

Achievement First Rhode Island, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting

September 27, 2016, 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

370 Hartford Avenue, Providence

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 5:48pm by Mayor Jorge Elorza.

Jorge Elorza, AFRI Board - Yes

Ben Smith, AFRI Board - Yes

Brian Gallogly, AFRI Board - Yes

Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes

Macky McCleary, AFRI Board - Yes

Elizabeth Winangun, AF Network Support - Yes

Reshma Singh, AFRI Board - Yes (phone)

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

Norman McCulloch, AFRI Board - No

Morgan Carter, Principal, AF Providence - Yes

John Igliazzi, AFRI Board - Yes

Kevin Lohela, Principal, AF Illuminar - Yes

Soraida Morales, AFRI Board - Yes

Public: James Wiley, Dan McGowan, Lily Gutterman, Artemia Cortez, Joanne Yen Gilbert, Yaneli Almonte

II. Open Session for Public Comment

Yaneli Almonte is a parent and she spoke about how hears parents talk about the desire to have more schools. She shared that she feels strongly that AF should expand to create more opportunities for more families.

Joanne Yen Gilbert is the parent of three scholars at AF Providence Elementary. Her children help motivate each other at home and her first grader is reading a 100 page chapter book and is able to tell her what the story is about. She told her mom that she has to be "loud and proud" at school. She feels fortunate that her kids have this opportunity but she wants this opportunity for more children. She feels that Achievement First is really preparing the children to be ready for college which leads to more success during college, and stronger citizens in our communities.

Artemia Cortez is the father of a second grader at AF Illuminar who is progressing well academically. He feels we need more schools like Achievement First - not just for his son, but for the whole community and that someday this school could turn out a Mayor or President.

III. Reports

A. Principal Reports (Morgan Carter and Kevin Lohela)

Morgan Carter shared her pride in the PARCC results. Attendance is at 98 percent which is third highest in the network (Illuminar is #1). This is the first year of being a fully grown elementary school. School culture is strong and she feels that the systems that have been created and the institutional knowledge is helping drive a lot of that success.

The PARCC ELA results (46%) surpass many other comparison groups, but she said she will never be happy with 46 percent. They are making some adjustments in the ELA program. She also shared her concerns about the diversity on the staff, especially in light of the challenges in our country. They want to find a way to improve the candidate pool. They are seeing very low application numbers from people of color. Team Recruit is working hard on this but there is more work that must be done.

REACH Circle is coming up next week. On October 6th, 5:30 - 7:00pm, they are hosting a Community Forum on Education and Immigration in the Latino Community. October 16th is the first family PARCC Night which is much earlier this year.

Kevin Lohela, AF Illuminar Principal, started his report with staff culture and the results of a staff survey. 100% reported that the school creates a welcoming environment, and has a strong culture. 100 percent also feel positive about working at the school, and agree with the statement that "as a team we are doing whatever it takes to give the scholars everything they deserve." Kevin believes strongly that it starts with the adults in the building and the team of teachers (which grew by 50 percent year over year!).

Attendance is at 98.5 percent which comes from engaging families with the problem solving around what is holding a child back from attending school and developing solutions in partnership with families. This year, they have 270 scholars. They are working on skill building for teachers and scholars to address behavior challenges. Kevin invited everyone to come visit the school. They have a weekly 15 minute meeting called Firefly Circle at 7:45am. Elizabeth Winangun talked about how special Firefly Circle is - scholars celebrate each other and honor their friends as Fireflies of the Week.

Family Leadership Collaborative met last week. In October they are having a workshop about growth mindset and the idea that intelligence is not fixed. Family Literacy night in November.

Second grade reading and math quizzes (those scholars were not at AF in kindergarten) crossed/surpassed the average of the Network (where other 2nd graders have had kindergarten and first grade at their AF schools).

Mayor Elorza asked Kevin Lohela to talk further about the experience of being in year two. Kevin talked about institutional knowledge and capacity building. Last year, every classroom had people who were new to AF. This year, every homeroom has a teacher that was a founding member creating an anchor in each classroom. The operational team is no longer doing things a first time - the flywheel is starting to work. Deans have background at other AF schools (one from Brooklyn one from New Haven).

Brian Gallogly asked about arrival and dismissal traffic, given the increasing capacity in the building. Both principals shared that parents are having trouble finding parking. Other parking lots don't allow parents to park just for drop off. They do not have crossing guards. Brian asked about whether it is possible to get crossing guards from the City or to hire someone with funds from the school budgets. Macky reinforced the importance of thinking of a crossing guard as a fixed cost that should be strongly considered. Kevin said that all children are walking with an adult because someone needs to sign out each child who is not getting on a bus. All external doors are wired with alarms which has been a significant improvement. Brian also inquired about recess and both principals said that the benefit of having an extended day is that kids have both physical education and recess.

Ben Smith asked about collaboration between the two schools and Kevin shared several examples of the shared resources, the coaching structure, as well as the informal conversations that lead to collaborations between the schools.

John Iglizzi asked about cameras which the principals said are in place. He also asked about teacher turnover. Morgan said that from last year to this year, they had 75 percent teacher retention which she's not satisfied with. She said that what she hears from teachers that makes them want to stay is the mission and the possibilities of a pipeline and the potential of opportunities with growth. Exit interviews have shown a variety of reasons why people leave. Kevin talked about Teacher Career Pathway (TCP) which is a five-stage progression for teachers, based on performance evaluations (peer survey, student and family survey, classroom observations, and student results). Across the network, ten teachers are Stage 5, "master teachers" and Stage 4 is "Distinguished" and AFPMA has several distinguished teachers.

B. Community Outreach (Elizabeth Winangun)

The AF Ambassador program, a parent leadership program, recently kicked off. 80 people RSVP'd and 50 parents came along with 50 kids who had a gym or art program available while parents were in the Ambassadors meeting. 50 percent of the parents who came were primary Spanish speakers so they had an interpreter who did an excellent job. The focus was about community building - getting to know one another, building knowledge of where people are from. Elizabeth has been working hard on the Community Forum on Education and Immigration in the Latino Community. AF has contracted with the YMCA to provide childcare so that staff members can participate and not have to watch kids.

She has also been working on gathering support for the AF growth and expansion.

C. Board Chair Report (Mayor Jorge Elorza)

The Mayor reminded everyone to attend the board meeting on Thursday morning at 9am to have the vote for the expansion plan.

He also shared that the board should consider bringing on new talented board members.

Sarah Blanton will reach out to establish a nominating committee to formalize the process.

D. Treasurer's Report (Macky McCleary)

Macky McCleary shared that the 2016 results have not yet been audited but both schools ended with slight surpluses. Looking at the current year, which goes up through August, only includes one month.

E. Board Business

Resolution 1: Approve Previous Meeting Minutes (6/30/16, 8/23/16)

Motion by Macky McCleary

Seconded by Brian Gallogly

All in favor

Resolution 2: Approve Financial Report

Motion by John Iglizzi

Seconded by Brian Gallogly

All in favor

IV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55pm by Mayor Jorge Elorza

Motion by Macky McCleary

Seconded by John Iglizzi