



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE; June 4, 2015

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**AF AMISTAD HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY, JOINED BY LOCAL AND STATE LEADERS, DEDICATES  
ITS NEW SCHOOL BUILDING IN NEW HAVEN**

*\$35 Million Project Transforms Former Martin Luther King School Building  
Into State-of-the-Art Campus*

NEW HAVEN, CONN. – Achievement First Amistad High, a high-performing, college preparatory public charter high school, today celebrated the dedication of its new school building at 580 Dixwell Avenue. Community leaders, and local and state elected officials—including Mayor Toni Harp, State Senator Martin Looney, State Representative and Education Chair Andrew Fleishmann, and several New Haven alders—participated in the festivities.

The dedication celebrated AF Amistad High’s new permanent home in the Newhallville community in New Haven. The school, formerly housed on Prince and Gold Streets, will now enjoy a building commensurate with the high-quality learning and instruction taking place there. Recently, *U.S. News & World Report* recognized Amistad as the number two high school in Connecticut in its “Best High Schools” rankings, and for the sixth consecutive year AF Amistad High’s graduating class had a 100 percent college acceptance rate.

“We are extremely excited to dedicate our new high school building. It is a physical representation of what has been happening at our high school for nine years,” said Caroline Williams, chairwoman of the AF Amistad Joint High School Committee. “Our students, teachers and families finally have a building worthy of the level of instruction, learning and dedication they have shown.”

The building is the result of a \$35 million construction project funded through a mix of public funding, philanthropy and financing. The project has transformed the long-vacant Martin Luther King School site into AF Amistad High’s state-of-the-art campus. It includes 75,000 square feet of space, a multi-sport turf field, and features artwork celebrating the civil rights leaders depicted on the exterior of the former Martin Luther King School as a tribute to the old school building and these inspiring individuals.

“Our mission is to make sure all students—regardless of race or economic status—have access to a great education and all of the opportunities that creates. We could not ask for a better location to pursue this mission than the site of the former Martin Luther King School, and we look forward to adding to its rich legacy in the Newhallville community,” said AF co-CEO and President Dacia Toll.

One of the key financial partners for this initiative was First Niagara bank, which provided \$7 million in loans for the building project.

“First Niagara is proud to help underwrite the construction of AF Amistad High School and its mission to provide students with a high-quality and state-of-the-art educational experience,” said David Cantor, first vice president and New England Region team leader for First Niagara’s Business Banking Department. “Achievement First is a great example of an institution that works to help New Haven



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students grow and develop.”

The dedication ceremony also highlighted and celebrated the strong collaboration between the school and local community that made this facility possible. In addition to the Newhallville neighborhood gaining one of Connecticut’s highest performing schools, the community will have access to the space for community events and functions. AF Amistad High has also expanded its enrollment to enroll ninth-graders from the community who did not previously attend an Achievement First middle school.

Toll added, “The entire community came together to make this new building a reality. School staff, parents, community leaders, city and state leaders, and generous donor all recognized the value of having a great high school in the neighborhood and worked together to make it happen. The big winners, in the end, are our students.”

During the dedication, which included a keynote address from Dr. David R. Harris, provost and senior vice president of Tufts University, Toll presented awards to Alder Delphine Clyburn, Alder Brenda Foskey-Cyrus, former Alder Jaqueline James, Mayor Toni Harp, State Representative Andrew Fleischmann, State Representative Toni Walker, State Senator Martin Looney, State Senator Gary Winfield, The Seedlings Foundation and the Steven A. & Alexandra M. Cohen Foundation, and also gave special thanks to ESPN and the NFL Foundation for the athletic fields; Fusco Corporation (the building architects), Fletcher Thompson and Strategic Building Solutions (the builders), for their critical help and partnership in making this project possible.

To learn more about this event, contact Amanda Pinto at [amandapinto@achievementfirst.org](mailto:amandapinto@achievementfirst.org).

### **About Achievement First and AF Amistad High**

Achievement First is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that currently operates 29 public charter schools in Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island. The mission of Achievement First is to close the achievement gap and deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all children, regardless of race, economic status or zip code. With its college-preparatory focus, Achievement First schools are attaining breakthrough academic gains, and 100% of AF Amistad High School graduates are accepted into colleges and universities. During the 2014-15 academic year, AF Amistad High serves 435 students, 98% of whom are African-American or Latino, and 74% of whom qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. Across our network, more than 9,500 students attend AF schools, the majority of whom are from historically underserved and low-income communities. For more information, visit [AchievementFirst.org](http://AchievementFirst.org).