



## AF Brooklyn Board Meeting Minutes

Achievement First

Tuesday, February 3, 2026 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/89492815184>

### Attendees:

Board Members in person: Brandon Sorlie, Amy Arthur Samuels, Desiree Dalton, Romy Coquillet, Avril Gordon, David Pollak, Chris Lynch, Erica Murphy

Board Members over Zoom: Kevin Miquelon, Akeem Frett, Keith Brooks, Andrea Kilpatrick

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Kristin Damo, Jeff Wooten, Ben Schanback, Jason Russell, Michael Rabin, Paul Nichols, Jessica McDonald, Michael Ortiz, Sulafa Bashir

Guests: L. Kimberly Cutler-Lee

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

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Brandon Sorlie at 6:02 pm.

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

There are no public comments as no members of the public were present.

#### III. **Welcome and Agenda Overview**

AF CEO Lisa Margosian welcomed the board members and introduced Jeff Wooten as the Interim Chief People Officer following a recent departure. She also noted that DumarPaden, Chief of High Schools, had transitioned out of AF. Ms. Margosian then outlined the focus on talent retention and data analysis in the upcoming discussion, emphasizing board involvement in formulating effective strategies.

#### IV. **Mission Moment**

Kristin Damo, Executive Director for NY, introduced Paul Nichols, the new Managing Director of External Affairs, who joined in December, focused on advocacy work. She then set the stage for the teacher retention discussion with school principals Michael Ortiz, and Jessica McDonald.

Principal Ortiz of Bushwick Middle School shared his set strategies for enhancing teacher retention, emphasizing coaching, development, work-life balance, and recognition as key factors. Principal McDonald emphasized the significance of predictable systems in teacher retention at Apollo Elementary. The school's processes, coupled with a focus on leadership alignment, have led to impressive academic and retention results, demonstrating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Board members asked questions regarding the variability in outcomes and retention between different schools, seeking suggestions for network-level interventions to standardize experience. The importance of predictability in school operations for staff was highlighted as a means to reduce variability and enhance equitable experiences across schools.

#### **V. Talent Retention**

The discussion shifted to an overview of AF's teacher retention and strategies by interim CPO Jeff Wooten. The presentation highlighted improved teacher retention trends post-COVID-19, attributing stability to supportive management and aligned goals. Key levers for retention were presented with an emphasis on performance management, goal setting, career conversations, and competitive salaries, and board members were invited to give input on additional strategies and how to prioritize efforts to ensure consistency and repeatability.

Board conversations revolved around data insights on teacher retention rates and potential avenues for equalizing these metrics. Strategies focused on reinforcing performance management before revisiting career pathway programs. There was also a discussion on addressing competitive disadvantages relative to public schools such as lack of pension benefits, which were highlighted as factors influencing teachers' decisions about tenure. A proposal was discussed that considered utilizing experienced teachers in residency programs across schools to share best practices and improve teaching skills. Board members suggested over-hiring strategies and strategically placing over-hired teachers to combat workload challenges due to understaffing.

#### **VI. Executive Session**

Mr. Sorlie stated that the board needed to enter into executive session to discuss the topics of principal mid-year reviews and facilities updates and a new board member. He requested a motion to enter into executive session to discuss these topics, inviting all present AF network staff to join.

A motion was made by Romy Coquillette, seconded by Chris Lynch. All were in favor and the board entered into executive session at 7:13 pm and exited at 7:47 pm, following a motion by Chris Lynch, seconded by David Pollak and all were in favor.

Prospective trustee La-Shaneigh Kimberly Cutler-Lee left the room during the executive session and was invited to return once the board returned to public session.

#### **VII. Finance Report**

AF CFO Ben Schanback updated the board on the network's financial position. He noted a strong position with an operating surplus, linked to increased enrollment and ongoing decreased spending related to staffing vacancies. However, expenditure from reserves surpassed expectations, primarily due to a timing issue of payments for some of last year's expenses hitting this year's operating budget. Additionally, cash balances were lower year over year primarily due to facilities spending and lease assistance payments.

There followed a discussion on the two key Income sheet drivers, student enrollment and staffing, highlighting that enrollment figures were below target and that staffing levels also remained below headcount targets.

## VIII. **Board Resolutions and Goals**

Mr. Sorlie moved on to the vote on the proposed resolutions, and there being no questions or comments, he asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Chris Lynch motioned, seconded by Amy Arthur Samuels. 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 December 9, 2025.
2. BE IT RESOLVED, the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby elects La-Shaneigh Kimberly Cutler to the Board as a Parent Representative for a 1-year term, ending June 30, 2026.
3. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby sets the number of Trustees at fifteen (15).
4. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby appoints the following committee members:
  - Finance Committee: Avril Gordon

Mr. Sorlie briefly discussed the board goals, reminding Board members of the board's individual giving goal and encouraging them to participate in upcoming scheduled school visits and a planned principal dinner. He also highlighted board composition and succession planning, which would be discussed at the next executive committee meeting to draft a recruitment plan.

## II. **Adjourn**

There being no other business, Mr. Sorlie requested a motion to adjourn. Erica Murphy motioned, seconded by Desiree Dalton. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.