

# **Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors Meeting**

March 23, 2016

403 James Street, New Haven

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

The following directors and staff were in attendance:

Richard Ferguson, ECCP Board - Yes

William Heins, ECCP Board - Yes

Laura Saverin, ECCP Board - Yes

Lystra Richardson, ECCP Board - No

Carlos Torre, ECCP Board - No

Genevive Walker, ECCP Board - Yes (Phone)

Kaitlyn Stasik, ECCP Board - No

Marnie Halsey, ECCP Board - Yes (Phone)

Patric Gregory, ECCP Board - No

Sean Williams, ECCP Board - No

Patricia Pierce, ECCP Board - Yes

Sharon Oster, ECCP Board - No

Stephanie Ma, ECCP Board - Yes

Andrew Poole, School Leadership - Yes

Chris Friedline, School Leadership - No

Robert Hawke, School Leadership - Yes

Karin Gould, School Leadership - Yes

Shirley Harrell, School Leadership - Yes

Sarah Hogarty, School Leadership - No

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

Megan Tokarski, AF Network Support - Yes

Public: Aliyya Swaby (New Haven Independent); Marilyn Carson (grandparent) & Sunasha Nixon (mother of fifth grader at Elm City College Prep)

## **II. Open Session For Public Comment**

Marilyn Carson thanked the board for having her and for bringing AF to New Haven. She inquired about whether AF would consider offering foreign language at the middle school level. The board promised to get back to her with an answer.

## **III. Reports and Discussion**

### **A. Principal Reports**

#### **1. Elm City College Prep ES (Andrew Poole)**

Andrew Poole reported that, academically, Elm City College Prep ES is pushing hard toward the school's end of year goals by making sure core instruction is high quality (giving teachers a lot of feedback) and making sure the right student interventions are in place.

The Elm City College Prep ES leadership team is beginning to plan for the 2016-17 school year,

particularly with regard to retaining and hiring talent. As of the date of the board meeting, only two staff members will not be returning to Elm City College Prep ES next year - both departing staff members are leaving due to life changes. (It also looks like Elm City College Prep ES will retain a lot of staff from Elm City College Prep MS - Greenfield.) The high rate of staff retention allows Elm City College Prep ES to deepen its development of existing talent.

Mr. Poole named merging two staffs next year (Elm City College Prep ES K-4 and Elm City College Prep MS 5-6) as a potential challenge. He is thinking a lot about how to create a united team that is working together to drive student achievement and build strength of character, so that the school does not fall into the trap of a continuing to foster a close-knit K-4 staff without fully integrating the 5-6 staff.

Will Heins asked Mr. Poole for his “secrets” to building and sustaining a strong staff culture. Mr. Poole named three key factors:

- The Elm City College Prep ES leadership team models good work/life balance and tries hard to be accommodating and understanding when staff members experience different phases of their life, such as the introduction of a new significant other, pet, child, etc.
- The Elm City College Prep ES leadership team works hard and intentionally to make the school a happy, joyful place to work, where people feel valued, successful and like they are growing as professionals.
- The Elm City College Prep ES staff has fun together. On the 2015 Organizational Health Survey, 100% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that “someone at work cares about me as a person.”

Marnie Halsey asked Mr. Poole if he feels like the planned facilities renovations at Elm City College Prep ES will be sufficient to accommodate grades K-6 in the 2016-17 school year. Mr. Poole said that planned facilities renovations makes the best of the available space by creating sufficient room for more students and adding meaningful enrichment space. However, he acknowledged that they are pretty major renovations happening on a tight timeline, which will be challenging.

Marilyn Carson asked about class size at Elm City College Prep ES in the 2016-17 school year. Mr. Poole reported that in grades K-5, there will be 30 students in each homeroom and 24 students in grade 6. For instruction, homerooms will be divided into groups no larger than 15.

## **2. Elm City College Prep MS (Chris Friedline)**

Karin Gould shared that Chris Friedline had a small emergency and will email his report to the board.

## **3. Elm City Greenfield MS (Robert Hawke)**

Robert Hawke reported that the school culture at Elm City College Prep MS - Greenfield has gotten a lot stronger since November, as measured by the percent of students on task and engaging with the material at a given moment. This has happened for a few reasons: 1) shorter school day; 2) hiring of a behavior specialist; and 3) more professional development for staff about what it truly looks like to be

simultaneously warm and demanding.

Academically, Elm City College Prep MS - Greenfield is starting the “Crescendo” push to the state test. The school does not do a lot of explicit test prep throughout the year, but the staff is targeting some specific standards between now and the state test.

The school has launched Dream Teams as a part of the Greenfield model, and they have been wildly successful. Students are leading Dream Team meetings and are coming out of them feeling really empowered and motivated. Families feel more connected to the school community, and teachers also feel like Dream Team meetings are a good use of time.

Last week, Elm City College Prep MS - Greenfield had its second full round of Expeditions last week, which were also extremely successful. There was a Theater Expedition, a Music Expedition, a Photography Expedition and a Robotics Expedition.

Mr. Hawke reported that the school’s current biggest challenges are: 1) continuing to push the culture work forward, so that the school simultaneously becomes more focused and more joyful, and 2) ensuring that the academic interventions are truly leading to student mastery.

Dick Ferguson announced that he is going to try to organize a full board presentation of the Greenfield PLP by Lisa Minott (Greenfield Technology Lead).

## **B. Board Chair Report (Dick Ferguson)**

### **1. Greenfield Update**

Dick Ferguson reported that, in mid-April, the AF NS team will move out of 403 James Street, so that the planned facilities renovations to Elm City College Prep ES can begin. The AF NS team will be temporarily housed at Elm City College Prep MS (Dixwell Avenue) before moving to Blake Street for the foreseeable future.

### **2. Joint High School Committee Report (Laura Saverin)**

Laura Saverin reported that some of the challenges at AF Amistad HS from the beginning of the year are showing improvement (e.g., fewer student removals).

AF Amistad HS will grow from 490 students this year to 570 in the 2016-17 school year, which is a testament to better student recruitment and retention (expect ~2% attrition this year). The school will need to hire ~13 additional staff members to accommodate this growth, as well as replacing teachers who leave - although teacher retention is expected to be higher than it has been in past years.

AF Amistad HS is currently focusing on developing students’ academic habits (study skills) in response to

feedback from alumni in college.

The school's course pass rate continues to be significantly below goal, and the leadership team is coaching teachers around how to better support students to pass (without lowering expectations).

### **3. AF Workshop Series**

Dick Ferguson reported that workshops have been offered on Partnerships, Special Education and Advocacy, with one more scheduled for April 6 focused on Teacher Recruitment.

Mr. Ferguson shared that he would like to have a workshop focused on AF Through College.

### **4. Professional Growth Plan (PGP) Process**

Dick Ferguson reported that Doug McCurry will complete Andrew Poole's PGP by March 30, at which time the board's Principal Committee will review it - although all board members are invited to participate because principal selection and evaluation is one of the board's most important functions.

Marc Michaelson will write Robert Hawke's PGP, and Jeff Sudmyer will write Claire Polcrack's PGP.

### **5. Governance Committee Report (Marnie Halsey)**

Marnie Halsey reported that one of the responsibilities of the Governance Committee is to review individual board members and the board as a whole. The Committee has been discussing a mechanism to evaluate the board as a whole, but has decided to first spend time setting clear goals in order to be able to evaluate progress.

The Committee has worked with AF to develop an annual checklist of board member compliance issues (such Conflict of Interest policies, fingerprinting, training, etc.) to track and ensure that all board members are in compliance.

The Committee continues to discuss and vet (meeting with board members, school visit) potential new board members. The Committee hopes to have fully vetted candidates to recommend for board membership in May, so that they will be on board in time for the summer board retreat. The board will be losing five members - Sharon Oster, Marnie Halsey, Sean Williams, and the teacher and parent reps - at the end of the school year. Dick Ferguson shared that the Committee is exploring the benefits of non-board members, such as Marnie Halsey and Sean Williams, continuing to serve on board committees in their respective areas of expertise.

The Committee is working on committee assignments for all board members, recognizing both that board members tend to be more engaged when they are involved in hands-on committee work and the bylaws specify that each board member should serve on a committee. Laura Saverin has agreed to be

one of Elm City College Prep's three representatives on the Joint High School Committee, replacing Carolyn Greenspan, who became the Amistad Academy board chair. The Committee is also exploring the creation of a Joint Advocacy Committee with Amistad Academy.

#### **6. Financial Report (Laura Saverin)**

Laura Saverin reported that all schools are close to budget, with either small surpluses or deficits. The DSOs are doing a great job of running the schools tightly.

The Finance Committee continues to monitor the debt for AF Amistad High, which resides on Elm City College Prep's balance sheet. AF has upgraded the short-term construction loan at AF Amistad High to a mortgage. Elm City College Prep will get some money back after the state completes the audit of the AF Amistad High facility.

The Finance Committee will review Elm City College Prep's FY17 budget during the next Treasurer call in May.

#### **IV. Executive Session**

The Board entered into Executive Session at 6:40pm.

The board exited Executive Session at 7:05pm.

#### **V. Board Business**

No quorum / no board business.

**RESOLVED, the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from January 27, 2016.**

Moved by  
Seconded  
All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the financial report as presented,**

Moved by  
Seconded by  
All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the amended and restated Bylaws as presented.**

Moved by  
Seconded by

All in favor

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m. by Dick Ferguson, following a motion by Laura Saverin, seconded by Stephanie Ma.