

- DRAFT -
Amistad Academy Board of Directors
Zoom Video Conference
Wednesday, January 12, 2022
5:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order

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

Yashira Agosto - No	Riley Bauling, Regional Superintendent
Jennifer Alexander - Yes	Kristin Damo, Regional Superintendent
Lorraine Gibbons - Yes	Beth Cocuzza, AF Network Support
Carolyn Greenspan - Yes	Elise Major, AF Network Support
Jane Levin - Yes	Connor McGann, AF Network Support
Gayatri Mehra - Yes	Ken Paul, AF Network Support
Tyra Smallwood - Yes	Neil Shah, AF Network Support
Patricia Sweet - Yes	Megan Tokarski, AF Network Support
Ethan Tyminski - Yes	
Shannelle Whyte - Yes	

II. Open Session for Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Approve Minutes

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from November 3, 2021.

Motion by Tyra Smallwood
Seconded by Jennifer Alexander
All in favor

IV. Discussion and Business

A. Discussion with Regional Superintendents

Riley Bauling gave a Regional Superintendent report about Amistad Academy Middle. The middle school is having a strong year, with some of the highest student, family, and staff investment and satisfaction in the Achievement First network, according to survey results. Anecdotally, Mr. Bauling reported high satisfaction with the performance of Principal Roseann Basile, as well as the school's other leadership team members and teachers. The board engaged in a Q&A and discussion of Mr. Bauling's report:

- Carolyn Greenspan asked if Amistad Academy Middle is experiencing teacher shortages. Mr. Bauling reported that the school has had a handful of teachers out due to illness at any given time, but the leadership team and grade-level chairs have been able to successfully provide coverage for those short-term absences. There are still two open positions, but the school has not received strong candidates for those roles; instead, deans have stepped into teaching roles and/or teachers have taught extra classes as needed. Amistad Academy Middle is currently anticipating strong teacher retention year-over-year, so there should not be significantly more vacancies to fill.
- Jane Levin asked about academics, especially the negative impact of disrupted learning during the pandemic on reading proficiency levels. Mr. Bauling shared that Amistad Academy Middle is using a nationally-normed internal assessment to assess student reading levels and is currently on track to meet its internal growth goals, but the big unknown remains how this will translate to performance on state assessments. The school has doubled down on the amount of in-house intervention provided to students, but it will be a multi-year effort to get students back to grade-level proficiency in reading. Fortunately, as a result of a strong, stable school culture and significant student, family, and staff investment, the school is able to focus on academics and the students who need intervention the most. Ms. Levin suggested leveraging the New Haven area's many colleges and universities for volunteer tutors. Mr. Bauling said this is being piloted at some Achievement First schools now, including Elm City College Preparatory in New Haven, and if it works well, it will likely be rolled out to other schools.
- Carolyn Greenspan inquired if Amistad Academy Middle is able to offer enrichment this year. Mr. Bauling said all students have a daily, one-hour enrichment block, including PE, creative arts and technology, dance, and/or art. On Friday afternoons, students also participate in a choice of clubs (*e.g.*, gaming, debate) for 45 minutes. Patricia Sweet asked if there is an opportunity to partner with New Haven's theater community to offer enrichment. Mr. Bauling said right now, schools are focusing on implementing the "basics" strongly and consistently, but when things reach a more steady state, Amistad Academy Middle can explore opportunities like this. It is something to consider during readiness planning for the 2022-23 school year, which will get underway in a couple months.

Kristin Damo gave a Regional Superintendent report about Amistad Academy Elementary. The elementary school is experiencing very high levels of staff, student, and family investment and satisfaction, according to survey results. The school currently has no teacher vacancies, and while there have been teachers out due to illness or childcare issues, these absences have not risen to substantially impactful numbers. Average daily student attendance is also high at over 90%. Principal Brooke Williams, as well as some other members of the school's leadership team, will be going out on maternity leave this winter and spring. Ms. Williams has been thoughtful and strategic about leave coverage for all critical roles and responsibilities. Ms. Damo reported that Amistad Academy Elementary's mid-year reading assessment cycle begins next week. This will be an opportunity to measure growth since the beginning of the school year. Beginning-of-year reading assessment results showed low reading proficiency levels, and the school has been finding as many opportunities as possible for reading intervention (e.g., students in grades K-2 have two phonics blocks every day), but it will be a multi-year effort to get students back to grade-level proficiency in reading. The board engaged in a Q&A and discussion of Ms. Damo's report:

- Jane Levin asked if the board can see the data from the mid-year reading assessment cycle. Ms. Damo said all data should be available in early February.
- Jennifer Alexander asked how parents reacted to the Achievement First network's decision to switch to remote learning during the first week of January and how they felt about returning to in-person school this week, as well as how the State responded. Both Mr. Bauling and Ms. Damo reported that parents accepted the decision to switch to remote learning, but were not thrilled about it, and welcomed the return to in-person school. Amistad Academy has been a very safe environment so far this school year, and parents feel comfortable sending their children to school given the safety protocols in place. Fatimah Barker, Achievement First's Interim CEO, spoke with CT's Commissioner of Education about the decision to switch to remote learning. The State is counting one day of remote learning, but Amistad Academy will have to make up two days. Ms. Damo reported that Amistad Academy has already adjusted the calendar to replace two teacher Professional Development Days with school days.
- Jane Levin asked if Achievement First is considering a vaccine mandate for students. Ken Paul shared that Achievement First is providing positive encouragement to families to vaccinate eligible children, but are not yet mandating vaccines for students. Shannelle Whyte suggested implementing a lesser quarantine period for vaccinated students, which might motivate more parents to vaccinate.

B. Board Chair Report

Carolyn Greenspan shared the list of AF Amistad High's Early Decision college acceptances so far.

C. Treasurer Report

1. Financial Report

Neil Shah shared Amistad Academy's year-to-date financial statements through November, 30, 2021, as previously presented to the Amistad Academy Finance Committee. He reported that the charter's financials are standard for this point in the fiscal year. Mr. Shah explained a shift in Amistad Academy's ESSER spending plans, namely pushing back some program items, such as tutoring, to Year 2 (2022-23) due to limited staff/capacity. Patricia Sweet asked about the long-term state funding forecast, and Mr. Shah reported that the new Education Cost Sharing (ECS) legislation is positive for charter schools in terms of bridging the gap of free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) and English language learner (ELL) revenue, but it will be a 10-year phase in. There has not been any indication of an increase to the per-pupil allocation for charter schools. Achievement First is continuing to look at how to be more efficient and sustainable in its budgeting.

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

Motion by Carolyn Greenspan
Seconded by Patricia Sweet
All in favor

2. Audited Financial Statements

Neil Shah presented Amistad Academy's Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, as previously presented to the Amistad Academy Finance Committee. He reported that Amistad Academy received an "unmodified opinion" from the auditors, indicating no findings and a clean audit.

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby accepts the report of the independent auditors CohnReznik prepared in relation to the fiscal year ending 6/30/21.

Motion by Patricia Sweet
Seconded by Jane Levin
All in favor

3. Procurement Policy

Neil Shah directed the board to a draft of the updated Achievement First Procurement Policies and talked through a summary of changes.



RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the updated Procurement Policy as presented.

Motion by Tyra Smallwood
Seconded by Lorraine Gibbons
All in favor

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m. by Carolyn Greenspan.

Motion by Patricia Sweet
Seconded by Jane Levin
All in favor