

**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**Joint Meeting of Achievement First (AF)**  
**Connecticut Boards**  
Amistad Academy, Bridgeport Academy  
Elm City College Preparatory, Hartford Academy  
Tuesday, August 23, 2022, 4:00 pm  
Venue: Omni Hotel, New Haven  
Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8959180848>

*The meeting is preceded by a closed board training session at 3:00-4:00 pm.*

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Presentation by Achievement First**
  - A. AF Strategic Initiatives
  - B. SY 2021-2022 report and reflections
    - 1. Scholars
    - 2. Staff
    - 3. School Operations
- IV. Adjourn**

## MINUTES

### Joint Meeting of Achievement First (AF) Connecticut Boards

Amistad Academy, Bridgeport Academy

Elm City College Preparatory, Hartford Academy

Tuesday, August 23, 2022, 4:00 pm

Venue: Omni Hotel, New Haven

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8959180848>

**Board Members in Attendance:** Lorraine Gibbons, Jennifer Alexander, Ethan Tyminski, Gayatri Mehta, Dick Ferguson, Laura Saverin, Stephanie Ma, Patric Gregory, Prish Pierce, LaVonte Bryant, Erica Demond, Dick Kalt, Rajeev Lakra, Marlene Macaуда, Ruben Felipe, Erwin Hurst, Sr., Jessica Glover, Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine, Alice Turner, Fracoise Deristel-Leger,

**Staff in Attendance:** Lisa Margosian, Beth Cocuzza, Isabel Tañedo, Neil Shah, Xanthe Jory,, Christina Braganza, John Sharkey, Rod Bowen, Jesse Balis-Haris, Charmayne Joseph, Ken Paul, Charisse Terry, Nakia Hall, Patricia Granda-Malaver, Sultana Salma, Linda Darkwah

**Guests in Attendance:** Charon Smalls, Surbhi Patel

Patricia Granda-Malaver recorded the minutes.

#### I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:19 PM by Dick Ferguson, Chair of Elm City College Preparatory Board. Mr. Ferguson encouraged Achievement First staff to introduce themselves to the board members.

#### II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

#### III. Presentation by Achievement First

##### A. AF Strategic Initiatives

Ms. Lisa Margosian, Interim Chief Executive Officer, kicked off the meeting presenting 4 strategic imperatives - multi-year initiatives that will direct Achievement First's focus and efforts in service of scholars and teachers.

Ms. Margosian then provided a brief overview of each strategic imperative for this coming school year:

1. Ensure that our schools deliver on their promise to our scholars, including summer readiness and a strong start to the school year.
2. Focus on our culture, ensuring a clear sense of direction, transparency in decision making, predictable communication, and a willingness to engage with all stakeholders.
3. Improve our systems and structures that support the quality performance and scaling of the network.
4. Attract and retain quality talent to deliver on our commitment to support the excellence of our schools.

Following this, AF leadership talked through each imperative in more detail.

Mr. John Sharkey, Interim Chief Academic Officer, explained that the first strategic imperative prioritizes the critical work of delivering on our promise to scholars, through our academic and instructional offerings, our social-emotional supports, and ensuring that students feel safe and welcome at school. He reminded the board that this school year AF is focused on reading in particular, as well as on student investment and continued reduction of exclusionary discipline practices. Mr. Sharkey also highlighted the fundamental summer professional development teachers recently completed which provides teachers the preparation to start off the year in a great spot. Before continuing, Ms. Lisa Tanen asked about the bullet point pertaining to physical safety on campuses and the role school-based staff have when threats occur. Ms. Margosian answered that there will be continual reporting on this topic in the dashboards, and Mr. Sharkey suggested a potential deep dive on safety threats during an upcoming fall meeting.

Ms. Beth Cocuzza, Chief of Staff, explained the second strategic imperative which focuses on workplace culture. She noted that this year AF plans to focus on bringing back a strong performance culture for both Network Support employees and principals while leadership strategizes a long-term plan for teachers and other school based staff.

Mr. Neil Shah, Chief Financial Officer, then transitioned to the third strategic imperative and explained that it seeks to improve AF's systems and structures. He listed out some ways that we are already working on this goal such as investing in finance and human resources improvements. For instance, centralizing employee relations by automating

systems like payroll will ultimately lessen the load on school-based DSOs in the long run.

Lastly, Ms. Cocuzza presented the final strategic imperative that focuses on retaining and hiring school-based and Network Support staff members to deliver on our mission. She noted the nationwide teacher shortage crisis that has impacted the teaching profession nationwide which is why talent is a primary focus this coming school year.

Ms. Margosian then opened the floor to questions. Trustees and staff engaged in conversation on topics such as efforts to maintain the quality of teacher talent, the future of signing and retention bonuses, and best practices to elevate the innovative experience of Achievement First teachers during recruitment.

## **B. SY 2021-2022 report and reflections**

### **1. Scholars**

The next meeting topic focused on AF scholar data across academies this past school year. Mr. Sharkey expressed the tremendous progress in school academics and cultures that have brought us closer to pre-pandemic standards while also acknowledging that there is still work to be done to close pre-pandemic gaps, particularly in math.

Mr. Jesse Balis-Harris, Chief of Elementary Schools, continued the conversation with data on Connecticut elementary schools, reporting that the school year ended with strong adult and scholar culture that has created an imperative foundation for continual academic achievement. He shared state assessment results to express that students were not where they needed to be on reading and math proficiency. In order to increase levels to our goals, Mr. Balis-Harris explained that we will be implementing curriculum changes, intentional professional development in the science of reading, and upgraded coaching/training. Mr. Balis-Harris then entertained questions from the Board on AF assessment results in comparison to host district and state levels, class cohorts rebounding differently depending on age, and the need to eventually surpass pre-pandemic levels.

Ms. Charmayne Joseph, Interim Chief of Middle Schools, began by reporting on student experience at Connecticut middle schools which had mixed results for this year. For instance, academies met student experience survey goals yet there are needed improvements in attendance and suspension rates which are largely due to the ramification of the pandemic. As for academics, Ms. Joseph focused on reading, science, ELA and math results, and ultimately confirmed that middle school scholars have improved from 2020-2021 but are generally performing below pre-pandemic levels. She supported these findings by offering a range of data including internal

assessments and state testing results. Ms. Joseph also provided insight on changes that have fueled growth such as science growth due to improvement in our curriculum and instruction.

Mr. Rod Bowen, Chief of High Schools, presented the academic state of Connecticut high schools. Although more scholars passed all of their courses this school year than last, student performance differed. For example, state testing data was not up to par with course passing rates. Mr. Bowen then turned to school culture for high schools which has experienced improvements Student Belonging and Valuing School according to survey data but other aspects like suspension rates are actively being worked on by investing in inclusive practices. Board members voiced interest in more information on where students are going to school post-graduation and discussed social work at schools to provide mental health support.

Ms. Xanthe Jory, Chief Operating Officer, presented updates on scholar enrollment and recruitment efforts in Connecticut. She reported that three of four CT charters are fully enrolled and we expect them to be fully enrolled next school year as well. She explained the effective recruitment methods we are using such as in-person outreach strategies, phone banking, digital marketing, and building data capacity. Ms. Jory then entertained questions from board members about reasons for the current trends in kindergarten enrollment and the specifics of improvements to our digital advertisements.

## **2. Staff**

Ms. Cocuzza transitioned the conversation to staff updates. She explained the bi-annual organizational health survey AF releases and the metrics used to predict retention, and presented results from staff at each academy level. Where there was low employee satisfaction, Ms. Cocuzza noted that the root causes were tied to teacher shortage and staffing challenges. These survey conclusions also helped instructional leadership to build more intentional alignment and more effective principal development with regional superintendents.

Mr. Michael Rabin, Deputy Chief of Staff, continued with the current state of recruitment and retention. He noted that Connecticut's difficult certification requirements have taken a toll on the teaching profession at large. Mr. Rabin highlighted our talent efforts like salary and retention bonuses, prioritization of schools with most openings, increased marketing efforts, and streamlining application process. He concluded with brief updates on hiring goals versus progress made to date. Mr. Sharkey followed up with strategies leadership will implement proactively in the coming school year to mitigate the issues we have identified this past year. The board will hear

more updates on the progress of these efforts in fall meetings. Mr. Sharkey entertained questions from the Board on emphasizing specialized teacher coaching at AF.

Ms. Christina Braganza, Chief Program Officer, reported on the investment of staff summer training series for AF's school-based teams. Ms. Braganza highlighted New Team member taxonomy training which gives new teachers the opportunity to practice building a strong classroom environment by rehearsing lessons and roleplaying. She shared the excitement of summer training being back in-person, with over 95% of participants agreeing/strongly agreeing that summer training is of high quality and high impact. Mr. Sharkey added that the goal of summer professional development is to present a series of connected training and experiences that support our visions across academies. He explained that we employed a logic model to identify specific inputs, activities and outputs needed for each session to lead us to the intended mission. In other words, we no longer look at summer training as individual sessions but rather as a collective story that will accelerate the recovery of students. Board members inquired on how summer training effectiveness is being tracked and whether individual boards can thank teachers and staff through appreciation events or additional support.

### **3. Operations**

Ms. Jory said that with the lessons we learned last year, we have implemented COVID safety guidelines in schools which include:

- Aligning guidelines with district policies and CDC guidance to simplify the decision-making process
- Evolving approaches as policies change and pandemic progresses
- Continuing asymptomatic testing this fall
- Requiring staff to receive booster shots

She continued with insight on school response to both imminent and non-imminent threats to the school community. Ms. Jory explained that we have revised and clarified protocols covering a range of threat responses that align with state guidance as well as adjusted preparedness and prevention protocols. Board members asked questions about potential simulations that can help improve our response.

Lastly, Mr. Rabin covered charter renewals as all 4 charters are up for renewal this year. He explained that we are targeting 5 year renewals, and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) will be evaluating us on various components. Mr. Rabin provided an outline of the renewal process, and noted that we are currently at the formal renewal application stage. Board members will get this document as signatures will need to be obtained before moving forward with site visits. Overall, Mr. Rabin pointed out that leadership is working hard to fortify the relationship that AF has

with CSDE. During discussion, Mr. Rabin answered a question regarding any stumbling blocks in past renewals.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 PM by Dick Ferguson.

Motion by Dick Kalt

Seconded by Raj Lakra

All in favor

**DRAFT AGENDA**

**Achievement First (AF) Hartford  
Finance Committee Meeting**

Monday, September 12th, 2022, 1pm EST

Zoom link: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/4765121702?from=addon>

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Board Discussion and Business**
  - A. FY23 Strategic Imperatives - Finance (Discussion)
  - B. FY23 Finance Committee Reporting Timeline (Discussion)
  - C. FY23 Revised Budget (Review)
- V. Other Business**
  - A. 2020/2021 Employee Retention Credit Application (Review)
- VI. Adjourn**





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New Haven, CT 06513  
203 773 3223

370 Hartford Avenue  
Providence, RI 02909  
401 347 1106 ext. 30610

## MINUTES

### Achievement First (AF) Hartford Finance Committee Meeting

Monday, September 12th, 2022, 1pm EST

Zoom link: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/4765121702?from=addon>

#### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:04PM by Neil Shah. The following board members and AF staff were in attendance.

Board members:

Erwin T. Hurst Sr.

Lisa Tanen

AF staff:

Kate Aufiero

Neil Shah

Devin Devanney

Angela Weinell

Ariana Rosa

Aprio Consultant:

Justin Elanjian

#### **II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **III. Approval of Minutes**

There were no minutes needing approval.

#### **IV. Board Discussion and Business**

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Mr. Neil Shah reviewed the FY23 Financial Strategic Imperatives. This included the investments in finance improvements to areas of payroll, accounting and other departments within the AF Finance team.

Mr. Shah proceeded to present the FY23 Finance Committee Reporting Timeline, which includes additional information being added to future board books, adding high level context during board meetings.

Ms. Kate Aufiero then discussed the FY23 Revised Budget, which includes updated staffing changes and an increase in per pupil funding.

#### **V. Other Business**

Mr. Justin Elanjian from Aprio discussed the process of the Employee Retention Credit, which is a refundable payroll tax credit made available by the CARES Act of 2020.

#### **VI. Adjourn**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:36pm

**AGENDA**

**Achievement First Hartford Academy  
Joint High School Committee Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Monday, September 19, 2022, 4:30-5:30 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Discussion**
  - A. School Report
  - B. Financial Report
- V. Adjourn**

**MINUTES**  
**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Monday, September 19, 2022, 5:30-7:00 pm

**Trustees in Attendance:** Erwin Hurst, Sr. Jessica Glover, Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine, Francoise Deristel-Leger. Charon Smalls

**Staff in Attendance:** Lisa Margosian, Beth Cocuzza, Sulafa Bashir, Neil Shah, Xanthe Jory, John Sharkey, Jesse Balis-Haris, Ken Paul, Patricia Granda-Malaver, Sultana Salma, Raven Obas, Oraina Simmons, Laneka Thomas, Nakia Hall, Dumar Paden, Kevin Lohela, Siobhan O’Leary

**Guests in Attendance:** Surbhi Patel

Patricia Granda-Malaver recorded the minutes.

**I. Call to Order**

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

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Hurst moved the board to vote on the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from June 23, 2022.

Motion by Lisa Tanen

Second by Jessica Glover

All in favor.

#### **IV. Presentation by Achievement First (AF)**

Ms. Lisa Margosian, interim Chief Executive Officer, preceded the AF presentations by taking a moment Note of gratitude from Lisa for their service and school leadership team

##### **A. Principals' Reports**

Ms. Raven Obas, Hartford Academy Elementary School Principal, provided updates on the strong start to the 2022-2023 year. She shared that student enrollment is at 93%, and they are continuing to get the word out that they are still enrolling scholars. The school is using creative methods like a referral table, social media postings, and teacher/family introduction calls. The latter has made it clear to staff the importance of incorporating this topic in their community engagements. Ms. Obas then went on to state that they are fully staffed this year, and they will continue to work on retention efforts to sustain their numbers. After her presentation, Ms. Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine, Hartford Board Member, asked Ms. Obas whether she predicts these numbers to remain leveled. Ms. Obas responded that her confidence is rooted in two sources: qualitative data that she gathers when interacting with teachers in the classroom and quantitative data of staff sentiment through the Staff Pulse Survey. Ms. Obas then transitioned into additional highlights of this new school year such as a solid classroom environment and nearly perfect student attendance. The board entered discussion, and Ms. Obas answered questions regarding vaccination/booster requirements and creative strategies to enroll siblings in differing grade levels.

Next, Ms. Oraina Simmons, Hartford Summit Middle School Principal, presented start of year updates. She noted that student enrollment is at 94%, and they are using promotional tactics like billboard and bus ads, family referrals, and community partnerships. As for staffing, there are still a few openings left to fill. Ms. Simmons highlighted methods they are using not only to hire new teachers but also retain current staff. For example, transitioning to block scheduling has improved career development as it allows teachers to have a break where they can lesson plan effectively and receive adequate coaching by school deans. Other highlights that were discussed by Ms. Simmons includes high staff morale, access to enrichment programs (theater, art and PE), and community building through family programming. Ms. Simmons answered a board member's question on the purpose of their upcoming first in-person "Back to School Night".

Finally, Ms. Laneka Thomas, Hartford High School Principal, stated that her school had started off the year with a 93% student enrollment. Her team is actively improving this number through tactics like their “Refer a Friend” campaign to increase 8th and 9th grade matriculation. Similar to the middle school, there are also unfilled positions at the high school level. Ms. Thomas mentioned that they are attempting to close this gap by incorporating block scheduling, utilizing building-based substitute teachers, and incentivizing cross content teaching for STEM subjects. She also noted that student experience will be a focal point this year and staff morale continues to increase through community building and coaching. A board member asked how comradery was being created, and Ms. Thomas elaborated on the importance of deans no longer being in classrooms this year since it ensures that they can solely provide coaching that teachers need to feel successful and a sense of belonging.

## **B. Deep dive on Academic Data**

Mr. John Sharkey, Interim Chief Academic Officer, presented a summary deep dive of Hartford academics. He began by explaining the importance of triangulation of data as a single data point does not speak to all the accomplishments that have been reached. There have been overall academic improvements from the 2020-2021 school year. In general, reading has been easier to rebound than math because math challenges are rooted in lack of foundational skills necessary to succeed in future levels. Hartford specifically performed on par with CT AF averages in ELA and slightly higher in Math. For this school year, AF will continue to measure performance through internal assessments, STEP, STAR, MAP, and mock state assessments. These results will prove whether curriculum pilots are being effectively implemented and supported. Mr. Sharkey then continued with bar charts to provide the board a visual representation of the Hartford schools’ academic data and pointed out performance comparisons with other AF CT schools and the overall AF Network.

After his presentation, Mr. Sharkey provided insight on AF’s response and academic initiatives for this school year. The three main tactics he focused on were

- 1) Curricular pilots in ES
- 2) Improvements in data reporting and response
- 3) Shifts to school support from network academic teams

Before wrapping up, a board member asked why the dashboard did not have as much input as the deep dive provided. Mr. Sharkey stated that the dashboard seeks to keep focus on the progress of the strategic imperatives. However, he promised that as assessment cycle and monitoring progresses there will be future deep dives for the board.

### **C. Presenting New Board Dashboard**

Mr. Michael Rabin, Deputy Chief of staff, gave a brief overview of the purpose of the new board dashboard, which was noted in the board book as well. He reminded board members that the dashboard will provide high-level overviews of critical data and ensure the Board understands AF's progress before AF leaders provide more context during meetings. After reviewing a draft version, Mr. Rabin stated that for future meetings, board members will receive a copy of the dashboard ahead of time and will be asked to review it in order to actively participate in meeting conversations. He also encouraged board members to provide feedback over the school year to continue to improve this useful tool. Mr. Hurst asked about the shift of data within dashboards, and Mr. Rabin clarified that there may be shifts, especially in academics once scholar assessments are incorporated, but some data points will stay stagnant.

### **V. Committee Reports**

Mr. Neil Shah, Chief Financial Officer, presented on the FY23 revised budget as there needed to be an incorporation of changes due to staffing and enrollment numbers. Mr. Hurst moved the board to vote on the matter.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the amended budget as recommended by the Finance Committee and prepared by Achievement First for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Motion by Lisa Tanen  
Second by Jessica Glover  
All in favor.

### **VI. Board Discussion and Business**

Mr. Hurst moved the board to a vote on the following resolutions. He asked Ms. Tanen to facilitate the first resolution on leadership to avoid a conflict of interest.

#### **A. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Leadership slate**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby elects the following leadership slate for the 2022-2023 fiscal year:

370 JAMES ST #404  
NEW HAVEN, CT 06513  
achievementfirst.org

25 BROADWAY, 12TH FLR  
NEW YORK, NY 10004  
achievementfirst.org

370 HARTFORD AVE  
PROVIDENCE, RI 02909  
achievementfirst.org



Erwin Hurst, Sr., Chair  
Jessica Glover, Vice Chair

Motion by Lisa Tanen  
Second by Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
All in favor.

## **B. Election of New Board Member**

Mr. Hurst facilitated the following resolution.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors elects Mr. Charon Smalls to the Board for a 3-year term, ending June 30, 2025.

Motion by Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
Second by Jessica Glover  
All in favor.

Mr. Hurst welcomed Mr. Charon Smalls to say a few words which he obliged.

## **C. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Committees**

Mr. Hurst once again asked Ms. Tanen if she could lead this vote to avoid a conflict of interest.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby appoints the following committee members:

- Personnel Committee: Erwin Hurst, Sr.(Chair), Francoise Deristel-Leger, Charon Smalls
- AF Joint Hartford Committee: Erwin Hurst, Sr. (Chair), Alice Turner

Motion by Lisa Tanen  
Second by Erwin Hurst  
All in favor.

## **D. Approval of Interim Principals**

Mr. Hurst facilitated the remaining resolutions.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the following individuals to serve as interim principals, as needed, based on the recommendations by Achievement First, between September 19 and December 1, 2022.

- Elementary School: Sueleidy Cruz
- Middle School: Tara Donovan
- High School: Jahki Manley

Motion by Jessica Glover

Second by Lisa Tanen

All in favor.

### **E. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Family Handbook**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the 2022-2023 AF Family Handbook with necessary corrections.

Motion by Erwin Hurst Sr.

Second by Lisa Tanen

All in favor.

Ms. Beth Cocuzza, Chief of Staff, reminded board members to fill out the conflict of interest forms and CMO evaluations by the deadline.

## **VII. Adjourn**

Mr. Hurst drew the meeting to a close by giving one final welcome to the newest board member and Ms. Sulafa Bashir, Interim Senior Director of Governance.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM by Mr. Erwin Hurst Sr.

Motion by Erwin Hurst Sr.

Seconded by Charon Smalls

All in favor

## **MINUTES**

### **Achievement First (AF) Hartford Finance Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, November 22nd 2022, 2pm EST

Zoom link: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/4765121702?from=addon>

#### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 pm by Erwin Hurst Sr. The following board members and AF staff were in attendance.

##### Board members:

Lisa Tanen-Lafontaine  
Erwin Hurst Sr.

##### AF staff:

Neil Shah  
Kate Aufiero  
Devin Devanney  
Angel Weinell  
Jesse Balis-Harris  
Breanna Walker  
Jamie Gronningsater

#### **II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **III. Approval of Minutes**

Erwin Hurst Sr. moved the committee to vote on the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Finance Committee board members hereby approves the meeting minutes from September 12th, 2022.

Motion by Erwin Hurst Sr.  
Seconded by Lisa Tanen-Lafontaine  
All in favor

#### **IV. Board Discussion and Business**

Mr. Neil Shah reviewed the FY23 Q1 Year-to-Date Financial Statements for AF Hartford Academy.

Ms. Kate Aufiero then provided the FY23 Profit and Loss statements as of September 2022. AF Hartford Academy is seeing an overall budget deficit of \$977,359.

Board members and AF staff members discussed the current status of enrollment declines and personnel budgets along with the mitigation strategies being deployed.

#### **V. Other Business**

Board members and AF Hartford Academy staff members would like to discuss potential opportunities for new donations restricted to AF Hartford with Team Development.

#### **VI. Adjourn**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm.



**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Thursday, Dec 1, 2022, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5:31 pm.

Attendees:

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

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

Achievement First Staff: Lisa Margosian, Beth Cocuzza, Sulafa Bashir, Neil Shah, Xanthe Jory, Jesse Balis-Harris, John Sharkey, Dumar Paden, Raven Obas, Ken Paul, Oraina Simmons

Sulafa Bashir recorded the minutes.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

An amendment was made to the minutes to correct the spelling of Mr. Smalls' name.

It was:

RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes as amended from September 19, 2022.

Motion first by: Jessica Alhasnawi

Second: Francoise Deristel-Leger

All in favor

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

Ms. Lisa Margosian opened the meeting and introduced AF's new Acting Superintendent, Karolyn Belcher.

Mr. John Sharkey framed the academic data to be presented saying that there is modest progress compared to last year.

##### **A. Principals' Reports**

Ms. Raven Obas gave the elementary school Principal's report. Overall highlights include student attendance remaining strong and student pulse survey results were 88% favorable. Academics remain a challenge as is enrollment and the resulting budgetary implications. Reading proficiency is ahead of the region, while Math proficiency is at or above, but both are below where we want to be. Student experience and culture continues to be a bright spot. Staff and family pulse surveys are at over 85% favorability.

*Board members discussed how parents are reacting to cutbacks due to budget*

Mr. Jesse Balis-Harris added that the school is off to a great start this year.

*Board members discussed rates of IEPs, 504 services and/or other interventions.*

Ms. Simmons gave the middle school Principal's report. Attendance is a highlight along with an increase in parent engagement. Current challenges include vacancies and temporary staffing solutions. Additionally, reading and math data show learning gaps. In response, shifts have been made to target PD for teachers to help close the reading gaps. Student experience is a work in progress as the teaching staff is fairly new and still developing skills for creating the most optimal student experience.

Mr. Dumar Paden gave the high school report on behalf of Principal Thomas. Attendance is a bright spot and staffing has improved from SY 21-22 but STEM and Special Education continue to be challenging. The school is working with an employment agency to bring in special education teachers part time to fill the void. Academics remain challenging as demonstrated by STAR Reading data and data around students' course pass rates.

*Board members discussed questions around suspensions, family satisfaction, and racial makeup of teachers.*



Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. thanked all the principals for their presentations and commented that upon visiting the schools, he feels a positive difference.

B. Update on Enrollment <Proposed Executive Session>

Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. motioned to go into executive session

Second: Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine

All in Favor

**V. Committee Reports**

A. Finance Committee

Mr. Neil Shah shared the Q1 financials as previously shared with the board in the pre-read materials.

**VI. Board Discussion and Business**

A. Election of New Board Member

It was:

RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors elects Ms. Surbhi Patel to the Board for a 3-year term, ending June 30, 2025.

Motion by: Jessica Alhasnawi

Second: Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine

B. Approval of Interim Principals

RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the following individuals to serve as interim principals, as needed, based on the recommendations by Achievement First, between December 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

- Elementary School: Sueleidy Cruz
- Middle School: Tara Donavan
- High School: Jahki Manley

Motion by: Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine

Second: Francoise Deristel-Leger

All in favor

C. Update on CEO Search



Ms. Lisa Margosian updated the board on the CEO search. She shared that the committee was formed in October and has been busy at work on a job description and selecting a search firm.

*Board discussed questions around the CEO search.*

D. Other Business

Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. reviewed the upcoming CT board meetings schedule.

**VII. Adjourn**

Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. adjourned the meeting at 7:03pm.

Motion by: Surbhi Patel

Second: Charon Smalls

All in Favor





**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Thursday, Dec 1, 2022, 5:30-7:00 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Discussion with Achievement First**
  - A. Principals' Reports
  - B. Update on Enrollment
- V. Committee Reports**
- VI. Board Discussion and Business**
  - A. Election of New Board Member
  - B. Approval of Interim Principals
  - C. Update on CEO Search
  - D. Other Business
- VII. Adjourn**

**AGENDA**

**Achievement First Hartford Academy  
Joint High School Committee Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Thursday, December 1, 2022, 4:30-5:30 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Discussion**
  - A. School Report
  - B. Financial Report
- IV. Adjourn**

**AGENDA**

**Achievement First Hartford Academy  
Joint High School Committee Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Thursday, January 26, 2022, 4:30-5:30 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Discussion**
  - A. School Report
- V. Adjourn**



**MINUTES**  
**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
**Joint High School Committee Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Thursday, January 26, 2022, 4:30-5:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Erwin Hurst Sr. at 4:33 pm.

Board members present:

AF Hartford Academy: Erwin Hurst Sr., Alice Turner

Jumoke: Myron Stewart, Arnel Hine, and Troy Monroe.

Also present were AF Staff: Dumar Paden, Regional Superintendent, Blakely Simoneau

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

It was:

RESOLVED the Achievement First Hartford Academy Joint High School Committee hereby approves the meeting minutes from December 1, 2021.

Motion by Myron Stewart

Second by Erwin Hurst, Sr.

All in favor.

**IV. Discussion**

A. School Report

Dumar Padem, Regional Superintendent, reported on:

- College and career readiness, including student college acceptances.

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- Academic report - interim assessments just completed, will give a strong sense of student academic progress.
- College visits and trips
- Discussed School Health Survey results for the high school - positive aspects, areas for growth, next steps and commitments

Myron Stewart brought up a four day school week. Discussion of feasibility.

## **V. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Erwin Hurst Sr. at 4:48 pm.

Motion by Erwin Hurst, Sr.

Second by Myron Stewart

All in favor



**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Amistad Academy Middle School, Room 149  
130 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06511  
Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/85766970291>  
Monday, February 6, 2023, 5:30-6:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5:34 pm.

Attendees:

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

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

Achievement First Staff: Christi George, Karolyn Belcher, Sueleidy Cruz, Laneka Thomas, Caleb Dolan, Sulafa Bashir, Gaylord Bourne  
Guests: Samantha Rose, Earline Bradshaw

Sulafa Bashir recorded the minutes.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Hurst, Sr. took the board through approval of the previous meeting's minutes.

It was:

RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from December 1, 2022.



Motion by: Erwin Hurst Sr.  
Second: Jessica Alhasnawi  
All in favor

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

##### **A. Principals' Reports**

Ms. Sueleidy Cruz, Interim Principal, gave the elementary school report. She mentioned some staff shifts that had happened in the previous few weeks and described some of the staff and student events that were held to bring joy and positivity through the holiday break.

Ms. Cruz went through the school's org health results and stated that the elementary school outperformed the network on the majority of the questions. She highlighted positive aspects around staff expectations and sense of purpose as well as some of the growth areas around staff input and ensuring they have materials they need. She outlined some of the action items the school's leadership team are taking on to address the results.

Mr. Caleb Dolan gave the middle school report on behalf of Principal Oraina Simmons. He mentioned joyful and community-building events at the school including the launch of the basketball season as well as other after-school programs and family game nights.

He shared the school's results on the org health survey highlighting positive aspects around team feeling valued and supported, and describing some of the growth areas around staffing and the steps leadership are engaged in to support staff.

Ms. Laneka Thomas gave the high school report, sharing early decision college acceptance results including first-time acceptances to Harvard, Brown and University of Rochester, as well as the overall number of applications submitted and the percentage receiving at least one acceptance so far. She also highlighted the recognition the school received from the state for its high percentage of FAFSA completion among families.

Ms. Thomas shared the school's org health data, describing the positive aspects around staff feeling cared for and that they are developing, while discussing some of the growth areas resulting from some of the staff being new which the leadership plans to address through continued focus on staff development but also ensuring opportunities are created to celebrate and affirm growth.



Board members asked questions about what support the schools need, which were mainly around driving talent to the schools to aid with the shortage of STEM, Special Ed and other subject teachers.

Mr. Hurst, Sr. made a comment on highlighting college acceptance results so other families can see what's possible

#### B. Enrollment Response Update

Ms. Carolyn Belcher gave an update on enrollment, describing the status of the various interventions that had been previously discussed to help mitigate against under-enrollment. She also outlined some of the outreach efforts for student recruitment after the application was opened, including AF's participation in the high school Expo event in January for the first time.

## II. Committee Reports

### A. Treasurer's Report

#### 1. FY22 Audited Financial Statements

Gaylord Bourne joined the meeting and gave an update on the AF Hartford Academy's Annual Audit. She stated that the audit received an unmodified opinion which is the cleanest opinion possible and added that there were no concerns or unusual items flagged by the auditors.

The AF Hartford Academy Board members subsequently joined the members of the Amistad Academy Board, the AF Bridgeport Academy Board and the Elm City College Prep Board for a joint CT board meeting.





**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Amistad Academy Middle School, Room 149  
130 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06511

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/85766970291>

Monday, February 6, 2023, 5:30-6:30 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Discussion with Achievement First**
  - A. Principals' Reports
  - B. Enrollment Response Update
- V. Committee Reports**
  - A. Treasurer's Report
    - 1. FY22 Audited Financial Statements
- VI. Adjourn**

**RECOMMENDED RESOLUTIONS**

BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from December 1, 2022.

**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**Achievement First Joint Connecticut**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Amistad Academy Middle School, Room 150  
130 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06511

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/83942299731>

Monday, February 6, 2023, 6:30 pm-7:30 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Discussion with Achievement First**
  - A. Academic Improvement Plan
  - B. Enrollment Response Plan
  - C. HR & Finance Investments
  - D. Org Health
  - E. Principal Renewal Process
- V. Board Discussion and Business**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session
    - 1. AF Network Reimagining
    - 2. CEO Search Update
- VI. Adjourn**

**RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION**

BE IT RESOLVED, the Joint CT Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from August 23, 2022.



**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Achievement First Joint Connecticut**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Amistad Academy Middle School, Room 150  
130 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06511  
Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/83942299731>  
Monday, February 6, 2023, 6:30-7:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

Each AF CT board chair made a motion to join the joint board meeting at 6:40 PM. The motions were seconded by the board members of each board. All were in favor, no dissenting votes and none obtained from voting.

CT board members present were:

Amistad Academy: Lorraine Gibbons, Jennifer Alexander, Patricia Sweet, Ethan Tyminski, Yashira Agosto

AF Bridgeport Academy: Rajeev Lakra, Michael Strambler, Dewey Loselle, Marlene Macaudo, Dick Kalt, Debra Hertz, Ruben Felipe

Elm City College Prep: Dick Ferguson, Laura Saverin, Prish Pierce, Erica Demond, Shashank Ghiria

AF Hartford Academy: Erwin Hurst, Sr., Jessica Alhasnawi, Alice Turner, Charon Smalls

AF Staff members present: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Beth Cocuzza, Blakely Simoneau, Michael Rabin, Christi George, Kate Aufiero, Sulafa Bashir

**II. Public Comment**

No members of the public were present.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

**IV. Discussion with Achievement First**

**A. Academic Improvement Plan**

Karolyn Belcher, the Interim Superintendent, provided an update on academic improvement and what steps they will be instituting to get students on track

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academically. She detailed the key levers for academic improvement - improving student achievement, clarifying our values proposition for scholars and families, and ensuring students feel valued, included, and engaged.

There were questions about the specific curriculum Achievement First currently uses and how those will be changing. Ms. Belcher explained how the new curriculum will address reading fluency and understanding.

Ms. Belcher provided information about the Principal in Residence Program, which is continuing this school year although the group is smaller than in previous years. She also provided information about the professional development that Achievement First will be using to address concerns about the changes in curriculum in order to support teachers.

#### B. Enrollment Response Plan

Michael Rabin, the Associate Chief of Staff, provided updates on how Achievement First is confronting enrollment problems. He outlined the four levers that have been identified - improve recruitment, decrease attrition, finding flexibility in the model, and analyzing the portfolio of schools. He described the ways we are using each lever to address the problems, including outreach plans at each school.

#### C. HR & Finance Investments

Lisa Margosian, the Interim CEO, introduced the problem that Achievement First has underinvested in infrastructure in HR and Finance. Kate Aufiero, the Associate Chief of Financial Planning & Analysis, explained the changes that will be made in the finance systems and the timeline for the changes. Christi George, the Associate Chief of Team Talent Operations, explained the changes that will happen in HR and the timeline for the changes. Ms. George detailed how some things will now be centralized to free up time for school staff and to improve the employee experience.

#### D. Principal Renewal Process

Ms. George provided details on the principal renewal timeline and process, including that there will be a different approach that provides more visibility to the board throughout the school year. Board members expressed concerns around the principal selection process, requesting multiple candidates. Ms. George acknowledged their request.

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Ms. Margosian expressed gratitude for the board members' time and for their understanding about rescheduling the meeting. She asked board members to share their questions as part of Achievement First's ongoing accountability to the boards.

#### **V. Board Discussion and Business**

The boards entered executive session at 7:37 PM to discuss the Achievement First Network Reimaging and to receive updates on the CEO candidate search.

#### **VI. Adjourn**

## MINUTES

### Achievement First (AF) Hartford Finance Committee Auditor's Exit Call

Thursday, March 9th, 2023, 1:00 PM EST

Zoom link: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/4765121702?from=addon>

#### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm by Erwin Hurst, Sr. The following board members and AF staff were in attendance.

Board members: Erwin Hurst Sr., Lisa Tanen

AF staff: Neil Shah, Kate Aufiero, Devin Devanny, Angela Weinell.

#### **I. Public Comment (None)**

A. There were no members of the public in attendance.

#### **II. Approval of Minutes (NONE)**

A. There were no prior minutes to approve.

#### **III. Board Discussion and Business**

A. AF Staff presented the Q2 financial statements, including the balance sheet and profit & loss, and there was discussion surrounding the enrollment decrease.

#### **IV. Other Business (NONE)**

A. There was no other business.

#### **V. Adjourn**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:27. Meeting was closed out by Erwin Hurst, Sr.

**AGENDA**

**Achievement First (AF) Hartford  
Finance Committee Meeting**

Thursday, March 9th, 2023 1pm EST

Zoom link: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/4765121702?from=addon>

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Board Discussion and Business**
  - A. FY23 Q2 Financial Statements (Review)
- V. Other Business**
- VI. Adjourn**

## MINUTES

### Achievement First (AF) Hartford Finance Committee Auditor's Exit Call

Thursday, March 9th, 2023, 1:00 PM EST

Zoom link: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/4765121702?from=addon>

#### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm by Erwin Hurst, Sr. The following board members and AF staff were in attendance.

Board members: Erwin Hurst Sr., Lisa Tanen

AF staff: Neil Shah, Kate Aufiero, Devin Devanny, Angela Weinell.

#### **I. Public Comment (None)**

A. There were no members of the public in attendance.

#### **II. Approval of Minutes (NONE)**

A. There were no prior minutes to approve.

#### **III. Board Discussion and Business**

A. AF Staff presented the Q2 financial statements, including the balance sheet and profit & loss, and there was discussion surrounding the enrollment decrease.

#### **IV. Other Business (NONE)**

A. There was no other business.

#### **V. Adjourn**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:27. Meeting was closed out by Erwin Hurst, Sr.





**AGENDA**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/86933222134>

Thursday, March 16, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Board Discussion**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session
    - 1. Principal Mid-Year Reviews
    - 2. Principal Hiring Pipeline
- V. Discussion with Achievement First**
  - A. Academic Update
  - B. Teacher Recruitment Update
  - C. Charter Renewal Update
  - D. Legislative Update
- VI. Committee Reports**
  - A. Finance Committee Report
- VII. Adjourn**

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

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/86933222134>

Thursday, March 16, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5:33 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	Y	Charon Smalls	N
Surbhi Patel	Y		

Achievement First Staff: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Christi George, Caleb Dolan, Kevin Lohela, Dumar Paden, Blakely Simoneau, Beth Cocuzza, Neil Shah, Nakia Hall, Michael Rabin, Sulafa Bashir, Xanthe Jory

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. took the board through approval of the previous meeting's minutes.

It was:

RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from February 6, 2023.

Motion by Lisa Tanen-LaFontain.

Second by Jessica Alhasnawi.

All in favor.

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#### **IV. Board Discussion**

- A. Proposed Executive Session
  - 1. Principal Mid-Year Reviews
  - 2. Principal Hiring Pipeline

Mr. Hurst, Sr., took the board through a motion to enter into executive session to discuss the topic of Principal Renewals, inviting the following AF staff to join: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Christi George, Kevin Lohela, Caleb Dolan, and Dumar Paden.

Motion by Lisa Tanen-LaFontain.  
Second by Jessica Alhasnawi.  
All in favor.

The board entered Executive Session at 5:36 pm and exited at 5:50 pm.

#### **V. Discussion with Achievement First**

- A. Academic Update

Ms. Belcher then gave an update on the preparations for state assessments as well as the decision to move to new high quality curriculum, detailing the curricula selected and the process for change management across elementary and middle school, especially with respect to minimizing the lift for elementary teachers to learn multiple curricula.

There was a discussion about the Science of Reading and why that particular approach was selected.

- B. Teacher Recruitment Update

Ms. Christi George gave an update on teacher recruitment, highlighting a change that shifts away from the central, online process that occurred during COVID, responding to principal feedback to bring screened candidates to the schools earlier in the interview process.

Ms. George also presented the latest data from the “Intent to Return” survey for teachers and school staff. She highlighted the efforts school leaders make to increase response rate and convert the “maybe” responses.

Board members asked questions about reasons why teachers leave and whether compensation was a factor. Ms. George discussed exit surveys as well as data from the



org health survey which is conducted twice a year and can provide context on why staff members leave, which is typically related to workload and alignment with school leadership's vision, much more than pay.

Ms. George also mentioned some changes being made to shore up teacher sourcing amidst the on-going teacher shortage, including new partnerships with local education organizations, and colleges and universities.

#### C. Charter Renewal Update

Mr. Michael Rabin gave an update on the current status of the charter renewal process, sharing the overall timeline as well as some positive feedback and comments received from CSDE during their visits and after. In particular, he highlighted the comments on Multilingual learners and English learners, given that this was an area which had been on a previous corrective action plan. He then discussed the areas where the charter was found to be out of compliance and outlined the steps being taken to address each issue.

Board members asked clarifying questions about the steps that needed to happen to increase the teacher certification percentage and there were also questions about the severity of the issues and potential renewal risk. Ms. George also mentioned a survey that CSDE sent out asking about the teacher shortage as it relates to teacher certification.

#### D. Legislative Update

Ms. Nakia Hall gave a legislative update highlighting increases in per-pupil funding that were achieved as a result of advocacy efforts. She also discussed a proposed bill to streamline the Educational Cost Sharing formula for funding public schools with the highest need which would include charter schools for the first time and give them access to these funds. Ms. Hall asked for board members' help to advocate for the passing of this bill by testifying at upcoming hearings and participating letter-writing campaigns. She mentioned that she would be sending more information on these efforts via email.

### VI. Committee Reports

#### A. Finance Committee Report

Mr. Neil Shah presented a summary of the Q2 financials for the charter, discussing the impact of the enrollment decline..



A board member asked about the impact of the revenue loss on after-school activities which can be an important recruitment tool to attract students to the charter. There was discussion on the challenges of the enrollment landscape coupled with funding challenges, as well as efforts to access public funds for after-school programming and continuing the advocacy work for per-pupil funding.

There was also a question about how to ensure sufficient funding to support fully staffing the schools in spite of the enrollment challenges. Mr Shah and Ms. George discussed philanthropy and ongoing work in the staffing model and budgeting process to support the schools.

## **VII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 6:39 pm

Motion by Lisa Tanen-LaFontain.

Second by Francoise Deristel-Leger.

All in favor.



**Minutes**  
**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
**Joint High School Committee Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Thursday, March 16, 2023, 4:30-5:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 4:31 pm.

Board members present:

AF Hartford Academy: Erwin Hurst Sr.,

Jumoke: Myron Stewart, Arnel Hine, and Troy Monroe.

Also present were AF Staff: Dumar Paden, Sulafa Bashir

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Hurst Sr, took the committee members through the approval of the previous meeting's minutes.

It was:

RESOLVED the Achievement First Hartford Academy Joint High School Committee hereby approves the meeting minutes from January 26, 2023.

Motion by Myron Stewart

Second by Erwin Hurst, Sr.

All in favor.

**IV. Discussion**

A. Finance Report

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Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. gave a report from the finance committee discussing the deficit resulting from under-enrollment across all academies, particularly the high school.

Committee members asked questions about the impact of the deficit year-over-year and Mr. Hurst, Sr. stated that enrollment declines had started before the pandemic and had continued over the past few years. He highlighted efforts to shift costs, particularly personnel costs to adjust accordingly.

There was also a discussion on student recruitment which entailed new efforts to participate in channels previously unavailable to AF and improved targeting.

## **V. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 4:41 pm.

Motion by Myron Stewart

Second by Erwin Hurst, Sr.

All in favor.



**AGENDA**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Monday, April 3, 2023, 5:00-5:30 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Board Discussion**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session: Personnel discussion regarding board approval of principal renewal offers for the 2023-24 school year
- IV. Adjourn**

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**Minutes**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Monday, April 3, 2023, 5:00-5:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5:02 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	N	Francoise Deristel-Leger	N
Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine	Y	Charon Smalls	Y
Surbhi Patel	Y		

Achievement First Staff: Sulafa Bashir, Kevin Lohela, Caleb Dolan, Dumar Paden

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Board Discussion**

- A. Proposed Executive Session: Personnel discussion regarding board approval of principal renewal offers for the 2023-24 school year

Mr. Hurst, Sr. turned to the topic of principal renewals for the 2023-24 school year and asked the board members if they had any questions or concerns about renewals of the 3 principals for AF Hartford academy. There were none.

Mr. Hurst, Sr. then took the board through a vote on approving the principal renewals as follows:

It was:

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RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the renewal of the following principals, with a final compensation package to be incorporated in the FY24 Budget to be reviewed and approved in June 2023:

- Raven Obas, AF Hartford Academy Elementary School
- Oraina Simmons, AF Hartford Summit Middle School
- Laneka Thomas, AF Hartford High School

Motion by Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine  
Second by Surbhi Patel  
All in favor.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5:06 pm.

Motion by Charon Smalls  
Second by Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine  
All in favor.



## **AGENDA**

### **Achievement First Hartford Academy Personnel Committee Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Thursday, April 20, 2023, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Committee Business and Discussion**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session - Personnel discussion:
    - 1. Principal candidate interview and principal appointment recommendations for 2023-24 school year
- IV. Adjourn**

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## **AGENDA**

### **Achievement First Hartford Academy Personnel Committee Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Thursday, April 20, 2023, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Committee Business and Discussion**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session - Personnel discussion:
    - 1. Principal candidate interview and principal appointment recommendations for 2023-24 school year
- IV. Adjourn**

[achievementfirst.org](https://achievementfirst.org)



**Minutes**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Personnel Committee Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Thursday, April 20, 2023, 4:00-5:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 4:02 pm.

Committee members in attendance, constituting a quorum:  
Erwin Hurst, Sr., Charon Smalls

Other AF Hartford Academy Board members in attendance: Lisa  
Tanen-LaFontaine

AF Staff in Attendance: Sueleidy Cruz, Sulafa Bashir, Shannon Williams-Paden

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Committee Business and Discussion**

- A. Proposed Executive Session: Personnel discussion: principal candidate interview(s) and principal appointment recommendations for 2023-24 school year

The committee members entered executive session at 4:03 pm inviting Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine, Shannon Williams-Paden and Sueleidy Cruz to join.

Motion by: Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
Second by: Charon Smalls  
All in favor

The committee members exited executive session at 5:02 pm and voted unanimously to recommend Sueleidy Cruz for the ES principal role.

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It was:

RESOLVED, that the Personnel Committee will recommend to the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors the approval of Sueleidy Cruz's appointment to serve as AF Hartford Academy Elementary School Principal for the 2023-2024 school year.

Motion by: Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
Second by: Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine  
All in favor

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5.05 pm.

Motion by: Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
Second by: Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine  
All in favor.



**Minutes**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Personnel Committee Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Thursday, April 20, 2023, 4:00-5:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 4:02 pm.

Committee members in attendance, constituting a quorum:  
Erwin Hurst, Sr., Charon Smalls

Other AF Hartford Academy Board members in attendance: Lisa  
Tanen-LaFontaine

AF Staff in Attendance: Sueleidy Cruz, Sulafa Bashir, Shannon Williams-Paden

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Committee Business and Discussion**

- A. Proposed Executive Session: Personnel discussion: principal candidate interview(s) and principal appointment recommendations for 2023-24 school year

The committee members entered executive session at 4:03 pm inviting Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine, Shannon Williams-Paden and Sueleidy Cruz to join.

Motion by: Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
Second by: Charon Smalls  
All in favor

The committee members exited executive session at 5:02 pm and voted unanimously to recommend Sueleidy Cruz for the ES principal role.

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It was:

RESOLVED, that the Personnel Committee will recommend to the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors the approval of Sueleidy Cruz's appointment to serve as AF Hartford Academy Elementary School Principal for the 2023-2024 school year.

Motion by: Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
Second by: Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine  
All in favor

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5.05 pm.

Motion by: Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
Second by: Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine  
All in favor.





**AGENDA**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Thursday, April 27, 2023, 5:00-5:30 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Board Discussion**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session: Personnel discussion regarding board approval of principal candidate for the 2023-24 school year
- IV. Adjourn**

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**AGENDA**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Thursday, April 27, 2023, 5:00-5:30 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Board Discussion**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session: Personnel discussion regarding board approval of principal candidate for the 2023-24 school year
- IV. Adjourn**

[achievementfirst.org](https://achievementfirst.org)



**Minutes**  
**AF Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8424626361>

Thursday, April 27, 2023, 5:00-5:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5:06 pm.

Attendees:

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

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

Achievement First Staff: Sulafa Bashir

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Board Discussion**

- A. Proposed Executive Session: Personnel discussion regarding board approval of principal candidate for the 2023-24 school year

Mr Hurst, Sr. made a motion to go into executive session to discuss the principal candidate for the elementary school.

Motion by Erwin Hurst, Sr.  
Second by Alice Turner  
All in favor.

The board entered executive session at 5:08 pm and exited at 5:16 pm.

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Mr. Erwin Hurst, Sr. took the board through a resolution to approve the candidate.

It was:

RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby appoints Sueleidy Cruz as principal of AF Hartford Academy Elementary School effective July 1, 2023.

Motion by Erwin Hurst Sr.

Second by Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine

All in favor

Mr. Hurst, Sr. said he will share the dates for the upcoming senior signing day and for graduation as well as reach out to the board members to gather informally over the summer to discuss ways to support the graduating seniors as they embark on their college journeys.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Erwin Hurst, Sr. at 5:22 pm.



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#### **IV. Adjourn**

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**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**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**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Resolutions and Approvals** Previous Meeting Minutes, Membership
- IV. Discussion with Achievement First**
  - A. Welcome (5 min)
  - B. Principal Reports (15 min)
  - C. State of Our Students - student wellness, academic progress, and high school update (20 min)
  - D. Finance Committee Report
    - 1. Q3 Financials and FY 24 Budgets (15 min)
    - 2. Fiscal & Procurement Policies, and Audit Engagement (5 min)
  - E. Charter Renewal Next Steps (5 min)
  - F. SY 2023/2024 Strategic Imperatives (5 min)
  - G. Schools Portfolio Planning (5 min)
- V. Board Business**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session: CEO Search and Talent Update (10 min)
- VI. Adjourn**

## RECOMMENDED RESOLUTIONS

### Consent Agendas (to be voted on altogether)

#### Consent Agenda 1: Meeting Minutes and Resolutions

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.

#### Finance Resolutions

4. BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year as presented.
5. 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.
6. BE IT RESOLVED that AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby ratifies the revisions to the Fiscal Policies and to the Procurement Policies as presented.
7. BE IT RESOLVED that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the closure of 1 bank account at Bank of America.



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

Venue: Virtual Meeting

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**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. Alhasnawi moved, Ms. Patel seconded. All in favor, none abstained.

Consent Agenda:

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#### **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.

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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**



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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

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#### **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**

## MINUTES

### Joint Meeting of Achievement First (AF) Connecticut Boards

Amistad Academy, Bridgeport Academy

Elm City College Preparatory, Hartford Academy

Tuesday, August 23, 2022, 4:00 pm

Venue: Omni Hotel, New Haven

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/8959180848>

**Board Members in Attendance:** Lorraine Gibbons, Jennifer Alexander, Ethan Tyminski, Gayatri Mehta, Dick Ferguson, Laura Saverin, Stephanie Ma, Patric Gregory, Prish Pierce, LaVonte Bryant, Erica Demond, Dick Kalt, Rajeev Lakra, Marlene Macaуда, Ruben Felipe, Erwin Hurst, Sr., Jessica Glover, Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine, Alice Turner, Fracoise Deristel-Leger,

**Staff in Attendance:** Lisa Margosian, Beth Cocuzza, Isabel Tañedo, Neil Shah, Xanthe Jory,, Christina Braganza, John Sharkey, Rod Bowen, Jesse Balis-Haris, Charmayne Joseph, Ken Paul, Charisse Terry, Nakia Hall, Patricia Granda-Malaver, Sultana Salma, Linda Darkwah

**Guests in Attendance:** Charon Smalls, Surbhi Patel

Patricia Granda-Malaver recorded the minutes.

#### I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:19 PM by Dick Ferguson, Chair of Elm City College Preparatory Board. Mr. Ferguson encouraged Achievement First staff to introduce themselves to the board members.

#### II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

#### III. Presentation by Achievement First

##### A. AF Strategic Initiatives

Ms. Lisa Margosian, Interim Chief Executive Officer, kicked off the meeting presenting 4 strategic imperatives - multi-year initiatives that will direct Achievement First's focus and efforts in service of scholars and teachers.

Ms. Margosian then provided a brief overview of each strategic imperative for this coming school year:

1. Ensure that our schools deliver on their promise to our scholars, including summer readiness and a strong start to the school year.
2. Focus on our culture, ensuring a clear sense of direction, transparency in decision making, predictable communication, and a willingness to engage with all stakeholders.
3. Improve our systems and structures that support the quality performance and scaling of the network.
4. Attract and retain quality talent to deliver on our commitment to support the excellence of our schools.

Following this, AF leadership talked through each imperative in more detail.

Mr. John Sharkey, Interim Chief Academic Officer, explained that the first strategic imperative prioritizes the critical work of delivering on our promise to scholars, through our academic and instructional offerings, our social-emotional supports, and ensuring that students feel safe and welcome at school. He reminded the board that this school year AF is focused on reading in particular, as well as on student investment and continued reduction of exclusionary discipline practices. Mr. Sharkey also highlighted the fundamental summer professional development teachers recently completed which provides teachers the preparation to start off the year in a great spot. Before continuing, Ms. Lisa Tanen asked about the bullet point pertaining to physical safety on campuses and the role school-based staff have when threats occur. Ms. Margosian answered that there will be continual reporting on this topic in the dashboards, and Mr. Sharkey suggested a potential deep dive on safety threats during an upcoming fall meeting.

Ms. Beth Cocuzza, Chief of Staff, explained the second strategic imperative which focuses on workplace culture. She noted that this year AF plans to focus on bringing back a strong performance culture for both Network Support employees and principals while leadership strategizes a long-term plan for teachers and other school based staff.

Mr. Neil Shah, Chief Financial Officer, then transitioned to the third strategic imperative and explained that it seeks to improve AF's systems and structures. He listed out some ways that we are already working on this goal such as investing in finance and human resources improvements. For instance, centralizing employee relations by automating



systems like payroll will ultimately lessen the load on school-based DSOs in the long run.

Lastly, Ms. Cocuzza presented the final strategic imperative that focuses on retaining and hiring school-based and Network Support staff members to deliver on our mission. She noted the nationwide teacher shortage crisis that has impacted the teaching profession nationwide which is why talent is a primary focus this coming school year.

Ms. Margosian then opened the floor to questions. Trustees and staff engaged in conversation on topics such as efforts to maintain the quality of teacher talent, the future of signing and retention bonuses, and best practices to elevate the innovative experience of Achievement First teachers during recruitment.

## **B. SY 2021-2022 report and reflections**

### **1. Scholars**

The next meeting topic focused on AF scholar data across academies this past school year. Mr. Sharkey expressed the tremendous progress in school academics and cultures that have brought us closer to pre-pandemic standards while also acknowledging that there is still work to be done to close pre-pandemic gaps, particularly in math.

Mr. Jesse Balis-Harris, Chief of Elementary Schools, continued the conversation with data on Connecticut elementary schools, reporting that the school year ended with strong adult and scholar culture that has created an imperative foundation for continual academic achievement. He shared state assessment results to express that students were not where they needed to be on reading and math proficiency. In order to increase levels to our goals, Mr. Balis-Harris explained that we will be implementing curriculum changes, intentional professional development in the science of reading, and upgraded coaching/training. Mr. Balis-Harris then entertained questions from the Board on AF assessment results in comparison to host district and state levels, class cohorts rebounding differently depending on age, and the need to eventually surpass pre-pandemic levels.

Ms. Charmayne Joseph, Interim Chief of Middle Schools, began by reporting on student experience at Connecticut middle schools which had mixed results for this year. For instance, academies met student experience survey goals yet there are needed improvements in attendance and suspension rates which are largely due to the ramification of the pandemic. As for academics, Ms. Joseph focused on reading, science, ELA and math results, and ultimately confirmed that middle school scholars have improved from 2020-2021 but are generally performing below pre-pandemic levels. She supported these findings by offering a range of data including internal

assessments and state testing results. Ms. Joseph also provided insight on changes that have fueled growth such as science growth due to improvement in our curriculum and instruction.

Mr. Rod Bowen, Chief of High Schools, presented the academic state of Connecticut high schools. Although more scholars passed all of their courses this school year than last, student performance differed. For example, state testing data was not up to par with course passing rates. Mr. Bowen then turned to school culture for high schools which has experienced improvements Student Belonging and Valuing School according to survey data but other aspects like suspension rates are actively being worked on by investing in inclusive practices. Board members voiced interest in more information on where students are going to school post-graduation and discussed social work at schools to provide mental health support.

Ms. Xanthe Jory, Chief Operating Officer, presented updates on scholar enrollment and recruitment efforts in Connecticut. She reported that three of four CT charters are fully enrolled and we expect them to be fully enrolled next school year as well. She explained the effective recruitment methods we are using such as in-person outreach strategies, phone banking, digital marketing, and building data capacity. Ms. Jory then entertained questions from board members about reasons for the current trends in kindergarten enrollment and the specifics of improvements to our digital advertisements.

## **2. Staff**

Ms. Cocuzza transitioned the conversation to staff updates. She explained the bi-annual organizational health survey AF releases and the metrics used to predict retention, and presented results from staff at each academy level. Where there was low employee satisfaction, Ms. Cocuzza noted that the root causes were tied to teacher shortage and staffing challenges. These survey conclusions also helped instructional leadership to build more intentional alignment and more effective principal development with regional superintendents.

Mr. Michael Rabin, Deputy Chief of Staff, continued with the current state of recruitment and retention. He noted that Connecticut's difficult certification requirements have taken a toll on the teaching profession at large. Mr. Rabin highlighted our talent efforts like salary and retention bonuses, prioritization of schools with most openings, increased marketing efforts, and streamlining application process. He concluded with brief updates on hiring goals versus progress made to date. Mr. Sharkey followed up with strategies leadership will implement proactively in the coming school year to mitigate the issues we have identified this past year. The board will hear

more updates on the progress of these efforts in fall meetings. Mr. Sharkey entertained questions from the Board on emphasizing specialized teacher coaching at AF.

Ms. Christina Braganza, Chief Program Officer, reported on the investment of staff summer training series for AF's school-based teams. Ms. Braganza highlighted New Team member taxonomy training which gives new teachers the opportunity to practice building a strong classroom environment by rehearsing lessons and roleplaying. She shared the excitement of summer training being back in-person, with over 95% of participants agreeing/strongly agreeing that summer training is of high quality and high impact. Mr. Sharkey added that the goal of summer professional development is to present a series of connected training and experiences that support our visions across academies. He explained that we employed a logic model to identify specific inputs, activities and outputs needed for each session to lead us to the intended mission. In other words, we no longer look at summer training as individual sessions but rather as a collective story that will accelerate the recovery of students. Board members inquired on how summer training effectiveness is being tracked and whether individual boards can thank teachers and staff through appreciation events or additional support.

### **3. Operations**

Ms. Jory said that with the lessons we learned last year, we have implemented COVID safety guidelines in schools which include:

- Aligning guidelines with district policies and CDC guidance to simplify the decision-making process
- Evolving approaches as policies change and pandemic progresses
- Continuing asymptomatic testing this fall
- Requiring staff to receive booster shots

She continued with insight on school response to both imminent and non-imminent threats to the school community. Ms. Jory explained that we have revised and clarified protocols covering a range of threat responses that align with state guidance as well as adjusted preparedness and prevention protocols. Board members asked questions about potential simulations that can help improve our response.

Lastly, Mr. Rabin covered charter renewals as all 4 charters are up for renewal this year. He explained that we are targeting 5 year renewals, and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) will be evaluating us on various components. Mr. Rabin provided an outline of the renewal process, and noted that we are currently at the formal renewal application stage. Board members will get this document as signatures will need to be obtained before moving forward with site visits. Overall, Mr. Rabin pointed out that leadership is working hard to fortify the relationship that AF has

with CSDE. During discussion, Mr. Rabin answered a question regarding any stumbling blocks in past renewals.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 PM by Dick Ferguson.

Motion by Dick Kalt

Seconded by Raj Lakra

All in favor

**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Monday, September 19, 2022, 5:30-7:00 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Minutes**
- IV. Presentation by Achievement First**
  - A. Principals' Reports
  - B. Deep dive on Academic Data
  - C. Presenting New Board Dashboard
- V. Committee Reports**
- VI. Board Discussion and Business**
  - A. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Leadership slate
  - B. Election of New Board Member
  - C. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Committees
  - D. Approval of Interim Principals
  - E. Approval of SY 2022-2023 Family Handbook
  - F. Conflict of Interest Forms
  - G. CMO Evaluation
- VII. Adjourn**

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## **MINUTES**

### **Achievement First Hartford Academy Joint High School Committee Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/7382361994>

Thursday, January 26, 2022, 4:30-5:30 pm

#### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Erwin Hurst Sr. at 4:33 pm.

Board members present:

AF Hartford Academy: Erwin Hurst Sr., Alice Turner

Jumoke: Myron Stewart, Arnel Hine, and Troy Monroe.

Also present were AF Staff: Dumar Paden, Regional Superintendent, Blakely Simoneau

#### **II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **III. Approval of Minutes**

It was:

RESOLVED the Achievement First Hartford Academy Joint High School Committee hereby approves the meeting minutes from December 1, 2021.

Motion by Myron Stewart

Second by Erwin Hurst, Sr.

All in favor.

#### **IV. Discussion**

##### **A. School Report**

Dumar Padem, Regional Superintendent, reported on:

- College and career readiness, including student college acceptances.

[achievementfirst.org](https://achievementfirst.org)



- Academic report - interim assessments just completed, will give a strong sense of student academic progress.
- College visits and trips
- Discussed School Health Survey results for the high school - positive aspects, areas for growth, next steps and commitments

Myron Stewart brought up a four day school week. Discussion of feasibility.

## **V. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Erwin Hurst Sr. at 4:48 pm.

Motion by Erwin Hurst, Sr.

Second by Myron Stewart

All in favor