



AF Brooklyn Board Meeting Minutes

Achievement First

Thursday, December 9, 2025 at 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM EST

TFA, 25 Broadway, 12th Floor, GC Room, New York, NY 10004

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/82265325929>

Attendees:

Trustees: Brandon Sorlie, Paul Cabana, Christopher Lynch, Tamika Bradley, Desiree Dalton, Erica Murphy, Kevin Miquelon, David Pollak, Amy Arthur Samuels, Keith Brooks

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Kristin Damo, Michael Rabin, Michael Diaz, Omar Mayyasi, Sulafa Bashir, Ben Schanback

Guests: Present over Zoom: Stephanie Kotnik, Nisha Inthiraratnam, and others

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by Brandon Sorlie.

II. Public Comment

There were no members of the public wishing to make comment. In response to the public comment heard at the previous meeting dated October 7, 2025, Mr. Sorlie read the following statement into record:

“I want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the Achievement First Bushwick Middle School staff members who shared their perspectives during our October board meeting’s public comment period. We appreciate your commitment to your school community and the care you expressed in your remarks.

Following that meeting, I connected with our regional leadership to better understand the situation and the steps that have already been taken to support staff and families during the leadership transition. Based on that review, the Board has determined that the requests raised fall within the scope of school and network management rather than board governance. The Board’s role is to ensure that Achievement First’s management acts in accordance with established policies, practices and core values, and we are confident that this has been done in this case. Matters related to communication and engagement with staff and families are managed by regional and school leadership.

I have communicated this directly to those who spoke at the October meeting and again want to thank them for taking the time to share their feedback and for engaging respectfully in the public comment process.

We encourage continued dialogue with regional leaders, including Executive Director Kristin Damo, who remain available to support the Bushwick Middle School community.”

III. Welcome and Agenda Overview

Mr. Sorlie then turned it over to Executive Director Kristin Damo who gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

IV. Mission Moment

Kristin Damo shared the mission moment highlighting the Empower program, which serves students with intense and complex learning disabilities. She stated that the program is fully staffed with directors and teachers, a historically challenging accomplishment, and is fully enrolled with students in K-12 and was marking the first graduating class this year.

Ms. Damo also celebrated the fact that 100% of university prep's graduating class matriculated into chosen college or career pathways, indicating strong persistence numbers.

V. New York Progress towards Goals

Ms. Damo moved on to review school progress towards goals, focused on achievement, attendance and teacher retention. The discussion started with an analysis of the first interim assessment cycle. Erica Murphy shared some of the highlights that had been discussed at the Academic Committee meeting, including the significant gains made by elementary schools in ELA as well as some growth across all subjects and academies. She emphasized the stark variation in proficiency rates that was observed, prompting a focus on spreading best practices among schools. There was also an observation that middle school results showed either stagnation or minimal growth, suggesting a need to recalibrate efforts to reach the 80% proficiency goal in the near future. In high school, significant growth was noted in some pockets but was not consistent across the 3 high schools.

The discussion moved on to revisit the importance of teacher retention goals for the year, highlighting improvements in retention rates over the years, although middle school remains an area needing attention. Emphasis was placed on regrettable retention numbers to better understand losses of valuable staff. The team discussed actions taken to improve retention including adjusting salary schedules for competitive market compatibility and organizing career conversations for staff development. Additionally, continued investments were being made in leadership development, given the noted correlation between the strength of school leadership and teacher retention rates and academic outcomes.

Questions were raised about why certain schools lose more teachers than others and about evaluating the average and median number of teachers' years of experience across schools, some of which was noted to be addressed at a future meeting.

Moving on to attendance data, it was noted that there is continued improvement in metrics, with active family engagement and outreach driving success in elementary and middle schools. High school attendance remains a challenge, but there is a strategic focus on incentives to continue to improve student engagement and attendance post pandemic.

There followed a discussion of areas of strength and opportunity with a focus on noted inconsistencies and skill level variation among schools, with some schools showing significant growth while others remain stagnant or grow at a slower rate. An observation was made that students perform well in elementary school but show decreased academic growth upon entering middle school. Contributing factors include large staffing gaps, a newer leadership team, and inconsistent standards which are being addressed through collaboration with regional superintendents.

Ms. Damo highlighted the team's sustained focus on collaborative growth, involving focused leader development as well as intensified regional support and extensive feedback for effective teaching.

There was a suggestion about balancing talent across schools and grade levels to better support struggling students. The team shared that recent efforts have been made to strategically expose principals to different levels (elementary vs. middle school) to enhance understanding of diverse teaching methods and to foster great teaching across all levels, noting similarity in fundamental teaching principles regardless of grade.

VI. Finance Report

Chris Lynch kicked off the Finance Committee's report by highlighting the meeting with the auditors who once again gave an unqualified audit opinion indicating compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and successful pressure tests for audit, fraud, and billing.

Ben Schanback introduced himself as the new CFO and thanked outgoing Interim CFO Omar Mayyasi for his contributions to the organization and his work with the board.

Ms. Schanback discussed the Q1 financials, highlighting modest revenue and expense decreases. The balance sheet remained strong, although cash flow has decreased year-over-year, primarily due to capital spending on large construction projects.

Enrollment figures were relatively stable at elementary but continued to be a challenge in middle school. Efforts have been intensified this year to improve matriculation rates from elementary to middle school, aiming to address declining trends.

There was a discussion on enrollment strategies. Key points included:

- Significant increases in marketing and advertising spending have positively impacted student enrollment and overall revenue.
- Positive enrollment trends were noted at elementary schools with strong community outreach and enrollment strategies, which are being shared across schools for best practice implementation.
- Additionally, it was noted that location has become more critical due to competitiveness. Facilities improvements, like cosmetic enhancements, are considered as long-term strategies to boost enrollment, particularly in challenging locations.

VII. Executive Session

Mr. Sorlie indicated the need for the Board to enter into executive session to discuss the topics of new board members and a personnel matter and called for a motion, inviting all AF staff in attendance in the conference room to join. Paul Cabana motioned, seconded by Chris Lynch. All were in favor and the board entered executive session at 7:22 pm and exited at 7:50 pm.

VIII. Board Resolutions

Mr. Sorlie moved on to the approval of the proposed resolutions, noting an amendment that was made in the previous meeting minutes to correct an error where Keith Brooks' name was

inadvertently left off the Academic Committee list. He also added that there was a resolution to add Romy Coquilletto back to the Executive Committee, stating that Romy's name was left off as an oversight, given that his and Romy's intention was for her to remain on to maintain consistency and support the chair role transition.

There being no questions or requested edits from the board, Mr. Sorlie asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Desiree Dalton motioned, Chris Lynch seconded, all were in favor and the consent agenda passed.

Consent Agenda

1. BE IT RESOLVED, the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the meeting minutes from October 7, 2025.
2. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby appoints the following committee members:
 - a. Executive Committee: Romy Coquilletto
3. BE IT RESOLVED, the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby elects Avril Gordon to the Board for a 3-year term, ending June 30, 2028.
4. WHEREAS, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees ("Board") convened an executive session on December 9, 2025, preceded by the AF Brooklyn Executive Committee convening an executive session on December 5, 2025, for the purpose of discussing a confidential personnel matter concerning the performance and continued employment of a school principal; and

WHEREAS, during executive session, the Board reviewed relevant information and the recommendation of the AF Brooklyn Executive Committee, and engaged in full and fair discussion regarding the personnel matter; and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that it is in the best interest of the school, its students, staff, and community to terminate the employment of the principal, effective December 10, 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the termination of the principal of Legacy Elementary School effective December 10, 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board authorizes the Chief Executive Officer, or their designee, to take all necessary steps to effectuate this action, including the issuance of required notices, execution of any related documents, and communication of the decision as appropriate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the discussion held in executive session shall remain confidential as required by law and Board policy.

IX. Visit Debrief and Board Goals

Prior to adjourning Mr. Sorlie revisited the board goals, one of which was around board school visits and then turned it over to Chris Lynch who shared some highlights from the recent school visit to AF Bushwick Elementary School including his observations about the Empwer program at the school, and the enrichment classes offered to students. He also noted the school's strong staff culture and socio-emotional support team.

Mr. Sorlie shared the board goals and discussed their importance for board member engagement and successful running of the board. He invited the board members to a turn-and-talk activity where they discussed the goals and how they would engage with them.

X. Adjourn

Mr. Sorlie asked to move to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Desiree Dalton, seconded by Paul Cabana. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm..