

**Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford**

Accountability and Support Committee

Thursday, June 13, 2024
450 Columbus Blvd.
Plaza North, Meeting Rooms C & D
Hartford, Connecticut

Minutes
(Approved on: September 12, 2024)

I. Call to Order

Pursuant to the notice filed with the Secretary of the State, and with the interim absence of Committee Chair Erin D. Benham, Committee Chairperson Pro Temp Donald F. Harris, Jr. called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

Committee

Members Present:

Donald F. Harris, Jr.
Dr. Seth D. Zimmerman
Kristen A. Record

Committee

Members Absent:

Erin D. Benham
Allan B Taylor

CSDE Staff Present:

Deputy Commissioner Charles E. Hewes, Ed.D.
Irene Parisi
Dr. Melissa Jenkins
Jennifer Webb
Leslie Navarrete
Shakira Jacobs-Vazquez
Robert Kelly

Guests Present:

Karolyn Belcher, Interim Superintendent of Achievement First Bridgeport Academy, Bridgeport
Brooke Williams, Regional Superintendent of Achievement First
Shalia Garnett, Elementary School Principal, Achievement First Bridgeport, Bridgeport
Lauren Raimondi, Elementary School Principal, Amistad Academy Elementary School, New Haven
Sueleidy Cruz, Elementary School Principal, Achievement First Hartford, Hartford
Stacy Gilison, Consultant, Team School Operations Achievement First
Nakia Hall, Director of External Relations of Achievement First
John Sharkey, Chief Academic Officer of Achievement First

II. Approval of Minutes

The Accountability and Support Committee did not reach quorum; the minutes of the May 15, 2024, Accountability and Support Committee meeting was tabled.

Vote:		
In Favor:	0	
Abstained:	0	
Opposed:	0	
Absent:	0	

III. Achievement First Charter Schools Renewal Corrective Action Updates

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer for the CSDE Academic Office, shared a brief overview of the latest State Board of Education (Board) approved charter renewal and the approved corrective action plan for Achievement First (AF) charter schools in April of this year. Ms. Parisi welcomed Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Interim Superintendent Karolyn Belcher; Regional Superintendent of Achievement First Brooke Williams; Elementary School Principal of Achievement First Bridgeport Shalia Garnett; Elementary Principal of Amistad Academy Elementary School, New Haven, Lauren Raimondi; Elementary School Principal of Achievement First Hartford Sueleidy Cruz; Consultant of Team School Operations Achievement First Stacy Gilison; Director of External Relations of Achievement First Nakia Hall; and Chief Academic Officer of Achievement First John Sharkey to provide a progress update per the conditions of their latest charter renewal for:

- Achievement First Bridgeport (AF Bridgeport)
- Achievement First Hartford (AF Hartford)
- Amistad Academy (Amistad)
- Elm City College Prep (ECCP)

AF expressed their gratitude for the technical assistance the CSDE provided with the SBE-approved Corrective Action Plan. AF shared with the Committee that AF charter schools did not experience absenteeism issues until after COVID-19; as result, proceeding COVID-19, AF built and started the implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for absenteeism. AF added that the MTSS for absenteeism in place helps maintain AF informed to build supports for the months AF charter schools are experiencing high absenteeism rates.

AF noted chronic absenteeism issues in the kindergarten grade level and at Amistad and an increase in the absenteeism rate during the holidays, particularly in the kindergarten grade level. AF will continue efforts to address Amistad's absenteeism rate with the goal of reducing it to 10 percent. AF will continue to focus on building and implementing MTSS for absenteeism. Ms. Parisi suggested AF to look into the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) and encouraged them to continue working alongside Kari Sullivan Custer from the CSDE Attendance, Chronic Absence, and Truancy Office and leverage state funding opportunities. Despite the teacher recruitment challenges AF charter schools are facing in the areas of mathematics and science, recruitment and retention continue to be a priority for AF. AF added that incentives have been created to be competitive in the teacher pool.

AF shared with the Committee that revamping the academic curricula was a massive undertaking and AF successfully revised the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics curricula to align with Common Core State Standards and is providing professional development for teacher knowledge building around the new ELA and mathematics curricula. While mathematics continues to be a challenge because of the teacher shortage in the subject area, AF is starting to observe progress in ELA, according to AF ELA assessments. AF went on to report that reading level for AF elementary school students is steadily increasing and there has been an increase in use of data to guide instruction. Additionally, AF reported ECCP experiencing a 46 percent increase in literacy in the kindergarten grade level and contributed it to the implementation of Science of Reading. AF will continue efforts in ELA and plans to provide further professional development to AF educators around the new curriculum to dive deeper in the curriculum.

Moreover, one of AF's goals for the incoming school year is to strengthen family engagement which was affected by the pandemic. The Committee thanked the AF team for their update. The Pro Temp Chair opened the floor for comments and questions from the Committee.

IV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete