should do if they are a victim of inappropriate behavior. Ms. Connell agreed that schools should be encouraged to incorporate this into their social-emotional goals for students.

C. Election of Board Members (Carolyn Greenspan)

1. Elect New Board Members

No discussion. See Resolution below.

2. Re-elect Board Members

No discussion. See Resolution below.

3. Elect Officers

No discussion. See Resolution below.

D. Finance Committee Report (Mike Griffin)

1. Approve Financial Report

Mike Griffin reported that the current FY16 budget forecast report shows Amistad Academy ending the fiscal year with a \$54,632 surplus. See Resolution below.

2. Approve the 2016-17 Amistad Academy Budget

Mr. Griffin explained that, beginning in FY17, AF is taking steps to decrease the organization's dependence on philanthropy, targeting a reduction in the use of philanthropy and reserves from \$28,000,000 in FY16 to \$22,000,000 in FY17. Most of this reduction is coming from the NY schools and Network Support budgets. At Amistad Academy, the philanthropy need will actually increase by approximately \$53,000 from FY16 to FY17, due mostly to some new programs at Amistad Academy Elementary. See Resolution below.

3. Appoint CohnReznik as Independent Auditors

No discussion. See Resolution below.

Mr. Griffin also shared that AF has surfaced two qualified candidates to replace Max Polaner as CFO, and an offer has been extended. Team Finance is in a good place going into the CFO transition. On the most recent Network Support Survey, Team Finance went from being the lowest-rated team to the highest-rated team, with 100% approval ratings.

Mr. Griffin reported that the Finance Committee has met with Mr. Polaner and Lisa Desfosses to review the New Market Tax Credits and make sure that there is accountability by AF. He expressed a confidence that AF is handling the New Market Tax Credits appropriately.

E. Joint High School Committee Report (Caroline Williams)

Caroline Williams reported that college acceptances and decisions at AF Amistad High are on track. The school expects, once again, to have 100% acceptance and matriculation. Students are also excelling in AP classes and performing well on the exams.

Summer programs, run by Lauren Cohen, are also on track, with 70 students registered for a pre-college program this summer and many others set up with internships, including new opportunities with Webster Bank and the New Haven Independent.

Teacher retention at AF Amistad High from 2015-16 to 2016-17 is currently 82%, as compared to an AF network average of 77%.

Ms. Williams led the Board in a discussion of the Public Comment from the Joint High School Committee Meeting.

IV. Executive Session - Personnel

Enter Executive Session:

Motion by Pat Sweet

Seconded by Caroline Williams

All in favor

Exit Executive Session:

Motion by Katrin Czinger

Seconded by Paul McCraven

All in favor

V. Additional Business

A. Approve Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Policy

Carolyn Greenspan will sign the CEP Policy documents. See Resolution below.

B. Accept Resignation of David Katzman, effective 5/17/2016

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 23, April 6 and May 11, 2016.

Motion by Jennifer Connell

Seconded by Pat Sweet

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby elects the following individuals to the Board of Directors with a three year term ending June 30, 2019.

Khadijah Muhammad, Parent Representative

Paul McCraven, Director

Motion by Lorraine Gibbons

Seconded by Caroline Williams

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby ratifies the re-election of Directors with a three year term ending June 30, 2019.

Mike Griffin, Director

Jennifer Connell, Teacher Representative

Motion by Pat Sweet
Seconded by Caroline Williams
All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby affirms the following leadership slate:
Carolyn Greenspan, Chair**

Motion by Caroline Williams
Seconded by Paul McCraven
All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby affirms the following leadership slate:
Caroline Williams, Vice-Chair**

Motion by Paul McCraven
Seconded by Jennifer Connell
All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby affirms the following leadership slate:
Mike Griffin, Treasurer**

Motion by Lorraine Gibbons
Seconded by Pat Sweet
All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby affirms the following leadership slate:
Lorraine Gibbons, Secretary**

Motion by Jennifer Connell
Seconded by Pat Sweet
All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial report as
Presented.**

Motion by Jennifer Connell
Seconded by Lorraine Gibbons
All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial budget as

recommended by the Finance Committee and prepared by Achievement First for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Motion by Jennifer Connell
Seconded by Lorraine Gibbons
All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby ratifies the re-appointment of CohnReznik to perform the financial audit of the 2015-16 fiscal year.

Motion by Jennifer Connell
Seconded by Lorraine Gibbons
All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the amendment of the Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs (ED-099) between the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and Amistad Academy by the Community Eligibility Provision.

Motion by Katrin Czinger
Seconded by Pat Sweet
All in favor

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m. by Carolyn Greenspan
Motion by Lorraine Gibbons
Seconded by Reginald Simmons