

## **Achievement First Bridgeport Academy**

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

March 24, 2016, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

529 Noble Avenue, Bridgeport

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:21 pm by Chris Kunhardt.

Chris Kunhardt, AFBA Board - Yes

Ed Raice, AFBA Board - Yes

Max Perez, AFBA Board - No

Cornelius Medas, AFBA Board - Yes

Debra Hertz, AFBA Board - Yes

Dick Kalt, AFBA Board - Yes

Harold Kamins, AFBA Board - No

James Bennett, AFBA Board - No

Wiley Mullins, AFBA Board - No

Marlene Macaуда, AFBA Board - Yes

Laurie Bussmann - AF Network Support - Yes

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes

John Furniss, AF Network Support - Yes

Catherine Dumas, AF Network Support - No

Challa Flemming, School Leadership - Yes

Christina Pares, School Leadership - Yes

Natasha Noel, School Leadership - No

Florisca Carter, School Leadership - No

Public: Dr. Michael J. Strambler, Andy Boas

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

No public comment.

#### **III. Board Business**

**RESOLVED, the AF Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby elects Dr. Michael J. Strambler to the board of directors for a term ending June 30, 2019.**

Motion by: Debra Hertz

Seconded by: Marlene Macaуда

All in favor

**RESOLVED, the AF Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from January 27, 2016.**

Motion by: Ed Raice

Seconded by: Dick Kalt

All in favor

**RESOLVED, the AF Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial report as presented.**

Motion by: Debra Hertz  
Seconded by: Marlene Macaуда  
All in favor

**IV. Reports and Discussion**  
**A. Principal Reports**

**Challa Flemming (Bridgeport Academy Middle)**

AF Bridgeport Middle School is starting to see real academic traction and growth. Upward trending results on Interim Assessments have served as a rallying point for teachers and staff and the everyone is feeling really strong about the progress. In addition, the school's year-over-year culture data is strong. Removals, out of school suspensions and in school suspensions are down dramatically from last year. Ms. Flemming believes it is a combination of efforts of Deans of Students and behavior systems - behavior specialists are pushing into classrooms, rather than removing scholars. Positive reinforcement has been increasingly effective. Attendance is up slightly, attrition is down slightly.

Crescendo is starting, which is the part of AF's "Arc of the Year" when the focus transitions to making sure that our scholars can do their best on State tests. Friday, Saturday, and Spring Break tutoring is being made available. Ms. Flemming expressed that the most important thing for her is that scholars feel confident that they can do their best on the test. They had a pep rally a few weeks ago, and will have a few more in the upcoming weeks. They have involved parents in bringing the #BeTheProof message home as well.

Girl's Basketball team was Division Championships (lost in city championship - only loss of season). Also had a Stage 4 teacher named this year (first teacher in two years to be recognized in this school).

Mr. Kunhardt inquired about staffing the tutoring - 160 students have gotten permission slips for tutoring, probably half of those will be returned. The sizes of study groups will be determined by the number of adults available to tutor so if board members are interested they should certainly help. The first session is Saturday, April 2nd, then April 23rd, 30th, May 7th and 14th from 8am-10am. There will also be tutoring during April Break from April 12 - 14th 8-10am in literature and math. Additionally, on the first day of testing (5/17 at 6:45am), the school is hoping to have a large group of people to meet students outside the school to cheer them on (Parents, members of the community, etc.). The Board is encouraged to attend and participate.

Ms. Flemming shared some initial projections of staff retention as the staff has indicated their intent to return in a survey. A significant percentage of the staff indicated 'maybe' they would return so the leadership team will be meeting with individuals to try to keep retention high. The major challenges for teachers persist: sustainability and work/life balance. The leadership team is trying to find small ways to make the work feel as balanced as possible. Another challenge comes from facing consistent behavioral issues from a very small percentage of scholars that do not necessarily improve over time, despite different and several attempts at interventions with both the scholars and their families. Teachers are doing a great job but it is important to keep morale high.

The budget is also a significant concern. AFBA Middle School will likely have to go from four to three sections per grade level as well as make possible staffing cuts. With the decrease to three sections, class size would increase to 30. They are looking at several different ways of making the budget work, and first budget meeting will be next week to drill down to specifics.

Ms. Flemming also expressed a notable staffing challenge with special education teachers, but said she had two very strong candidates in the past few weeks. Relay Graduate program will likely be coming to CT next year and would serve as a good resource for training Teachers in Residence (TIR).

Mr. Kunhardt asked about hiring temporary staff to help with lunch. Ms. Flemming explained that they did not hire temporary staff, but did hire an additional TIR. Now Recruitment is focusing on next year. Have two signed offers with TIR's for next year.

### **Christina Pares (Bridgeport Academy Elementary)**

Ms. Pares was pleased to report that AF Bridgeport Elementary School's Organizational Health data has shown double digit gains in most categories - not only in a year over year measure but also based on changes from the beginning to mid-year (a transition which usually sees scores decline as the school year wears on). Staff members have been very happy about the student growth and the big culture wins such as Spirit Days, which are great for both teachers and students. The school had four teachers named Stage 4 this year.

3rd grade math is top or second in the network on weekly quizzes (due almost entirely to a fantastic second year teacher). They are projecting lots of growth on SBACs based on Interim Assessments (IAs) and weekly quizzes, expecting double digit growth in 3rd and 4th grades. Compared to last year, the school is down significantly in out of school suspensions and removals largely because the culture team has gotten smarter and better at working together. Crescendo mode is kicking off, as the school gets ready for the State tests. The AF Network has done a very good job of supporting the Deans to be ready to support our kids.

Staffing for next year remains a challenge. They are losing two very strong teachers (including the 3rd grade math teacher who has been commuting from NYC to Bridgeport every day and another strong teacher who is moving to Hartford), and many other teachers are on the fence. Ms. Pares cited burnout as a major factor for those teachers who are undecided about returning, as well as the reductions in bonuses (such as the attendance and Report Card Bonuses). Bonuses are major factors for those who are not stage 4 teachers. Finally, teachers often don't have enough time for family life, especially those with children. Majority of moms in the building are already on a modified schedule. The lack of support staff is also a problem (can only have three TIR's next year). They will also be making staffing cuts. AFBA Elementary is already at three sections of 33-35 kids per section with the K-2 classes split in half already.

#### **B. Joint High School Committee**

Mr. Kunhardt reported that the High school is going strong.

#### **C. Principal Committee**

The Principal committee will meet with Ms. Pares and Ms. Flemming (individually) in advance of the PGP review which happens with the regional superintendents. Will try to review PGP in late

April/May.

**D. Board Engagement and the AF Workshop Series (Chris Kunhardt)**

Mr. Kunhardt led a discussion about ways for the board to support the teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week which is the first week of May. Based on feedback from the schools, they suggested three different events. Start with week with breakfast of some kind, a “Candy Bar” in the middle of the week, and possibly a food truck at the end of the week.

Mr. Kunhardt and Ms. Blanton will follow up via email for Board Members to sponsor certain events. Would need to get estimates for costs, with 50-60 staff at each school it could cost a couple hundred dollars each.

Mr. Kunhardt reminded board members about the opportunities to participate in Middle School walkthroughs with Shannon Garfield.

**E. Financial Report (Ed Raice)**

Mr. Raice gave a report from the Finance Committee. Budgets are looking good. CohnRehznik will not be doing the audit this year. The CT State Department randomly chooses a charter school to have a different auditor for one year so we chose a firm from their recommended list with extensive charter school finance background.

**V. Executive Session - Personnel**

Motion to enter Executive Session: Chris Kunhardt at 7:40pm

Motion to exit Executive Session: 8:03pm

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05pm by Chris Kunhardt.