

**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Achievement First Brooklyn**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**

Venue: TFA, 25 Broadway, 12th floor - GC Room  
Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/82020104817>  
Monday, May 15, 2023, 6:00-8:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Ms.Romy Coquillette at 6:04 pm.

**Attendees:**

The following Trustees, constituting a quorum, were in attendance:

Name	Present	Name	Present
Romy Coquillette	Y	Desiree Dalton	Y
Christopher Lynch	Y	Akeem Frett	Y
Warren Young	Y	Anup Menon	N
Alison Richardson	N	Kevin Miquelon	Y
Jon Atkeson	Y	Will Robalino	N
Rhonda Barros	N	Amy Arthur Samuels	Y
Tamika Bradley	Y	Josh Vidro	N
Paul Cabana	Y	Shawn Warren	Y

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Xanthe Jory, Blakely Simoneau, Neil Shah, Michael Rabin, John Sharkey, Christi George, Beth Cocuzza, Sulafa Bashir, Rod Bowen, Kate Aufiero, Barbara Forti, Vernell Harris

**II. Public Comment**

No members of the public were present.

**III. Discussion with Achievement First**

A. Welcome and Mission Moment (5 min)

Ms. Margosian welcomed the board members and shared a video of a student who is planning to attend the University of Pennsylvania to ground everyone in the work AF is doing. Ms Coquillette shared how impressive she found an AF school on a recent school visit.

B. State of Our Students - student wellness, academic progress, and high school update (30 min)

Ms. Belcher shared updates on AF's approach to student wellness, including the work that is being done related to social-emotional health to address student health needs and reduce safety incidents. Ms. Jory updated the board on how AF is approaching safety and student wellness by utilizing a cross-functional approach and what steps have been taken this year. Ms. Jory also shared additional safety measures that will be instituted next school year.

Mr. Young asked about metrics and historical data, and Ms. Jory explained what has changed this year and what will change next year including becoming more sophisticated in our approach to safety data. Ms. Jory explained that the primary metric is response effectiveness, not incidents. Ms. Belcher offered additional metrics to look at that indicate positive student experience, like discipline, chronic absenteeism, and student engagement.

Mr. Sharkey provided academic updates. This year, the team focused on data and building plans which has led to meaningful growth and demonstrated some areas for improvement. Mr. Sharkey informed the board about elementary student academic achievement, and noted that they are performing much better compared to last year. He also offered an update on middle school students, whose performance is stabilized in some areas and growing in some other areas.

Ms. Samuels asked about how to support fifth graders, who are struggling more than other middle school grades. Mr. Sharkey explained that both curriculum and leadership development will target the deficits in this grade. Mr. Sharkey noted that other specific grade cohorts are struggling and these are being targeted, for example 11th and 12th graders.

Mr. Sharkey provided updates on students with disabilities, noting they are not performing at the level of their gen ed peers, and how new curriculum will address this gap.

Mr. Sharkey offered updates on the new curriculum implementation, which has been rolled out in some classes. He explained that teachers are beginning to embrace the new curriculum, but have expressed concerns about the volume and speed of change. Ms. Coquillette asked about the effect of NYC DOE adopting Wit and Wisdom, and Mr. Sharkey explained that he is not concerned about Wit and Wisdom's capacity. Ms. Coquillette also asked about how progress will be measured considering this is new for teachers. Ms. Sharkey explained that the metrics will be changed from evaluation to pedagogy and curriculum. Mr. Young asked about goals and AI use in classrooms, Mr. Sharkey provided goals he has developed. Ms. Belcher and Ms. Jory explained that AF is still determining how to respond to AI.

Ms. Belcher provided an update on high school students, including concerns around reading ability. Mr. Bowen described the process for reconsidering how AF approaches high school and how his team plans to improve the high school experience. Ms. Belcher and Mr. Bowen

offered examples, including changes in curriculum and data collection.

Mr. Bowen offered an update on Ujima and East Brooklyn High Schools consolidating, including that all staff have found positions and enrollment looks positive. Mr. Cabana asked about the value proposition around high school and when the board would be updated on it. Mr. Bowen explained that AF is meeting with Attuned to draft this vision by the end of June and will provide the update by the end of the summer.

#### C. Teacher Recruitment Update (10 min)

Ms. George provided a rundown of teacher recruitment, including the need to recruit more STEM and Special education teachers. Ms. George explained that AF is doing things to speed up the recruitment process to get candidates into schools faster. Mr. Young asked about referrals, and Ms. George encouraged the board to refer people for teaching positions. Mr. Lynch asked about teacher salary, and Ms. George explained that base compensation is competitive and does not often come up during the recruitment process. Mr. Miquelon asked about competing with union benefits, and Ms. George explained that it's typically an issue with more seasoned teachers. Ms. George offered insight into the Teacher Career Pathway and the many considerations around bringing it back.

#### D. Finance Committee Report

##### 1. Q3 Financials and FY 24 Budgets (20 min)

Mr. Shah provided updates on Q3 financials which show strong liquidity. Mr. Shah also explained that AF Brooklyn is tracking closer to the budget than earlier in the year, but there is a reduction of about \$2 million due to student enrollment shortages.

##### 2. Banking Consolidation, Fiscal Policies & Procedures, and Audit (10 min)

Mr. Shah explained that none of the AF Brooklyn money is invested in banks with high risk, all of the money is in Bank of America with the exception of bonds. Mr. Shah asked for board approval to close 9 of the 10 operating accounts and close one capital account, and approval to open one Alex Brown account.

Mr. Shah also asked the board to approve changes to the fiscal policy and procurement policy, including the approval process and changes to reconcile any inconsistencies. Mr. Shah also asked the board for approval to re-engage with Cohn Reznik to audit this year and next year.

Mr. Young explained that the finance committee met several times on these issues, and noted that enrollment is still down. Mr. Young also asked about the expiration of Cohn Reznik term limits, and Mr. Shah explained that the term has not been completed. Mr. Shah explained that they would be considering new auditors after the term expires.

Mr. Shah further explained that the schools drive a lot of the budgeting process, and that enrollment is still projected to be down but per pupil funding will likely go up. Mr. Shah detailed revenue and spending which resulted in a \$9.5 million surplus this year and \$9 million surplus next year. Mr. Shah explained that AF is putting together a list of options for that surplus that will be brought to the board in June.

Mr. Young explained that the budget reflects decreased enrollment and a 3-5% increase for teacher salary. Mr. Young explained that there are national risks but also there are institutional risks that impact our mission, and the need to balance financial risks with strategic risks. Mr. Young explained that he is looking forward to seeing the proposals before the next school year. Ms. Margosian offered that the money should be going back into the hands of the AF teams to invest in academic growth, things like safety, and other things that impact students. Ms. Coquillet explained that this is a pivot from how it has been handled in the past, and offered thanks for Mr. Shah's work. Mr. Atkinson explained that this is an investment in our schools and students, and is not about saving money. Mr. Young wanted the record to be clear that the board is not approving a \$9 million surplus. Mr. Atkinson offered that this is not a conditional approval, the board is approving the budget with the exception of the \$9 million.

Ms. Coquillet explained that the Finance Committee felt that there could not be an approval of any budget without that list of options without AF coming back with a list, which AF agreed to provide. There was discussion as to whether the approval should be conditional. Ms. Coquillet requested a special meeting after the list is provided and Mr. Shah agreed to provide the list prior to that meeting. The board agreed to remove the term "conditionally" in the resolutions and to approve the budget.

Ms. Samuels asked about how the surplus impacts the other regions without a surplus, and Mr. Shah explained how they prevent inequities.

Ms. Coquillet moved to approve the resolutions, which were amended to remove the word "conditional" from the first resolution. Ms. Coquillet asked for a motion to approve 1-5, Mr. Young moved and Mr. Atkinson seconded. All voted in favor. There were no abstentions.

It was:

1. RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees (the "Board") hereby approves the financial budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year as presented and acknowledges that Achievement First (the "Network") will provide a List of Ideas (the "List") for approval by the Board, before June 30, 2023. The List shall include programs, improvements or reserves designed to specifically address the strategic priorities of the Brooklyn/Queens Schools, including academics, facilities, employee retention, and enrollment. The List shall be comprised of ideas that can be implementable in the 2023-24 school year, include a brief description of intended outcome and, if possible, an estimated cost. The intention is for the Board to review and approve acceptable ideas on the List at the next Achievement First Brooklyn Board meeting.

2. RESOLVED that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby ratifies the re-appointment of CohnReznick to perform the financial audit of the 2023-2024 fiscal year and prepare the IRS Form 990s.
3. RESOLVED that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby ratifies the revisions to the Fiscal Policies and to the Procurement Policies as presented.
4. RESOLVED that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the opening of a cash transfer account and a savings account at Alex Brown, a division of Raymond James.
5. RESOLVED that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the closure of 10 bank accounts at Bank of America.

E. 2023/2024 Strategic Imperatives (5 min)

Ms. Margosian provided an update on AF Inc.'s next year's strategic imperatives: investment in staff, investment in students, investment in infrastructure, and investment in AF's future.

F. Schools Portfolio - approach to growth and consolidation (5 min)

Mr. Rabin offered a preview of the way Achievement First is approaching portfolio management and the annual cycle of any portfolio modifications. Mr. Rabin explained that this approach is more proactive and Achievement First is considering potential changes for SY 24-25 which will be brought to the board this coming fall. Mr. Young asked if Mr. Rabin is doing a peer analysis, and Mr. Rabin explained that there is some ability to do this analysis looking at other CMOs.

Ms. Coquillet asked about a board dashboard, and Ms. Cocuzza explained that Achievement First is working on developing it by the end of June.

Mr. Miquelson asked about the top priorities for the process of portfolio management, and Mr. Rabin explained the impact at the school level (NY enrollment impact) is the driving force right now and as infrastructure is built out Achievement First will be looking at things more holistically. Ms. Margosian explained that Achievement First is looking at our schools and students.

**IV. Board Business**

- A. Board Resolutions and Approvals: Previous Meeting Minutes, Membership, Code of Ethics, Board Manual (10 min)

Ms. Coquillet asked for consent approval for the resolutions numbers 6-8. Mr. Young made the motion, Mr. Lynch seconded. All in favor, no abstentions.

It was:

6. RESOLVED, the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 1, 2023 and April 4, 2023.
7. RESOLVED that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby adopts the Board Manual for the 2023-2024 school year:
8. WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that sound, ethical standards of conduct serve to increase the effectiveness of the Board and school staff as educational leaders in the community; and
  - o WHEREAS, the Board also recognizes its obligations under the General Municipal Law, the NYS Charter Acts, and the Not-for-Profit Corporations Law to adopt a code of ethics consistent with those laws; NOW THEREFORE
  - o BE IT RESOLVED that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby adopts the Code of Ethics & Conflict of Interest Policy.

Ms. Coquilletta asked for consent approval for the resolutions numbers 9-13. Mr. Miquelon moved, Mr. Atkeson seconded. All in favor, no abstentions.

It was:

9. RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby re-elects Tamika Bradley to serve as a Parent Representative for an additional 1-year term ending June 30, 2024.
10. RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby re-elects Desiree Dalton to serve as a Parent Representative for an additional 1-year term ending June 30, 2024.
11. RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby re-elects Chris Lynch to serve an additional three-year term ending June 30, 2026.
12. RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby removes Rhonda Barros as a Trustee pursuant to Section 4(a) of the Amended and Restated Bylaws of the Achievement First Brooklyn Charter Schools for failing to attend at least 50% of the board meetings in the 2022-2023 term.
13. RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby sets the number of Trustees at fourteen (14).

Ms. Coquilletta explained that Ms. Richardson would not be returning for the next board term, and thanked Allison Richardson for her five years of service on the board.

**B. Proposed Executive Session: CEO Search and Talent Update (15 min)**

The board voted to enter into Executive Session to discuss CEO search and talent updates, inviting Lisa Margosian to join.

Motion by Warren Young.  
Second by Chris Lynch.  
All in favor.

## **V. Adjourn**

The board adjourned at 7:52 PM.