

Amistad Academy
Joint High School Committee Meeting

Wednesday, November 16, 2016
495 Blake Street, New Haven

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 4:44 p.m. by Caroline Williams.

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

Caroline Williams, Amistad Board - Yes (phone)	Chris Kunhardt, AFBA Board - Yes
Carolyn Greenspan, Amistad Board - Yes	Cornelius Medas, AFBA Board - Yes (phone)
Reginald Simmons, Amistad Board - Yes	Dick Kalt - AFBA Board - No
Richard Ferguson, ECCP Board - Yes	Sarah Blanton, AF Network Support - Yes
Laura Saverin, ECCP Board - Yes	Megan Tokarski, AF Network Support - Yes
William Heins, ECCP Board - Yes	

II. Open Session For Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. School Report (Morgan Barth)

Today marks the midpoint of the second quarter. Morgan Barth described this as a very busy time of year. He met earlier today with the college team to review a selection of college applications. Nearly all students in their personal statements wrote essays that reminded him of types of remarks made at senior signing day. He found the essays to be beautiful expressions of their time in high school. It was a great reminder of what our scholars experience both in and out of school.

Sports seasons have just wrapped up with volleyball having had a particularly strong season - they hosted a post-season game at the school. Morgan shared the excitement about having a high school that truly holds up to the expectation and image of high school that many students have - sports, big facility, strong courses, extracurricular activities.

Amistad High School has experienced significant year-over-year growth on school culture metrics including a drop of more than 50% on school suspensions and removals. They have made modest to significant academic growth, year over year, which has helped to powerfully illustrate that the hard work leads to the improvements they want. At this point in the year, they are working on narrowing the

delta between strong teachers and those who are struggling and will be sending a clear message about benchmarks that need to be reached.

There are a few rough spots that Morgan wants to clean up around misbehavior in the classroom. Overall, he's seeing growth but not as fast as he would like.

Dick Ferguson asked about new staff and how many are struggling - Morgan said that there are 25-30 new teachers and about 70% are making good progress - the kind you'd want in first year teachers. Because the school is still growing there are 8-10 new teaching positions because the freshman class is big. Between the need to add positions and last year's low staff retention, they are at a place where half the teachers in the building are new. They have the regular complement of academic deans (one for each content area) but because of their size, they also have a Dean of College and a Dean of Special Services. They have an upper and lower school Dean of Students. Morgan thinks the Deans are strong but several of them are in their first year in that role. Most of Morgan's day is spent coaching deans to be better coaches of teachers.

Chris Kunhardt asked about the plan for the new teachers who are not progressing as quickly as they need to be. The new teachers receive a lot of coaching and opportunities to observe their mentor teachers teaching classes. Compared to last year at this time, the school had lost 8eight teachers (who had quit) and so far this year, only one teacher has left (mutual decision). The school is more stable this year. A former teacher, who'd left after last year, inquired about open positions the same week that they lost that one teacher so they gained someone back to the team with experience.

Caroline Williams inquired about the returning teachers. Morgan shared that most are doing well, morale is generally strong.

Morgan shared that most of the challenges with teachers are around some of the warm parts of the mission. For those teachers who may have started the year too strict, they have eased up very successfully. For those who are not strict enough, there is a high amount of enabling. Some teachers just need a shot in the arm of polite, friendly, firm, strict rules and consequences.

Reginald inquired about the ways in which the "warm" is being assessed because it doesn't appear in the Essentials Rubric. Morgan said that the rubric doesn't usually include the prerequisites for getting to great instruction which is where a lot of the warm exists, but perhaps the rubric should include it. As they do walk throughs, they are observing this and is part of the feedback given to teachers, similar to the number of students on task. The Committee then had a discussion about the way in which the Essentials might serve to reinforce the values of great teaching and should perhaps include some of the "warm."

Morgan shared that they should be getting the results of a student investment survey soon. In terms of the student leaders who led the rally last spring, they meet regularly with Morgan. They have shared that they feel their concerns have been addressed and for the most part, Morgan feels that they are in a

good place. Morgan shared the same slides that were presented to the board at the September meeting with the students. They see the progress and appreciate that the school is not yet where Morgan wants it to be. Some changes to the rules have made the school feel more reasonable and flexible.

Student attrition is quite low, even despite the events of last year. The goal was not to exceed 5 percent and they are closer to 2.5 percent of students who left last year, and this year, Morgan believes it's closer to 1 percent so far today. Most students who leave are leaving because they want a bigger sports program.

Carolyn Greenspan inquired about the number of students who are failing at least one class. The number dramatically improves over the course of high school but Morgan believes that it is incumbent upon the staff to ensure that they impress upon the 9th and 10th graders that it is important now. "AP for All" means that many kids are taking AP classes and may struggle. Carolyn Greenspan expressed the need to hold Morgan accountable for the pass rates. Caroline Williams inquired about comparative high schools - are other high performing charters and AF Brooklyn HS.

IV. Financial Report (Laura Saverin)

Laura gave a financial report.

V. Board Business

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy High School Committee hereby approves the meeting minutes from September 13, 2016.

Motion by Laura Saverin

Seconded by Carolyn Greenspan

All in favor

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

Motion by Dick Ferguson

Seconded by Carolyn Greenspan

All in favor

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:38 p.m. by Caroline Williams

Moved by Dick Ferguson

Seconded by Cornelius Medas

All in favor