

AF Joint Connecticut Board Meeting Minutes AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors

Thursday, October 10, 2024 at 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM EDT
Amistad High School: 580 Dixwell Avenue, New Haven, CT 06511

Attendees: Erwin Hurst, Sr., Francoise Deristel-Leger, Charon Smalls, Victor De La Paz

Guest: Leonard Epps

AF Staff: Lisa Margosian, Tiffany Bostic

I. Call to Order

Mr. Hurst, Sr. called the meeting to order at 5:50 pm.

II. Public Comment

Mr. Leonard Epps, a potential board member, attended the meeting as a member of the public but made no public comment.

III. Board Business: Board Goals & Board Resolutions and Approvals

Mr. Hurst Sr. introduced the consent agenda and asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve. Francoise Deristel-Leger motioned, Victor De La Paz seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstaining.

Consent Agenda:

1. BE IT RESOLVED, the Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from June 10, 2024 and June 13, 2024.
2. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby elects the following leadership slate for the 2024-2025 fiscal year:
 - a. Erwin Hurst, Sr, Chair
 - b. Francoise Deristel-Leger, Vice Chair
 - c. Victor De La Paz, Treasurer
 - d. Surbhi Patel, Secretary
3. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby appoints the following committee members:
 - Finance Committee: Victor De LaPaz (Chair), Erwin Hurst, Sr., Lisa Tanen-LaFontaine
 - Personnel Committee: Erwin Hurst, Sr.(Chair), Francoise Deristel-Leger, Charon Smalls
 - AF Joint Hartford Committee: Erwin Hurst, Sr. (Chair), Alice Turner, Surbhi Patel

4. BE IT RESOLVED that the Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the following individuals to serve as interim principal, as needed, for a period of time not to exceed sixteen weeks through June 30, 2025, based on the recommendations by Achievement First.

School	Interim Principal 1	Interim Principal 2
Elementary School	Jenn Arce	DJ Vandrilla
Middle School	Jessica Alhasnawi	Ashlie Alleyne
High School	Jahki Manley	n/a

5. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the 2024-2025 AF Family Handbook.

IX. Adjourn

There being no further business, Mr. Hurst asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Francoise Deristel-Leger motioned, Charon Smalls seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained. The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 pm.

Additional Meeting Notes

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CEO Welcome

Lisa Margosian, AF CEO, welcomed the four Connecticut boards and thanked everyone for being there.

Our Schools Today: Strengthening our Foundation, Building our Future

A. Academics

Transitional Superintendent Amy D'Angelo and Chief Academic Officer, John Sharkey, discussed school performance, noting that they outperform their school district in ELA across all regions. However, they acknowledged the need for improvement in other areas and committed to focusing on pricing and increasing student enrollment. They emphasized the importance of data in driving change and improving curriculum implementation and expressed confidence in the team's ability to improve moving forward.

Kristin Damo, Chief of Elementary Schools shared about what is being done to support students in improving academic outcomes. She discussed the school's approach to engaging families with summer learning packets. The packets were sent out in advance, and when students return, teachers check the completed work, provide incentives, and engage families in discussion. She mentioned the importance of providing translations and support resources for families. For early intervention, the school conducts assessments in kindergarten through second grade at the start of the year to identify students needing additional support.

Charmayne Joseph, Chief of Middle Schools, discussed the challenges faced by middle school students in terms of proficiency in English and math. She highlighted the need for consistent and responsive data, particularly in math, and the importance of addressing foundational reading skills. Shannon also mentioned the implementation of new programs such as Lexia for reading intervention and I Excel for math intervention.

Dumar Paden, Chief of High Schools, discussed potential new solutions and the importance of identifying root causes and prioritizing actions to improve high school performance.

B. Chronic Absenteeism

Tiffany Bostic, Chief of Support Services shared that the region improved on chronic absenteeism last year. She shared strategies being implemented in order to decrease the number of students who are chronically absent by 8% this year.

C. Teacher Certification

Amy D'Angelo discussed the progress being made on teacher certification. She mentioned the ongoing work with an external consultant to ensure compliance and the need for strategic planning for enterprise certification.

VI. ESSER Spend Down Update

Aaron Obrachta, Associate Chief of Development, discussed ESSER and its third round of funding, which ended on September 30th. He discussed the management of funds for various projects, emphasizing the goal to reduce these funds to zero. He highlighted the significant increase in funds for Esser 3, which went from March 2021 to September 2024, and the injection of almost 30 million dollars into schools for technology, personnel, and safety equipment. Mr. Obrachta also mentioned the challenges of spending down to the last dollar and the need for careful management of funds. He noted that the funds are restricted in how they can be used and that they have gone through an amendment earlier this year to ensure proper use.

VIII. AF CT Boards: Partnering on Governance

Lisa Margosian shared her focus areas for the year and her expectations for the board related to engagement, attendance, and board giving. She also discussed the board's role in governance and shifting from oversight to strategic engagement.

VII. Mission Moment

Ms. Margosian shared that this year is Achievement First's 25th Anniversary and the organization's remains committed to closing the achievement gap and supporting under-resourced communities. She mentioned that there will be regional block parties and celebrations culminating with a summit at the end of the year. Then she shared a video about the 25th anniversary before the meeting end.