



AF Rhode Island Board Meeting Minutes

Achievement First

Wednesday, December 3, 2025 at 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM EST

AF Providence High School, Room 135 - 206 Elmwood Avenue Providence, RI 02907

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/81151122179>

Attendees:

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

AF Staff: Lisa Marogisan, Tom McDermott, Michael Rabin, Kevin Lohela, Alison Carr, Benjamin Schanback, Omar Mayyasi, Sulafa Bashir, Yvonne Williams

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm.

II. Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

III. Welcome and Agenda Overview

Rhode Island Executive Director Tom McDermott welcomed the board members and gave an overview of the meeting agenda covering growth plans, RICAS data overview, progress towards goals, and finance reports.

IV. Mission Moment

Mr. McDermott opened the meeting with a mission moment that he described as being grounded in one of the three priorities he introduced at the last board meeting, namely “Root in Community”. He highlighted some of the recent community engagement events including the board visits to Providence Elementary and Middle Schools and a Thanksgiving event where over 450 turkeys were distributed to families.

V. Finance Report

The discussion moved to the Finance Committee Report. Ben Schanback was introduced as the new CFO. The board was briefed on management fees with plans to communicate directly with individual board members to address any questions. Mr. Schanback gave an overview of the one-time Employee Retention Credit funds that are available for unrestricted use by the organization, with the goal of applying them towards five general purposes: stabilization, academic intervention, culture initiatives, workforce investments, and facilities needs. There were questions from the board around the criteria for spending the ERC fund. The team responded that Plans for using Employee Retention Credit funds are still being developed with

input from Tom and the schools. No vote or action was requested at this meeting, but discussions will continue with the board at future meetings.

There was an overview of the quarterly financials, with the finance team projecting a surplus due to increased revenue, while managing assets and liabilities growth. Strategies discussed include addressing enrollment challenges and utilizing financial resources effectively. Next year's budget inputs will consider personnel variance, with current staffing showing some improvement from last year's challenges.

VI. Executive Session - Growth

The conversation shifted towards growth plans. Vice Chair Maryellen Butke asked for a motion for the board to go into executive session to discuss growth. James Wiley motioned, Nicole Pollock seconded. All were in favor.

The board went into executive session at 5:50 pm and exited at 6:08 pm.

VII. Board Business and Resolutions

Ms. Burke moved on to the approval of the previous board meeting minutes. There being no questions, she called for a motion. James Wiley motioned, seconded by Victor Capellan. All were in favor. The motion passed and the meeting minutes were approved.

Minutes Approval

BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Rhode Island Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from October 20, 2025.

Ms. Burke moved on to approval of the growth resolution. There being no questions, she asked for a motion. Janelle Clarke-Holley motioned and Nicole Pollock seconded the motion. All were in favor. The resolution was approved.

Growth Resolution

WHEREAS, Achievement First Rhode Island is committed to growth within the region and providing educational opportunities to as many scholars in Providence as possible,

WHEREAS, Achievement First Rhode Island recognizes that the current conditions of the region present challenges for growth and expansion,

WHEREAS, Achievement First Rhode Island initiated the Greenlight Process to determine the best path forward and to bring recommendations to the Board of Directors,

WHEREAS, during the October 20th, 2025 Board of Directors meeting, Achievement First Rhode Island Board of Directors approved the signing of a long-term lease at 220 Blackstone St. for the K-8 Envision school,

WHEREAS, during the October 20th, 2025 Board of Directors meeting, Achievement First Rhode Island proposed a short-term stabilization scenario to open Envision MS in school year 2026-2027 to serve students from Envision ES and Promesa ES and return Promesa ES to serve grades Kindergarten through 4th grade after SY 2026-2027,

WHEREAS, during the October 20th, 2025 Board of Directors meeting, Achievement First Rhode Island proposed a long-term stabilization scenario to temporarily revise the regional growth plan from five elementary schools, five middle schools, and two high schools to four elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school, ensuring all Achievement First Rhode Island students have a guaranteed seat from Kindergarten to 8th grade,

WHEREAS, during the December 3, 2025 Board of Directors meeting, Achievement First Rhode Island recommends implementing the short-term and long-term stabilization scenarios,

NOW THEREFORE IT IS RESOLVED that the Achievement First Rhode Island Board of Directors approves the short-term stabilization recommendation to open Envision MS in school year 2026 - 2027 and return Promesa ES to a K-4 school after school year 2026-2027.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the Achievement First Rhode Island Board of Directors approves the long-term stabilization recommendation to temporarily revise the portfolio growth plan to four elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the Achievement First Rhode Island Board of Directors revisit the portfolio growth plan annually to determine whether conditions have improved and support further growth.

VIII. Rhode Island Progress towards Goals

Mr. McDermott gave an overview of RICAS results and achievement, highlighting year-on-year improvement in RICAS results across various academic subjects, with elementary and middle schools showing double-digit gains. While encouraged by growth, he discussed the challenges of low proficiency and variability across schools. There was also a conversation about students with IEPs and historically marginalized groups showing proficiency levels that outperformed peers across the state, and how to showcase these results.

Mr. McDermott also discussed attendance goals, stating that strong attendance interventions have yielded significant improvements in daily average attendance and absenteeism across schools. He noted seasonal trends expected in absenteeism rates during the winter, with proactive strategies in place to address cold weather influences.

Other areas for improvement discussed include middle school ELA instruction due to a high number of new teachers, and focusing on enhancing intervention systems for better alignment with grade-level proficiency. Mr. McDermott added that resources will be allocated towards literacy expertise engagement as part of ERC funds utilization.

IX. Adjourn

Prior to adjourning the meeting, Maryellen Butke reminded the board of the next meeting date and stated that the board retreat, initially scheduled for January would be postponed until the start of the next school year.

There being no other business, Ms. Burke asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion by Victor Capellan motioned, seconded by Janelle Clarke-Holley. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 6:54 pm.