

Achievement First Hartford Academy
Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, March 28, 2016, 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 5:07 pm by John Motley.

John Motley, AFHA Board - Yes

Barry Jacobson, AFHA Board - Yes

Jeffrey Digel, AFHA Board - No

Marshall Ruben, AFHA Board - Yes

Angela Scott, AFHA Board - No

William Schedl, AFHA Board - Yes

Jose Rendon, AFHA Board - Yes

Ja Hanna, AFHA Board - Yes

David Dee, AFHA Board - Yes

Emily Banks, School Leadership - Yes

Ernest Peterson, School Leadership - No

Sorby Grant, School Leadership - No

Ben Cruse, School Leadership - Yes

Morgan Barth, AF Network Support, Yes

Shannon Garfield, AF Network Support - Yes

Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes

John Furniss, AF Network Support - Yes

Laurie Bussmann, AF Network Support - Yes

Nick Lebron, AF Network Support - Yes

Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes

Public: Giana Gleason

II. Open Session For Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Reports and Discussion

A. Principal Reports

Hartford Academy Elementary (Ernest Peterson)

Mr. Peterson led a report on the state of the school. Teachers are focusing on giving rapid feedback, consistently providing real time, frequent feedback to scholars. At this point in AF's "Arc of the Year" they are entering into "Crescendo" which is the phase leading up to state testing. They are also in the process of sending out offer letters to teachers, so in the near term, the school will have a good idea of who intends to stay at the school and who does not. Ms. Thomas, the incoming principal, is very involved in this process. Letters will be going out April 1.

AF Hartford Elementary continues to carry a financial deficit, largely because of over-hiring and lower rates of attrition. They are working on cutting everywhere that does that affect the classroom. They are still hopeful that they can meet their budget by the end of the year.

Hartford Academy Middle (Sorby Grant)

Mr. Barth led a report on behalf of Ms. Grant who was unable to attend. AF Hartford Middle School has shown good progress. Academically, IA3 showed some significant gains over IA2 and, in several grades/subjects, major year-over-year gains. Specifically, 8th grade ELA and Math, and 5th grade ELA showed some of the biggest gains in network. They are working hard to prepare for the State test which is only a couple of school weeks away. The SBAC tests the scholars' substantial and deep knowledge of the subject matter so it is not a test for which schools can really do test prep. In addition to the academic progress, school culture is improving. They have greatly reduced volume and severity of misbehavior, and have pockets of real excellence throughout the school.

In spite of much progress, they are still working on ensuring that the classes are *all* engaging with students who are staying on task and doing their work with enthusiasm.

The leadership team will be stretched this spring as Zack Vose, a 5th grade dean, is leaving to become Principal at Amistad Academy ES. He will be spending more of his time for the remainder of the school year at Amistad Elementary. In response some coaches from NY have been coming up to help on a part time basis.

They are focused on hiring for next year and a very promising math and science dean has already signed on. The position was unfilled this year so the school is excited to have that position filled for the 2016-17 school year. Ms. Dacia Toll and the Regional Superintendents feel that the school is not likely to backfill the seats left vacant by students who leave. They are trying to stay at a two section school. This small size is advantageous in reestablishing the academic and school culture high standards but they then will lose some of the economy of scale associated with being a larger school. AF Hartford Middle overenrolled for this year because they anticipated more attrition than they anticipated. If we don't backfill this year, we will hit the enrollment pattern that was approved by the Board last year.

Moving forward, over the course of the spring, Mr. Barth will be transitioning to be the Regional Superintendent of AF Hartford Elementary School. Ms. Shannon Garfield will begin to support AF Hartford Middle in the spring, in addition to AF Hartford Summit. Ms. Garfield then introduced herself to the Board and gave a brief overview of her background.

Summit Middle (Ben Cruse)

Mr. Cruse gave a report on the state of Summit Middle school. The leadership team has been fully hired for next year. They hired a Math/STEM Dean and a Dean of Special Services who have both started early. Suspension numbers are down for both out of school and in school suspensions. AF Summit saw strong results in IA3 especially in ELA and this success is mirrored in weekly quizzes and overall growth.

Attendance is 95% (worst in network), down slightly from last year and it has gotten worse over winter despite increased incentives. The board engaged in a discussion about truancy and the challenges that the school (and all of Hartford) is facing. They are working hard to encourage kids to come to school and Mr. Cruse was clear that a vast majority of scholars have excellent attendance.

Mr. Cruse also expressed a concern regarding their space. They don't have a gym, they are growing 90 students (grade level expansion) but only getting two additional classrooms, and they will share a hallway with another school. Most of the families at AF Summit live in the South End so moving to a different building, potentially in the North End would be difficult for families.

Mr. Motley explained that the Mayor has been very honest about the budget situation and how it will slow down school construction program.

Joint High School Committee (Emily Banks)

Ms. Banks shared that students are hearing back from colleges many of which are very selective. They have a bell at front entry that students can ring when they get into a college which has been fun.

They are excited about increasing access to AP's next year, and currently there is a good culture around AP. For example, there was no school today but approximately 60 students came to school to study for AP courses and exams. Students took the National Latin Exam recently and the results are looking very promising. Kudos to Mr. Schedl - students start in Junior year.

Staff culture has been improving. They will have to make a few new hires, but this is the first year that the school is fully grown. This will allow for additional consistency next year.

Attendance has been an issue which they are working to improve.

B. Board Chair Report (John Motley)

1. Professional Growth Plan (PGP) Process

Board members will be invited to participate in the Principal PGP process when the PGPs are completed by the Regional Superintendents.

2. AF Workshop Series - April 6th

The next workshop is occurring April 6th in New Haven. This one will be focused on teacher recruitment and staffing. VP of Recruitment Becca Howlett will be leading the meeting.

3. Board Training - April 11th

Mr. Ruben has agreed to host the training from 12-3pm 249 Pearl Street 3rd floor (across from Bin 88). Ms. Blanton will be sending the invitation to all new Board members.

C. Teacher Certification (Laurie Bussmann)

Motion to enter Executive Session at 6:07pm by Marshall Ruben

Motion to exit Executive Session: 6:14pm by Jon Motley

D. Advocacy Report (Nick Lebron)

Mr. Nick Lebron shared that AF Hartford had a successful charter renewal meeting with over 90 visitors, and 20 speakers.

Student recruitment is going well and they have more applications than last year.

E. Financial Report (Barry Jacobson)

Mr Jacobson gave the financial report and shared that the elementary school has knocked deficit down considerably. The high school has gone to a small surplus. There are no other major changes.

F. Staff Child Preference

Ms. Blanton gave a brief overview of the AF lottery, including preferences. The new preference would allow teachers to have an absolute preference (after siblings) to enroll their children in the school. Mr. Barth explained that it is an important proof point that AF is good enough for the kids of staff and teachers.

G. Family Survey

Mr. Hanna expressed an interest in keeping Board in touch with parents. He presented an idea about idea of doing parent survey. Mr. Hanna opened it up to the Board for suggestions on things that the Board would want to learn and gain from parents. Why us? Why did you say yes? What can we do better? What are the expectations that you have as parents? What is your understanding of your obligation as an AF parent?

IV. Board Business

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from February 29, 2016.

Moved by: Marshall Ruben

Seconded by: Ja Hanna

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Board of Directors hereby approves the financial report as presented.

Moved by David Dee

Seconded by Ja Hanna

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Board of Directors hereby approves the Jeff Digel as Treasurer of the Board, effective March 28, 2016.

Moved by Barry Jacobson

Seconded by Marshall Ruben

All in favor

RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Board of Directors hereby approves the following non-material revision to the admissions policy: add an absolute preference to children of active employees, provided those individuals are employed as of the lottery deadline and the number of applicants admitted pursuant to this preference is limited to 5 percent of the overall enrollment within a given school.

Moved by Jose Rendon

Seconded by Ja Hannah

All in favor

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 pm by John Motley

Moved by Ja Hanna