

Achievement First (AF) Brooklyn Charter Schools

Board of Trustees Meeting

Thursday, November 12, 2020

Zoom Video Conference

- DRAFT MEETING MINUTES -

Board Members in Attendance: Deb Shanley, Romy Coquillette, Jon Atkeson, Amy Arthur Samuels, Kevin Miquelon, Chris Lynch, Judith Joseph Jenkins, Andy Hubbard, Warren Young, Will Robalino, Justin Cohen

Staff and Guests in Attendance: Sarah Blanton, Ken Paul, Stephanie Keenoy, Amy D'Angelo, Chi Tschang, Dacia Toll, Richard Buery

Sarah Blanton recorded the minutes. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm by Deb Shanley.

1. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

2. Assessing Learning and Growth with Stephanie Keenoy, Chi Tschang and Amy D'Angelo

Stephanie Keenoy is AF's new Superintendent and is also serving as the elementary school academy lead. At all academy levels, measuring student growth and development is very different this year. Student experience, in elementary school, is being evaluated by students via monthly pulse surveys which ask questions like "my teacher likes me," "I like my teacher," and "someone at school cares about me." Twice per year there will be formal surveys.

Academic achievement is normally evaluated by way of interim assessments which are given two or three times per year. This year, students take bi-weekly reading and math quizzes. STEP/F&P (reading) will be given twice a year. In math, students will take a Math Growth Test in the middle of the year to assess whether students are making progress and determine what supports students will need, and then again at the end of the year. There are not likely to be state tests in NY.

94% of ES classrooms are scoring a three or higher on belief and belonging based on the AF essentials rubric (3+ represents proficiency in both academic and school culture). On the October pulse survey, 85% feel known, loved and are learning (up double digits from last year). Student experience data ranges from 82% - 89% which is tighter than in the past.

There is a big gap when it comes to gender. Boys are liking school and their teachers less than girls, in particular. This is the first year that we have sub-population data that we can examine and strategize around. Schools come up with action plans aligned to sub-population data.

Overall, attendance is 95%. There have been no suspensions or removals, not surprisingly, because schools have been remote. Attrition data is less than it has been in past years (0.5%). Teacher retention, as measured by mid-year departures, is at 3%.

In reading, 44% of kids are on track to being on grade level at the end of the year. Compared to last year, 57% were on grade level. The elementary school schedule has been modified to include small group reading every day, many are either one-on-one or one on two every day. All schools have a 30 minute intervention block each day. Based on data, schools are creating intervention groups and all schools have at least 30 minutes of intervention built into the schedule every day.

There is an hour-long humanities block that focuses on critical thinking, innovation and project based learning. There is a math block that is problem solving and kids are expected to solve problems in multiple ways. There is also a science block. AF is working hard on both getting kids to reading levels but also on critical thinking.

Chi Tschang, Regional Superintendent and Middle School Academy lead, grounded the discussion in the focus on classroom environment. They set goals around belief and belonging, student work submission, attendance and scholar investment.

- Goal Met: Student investment surveys. The schools are up approximately 15 percent in terms of how much students feel like they belong in school. The data suggests that students feel that classrooms are warm and positive.
- Goal Met: Students Attendance. Average daily attendance (measured in advisory in the morning) is 96.4% and the average across all academic subjects is 91% so schools are working to close that gap to increase attendance in each class over the course of the day.

AF Middle Schools did not meet the goal in student work completion (80%). The range between the highest and lowest schools are wide (55 – 84%).

Mr. Tschang reviewed areas where he feels that AF is struggling. Given the spring 2020 COVID slide, our students entered this year with severe learning loss. On top of that, we know that this year's learning loss is also concerning but we don't have enough reliable data to know how bad it might be. The board discussed with Mr. Tschang the issues around learning loss and remediation.

Amy D'Angelo, Regional Superintendent and High School Academy lead, shared headlines around what is working and not working at the high school level, as well as what is being done to address the challenges.

In terms of what is working well, Ms. D'Angelo shared that they chose to keep the rigor high with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction. AP enrollment looks strong. Average daily attendance looks good (95%) but there is variability when looking course by course during the school

day. Four of the five principals are in their first year and they are doing well. All schools are focusing on a “building with not for” (highly collaborative processes) regarding remote learning and adapting the grading policy for the remote/hybrid context. Two of the three Brooklyn HS hit the goal of 80% passing all classes.

Challenges at the high school level include too many students failing classes at the end of the first quarter, period by period attendance and student engagement, and it is also challenging to get reliable clarity on learning given testing conditions, student investment. It’s hard to get clarity with tools we have.

What are we doing about it?

- Aligning network resources to really focus on how to support students who are struggling the most. One of the challenges is that there are many reasons for student struggles.
- Revising core program assumptions.
- Further modifying remote learning assumptions.

Ms. D’Angelo reviewed the revised academic assessment plan with the common AF high school assessments, AP exams, and mock Regents exams.

3. Committee Reports

Finance Committee: Jon Atkeson reported that the early days of this fiscal year are relatively positive, with a surplus on the updated budget. The finance committee met with the auditors and reviewed the clean audit. The finance committee is working on getting clarity on understanding the surplus to best make allocations.

It is unclear whether there will be a mid-year State budget adjustment that would impact per-pupil funding.

Real Estate Committee: Kevin Miquelon, updated the board on the progress made by the real estate committee. The lease for Pitkin Ave was signed. Civic Builders is the developer. Jon Atkeson added that the lease for the Queens school was also signed.

4. CEO Transition Update

Dacia Toll reflected on her decision to depart AF after 21 years. She feels it is the best for the organization. She truly believes that Rich Buery, AF’s current President, is the leader who can take AF into its next chapter.

Mr. Buery shared his gratitude to Dacia and the entire Achievement First community.

Deb Shanley expressed her support of Mr. Buery.

5. Board Business

RESOLVED, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the financial report as presented.

Motion by Jon Atkeson

Seconded by Warren Young

All in favor

RESOLVED, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby accepts the report of the independent auditors CohnReznick prepared in relation to the fiscal year ending 6/30/20.

Motion by Deb Shanley

Seconded by Andy Hubbard

All in favor

RESOLVED, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the meeting minutes from October 1, 2020.

Motion by Deb Shanley

Seconded by Romy Coquillette

All in favor

RESOLVED, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the Family Handbook Addendum as presented in exhibit A.

Motion by Deb Shanley

Seconded by Chris Lynch

All in favor

RESOLVED, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the school safety plan as presented in exhibit B.

Motion by Jon Atkeson

Seconded by Warren Young

All in favor

Deb Shanley abstained

6. New Business

Ken Paul gave a philanthropy update including an update of a meeting with some members of the AF Brooklyn Board.

7. Adjourn

It was unanimously decided to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 pm.

Motion by Romy Coquillette

Second by Warren Young

All in favor