

- DRAFT -

**Amistad Academy**  
**Joint High School Committee Meeting**  
Wednesday, March 23, 2016, 4:30 - 5:30 pm  
403 James Street, New Haven

**I. Call to Order & Attendance**

The meeting was called to order at 4:35pm pm by Caroline Williams.

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

Caroline Williams, AA Board - Yes	William Heins, ECCP Board - Yes
Carolyn Greenspan, AA Board - Yes	Laura Saverin, ECCP Board - Yes
Reginald Simmons, AA Board - No	Richard Ferguson, ECCP Board - Yes
Andrew Lachman, AA Board - Yes	Dick Kalt - AFBA Board - Yes
Reginald Simmons, AA Board - Yes	Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes
Lorraine Gibbons, AA Board - Yes	Megan Tokarski, AF Network Support - Yes
Max Perez, AFBA Board - No	Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes
Chris Kunhardt, AFBA Board - Yes	John Furniss, AF Network Support - Yes
Cornelius Medas, AFBA Board - Yes	Claire Polcrack, School Leadership - Yes

**II. Open Session For Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Reports**

**A. School Report (Claire Polcrack)**

Ms. Polcrack shared that the past quarter (Q3) has been strong overall. The leadership team has been focusing on coaching teachers around the quality and quantity of student feedback. Scholars, in turn, have been feeling more positive about their academic progress. The leadership team has also been more active in the hallways, making sure scholars are not lingering and are spending as much time in class as possible.

Universally, there is a need to work on academic habits (study skills). There are pockets of excellence, but it isn't universal. The college counselors put together reports on how AF Amistad HS alumni are doing, including what they self-report they wish they'd learned in high school. The most common response is that they wish they learned better how to study.

As of often the case as the end of the school year approaches, students are more focused on their academic performance. The Deans have been restructuring the schedules to focus more on one-

on-one interactions. Add to that the fact that springtime brings college acceptances and everyone in the school directly or indirectly experiences a motivational boost.

The board engaged in a discussion about the high academic bar and whether passing seven courses to matriculate to the next grade is realistic. Ms. Polcrack shared that keeping the bar high pushes students to achieve but that there are conversations within staff about what exactly the high bar means. One consideration would be to lighten the courseload from seven courses to five. Ms. Polcrack said that high school GPA has a strong correlation to success in college. Thus, building the skills needed for students to succeed in high school is incredibly important. Of similar importance is ensuring that scholars feel intrinsically motivated and are driven to excel.

Mr. Kunhardt asked about graduation requirements and whether there is ever a conversation about holding back more students. Ms. Polcrack explained that there are some students who have been retained, but they are also focused on building other skills that can translate to success in college. They are focused on bridge programs (which allow students to earn another credit before the first semester). Mr. Kunhardt asked about senior spring and if they have troubles with engagement. Ms. Polcrack explained that the internal motivation for doing well in AP classes is a big motivating factor.

Ms. Polcrack explained that she has already met twice with her leadership team to start planning for next year discussing upcoming priorities with particular attention to the projected increase in enrollment (570 scholars). This increase is largely due to lower attrition and greater numbers of middle school students choosing AF Amistad HS. As a result of this projected enrollment, they expect to hire roughly 13 additional staff members but, due to budgetary constraints, the leadership team will concurrently have to make difficult decisions regarding areas to cut back.

Every week the Leadership Team meets to discuss where each teacher is in terms of renewal. The current estimate is that 75% of staff intends to return and a good amount of the other 25% are possibly returning. Ms. Polcrack anticipates roughly eight staff members leaving. Contracts are going out in April (before spring break) so they will have more concrete numbers at that time. Ms. Polcrack is also specifically looking for new staff with roots in the area.

Senior Signing day is May 24th

#### **Financial Report**

Ms. Saverin led a discussion of the financial report. There are no major updates, but the school is still grappling with a projected deficit.

#### **IV. Board Business & Discussion**

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy High School Committee hereby approves the meeting minutes from January 27, 2015.**

Moved by Dick Ferguson  
Seconded by Chris Kunhardt  
All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy High School Committee hereby approves the financial report as**

**presented.**

Moved by Will Heins

Seconded by Reginald Simmons

All in favor

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28 by Carolyn Greenspan .

Moved by Chris Kunhardt

All in favor