**Vice President, Communications & External Relations**

**Start Date: Flexible – July/August**

**Team: CXO**

**Location: Brooklyn, NY or New Haven, CT**

**About Achievement First:**

Achievement First, a non-profit 501(c)3 charter school management organization, will operate 29 public charter schools in Brooklyn, Connecticut and Rhode Island for the 2014-15 school year. 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 or economic status. Achievement First currently educates more than 8,100 students in historically underserved and underserved neighborhoods, with over 90% of our students identifying as Black and Latino. With its college-preparatory focus, the Achievement First approach is attaining breakthrough academic gains throughout the network. Beyond our students and schools, Achievement First is an engaged and prominent partner in the larger conversation about how to improve public education and student achievement in our country.

Achievement First’s approach to teaching and learning enables every student to succeed at the highest levels. This involves:

* Recruiting and developing successful teachers and school leaders and empowering them to use student data to strategically drive instruction;
* Creating a joyful school culture where it is “cool to be smart” that emphasizes character education and focuses students on college;
* Providing students with more time on task and intense intervention when they are struggling so that no child falls through the cracks.

For more information about Achievement First’s mission, approach, schools and team, please visit our website at [www.achievementfirst.org](file:///C:/Users/BeccaHowlett/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/Temporary%20Internet%20Files/Content.Outlook/EN415SPX/www.achievementfirst.org).

**Summary:**

Achievement First seeks a Vice President, Communications and External Relations who will lead AF’s community engagement, advocacy, and grassroots campaigns as well as the regional and national communications strategy for our entire network. This is an extraordinary opportunity for a senior leader committed to building and promoting a fast-growing network of great schools. Reporting to the Chief External Officer (CXO), the Vice President, Communications and External Relations will oversee a team of 10 full time staff through four direct reports and will have direct interaction with senior leadership, community leaders, and major media outlets. The right candidate will have strong strategic communications experience dealing with media, as well as experience building and overseeing cross-functional marketing campaigns; external relations initiatives; and fast-paced advocacy related strategies aimed at supporting our student recruitment and community engagement efforts as well as increasing our media profile. He or she will build partnerships with community organizations, supporters, and state and public officials as well as national and local media.

**Responsibilities of the Vice President, Communications and External Relations** **will include, but are not limited to:**

* **Team Leadership**
  + Attract, hire, train, evaluate and motivate a communications and external relations team of highly skilled and driven individuals, who execute at high levels of excellence and deeply share AF’s mission.
  + Establish and maintain high standards of team performance by developing clear long-term and annual goals and rigorously tracking performance against them.
  + Ensure that the Communications and External Relations teams operate in a way that is consistent with AF’s culture and mission and always puts our schools and their students first.
  + Directly supervise Directors of Advocacy and Community Engagement to develop strategy and oversee community engagement and advocacy efforts.
  + Directly supervise Director of Brand Strategy and Communications to ensure high volume of positive press around AF and advocacy initiatives.
* **Media and Communications Oversight**
  + Develop and implement a strategic communications plan to broaden awareness of Achievement First’s schools and priorities, and increase the network’s visibility to a variety of stakeholders including parents, community leaders, education reformers, policymakers, and more.
  + Oversee internal and external communications shop and work in collaboration to seek and prioritize media opportunities.
  + Cultivate and manage relationships with local and national media outlets to ensure steady and consistent coverage of the network.
  + Manage the development and distribution of all print and electronic media material, including some internal communication.
  + Ensure message coherence and consistency across all teams, and within the organization as a whole on an ongoing basis.
  + Proactively anticipate and identify issues of concern, and present recommendations and strategies for resolution.
  + Manage social media for AF and create policies guiding the management of AF’s social media channels.
* **External Affairs Oversight**
  + Advise and support the CXO on the development and implementation of overall external relations strategy, goals, and tactics.
  + Oversee and coordinate the day-to-day operations of the organization’s external communications, advocacy, and organizing efforts.
  + Work directly with the CXO and network leadership as a partner in developing and executing legislative and political strategy.
  + Help execute strategic plans as needed, including political and media campaigns, organizing, and managing advocacy events.
* **Performance Management and Progress Reporting**
  + Actively maintain and deliver regular reports about progress made toward communications and external relations goals.

**Skills and Characteristics:**

* Knowledge of the current educational landscape, both in our regions and across the country preferred but not required
* Willingness to work some weekends and evenings and travel regionally
* Ability to effectively manage and communicate with internal and external partners at all levels
* Proven ability to manage multiple diverse projects and meet deadlines in a fast-paced, demanding environment
* Experience working in politically sensitive public environments
* Flexible and able to adapt quickly to new, difficult and/or shifting circumstances
* Excellent verbal and written communication skills; confidence in communicating across a wide variety of platforms, including digital, written, and in-person presentations
* Keen judgment and critical thinking skills and the ability to seek alternative solutions, conclusions, and approaches to problems
* Strong work ethic and “roll-up-my-sleeves” attitude
* Results-oriented individual and willing to do “whatever it takes”
* Self-reflective, receptive to constructive feedback, and willing to learn and improve
* Belief in the Achievement First mission and educational model

**Educational Background and Work Experience:**

* Bachelor’s and advanced degree preferred with 10+ years of work experience
* Experience in developing media strategies, communicating verbally with media, and creating news releases, public relations, and marketing materials
* Demonstrated experience and a portfolio of accomplishments in obtaining major market media coverage
* Previous experience coaching and managing others; ideally previous experience directly managing other managers

**Compensation:**

Salary for this position is competitive and commensurate with experience. Additionally, Achievement First offers a comprehensive benefits package.

**To Apply:**

Achievements First is currently reviewing applications—please apply before Sunday, May 18th.

Send resume and one to two page cover letter clearly outlining why you think your previous experience makes you a strong candidate to:

Zenon Halatyn

Executive Assistant to Chief External Officer

[zenonhalatyn@achievementfirst.org](mailto:zenonhalatyn@achievementfirst.org)

Please visit the Achievement First careers site at <http://www.achievementfirst.org/careers/>. Achievement First is an equal opportunity employer and an organization that values diversity. People from all diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply. Spanish language proficiency is a plus. You can learn more about diversity at Achievement First here: <http://www.achievementfirst.org/about-us/diversity/>.