

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**AF Rhode Island**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Achievement First Providence High School  
206 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, RI 02907  
Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/89703149980>  
Monday, December 11, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

Mayor Smiley called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

Name	Present	Name	Present
Mayor Brett Smiley	X	Macky Mcleary	X
Maryellen Butke	X	John Iglizzi	
James Wiley	X	Mayor Charles Lombardi	
Joanne Schofield	X		

**AF Staff present:** Lisa Margosian, Shannon Miller, John Sharkey, Jillian Fain, Michael Rabin, Neil Shah, Xanthe Jory, Karolyn Belcher, Ru Sharma, LaNelle Alexander, Kevin Lohela, Jen Andrade, Cassidy McKee, and Aaron Obrachta.

**II. Public Comment**

Ms. Diana Ferreira provided public comment. Ms. Ferreira, a parent, made a comment about the need for an advanced math trajectory in middle school to ensure students are prepared for college requirements. The board thanked her for raising her concerns.

Ms. Jennifer Efflandt provided public comment. Ms. Efflandt expressed concern about the lack of language classes at AF Middle and the inability to transfer math courses for students coming from AF schools.

Ms. Leila Naguru provided public comment. Ms. Naguru is a 6th grade student at an AF middle school and shared her desire to be able to take Spanish in middle school. The board thanked her for raising her concerns.

Ms. Karolyn Belcher, AF Superintendent, shared a follow up from the parent, Ms. Tiffany Bliss, who made public comment at the September 26, 2023 board meeting. Ms. Belcher reported that concerns raised by Miss Bliss, a parent from an AFRI school, regarding the special education services outlined in her child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), were addressed. Miss Joseph, the leader of the middle schools, responded by email, emphasizing

that all teachers had access to IEPs, providing clarity on occupational therapy and small group sessions, and addressing questions about potential out-placement. The Regional Superintendent, Mr. Dolan, and school staff met with Ms. Bliss to discuss educational concerns, implementing changes based on her feedback. Ms. Bliss has since joined the Family Advisory Council, and efforts are being made to improve responses to the child's IEP, ensuring ongoing teacher awareness and accommodation of special needs in the classroom. The board expressed confidence that Ms. Bliss received a satisfactory resolution to her concerns.

### **III. Resolutions and Approvals:** Previous Meeting's minutes

Mayor Smiley moved for approval of the previous meeting minutes.

Motion by Maryellen Butke

Second by James Wiley

All in favor, none abstained.

BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from September 26, 2023.

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

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

Ms. Lisa Margosian, AF Inc. CEO, expressed gratitude to the board members, staff, and families for their support and commitment to providing exceptional education.

Ms. Margosian introduced Mr. Kevin Lohela, an AF Regional Superintendent, who discussed the importance of student experience metrics, including average daily attendance and suspension rates. He highlighted the presence of 15 Rhode Island interns in special education classes and their contributions to the school.

#### **B. Principal Discussion (10 min)**

Ms. Jen Andrade, Principal of AF Promesa Elementary School, emphasized the value of student experience and enjoyment in school. She discussed the organizational health results of her school. She mentioned the school has a 94% average for attendance, one of the lowest suspension rates in the network and that students have improved 10% or more in all Math Interim Assessment results in K-4. Ms. Andrade mentioned that the family survey results show 90% favorable ratings and shared some quotes from the surveys, such as "My son's teachers love and care about him." and 'this school feels like an extension of our family'.

Ms. Andrade spoke about how curriculum implementation was going and some of the challenges related to it. She also mentioned the challenges of parking issues and sharing

facilities, such as gyms and libraries. She expressed excitement for the plan for Promesa 5th grade, another grade of 100 kids and 8 more staff members.

C. Proposed Executive Session: Growth Strategy Updates (30 min)

Mr. Smiley asked for a motion to enter executive session. Motion by Ms. Butke, seconded by Mr. Wiley.

D. Academic Updates (15 min)

Mr. John Sharkey, Chief Academic Officer, highlighted academic progress. Encouragingly, eighth-grade science scores surpassed the state average for the first time. He emphasized the need for growth and discussed projections to overtake the state average within one to two years. Despite challenging targets, Mr. Sharkey reported positive growth in elementary reading and middle school assessments, with a focus on curriculum adoption and ongoing support. High school assessments are underway, with growth metrics expected in January. He mentioned a deep dive into PSAT results and further progress updates at the next meeting.

E. AF Philanthropy (10 min)

Mr. Aaron Obrochta, Associate Chief of Development, discussed the transition in fundraising leadership is happening, with him taking over from Ken Paul. The fundraising approach is shifting to be more strategic and long-term. Specific needs in Rhode Island include operational gaps, per-pupil revenue, and capital improvements. Mr. Obrochta stated that the total fundraising goal for the year is 12 million, with Rhode Island accounting for 1.79 million. Partners at PCLB will match funds for multi-year pledges. The focus is on leveraging networks and introducing potential supporters to the cause.

F. Finance Committee (5 min)

Mr. Neil Shah, Chief Financial Officer, shared the finance committee report. He said that the state calculated their per pupil revenue, which was substantially higher than expected. The balance sheet showed a decrease in cash due to capital investments and an increase in capital assets and long-term assets. There was a significant difference in revenue, with \$5 million in extra per pupil revenue. A surplus of about three-some-odd million dollars was expected and would be used for capital investments. The goal was to raise income through fundraising to build up cash reserves and address building maintenance needs. The balance sheet is levered and they need to manage operations with it. Mr. Shah stated that they want to build large-scale capital assets but are constrained by the lack of existing tax to fund them. He wants to increase the cash reserve, but is unsure about hitting a bumpy spot.

V. **Board Business:** Board Goals (10 min)

Shannon Miller, Managing Director of Board Relations and Governance, reminded the group about the board goals that were set during the summer. She said she will reach out to members to check on progress and asked them to report out again at the next board meeting.

VI. **Adjourn**

Maryellen Butke moved for the meeting to be adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Motion by James Wiley.

Second by Joanne Schofield.

All in favor.