

- DRAFT -

**Amistad Academy  
Board of Directors**

Zoom Video Conference

Wednesday, November 4, 2020, 5:30 pm

**I. Call to Order and Attendance**

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 pm by Carolyn Greenspan. The following board members and Achievement First Staff were in attendance:

Carolyn Greenspan - Yes	Lauren Gemske, Amistad Elementary School Principal
Lorraine Gibbons - Yes	Roseann Basile, Amistad Middle School Principal
Jane Levin - Yes	Christina Ellington, Regional Superintendent
Pat Sweet - Yes	Jesse Balis-Harris, Regional Superintendent
Jennifer Alexander - Yes	Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support
Albert Maldonado - No	
Ethan Tyminski - Yes	Ken Paul, AF Network Support
Tyra Smallwood - No	
Shannelle Whyte - Yes	

**II. Open Session for Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Introduction to Rich Buery**

Dacia Toll and Rich Buery joined the meeting to discuss Ms. Toll's plans to transition out of her role as CEO towards the end of this academic year. She shared that the decision feels right and that AF has been a tremendous joy. She is convinced that this is healthy and right for the organization and feels very strongly that Rich Buery is the leader that will take AF to the next level.

In her introduction of Mr. Buery, she shared his professional experience founding and leading organizations, including the Children's Aid Society and NYC's Pre-K for All initiative. She spoke about his extraordinary people leadership skills and his high standards for the scholars we serve.

Mr. Buery introduced himself by sharing a bit about his background, growing up as the son of a high school teacher in East New York. His history with Achievement First includes watching

Amistad Academy open in 1999 (having been at Yale Law School at the same time as Ms. Toll) and serving as a founding board chair of one of the Brooklyn Charters

#### **IV. Discussion and Business**

##### **A. Principal reports**

Ms. Rosie Basile, Amistad Middle School principal, shared that with school is transitioning back to remote learning after what she believed was a very productive hybrid learning period. Scholars were able to get much more done and were enjoying being in school.

In mid-December, they will have organizational health data survey results. Preliminary pulse checks have been very positive.

The Dean of Special Services resigned in October which was unanticipated. There is a strong internal candidate for the role. In addition, there should be four special services teachers but they currently only have three. All work is getting done but Ms. Basile noted that the team feels stretched.

“Chapter two,” which marked the second phase of the academic year, in which families could opt into hybrid learning or remote, was supposed to have more scholars back in school than chapter one. Ms. Basile is hopeful that when they are able to be back in the building, those scholars will opt into in-person learning.

Ms. Basile said that everyone is working hard and taking feedback well, but they want to continue to improve instruction. There are no issues with professionalism but there are some substantial academic gaps that need to be closed.

She shared tremendous year-over-year gains in student investment survey results. The Network classroom environment walk-through results were up significantly from last year. The staff experience data shows no variation by race.

Her top priority is for scholars to feel cared for and also to maintain a strong adult culture.

Ms. Lauren Gemske, Amistad Elementary School interim principal, updated the board that chapter two was set to begin with 56% of students back in school. Kids were disappointed to go back to remote. It’s especially challenging for the younger scholars to be remote.

Organizational health data shows that 100% of teachers said they feel supported by the

leadership team and 90% said they felt they understand their roles and responsibilities. The 10% who were not clear on their roles and responsibilities were teachers who don't have direct classroom responsibilities and indicated they were not clear on how best to support remote instruction.

STEP (reading) test results showed students falling behind where they had been in March. Ms. Gemske discussed how the team is looking to improve remote instruction.

There is a concern about attendance for a subset of students are not regularly attending school. And although kids are happy, they may not be focused and getting work done to the level and degree that the school would like.

Ms. Gemske shared that they are doing very intentional work with scholars around belief and belonging.

Amistad Elementary is soliciting input from staff on programmatic decisions. All voices are being elevated and Ms. Gemske believes they landed in a better place because of the additional input from staff.

### **B. Joint High School Committee Report**

Jane Levin reported from the Joint High School Committee meeting. Unlike at the younger grades, a sizeable number of students who had opted into in-person learning during chapter one decided to be remote during chapter two. At this point, though, they are going fully remote.

Twenty eight students in the senior class have applied to college already, 22 of whom applied early decision. Mr. Obas shared some strong organizational health data but also a concerning area around whether the teachers feel they are adequately preparing the scholars academically. Remote learning is an enormous challenge.

### **C. Board Chair Report**

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from September 8 and October 7, 2020.

Motion by Ethan Tyminski

Seconded by Shannelle Whyte

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby elects Patricia Sweet to serve as Treasurer for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Motion by Carolyn Greenspan

Second by Ethan Tyminski

All in favor

Ms. Greenspan shared with the board that Elm City is doing renovations on the building that Amistad owns and the Amistad Board is agreeing to guarantee the loan.

WHEREAS, the Amistad Board of Directors (the "Board") are the owners of property located at 407 James Street, New Haven, CT (the "Property"), and is leased to the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors ("ECCP");

WHEREAS, ECCP has approved and substantially completed the facilities consolidation and renovation project at the Property;

WHEREAS, ECCP has approved a loan agreement by and between itself and the Charter School Growth Fund ("CSGF") for nine hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$950,000.00) at a three percent (3%) interest rate, to be repaid on terms described above;

WHEREAS, the loan is predicated on a) a guarantee from Amistad, owner and beneficiary of the improvements, and b) on a management fee subordination agreement from AF Inc.;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board hereby agrees to serve as guarantor of the Loan Agreement with CSGF, for nine hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$950,000.00), binding the Board to the terms and obligations in the Loan Agreement attached as Exhibit A.

BE IT RESOLVED FURTHER, Achievement First Inc., acting through its officers or designees (each an "Authorized Person") are, jointly and severally, authorized and directed, in the name of the Board, to do all such things and acts and to execute and deliver all such applications, documents and instruments in writing and to expend such fees for and on behalf of the Board as may be necessary or advisable in order to give effect to and, generally, carry out the intent of the forgoing resolution including, without limitation, to execute and deliver any instruments and documents required in connection with the Loan Agreement, in the name and on behalf of the Board, on such terms and conditions and in such form deemed necessary or desirable and approved by such Authorized Person with such changes, modifications and amendments thereto as such Authorized Person may in such person's discretion approve, which approval shall be conclusively evidenced by the execution and delivery of such applications, documents and instruments in writing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all actions previously taken by any Authorized Person in furtherance of the foregoing resolutions are hereby ratified and confirmed.

Motion by Ethan Tyminski

Seconded by Jane Levin

All in favor

#### **D. Finance Committee Report**

Pat Sweet reported that the per-pupil funding has remained the same and enrollment is strong. The elementary school is projected to break even while the middle school is facing a small deficit.

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

Motion by Jane Levin

Seconded by Lorraine Gibbons

All in favor

#### **V. Adjourn**

There being no other business before the board, it was unanimously decided to adjourn at 6:50 pm.

Motion by Pat Sweet

Second by Ethan Tyminski

All in favor