

Amistad Academy
Joint High School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 13, 2016
495 Blake Street, New Haven

I. Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 4:36 p.m. by Caroline Williams.

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

Caroline Williams, Amistad Board - Yes	Chris Kunhardt, AFBA Board - No
Carolyn Greenspan, Amistad Board - Yes	Cornelius Medas, AFBA Board - Yes
Reginald Simmons, Amistad Board - Yes	Dick Kalt - AFBA Board - Yes
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 - No	Ken Paul, AF Network Support - Yes
	Morgan Barth, Amistad High School Principal - Yes

Additional board members in attendance: Jane Levin, Amistad Board, Khadijah Muhammad, Amistad Board

II. Open Session For Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. School Report (Morgan Barth)

Morgan Barth shared that in this fourth full week with students in class, the team of teachers and school leaders, the students, and families have been pleased with the start of the school year.

The returning teachers are overwhelmingly performing based on observing them teach and surveying their job satisfaction, morale, commitment to the team, etc. The teacher retention rate was approximately 60 percent so they have had to do a lot of work training new teachers.

Students largely seem to feel a shift in tone that makes the social compact feel relevant again (“we’re going to ask a lot of you and you’re going to ask a lot of us in service of getting ready for college”). Even some of the parents who had been critical of the school have reached out to say they’re pleased with the start of the school year. Of course, the team will need to sustain this over the course of the school year, while also delivering strong AP & SAT results, GPAs, etc.

Amistad High had its first home school volleyball and soccer games yesterday, and after-school clubs

met for first time this afternoon. Morgan Barth will send the athletic schedule to the board, as well as adding board members on the High School Committee to the e-mail newsletter distribution list.

In 2013-14, of our CT schools, Amistad Academy (K-12) was least racially diverse, and slightly less diverse than our host district. However, Amistad Academy was significantly more diverse than CT State overall. In terms of progress, 2015-16 is significantly more diverse than 2013-14, with a significant uptick in diversity of new hires. Currently 26% of teachers and leaders identify as Black, Latino or Multiracial (up from 17% in 2013-14. They also hired two new Deans of Students and a new DSO this year, all of whom are people of color. Morgan Barth believes that the progress made is primarily a function of naming diversity as a priority, combined with personal outreach and excellent efforts of our recruitment team.

Dick Kalt asked how we are tracking against certification with all of the new teachers. Morgan reminded the board that the charter is up for renewal this year and so the school is committed to demonstrating progress. Team Recruit has gotten more strict about pursuing only those candidates who are imminently certifiable in the hiring process. 2016-17 was also the first year that a penalty/reward was baked into the salary offer letter.

Carolyn Greenspan asked about any changes to the demerit system. Morgan shared that they don't call it the demerit system anymore, now Wolf Point System. They do believe in having consistent rewards and consequences, but have softened some of the sharp corners, so to speak, such as reserving detention for a more egregious set of bad choices rather than for something like an accumulation of small infractions. Morgan held a working group with the student body over the summer and found that the students who were often the ones advocating for the maintenance of some of the strict rules, with better implementation/consistency. The biggest takeaway, he found, was that the rule or norm or reward or consequence are inconsequential if you've not taken the time to build a relationship with the student or if you're not capable of providing a rationale. We don't enforce things just because "it's a rule;" the rule should be in service of something.

Laura Saverin asked about any student retention in the early weeks of school. Morgan does not know of any choice departures so far, although they are still sorting out all of the enrollment data.

Qualitatively, classroom observations follow a rubric, with criteria for success around things like teacher tone, etc., while quantitatively, students are surveyed about their perception of teacher relationships and the results are entered into that rubric.

There are two AF alumni who are first year teachers. So far, they are doing great, although it's hard being a first-year teacher.

IV. Financial Report (Laura)

After showing a deficit all year, AF Amistad High ended up (pre-audit) showing a slight surplus for FY16.

The most important thing to look at right now is enrollment, and the enrollment is large, including a

healthy waitlist if needed.

Shirley Harrell is the new RDO. Esther Massie is the new DSO.

V. Board Business

RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy High School Committee hereby approves the meeting minutes from May 18, 2016.

Motion by Carolyn Greenspan

Seconded by Laura Saverin

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

New Business

Dick Kalt reported very successful internships by two young women from AF Amistad High at his company, CRN International, and encouraged board members to help find internships for our high school students because they are so impactful.

Dick Kalt reported that CRN International produces a podcast called "Distractions" hosted by Dr. Ned Hollowell. Distractions has been in circulation since March and last week, Paige from Team Special Services was on to discuss special needs in education. The podcast will air in October.

Khadijah Muhammad reported that the PLC recently had their first meeting with close to 50 parents in attendance, which was the largest group they have ever had. The parents were in good spirits about Mr. Barth's leadership and the direction of the school.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:26 p.m. by Caroline Williams

Moved by Laura Saverin

Seconded by Reginald Simmons

All in favor