

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Amistad Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/85331059679>

Monday, May 22, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Lorraine Gibbons at 5:33 pm.

**Attendees:**

Name	Present	Name	Present
Lorraine Gibbons	Y	Shannelle Whyte	N
Patricia B. Sweet	Y	Yashira Agosto	Y
Jennifer Alexander	Y	Gayatri Mehta	N
Ethan Tyminski	N	Linda Darkwah	N
Zihan Su	Y		

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Xanthe Jory, Michael Rabin, Christi George, Neil Shah, Beth Cocuzza, Blakely Simoneau, Sulafa Bashir, Rod Bowen, Lauren Raimondi, Rosie Basile, Simon Obas, Caleb Dolan, Brooke Williams

**II. Public Comment**

No members of the public were present.

**III. Board Resolutions and Approvals** Previous Meeting Minutes, Membership

Ms. Gibbons took the board through the consent agenda, which included approving the previous meetings' minutes, the introduction of the new Yale School of Management Board Fellow Zihan Su, who introduced himself to the board and the resignation of Ms. Gibbons from the Treasurer role. Ms. Gibbons also acknowledged Ethan Tyminski's resignation effective 6/30/2023 and thanked him for his service of 4 years on the board.

Consent agenda - motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Ms. Alexander. Unanimous.

It was:

- RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 9, 2023 and April 6, 2023.
- RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves Mr. Zihan Su to serve as a Yale SOM Board Fellow for an 18-month term, ending June 30, 2024.
- WHEREAS, Lorraine Gibbons submitted her resignation from the role of Treasurer effective May 22, 2023, it was RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby accepts her resignation.

#### **IV. Discussion with Achievement First**

##### **A. Welcome (5 min)**

Ms. Margosian welcomed the board and outlined the content of the board meeting.

##### **B. Principal Reports (15 min)**

Ms. Raimondi, the principal of Amistad Elementary School, presented on the elementary school. She provided updates on recent events and invited board members to attend future events. She also provided academic updates, including an increase in academic proficiency.

Roseann Basille, the principal of Amistad Middle School, presented on the middle school. Ms. Basille provided updates on the future events at the school. Ms. Basille also reported on school org health, which is strong, including 95% of staff returning for next school year.

Simon Obas presented on the high school. Dr. Obas invited board members to upcoming celebrations, including high school graduation, and provided details of past celebrations and events. Dr. Obas explained that some staff are leaving because they are moving out of state, and acknowledged that there have been challenges. Dr. Obas expressed gratitude for his hardworking staff.

##### **C. State of Our Students - student wellness, academic progress, and high school update (20 min)**

Karolyn Belcher, the Superintendent, presented on student wellness. She explained the connection between disciplinary incidents and mental health, and how Achievement First is approaching this problem proactively. Xanthe Jory, the Chief Operating Officer, detailed the work that is being done this year and the work that will be done next year.

Ms. Belcher provided details of the steps being taken to support student mental health and the partnerships being pursued for next school year. Ms. Jory presented on the safety incident data and explained how the safety response protocols have been improved upon this year. Ms. Belcher mentioned that there are concerns about safety at the high school, and outlined steps that they are taking to address the culture issues there.

Ms. Belcher also provided academic updates, where upper grades are doing better but some of the other grades continue to struggle. She also presented on students with special needs, who are doing worse overall academically than their general education peers, and explained the steps that are being taken to support multi-language learners and students with disabilities next year.

Ms. Belcher presented on the post-graduation plans, where the majority of the students graduating are going to four year colleges. Board members asked about additional academic data, and Ms. Belcher promised to come back with more data in the fall. Ms. Alexander asked what was being done for high school students, and Ms. Belcher explained that not enough was being done and that this is an area that will be concentrated on next school year.

#### D. Finance Committee Report

##### 1. Q3 Financials and FY 24 Budgets (15 min)

Mr. Shah presented on the Q3 financials and FY 2024 Budgets, and explained that liquidity is still strong and the budget is on track.

##### 2. Banking Consolidation, Fiscal & Procurement Policies, and Audit Engagement (5 min)

Mr. Shah informed the board that the banking institutions that Amistad banks with are strong. Mr. Shah requested a resolution to close Key Bank accounts and to open accounts with Bank of America. Mr. Shah explained how ESSR funds are reducing the need to spend more, but

cautioned that they will run out next year.

Ms. Gibbons asked for a motion to approve the resolutions. Ms. Alexander moved, Ms. Agosto seconded. All in favor, no abstentions.

It was:

- RESOLVED, that the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year as presented.
- RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby ratifies the re-appointment of CohnReznick to perform the financial audit of the 2023-24 fiscal year and prepare the IRS Form 990s.
- RESOLVED that the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby ratifies the revisions to the Fiscal Policies and to the Procurement Policies as presented.
- RESOLVED that the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the opening of 1 checking account and 1 savings account at Bank of America.
- RESOLVED that the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the closure of 3 bank accounts at Key Bank.

#### E. Charter Renewal Next Steps (10 min)

Michael Rabin presented on the next steps for the charter renewal process, where there are three areas for improvement. Mr. Rabin provided the timeline for the renewal process.

#### F. SY 2023/2024 Strategic Imperatives (5 min)

Ms. Margosian presented the Strategic Imperatives for the next school year. She mentioned that the team is concentrating on four key areas, investing in staff, investing in students, investing in infrastructure, and investing in AF's future. Ms. Margosian provided details of how AF will be concentrating on these imperatives and the work that will be done.

#### G. Schools Portfolio Planning (5 min)

Mr. Rabin gave an overview of the portfolio planning process and the timeline for making

decisions. Ms. Alexander asked if there were any schools in Connecticut that AF is concerned about, and Mr. Rabin explained that there wasn't a specific school but that declining enrollment at some schools is concerning. Ms. Margosian provided details about the high school consolidation in New York and the way AF is approaching this work. She expressed the need to work with other charter schools and our authorizer given declining enrollment.

Ms. Sweet expressed concerns about teacher recruitment. Christi George explained that it is a concern, and offered the steps that AF is taking to address it. Ms. George also explained that certification standards are extremely difficult in Connecticut, which is causing issues with finding teachers.

#### **V. Other Business - Board Recruitment**

Ms. Sweet implored others to expand the board. Ms. Gibbons asked to reinstitute visitor's day, where friends and family could visit the school. Ms. George offered to get a list of the partnerships.

#### **VI. Board Business**

##### **A. Proposed Executive Session: CEO Search and Talent Update (10 min)**

Ms. Gibbons took the board through a motion to enter into executive discussion to discuss the topics of CEO Search and Talent Update, inviting Lisa Margosian to join.

Ms. Sweet made the motion, Ms. Alexander seconded. All in favor, no abstentions.

#### **VII. Adjourn**