

MINUTES
Achievement First Hartford Academy
Board of Directors Meeting

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Monday, September 19, 2022, 5:30-7:00 pm

Trustees in Attendance: Erwin Hurst, Sr. Jessica Glover, Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine, Francoise Deristel-Leger. Charon Smalls

Staff in Attendance: Lisa Margosian, Beth Cocuzza, Sulafa Bashir, Neil Shah, Xanthe Jory, John Sharkey, Jesse Balis-Haris, Ken Paul, Patricia Granda-Malaver, Sultana Salma, Raven Obas, Oraina Simmons, Laneka Thomas, Nakia Hall, Dumar Paden, Kevin Lohela, Siobhan O’Leary

Guests in Attendance: Surbhi Patel

Patricia Granda-Malaver recorded the minutes.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM by Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr., Hartford Board Chair.

II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Hurst moved the board to vote on the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from June 23, 2022.

Motion by Lisa Tanen

Second by Jessica Glover

All in favor.

IV. Presentation by Achievement First (AF)

Ms. Lisa Margosian, interim Chief Executive Officer, preceded the AF presentations by taking a moment Note of gratitude from Lisa for their service and school leadership team

A. Principals' Reports

Ms. Raven Obas, Hartford Academy Elementary School Principal, provided updates on the strong start to the 2022-2023 year. She shared that student enrollment is at 93%, and they are continuing to get the word out that they are still enrolling scholars. The school is using creative methods like a referral table, social media postings, and teacher/family introduction calls. The latter has made it clear to staff the importance of incorporating this topic in their community engagements. Ms. Obas then went on to state that they are fully staffed this year, and they will continue to work on retention efforts to sustain their numbers. After her presentation, Ms. Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine, Hartford Board Member, asked Ms. Obas whether she predicts these numbers to remain leveled. Ms. Obas responded that her confidence is rooted in two sources: qualitative data that she gathers when interacting with teachers in the classroom and quantitative data of staff sentiment through the Staff Pulse Survey. Ms. Obas then transitioned into additional highlights of this new school year such as a solid classroom environment and nearly perfect student attendance. The board entered discussion, and Ms. Obas answered questions regarding vaccination/booster requirements and creative strategies to enroll siblings in differing grade levels.

Next, Ms. Oraina Simmons, Hartford Summit Middle School Principal, presented start of year updates. She noted that student enrollment is at 94%, and they are using promotional tactics like billboard and bus ads, family referrals, and community partnerships. As for staffing, there are still a few openings left to fill. Ms. Simmons highlighted methods they are using not only to hire new teachers but also retain current staff. For example, transitioning to block scheduling has improved career development as it allows teachers to have a break where they can lesson plan effectively and receive adequate coaching by school deans. Other highlights that were discussed by Ms. Simmons includes high staff morale, access to enrichment programs (theater, art and PE), and community building through family programming. Ms. Simmons answered a board member's question on the purpose of their upcoming first in-person "Back to School Night".

Finally, Ms. Laneka Thomas, Hartford High School Principal, stated that her school had started off the year with a 93% student enrollment. Her team is actively improving this number through tactics like their “Refer a Friend” campaign to increase 8th and 9th grade matriculation. Similar to the middle school, there are also unfilled positions at the high school level. Ms. Thomas mentioned that they are attempting to close this gap by incorporating block scheduling, utilizing building-based substitute teachers, and incentivizing cross content teaching for STEM subjects. She also noted that student experience will be a focal point this year and staff morale continues to increase through community building and coaching. A board member asked how comradery was being created, and Ms. Thomas elaborated on the importance of deans no longer being in classrooms this year since it ensures that they can solely provide coaching that teachers need to feel successful and a sense of belonging.

B. Deep dive on Academic Data

Mr. John Sharkey, Interim Chief Academic Officer, presented a summary deep dive of Hartford academics. He began by explaining the importance of triangulation of data as a single data point does not speak to all the accomplishments that have been reached. There have been overall academic improvements from the 2020-2021 school year. In general, reading has been easier to rebound than math because math challenges are rooted in lack of foundational skills necessary to succeed in future levels. Hartford specifically performed on par with CT AF averages in ELA and slightly higher in Math. For this school year, AF will continue to measure performance through internal assessments, STEP, STAR, MAP, and mock state assessments. These results will prove whether curriculum pilots are being effectively implemented and supported. Mr. Sharkey then continued with bar charts to provide the board a visual representation of the Hartford schools’ academic data and pointed out performance comparisons with other AF CT schools and the overall AF Network.

After his presentation, Mr. Sharkey provided insight on AF’s response and academic initiatives for this school year. The three main tactics he focused on were

- 1) Curricular pilots in ES
- 2) Improvements in data reporting and response
- 3) Shifts to school support from network academic teams

Before wrapping up, a board member asked why the dashboard did not have as much input as the deep dive provided. Mr. Sharkey stated that the dashboard seeks to keep focus on the progress of the strategic imperatives. However, he promised that as assessment cycle and monitoring progresses there will be future deep dives for the board.

C. Presenting New Board Dashboard

Mr. Michael Rabin, Deputy Chief of staff, gave a brief overview of the purpose of the new board dashboard, which was noted in the board book as well. He reminded board members that the dashboard will provide high-level overviews of critical data and ensure the Board understands AF’s progress before AF leaders provide more context during meetings. After reviewing a draft version, Mr. Rabin stated that for future meetings, board members will receive a copy of the dashboard ahead of time and will be asked to review it in order to actively participate in meeting conversations. He also encouraged board members to provide feedback over the school year to continue to improve this useful tool. Mr. Hurst asked about the shift of data within dashboards, and Mr. Rabin clarified that there may be shifts, especially in academics once scholar assessments are incorporated, but some data points will stay stagnant.

V. Committee Reports

Mr. Neil Shah, Chief Financial Officer, presented on the FY23 revised budget as there needed to be an incorporation of changes due to staffing and enrollment numbers. Mr. Hurst moved the board to vote on the matter.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the amended budget as recommended by the Finance Committee and prepared by Achievement First for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Motion by Lisa Tanen
Second by Jessica Glover
All in favor.

VI. Board Discussion and Business

Mr. Hurst moved the board to a vote on the following resolutions. He asked Ms. Tanen to facilitate the first resolution on leadership to avoid a conflict of interest.

A. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Leadership slate

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby elects the following leadership slate for the 2022-2023 fiscal year:

370 JAMES ST #404
NEW HAVEN, CT 06513
achievementfirst.org

25 BROADWAY, 12TH FLR
NEW YORK, NY 10004
achievementfirst.org

370 HARTFORD AVE
PROVIDENCE, RI 02909
achievementfirst.org

Erwin Hurst, Sr., Chair
Jessica Glover, Vice Chair

Motion by Lisa Tanen
Second by Erwin Hurst, Sr.
All in favor.

B. Election of New Board Member

Mr. Hurst facilitated the following resolution.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors elects Mr. Charon Smalls to the Board for a 3-year term, ending June 30, 2025.

Motion by Erwin Hurst, Sr.
Second by Jessica Glover
All in favor.

Mr. Hurst welcomed Mr. Charon Smalls to say a few words which he obliged.

C. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Committees

Mr. Hurst once again asked Ms. Tanen if she could lead this vote to avoid a conflict of interest.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby appoints the following committee members:

- Personnel Committee: Erwin Hurst, Sr.(Chair), Francoise Deristel-Leger, Charon Smalls
- AF Joint Hartford Committee: Erwin Hurst, Sr. (Chair), Alice Turner

Motion by Lisa Tanen
Second by Erwin Hurst
All in favor.

D. Approval of Interim Principals

Mr. Hurst facilitated the remaining resolutions.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the following individuals to serve as interim principals, as needed, based on the recommendations by Achievement First, between September 19 and December 1, 2022.

- Elementary School: Sueleidy Cruz
- Middle School: Tara Donovan
- High School: Jahki Manley

Motion by Jessica Glover

Second by Lisa Tanen

All in favor.

E. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Family Handbook

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the 2022-2023 AF Family Handbook with necessary corrections.

Motion by Erwin Hurst Sr.

Second by Lisa Tanen

All in favor.

Ms. Beth Cocuzza, Chief of Staff, reminded board members to fill out the conflict of interest forms and CMO evaluations by the deadline.

VII. Adjourn

Mr. Hurst drew the meeting to a close by giving one final welcome to the newest board member and Ms. Sulafa Bashir, Interim Senior Director of Governance.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM by Mr. Erwin Hurst Sr.

Motion by Erwin Hurst Sr.

Seconded by Charon Smalls

All in favor