

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/89944188525>

Tuesday, June 20, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

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

Attendees:

The following board members, constituting a quorum, were in attendance:

Name	Present	Name	Present
Erwin Hurst, Sr.	Y	Alice Turner	N
Jessica Alhasnawi	Y	Francoise Deristel-Leger	Y
Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine	N	Charon Smalls	Y
Surbhi Patel	Y		

AF Staff present: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Blakely Simoneau, Rod Bowen, Christi George, Raina Simmons, and Neil Shah

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

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

Mr. Hurst asked for a vote on the consent agenda. Ms. Alhansnawi moved, Ms. Patel seconded. All in favor, none abstained.

Consent Agenda:

1. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 16, 2023, April 3, 2023 and April 27, 2023.

2. WHEREAS, Erwin Hurst, Sr. submitted his resignation from the role of Treasurer effective June 1, 2023, BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby accepts his resignation.
3. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby agrees to enter into a 1-year extension of the Cooperative Arrangement Agreement between Achievement First Hartford Academy, Inc. and Jumoke Academy, Inc., and authorizes the Board Chair to execute such a 1-year extension Agreement on the Board's behalf subject to any necessary legal review.

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

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

Lisa Margosian welcomed the board and said the focus of the meeting was to talk about the state of the student focusing on their wellness and academic progress.

##### **B. Principals Report**

Elementary School Principal Sueleidy Cruz gave an update on celebrations and events happening at the school before the end of the year to help with the student and teacher experience. 100% of staff are coming back so they are fully staffed for the upcoming year.

Oraina Simmons, Middle School Principal is excited to wrap up the school year and also have many end of year events. Also 100% of offer letters given were assigned. A number of teammates are pursuing leadership opportunities at Summit.

Rod Bowen, outgoing Chief of High Schools, presented for the High School Principal. The end of the year has been a celebration of the success of the graduating class and inspiring the lower grades through the senior's successes. Caring for the whole person is the focus for staff retention. 93% of staff invited to return have signed, which is up from last year and only one person not returning.

Francoise Deristel-Leger commended the principals on the staff retention and noted that schools across the country are struggling with retention.

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

Karolyn Belcher noted a decline in student mental health post-pandemic, leading to increased

disciplinary issues. The plan for the next year involves proactive measures to institutionalize social-emotional support. A ground-level audit of the social work team was conducted, and community partnerships are being leveraged for school support. Transparency in addressing incidents, primarily at the middle school level, is a priority. To enhance the school culture, investments, utilizing remaining ESSR funds and reserves, will fund additional social workers and a discipline position.

They have also made progress on system-wide safety updates including improving visitor protocol, making sure there are two-way radios in case they can't use the public address system, and creating universal expectations for secure buildings.

Francoise Deristel-Leger inquired about expanding with Ruler and the distribution of funds for addressing incidents in schools. Ms. Belcher mentioned the investment in middle and high schools to enhance school culture. Ms. Deristel-Leger highlighted incidents in elementary schools, emphasizing the need to address them. Belcher acknowledged the lower seriousness of incidents at the elementary school level compared to other levels.

Mr. Smalls asked about which community partners we are looking at. Ms. Belcher said she will follow up with the specific partners and to get feedback.

Ms. Belcher provided an academic progress update. Elementary school performance is mixed, with strong growth in ELA but a decline in Math. In the Middle School, there's a decline in both ELA and Math, partly due to challenges in finding qualified Math teachers. The focus is on retaining staff and enhancing curriculum and professional development. Special services students still lag behind the general population. The key initiative for the next year is core reading instruction, with expectations of gradual impact. Curriculum adoption is on track, representing a significant investment for the upcoming year.

Mr. Hurst inquired about the impact and timeline for the new curriculum's improvement. Belcher emphasized the need for additional efforts in Hartford to achieve desired academic progress. Proposed investments include sports, after-school programs, professional development, and incentives for STEM and Special Ed. A turnaround is expected in approximately three years, with hopes for modest gains in the coming year.

Ms. Patel asked about special education and how to get them to an achievement level. Ms. Belcher said they are looking for progress in outpacing the state in special education. Still doing everything we did this year and think the new curriculum will help.

Ms. Belcher continued with high school academic updates. She noted there are a lot of wins to celebrate with students going to rigorous and respected colleges. Hartford Summit and Hartford High School need to improve substantially and AF will be investing to make them schools where parents want to send their children.

Mr. Hurst highlighted the desire for a balanced focus on both academics and extracurricular activities, noting that students and parents view extracurriculars as an essential component. Belcher acknowledged ongoing investments in sports and afterschool programs, aiming to align offerings with students' interests and foster a more comprehensive educational experience.

#### D. Finance Committee Report

Neil Shah presented the financial report. There was not a committee meeting because of scheduling issues. Mr. Shah presented the balance sheet and noted that liquidity has decreased but is still sufficient. Most of the balance sheet is cash and short-term liabilities. Rolling cash balances are in a bit of a decline. A net loss for FY23 is projected because of enrollment declines.

Mr. Shah shared the FY24 Budget and noted that there are anticipated personnel increases due to rising salary and healthcare costs and an assumption that per pupil funding will remain flat until the state budget is passed.

Mr. Shah discussed consolidating banking accounts. There is an extra account that was for capital that is no longer being used and needs to be closed out. Mr. Shah also shared that there will be changes across the network to some fiscal & procurement policies in order to allow for efficiency and increase accountability.

Mr. Hurst asked for a vote on the FY24 Finance Resolutions. Motion by Ms. Patel. Second by Charon Smalls. All in favor, none abstained.

1. BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year as presented.
2. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Hartford 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.

3. BE IT RESOLVED that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby ratifies the revisions to the Fiscal Policies and to the Procurement Policies as presented.
4. BE IT RESOLVED that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the closure of 1 bank account at Bank of America.

E. Charter Renewal Next Steps (5 min)

Michael Rabin provided an update on the three year charter renewal received in the spring. Three areas were highlighted for improvement: increase student achievement, decrease chronic absenteeism and 100% certification compliance. Drafts of the corrective action plan have been submitted, and a committed timeline for implementation has been outlined.

Ms. Deristel-Leger asked about the plan for chronic absenteeism. Mr. Rabin said there are many reasons why students aren't coming to school so the improvements in social-emotional supports that Ms. Belcher discussed earlier should help address the issue. Ms. Deristel-Leger also asked if we can meet 100% certification. Christi George said that the steps to getting certified are clearly laid out so they know the deadlines.

Charon Smalls asked where we are currently in meeting it. Ms. George said we are currently around 80% but it is still going to change depending on staffing. Mr. Smalls mentioned the teacher shortage in Hartford and Ms. George discussed the incentives AF offers for certified teachers.

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

Ms. Margosian outlined organizational priorities for the next year across four imperatives: students, staff, infrastructure, and the future. The emphasis is on implementing a new curriculum for students and building/retaining a strong operational team for staff. Infrastructure considerations include using a racial equity lens and addressing stakeholder engagement needs. There's a future-oriented focus on identifying growth or consolidation opportunities.

G. Schools Portfolio Planning (5 min)

Mr. Rabin said the network is taking a data driven, holistic approach to understanding the needs of every school and being proactive. The network is looking at the full portfolio of schools every two years to understand what we need to do for our schools.

#### **H. Board Business**

Mr. Hurst took the board through a motion to enter executive session to discuss the CEO Search and Talent Update inviting Lisa Margosian to join. Second by Ms. Alhansnawi. All in favor, none abstained.

#### **I. Adjourn**