



## **AF Brooklyn Board Meeting Minutes**

2/11/2025 6:00 PM EST

25 Broadway, 12th FL, New York, NY 10004

<https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/89318880050>

### **Attendance**

**Members:** Jon Atkeson, Andrea Kilpatrick, Erica Murphy (remote), Paul Cabana, Romy Coquillet, Desiree Dalton, Akeem Frett, Chris Lynch (remote), Kevin Miquelon, David Pollak, Amy Arthur Samuels, Brandon Sorlie

**Guests:** Keith Brooks

**AF Staff:** Amy D'Angelo, Alicia Harper (remote), Kiah Hufane, Charmayne Joseph, Lisa Margosian, Omar Mayyassi, Shannon Miller, Aaron Obrochta, Dumar Paden, Michael Rabin, Marc Sachse (remote), Meryl Senter, Ru Sharma

#### **I. Call to Order (Presenters: Romy Coquillet)**

Romy Coquillet called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

#### **II. Public Comment (Presenters: Romy Coquillet)**

There were no members of the public present.

#### **III. CEO Agenda Overview (Presenters: Lisa Margosian)**

Lisa Margosian highlighted the agenda for the meeting which is focused on talent but also included financial updates.

#### **IV. Executive Session: Voyager MS, Principal Candidates, and Principal Mid Year Reviews (Presenters: Charmayne Joseph, Amy D'Angelo, Dumar Paden, Kristin Damo, Michael Rabin)**

Ms. Coquillet asked for a motion to enter executive session asking all AF staff in attendance to join. Jon Atkeson motioned. Brandon Sorlie seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained. The board exited executive session at 7:00 pm.

#### **V. Board Approvals and Resolutions (Presenters: Romy Coquillet)**

Ms. Coquillet asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda approving the minutes from the December 10th meeting and approving the principal candidates. Desiree Dalton motioned. Andrea Kilpatrick seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

1. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby approves the meeting minutes from December 10, 2024.

2. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby appoints the individuals listed below as principals of the following Achievement First schools effective immediately:

1. Don Hardin, Crown Heights Middle School
2. Shane' Ramos, Aspire Elementary School

3. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Brooklyn Board of Trustees hereby appoints the individuals listed below as principals of the following Achievement First schools effective July 1, 2025:

1. Daliza "Dali" Lawrence, North Brooklyn Prep Elementary School
2. James Fernandez - Brooklyn High School
- 3.

Ms. Coquillette introduced a resolution to close Voyager Middle School at the end of the school year. Brandon Sorlie motioned. Desiree Dalton seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

BE IT RESOLVED, The Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees, on behalf of Achievement First Voyager Middle School, hereby resolves to accept the recommendation to close Achievement First Voyager Middle School at the conclusion of the 2024-2025 school year and to immediately cease enrollment of any students, pending State University of New York (SUNY) approval.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED Achievement First Inc. and its designees are, jointly and severally, authorized and directed, in the name of Achievement First Brooklyn Board of Trustees, to submit an enrollment plan and other documents needed to seek charter revisions from the charter authorizer in order to effectuate the foregoing resolution.

#### **VI. Mission Moment (Presenters: Meryl Senter)**

The board welcomed Meryl Senter, the principal of AF East New York Elementary School, to share insights about her role and the school's operations. The school is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a slogan '20 years old going for gold', focusing on growth in KPIs and school-wide priorities such as adult culture, academics, and student experience.

The school aims to maintain and improve staff satisfaction, as indicated by the goal of achieving a 4.0 or higher in the organizational health survey. Ms. Senter emphasized the importance of retaining staff for the benefit of the students and the school community, noting that long-term staff contribute to a flourishing art program and overall student experience. She shared that the stability of the leadership team has been crucial in building a shared vision for the school, which has contributed to its success. She highlighted the importance of having a coalition of leaders who can support the principal in realizing this vision.

#### **VII. AF: Building a Talent First Organization (Presenters: Ru Sharma)**

Ru Sharma presented on AF's talent strategy. She emphasized the need for a strategic approach to talent acquisition, recognizing that the current landscape shows a decline

in new teachers entering the profession. This necessitates a rethinking of recruitment and pipeline programs to ensure a sustainable talent pool.

Ms. Sharma shared that her team is working on clearly defining their employee value proposition to attract potential candidates and retain current employees. This involves restructuring the recruitment process to focus on regional teams, which allows for tailored strategies that meet the unique demands of each area. The recruitment strategy has shifted to prioritize quality candidates over the number of applications received. This includes implementing stricter application processes to filter out unqualified candidates, thereby improving the overall quality of hires.

Ms. Sharma highlighted the strategic direction towards expanding the teacher pipeline, indicating a shift from traditional recruitment methods to a more proactive approach in attracting teachers. This includes the need for investment to grow certified teachers, especially from diverse backgrounds. She mentioned her team is rebooting the teacher in residence program to better align with current needs and expectations, which was recently presented to school chiefs. Her team is working on a homecoming initiative to engage alumni as teachers, which will require follow-up actions to ensure successful implementation. She discussed a new volume hiring days initiative which aims to enhance recruitment efficiency and improve candidate experience, which is a strategic shift in their hiring process.

Ms. Sharma mentioned that the organization is actively working with an external agency to develop a compelling employee value proposition that reflects its commitment to racial equity and aims to attract potential candidates. This initiative is seen as crucial for both recruitment and internal communication. Her team plans to transition from surveys to interviews for gathering feedback from exiting employees to better understand their reasons for leaving, which is crucial for improving retention strategies and better understanding the value proposition.

Ms. Sharma stated that she is committed to investing in staff development and leadership growth to improve teacher retention, which is a significant challenge currently faced, especially in the context of post-pandemic recovery. She acknowledged the need for strategies to improve retention, particularly in middle schools, which are currently trailing behind other academies. This includes addressing principal turnover and implementing effective management practices.

Ms. Sharma emphasized the importance of leadership development initiatives, including the appointment of strong elementary school principals to middle schools and the establishment of dedicated regional superintendents for New York, which aims to enhance focus and support for local principals. The team plans to continue developing leadership at all levels, including providing leadership development for deans, which is a new initiative aimed at strengthening management capabilities within schools.

## **VIII. Finance Committee Report (Presenters: Omar Mayyasi, Chris Lynch)**

Omar Mayyasi shared that the financial report indicated a projected net surplus of \$8.75 million, attributed to 70 open positions and an additional revenue of \$3.5 million, reflecting a positive financial outlook. He mentioned there is a focus on supporting school leaders and principals in utilizing their current year surplus effectively, ensuring alignment and clarity in spending.

Mr. Mayyasi presented a financial forecast indicating an expected additional funding revenue of approximately \$3.6 million, primarily sourced from ESSER, special education, and interest income. The discussion highlighted that 70 open positions are generating over \$8 million in salary savings, which are being utilized to offset costs associated with consulting work and initiatives. Furthermore, the liquidity status was discussed, revealing a cash balance of \$112 million, with specific interest rates from Bank of America and Alex Brown accounts contributing to the overall financial health.

Brandon Sorlie highlighted the need to explore an overhire strategy to mitigate staffing shortages, suggesting that hiring more staff initially could help manage future turnover and retention issues. The AF team agreed to consider the overhire strategy as a viable option moving forward, indicating a need for further exploration and planning on how to implement this strategy effectively.

Romy Coquillette requested an update on specific investment initiatives and their financial status for the next board meeting, emphasizing the importance of collaboration across all levels to ensure effective spending. She also asked for a preliminary budget including high-level assumptions regarding tuition, enrollment, and compensation.

**IX. AF 25th Anniversary Summit (Presenters: Lisa Margosian)**

Lisa Margosian shared details about the celebration event for AF's 25th anniversary, which will involve board members, alumni, students, families, and teachers, showcasing the program and its achievements. Invites will go out at the end of February.

**X. Adjourn (Presenters: Romy Coquillette)**

Ms. Coquillette asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jon Atkeson motioned, David Pollak seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained. The meeting adjourned at 8:08 pm.