

**MINUTES**  
**Achievement First Joint Connecticut**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

Venue: AF Amistad High School  
580 Dixwell Avenue, New Haven, CT 06511  
Thursday, June 13, 2024, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 pm.

**II. Public Comment**

There were no members of the public present.

**III. Discussion with Achievement First**

A. CEO Welcome and Mission Moment (15 mins)

Lisa Margosian, CEO, welcomed everyone and thanked them for making the effort to be there for the in person meeting. She turned it over to Dumar Paden, chief of high schools to introduce the Howling Wolf Legion Percussion group. The group performed to an enthusiastic crowd.

B. Strategic Planning for AF's Future (20 mins)

Following the performance, Ms. Margosian went through the agenda for the evening before beginning to walk the board through the multi-year strategic plan, initiated in December with the leadership team, leveraging stakeholder input to evolve Achievement First's education. Ms. Margosian read the new versions of the mission and vision statement. She then discussed current challenges in the sector such as teacher shortages, shifting teacher expectations, certification complexity, shift in philanthropy, and declining student enrollment. She reflected on the strengths and challenges currently facing AF.

Michael Rabin, chief strategy officer, outlined four multi-year strategic priorities, emphasizing the importance of realizing graduate aims, integrating K-12 programs, sustaining the organization, focusing on talent development, and ensuring effective network support. Mr. Rabin shared that the organization has created mission measures to ensure the realization of their mission over time. They will focus on post-secondary outcomes and readiness measures, which will be assessed yearly. Additionally, quarterly assessments of the strategic plan progress will be conducted for self-assessment and reporting to stakeholders.

1. Rigorous Core Model (15 mins)

John Sharkey, chief academic officer, discussed the first strategic priority, rigorous core model. Mr. Sharkey provided details on how the curriculum implementation has gone this year and the plans for continuing the implementation over the next five years. Mr. Sharkey also shared some optimistic results on reading proficiency across all academies.

## 2. Vibrant Schools (15 mins)

Tiffany Bostic, chief of special services, shared about two initiatives that were piloted this year related to strategic priority two, vibrant schools. Ms. Bostic discussed implementing teletherapy pilot programs with Cartwheel Teletherapy to provide therapeutic services, family counseling, and psychiatric evaluation to students, addressing the long waiting lists and lack of native language services. She also mentioned the strategic partnership with the JED Foundation to assess and support student mental wellness, implement social-emotional learning curriculum, and develop a multi-tiered system of support in schools.

## 3. Equity Centered Talent (15 mins)

LaNelle Alexander, chief equity officer, shared details about strategic priority three, equity centered talent. She shared about initiatives including hosting events such as diversity and cultural observances to foster a sense of belonging, with upcoming events focusing on mental health awareness and breaking stigma. The organization is focusing on refreshing its current values to define behaviors that promote a healthy organizational culture. They plan to roll out these changes in the upcoming school year. Ms. Alexander shared that part of the multi-year plan includes defining pillars for team interactions and community engagement. She also discussed plans to operationalize values, design cultural workshops, continue the Leading for Racial Equity Fellowship, establish a DE&I Leadership Advisory Council, and implement scorecards for measuring progress.

## 4. Equitable and Sustainable Systems (15 mins)

Michael Rabin presented on strategic priority four, equitable and sustainable systems. He reflected on the progress that has been made this year including updating the annual portfolio management processes, redeveloping positive relationships with our authorizers, and reviewing the CT charter landscape to understand the current opportunities and challenges within the state. Future plans include making sure we have the right localized supports for our schools in Connecticut. He mentioned that there has been feedback that AF needs more direct, impactful influence on the sector, on the ground on a regular basis.

## C. Assessing our CT Needs (20 mins)

Lisa Margosian shared that she has identified a framework that is necessary for charter schools to be successful in a region. Michael Rabin walked the board through the five F's framework which includes families, faculty, funding, facilities, and friends. He said it is a mixed bag of results across AF's three regions, with New York being the most friendly and Connecticut being the least. He stated that it is simply the reality we need to navigate and adapt to, rather than a critique of Connecticut itself.

Mr. Rabin shared that through our strategic plan we intend to provide the necessary internal supports for our Connecticut charters but that assistance is needed from the boards to impact our external landscape. Specifically, he mentioned active board engagement and connections to political allies and funders.

Mr. Rabin and Ms. Margosian opened the floor for discussion. Amy D'Angelo suggested asking board members to host virtual salons, inviting their contacts and sharing information about AF to invite interest. Shannelle Whyte and Kelia Lanham discussed the need to involve parents more in the conversation. Charron Smalls suggested a parent senate made up of parents representing all of the AF charter schools in the state. Jen Alexander spoke about opportunities for advocacy with AF Hartford teachers, many of who live in the district.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.