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**Achievement First Shared Beliefs & Consistent Practices**

**Framing this Document**

Achievement First Network Support and schools have worked together to define the key components of AF schools and clear decision rights on programmatic issues. At a high level, three key documents guide this work:

* **AF Report Card:** The AF Report Card provides clear, unambiguous goals for all AF schools. Everyone knows what we are shooting for – and what we are ultimately held accountable for. By hitting clear targets for academic achievement and other measures, schools can earn between 0 and 600 points on the AF Report Card, and schools are graded by the score on the AF Report Card (A+ / Exemplary = 475 or higher, A / Very Strong = 425 or higher, B+ / Strong = 375 or higher, B / Solid = 325 or higher, C / Developing = 275 or higher, F / Not meeting standard = 274 or below). Principals work with AF Network Support to set 3-year goals aligned to the AF Report Card, and the results of the AF Report Card are transparent. Bonuses for all school staff are also aligned to the AF Report Card.
* **Shared Beliefs & Consistent Practices:** This is this document. It define the working relationship between network and school leaders and the guiding principles we use to make decisions. It also clearly identifies the set of practices that need to be consistent across all schools, providing clear rationales for each practice.
* **Core Practices / Readiness:** Between being “tight” on goals (the AF Report Card) and clear on the limited set of practices that need to be consistent across the network, there is a large middle. Historically, this was not well-defined, and it caused issues with student achievement, staff sustainability, and network-schools relationship. The Core Practices /Readiness document names key expectations/practices that define all Achievement First schools, but unlike Consistent Practices, the practices may differ from school to school. AF Network Support will play a key role in curating exemplars from across the network and coordinating training and support, and schools will use this support to adopt, modify, or create their own systems/practices; while these practices may differ, they all will meet the criteria outlined in the Core Practices / Readiness document.

These three documents provide strong guidance to schools. It should be noted that it is impossible to capture every issue, for schools are incredibly complex, people-intensive places. In trying to get to clarity, the spirit of working together to do what works to drive student achievement should never be lost. That is why we start with the guiding principles below before outlining the consistent practices.

**Guiding Principles**

**All AF leaders share a strong outcomes-oriented approach.**

AF’s mission focuses on developing the academic and character skills students will need to succeed in college and life, and all AF leaders agree that the ultimate Shared Belief is that we need to do whatever it takes to get there. It will be crucial, therefore, to clearly establish benchmarks for excellence (most clearly in the AF School Report Card) and to align all of our practices and decisions around meeting these clear performance targets. We want to create a network of schools that are consistent in their great outcomes not a network of schools that may be consistent in their practices but not consistent in great outcomes.

**We believe in both the power to lead and in the power of the network.**

In order to meet these clear outcome goals, we all understand both that principals will need wide and deep decision rights in order to drive achievement at their schools and that there will need to be a set of practices shared by all AF schools in order to provide the level of support necessary to aid and sustain schools in their work. Some thoughts to guide us on this journey:

*Relationships matter more than documents*

This document endeavors to capture this “sweet spot” of power to lead and power of the network, but smart people don’t instinctively consult documents before they make decisions. They instinctively talk to other smart people. Many school districts fail to develop a strong, support-oriented relationship with principals. We realize that the crucial relationship here is the one between the Regional Superintendent (and AF’s School Support Team) and the principal (and the school’s leadership team); the Regional Superintendent isn’t the principal’s only “go to” person, nor are they the only point of contact between AF School Support and school leaders, but the Regional Superintendent works to create a relationship where he/she can both share a personal “toolbox” of knowledge and skills and also act as a guide to the broader AF (and beyond) “hardware store” of resources. For the shared practices to work, the Regional Superintendent and principal must have a relationship built on trust, open communication, mutual problem-solving, and shared accountability for amazing student outcomes. If the relationship between the Regional Superintendent and principal is not working or begins to break down, both parties are responsible for first trying to engage in deep discussions to name the issues and try to work them out; if necessary, AF’s superintendent can be asked by either party to help “unstick” the relationship or (in rare cases) decide to have a different primary support person for the principal.

*Principals have wide and deep decision-making rights, for AF is fundamentally an outcomes-driven organization*

Having a great principal is the most important driver in a school for having great student achievement. AF Principals have wide and deep decision rights so they have the autonomy to really drive student achievement in their school. Principals know more about the day-to-day variables impacting their schools, the knowledge and skills of teachers and staff at their school, strengths and challenges faced by individual students, parents, and the broader community. Therefore it makes sense to empower principals to make decisions so that the school can deliver on the promises made to students and families.

*AF (especially the school support lead working with a school) has strong input rights*Principals also agree to work in partnership with Achievement First, acknowledging the strong input rights of their school support lead; in practice, this means working together with Team School Support and the principal cohort to problem-solve school-site decisions. The more important the decision or the more seismic the directional shift, the stronger the input rights of the school support lead should become. The principal also has the responsibility to make decisions that are in keeping with the AF Core Values and consistent shared practices.

*Shared Practices are Important*

In this context of the principal’s power to lead, principals also know that their schools are part of something bigger and value the resources, support, and best practice sharing of the principal cohort and the broader AF network. AF principals and central staff believe in the power of shared practices for many reasons; among others, it allows us to best facilitate sharing and professional development across the network, enables strong support services, delivers consistently high-quality outcomes, develops talented people to take on opportunities across the network, makes this incredibly hard work sustainable for school leaders and teachers, and enables the transition of schools from one leader to another over time. In short, we do things that are proven to work, and we keep a limited set of things consistent for the benefit of coordinated support and collaboration.

*Principals and AF staff work together to shape AF’s Shared Practices*

The principal cohort working together to shape AF’s broad frameworks of shared practice is one of the things that makes AF special. We aim to break the broken paradigms of “central v. schools,” “client v. provider,” or “consistent v. flexible.” School districts have traditionally become distant “command-and-control” bureaucracies, and charter schools have suffered from an invent-the-wheel-with-martyr-staff approach that can, at best, produce only temporary islands of excellence. AF is working to develop a new way of creating a network of excellence. We view the principal cohort, working with AF staff, as keepers of an evolving set of shared practices that all AF schools use and improve.

We all realize that shared practices are necessary for the network to function and grow with high quality and that decisions are made in such a way that support both a school’s priorities and needs and also strengthen the broader network. If we do this right, principals can say: “I have a role in shaping the shared practices that inform the network, and I have tons of support and resources to support these. I also have the authority and autonomy to make decisions that I believe best drive achievement at my school, and I value strongly the input of my school support lead in helping me make the best decisions. When I make changes, I make them thoughtfully, in partnership with my school support person, in alignment to AF’s shared practices, and in the strong belief that this change will drive stronger student achievement and character outcomes.” AF’s superintendent reserves approval rights on issues that are fundamental to the organization, but in this spirit, it should be extremely rare that a principal decision would be overruled.

*AF staff and Principals will work together to prioritize which Shared Practices to discuss for evolution, and principal input groups will work together with AF to help evolve our Shared Practices*

There are some core shared practices (e.g. most scope and sequences, interim assessments) that will be discussed and edited collaboratively each year, but it isn’t practical or desirable to put all issues on the table each year. Each year, AF staff and principals will work to prioritize issues for discussion and decision-making and divide these issues into working groups that will lead the process of shared practice evolution. We want to avoid the lurching back-and-forth so common in many districts (e.g. five reading curricula in seven years) while we relentlessly improve. We will also recognize that it will be logistically impossible for everyone to give deep input on all issues and that there may be rare but necessary occasions in which AF leadership needs to make a final decision if clear consensus can’t be reached or if it believes a decision is truly counter to the long-term well-being of the organization. In general, input groups are formed by January each year, and the work of the groups would be finished by June of each year. Scope and Sequence groups will also work on a January to June timeline, and IA feedback will be given on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Moreover, this document is updated and reviewed by the cohort each July.

*Clarity about decision rights and the process for change is important to make this work.*

We will seek to maximize input, gain consensus around decisions, and present a unified front after decisions are made. Decision rights fall into three clear categories -- consistent practices (the what and the how are the same), consistent outcomes that schools design to meet clear criteria (the WHAT is required, the HOW is up to schools), and suggested but not required best practices. When the principal cohort identifies areas for further discussion and potential shared practice evolution, the input group will work to clarify the outcomes of the group and the process and timeline for decision-making.

*There is a clear process for planned, targeted innovation and school-site differences*

We always want to seek a better way, and we also want to be thoughtful and deliberate in how we change and evolve. Therefore, a process for innovation / pilots and school-site differences is explained later in this document. Pilots are only necessary for items in the Consistent Practices (What and How) category, for other items already have principal approval rights.

While the shared practices apply to all schools and principals, common sense and practical realities suggest that newer schools would most likely build off what works and stick more closely to proven practices in the critical start-up years. As schools mature and school leaders gain knowledge and expertise, it makes sense that these principals would have greater insight into both how to evolve our shared practices and how to strategically innovate.

*In cases* of *low performance, AF will provide great support*

AF invests a tremendous amount in principal selection and development so that principals are equipped to lead their schools to high performance. In the cases of lower-performing schools, principals would be put on a performance improvement plan, and the PIP would clearly outline what would need to change and what support would be given to help meet those change goals. These cases would be based on clear data (state tests, IAs, school observations, AF Report Card) and come after robust support was given. In these cases, this performance improvement plan would be time-bound and performance-bound (that is, they would end at certain date if performance measures were met). If performance does not improve enough to put the school on a clear path toward meeting our goals, AF will replace the school leader.Theprocess is meant to preserve the network as having universally high-achieving schools. In any case where a decision was made to replace the school leader, AF would work with the school leader to help him/her find a new position that is a better match for his/her skills and interests, and we would also work with the principal to craft a message and transition plan that set up both the principal and the school up for future success.

**AF principals are organizational leaders – and have organizational responsibilities.**

*Principals have a responsibility to be strong organizational leaders:* Because shared practices, a strong spirit of sharing, and joint accountability take hard work, principals should be strong organizational leaders. This takes the form of spending time and energy to help the network shape shared practices and evolve our understanding of excellence, and it also means that principals consciously and deliberately support network decisions, celebrate network successes, and share network resources (including talented people) so that all schools succeed. It also means that principals feel a responsibility to help all schools succeed by helping to lead trainings, participate in working groups, develop programs and materials, and support network initiatives.

*This takes time:* What we are trying to do – have the principal cohort be a strong, engaged cohort working to shape Shared Practices for the mutual benefit of the entire network – takes time and effort. It’s sometimes messy, and it will often takes several discussions and drafts to get to a good decision. The principal’s job is demanding and unrelenting, and the demands on the limited time we have together are great – skill-building, dilemma sharing, best practice sharing, data analysis, etc. In order for this to work, the cohort will have to recognize that we will need to dedicate significant amounts of our precious time to work and share together.

*Partnership, Team & Family:* The relationship between AF and schools is neither a “command-and-control” district says, school does model nor a “client-service” schools says, AF jumps dynamic. Both of these paradigms are broken. We seek to have a deep partnership, one that is trusting, honest, and transparent. The leaders of schools (principals) and AF teams have special responsibilities to support each other, ask questions, have each others back … and give each other tough feedback and hold each other accountable.

*Discuss / Dialogue / Disagree in Private:* Principals and other school-based leaders agree to discuss and disagree in private and sing from the same hymnal in public. It means, for example, that principals never say to school staff: “I need to check with central about that” or “I’m not sure if my Regional Superintendent will like that” or complain about AF or another school or principal to anyone on their staff. It also means that principals commit to coming directly to the person or team they have a problem with first before discussing that team or problem with another principal or AF staff member (other than their school support lead).

*Consider impact of actions:* Principals consider the impact of their actions on AF, other schools, and other school leaders. Principals and AF staff also agree to assume best intentions and to guard against school v. school or school v. AF sentiments in language or actions. We all agree to give feedback immediately and directly to each other if any such issues arise, and we commit to sharing any resources with the entire AF network.

*Help the broader mission:* AF school leaders are not just school leaders; they are also AF leaders. We hope that this means they get tons of support and value from the network. It also means that they have a responsibility to help the network – present at internal and external PD events, go to career fairs, speak with funders, etc. One of the values of the network is that we can spread these responsibilities around, but it is essential that all our top people, including principals, do their part in this effort.

*Leadership Team:* In order to deepen the organizational leadership of the principal cohort, one principal from each geography will serve on the AF leadership team. This team helps shape larger AF vision and strategy and identifies areas of strength and weakness in order to set priorities and execute against them. The principal cohort will work to select leadership team members each spring for the next year.

**A set of core shared beliefs guides the decision-making of all school leaders and central staff.**

* **Excellence:** The standard our scholars need and deserve is excellence. We aim to close the achievement gap and have student achievement results that are comparable to the highest-performing districts, regardless of the demographics of these districts. We want to create truly best-in-class schools, and we do not make excuses or settle for mediocrity.
* **Great Leadership:** An AF school cannot be great without a strong leader who both has the knowledge and skills around instructional leadership, leadership of people, and school culture leadership and has the authority and wisdom to make important decisions that maximize student achievement.
* **Great Teaching:** No variable in the student achievement formula is more important than the quality of a teacher, and AF schools aggressively and relentlessly work to rapidly build the knowledge and skills of all teachers so that there is high-quality, Essentials-aligned instruction happening in every class, every day.
* **Instruction Time is Sacred:** Our schools realize that our scholars have precious few hours to close the achievement gap and be ready to truly compete with the best students in this nation and world; our school leaders aggressively guard class time, working to dramatically limit any interruption or problem that is taking even a minute of class time. We believe that our students need more time, but even more importantly, we believe the time we give them needs to be high-quality.
* **Sustainability and Scalability:** AF schools recognize that we must build systems, patterns of distributive leadership, and shared practices in order to deliver excellence for years to come. In particular, we will embrace the value of clear, documented systems for all key school functions and work to ensure that roles and responsibilities (including how the owner of the system is held accountable for success) for delivering excellence with these systems are clear. We don’t have every answer, but we must learn together and build off prior knowledge in order to deliver amazing results in a sustainable way.
* **Data:** AF schools are committed to taking clear, concrete actions to change instruction and practice based on data. We set clear, ambitious, measurable goals, and we actively monitor the progress of these goals. Moreover, we don’t just report data; we act on it. We react with urgency and overwhelming force when data trends suggest we will not meet our goals. We don’t create any data report unless there would be a clear action step taken if the data was not acceptable.
* **Planning:** We believe deeply in planning on all levels, especially instructional planning. We recognize that the best teachers have clear year, unit, and lesson plans and that the best schools have clear and concrete plans for all core school functions. Planning and professional development time should be high-quality, purposeful, and targeted so that the resulting instructional time is of the highest quality and Impact possible.
* **Feedback, Reflection, and Continuous Improvement:** We celebrate a culture of feedback and design clear structures to reflect, get feedback, and create clear plans for improvement.
* **School Culture:** We believe that schools can be both structured and joyful, and we reject the idea that a school can’t simultaneously sweat the small stuff while building a joyful culture where everyone is being truly nice to each other, solving problems, developing character skills, and being held accountable to the highest behavioral standards. We want our students to move up all the levels of the Kohlberg continuum; we recognize that compliance / following the rules is not the ultimate goal, and we also realize that students can’t reach the highest levels of character development in a context in which students are not compliant / following the rules.
* **Pragmatic, not Ideological:** AF does not subscribe to any ideological framework or teaching belief system other than what has been proven to work. We value most practices that have been proven to work in AF schools, and we also deeply respect and value practices that have been proven to work in high-performing schools serving similar student populations to AF, ideas and practices that have thorough achievement-based research backing them, and the best practices from any K-12 school or other industries. In short, we want to do what works.
* **Partnership:** The broken paradigm – Should I ask for permission? Or should I ask for forgiveness? – shouldn’t apply to our work. Instead, the core question is -- Have I explored this issue in deep, open partnership, especially the partnership between school leaders and the school support team? Our strong belief is that the more smart, experienced people can tackle a problem, the better the outcome.
* **ALL Scholars:** We take seriously our commitment to ALL students. We want to be a model of public school reform, and we therefore must serve the same student populations that regular public schools serve. Specifically, this means that AF schools will serve special education students (save students with truly significant needs who need more specialized programs) and we will consider it a true failure if large numbers of students leave the school.

**Rationales for Consistent Practices (the What and How the Same at all schools)**

For practices that need to be consistent (the WHAT and the HOW the same), we need to be able to provide a strong, compelling rationale. This section, therefore, is longer in order to provide clear rationales for each of these practices. These practices are not “created far away” in a smoky office. Rather, the Principal Cohort works together to define, and AF’s superintendent has approval rights. For Consistent Practices, the OAPICS is as follows: Owner = Team Superintendent, Approver = Superintendent, Performer = Team Superintendent, selected schools (to get exemplars), Input = Principals, Team Superintendent, Network Support Team Leaders, Communicated to: Deans, Principals, Team Superintendent, Network Support Team Leaders, Shared Practice Implications = Yes. These are practices that should be consistent throughout the network.

Achievement First has identified six possible reasons why a practice would need to be consistent (the what and the how the same):

**Data:** We need consistent data capturing and data repositories to easily compile and compare data to ensure excellence, measure progress toward goals, and empower different ways to get there. If principals and schools capture data in the same way and are held accountable to meeting clearly established measures, principals can then figure out the best ways to lead to their results.

**Talent:** As we grow the number of schools and work to create career pathways where folks take on clearly defined role and move to a new school or to a central position, weneed clearly articulated and consistent pay and benefits structures, leadership development practices, on-boarding practices, etc. to grow a network. Clarity on these issues allows people to feel like they are being treated fairly, and we can build in performance-based structures so that we don’t become the blob we tried to escape.

**Legal:** Some policies, like parent handbook info, suspension policies, etc, need to be consistent to ensure compliance, avoid lawsuits, and allow certain folks to gain deep expertise in helping schools navigate tricky waters.

**Effective & Efficient Support:** Some shared resources and practices are necessary – IT policies, recruitment of teachers, finance system and practices, etc – to ensure efficient support of schools. If every school did some of these differently, we would end up with fragmented, inconsistent, expensive, and unsustainable support structures.

**Team & Family:** In order to grow and have maximum impact, we need a broad team and family spirit in sharing people, ideas, resources and participating in network activities. Part of being in a network is supporting other schools and the AF central teams.

**Non-Negotiables:** There are just a few practices – length of school year, length of school day, amount of spending total – that are so core that we have to keep them sacred. We try to limit these to the truly mission-critical.

**Process for Innovation & School-site “Differences” to Consistent Practices**

Before listing the consistent Shared Practices, it is important to note that for these practices, we have defined a process for school-site "differences" to certain practices and for innovation/pilot programs to push the AF network. (These pilot programs/differences are not necessary for topics in the Core Practices/Readiness categories, for these categories already anticipate significant school-site differences.)

The spirit of pilot programs or school-site differences is not innovation for innovation's sake; rather, it is a mechanism to ensure that AF’s shared practices do not hamper principals’ ability to meet their big goals and that AF has clear mechanisms to try new approaches that might lead to even greater student achievement results.

We also want to make sure that there are a manageable number of pilots a year (a handful) and that a single school would generally not have more than one pilot in a given year.

**Cohort Process for Innovation / Pilot Programs or School-site Differences**

This process is meant to be clear and non-bureaucratic. Essentially, it boils down to a principal and Regional Superintendent working closely together to establish what will be different and how success will be measured.

1) Need for a "better way" identified by a school, AF, or the principal cohort

2) School volunteers, AF asks a school, or principal cohort asks a school to pilot a potential "better way"; a pilot of a new approach is limited to 1-2 schools

3) The principal discusses the idea with his/her Regional Superintendent

4) The piloting school writes a short "pilot proposal" including the challenge the pilot is addressing, what the pilot is, who will do it, what training will be necessary, what AF support will be necessary, how long the pilot will take place, and how we will measure the success of the pilot, and who from AF is the point person to talk about the pilot with the school

5) The piloting school meets with the superintendent/Regional Superintendent; feedback is given, and the superintendent/asst. superintendent approves the pilot or asks the school to do more work on the pilot proposal

6) Regional Superintendent informs the principal cohort of the pilot

7) Pilot happens; data is shared with the Regional Superintendent.

8) Data / results are shared with Team Superintendent. Team Superintendent determines whether to determine the pilot was unsuccessful, extend the time for the pilot, extend the pilot at one school, add additional schools to the pilot, or adopt the pilot as Shared Practice

**Examples of Pilot Programs**

AF Flatbush Middle may pilot a program for all students who have 85 or above IA average and mastery on all 3 CMTs (as 6th or 7th graders) to apply to be able to leave school at 3:00 (an hour early) if they have signed up for an approved, structured after-school program. They agree to keep data on the students to see scores slip, and they also commit to developing a handbook of approved options for kids.

AF Flatbush Elementary wants to try a modified kindergarten scope and sequence (doing the standards in a different order) in the belief that this will drive better student outcomes at the end of the year. The K team there works with AF’s Curriculum team and stays in conversation and dialogue about the S+S and IAs they will use. The goal is to figure out if this suggests that a more dramatic change to AF’s scope and sequence for all schools would be suggested. The team and AF both agree to keep an open mind – that the goal of the pilot is not to “convince” the other – but to see what the data says at the end.

**Consistent Practices (What and How the Same at all schools)**

**Goals / Outcomes**

*AF Report Card*:

* All AF schools use the AF Report Card as the key goals for the school; schools use the AF Report Card to aid in setting of school BHAGs, and it is the ultimate accountability tool for all AF schools.
* Rationale: *Data –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coopetition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. The report card is the basis for having a performance management system – very clear, unambiguous, measurable outcomes against which our schools strive to attain.

*Organizational Health Survey, School Leadership Survey, AF Support Survey, Parent Survey*

* All schools give these surveys at common times or within common windows
* Rationale: *Data and Talent* – As a network, we need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness.  In addition, we are committed to continuous improvement.  Therefore, the data is reported back to the school leader in order for him or her to set clear improvement goals.

*AF Special Education Report Card* to measure school-site special education

* The school’s special ed coordinator works with AF’s Director of Special Education to produce these monthly or bi-monthly
* Rationale: *Data & Legal & Effective + Efficient Support –* Special education compliance is very tricky business, and we want to make sure that we know when/if there are issues, ensure that we are in full compliance with the law, and best support our schools to excellence.

*Operations Scorecard & Operations Deep Dives* tomeasure school-site operations:

* The school’s DSO works with the Regional Director of Ops to produce and analyze these.
* Rationale: *Data & Effective + Efficient Support –* There are certain core measures of operational excellence that should be consistent across our network, and we are aiming to measure these on an ongoing basis so that schools can, as appropriate, innovate and figure out new ways to meet the goal. We also want to be clear about the required, state-imposed (and sometimes AF-requested) outcome measures so that schools have the bandwidth to also tackle school-specific measures.

*Monthly KPI Reports from Ops team (common core)*

* All AF schools receive a common set of network-wide and school-specific Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports. AF Network Support works to define what will appear on these reports and the data integrity steps schools need to take to ensure that we have apples-to-apples data.
* Rationale: *Data –* We need a clear calendar of when certain data will be analyzed, and the monthly reports provide this function.

*Bonus Plan*

* The bonus program applies to all school-site staff.
* Rationale: *Data &Talent –* It makes sense to tie performance-based compensation to clear outcome measures, and we also need these bonus plans to be consistent within a geography. If some principals made the decision to share a bonus, it would put unfair pressure on other principals and expand the bonus criteria to another group, potentially setting AF up for noise around the criteria. This all could be moot in 2011-12 and beyond if we are able to expand the bonus program to all.

**Academic Program**

*Scopes and Sequences*

* Schools will administer *Interim Assessments* for reading (2-12), writing (K-12), math (K-12) science (3-12), social studies (5-12), and all core high school courses
* Rationale: *Data -* We want to be able to see, in real time, what practices, schools, and teachers are having positive effects … and what the areas for concern are. State and standardized test results are too slow in coming – we don’t fully have them analyzed until right when the school year is starting – to fully provide this function. By having five checkpoints a year, we are able to adjust and support in real time. We also want to “go beyond” state standards in our curriculum, and it would be challenging to measure this without consistent data reporting.

*Common Data Day*

* We can have data days be off by a day or two, but we really need to keep the IAs happening at the same time to have a real apples-to-apples comparison.
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support –* We are able to best share across the network, leverage common training (both from within and outside the network), and identify strong performers to share if we are using the same scope and sequence and interim assessments. Finally, the time and energy required to create quality assessments is immense, and it probably doesn’t make sense for individual schools to tackle this alone.

*Note about SS & IAs*

* We want to emphasize four things: 1) S+S and IAs are reviewed on an annual basis. 2) the S+S and IAs are the FLOOR, not the ceiling … and individual schools may create additions and supplemental assessments that meet their needs, 3) Though IAs are consistent, schools can make decisions to use S+S in nuanced ways. 4) We imagine this to be an area where schools will strategically use the pilot program. For example, if a school had a strong K team that wanted to remix the writing scope and sequence, they could, keeping Team Curriculum & PD in the loop, could try a new way. And if it works, it should help all of AF remix the S+S.
* Rationale: *Team & Family –* Because S+S and IAs are such an important part of a school and play an important network-wide role, we are committed to seeking out ongoing feedback. Scope and Sequence reviews happen in the January-April window, and IAs are reviewed on a rolling basis per cycle.

*Essentials of Great Instruction, Cycle of Effective Teaching*

* These will serve as the core of instructional program. This doesn’t mean that schools wouldn’t have their own additional rubrics/measures.
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Non-Negotiable:* In order for us to coordinate sharing, training, and support, we need a common definition of quality teaching, planning, and data analysis. Moreover, we just think that the Essentials define quality teaching in a way that is consistent with the findings of TFA, KIPP, Uncommon, Jon Saphier, and other organizations that we respect. The Essentials simply define quality teaching, and we should embrace them and push all of our teachers toward becoming masters of the Essentials.

*Trimester System(ES / MS), Semester System HS*

* AF elementary and middle schools operate on a trimester system with three progress reports and three report cards a year. AF high schools operate on a semester system with two progress reports and two report cards a year.
* Rationales: *Data* and *Efficient Support:* AF can best ensure clear, accurate, apples-to-apples data (e.g. comparing IA scores to grades, etc.) if all schools are on the same grading patterns. Moreover, if schools at the same grade levels are on different marking systems, it naturally causes differences in IA windows, report card night times, etc. These differences can make it very difficult to schedule key events and coordinate support. The elementary and middle schools are on a trimester system in order to give clear, frequent feedback to students and parents, and the high school is on a semester system to best match the credit requirements of the state (for graduating high school) and colleges (for admission).

*Grading Standards*

* For MS/HS: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 0-69 = F
* For MS/HS: Common GPA points scale
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient support, Data –* Much of our support and calendar is built around the trimester concept, and it’s much easier for us to provide consistent support to that. We want to be able to correlate course grades with IA scores, state tests, and other data, and without a common, consistent grading standards, we can’t do that.

*AF High School Graduation Requirements*

* Note: Principals make all final graduation decisions
* Rationale: *Data –* High school graduation rates across the country have become almost meaningless in part because of the huge variability in what it means to be a graduate. We need to be able to have true apples-to-apples comparisons here and support schools in resisting the temptation to lower the standard to raise the data.

*Promotion Policy & Standards Based on AF’s Academic Criteria*

* We are a K – 12 network and the decisions of one school impact the others in the charter, promotion policies are a consistent practice, and the same promotional policies should appear in all Family Handbooks.  There is, however, an articulated process for exceptions and extreme circumstances that allows for reasonable principal discretion and a clear network support process; this policy and the related processes are spelled out in the AF Promotion Overview document. Promotion decisions impact all AF schools along the K-12 continuum. For example, if a middle school decides to promote and 8th grader woefully deficient in skills or an elementary school holds back a student twice before entering middle school, those decisions impact more than just that school. Moreover, promotion decisions and rates can be high-profile topics, and promotion has a direct tie to attrition – and our mission. Therefore, we need to have a network-wide approach. In addition, there just should be a minimum bar for what it means to be an AF graduate, and we want to hold firm on that.
* Rationale: *Non-negotiable, Data, Non-negotiable –* Much like high school graduation rates, promotion rates have become somewhat meaningless as well because of hugely variable standards. We want to create rigorous, consistent academic standards and have true apples-to-apples comparisons. By doing so, we can push schools to explore best practices of other schools to help all students reach these standards.

*Special Education – Core Policies and Handbook*

* Rationale: *Data & Legal & Effective + Efficient Support –* Special education compliance is very tricky business, and we want to make sure that we know when/if there are issues, ensure that we are in full compliance with the law, and best support our schools to excellence. It is really hard to gain this expertise, and if all of our schools tackle the core compliance and policies in the same way, we can greatly enhance the support we can provide.

*High School Program Requirements*

* Schools agree to be responsive to requests to share best practice resources at the school with other AF schools on the Server; anything created at the school can be shared with all AF schools
* *Rationale: Effective + Efficient Support, Team & Family:* Schools are part of the AF network, so any quality product created by a school can and should be shared. Sharing does take some time and effort, but even if a school shares three times as much as the average AF school, it would only be sharing 3/17 or 3/30 (or however many schools we are up to); the benefit of sharing far outweighs the cost, and by leveraging the sharing of schools, we can provide much stronger support.

**School Culture**

*Suspension Criteria / Process*

* When suspending students, use the criteria for suspension and follow the process outlined by AF
* Rationale: *Legal, Data –* Suspension is fraught with tricky legal questions, and we need to do it consistent with our policies and practices. We want to make sure that we are tracking suspensions consistently to share best practices and to be able to report this out to authorizers in a timely fashion.

*Expulsion Criteria / Process*

* When expelling students (should be very, very rare), use the criteria for suspension and follow the process outlined by AF. NOTE: Principals make all suspension and expulsion decisions
* Rationale: *Legal, Effective + Efficient Support, Non-Negotiable –* Expulsion is fraught with tricky legal questions, and we need to do it consistent with our policies and practices. *-*  Asst. Superintendents and other AFers can build strong expertise to navigate these situations if our policies are the same. We are fundamentally not a “kick ‘em out” organization, and we want to make sure that we stay true to this (within reason and policy).

*Infinite Campus to track student attendance, medium to major discipline issues*

* Rationale: *Data* - In order for this data to be meaningful, we need a consistent system. The data can be powerful as we correlate it to other measures and work to highlight schools with particularly strong practices (so that they can share with others). We also want to encourage schools to use systems and practices that best work for them, and we can measure the success (and be able to share) only if our data is consistent.

*Family Handbook*

* This is the core AF Handbook used by all schools. Schools can modify and add, but core sections need to be there.
* Rationale: *Legal, Effective + Efficient Support:* There are many policies (FERPA, discipline, grievance, etc.) that are required by law and need to be constructed in a certain way. AF has lawyers review our handbook. Having multiple handbooks greatly increases the chance of legal exposures. Asst. Superintendents and other AFers can build strong expertise to navigate these situations if our policies are the same.

**School Support**

*Comprehensive School Review Process (pilot to start in 2011)*

* Schools will complete this process every other year
* Rationale: *Data –* The School Reviews will be built upon the core data sets reflected in the AF Report Card and Teacher Career Pathways. AF will work with schools to design and implement effective school reviews.

*Operations Calendar & School Leader Calendar*

* These documents will be used as basis for core functions
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support –* By using a clear, common core calendar, AF teams can best support schools. It becomes very hard to keep track if different schools did some basic functions at different times.

**Talent Management**

*Recruitment Process / Network-wide approach*

* Team Recruit outlines a process for recruitment that all schools use. Note: Principals make all hiring decisions (and co-decide for deans)
* Rationale: *Talent, Effective + Efficient Support, Legal –* We are trying to do something bigger than just starting one great school; as such, we need to ensure that all candidates have a strong, positive impression of AF and that we proactively and professionally interact with them; we also may need to distribute talent across schools based on the needs of schools. Team Recruit provides a tremendous service to schools, and in order for this to work well, the process needs to be consistent across schools. There are some potential legal pitfalls involved in the recruiting and hiring process; Team Recruit regularly reviews their practices to make sure they aren’t violating any laws nor creating unnecessary legal exposure for AF.

*Principal & Regional Supt. must both agree to hire deans and Directors of Operations*

* The reality is that it would be rare when an Regional Supt. would go against the principal; the main point here is for the Regional Supt. to be very involved in the process
* Rationale: *Talent –* Deans are more than just school leaders; they are network leaders. Moreover, when principals leave, it is usually a dean at the school who takes over, so AF has a vested interest in making sure the dean corps is solid.

Performance Improvement Plans use clear AF format and process.

* Principals make all decisions to put teachers, staff on PIPs Process for termination, other major HR issues
* *Legal, Talent, Effective + Efficient Support -* We need to follow certain procedures to be fully protected legally, and being consistent here supports that. We need our solid performers to know that we are fair and follow clear processes.Our HR team has developed deep expertise here, and they can support principals if a consistent process is followed.

**College / Alumni**

AF to College supports college placement alumni program staff with high school principal being the ultimate manager/approver

* College Placement & College/Alumni Core Calendars, Seminar Curriculum (9-12); room set up/materials meet AF to College criteria
* Rationale*: Effective + Efficient Support –* Team AF to College provides a tremendous service to schools that requires very specialized knowledge, and the leadership of the AF to College Team has the most expertise in this area – and has developed clear, proven processes.

**Parents**

*Give AF Parent Survey at the 2nd RC night (or soon before/after)*

* Rationale: *Data –* We need this consistent data done at the same time to share best practices across the network; we can custom-design questions and get this data in real-time.

*Also give DOE Parent Survey (in NYC)*

* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support –* This survey is required by the DOE, so we also need to give it. It allows Teams Ops and X to better work with authorizers.

Parents pick up report cards at RC night, get and discuss promotional letters at RC night

* Rationale: *Data –* We want to make sure that the important data on student achievement and promotional status are clearly and systematically communicated to parents

**Budget**

*Base budget model created by Team Finance is the starting point for budgets*

* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support –* It is just efficient to have a common budget core and template as a starting point, from which some discretion and variation will naturally occur; since schools eventually approve their budgets, all is good.

*Audit Prep / Audit Process*

* Rationale: *Legal –* There are some policies and procedures we just have to do consistently to adhere to state and federal law.

*Fiscal Policies / Fiscal Policies Handbook*

* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support –* Using the same fiscal policies and audit process allows AF’s central finance team to provide support to schools in a cost-effective way.

*Staffing Plans in the spirit of core budget/staffing model*

* The principal has the final decision-making power to staff the school as he/she needs – given the budget available.
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support –* We are able to project our budgets and coordinate programmatic support based off a general staffing model. At the end of the day, we need to give principals the flexibility necessary to make the staffing structure fit their needs. In general, we ask that if principals think they might be more than +/- 2 positions, they at least dialogue with both the Regional Superintendent (from an educational point-of-view) and the VP Finance (from a financial point-of-view).

**Teacher & Staff Development**

*Full school participation (100% of relevant folks in new staff training, AF-wide PD days, principal, PIR, dean, coach, GL chair, fellows cohort trainings*

* Note: are all reasonable people, so there will always be special circumstances; principals are expected to attend both the whole cohort events as well as regional events (e.g. elementary NY principal events)
* AF-wide PD days - schools lead 2-3 sessions each (0 -1 in year 1) … and provide “teachers” for New Staff Training and content days as asked (within reason)
* Rationale: *Team & Family, Effective + Efficient Support:* In order to grow and have maximum impact, we need a broad team and family spirit in sharing people, ideas, resources and participating in network activities. Part of being part of a network is supporting other schools and the AF central teams. We want to leverage our best folks for new staff training, PD days, content days, etc. so that schools can get maximum benefit and reduce their overall teacher development load. These trainings also allow us to leverage the best trainers across the network, saving time and leading to higher student achievement.

*Professional Growth Plans*

* Completed by teachers, deans, principals on scheduled timeline; learning goals set by Oct. 1
* Rationale: *Talent* – A strong evaluation that focuses on both the outcomes and inputs related to a specific role is essential to the continuous learning and development of all team members.  Talent development is so critical to our success, it’s important to have a consistent evaluation process.

*Leadership Essentials, School Leader PGPs*

* The Network uses these as basis of support for deans/leaders. In the future, use clear HRIS system to capture goals, PGPs, etc.
* Rationale: *Data* – We want to be able to cross-cut PGP data with achievement and retention data (e.g. are we losing high-rated or lower-rated teachers?), and without a clear, consistent data source, this becomes much more challenging.

*Teacher Career Pathway Program and Criteria*

* Data captured in 2010-11, “lives” in 2011-12). All schools work to collect data and give feedback on common calendar for the following:
* Classroom observations (coach)
* Classroom observations (coach + Asst. Supt)
* Value-added data
* Planning review
* Parent Survey
* Student Survey
* Peer/Admin Survey
* Rationale: *Data, Talent, Effective + Efficient Support* – The teacher pathways data is crucial for us to make wise staffing, PD, and compensation decisions. Having a clear, fair data set is crucial to the success of the program. In order to systematically develop our talent and retain our best teachers, we must have common criteria for excellence, pay increases and status across our schools.

**Calendar / Schedule**

*Common start/end days\**

* All schools will have the same total # of school days, NS training days, school-site training & planning days, breaks, Data Days. \* Note: With strong rationale, and if the total # of school days is still met, schools have I day of wiggle room (+ or -) on start and end days. (ex: Schools *may* start the year earlier in exchange for an extra holiday.)
* Rationale: *Non-negotiable* – This is just one of those things that we hold sacred – a longer school year / more time on task

*Total Teacher Days = 212-215. How to get to 212-215?*

* Before school training: 10-20 days (minimum = 10)
* Student Days: 190-195 (minimum = 190)
* Data Days: 4 (minimum = 4)
* AF-wide PD Days: 2 (minimum = 2)
* School-site PD Days: 0-4 (minimum = 0)
* Rationale: *Talent, Data –* Because AF compensation structures are based on apples-to-apples comparisons, schools need to have the same work expectations; we also believe in a common new staff training experience. Without common data windows, data becomes meaningless.

*Suggested*

* 15 before school, 190 student, 4 data, 2 AF-wide PD days, 2 school-site days = 213 total days. Schools can count only 1 day as one of the 190 if less than all the students come; that is, a school could just have their 5th graders that day and count it as a day of school, but they couldn’t have four days of only 5th grade and count it as four days.
* Rationale: *Non-negotiable, Talent, Effective + Efficient Support, Non-negotiable* – This is one of those things that we hold sacred – a longer school year / more time on task.Because AF compensation structures are based on apples-to-apples comparisons, schools need to have the same work expectations; we also believe in a common new staff training experience. *Effective + Efficient Support* – We’ve run into a lot of issues with schools changing schedules once the school year has started, and we want to really push folks to do the thinking before the school year starts; changing the school calendar is a big deal, and we should rarely do it. *Non-negotiable* – We just have to hold time sacred and collectively guard against “death by 1000 cuts” – the little things that add up.

*Snow Day Policy*

* New Haven, Bridgeport, New York - If there are greater than 3 snow days before February Break, schools will make up these days (e.g. if there are 5 snow days before February Break, then schools will make up two days over February Break). Make-up days will be early-dismissal days, and all core reading, writing, and math classes will take place. Snow days “reset” after February Break. If there are more than 3 snow days after February Break, schools will make up the day by choosing from among the following: not having school on IA#4, having school on Memorial Day, having school on Good Friday, extending school extra days in June. Schools must make up the days after February Break, but they have the option of how to do this
* Hartford - If there are greater than 4 snow days a year, AF Hartford schools will make them up. The school-based options include using time over March break, using IA #4 time, having school on Memorial Day, or extending school extra days in June.
* Rationale: *Non-negotiable* – We need to hold the time our students are with us sacred.

*School Closings*

* AF Network Support to make decisions about school openings/closings. Generally, we follow the dictates of the local school districts, but in unusual situations, AF Network Support will make final decisions.
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support* – We need to be able to make coordinated decisions, It can put pressure on individual principals to make decisions that may or may not be right for them, and it also insulates the principal from the decision somewhat. Because multiple teams – facilities, Ops – are often involved in these decisions and have more expertise assessing facility readiness, busing issues, and safety risks, it makes sense for these decisions to be done at the network level.

*School Day*

* 7:30-4:00 Mon. –Thurs. core, 7:30-1:00 Friday/SA – or equivalent time = minimums. School days changed only with Asst. Superintendent approval after set with principal cohort. *“Sacredness” of Core Academic Classes -* Examples include: Athletic events scheduled so scholars rarely miss class, picture days are scheduled to never have scholars miss reading, writing, or math classes, and testing (e.g. F & P) is done in such a way that doesn’t impact reading class. The total amount of time for different subjects should equal the following minimums: reading (3 hours elementary, 2 hours middle), writing (45 minutes – 60 ideal), math (60 minutes – 90 ideal), history (45 minutes\*), science (45 minutes\*) \*elementary schools may have only 45 minutes total for history and science.
* Rationale: Non-negotiable - We need to hold the time our students are with us sacred.

*Core Standardized Tests and Testing Scheduling*

* Common IAs, testing days/windows, total days, SA, AF-wide PD days. Data timeliness (data in by set deadlines is agreed-upon formats).
* Rationale: *Data* – Without common data windows, data becomes meaningless and impossible to use for any real comparison.

*Incoming students for start-up*

* Do not start prior to the regular start of the school year (e.g. no summer program)
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support* – We’ve determined that running SA before the first year of a school is very challenging for all AF teams, and it decreases the likelihood of a smooth start

**Management / Distributed Leadership**

*Director of Operations co-managed, evaluated by AF Central & principal*

* The principal serves as primary manager ; both Director of Regional Ops and principal take part in PGP process; principal has weekly or bi-weekly meeting with Director of Ops, and the Director of Ops participates in all Leadership Team meetings
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Team & Family –*  In order to support Ops, the Regional Director of Ops needs to be able to be part of the PGP process. The Regional Director of Ops provides strong support to the School Director of Ops. In order for Ops to function well, a weekly or bi-weekly meeting between The School Director of Ops and principal is necessary.

*Operations Staffing*

* Full sized school will have a Director of Ops, School Services Manager, Office Coordinator. (There may be school-specific reasons to supplement this core, but in most cases, these three should be able to carry the core Ops lift.)
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support -* Operations calendars, roles and responsibilities, training, and support are built off this model. (That said, there should always be some school-site tweaking).

*Operations PGPs*

* The people managed by the Director of Operations will draft evaluations and they will be approved by principal
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support -*  In order to support Directors of Ops, the Regional Director of Ops needs to be able to be part of the PGP process. The principal, however, should be the ultimate boss of everyone in the building and therefore lead the PGP process for operations team members.

*Operations Scorecard & Ops Deep Dives*

* These will be used to define and maintain excellence
* Rationale: *Data –* By having this clear standard of excellence and clear data points on Ops performance, we can free Ops teams to innovate and share best practices.

**Policies / Procedures**

*AF Core Values*

* All schools and network will hold these core values
* Rationale: *Non-negotiable, Team & Family -* The org needs a set of core values to ground itself. The AF Core Values act as the glue of our organization, and are the bedrock we’ll keep coming back to.  They will be used for PGPs, AF-wide discussions, etc. This does not preclude school-based values for students (ex: variations of REACH or different values) or for a school to have school-specific norms and staff values.

*AF Working Agreements*

* For example: responsiveness, etc.

Rationale: *Team & Family, Effective + Efficient Support* – We need to set clear norms across our organization so that everyone feels respected and understand what is expected of them. By having clear norms, we all can give and receive support in a way that makes the most sense.

*Employee Handbook / Personnel Policies*

* *Talent, Effective + Efficient Support, Legal* – Good people want clear, consistent policies, and as our folks move from one school to another or central to schools, they want to really understand the policies. Different AF teams become real experts on the policies, and it makes supporting schools much easier to have consistency there.Some aspects of the employee handbook are mandated by law (e.g., non-discrimination, harassment), and we need to ensure that all schools are in compliance to protect them from liability.

*Teacher Dress*

* For common PD times
* Rationale: *Team & Family* – There should be common norms for the times we come together.

**Compensation**

*Salary Criteria + Process*

* Rationale: *Talent –* Having different criteria for excellence, pay increases, and status across our schools would make it quite hard to develop talent systematically, having meaningful cross-school cohort groups, etc. Teachers (and any employee) care deeply about fairness, and it wouldn’t be fair to have wide pay gaps across schools for doing similar jobs at similar performance levels.

*Salary Extras for Different Jobs*

* Jobs such as coach, GL chair, etc. and extra work (e.g. presenting at AF-wide PD day) – within a flexible salary band – make staff eligible for salary extras
* Rationale: *Talent –* Having too many differences here creates undo bumpiness and upset feelings; we establish guidelines that provide some allowable range with principal discretion based on the exact responsibilities.

*Benefit Structures*

* AF network is able to obtain better benefits from insurance providers if we make decisions as a collective group.
* Rationale: *Talent, Effective & Efficient Support* - Benefits are a monetary part of total compensation even though we don’t give these to staff in the form of cash.  Teachers (and any employee) care deeply about fairness, and it wouldn’t be fair to have wide differences in benefit structures across schools.

**Testing & Core Data**

*F&P*

* All K-8 students will be tested in the middle and at the end of the year until level Z. New students will take the F&P at the beginning and the end of the year.
* Rationale: *Data, Legal –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coop-etition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. In order for data to be accurate, clear, and fair, we need to establish clear testing windows and protocols that all schools follow. We have committed to certain measures in our charters, and we need to commit to having clear, transparent protocols for data.

*Terra Nova Math*

* All K-2 students will be tested at the end of the year
* Rationale: *Data, Legal –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coop-etition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. In order for data to be accurate, clear, and fair, we need to establish clear testing windows and protocols that all schools follow. We have committed to certain measures in our charters, and we need to commit to having clear, transparent protocols for data.

*DRP*

* All students (grades 1-12) will be tested at the end of the year. In CT students will also be tested mid-year
* Rationale: *Data, Legal –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coop-etition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. In order for data to be accurate, clear, and fair, we need to establish clear testing windows and protocols that all schools follow. We have committed to certain measures in our charters, and we need to commit to having clear, transparent protocols for data.

*GRADE*

* High School (or MS kids past Z) use for Reading
* Rationale: *Data, Legal –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coop-etition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. In order for data to be accurate, clear, and fair, we need to establish clear testing windows and protocols that all schools follow. We have committed to certain measures in our charters, and we need to commit to having clear, transparent protocols for data.

*State Tests*

* Give test, collect / input data & store data in the same way for any state or standardized test across AF. 100% of students take required state and standardized tests – including students with IEPs. Standardized Testing Protocols followed.
* Rationale: *Data, Legal, Effective + Efficient Support –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coop-etition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. In order for data to be accurate, clear, and fair, we need to establish clear testing windows and protocols that all schools follow. We have committed to certain measures in our charters, and we need to commit to having clear, transparent protocols for data. These systems will provide the best tracking at each school.

*SATs, APs, SAT-IIs*

* Taken by all HS students
* Rationale: *Data, Legal –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coop-etition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. In order for data to be accurate, clear, and fair, we need to establish clear testing windows and protocols that all schools follow. We have committed to certain measures in our charters, and we need to commit to having clear, transparent protocols for data.

*IT System for Recording Standardized Tests*

* Infinite Campus for core student/teacher data, attendance, HW, student discipline
* Rationale: *Data, Legal –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coop-etition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. In order for data to be accurate, clear, and fair, we need to establish clear testing windows and protocols that all schools follow. We have committed to certain measures in our charters, and we need to commit to having clear, transparent protocols for data.

*Shared Definitions*

* Attendance (tardy, absent, early dismissal) HW, medium & major discipline issue
* Rationale: *Data –* In order for this data to be meaningful, we need a consistent standard. The data can be powerful as we correlate it to other measures and work to highlight schools with particularly strong practices (so that they can share with others). We also want to encourage schools to use systems and practices that best work for them, and we can measure the success (and be able to share) only if our data is consistent.

*Tracking*

* All major and medium discipline issues logged in IC. Tracking homework using a common system (not ready for 2010-11 school year).
* Rationale: *Data, Legal –* We need consistent outcome measures and a clear process to see where we have pockets of strength and weakness. By keeping the outcome measures consistent, we can push toward “coop-etition” – schools wanting to be the best … but doing it in a spirit of sharing and cheerleading of other schools. In order for data to be accurate, clear, and fair, we need to establish clear testing windows and protocols that all schools follow. We have committed to certain measures in our charters, and we need to commit to having clear, transparent protocols for data.

**Information Technology**

*Consistent IT Systems*

* Phone system, IT backbone, IT support, AF welcome page, ListServes, school website through AF core site, IT equipment and software profile. Athena for Interim Assessments
* *Effective + Efficient Support, Team & Family, Talent –* We cannot provide quality IT support across multiple platforms. We want to have clear, consistent messages about Achievement First and its schools, and it makes sense to coordinate that through a talented marketing team.

*Budget / Finance Software*

* Rationale: *Data, Effective + Efficient Support –* It would be next to impossible to get clear, accurate, timely data from multiple systems.

*Other Key Data Systems as Added*

* For example: HRIS for HR issues, College/Alumni tracking
* Rationale: *Data, Efficient Support –* We need to be able to easily and clearly track our financial position, and as the organization grows in size, it makes it easier to identify efficiencies and perform analysis across schools to help them all improve their financial management.

**The Following are Coordinated by Team External**

*The Board*

* Setting agendas of board meeting, core preparation for meetings, Board Member Recruitment, Work with the board on the Charter management agreement
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Legal –* AF provides robust support managing the boards and external audiences; unless communication to these constituencies is funneled through Team X, it becomes incredibly challenging to provide the level of support needed; in some cases, there are clear legal issues, and Team X is aware of them and skilled in navigating them.

*AF Network Support coordinates all fundraising*

* All fundraising efforts/asks cleared by Team X (Note: To reach this goal, small groups of 1- 4 funders (with an AF person) may visit schools without notice. The goal is always to provide notice to schools. Visitors will follow – and be briefed on – AF Visitor Expectations).
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Legal –* AF provides robust support managing the boards and external audiences; unless communication to these constituencies is funneled through Team X, it becomes incredibly challenging to provide the level of support needed; in some cases, there are clear legal issues, and Team X is aware of them and skilled in navigating them.

*Media*

* AF coordinates media and serves and point of contact for any media request and serves and point of contact for any media request
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Legal –* AF provides robust support managing the boards and external audiences; unless communication to these constituencies is funneled through Team X, it becomes incredibly challenging to provide the level of support needed; in some cases, there are clear legal issues, and Team X is aware of them and skilled in navigating them.

*Principals to Attend Board Meetings*

* The expectation is that they will prepare necessary reports & communication
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Legal –* AF provides robust support managing the boards and external audiences; unless communication to these constituencies is funneled through Team X, it becomes incredibly challenging to provide the level of support needed; in some cases, there are clear legal issues, and Team X is aware of them and skilled in navigating them.

*Use Major Issues Guidance Documents*

* e.g. press, epidemic, etc.
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Legal –* AF provides robust support managing the boards and external audiences; unless communication to these constituencies is funneled through Team X, it becomes incredibly challenging to provide the level of support needed; in some cases, there are clear legal issues, and Team X is aware of them and skilled in navigating them.

**Enrollment**

*Withdrawal*

* For Every withdrawal, the form must be fully complete (including the explanation of what the school did) for any student leaving the school. Information entered into Infinite Campus
* Rationale: *Data* – We need to capture all of this information, for it’s important that we uphold our mission of serving all students – and that we problem-solve if we trends. This data needs to be kept in a consistent place.

*Up-To-Date Enrollment and Withdraw Data in Infinite Campus*

* Rationale: *Data, Legal, Effective + Efficient Support –* Enrollment numbers impact funding to schools and to AF Central and so it is important that these are up-to-date and accurate.

*Enrollment Targets*

* Standard Minimum Per Grade and Minimum Total
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support* – AF bases fundraising, central support, recruitment, etc. off of clear enrollment patterns, so we need to meet these.

Student Recruitment and Lottery

* Coordinated by AF (need some support of schools)
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support* – Team X can provide this function well for schools.

Support high school enrollment process fully (MS and HS)

* Use philosophy and process outlined by AF to support MS/HS goal of matriculation to AF high schools and other top college-prep schools
* Rationale: *Team & Family, Effective + Efficient Support:* We don’t see the 8th-9th transition as fundamentally different than a 2nd-3rd or 7th-8th grade transition. The 9th grades are natural transition points. We’ve also developed our program to be K-12, and it can be really tricky for the high school if the message is anything other than this is a strong option. Moreover, we need to hit certain enrollment targets in order to provide the rich, full experience for all students. (Further rationale for this is found in the documents highlighting the high school process.)

**Network Support**

*Network-Schools Communication*

* Principal & school responsibilities; School Leader Calendar responsiveness; School Leader Memo responsiveness; Monthly 1-on-1 meetings with Team Leaders
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Team & Family* – AF Network Support and all schools are working hard to make sure that we re-define the network-schools paradigm. It’s important that we establish and stick to a few key structures and expectations to make this work.

*Regional Superintendent Relationship*

* Core Support (Monthly meetings, weekly calls as necessary, co-observations); Commitment to building a strong, honest, problem-solving relationship
* Rationale: *Effective + Efficient Support, Team & Family* – AF Network Support and all schools are working hard to make sure that we re-define the network-schools paradigm. It’s important that we establish and stick to a few key structures and expectations to make this work.