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Amistad Academy

Board of Directors

Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Amistad High School, 580 Dixwell Ave, New Haven

5:30 pm

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 5:36 pm by Carolyn Greenspan. The following board members, constituting a quorum, and Achievement First staff were in attendance:

Carolyn Greenspan - Yes

Jennifer Alexander - Yes

Lorraine Gibbons - Yes (phone)

Albert Maldonado - No

Tim Pavlis - Yes

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

Jane Levin - Yes

Katie Rosa Moher, AF Network Support - Yes

Pat Sweet - Yes (phone)

Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes

Carla Seeger - Yes

Sarah Lewis, School Leadership - Yes

Khadijah Muhammad - Yes

Victoria McCall, School Leadership - Yes

Public: Linda Franciscovich, Julie Hajducky, Tanis Klingler, Chris Peak

II. Open Session for Public Comment

No public comment

III. Approve Minutes

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 25, 2019.

Motion by Khadijah Muhammad

Seconded by Jane Levin

All in favor

IV. Reports, Discussion and Board Business

A. Principal Reports

Sarah Lewis, Amistad Elementary School principal, shared updates regarding teacher certification, teacher and leader retention and hiring, student suspensions, student attrition, testing, student promotions in doubt, school culture, and the upcoming principal transition.

Testing for the state assessment (SBAC, which test English Language Arts and math) is

complete. Overall, math has more challenging, although results are expected to improve year-over-year. K-2 literacy, measured by the STEP assessment, was a major focus when Ms. Lewis became principal two years ago. So far this year, results are up double digits from last year. The board had a discussion about measuring student growth and promotions in doubt.

Brooke Williams, incoming principal, has helped to ensure a smooth transition. Ms. Williams has been thoughtful about connecting with returning staff. Additionally, the Leadership Team will remain at the school (with the exception of one member who is staying in network).

The board recognized and thanked Ms. Lewis for her leadership as this is her last board meeting.

Victoria McCall, Amistad Middle School principal, shared updates regarding teacher certification, teacher retention, student suspensions, student GPA, student promotions in doubt, and student attrition.

100% of teachers who received an offer letter signed for the upcoming school year.

This year, Amistad Middle School had some of the strongest guided reading interventions, which will be the basis for training across the network. When we get interventions right, we can help the students who struggle most as there is often a correlation between academic performance and behavior.

As discussed in previous principal reports, most suspension-worthy behaviors are the result of conflicts stemming from social media. While the school has little control over what happens outside of its walls, these events are impacting the school day. Therefore, Ms. McCall is trying to figure out a plan for supporting mediation between scholars, scheduling time for relationship building, and providing professional development opportunities for staff regarding conflict resolution.

Going forward Ms. McCall will focus on ensuring that:

- Scholars feel safe
- Families are connected to the messaging at school
- Teachers have opportunities to pause lessons for “teachable” social-emotional moments

B. Amistad High School Committee Report

Jane Levin summarized the Amistad High School Committee report given earlier in the evening

by Emery Sykes, Amistad High School interim principal.

With regards to school culture, Ms. Sykes' aspiration is for the High School to be a place where her own children could attend. To that end, Ms. Sykes and the Leadership Team have worked to stabilize the school and identify necessary vs. unnecessary discipline.

With regards to academics, the school is doing well. Students took more than 1,000 AP exams across all subjects. Additionally, 100% of seniors received college acceptances.

Most important, Ms. Sykes and the Leadership Team is working to make the end of the school year special in light of the year's challenges. Students are excited for Senior Signing Day.

As the Leadership Team reflects upon this year and plans for the next, there is a need to focus on supporting students with conflict resolution in the age of social media, especially among 9th and 10th graders. Furthermore, Shannon Garfield, regional superintendent, has stepped up to not only support Ms. Sykes in her interim role, but to prepare Simon Obas to lead the school. This year, they have visited a number of schools around country to learn about best practices and what they can bring back to Amistad High School.

C. Finance Committee Report

Tim Pavlis gave the financial report including year to date financials, the balance sheet, the audit firm selection process, the updated fiscal policies and the FY20 budget.

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby ratifies the re-appointment of CohnReznick to perform the financial audit of the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Motion by Tim Pavlis

Seconded by Jennifer Alexander

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial report as presented.

Motion by Khadijah Muhammad

Seconded by Pat Sweet

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial budget as recommended by the Finance Committee and prepared by Achievement First for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Motion by Tim Pavlis
Seconded by Jane Levin
All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the updated Fiscal Policies and Procedures as presented.

Motion by Jennifer Alexander
Seconded by Pat Sweet
All in favor

D. Board Chair Report

Carolyn Greenspan led a discussion about the charter renewal process, which starts in September, the term limits of parent representatives, the best practices that the board may not be implementing, and if high school students are feeling more confident and supported.

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the board of education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020.

AND WHEREAS, This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups.

AND WHEREAS, The board of education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held.

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby authorizes the Board Chair to

certify that Amistad Academy Elementary and Middle Schools meet the standards specified in Section 10-215e of the Connecticut General Statutes for the period July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020.

Motion by Tim Pavlis
Seconded by Lorraine Gibbons
All in favor

V. Executive Session - Discussion of attorney client privileged communication regarding review of school incident

The board entered executive session at 6:30 pm.

Motion by Jennifer Alexander
Seconded by Carla Seeger
All in favor

The board exited executive session at 8:43 pm.

Motion by Tim Pavlis
Seconded by Pat Sweet
All in favor

VI. Approve Release of Conclusions and Recommendations

BE IT RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the release of the conclusions and recommendations of the investigator, Leander Dolphin, Shipman & Goodwin LLP, dated May 22, 2019.

Motion by Jane Levin
Seconded by Jennifer Alexander
All in favor

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Motion by Khadijah Muhammad
Seconded by Tim Pavlis
All in favor