

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Achievement First (AF) Brooklyn Charter Schools**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**

Wednesday, August 10, 2022, 4:45-7:00pm  
Venue: 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019, Room 47A  
Zoom: [LINK](#)

**Trustees in Attendance:** Romy Coquillette, Alison Richardson, Anup Menon, Chris Lynch, Jonathan Atkeson, Will Robalino, Akeem Frett, Tamika Bradley, Amy Arthur Samuels, Kevin Miquelon

**Staff and Guests in Attendance:** Lisa Margosian, Beth Cocuzza, Isabel Tañedo, Neil Shah, Xanthe Jory, De-Lea Deane-Allen, Bonnie Litt, Christina Braganza, John Sharkey, Rod Bowen, Jesse Balis-Haris, Charmayne Joseph, Christi George, Ken Paul, Patricia Granda-Malaver, Sultana Salma

Patricia Granda-Malaver recorded the minutes.

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:57 PM by Romy Coquillette, Board Chair.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Presentation by Achievement First**

**A. AF Strategic Initiatives**

Ms. Lisa Margosian, Interim Chief Executive Officer, kicked off the meeting presenting 4 strategic imperatives - multi-year initiatives that will direct Achievement First's focus and efforts in service of scholars and teachers.

Ms. Margosian then welcomed board members to read off the 4 strategic imperatives:

1. Ensure that our schools deliver on their promise to our scholars, including summer readiness and a strong start to the school year.
2. Focus on our culture, ensuring a clear sense of direction, transparency in decision making, predictable communication, and a willingness to engage with all stakeholders.

3. Improve our systems and structures that support the quality performance and scaling of the network.
4. Attract and retain quality talent to deliver on our commitment to support the excellence of our schools.

Following this, AF leadership talked through each Imperative in more detail.

Mr. John Sharkey, Interim Chief Academic Officer, explained that the first strategic imperative prioritizes the critical work of delivering on our promise to scholars, through our academic and instructional offerings, our social-emotional supports, and ensuring that students feel safe and welcome at school. He reminded the board that this school year AF is focused on reading in particular, as well as on student investment and continued reduction of exclusionary discipline practices. Mr. Sharkey also highlighted the fundamental summer professional development teachers recently completed which provides teachers the preparation to start off the year in a great spot.

Ms. Christi George, VP of Talent Operations, explained the second strategic imperative which focuses on workplace culture. She noted that this year AF plans to focus on bringing back a strong performance culture for both Network Support employees and principals while leadership strategizes a long-term plan for teachers and other school based staff.

Mr. Neil Shah, Chief Financial Officer, then transitioned to the third strategic imperative and explained that it seeks to improve AF's systems and structures. He listed out some ways that we are already working on this goal such as investing in finance and human resources improvements. For instance, centralizing employee relations by automating systems like payroll will ultimately lessen the load on school-based DSOs in the long run.

Ms. De-Lea Deane-Allen, Chief Equity Officer, presented the final strategic imperative that focuses on retaining and hiring staff members to deliver on our mission. She noted that the Great Resignation has impacted the teaching profession nationwide which is why talent is a primary focus this coming school year.

Ms. Margosian then opened the floor to questions. Trustees and staff engaged in topics like scholar success post graduation, enrollment numbers, data differentiation between Network Support versus Brooklyn, and the Board setting

## **B. SY 2021-2022 report and reflections**

### **1. Scholars**

The next meeting topic focused on AF scholar data across academies this past school year. Mr. Jesse Balis-Harris, Chief of Elementary Schools, kicked off the conversation

with data on Brooklyn elementary schools, reporting that students were not where they need to be on reading and math proficiency, and that there are planned revisions to curriculums to strengthen these skills. Mr. Balis-Harris also reported on the thriving school culture in elementary schools. Overall, Brooklyn elementary schools ended the school year with largely solid foundations in place and an improvement of organizational health and retention. Mr. Balis-Harris then entertained questions from the Board on standardized testing and changes in curriculum.

Ms. Charmayne Joseph, Interim Chief of Middle Schools, reported on reading, science, ELA and math, and ultimately confirmed that middle school scholars have improved from 2020-2021 but are generally performing below pre-pandemic levels. Ms Joseph also mentioned that school culture this past year also had mixed reviews. For instance, Brooklyn middle schools met student experience survey goals yet there are needed improvements in attendance and suspension rates which were ramifications of the pandemic. The discussion that followed allowed Ms. Joseph to give further details on how revisions in curriculum are 1) aligning with science of learning research and 2) introducing elementary school learning challenges in order to create a strong and layered foundation for middle school instructors. Lastly, there was a conversation on the importance of parent partnership in school culture, especially in addressing suspensions and other behavioral impacts of the pandemic.

Mr. Rod Bowen, Chief of High Schools, presented the academic state of Brooklyn high schools. Although more scholars passed all of their courses this school year than last, student performance differed. For example, Regents testing data were not up to par with course passing rates. Mr. Bowen then turned to school culture for high schools which has experienced improvements Student Belonging and Valuing School according to survey data but other aspects like suspension rates are actively being worked on by investing in inclusive practices. Board members voiced interest in learning more about post-graduate performance of scholars.

Ms. Xanthe Jory, Chief Operating Officer, presented updates on scholar enrollment and recruitment efforts. AF ended the school year with a total shortfall of scholars which is a trend for charters across the nation. Ms. Jory then explained that the kindergarten enrollment gap has persisted despite targeted recruitment efforts which in turn affects enrollment in all elementary school grades. On the other hand, AF has been able to backfill older grades and high school enrollment in particular is very robust. She explained the effective recruitment methods we are using such as in-person outreach strategies, digital marketing, and building data capacity. Ms. Jory then entertained questions from board members on enrollment trends.

## **2. Staff**

Ms. Christi George, VP of Talent Operations, transitioned the conversation to staff updates. She explained the bi-annual organizational health survey AF releases and the metrics used to predict retention, and presents results from staff at each academy level. Where there was low employee satisfaction, Ms. George noted that the root causes were tied to teacher shortage and staffing challenges

Ms. Deane-Allen continued with our recruitment and retention efforts, highlighting salary and retention bonuses, prioritization of schools with most openings, increased marketing efforts, and streamlining application process. Ms. Deane-Allen then gave brief updates on hiring goals versus progress made to date. Mr. Sharkey followed up with strategies leadership will implement proactively in the coming school year to mitigate the issues we have identified this past year. The board will hear more updates on the progress of these efforts in the fall meeting. Mr. Sharkey entertained questions from the Board on block scheduling and professional development investment for teachers that other charter schools do not offer.

### **3. Other operational updates**

Ms. Christina Braganza, Chief Program Officer, reported on the staff summer training series for AF's staff. Ms. Braganza highlighted New Team member taxonomy training which gives new teachers the opportunity to practice building a strong classroom environment by rehearsing lessons and roleplaying. She shared the excitement of summer training being back in-person, with over 95% of participants agreeing/strongly agreeing that summer training is of high quality and high impact. Mr. Sharkey added that the goal of summer professional development is to present a series of connected training and experiences that support our visions across academies. He explained that we employed a logic model to identify specific inputs, activities and outputs needed for each session to lead us to the intended mission.

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

### **A. Proposed Executive Session: State of Brooklyn Facilities**

The board entered executive session at 6:50 PM to hold discussions on the state of Brooklyn facilities. Ms. Coquillette invited AF staff physically present.

Motion by Romy Coquillette  
Seconded by Chris Lynch  
All in favor.

The board exited out of executive session at 7:18 PM.

Motion by Jon Atkeson  
Seconded by Romy Coquillette

All in favor.

### **B. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Leadership slate**

Ms. Coquilletto moved the board to a vote on the following resolutions. She asked Mr. Jon Atkeson to facilitate the first resolution on leadership to avoid a conflict of interest.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby elects the following leadership slate for the 2022-2023 fiscal year:

Romy Coquilletto, Chair  
Chris Lynch, Vice Chair  
Warren Young, Treasurer  
Alison Richardson, Secretary

Motion by Kevin Miquelon  
Seconded by Chris Lynch  
All in favor.

Ms. Coquilletto facilitated the procedure for the resolutions that followed.

### **C. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Committees**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby appoints the following committee members:

Academic Committee: Alison Richardson (Chair), Amy Arthur Samuels, Tamika Bradley, Romy Coquilletto, Desiree Dalton

Executive Committee: Romy Coquilletto (Chair), Warren Young, Chris Lynch, Anup Menon, Alison Richardson,

Facilities Committee: Kevin Miquelon (Chair), Jon Atkeson, Romy Coquilletto, Chris Lynch, Josh Vidro

Finance Committee: Warren Young (Chair), Jon Atkeson, Akeem Frett, Chris Lynch, Will Robalino

Motion by Jon Atkeson  
Seconded by Kevin Miquelon  
All in favor.

### **D. Setting the number of Trustees**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby sets the number of Trustees at fifteen (15).

Motion by Kevin Miquelon

Seconded by Jon Atkeson

All in favor.

**E. Approval of SY 2022-2023 District-wide safety plan**

Before the approval, Ms. Desiree Dalton asked a clarifying question about the additional two schools that would be scheduled to review for the safety visits. Ms. Jory explained that the safety plan shared was submitted to the state, but there will still be two schools visited in the fall for a total of four schools reviewed. Ms. Coquillette then moved the board to vote on the resolution.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the District-wide safety plan for SY 2022-2023.

Motion by Chris Lynch

Seconded by Warren

All in favor.

Ms. Coquillette confirmed that Mr. Andy Hubbard and Ms. Theresa Hayes would not be returning to the Board.

**V. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 PM by Romy Coquillette

Motion by Warren Young

Seconded by Jon Atkeson

All in favor