



AFRI Board Meeting Minutes

4/24/2025 5:30 PM EDT

AF Providence HS, 206 Elmwood Avenue Providence, RI 02907

Attendance

Members: Maryellen Butke, Janelle Clarke-Holley, Nicole Pollock, James Wiley

Guests: Victor Capellan

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Michael Rabin, Jason Russell, John Sharkey, Amy D'Angelo, Kevin Lohela, Kate Aufiero

Public Comment: Elizabeth Ramirez, Janie Segui Rodriguez, Janet Rodriguez

I. Call to Order

AFRI Board Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

II. Public Comment

The public comment portion of the meeting featured several testimonies from parents and community advocates, expressing concern over recent decisions affecting the future of AF Promesa and Envision. Families voiced frustration about the lack of clarity around school continuity, as well as the emotional and logistical burden this uncertainty has created.

One parent, Elizabeth Ramirez, spoke about her personal journey—how education and opportunity changed the trajectory of her life—and her desire for her children to have the same chance. She expressed concern that the promised K–12 pathway through Achievement First was now in question and stressed that, after working hard to avoid traditional public school options, she now feels let down.

Janie Segui Rodriguez, CEO of Stop the Wait Rhode Island and an AF parent, shared that her organization has received calls and emails from families struggling to navigate their next steps. With the Rhode Island school lottery recently concluded, many parents now face the reality that they do not have school placements for their children next year. Janie reiterated the community's desire to partner with Achievement First but emphasized that families feel abandoned and that their trust has been shaken.

Another parent, Janet Rodriguez, described the panic of not knowing where her son—who receives special education services—will attend school next year. She spoke of the contrast between her child's growth at Achievement First and the breakdowns she experienced in the district system. Her comments underscored the value AF schools have provided and her fear that other agendas may be interfering with student needs.

Ms. Sequi Rodriguez's daughter read aloud a written statement from Marlene Ocasio who praised Achievement First for helping close the opportunity gap and delivering on its promises to families. The letter urged the board to preserve the trust that has been built and to honor the commitment made to students and parents at the time of enrollment.

AF leadership acknowledged the importance of the public feedback and confirmed that a formal response would be shared at the next board meeting. Written comment submitted to AF is included as an attachment to the minutes.

III. Board Resolutions and Approvals

The board moved on to reviewing the consent agenda for approval which contained resolutions approving the previous meeting minutes and adding Victor Capellan as a new board member. Maryellen Butke introduced Victor and Nicole Pollock shared enthusiastic support for Victor's appointment. He was praised for his extensive experience in education system transformation, as well as his thoughtful, strategic, and compassionate approach to leadership. Members highlighted his deep roots in Rhode Island and Providence, noting that he brings valuable connections and insight to the board.

Ms. Butke asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. James Wiley motioned. Nicole Pollock seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

Consent Agenda

1. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 25, 2025.
2. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Rhode Island Board of Directors elects Victor Capellan to the Board for a 3-year term, ending June 30, 2027.

IV. CEO Agenda Overview

Lisa Margosian, AF CEO, opened the discussion by previewing the evening's agenda: updates on the upcoming AF25 Summit, a facilities update, academic progress reports, strategic planning updates, and a financial overview.

V. AF 25 Summit Updates

Michael Rabin, AF Chief Strategy Officer shared updates about the upcoming AF25 Summit, taking place May 29–30. The summit aims to celebrate AF's legacy, highlight current successes, and look ahead to the network's future. It will feature keynote speakers like Misty Copeland and Geoffrey Canada, and include sessions led by staff and students. A regional celebration for AF Rhode Island will also be held in conjunction with Senior Signing Day on May 16.

VI. Executive Session

Ms. Butke asked for a motion for the board to go into executive session to discuss facilities updates. James Wiley motioned. Victor Capellan seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

VII. Academic Updates: Mock State Test Data

John Sharkey, AF Chief Academic Officer, presented data from mock RICAS assessments. Rhode Island AF schools showed notable year-over-year improvement, with elementary ELA scores improving by 9% and math by 7%. Middle schools, previously showing a 20% decline in ELA, improved to just a 3% decline. Notable bright spots included Illuminar and Providence Elementary, while middle schools continued to show progress amid staffing challenges. Mr. Sharkey outlined responsive strategies such as bi-weekly assessments, in-person coaching, and timely data analysis to drive targeted instruction. These efforts are being built into next year's readiness plans.

VIII. Strategic Planning Updates

Lisa Margosian and Michael Rabin presented an overview of the network's strategic planning journey. The conversation focused on AF's efforts to shift from a centrally managed model to a more community-embedded regional approach. Leaders discussed the evolution from a startup to a sustaining institution and emphasized the need to better align support with local school and family needs. The approach includes bolstering foundational resources, strengthening school-level leadership, and investing in continuous improvement strategies.

IX. Finance Updates

Kate Aufiero, Associate Chief of Finance, delivered a brief update on financial planning. She noted that the upcoming FY26 budget will reflect projections related to the new facilities plan. While philanthropic support may need to increase, financial implications are being thoughtfully incorporated into action plans. The board was told to expect further budget detail in future meetings as planning advances.

X. Adjourn

Before adjourning the board briefly discussed the upcoming inaugural Senior Signing Day for AF Providence High School. There being no other board business, Ms. Butke asked for a motion to adjourn. Janelle Clarke-Holley motioned. Nicole Pollock seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained. The meeting adjourned at 7:01 pm.

Attachment

Written Comment Submitted to AF

Janie Segui Rodriguez

Marlene Ocasio



401-787-3389



janie@stopthewaitri.org



1290 Westminister St, Unit 100,
Providence RI 02909



April 24th, 2025

Dear Achievement First Board,

My name is Janie Segui Rodriguez. I'm the proud mother of a fifth grader at Achievement First Providence and the Founder & CEO of Stop the Wait RI, a nonprofit organization committed to empowering parents to advocate for equitable, high-quality public education for all Rhode Island children.

Over the past several years, we've had the opportunity to partner with Achievement First in a variety of ways—supporting families, running parent meetings, and building parent power across school communities. Most recently, our team has worked with families from both schools that are currently on pause. We've reached out to help them understand their options, apply for financial aid, and navigate charter school and private school applications. I am here today—because friends tell friends the truth.

At every turn, families have voiced their frustration, their heartbreak, and their fears. The facility needs, the enrollment pause, and the uncertainty about next year have left many families feeling abandoned. Now, after lottery results were released just a couple of weeks ago, far too many families are left without a school option that matches what they had hoped for their children.

I deeply sympathize with these families. And as someone who has experienced the transformational power of Achievement First firsthand—both as a parent and a community advocate—I **must ask: How is Achievement First making this right?**

I know this is not easy. I understand the challenges you face. But I also know the depth of care and dedication among your team. There must be a better way forward, one that honors the trust families have placed in this school and offers them a future filled with possibility—not uncertainty.

We are here, ready to support that journey—with honesty, compassion, and the urgency our families deserve. And, I know other community partners are ready to support as well.

With hope and determination,

Janie Segui Rodriguez
Founder & CEO

Marlene Ocasio
AF- Promesa Parent
401-345-4014

April 24, 2025

Dear Achievement First board,

I am a Providence public school graduate, and I am the parent of children who attend AF Promesa. I am writing to express my strong support for honoring the commitment you made to families when we signed up for your school. I have a son who is attending 5th grade at Promesa, and won't have a school next year.

My children are thriving at Achievement First. I've seen them grow academically and personally in ways that I truly believe wouldn't have been possible elsewhere. The structure, support, and high expectations set by the school have made a significant difference in their education—and in their confidence.

Achievement First is delivering results for so many families like mine. They're not just promising better outcomes—they're proving it, year after year. These schools are helping to close the achievement gap, provide opportunity, and give families like mine real choices in education.

When a promise is made to families, it should be kept. Achievement First has earned the trust of parents, students, and communities through its commitment to excellence. Not allowing our children to continue to the next grade with their classmates, breaks that trust.

I want my children—and every child—to have access to schools that believe in their potential and help them reach it. How is Achievement First honoring the commitment it made to my son?

Thank you,
Marlene Ocasio