

## **Achievement First Bridgeport Academy**

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

March 23, 2017, 6:00 pm

AFBA Middle School

529 Noble Ave, Bridgeport CT

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm by Chris Kunhardt. The following board members, constituting a quorum, and Achievement First Staff were in attendance:

Chris Kunhardt, AFBA Board - Yes

Dick Kalt, AFBA Board - Yes

Marlene Macauda, AFBA Board - Yes

Debra Hertz, AFBA Board - Yes

Max Perez, AFBA Board - No

Harold Kamins, AFBA Board - No

Michael Strambler, AFBA Board - Yes

James Bennett, AFBA Board - Yes

Ebrima Jobe, AFBA Board - Yes

Cornelius Medas, AFBA Board - No

Heather Watcher, AFBA Board - Yes

Challa Fleming, AFBA MS School Leadership - Yes

Christina Pares, AFBA ES School Leadership - Yes

Natasha Noel, AFBA MS School Leadership - Yes

Florisca Carter, AFBA ES School Leadership - Yes

Shannon Garfield, AF Network Support - Yes

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

John Furniss, AF Network Support - Yes

Peter Cymrot, AF Network Support - Yes (phone)

Laurie Bussmann, AF Network Support - Yes (phone)

Public: Ruben Felipe, Simon Obas, Danielle Williams (8th grade teacher at AFBA Middle School)

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

There was no public comment.

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

##### **A. Election of New Board Member**

Mr. Felipe introduced himself and described briefly the work he has done over the few past decades in the city of Bridgeport. Mr. Kunhardt expressed his support for Ruben joining the board of directors.

RESOLVED, the AF Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby elects Ruben Felipe to the Board of Directors with a three year term ending June 30, 2018.

Motion by Dick Kalt

Seconded by Marlene Macauda

All in favor

##### **B. Approval of Minutes**

RESOLVED, the AF Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from January 25, 2017.

Motion by Debra Hertz  
Seconded by Dick Kalt  
All in favor

#### **IV. Reports**

##### **A. Principal Reports**

**Bridgeport Academy Elementary School (Christina Pares).** Ms. Pares shared that AF Bridgeport Elementary School is focusing on school culture, academics, and adult culture. Right now is when adults start to think about whether they want to return for next year. They have started an internal interview process for teachers interested in dean positions.

The org health survey revealed that staff morale went up 18 percentage points. There has been a big push this year on character education and social emotional learning with help from Harvard and the Tauck Foundation. Survey results show an increase of 16 percentage points in people feeling good about being able to pursue their personal priorities. Results went down 17 percentage points for staff feeling like the school is welcoming of diverse backgrounds. School is roughly 57 percent Black, Latino or Multiracial and while the racial composition of the staff is quite diverse, the way in which the staff interact with one another can be strengthened . As a result, they have spent more time on Diversity and Inclusiveness conversations. Budget constraints are putting tension on next year.

Mr. Pares is feeling really good about academics. K-2 is focusing on reading goals with an increased rigor standard. 3rd and 4th grade are projecting gains on all SBAC tests. 4th grade ELA is looking really strong. 4th grade Math is highest in network. The transition from 2nd to 3rd grade has proved challenging. They are starting the “Crescendo” ramp up with after school tutoring.

School culture remains strong, building on a strong foundation and the self-directed learning work. Suspensions are around 2 percent.

**Bridgeport Academy Middle School (Challa Flemming).** Ms. Flemming shared that there have been a series of culture challenges. They did a school-wide reset in January focusing on accountability and raising the bar for teachers and staff. They had an extra PD day in January and were able to give the school a good fresh start. They introduced a detention buyback program where scholars who would normally be subject to detention due to incidents very early in the day can avoid detention by behaving well throughout the rest of the day. This has increased focus on scholars’ positive behavior. In February, two of their strongest teachers stepped out of classroom to serve as associate deans (humanities teachers are teaching a double block), which serves to help with school culture.

On the positive side, there is a higher number of students on the Dean’s list. Generally scholars are feeling much more motivated around the academics. One of the academic deans had transitioned into a teacher role to replace a teacher who had left earlier in the year, but neither role has been replaced. Team has continued to work hard and be incredibly devoted to their work.

Ms. Flemming invited the Board to the 10th Gala, May 20th at 6pm.

Mr. Kunhardt inquired about teacher certification, specifically on how involved the Principals are in getting their teachers certified. Ms. Pares highlighted that she works very closely with Ms. Carter, her Director of School Operations. Ms. Carter supports teachers with the step by step process to get certified. Ms. Pares stated that she would be working more closely with Ms. Bussmann, VP of Operations, in the future.

Ms. Flemming acknowledged that while she and Ms. Noel do talk about it, it is something they could be pushing on more.

Mr. Kunhardt further inquired about the 8th grade class and how prepared they are to move on to HS, especially in comparison to last year. Ms. Flemming stated that she feels last year's cohort was slightly more prepared, but this year's 8th graders are leading the culture charge and she feels that they will end the year in a good place. They are trending slightly down in math and a little bit more in ELA compared to last year.

#### **B. Joint High School Committee Report (Chris Kunhardt)**

Mr. Kunhardt gave an update on Amistad High School based on the High School Committee meeting from the day prior where two student leaders joined the meeting. He highlighted the discussion regarding the amount of emotional/mental support the students receive. Right now, Mr Barth, Amistad HS principal, anticipates that 80-85% of teachers will renew (last year was around 50%).

#### **C. Principal Committee (Debra Hertz)**

##### **1. Approve New AF Bridgeport Middle School Principal**

Motion to enter executive session at 6:36pm by Debra Hertz. Seconded by Dick Kalt. Motion to exit executive session at 6:59pm by Chris Kunhardt.

RESOLVED, the AF Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby approves Simon Obas as the principal of AF Bridgeport Middle School effective July 1, 2017.

Motion by Jim Bennett

Seconded by Debra Hertz

All in favor

#### **D. Board Chair Report (Chris Kunhardt)**

Mr. Kunhardt highlighted to Board Workshop series. Partnerships April 5th, Special Ed May 2, Greenfield May 4. He further discussed Teacher Appreciation week May 1st-5th.

##### **1. Approve Charter Management Agreement Amendment**

RESOLVED, the AF Bridgeport Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the amendment to the Charter Management Agreement as presented.

Motion by Jim Bennett

Seconded by Debra Hertz  
All in favor

**E. Treasurer Report (Dick Kalt)**

Mr. Kalt gave a report on the financial status of the schools. The elementary school is slightly above budget, while the middle school is slightly under budget. The big concern is that state funding is flat.

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

Motion by Marlene Macauda  
Seconded by Heather Watcher  
All in favor

**V. Teacher Certification/Charter Renewal**

Mr. Peter Cymrot gave a report on the Charter Renewal process. State Board of Ed renewed charter for three years (consistent with ECCP and Amistad Academy, similar to AF Hartford Academy). The three year renewal was mostly due to the suspension rate and the ongoing teacher certification issues. By the beginning of May, AF is required to have a plan in place to address certification. AF needs to make progress sufficient to satisfy the Commissioner. It is not clear if there will be an exact number, but AF needs to show that we are doing everything we can to get into compliance. Ms. Bussmann looking into comparisons with the traditional public schools.

Mr. Bennett inquired as to what actions will be different this year versus the last few years. Mr. Cymrot expressed that we have progressed from 49% to 69% over the past few years. There is a point where we can make a decision to demote/fire employees that aren't certified. We haven't been in that position, but there is a point where we might need to make those decisions. Ms. Bussmann is meeting in the next week with school leadership and recruiters to think about staffing, in light of certification. Mr. Cymrot explained that teachers can't apply for a CSEP program until they are hired.

Of all certified teachers in CT, only 8.2% are from a minority group which is a major reason that we hire teachers from out of state and because Connecticut does not offer reciprocity, those out of state teachers are almost always uncertified in CT. Mr. Kunhardt inquired about best practices from other charters. Ms. Bussmann explained that we have several cases within AF that are at or near 100%.

Mr. Bennett expressed a desire to have contact with someone at AF regarding different solutions to make improvements faster.

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm by Chris Kunhardt.

Motion by Ruben Felipe  
Seconded by Debra Hertz