

Achievement First Hartford Academy
Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, November 16, 2015, 5:00 – 7:00 pm
305 Greenfield Street, Hartford

The following board members, constituting a quorum, and Achievement First Staff were in attendance:

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm by John Motley.

John Motley, AFHA Board - Yes

Lankford Wade, AFHA Board - Yes

Barry Jacobson, AFHA Board - Yes

Nyema Pinkney, AFHA Board - No

Marshall Ruben, AFHA Board - Yes

Angela Scott, AFHA Board - Yes

Colleen Palmer, AFHA Board - No

Emily Banks, School Leadership - Yes

Benjamin Cruse, School Leadership - Yes (phone)

Ernest Peterson, School Leadership - Yes

Sorby Grant, School Leadership - No

Nick Lebron, AF Network Support - Yes

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

Morgan Barth, AF Network Support - Yes

Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes

Laurie Bussmann, AF Network Support - Yes

Pete Cymrot, AF Network Support - Yes

John Furniss, AF Network Support - Yes

Public: Ms. Joanna Rodriguez, Ms. Liz Smith, Ms. Talitha Loggins, Ms. Lashawn Robinson

II. Open Session For Public Comment

Each of the members of the public, parents Joanna Rodriguez, Liz Smith, Talitha Loggins, and Lashawn Robinson each made a public comment regarding the challenges around the experiences of their children at the AF Hartford schools

III. Reports and Discussion

A. Principal Reports

Hartford Elementary School (Ernest Peterson)

AF Hartford Elementary is preparing for visit from State DOE tomorrow as preliminary visit for charter renewal. Specifically looking to highlight teacher certification and suspension reduction. Focusing on rigor and pacing as well as launching weekly quizzes. Trying to create an environment of strong culture, hard work and grit. Strong first few months leading up to state testing.

AF Hartford MS (Sorby Grant)

Ms. Sorby Grant was not present and instead, the Regional Superintendent for AF Hartford Middle

School, Mr. Morgan Barth, spoke about the school and the challenges it is facing.

AF Summit MS (Ben Cruse)

Mr. Ben Cruse shared that one the major goals for the year is that all classes make better than average growth on IA's based on baseline from SBAC scores. Some highlights on that front include: 5th grade history and vocabulary, and 6th grade writing. These accomplishments are particularly exciting given the newness of the teachers. Four out of the five teachers in 6th grade are new to teaching, 5th grade has one brand new teacher and one teacher in her second year.

Unfortunately, AF Summit lost their Dean of Special Services, two special education teachers and two social workers within first two months of school. They have now hired additional special ed teachers, but one of the first year special ed teachers is taking on double class load. They are still working to identify a Dean of Special Education. AF Summit has 36 students with IEPs out of 190 total students.

Attendance is around 96.3% which is the second lowest in the AF network and the school is working to support the scholars who are struggling the most, both behaviorally and academically.

Finally, Mr Cruse shared that the future location of the school is creating some challenges with student recruitment. Because they are not sure where we will be next year and while they would love to move to the south end - 40% of students come from south end - without the ability to tell parents for sure that will be the case, it is negatively affecting student recruitment efforts.

Hartford HS (Emily Banks)

Ms. Emily Banks reported that half the senior class has submitted college applications already with six or seven having applied early decision. Scholars are applying to schools that have high six-year graduation rates and seem like good academic, financial and social matches.

The freshman class, coming off some disappointing SBAC results, is rising to the occasion. Student GPAs are much stronger than last year (two and a half times as many students with above a 3.5GPA). There is a strong, very motivated cohort. Two and a half times the number of freshman have qualified for summer programs.

Ms. Banks feels particularly strong about the practices in place in the AP courses especially in five of the seven AP courses.

Ms Banks said that daily attendance has been at all time low. The network goal is 97 percent and AF Hartford High was at 95 percent today, the Friday prior was 93 percent. These numbers have never been so low. Some of the scholars have significant health concerns but she expressed concerns about a handful of scholars who she feels are in crisis. Ms. Banks shared the strategies the school is using to try to support these scholars and get them back on track. The school is trying to leverage Hartford Promise, which has an attendance component, to incentivize scholars to come to school.

Mr. Motley inquired about attendance at Jumoke Academies and Ms. Nichelle Woodson said that

attendance has been around 97 or 98 percent and Mr Frank Williams reported that it hasn't been an issue at principal meetings.

Ms. Banks' other concern centers around teacher attendance and teacher fatigue. A few initial check ins with teachers have been less positive than in the past and she anticipates greater turnover at the end of this school year. The feedback she's getting is around intensity and exhaustion. Mr. Barry Jacobson brought up the four weeks of teacher training. Mr. Ken Paul reported that, from the Day of Practice, there was acknowledgement of two challenging summers - first with Big Steps and the more recent with the extra weeks of training. He further explained the increasing demand for charter school teachers has created greater challenges around identifying and hiring talent. Therefore, there needs to be an increased emphasis on maintaining talent over multiple years.

B. Community Outreach Report (Nick Lebron)

Mr. Nick Lebron gave a report about the state of Community Outreach. We are in the midst of student recruitment and have already received the list from Hartford Public schools. Will be looking to fill roughly 330 seats. Ready to start canvassing, working with the parent canvassing team. We had a successful rally in Bridgeport this past week - brought seven scholars from AF Hartford HS, the student advocacy team that helps with going to the state capital.

C. Teacher Certification Update (Laurie Bussmann)

Ms. Bussmann told the Board that progress has been made but still work to be done. Lots of tests that were taken in October, including all administrators, and results have not been received yet (22 in total). AF is putting into place consequences that include compensation (teachers would not be renewed with additional salary if uncertified). New hires will have two levels of pay - one for certified and one for non-certified. The salary increase would be retroactive if certified within 40 days of being hired. Staff will be told of these policies by December 1st. Ms. Bussmann anticipates being at 80% certified within the month based on best educated guess.

D. State Department of Education Renewal Process (Pete Cymrot)

Mr. Cymrot gave an overview of the renewal process for AF. There is a preliminary meeting tomorrow to discuss suspensions and teacher renewals, and is a chance to show that progress that has been made. Application for renewal will be due in December, will be sent to Board for review.

E. Finance Committee Report (Lankford Wade)

Mr. Wade led a review of the Financial Report. Three schools are in budget, with a minor variance at AF Hartford ES that will be balanced out by end of year. AF Hartford MS has identified the need to make incremental improvements in the school that will be made up by increased fundraising.

IV. Executive Session - Personnel

Motion to enter Executive session at 6:09 by John Motley

Seconded by Marshall Ruben

Moved out of Executive session at 6:59 by Barry Jacobson

Seconded by Lankford Wade
All in favor

V. Board Business

A. Resolution to approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Moved by Barry Jacobson
Seconded by Marshall Ruben
All in favor

B. Resolution to approve Financial Report

Moved by Barry Jacobson
Seconded by Marshall Ruben
All in favor

C. Resolution to accept Budget Revision

Moved by Barry Jacobson
Seconded by Marshall Ruben
All in favor

D. Resolution to enter Stipulations into the Record

Motion for approval as corrected: Marshall Ruben
Seconded by Angela Scott
All in favor

E. Resolution to accept Conflict of Interest Policy

The Board did not vote on an updated conflict of interest policy and will await the State's feedback on the policy submitted by AF.

VI. Board Discussion

Adjourn

Moved by Angela Scott
Seconded by Marshall Ruben
The meeting was adjourned at John Motley by 7:03pm.