

Contact: Amanda Pinto; (203) 726-0168; amandapinto@achievementfirst.org

ACHIEVEMENT FIRST, YES PREP AND ASPIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE CHARTER NETWORK ACCELERATOR

Twelve Public Charter School Networks Join Cohort to Share Best Practices to Close the Achievement Gap

January 21, 2014 – NEW HAVEN, CONN. – Achievement First, a high-performing network of 25 non-profit, college-preparatory public charter schools in Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island, today partnered with YES Prep and Aspire Public Schools to announce the inaugural cohort of 12 public charter school networks for the Charter Network Accelerator. The program is focused on helping experienced leaders, with an emphasis on leaders of color, in designing and scaling their networks of schools.

The 12 public charter management organizations (CMO) selected as members of the inaugural cohort represent nearly 20,000 students at 45 schools in 11 states. Together with lead partners Achievement First, YES Prep and Aspire Public Schools, the diverse cohort will also help address an issue Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has called one of the biggest challenges to effective school reform: a lack of diversity among our nation’s teachers.

Through the Charter Network Accelerator, charter management organizations achieving strong results with historically underserved populations will participate in bi-monthly learning sessions where leaders receive training in the skills required for managing a rapidly growing organization, and explore options for teacher and leader pipelines, CMO structure, and core academic programs.

“We are excited to launch the Accelerator because we know that helping charter networks expand with excellence will mean that thousands more students will graduate from college and have access to all the opportunities in life that flow from a great education,” said Achievement First Co-CEO and President Dacia Toll. “Through the Accelerator, a diverse group of public charter school networks will share promising practices for closing the achievement gap at scale. Together, we will provide far more students with an excellent education than we could ever reach as individual networks.”

“We look forward to sharing best practices with other high-performing CMOs across the nation with the same end goal—to create more high-quality seats for students from low-income communities,” said YES Prep President and CEO Jason Bernal. “Initiatives like the Charter Network Accelerator play a pivotal role in closing the opportunity gap by ensuring that high-performing schools are prepared to serve more students and new communities. We are honored to be a partner in this work.”

“At Aspire, part of our mission is to share successful practices and help catalyze change in public schools,” said Aspire Public Schools CEO James Willcox. “The Charter Network Accelerator provides an opportunity to expand quality educational practices to meet the college-readiness needs of underserved students and their families.”

Charter Network Accelerator participants include:

- Algiers Charter School Association (New Orleans, La.)
- Charles A. Tindley Accelerated Schools (Indianapolis, Ind.)

- Collegiate Academies (New Orleans, La.)
- First Line Schools (New Orleans, La.)
- Harvest Preparatory School (Minneapolis, Minn.)
- FUSE (Hartford, Conn. and Bridgeport, Conn.)
- LEAD Public Schools (Nashville, Tenn.)
- New Urban Learning (Detroit, Mich.)
- Public Prep (New York, N.Y.)
- ROADS Charter High Schools (New York, N.Y.)
- St. Louis Language Immersion Schools (St. Louis, Mo.)
- Scholar Academies (Philadelphia, Penn.; Washington, D.C.; Trenton, New Jersey)

For more information, please contact Amanda Pinto at amandapinto@achievementfirst.org.

About Achievement First

Achievement First is a non-profit network of college-preparatory public charter schools in New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island. During the past 15 years, we have successfully expanded from operating one middle school serving 85 fifth- and sixth-graders to managing 25 high-performing schools serving 8,100 students in kindergarten through grade 12. Achievement First believes in sharing best practices for closing the achievement gap at scale, and partners with traditional districts and public charter schools to improve education for all students.

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

- Providing students with more time spent learning and intense intervention when they are struggling so that no child falls through the cracks;
- 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.

For more information, please visit <http://www.AchievementFirst.org>.

About YES Prep

YES Prep is a top-performing charter management organization that currently operates 13 high-performing schools serving 8,000 students throughout Houston in grades six to 12. Since opening its doors in 1998, YES Prep has continuously redefined what is possible for students, families and the public education system at large, and 100 percent of YES Prep's seniors have been accepted to four-year colleges and universities. In 2012, YES Prep was the winner of the inaugural Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools.

About Aspire Public Schools

Aspire Public Schools is a national nonprofit organization that currently operates 37 high-performing, open-enrollment public charter schools serving over 13,500 students in underserved communities

across California and Memphis, Tenn. Founded in 1998, Aspire is one of the highest-performing public school systems in the nation, delivering a rigorous *College for Certain* education to students in grades K-12. An unrelenting focus on college preparedness led to 100 percent of graduating Aspire seniors being accepted to four-year colleges or universities over the last four years. Opening its first schools in 1999, Aspire is currently celebrating its 15th anniversary as one of the nation's first charter management organizations. Visit Aspire Public Schools at www.aspirepublicschools.org.