

Approved, 1/21/15

Joint Session of the Boards of Directors of  
**Amistad Academy & Elm City College Preparatory**  
**Boards of Directors Meeting**  
November 19, 2014, 5:30 – 7:30 pm  
403 James Street, New Haven

**I. Call to Order & Attendance**

The meeting was called to order at 5:49 pm by Dick Ferguson.

The following board members and Achievement First Staff were in attendance:

Bill Bouton, Legal Resources - Yes	Toni Harp, AA Board - No
Carolyn Greenspan, AA Board - Yes	Howard Hill, AA Board - No
Pat Sweet, AA Board - Yes	Dorsey Kendrick, AA Board - No
Erik Clemons, ECCP Board - Yes	Andrew Lachman, AA Board - Yes
Richard Ferguson, ECCP Board - Yes	Amanda Alonzy, School Leadership - Yes
Marnie Halsey, ECCP Board - Yes	Rebecca Good, School Leadership - Yes
Patricia Pierce, ECCP Board - Yes	Katie Poynter, School Leadership - Yes
Laura Saverin, ECCP Board - Yes	Andrew Poole, School Leadership - Yes
Kaitlyn Stasik, ECCP Board - Yes	Karin Gould, School Staff - Yes
Magaly Cajigas, ECCP Board - No	Shirley Harrell, School Staff - Yes
William Heins, ECCP Board - Yes	D. Scot Kerr, AF Network Support - Yes
Sharon Oster, ECCP Board - Yes	Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes
Lystra Richardson, ECCP Board - No	Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes
Katrin Czinger, AA Board - Yes	Teresa Neff Webster, AF Network Support - Yes
Lorraine Gibbons, AA Board - Yes	Gaylord Bourne, AF Network Support - Yes
Michael Griffin, AA Board - No	Robyn Silverman, AF Network Support - Yes
Caroline Williams, AA Board - Yes	Laurie Bussmann, AF Network Support - Yes
Sheri Gellman, AA Board - No	Max Polaner, AF Network Support - Yes
Jane Levin, AA Board - Yes	

Guests: Cornelius Medas, Achievement First Bridgeport Board

**II. Open Session For Public Comment**

Ms. Lorraine Gibbons asked "How are our schools prepared for security?"

Principal Rebecca Good confirmed that ECCP MS, like all Achievement First schools, has updated its security policy and practices to ensure school safety and to make sure students are prepared for

security issues. Teresa Neff Webster, AF Regional Director of Operations, confirmed that all Achievement First Connecticut schools must comply with safety policies and procedures. She provided an illustrative example of a recent security situation at an Achievement First school that was responded to with the correct actions by school leaders.

### **III. Principal Reports**

Andrew Poole, Principal of Elm City College Preparatory Elementary School (ECCP), provided a report. He reported on school culture sharing that attendance is exceeding the network goal and suspension numbers are down relative to last year. In regards to academics, ECCP ES interim assessments (IA) showed tremendous growth for students relative to last year and other schools in the Achievement First network. Mr. Poole credited the Week 8 Culture Vision as a contributing factor to ECCP ES success and shared that the school is looking toward the next 8 weeks during which they are pushing on intellectual prep and engagement. Professional development, lesson training and lesson rehearsals for teachers and school leaders will ensure teachers are prepared and ready to engage scholars in rigorous tasks.

Mr. Poole described his excitement to align school curriculum to the common core standards. He highlighted that Connecticut's standards were lower and new common core standards set a higher bar of student performance. In order to reach the higher bar of achievement, ECCP ES is pushing forward on multiple fronts including Saturday Academy, stronger homework and after school work as well as other strategies.

Amanda Alonzy, Principal of Amistad Academy Elementary School, provided a report. Ms. Alonzy updated the Board on AAES interim assessment results. Ms. Alonzy explained that several of the tests shifted so she was happy to see pockets of success but that the school still has a long way to go. Ms. Alonzy also reported on school culture stating that AAES had a tough year last year but this year she is happy to say the school is humming along and has a great school culture. Right now, teachers are completing feedback surveys on the school and leadership team which Ms. Alonzy is eager to review.

Ms. Alonzy described the positive professional development opportunities for principals. This year, all Connecticut and Rhode Island principals have built a strong cohort and meet every other week to discuss topical academic challenges, for example 4th grade reading. She shared that the cohort is making a big and positive impact at the network. Ms. Alonzy also described this year's challenges. She shared that suspension numbers are not where she wants them to be. To correct for this and avoid suspensions, AAES leadership has spent a lot of time developing a behavior plan process so teachers can own culture in their classrooms and prepare them with the tools they need to foster joyful rigor. AAES second challenge is a thin staff, in part, due to maternity leaves. The school lost a teacher this week without notice. However, AAES has a plan and many candidates interviewing for the vacant position.

Rebecca Good, Principal of Elm City Middle School, provided a report. Ms. Good shared that the school is taking a strong approach this year to ensure every teacher is on the path to certification. The

support from the AF network has been incredible. ECCP MS has the least number of suspensions and are continuing to push on their positive school culture so students are in school. ECCP MS teachers feel accountable if a student is removed from their class and if a student is removed, the teacher follows up with the student to discuss the issue and solutions after class. Ms. Good concurred with Ms. Alonzy In regards to principal professional development opportunities and reflected on the Middle School cohort work. Ms. Good shared that her cohort is meeting tomorrow to discuss close reading and unpack what it is like for a teacher on a daily basis.

Ms. Good voiced her concerned that the shift to the common core has impacted the 8th grade cohort in particular. She explained that students thought they were doing well and ready for college based on their scores on the Connecticut Mastery Test but the shift to common core curriculum has changed their understanding of what their scores mean. Ms. Good confirmed school leadership is working hard to prepare students for a potential struggle in 9th grade with an even more rigorous set of standards. Ms. Good is hosting ECCP MS alums at the school to discuss the struggles they faced and how they achieved academic success. Ms. Good also voiced her concern regarding staff sustainability.

Katie Poynter, Principal of Amistad Academy Middle School, provided a report. Ms. Poynter shared that she is also excited about the work the principal cohorts are doing this school year. In particular, the opportunity for principals to prepare and teach a lesson and to receive feedback. Ms. Poynter highlighted that the school is focusing on student civic engagement as a window into character building. This Saturday, students are volunteering at a clothing drive. On December 3, students are attending the a rally For Every Child on the New Haven green to ensure all kids have access to a great education in Connecticut.

Ms. Poynter provided an update on academics sharing that the school has made the natural shift from the eight week culture focus to a focus on academic rigor. Specifically, using the lens of joyful rigor to drive academic achievement. Ms. Poynter described joyful rigor as, “how hard the kids are working and how happy they are to be working that hard. We want teachers constantly conveying how much fun learning can be when you work hard at it.” In order for teachers to push on joyful rigor, teachers are receiving ‘real time coaching’ by school leadership. Live coaching during class time allows teachers to implement new and better skills and they are excited about it.

Ms. Poynter also reflected on school growth areas including teacher transitions, citing four teacher transitions since the beginning of the school year. Ms. Poynter clarified that the purpose of the eight week culture vision was to ensure all teachers were effective and that the school retained high quality teachers. Ms Poynter shared that she is proud of her team for doing an amazing job to ensure kids are not feeling the change and that she has either hired or is actively recruiting to replace those teachers.

#### **IV. Joint High School Committee Report (Caroline Williams)**

Ms. Caroline Williams, Chair of the Amistad Academy Joint High School Committee, provided a report. She updated the board on staffing, citing the loss of two teachers. Ms. Williams emphasized that Principal Chris Bostock is focused on replacing those teachers and scaling up to a larger sized school.

Ms. Williams noted Principal Bostock's collaboration with Achievement First Hartford High School Principal Emily Banks. Ms. Williams shared that, academically, the school is doing well. All grades (9-12) are common core aligned and that all science classes are either Advanced Placement (AP) courses or curriculum equivalent. Ms. Williams shared that the school realigned its grading policy to ensure Grade Point Averages hold students accountable and are aligned to student skills. Culturally, suspensions are down and better than last year.

Ms. Williams deferred to Mr. Michael Kerin, Director of Facilities, to provide an update on the future home of AF Amistad High located at 580 Dixwell Avenue building. Mr. Kerin explained his team is nearing completion of the project and on track to receive the certificate of occupancy shortly. Mr. Kerin described the finishing touches left to complete at the school including painting and installing fixtures. The classroom wing is mostly finished and essentially ready. The furniture will arrive during the second week of December. The school's materials will be moved to the new location on Dec 20th and the operations staff is on it. It is an exciting but hectic time. Mr. Kerin was optimistic that his team would be able to provide the school with more things they would like to have within budget.

#### **V. Joint Governance Committee Report (Marnie Halsey, co-chair)**

Ms. Halsey, Chair of the Amistad and Elm City College Preparatory Governance Committee, stated the governance committee is working to recruit new members onto the Board of Directors. She described the recruitment and selection process which starts with a candidate's visit to the school and includes an understanding of each candidate's general knowledge and interest in education. The governance committee then works to help move that process forward. Ms. Halsey shared that all members are excited to diversify the board and bring on new talent.

#### **VI. Philanthropy Update (Ken Paul)**

Mr. Ken Paul, Vice President of Development, provided a philanthropy update. He shared that Achievement First is continuing to have a wonderful year for fundraising. His team has been able to identify either on a cash or pledge basis 75% of the goal for the year. We still have over \$1MM to get. Mr. Paul explained that donations are helpful in June but due to cash flow, donations would be appreciated earlier in the school year.

Mr. Scot Kerr, Associate Director of Communications and External Relations, stated that there is risk in Connecticut to reduce the deficit and therefore, State funding for Achievement First schools can be a target. Specifically, reductions to the budget could pose an issue for opening more schools or reducing per-pupil funding for already existing schools. Recently, Achievement First hired a new Vice President of Communications and External Relations who has relocated to Connecticut to lead the strategy on this important issue. Mr. Kerr announced that there will be a rally For Every Child on Dec 3, 2014 on the New Haven green to ensure all Connecticut children have access to a great education.

#### **VII. Teacher Certification (Laurie Bussmann)**

Ms. Laurie Bussmann, Vice President of Operations and Technology, provided a report on teacher certification. She shared that she has had several conversations with the Board Chairs to ensure Achievement First schools are compliant with Connecticut's certification requirements. Ms. Bussmann clarified that the issue of teacher certification is a top priority for the entire operations team with the goal of 100% compliance. Ms. Bussmann confirmed that this work is a top priority and that AF is working to ensure effective and productive communication with the State of Connecticut.

Ms. Bussmann indicated that there are two initiatives that will be addressed over the course of the year:

1. Working to support existing staff who are uncertified on their path to certification, and
2. Working with Team Recruit to increase the number of candidates that have certification.

Ms. Bussmann reported that there is a significant effort underway including the following steps:

- Inventory of staff complete and tracking processes are in place
- Personal emails to any uncertified staff notifying them of the requirements
- Network support is funding any tests, fees, and prep lessons that encourage staff to complete required steps to certification.

#### **VIII. Board Discussion**

#### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08PM by Dick Ferguson

## **Amistad Academy Board of Directors Meeting**

November 19, 2014

403 James Street, New Haven, Community Room

#### **I. Call to Order & Attendance**

The meeting was called to order by Carolyn Greenspan at 7:14pm.

The following directors and staff were in attendance constituting a quorum:

Bill Bouton, Legal Resources - No  
Katrín Czinger, AA Board - Yes  
Lorraine Gibbons, AA Board - Yes  
Carolyn Greenspan, AA Board - Yes  
Michael Griffin, AA Board - No  
Jane Levin - Yes (phone)  
Pat Sweet, AA Board - Yes

Sheri Gellman, AA Board - No  
Toni Harp, AA Board - No  
Howard Hill, AA Board - No  
Dorsey Kendrick, AA Board - No  
Andrew Lachman, AA Board - Yes  
Jennifer Connell, AA Board - Yes  
Tashia Mills, AA Board - No

Caroline Williams, AA Board - Yes

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

## **II. Open Session For Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

## **III. Board Business**

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby elects Jennifer Connell as the Teacher Representative of the Amistad Academy Board of Directors, serving a two-year term expiring on 6/30/16.

Pat Sweet moved  
Katrin Czinger second  
All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby elects Tashia Mills as the Parent Representative of the Amistad Academy Board of Directors, serving a two-year term expiring on 6/30/16.

Andrew Lachman moved  
Pat Sweet second  
All in favor

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from September 17, 2014.

Recommended amendments: Review Lorraine Gibbons and Michael Griffin's motions and seconds as it pertains to their own nominations. Add Jane Levin to the list of board members. She did not attend the meeting but should be listed as a "no".

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the financial report as presented.

Pat Sweet Moved  
Caroline Williams Second  
All in favor

RESOLVED, Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the report of the independent auditors CohnReznik prepared in relation to the fiscal year ended 6/30/14 for Amistad Academy.

Pat Sweet Moved  
Caroline Williams Second

All in favor

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

##### **A. Governance Training Debrief**

The board briefly discussed the CABE training in both Trumbull and Hamden, and the importance of attending before the charter renewal in June 2017.

##### **B. Conflict of Interest Forms**

The board members all completed and submitted a conflict of interest form. Jane Levin requested an electronic copy.

##### **C. College Questionnaire**

Sarah Blanton discussed the importance of collecting data on the college connections of our board members so that we may initiate conversations with Team College to support the high school scholars and alumni. The board members completed and submitted the survey.

#### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:41 by Carolyn Greenspan.