



## AF Hartford Academy Board Meeting Minutes

Achievement First

Tuesday, April 28, 2026 at 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM EDT

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/82707619180>

### Attendees

Board Members: Erwin Hurst, Sr., Leonard Epps, Charon Smalls, Surbhi Patel

AF Staff: Amy D'Angelo, Samantha Lucky, Laneka Thomas, Jessica Alhasnawi, Sueleidy Cruz, Ben Schanback, Sulafa Bashir, Ash Rodriguez

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

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

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

There were no members of the public present.

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

Amy D'Angelo welcomed the board members and gave an overview of the meeting agenda, emphasizing the principals' role in sharing strategies for state test preparation, core work for the year, and planning for next year.

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

Samantha Lucky shared a 'Mission Moment', highlighting the success of the theater production 'Madagascar Junior' at Hartford Elementary, which showcased the holistic development of students through arts and collaboration. She praised a second grade teacher, Bennett Cognato, for elevating the theater program.

#### V. **Academic Update: Mock Exams**

Elementary Principal Sueleidy Cruz gave a school report, highlighting preparations for the ELA and Math state tests, focusing on data-driven instruction and professional development from previous mock assessments. Results indicated incremental growth, yet were below desired proficiency levels. Efforts included quality coaching, feedback, daily student work reviews, and enhanced classroom strategies. Attendance spotlighted steady rates, despite some student absences needing added family engagement. The continued use of interventions and thematic activities, such as popular themes like Pokemon and Sonic, supports improved engagement and preparation.

Next, Jessica Alhasnawi gave the Middle School Report. She discussed ELA growth in grades 5-7 and described daily assessments used to identify misunderstandings and adjust subsequent teaching sessions, showing positive growth trends. She mentioned incentives utilized to support steady attendance rates, which included daily contact attempts made by advisors and the attendance team to ensure student presence, and a potential strategy of involving temporary staff to perform home visits and outreach over summer to improve historical attendance issues. There was a conversation about the reintroduction, post-COVID, of holdover policies, with principals providing input on implementation scope.

HS Principal Laneka Thomas reported progress as the High School prepared for AP testing, describing notable improvements in ELA scores across grades 9-12, especially in grade 10. Math proficiency gains were reported in Algebra courses. Attendance remains high at 95% attendance rate with strategic support targeting a slump in 10th grade performance. She also highlighted that 11 students were receiving Hartford Promise scholarships. The board discussed strategies for improving chronic absenteeism, including summer outreach to families and potential holdover policies for extreme cases.

Ms. Thomas also shared and invited the board members to attend the upcoming senior events which included Senior Signing Day and graduation.

#### **VI. Executive Session: Principal Appointment and Renewals**

Mr. Hurst, Sr. stated that the board needed to go into executive session to discuss principal appointments and renewals. He asked for a motion for the board to enter executive session to discuss these topics, inviting the AF Network staff present to join. Charon Smalls motioned and Surbhi Patel seconded. All were in favor and the board entered executive session at 6:17 pm and exited at 6:32 pm following a motion by Erwin Hurst, Sr. and seconded by Leonard Epps.

#### **VII. Board Resolutions**

Mr. Hurst, Sr. took the board through the consent agenda which included approving previous meeting minutes, middle school principal appointment, and principal renewals. He asked if there were any questions about any of the items on the agenda, and hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Charon Smalls so moved, seconded by Leonard Epps. All were in favor and the consent agenda passed.

#### **Consent Agenda**

1. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from February 26, 2026.
2. BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby appoints Jessica Alhasnawi as the principal of AF Hartford Summit Middle School,

effective immediately.

3. BE IT RESOLVED, that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the renewal of the following principals, with a final compensation package to be incorporated in the FY27 Budget to be reviewed and approved in June 2026:
  - a. Sueleidy Cruz - AF Hartford Academy Elementary School
  - b. Laneka Thomas - AF Hartford Academy High School

#### **VIII. Finance Committee Report**

CFO Ben Schanback presented the Finance Committee report, highlighting budget challenges due to flat revenue and increasing expenses in Connecticut. In response, adjustments were made to staffing models and discretionary spending, alongside simplifying school budgets to a single budget fitting within an evolved operating model. Additionally, a region-wide initiative budget overseen by Amy D'Angelo has been developed, ensuring equitable student experiences.

Despite revenue challenges and growing expenses such as inflation and staffing costs, some positive developments were noted including facility enhancement investments funded by several sources including Employee Retention Credit and state drip funding. Mr. Schanback noted that the final fiscal year 2027 budget would be presented at the next meeting.

#### **IX. Adjourn**

Prior to adjourning, Mr. Hurst, Sr. acknowledged that board member Alice Turner was stepping away from the board after approximately 10 years of service and expressed gratitude for her contributions.

There was a discussion about charter renewal including a mention of the upcoming hearing taking place on May 13th as well as a discussion of new board member recruitment, with an emphasis on finance and legal expertise and a suggestion of Leadership Greater Hartford as a resource for board recruitment and training.

There being no other business, Mr. Hurst, Sr. asked for a motion to adjourn. Charon Smalls made the motion. Leonard Epps seconded and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:47 pm.