

AFTER UNCERTAIN FUTURE, ACHIEVEMENT FIRST HARTFORD ACADEMY SAVED

Budget Shortfall Eliminated through Leadership from Governor Rell, City of Hartford, Hartford Public Schools, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and Private Donors

July 23, 2008 – Hartford, Conn. – Achievement First, a non-profit charter school management organization, today announced that all 252 students from low-performing and underserved neighborhoods who were promised seats can now attend its new Hartford Academy due to public and philanthropic support galvanized by Achievement First parents, Governor Rell, Superintendent Adamowski, Mayor Perez, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and other private donors. The opening of Achievement First Hartford Academy is part of a larger “All Choice” plan to transform Hartford public schools through accountability and full parental choice, with the goal of opening 30 new schools over the next 10 years.

The absence of state funding placed Achievement First Hartford Academy in a precarious situation only weeks before its first day of school. Through a strong commitment to closing the achievement gap, necessary funds and in-kind considerations were secured from the State of Connecticut, the Hartford Board of Education, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Olson Foundation, George Weiss, Jon Sackler, Mary Corson, the Hartford Steamboiler, the H.A. Vance Foundation, Michael and Joyce Critelli, the Imagineers Foundation, and anonymous gifts from a Greenwich foundation and individual donors.

“We are incredibly grateful for all of the support that has come together to save this school,” remarks Dacia Toll, Achievement First’s founder and co-CEO. “Now it is up to us to deliver on our promises to kids and their families. Together, we will create a truly special school and put all of our scholars firmly on the path to college.”

According to Superintendent Steven J. Adamowski, “Achievement First Hartford Academy is a critical element in our plans to reorganize Hartford Public School into an all-choice system of high-performing learning centers. My sincerest thanks Gov. Rell, Dacia Toll, Mayor Perez and the private funding sources that stepped up and made it possible for the school to open next month.”

“Achievement First Hartford Academy offers great promise to address one of the most critical needs in the Greater Hartford region – closing the academic achievement gap between Hartford students and their suburban peers,” says Linda J. Kelly, president of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. “While funding an independent school is extraordinary for the Hartford Foundation, we felt compelled to step forward and partner with other funders and government to ensure that this opportunity was available for Hartford children.”

Mayor Eddie A. Perez, who is also the chairman of the Board of Education, is thrilled with the good news. He says, “Once again, we have found a way to work together and put our students first. This is another positive step towards providing hope and opportunity for our youngsters as they achieve higher academic goals and continue on to graduate from college.”

The mission of Achievement First is to close the achievement gap and deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all children in America. With its college-preparatory focus, the Achievement First model is attaining breakthrough academic gains throughout its network of charter schools, which includes the nationally acclaimed Amistad Academy, Elm City College Prep, Achievement First Bridgeport Academy and six charter schools in Brooklyn, NY. In September 2008, the Achievement First network of schools will educate nearly 3,700 children.

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About Achievement First

Achievement First, a non-profit charter school management organization, was founded in 2003 by Dacia Toll and Doug McCurry, the leaders of the nationally acclaimed Amistad Academy that opened in New Haven, Conn., in 1999 and was recently cited by the U.S. Department of Education as one of seven schools across the country that should be models for closing the achievement gap.

For more information about Achievement First, please visit www.achievementfirst.org.