

- Draft Minutes -

Achievement First Rhode Island

Board of Directors Retreat

September 23, 2020, 5:30 pm

Zoom Video Conference

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was unofficially to order at 5:38 pm by Mayor Jorge Elorza. The following board members, constituting a quorum, AF Rhode Island and Achievement First staff were in attendance:

Jorge Elorza - Yes

Macky McCleary - No

Reshma Singh - Yes

John Iglizozzi - No

Soraida Morales - Yes

Ben Smith - Yes

Maryellen Butke - Yes

James Wiley - Yes

Jorge Cardenas - Yes

Charles Lombardi - No

Aja Davis, AFRI School Leadership

Andrew Walker, AFRI School Leadership

Kevin Lohela, AFRI School Leadership

Mindy Rice, AFRI School Leadership

Donavan Tracey, AFRI School Leadership

Jennifer Andrade, AFRI School Leadership

Salvador Pellerano, AFRI School Leadership

Breonna Hudgins, AFRI School Leadership

Achievement First staff: Sarah Blanton, Elizabeth Winangun, Cassidy McKee, Ken Paul, Victor De La Paz, Eduardo Del Valle, Jesse Balis-Harris, Kiah Hufane

Public: Dan McGowan, Jillian Fain

II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Approve Minutes

RESOLVED, the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from May 19, 2020.

Motion by Maryellen Butke

Second by Ben Smith

All in favor

IV. Reports and Business

A. Principal Reports

Kevin Lohela, AF Illuminar Elementary School principal, shared the major lift of starting the school year and the strong efforts from the entire team. The school has clear priorities and have executed successfully on those priorities. Navigating the complexity of remote learning is challenging but they've

focused on grace, optimism and collaboration in working towards solutions.

The kids are ver happy to be back in school. The scholars who are still remote are also happy. 50% of families have opted to have their children learn remotely, 50% come in-person.

Summer training was successful – 6+ weeks – and that training time was critical.

Teacher retention is 90% and leadership team retention is 85%. Attendance is 95% and student attrition is less than 1%.

Mindy Rice, AF Promesa Elementary School Principal, noted her strong leadership team and shared some of the challenges of leading a school remotely. She also shared how proud she is of the teachers and how happy the children are to be in school. Not a single kindergartener or first grader struggled with the drop off procedures. Each one entered the building confidently.

With safety as the top priority, certain systems and COVID procedures are time consuming and take away from learning time. Attendance is 96%. Two kids switched out of AF Promesa because other children in the household did not get in through the lottery and the families wanted to keep the kids together.

Aja Davis, AF Providence Elementary principal, echoed many of what the previous principals shared. The AF support has been tremendous for school start up. She shared photos from the first days of school. The capacity to get scholars to and from school has been a challenge.

The leadership team is doing great and the kids are strong. Ms. Davis compared teaching under this hybrid model to being a first year teacher with lots of ups and downs. 40% in of scholars are coming to school for in-person instruction and 60% are remote. Social distancing means all scholars have their own contained materials, their own lockers with desks six feet apart. The school had 100% teacher retention, and attendance is 96%.

Mayor Elorza noted that there seem to be higher percentages of families who are opting to keep their children home, doing remote learning, compared with Providence Public Schools. Ms. Rice shared that it may be because of the strength of the remote learning program and the efforts to ensure that the scholar experience in remote learning is positive. There is a full day schedule with live lessons and breaks included. The school year is broken up into two month “chapters” and for each chapter families have the option to select remote or in-person learning.

The school leaders spoke about ways they anticipate providing support for scholars, families and staff during what may be a tumultuous time post-election.

Donavan Tracey, principal of AF Providence Middle School, began his discussion around ensuring that everything they do as a school increases equity for the school. He shared some of the challenges,

including transportation and shifting systems to ensure safety. Challenges aside, the kids were really excited to be back in the building.

The leadership team has high energy and is very committed. Summer training for teachers similarly had very high energy. Staff are eager to embrace new challenges, with a deep desire to improve.

69% of scholars are remote. 31% are coming in-person. Of those students coming in-person, 79% come four days per week and 21% come two days per week. He reviewed classroom assignments, classroom set up (staff rotate, kids stay in place). Student attendance is 95%, attrition is 5%, and enrollment is 415. Teacher retention was 68%, leadership team retention was 86%.

Andrew Walker, principal of AF Illuminar Middle School, expressed his gratitude for the entire AFRI team. He shared how the school is living the value of Lead for Racial Equity and ensuring it's at the center of the work. The year, thus far, has been challenging but smooth. He shared a video of instruction from the first day of school and the use of technology integrating in person and remote instruction.

The entire leadership team is back, 100% retention. 75% of teachers returned and the new teachers are very strong. Attrition is less than 1%. Attendance is 97.5%. Enrollment is 208.

B. Facilities Discussion

Cassidy McKee led a discussion about the facilities repairs that are needed at the Hartford Ave building. AF is coming to the board to request use of board reserves for asbestos abatement and waterproofing repairs.

WHEREAS, the building at 370 Hartford Ave serving AF Providence Elementary School, AF Providence Middle School and AF Promesa Elementary School ("the schools") requires facilities maintenance, and

WHEREAS, this maintenance includes, but is not limited to, asbestos abatement in the glazing on the windows in both gymnasias and roof repairs and the restoration of the building façade in order to resolve water penetration, and

WHEREAS, the schools have, to date, maintained safety from the asbestos by way of containment (keeping windows closed, restriction access and exposure to windows by closed grates), and

WHEREAS, the ventilation plan for re-opening the schools (following the spring 2020 COVID-19 shut down) prioritizes outdoor air which is not possible given the current conditions of the windows, as opening the windows or placing fans in the windows is not safe, and

WHEREAS, the asbestos abatement project is estimated to be \$160K and the water proofing repairs are estimated to be \$100K,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors hereby approves the asbestos abatement project in both gymnasias to address the south facing windows, including containment, removal and replacement of windows, updates to mechanical systems given the size of the windows as well as the roof and building façade water penetration work, as presented.

RESOLVED FURTHER that the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors approves the use of board designated reserves up to, but not to exceed, \$260K for the purposes of the aforementioned facilities improvement projects.

Motion by Ben Smith
Second by James Wiley
All in favor

Ben Smith made a motion to enter into executive session at 6:45 pm to discuss real estate locations for a future high school. He invited the following AF staff to join: Victor De La Paz, Cassidy McKee, Eduardo Del Valle, Elizabeth Winangun, Sarah Blanton, and Salvador Pellerano. Seconded by James Wiley
The board exited executive session at 7:07 pm. Motion by James Wiley. Seconded by Ben Smith. All in favor.

C. Treasurer Report

Ben Smith gave the treasurer report with revised, balanced budgets which note certain line items that were removed from the budget (largely operational items that are not relevant with COVID). Those savings are offset by additional costs associated with cleaning. At this time, the schools are not operating under austere conditions but that could change in the future.

Mr. Smith reviewed changes to the conditions of the PPP loan.

RESOLVED, the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors hereby approves the amended budget as recommended by the Finance Committee and prepared by Achievement First for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Motion by Ben Smith
Second by James Wiley
All in favor

D. Board Chair Report

Elizabeth Winangun shared that AF has an opportunity to expand and open two new K-8 schools and a new high school. Mayor Elorza thanked Elizabeth and the AF team for moving this forward. He noted this interesting and hopeful moment for Providence Public Schools with the State takeover. At the same time, there are charter networks that are serving children well. This presents an incredible opportunity to expand these types of high-quality options for our families.

WHEREAS the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors Island proposes to submit an application authorizing it to open three new schools; two serving grades K-8 with students eventually feeding into a new AF high school.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors approves the submission of an application authorizing it to open three new schools serving grades K-12;

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors hereby authorizes and directs Achievement First Network Support to prepare, execute, and deliver such application and to take and carry out any other action required by this resolution.

Motion by Maryellen Butke

Second by Reshma Singh

All in favor

RESOLVED, the AF Rhode Island Academy Board of Directors hereby elects the following leadership slate for the 2020-21 fiscal year:

Mayor Jorge Elorza, Chair

Ben Smith, Treasurer

Reshma Singh, Secretary

Motion by James Wiley

Second by Maryellen Butke

All in favor

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 pm by Mayor Elorza.

Motion by Maryellen Butke

Seconded by Reshma Singh

All in favor