



MINUTES
Amistad Academy
Board of Directors Meeting

Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/84018756985>

Tuesday, April 9, 2024, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Lorraine Gibbons at 5:30 pm.

Name	Present	Name	Present
Lorraine Gibbons	X	Shannelle Whyte	X
Patricia B. Sweet	X	Yashira Zwisler	X
Jennifer Alexander	X	Linda Darkwah	X
Zihan Su (Yale Board Fellow)	X		

Also in attendance: Blakely Simoneau, Shannon Miller, Lisa Margosian, Dumar Paden, John Sharkey, Michael Rabin, Omar Mayyasi, Amy Christie, Brooke Williams, Lauren Ramondi, Jasmine Watts, Neil Shah, Dumar Paden, Raven Obas, Karolyn Belcher, and Camila Novo-Viano

II. Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

III. Board Business

- A. Board Resolutions and Approvals: Previous Meeting Minutes, New Yale SOM Member, Increasing Educator Diversity Plan, and Healthy Schools (5 mins)

Ms. Gibbons welcomed Camila Novo-Viano as the newest Yale Board Fellow, replacing Zihan Su. The board members thanked Zihan Su for his service on the board.

Ms. Gibbons asked for a motion to approve the board resolutions. Jennifer Alexander motioned, Linda Darkwah seconded. All in favor, none opposed.

1. BE IT RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves

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- the meeting minutes from December 14, 2023 and March 19, 2024.
2. BE IT RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves Ms. Camila Novo-Viano to serve as a Yale SOM Board Fellow for an 18-month term, ending June 30, 2025.
 3. BE IT RESOLVED, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the School Boards' Increasing Educator Diversity Plan.
 4. BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.
 5. BE IT RESOLVED that, the Amistad Academy Board of Directors will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sale.

IV. Discussion with Achievement First

A. CEO Welcome and Principal Updates (10 mins)

Ms. Gibbons turned it over to AF CEO Lisa Margosian. Ms. Margosian welcomed the board and walked through the agenda for the evening.

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Amistad Elementary Principal Lauren Raimondi shared about the state of the school. Ms. Raimondi mentioned significant improvements in fourth-grade math results and shared positive outcomes in addressing chronic absenteeism and maintaining strong school culture. She provided updates on school culture, attendance rates, and academic growth. She highlighted improvements in classroom environments, attendance rates, and academic performance in programs like Foundations. Ms. Raimondi reported a significant increase in proficiency levels in math and ELA, with a focus on academic growth in third and fourth grades. Additionally, she highlighted upcoming family events like Pride Circle, SBAC pep rally, pass the torch ceremony, field days, and end-of-year trips.

Superintendent Karolyn Belcher highlighted the improvements in attendance rates across elementary, middle, and high school levels, mentioning a decrease in chronic absenteeism. The efforts of the Attendance Committee led by Ms. Raimondi and Jasmine Watts were acknowledged for their positive impact.

Principal Jasmine Watts mentioned a 9 to 10% decrease in chronic absenteeism at Amistad Middle School. She also highlighted that students scored 80% correct in ELA and 70% correct in Math on multiple choice questions, showing growth year over year. She also discussed upcoming events at Amistad Middle School, including a SBAC pep rally, Pass the Torch ceremony, 8th grade formal, field day, and 8th grade graduation at the high school.

Shannelle Whyte praised the middle school staff for their professionalism and community spirit. Ms. Watts confirmed that all middle school teachers are 100% certified. There was a brief discussion about the progress in teacher certification and student achievement, aiming to move away from a corrective action plan.

B. Postsecondary Persistence Approach and Results (30 mins)

Dumar Paden, Chief of High Schools presented data from different class cohorts and discussed tracking students' progress post-high school graduation, emphasizing the belief in students returning to school after 'stopping out.' Mr. Paden shared comparisons of college graduation rates between students at Achievement First schools and the national average, highlighting the impact of an AF education on

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students' success. He also shared data from national low poverty schools and national high poverty schools, demonstrating the success of students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds at Achievement First schools.

Amy Christie discussed the necessary conditions for achieving positive outcomes for students, emphasizing academic preparation, personalized postsecondary advising, and support during transitions. Ms. Christie explained the targeted approach to supporting students from ninth through twelfth grade, including college trips, financial aid support, and alumni support through the KIPP Collaborative.

Lisa Margosian expressed concerns about the unfunded mandate for college and career services, the significant increase in costs, and the need to find sustainable funding sources to support their mission promise. She mentioned plans for joint fundraising efforts with collaborators to secure funding for college and career services, aiming to engage in data sharing and outreach to raise awareness about the need for financial support.

C. Academic Updates (20 mins)

John Sharkey, Chief Academic Officer discussed the decision to focus on continuous improvement cycles to drive growth in academic results. He shared concerns about the decline in reading proficiency from October to December, prompting a corrective action plan to address the issue. Mr. Sharkey discussed the updated interim assessment data showing encouraging progress in science and math proficiency levels compared to previous years.

Mr. Sharkey mentioned a 6% increase in elementary ELA performance year over year due to new curriculum adoption and efforts by school leaders and teachers. Ms. Gibbons acknowledged the progress in elementary ELA but highlights the need to continue working towards goals. The group discussed shifts to teacher turnover and the impact on performance, with a focus on curriculum implementation and student outcomes.

Next Mr. Sharkey discussed the progress in middle school ELA, surpassing last year's performance in proficiency and positive trends in mock exam results. Jen Alexander raised concerns about setting goals for student performance compared to

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pre-pandemic levels and the changes over the years. Mr. Sharkey shared the growth trends in student performance, mentioning improvements in reading and math proficiency, as well as the need for further work to enhance student outcomes. He explained the specific proficiency goals set for students, such as reading proficiency at the 50th percentile nationally and numeracy expectations for K2 students.

D. Finance Update (15 mins)

Neil Shah and Omar Mayyasi presented the finance committee report to the board. The balance sheet comparison showed a decrease in cash and net assets, but still maintaining \$20 million in net assets. There was an increase in revenue this year, with a focus on maximizing ESSER funding and achieving a balanced budget by the end of the year. The budgeting process for the upcoming year was highlighted, with a plan to present the proposed budget at the next board meeting in May or June. The board decided to renew Kohn Resnick as the auditor for Achievement First Amstad at the next full board meeting.

V. Board Business

A. Executive Session: Principal Mid Year Reviews & Amistad HS Update (10 mins)

Ms. Gibbon asked for a motion to go into executive session to discuss the principal mid year reviews and an update on Amistad HS. Pat Sweet motioned, Jen Alexander seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The meeting entered executive session at 6:37pm.

VI. Adjourn

The group exited executive session at 6:51 pm. Ms. Gibbons asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pat Sweet motioned, Jen Alexander seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 pm.