

Achievement First Bridgeport Academy

Board of Directors Meeting

September 17th, 2015, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

529 Noble Avenue, Bridgeport

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 pm by Andrew Boas.

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

Andrew Boas, AFBA Board - Yes

Debra Hertz, AFBA Board - No

Harold Kamins, AFBA Board - Yes

Chris Kunhardt, AFBA Board - Yes

Marlene Macauda, AFBA Board - Yes

Cornelius Medas, AFBA Board - Yes

Wiley Mullins, AFBA Board - No

Max Perez, AFBA Board - No

Ed Raice, AFBA Board - Yes

Lauren Patalano, AFBA Board - No

James Bennett, AFBA Board - Yes (phone)

Dick Kalt, AFBA Board - Yes

Christina Pares, School Leadership - Yes

Challa Flemming, School Leadership - Yes

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes

Morgan Barth, AF Network Support - Yes

Megan Tokarski, AF Network Support - Yes

John Furniss, AF Network Support - Yes

Public: Carol Boas

II. Open Session For Public Comment

No public comment.

III. Board Business

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Bridgeport Board of Directors hereby approves Chris Kunhardt as the new Chair of the Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors.

Moved by Dick Kalt

Seconded by Harold Kamins

All in favor

III. Reports and Discussion

A. Principal Reports

Bridgeport Elementary (Christina Pares)

Ms. Pares began with a review of the SBAC data. She explained that the data, while not surprising, was nonetheless disappointing. 3rd Grade struggled the most in SBAC, and were the biggest struggle last year in school. 4th grade (who are now the 5th grade at Bridgeport MS), also struggled.

There has been an 89% decrease in removals and 99% decrease in suspensions, and Academic Deans have been able to focus on the professional development of teachers rather than the cultural struggles. They have focused on building a strong school culture - student and family investment, teachers feeling like they are the captains of their own ships. Systemic academic changes have been made, and there has been a clear plan of teacher investment. For example, K-2 has become more departmentalized, and the third and fourth grades have become more like middle school (4th grade math teachers only teach math, etc). Deans have been able to focus especially on the new teachers.

SBAC struggling areas - ELA, especially in the third grade. Mr. Kunhardt inquired about the challenge of letting teachers keep their individual lesson plans while also maintaining the “best in class” lesson planning. Ms. Pares explained that some of their teachers have been providing lesson plans for the entire network, leading to increasing investment amongst teachers.

Mr. Ken Paul then invited Mr. Morgan Barth, Regional Superintendent in charge of AF Bridgeport ES, to speak. He explained that part of the reason that SBAC data has dropped is due to the change to the Common Core and underscored the improvements in school culture. At this time last year, there were 236 instances of removal, this year it is down to 25. They have also gone from nine suspensions to one this year. This is likely due to an increased focus on school culture and a better plan for summer training, along with real time coaching.

AF Bridgeport Middle (Challa Flemming)

Ms. Fleming led a review of the current state of AF Bridgeport Middle School. She had two major points to bring - SBAC results and retention. Based on the SBAC results, we can clearly see that the achievement gap got even bigger (30-60% lower than wealthiest counties): half of the AF Bridgeport Middle School grades/subject areas are quite a bit higher than district, other grades/subject areas are just above the district (5th grade math 2% higher than district). In several subjects AF Bridgeport MS is in the middle to high average of AF schools, however there are several areas that Bridgeport MS is lowest.

Mr. Boas inquired about a correlation between the interim assessments given by the school and the SBAC test. Ms. Flemming explained that the third interim assessment is designed to mimic the SBAC. Other Board members inquired about whether having the 4th graders from Bridgeport ES will increase test scores for 5th grade, however Ms. Fleming explained that there are some problems with school culture in 5th grade, and that the increase in IA scores is not as high as they had thought originally. Mr. Kalt inquired about the parent response, and Ms. Flemming explained that parents have not been told yet about the SBAC results as the schools have just received the data.

Mr. Medas and Mr. Kunhardt asked about teacher morale and any plans for increasing the amount of support in the face of disheartening test results. Ms. Flemming explained that they are using the test results as a motivational tool and that they are making staff health a priority this year. Mr. Boas asked about the overall quality of the staff and staff retention, and Mr. Kunhardt asked specifically about special education. Two special education teachers left, one because she was not developing professionally like she wanted to and the other because she could not personally grow. Currently they have two certified special education educators and one teacher doing intervention, down from four special education teachers last year.

B. SBAC Results (Chris Kunhardt)

The Board did not discuss the SBAC results further.

C. Teacher Certification (Laurie Bussmann)

Ms. Laurie Bussmann reported to the board the update on teacher certification for AFBA. Currently, 52% of AFBA teachers are certified. Last year at this point AFBA was at 50%. Compared to the 2014-15 school year, though, there is a palpable difference in the alignment between senior leadership and schools and a stronger sense of the prioritization and urgency of this matter. Team Recruit is working to avoid a cycle where the schools begin the year with the same low certification numbers each year because of turnover. AF wants teachers to get their paperwork and tests done before the start of the year, as opposed to during the school year. Ms. Bussmann feels good about where we will be in a month and a half.

Mr. Ed Raice inquired about the law and whether 100% certification is for the beginning of the year or the end of the year. The law is 100% certification within 60 days.

Mr. Andy Boas asked about how the State is feeling about our status and progress. We need to be making a valiant effort and concrete progress in order to satisfy the State.

Mr. Morgan Barth added that while this has been a compliance issue in the path, Achievement First is taking this very seriously. The message that has come down is that no one is to be hired who is unable to get certified.

Ms. Bussmann gave examples of ways in which the tactics to incentivize compliance. The Board recommended ideas. Mr. Chris Kunhardt shared a story of speaking with a special education teacher who shared that she wanted to work at AF for the rest of her career and in equal measure, stressed that she needs to get certified as fast as possible. Mr Kunhardt felt that it was apparent that the message has been made clear to the teachers that certification is a top priority.

D. Joint High School Committee Report (Cornelius Medas)

Mr. Medas expressed how impressed he was with Claire Polcrack, the new High School Principal. The Bridgeport cohort has been stronger than in the past. Accommodations have been made to allow Bridgeport students to stay later for extra help. Extra buses and stops have been added. Mr. Medas explained that there have been two teachers who have left thus far in the year.

Mr. Ken Paul added that attrition is down, enrollment is up, and they won their first football game on Monday.

Mr. Medas explained due to the increased size of the freshman class, more resources have been devoted to their class. Mr. Dick Kalt inquired about the size of the composition classes, and Ms. Sarah Blanton and Mr. Morgan Barth explained that they have brought in extra help to coach teachers into grading more efficiently, and AP test scorers to help administrators and teachers learn the standards.

Mr. Ed Raice inquired about whether the budget exists to hire substitute teachers - Mr. Morgan Barth explained that most schools use their Teacher's in Residence to fill in the gaps when substitutes would be needed.

E. Visitor Day Schedule (Ken Paul)

Mr. Ken Paul shared with the board the dates of the upcoming Visitor Days on Wednesday,

October 7th and Tuesday, November 3rd, in Bridgeport and October 9th at Amistad.

F. Treasurer's Report (Ed Raice)

Mr. Ed Raice gave the treasury report. Mr. Boas suggested that the Board speak with the Directors of School Operations to understand the differences in financial statements.

IV. Board Business

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Bridgeport Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from 5/28/15, 8/13/15, and 9/4/15.

Moved by Mr. Ed Raice

Seconded by Harold Kamins

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial report as presented with plans to follow up.

Moved by Harold Kamins

Seconded by Cornelius Medas

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the 2015-2016 School Wellness Policy as drafted.

Moved by Marlene Macaуда

Seconded by Harold Kamins

All in favor

V. Executive Session

Moved into Executive Session at 7:39pm

Exited Executive Session at 7:50pm

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53pm.

Moved by Cornelius Medas, Seconded by Marlene Macaуда.