

**DRAFT AGENDA**

**Achievement First (AF)**

**Elm City College Preparatory Board Meeting**

Monday, August 15, 2:00 pm

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

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Board Discussion and Business**
  - A. Discussion and vote on appointment of interim principal of Elm City College Preparatory Elementary School
- IV. Adjourn**

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Achievement First (AF)**  
**Elm City College Preparatory Board Meeting**

Monday, August 15, 2:00 pm

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

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:06pm by Dick Ferguson.

The following board members, constituting a quorum of the board, and AF staff were in attendance.

Board members: Dick Ferguson, LaVonta Bryant, Pat Gregory, Erica DeMond, Prish Pierce, Laura Saverin

AF Staff: Jesse Balis-Harris, Brooke Williams, Shannon Williams-Paden, Isabel Tañedo

Isabel Tañedo recorded the minutes.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Board Discussion and Business**

**A. Interview with Lauren D’Addario candidate for interim principal  
of Elm City College Preparatory Elementary School**

The Board entered into Executive Session at 2:06 pm, inviting AF staff on the call to join.

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Seconded by Prish Pierce  
All in favor.

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The Board exited out of Executive Session at 2:45 pm

Motion by Prish  
Seconded by Pat  
All in favor.

It was

RESOLVED, that the Elm City College Preparatory Board hereby approves the appointment of Lauren D’Addario as interim principal of the Elementary School until such time that a permanent principal is recruited.

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Seconded by Prish Pierce  
All in favor.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:46pm.

Motion by LaVonta Bryant  
Seconded by Pat Gregory  
All in favor.

**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

**AGENDA**

**Achievement First (AF) Elm City College Preparatory  
Finance Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, September 21st, 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**

## MINUTES

### Achievement First (AF) Elm City College Preparatory Finance Committee Meeting

Wednesday, September 21st, 2022, 1pm EST

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 1:05pm by Laura Saverin. The following board members and AF staff were in attendance.

##### Board members:

Richard Ferguson

Laura Saverin

Patrick Gregory

##### AF staff:

Neil Shah

Devin Devanney

Kate Aufiero

Ariana Rosa

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

There was no public comment.

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

There were no minutes needing approval.

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

Mr. Neil Shah reviewed the FY23 Financial Strategic Imperatives. This included the investments in finance improvements to areas of payroll, accounting and

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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.

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

Mr. Shah discussed the process of the Employee Retention Credit, which is a refundable payroll tax credit made available by the CARES Act of 2020. This work would be in collaboration with a company named Aprio.

#### **VI. Adjourn**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:37pm.

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Seconded by Patrick Gregory  
All in favor.

**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**  
**Elm City College Preparatory**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

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

Wednesday, September 29, 2022, 5:30-7:00 pm

**Trustees in Attendance:** Dick Ferguson, Stephanie Ma, Prish Pierce, LaVonte Bryant, Katie Hagen, Patric Gregory, Erica Demond

**Staff in Attendance:** Lisa Margosian, Beth Cocuzza, Sulafa Bashir, Neil Shah, Jesse Balis-Haris, John Sharkey, Ken Paul, Michael Rabin, Sultana Salma, Nakia Hall, Lauren D'Addario, Brooke Williams, Tanesha Forman

Patricia Granda-Malaver recorded the minutes.

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:32PM by Mr. Dick Ferguson, Elm City College Preparatory Board Chair.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

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

BE IT RESOLVED, the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from August 15, 2022.

Motion by LaVonte Bryant  
Seconded by Katie Hagen  
All in favor

**IV. Presentation by Achievement First**

Before beginning, Ms. Lisa Margosian, Interim Chief Executive Officer, kicked off the presentations with an inspirational quote to highlight the amazing work and “magic”

she witnessed the Elm City school leaders implementing when visiting their campuses this school year.

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

Ms. Lauren D'Addario, Elm City College Preparatory (ECCP) Elementary School Principal, provided updates on the strong start to the 2022-2023 year. She shared that student enrollment is at 100% and will soon be fully staffed as they finalize filling two open positions. Ms. D'Addario then transitioned to return-to-school highlights. In terms of adult culture, ECCP ES had a strong start, and to ensure staff happiness, they have pre-planned staff appreciation events and a mini-pulse survey that had positive results. As for the student and family experiences, Ms. D'Addario elaborated on the creative events they have executed including spirit days, principal meet & greet, and an in-person Back-to-School Night. Furthermore, a strong classroom environment has been prioritized, and the academic effectiveness will be assessed soon since students will be entering their first testing cycle. Mr. Patric Gregory, ECCP Board member, asked about academic data, and AF leaders responded that this will be covered later in the meeting.

Next, Ms. Tanesha Forman, Elm City College Preparatory Middle School Principal, presented the start of year updates. She noted that student enrollment is at 100%. As for staffing, there are limited open positions, and those are currently being filled by school leaders. Other highlights that Ms. Forman discussed include: 1) a strong start for teachers and students, 2) family re-engagement through a BBQ and Back-to-School Night, and 3) unique student experience like weekly events that celebrate academic and character habits.

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

Mr. Jesse Balis-Harris, Interim K-8 Chief of Schools, presented a summary deep dive of Bridgeport academics. He began by explaining the multiple data points they would be sharing and that overall there have been 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. For this school year, AF will continue to measure performance through internal assessments, STEP, STAR, MAP, and mock state assessments as we have seen an alignment of those test results with state testing. These results will prove whether curriculum pilots are being effectively implemented and supported. Mr. Balis-Harris then continued with bar charts to provide the board a visual representation of the Elm City schools' academic data and pointed out performance comparisons with other AF CT schools and the overall AF Network. Board members asked questions

throughout the presentation related to district-by-district comparative data, which Mr. Balis-Harris clarified we do not yet have access to, and STEM teacher recruitment.

After his presentation, Mr. Balis-Harris provided insight on AF's response and academic initiatives for this school year. The three main tactics he focused on were:

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

The board members asked further questions on the curricular pilots and emotional/social support being provided to scholars this school year.

### **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. No questions were asked.

Mr. Ferguson thanked all of the AF staff that presented for the concise and informative data provided. He reminded board members that the meeting is recorded, so they can rewatch if they are ever unable to attend or would like to rewatch to fully understand everything that was covered.

### **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. Shah answered lingering questions about staffing trends. Mr. Ferguson then moved the board to vote on the matter.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the amended budget as recommended by the Treasurer and prepared by Achievement First for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Motion by Prish Pierce  
Second by LaVonte Bryant  
All in favor.



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

Mr. Forman moved the board to vote on the following matters:

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

BE IT RESOLVED, that Elm City College Preparatory Board Board of Directors hereby elects the following leadership slate for the 2022-2023 fiscal year:

- Dick Ferguson, Chair
- Laura Saverin, Treasurer
- Stephanie Ma, Secretary

Motion by Dick Ferguson  
Second by Prish Pierce  
All in favor.

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

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby appoints the following committee members:

- Finance Committee: Laura Saverin (Chair), Dick Ferguson, Patric Gregory
- Governance Committee: Stephanie Ma (Chair), Dick Ferguson, Laura Saverin, Prish Pierce
- Personnel Committee: Dick Ferguson (Chair), Stephanie Ma, Patric Gregory, Prish Pierce
- AF Joint Amistad Committee: Dick Ferguson, Laura Saverin, Prish Pierce

Motion by LaVonte Bryant  
Second by Patric Gregory  
All in favor.

### **C. Approval of Interim Principals**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the following individuals to serve as interim principals, as needed, based on the recommendations by Achievement First, between September 29 and November 30, 2022.

- Elementary School: Julia Leonard
- Middle School: Serena Johnson

Motion by Dick Ferguson  
Second by LaVonte Bryant  
All in favor.

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

BE IT RESOLVED, the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the 2022-2023 AF Family Handbook.

Motion by Dick Ferguson  
Second by LaVonte Bryant  
All in favor.

#### **VII. Adjourn**

Prior to adjourning, Mr. Ferguson reminded board members to complete conflict of interest forms by the given deadline.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:33PM by Mr. Dick Ferguson.

Motion by LaVonte Bryant  
Seconded by Prish Pierce  
All in favor

**AGENDA**  
**Elm City College Preparatory**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

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

Wednesday, November 30, 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
- V. Committee Reports**
  - A. Finance Committee
  - B. Amistad Joint HS Committee
- VI. Board Discussion and Business**
  - A. Approval of Interim Principals
  - B. Update on CEO Search
  - C. Other Business
- VII. Adjourn**



**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Elm City College Preparatory**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

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

Wednesday, November 30, 2022, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Dick Ferguson at 5:31 pm.

Attendees: Board Members

Name	Present	Name	Present
Dick Ferguson	Y	LaVonta Bryant	Y
Laura Saverin	Y	Katie Hagen	Y
Stephanie Ma	Y	Erica Demond	Y
Prish Pierce	Y	Patric Gregory	N

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Neil Shah, Karolyn Belcher, Xanthe Jory, John Sharkey, Beth Cocouzza, Jesse Balis-Harris, Brooke Williams, Tanesha Forman, Sulafa Bashir, Sultana Salma, Ken Paul

Sulafa Bashir recorded the minutes.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Ferguson took the board through approval of the previous meeting minutes.

It was:

RESOLVED, the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from September 29, 2022.

Motion by Prish Pierce

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Second LaVonta Bryant  
All in favor

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

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

Prior to commencing the presentation, Ms. Lisa Margosian, Interim Chief Executive Officer, introduced newly appointed Acting Superintendent, Ms. Karolyn Belcher.

Mr. John Sharkey gave an overview to frame the data from the initial round of internal assessments, sharing that there continue to be incremental improvements in ES and MS that suggest that there is modest progress from last year. However, there is a need to increase the rate of progress in order to achieve the year-end goals set.

Ms. Brooke Williams, Regional Superintendent for ES, shared the principal report on behalf of Principal Lauren D'Addario. Highlights included positive student and family experience survey results as well as strong adult culture based on the network-wide health survey. Mr. Jesse Balis-Harris added that the survey provides access to national comparative data, which puts the school in the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Ms. Williams shared academic data and challenges related to student achievement, while emphasizing the school's focus on leveraging reading programs' progress monitoring tools to assess scholar development. Similarly, in Math, she mentioned interventions including a focus on CGI instruction and ensuring teachers are facilitating robust math discussions.

There was also a discussion on safety which was a growth area based on family survey responses.

Ms. Tanesha Forman shared the MS principal report, discussing the staffing and academic challenges. She noted the school stabilization as a highlight which moved from an average of 1.8 to 3.0 on foundational teacher skills and habits during classroom walkthroughs. Another highlight was student experience and community partnership, which included prioritizing student belonging and teacher relationships.

Ms. Forman presented the academic data which included STAR reading assessment which shows Grade Level Equivalency (GLE) achieved by scholars compared to their grade. To reduce the variance, the school has prioritized phonics and guided reading to (re) build foundational reading.



Ms. Forman also presented on the student culture, including the student experience where learning favorability increased 7 points and is the highest level achieved in the last 2 years.

Board members asked questions and requested data comparing results with state, district and national results where possible. There was also a discussion on the challenges of staffing including the impact of the flu season, and the overall implications thereof. The school is trying to find creative ways to fill the gap in staffing, which will be a multi-year initiative.

There was a discussion on celebrating the work being done and the board expressed interest in supporting a staff celebration event.

## **V. Committee Reports**

### **A. Finance Committee**

Mr. Neil Shah, Chief Financial Officer, presented the Q1 Financials focusing on the P&L. He noted that the audited statements will be reviewed in December, which will then be reported during the January 2023 meeting. The board members were invited to attend the review meeting.

### **B. Amistad Joint HS Committee**

Mr. Dick Ferguson shared an update from the Amistad Joint High School Committee meeting, stating that hiring is a challenge, particularly in STEM. He noted concern about the STAR reading assessment results and the reported grade level assessment for 12<sup>th</sup> grade. It was acknowledged that this was a nation-wide issue and had significant impacts on college readiness and remediation needed.

Mr. Ferguson mentioned attending a celebration for students with academic honors at the high school earlier that month. Ms. Prish Pierce remarked that she had noticed that the majority of students receiving the awards were female and was curious about national trend data on the variation between girls and boys recognized for high academic achievement. Ms. Margosian noted that AF staff will follow up on the matter.

There was also a discussion on AF's shift away from "college for all" to college-ready, recognizing that some students will opt for alternatives to the college route. Ms. Margosian noted that the revised framework of what it means to be college ready will be shared in January 2023.



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

### **A. Approval of Interim Principals**

Mr. Ferguson took the board through a resolution to extend the duration (through the end of the year) of the previously approved candidates who would act as interim principals in the event of an unanticipated leave by a current school principal.

It was:

RESOLVED that the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the following individuals to serve as interim principals, as needed, based on the recommendations by Achievement First, between November 30, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

Elementary School: Julia Leonard

Middle School: Serena Johnson

Motion by Laura Saverin

Second by LaVonta Bryant

All in favor

### **B. Update on CEO Search**

Mr. Ferguson noted that the search committee has been established and consists of board members from AF Inc and some AF school boards as well.

Ms. Margosian stated that the committee has already vetted search firms and drafted the CEO job description. During the December/January break, potential candidates will be identified.

### **C. Other Business**

Mr. Ferguson presented the calendar of upcoming board meetings for 2023.

## **VII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Dick Ferguson at 6:35 pm.

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**AGENDA**  
**Elm City College Preparatory**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Zoom

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- VII. Adjourn**





**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**Elm City College Preparatory**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Amistad Academy Middle School, Room 148  
130 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06511

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/84426932704>

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
- V. Committee Reports**
  - A. Amistad Joint HS Committee Report
  - B. Treasurer's Report
    - 1. FY22 Audited Financial Statements
- VI. Adjourn**

**RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION**

BE IT RESOLVED, the Elm City College Preparatory Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from November 30, 2022.

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**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Elm City College Preparatory**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Amistad Academy Middle School, Room 148  
130 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06511  
Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/84426932704>  
Monday, February 6, 2023, 5:30-6:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm by Mr. Dick Ferguson.

Attendees

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

Name	Present	Name	Present
Dick Ferguson	Y	LaVonta Bryant	N
Laura Saverin	Y	Katie Hagen	N
Stephanie Ma	?	Patric Gregory	N
Prish Pierce	Y	Shashank Ghiria	Y
Erica Demond	Y		

AF Staff: Michael Rabin, Lauren D'Addario, Tanesha Forman, Gaylord Bourne, Sulafa Bashir

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Approval of the minutes was postponed until a quorum was achieved later in the meeting.

**IV. Discussion with Achievement First**

A. Principals' Reports

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Ms. Lauren D’Addario gave the elementary school report, discussing some school events from the end of the 2022 calendar year, as well as positive results of student experience where the school’s results placed it at number 1 in the network. Ms. D’Addario mentioned that, in January, the elementary school kicked off reading testing and academic interventions including incorporating more small group instruction. She also shared some pictures depicting “joy days.”

Ms. D’Addario then described the Org health survey measuring employee satisfaction that all staff across the network took each year, and she summarized the school’s results, which exceeded the network goal.

There were questions from board members about:

- whether Gallup worked with charter schools only or also district schools in K-12
- whether the school was fully staffed, and the number of first year teachers (i.e. new to teaching and new to the school
- the teacher certification status at the elementary school

Ms. Tanesha Forman gave the middle school report, sharing some details and photos of winter events from the end of the calendar year and black history month. She mentioned that the middle school students took the STAR reading assessment in January and students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade were at the top of network reading growth while 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders’ results placed them somewhere in the middle of the network. She also outlined some of the action items being taken to support students’ growth, especially for grades 5 and 8.

Ms. Forman summarized the results of the middle school’s org health survey and highlighted the differences among the more tenured teachers whose results were much stronger relative to their peers who were new to teaching. She also shared the initiatives around building adult culture that she was undertaking with her staff. She detailed the overall positive aspects and growth areas from the survey as well as the next steps around supporting staff to build trust and feel successful.

Board members asked questions about:

- Friday afternoon staff PD and what it entails
- Teacher certification rate
- Percentages of new teachers coming from liberal arts colleges vs. Ed School programs.

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## V. Committee Reports

### A. Amistad Joint HS Committee Report

The Elm City College Prep Board joined the Amistad Academy Board and the AF Bridgeport Academy Board to hear the Amistad Joint HS Committee report.

Mr. Rod Bowen gave the High School report on behalf of Principal Simon Obas, starting with an update about the staff holiday party and some highlights about the school's basketball team.

He then discussed the results of the school's recent org health survey which outperformed the AF network averages across all dimensions but one.

He shared some of the key positive aspects and the growth areas and outlined some next steps and action items that the school's leadership team committed to putting in place in response to the survey results.

Board members asked questions about

- the STAR reading data and whether it represented a particular grade or an overall average
- whether humanities teachers were also able to focus on reading instruction and what other resources can be made available to shore up literacy such as tutoring

### B. Treasurer's Report

#### 1. FY22 Audited Financial Statements

Ms. Laura Saverin gave the Treasurer's report highlighting the results of the annual Audit. She shared that once again the audit received an unmodified opinion or clean opinion and there were no issues identified by the auditors. She also mentioned that the results of the Federal and State single audits were also clean, unmodified opinions. She touched on the use of ESSR federal funding and the increased expenses seen this year associated with items such as meals and busing, resulting from school being fully in-person.

### Approval of Minutes

Mr. Ferguson took the board through approval of the minutes



Motion by Laura Saverin  
Second by Prish Pierce.  
All in favor

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

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**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**

**DRAFT AGENDA**

**Achievement First (AF) Elm City College Prep  
Finance Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 10AM 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**



**AGENDA**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/82747985651>

Monday, March 13, 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
- VI. Committee Reports**
  - A. Finance Committee Report
- VII. Adjourn**

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**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/82747985651>

Monday, March 13, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 pm by Mr. Dick Ferguson.

Attendees

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

Name	Present	Name	Present
Dick Ferguson	Y	LaVonta Bryant	Y
Laura Saverin	Y	Katie Hagen	N
Stephanie Ma	Y	Patric Gregory	Y
Prish Pierce	N	Shashank Ghiria	N
Erica Demond	N		

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Blakely Simoneau, Christi George, Charmayne Joseph, Brooke Williams, Neil Shah, Michael Rabin, Sulafa Bashir, Xanthe Jory.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Ferguson took the board members through approval of the previous meeting's minutes.

It was:

RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from February 6, 2023.

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Motion by Laura Saverin  
Second by Pat Gregory  
All in favor

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

##### **A. Proposed Executive Session**

Mr. Ferguson proposed that the board enter into Executive Session to discuss principal mid-year reviews and the principal hiring pipeline, inviting the following AF staff to join: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Christi George, Charmayne Joseph, and Brooke Williams.

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Second by LaVonta Bryant  
All in favor

The board entered into executive session at 5:37 pm and exited at 5:58 pm.

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

##### **A. Academic Update**

Ms. Karolyn Belcher shared that the board members asked for the latest academic data during executive session and that while it was not available yet as the assessment cycle was still on-going, the team would commit to share in more detail at the next board meeting.

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.

Board members asked about specific reading curriculum that was used in the past and also about whether certain AF curricula would still be in use.

##### **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.

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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.

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.

Ms. Lisa Margosian and Ms. George also added some context on the challenges with hiring STEM teachers in the middle school, and highlighted incentives such as signing bonuses as well as efforts to retain current teachers.

Board members asked about whether the state was considering loosening restrictions for teacher certification given the teacher shortage and advocacy efforts. In response, Ms. George mentioned a survey that CSDE sent out asking about the teacher shortage as it relates to teacher certification.

#### 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 about the current certification rate for the charter.

Ms. Lisa Margosian also added that the network was setting a different tone with the authorizer with respect to teacher certification compared to prior years and that the team was making strides to cooperate and be in compliance.

#### D. Legislative Update

Ms. Blakely Simoneau reported on a legislative update on behalf of Nakia Hall, 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 to funding public schools with the highest need which would include charter schools and give them access to these funds. Ms. Simoneau 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 more information on these efforts would be emailed out by Nakia Hall to the board.

There was a discussion about how the charter funding gap in CT and how funding worked differently compared to NY where “the money follows the child”.

## **VI. Committee Reports**

### **A. Finance Committee Report**

Mr. Neil Shah presented a summary of the Q2 financials for the charter.

There was a discussion about the philanthropy amounts being raised by AF to balance the budget and whether they had changed from the budgeted amounts and also whether they were on track to meet targets.

## **VII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Dick Ferguson at 6:47 pm.

Motion by Pat Gregory  
Second by Laura Saverin  
All in favor.



**AGENDA**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Personnel Committee Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

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

Monday, March 27, 2023, 1:00-2:00 pm

- I. Call to Order**
- II. 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
- IV. Adjourn**

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**Minutes  
Elm City College Prep  
Personnel Committee Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

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

Monday, March 27, 2023, 1:00-2:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Dick Ferguson at 1:00 pm.

Committee members in attendance, constituting a quorum:

Dick Ferguson, Pat Gregory, Prish Pierce, Stephanie Ma

Other Elm City College Prep Board members in attendance: Laura Saverin

AF Staff in Attendance: Lauren D’Addario, 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 inviting Laura Saverin and Lauren D’Addario to join.

Motion: Pat Gregory

Second: Prish Pierce

All in favor



The committee members exited executive session at 1:58 pm and voted unanimously to recommend to the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors the appointment of Lauren D'Addario as the principal for ECCP Elementary School.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:01 pm.



**AGENDA**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

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

Monday, April 3, 2023, 4:00-4:30 pm

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

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**Minutes**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

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

Monday, April 3, 2023, 4:00-4:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Dick Ferguson at 4:01 pm.

Attendees

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

Name	Present	Name	Present
Dick Ferguson	Y	LaVonta Bryant	Y
Laura Saverin	Y	Katie Hagen	N
Stephanie Ma	N	Patric Gregory	Y
Prish Pierce	Y	Shashank Ghiria	Y
Erica Demond	Y		

AF Staff: Sulafa Bashir, Charmayne Joseph, Brooke Williams

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Board Discussion**

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

Mr Dick Ferguson took the board through a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss principal renewals and appointments, inviting the following AF staff to join: Sulafa Bashir, Charmayne Joseph, Brooke Williams

Motion by Laura Saverin

Second by LaVonta Bryant

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All in Favor.

The board entered executive session at 4:04 pm and exited at 4:08 pm

Mr. Ferguson took the board through the vote to approve the principal renewal and appointment for Elm City as follows:

It was:

RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby approves the renewal of the Tanesha Forman as principal of Elm City College Prep Middle School, with a final compensation package to be incorporated in the FY24 Budget to be reviewed and approved in May 2023.

Motion by Dick Ferguson  
Second by Laura Saverin  
All in favor.

It was further:

RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby appoints Lauren D'Addario as principal of Elm City College Prep Elementary School effective July 1, 2023.

Motion by Dick Ferguson  
Second by Patric Gregory  
All in favor.

#### B. Healthy Food Certification

Mr Ferguson then turned to the topic of the healthy food certification resolutions that were previously sent to the board. He asked if the board members had read through the proposed resolutions and then subsequently took the board through the vote on the two resolutions as follows:

It was:

RESOLVED that, pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the



schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

It was further:

RESOLVED that, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales.

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Second by LaVonta Bryant  
All in favor.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Dick Ferguson at 4:18 pm

Motion by Pat Gregory  
Second Lavonta Bryant  
All in favor.

**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/89966838394>

Tuesday, May 30, 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 (10 min)
  - C. Amistad HS Committee Report (5 min)
  - D. State of Our Students - student wellness, academic progress, and high school update (20 min)
  - E. Finance Committee Report
    - 1. Q3 Financials and FY 24 Budgets (15 min)
    - 2. Fiscal & Procurement Policies, and Audit Engagement (5 min)
  - F. Charter Renewal Next Steps (10 min)
  - G. SY 2023/2024 Strategic Imperatives (5 min)
  - H. Schools Portfolio Planning (5 min)
- V. Board Business**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session: CEO Search and Talent Update (10 min)
- VI. Adjourn**

**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/89966838394>

Tuesday, May 30, 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 (10 min)
  - C. Amistad HS Committee Report (5 min)
  - D. State of Our Students - student wellness, academic progress, and high school update (20 min)
  - E. Finance Committee Report
    - 1. Q3 Financials and FY 24 Budgets (15 min)
    - 2. Fiscal & Procurement Policies, and Audit Engagement (5 min)
  - F. Charter Renewal Next Steps (10 min)
  - G. SY 2023/2024 Strategic Imperatives (5 min)
  - H. Schools Portfolio Planning (5 min)
- V. Board Business**
  - A. Proposed Executive Session: CEO Search and Talent Update (10 min)
- VI. Adjourn**



**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/89966838394>

Tuesday, May 30, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Dick Ferguson at 5:32 pm.

Attendees

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

Name	Present	Name	Present
Dick Ferguson	Y	LaVonta Bryant	Y
Laura Saverin	Y	Katie Hagen	N
Stephanie Ma	Y	Patric Gregory	Y
Prish Pierce	N	Shashank Ghiria	Y
Erica Demond	N		

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Neil Shah, Michael Rabin, Christi George, Blakely Simoneau, Lauren D'Addario, Tanesha Forman, Brooke Williams, Sulafa Bashir

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

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

Welcome new Yale Board Fellow Shashank Ghiria.

Meeting minutes approved.

It was:

- RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 10, 2023 and April 4, 2023.
- RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby approves Mr. Shashank Ghiria to serve as a Yale SOM Board Fellow for an 18-month term, ending June 30, 2024.

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Second by Lavonta Bryant  
All in favor.

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

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

Lisa Margosian, Interim CEO, welcomed the board.

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

Lauren D’Addario provided an update on the ECCP Elementary School, including recent and upcoming events. Tanesha Foreman provided an update on ECCP Middle School. Both principals concentrated on the partnership between the two schools, following their slogan “Two Schools One Mission.”

Karolyn Belcher provided updates on Amistad High School, including culture set backs and how AF is thinking through a reset and concentrating on restorative practices and deescalation.

Karolyn Belcher provided an update on the academic progress at the school. She acknowledged that there is not the achievement that AF aspires to, but that there is some growth. Ms. D’Addario raised that many of the students didn’t finish the test, but also that testing lasted two days and they felt it was too much to put students through multiple days of testing. Ms. Belcher confirmed that this is a mock test, and is longer than other tests.

Board members asked about the test and academic improvement. Mr. Ferguson asked about how AF scholars are doing compared to the district. Ms. Belcher explained that the information will come from the district, but that doesn’t come until later. She highlighted that they are in the process of redoing the curriculum which could be part of the reason why the results are the way they are. The focus on school culture this year is paying off with less staff

turnover and improving culture can lead to better academic performance.

C. Amistad HS Committee Report (5 min)

Ms. Belcher provided updates on high school academics. She acknowledged that there is more work that needs to be done around reading. She also presented on post-graduate plans, and noted that the majority of the students graduating will be going to four year colleges.

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

Ms. Belcher presented information on the state of the students, including mental health needs and safety responses. She acknowledged that academics, mental health, and safety go together. Mr. Ferguson asked about any serious incidents, and Ms. Belcher and Ms. Margosian confirmed that nothing additional has happened.

E. Finance Committee Report

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

Neil Shah presented the Q3 financials and FY 2024 budgets. He noted that the assets far exceed liabilities. He requested the board approve the next year's budget. He noted that there is less revenue due to ESSER, but fewer expenses as well. There is increased public funding and also philanthropy. Ms. Saverin confirmed that there is no change in philosophy, but that the big change is in philanthropy.

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

Mr. Shah provided information on Key Bank, where Elm City keeps its funds. Mr. Shah noted to that regional banks are failing, and requested permission to move the accounts to Bank of America as it is a safer option.

Mr. Shah pointed out changes to the fiscal and procurement policies, which were included in the pre-read. Mr. Shah also asked for approval to use Cohen Reznik as auditors.

Mr. Ferguson called for a motion to approve the resolutions. Ms. Saverin moved, Mr. Pat Gregory seconded. No opposed, all in favor.

It was:

RESOLVED, that the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby approves the financial budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year as presented.

RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby ratifies the re-appointment of CohnReznick to perform the financial audit of the 2023-24 fiscal year and prepare the IRS Form 990s.

RESOLVED that Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby ratifies the revisions to the Fiscal Policies and to the Procurement Policies as presented.

RESOLVED that the Elm City Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the opening of 1 checking account and 1 savings account at Bank of America.

RESOLVED that the Elm City Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the closure of 3 bank accounts at Key Bank.

#### F. Charter Renewal Next Steps (5 min)

Michael Rabin presented on the charter renewal next steps, which includes three areas of improvement - staff certification, academic improvement, and chronic absenteeism. Mr. Rabin explained that they are working with the Connecticut State Department of Education and have submitted plans, but are waiting on CSDE feedback.

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

Ms. Margosian provided updates on the progress toward the Strategic Imperatives for SY 22-23. She presented on the Strategic Imperatives for the coming school year.

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

Mr. Rabin presented on the timeline for schools portfolio planning, and confirmed there are no major changes right now but that the board will be brought along every step of the way. Mr. Rabin confirmed that this was really meant as a preview of the process. Ms. Margosian offered background on the consolidation of two AF New York high schools.

### V. Board Business

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

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Second by Pat Gregory  
All in favor.

**VI. Adjourn**

**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Elm City College Prep**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/89966838394>

Tuesday, May 30, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Dick Ferguson at 5:32 pm.

Attendees

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

Name	Present	Name	Present
Dick Ferguson	Y	LaVonta Bryant	Y
Laura Saverin	Y	Katie Hagen	N
Stephanie Ma	Y	Patric Gregory	Y
Prish Pierce	N	Shashank Ghiria	Y
Erica Demond	N		

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Karolyn Belcher, Neil Shah, Michael Rabin, Christi George, Blakely Simoneau, Lauren D'Addario, Tanesha Forman, Brooke Williams, Sulafa Bashir

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

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

Welcome new Yale Board Fellow Shashank Ghiria.

Meeting minutes approved.

It was:

- RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 10, 2023 and April 4, 2023.
- RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby approves Mr. Shashank Ghiria to serve as a Yale SOM Board Fellow for an 18-month term, ending June 30, 2024.

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Second by Lavonta Bryant  
All in favor.

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

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

Lisa Margosian, Interim CEO, welcomed the board.

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

Lauren D’Addario provided an update on the ECCP Elementary School, including recent and upcoming events. Tanesha Foreman provided an update on ECCP Middle School. Both principals concentrated on the partnership between the two schools, following their slogan “Two Schools One Mission.”

Karolyn Belcher provided updates on Amistad High School, including culture set backs and how AF is thinking through a reset and concentrating on restorative practices and deescalation.

Karolyn Belcher provided an update on the academic progress at the school. She acknowledged that there is not the achievement that AF aspires to, but that there is some growth. Ms. D’Addario raised that many of the students didn’t finish the test, but also that testing lasted two days and they felt it was too much to put students through multiple days of testing. Ms. Belcher confirmed that this is a mock test, and is longer than other tests.

Board members asked about the test and academic improvement. Mr. Ferguson asked about how AF scholars are doing compared to the district. Ms. Belcher explained that the information will come from the district, but that doesn’t come until later. She highlighted that they are in the process of redoing the curriculum which could be part of the reason why the results are the way they are. The focus on school culture this year is paying off with less staff

turnover and improving culture can lead to better academic performance.

C. Amistad HS Committee Report (5 min)

Ms. Belcher provided updates on high school academics. She acknowledged that there is more work that needs to be done around reading. She also presented on post-graduate plans, and noted that the majority of the students graduating will be going to four year colleges.

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

Ms. Belcher presented information on the state of the students, including mental health needs and safety responses. She acknowledged that academics, mental health, and safety go together. Mr. Ferguson asked about any serious incidents, and Ms. Belcher and Ms. Margosian confirmed that nothing additional has happened.

E. Finance Committee Report

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

Neil Shah presented the Q3 financials and FY 2024 budgets. He noted that the assets far exceed liabilities. He requested the board approve the next year's budget. He noted that there is less revenue due to ESSER, but fewer expenses as well. There is increased public funding and also philanthropy. Ms. Saverin confirmed that there is no change in philosophy, but that the big change is in philanthropy.

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

Mr. Shah provided information on Key Bank, where Elm City keeps its funds. Mr. Shah noted to that regional banks are failing, and requested permission to move the accounts to Bank of America as it is a safer option.

Mr. Shah pointed out changes to the fiscal and procurement policies, which were included in the pre-read. Mr. Shah also asked for approval to use Cohen Reznik as auditors.

Mr. Ferguson called for a motion to approve the resolutions. Ms. Saverin moved, Mr. Pat Gregory seconded. No opposed, all in favor.



It was:

RESOLVED, that the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby approves the financial budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year as presented.

RESOLVED, the Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby ratifies the re-appointment of CohnReznick to perform the financial audit of the 2023-24 fiscal year and prepare the IRS Form 990s.

RESOLVED that Elm City College Prep Board of Directors hereby ratifies the revisions to the Fiscal Policies and to the Procurement Policies as presented.

RESOLVED that the Elm City Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the opening of 1 checking account and 1 savings account at Bank of America.

RESOLVED that the Elm City Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the closure of 3 bank accounts at Key Bank.

#### F. Charter Renewal Next Steps (5 min)

Michael Rabin presented on the charter renewal next steps, which includes three areas of improvement - staff certification, academic improvement, and chronic absenteeism. Mr. Rabin explained that they are working with the Connecticut State Department of Education and have submitted plans, but are waiting on CSDE feedback.

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

Ms. Margosian provided updates on the progress toward the Strategic Imperatives for SY 22-23. She presented on the Strategic Imperatives for the coming school year.

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### V. Board Business

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

Motion by Laura Saverin  
Second by Pat Gregory  
All in favor.

**VI. 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