

**Amistad Academy**  
**Joint High School Committee Meeting**  
Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 4:30 - 5:30 pm  
AF Amistad High School, 580 Dixwell Ave, New Haven

**I. Call to Order & Attendance**

The meeting was called to order at 4:38pm by Caroline Williams.

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

Caroline Williams, AA Board - Yes	Max Perez, AFBA Board - No
Carolyn Greenspan, AA Board - Yes	Richard Ferguson, ECCP Board - Yes
Lorraine Gibbons, AA Board - Yes (phone)	Laura Saverin, ECCP Board - Yes
Andrew Lachman, AA Board - Yes	William Heins, ECCP Board - No
Reginald Simmons, AA Board - Yes	Claire Polcrack, School Leadership - Yes
Jane Levin - AA Board - Yes	Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - No
Chris Kunhardt, AFBA Board - Yes	Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes
Cornelius Medas, AFBA Board - Yes	John Furniss, AF Network Support Yes

**II. Open Session For Public Comment**

No public comment.

**III. Reports**

**A. School Report (Claire Polcrack)**

Ms. Claire Polcrack was very pleased to report that they have hired a math teacher and he's part of the pre-calculus team that is already very strong.

Scholars are reporting improvements in GPA. The school feels that they are in a strong place going into the winter months. Ms Polcrack further explained that the new High School building matches the hard work of the scholars and staff. More all school meetings are possible, which has greatly helped morale. Community/Culture building activities have increased as well (ex: 11th grade trust exercises, athletics, etc.). Larger building also increases ability for teachers to do 1-on-1 work with students.

Results from the Interim Assessments have been encouraging, especially with returning teachers.

Some of the areas of growth are:

- Continuing to work on setting strong academic habits and vision.
- Increasing scholar ownership and investment.
- Pushing for increasing GPA, especially in lower grades and helping them maintain through their four years.

- Focusing on supporting struggling scholars with a focus on social-emotional intelligence.

Ms. Halsey inquired about the new scholars who have come in from the neighborhood. Ms. Polcrack explained that they have been doing well and have become part of the Amistad High School Community. Mr. Ferguson pushed for clarity re: how the Newhallville scholars were selected. Ms. Polcrack explained that those scholars from Newhallville self-selected by applying to the waitlist.

Mr. Simmons inquired about what the plan is to increase the pass rate for classes. Ms. Polcrack explained that they must first ask whether it is a skill or will issue. Next Wednesday, teachers will be examining that question for each scholar, and how best to support each individual. Teachers whose classes are falling under 90% passing will get a lot of support (Chemistry, higher level math classes especially).

Ms. Polcrack shared that at Alumni Homecoming 80 to 100 students came back, served on both student and teacher panels and sat for video-taped interviews with the College Team. In the student panels, they focused on how hard the current scholars ought to be working now. With teachers, they reiterated that 1) they love how supportive their teachers are, but also that 2) they also wish the teachers had not helped them as much as they did because once they reached college, they often struggled with so much independence. There has been a scaffolding down of support from 9th-12th (for example, writing assignment calendars on the board in 9th grade, whereas giving month long syllabi in 12th grade). Different teachers will need different strategies that will feel authentic for them.

Mr. Kunhardt inquired about the College Success program. Ms. Polcrack explained that the College counselors are based in this building, and scholars meet them in the beginning in 9th grade. They also take a class called Foundations of Leadership, which serves as a college prep class. In 11th grade they form lists of colleges. There are four staff dedicated to college prep in the building.

Teacher sustainability is also a topic that Ms. Polcrack is focusing on asking the question, what does it mean to work in our school and be sustainable for our staff? Conversations have been held with staff to find out what it would take for teachers to want to work here forever. Ms. Polcrack explained that for her, personally, her work-life balance isn't ideal, but she knows that she will get to that balance eventually (perhaps after the first couple years as a new principal).

Ms. Greenspan inquired about the academic support from the network. Network provides IAs, as well as a unit plan for each subject. Teachers are given end results and texts, but teachers need to develop the individual lesson materials. First year teachers submit their lesson plans a week in advance to their coach so that they get feedback and can implement feedback before it goes before students.

Mr. Medas asked about the TFA corps members, and if they need additional support. Ms. Polcrack explained that they need the same support as anyone who is new to teaching. Any teacher who joins AF has a lot to learn in the beginning, but for most of the staff that is part of the appeal.

Ms. Polcrack is looking for additional ways for staff to interact both with each other and with students. Moving forward, every Wednesday they will have 15 minutes of a peer-led discussion group focused on diversity and inclusiveness.

Ms. Polcrack explained that everyone has a coach (including herself). Teachers sometimes feel overwhelmed, but that is part of why their coach is there.

Ms. Levin asked about how Amistad HS students are persisting college. Ms. Polcrack said that they are currently experiencing about an 80% persistence rate. They have found that making it through

2nd semester sophomore year is the biggest indication of success. Developing Campus Champions program for juniors and seniors in college, helping connect students with faculty and staff at the universities who want to help out. At each state university they have started to build peer-to-peer Campus Champions. There is a senior Amistad HS alumna at Eastern who serves as liaison between AF staff and students at Eastern.

**B. Financial Report**

Ms. Williams led a discussion of the Financial Report. The deficit has been reduced and money can be moved within the charter.

**IV. Board Business & Discussion**

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy High School Committee hereby approves the meeting minutes from November 18, 2015 with the addition of Jane Levin to the Attendees**

Moved by Dick Ferguson

Second by Carolyn Greenspan

All in favor

**RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy High School Committee hereby approves the financial report as presented.**

Motion by Carolyn Greenspan

Second by Dick Ferguson

All in Favor

The meeting was adjourned by Caroline Williams at 5:35