

Chief Talent Officer

Who are we? Achievement First (AF) exists to address the legacy of racism in education in America. We know that all children—regardless of race, zip code, or economic status—need and deserve access to a great education. At the core of our approach is the shared journey by our students and staff to fulfill our incredible potential.

Just the facts. Achievement First has consistently been rated one of the top charter school networks in the country, AND we are still learning and growing. AF is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that currently supports 37 public charter schools in New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. The mission of AF is to deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all children. We currently employ more than 2,000 staff -- 47% of whom identify as Black, Latinx, or Multi-racial -- who collectively educate more than 14,300 students in Brooklyn, NY; Providence, RI; and New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford CT. More than 85% of our students qualify for free or reduced priced lunch. Our students are proving what's possible by achieving breakthrough results in terms of academic achievement and long-term college persistence.

Our focus and reach extend beyond the students and communities that we serve directly. Achievement First is an engaged and prominent partner in the broader education-reform movement, partnering with schools and networks from across the country and openly sharing all of our resources with all educators free of charge. We currently serve more than 100,000 additional students through two key partnership initiatives. Our Charter Network Accelerator is an intensive cohort-based training program for CMO leaders (with a focus on leaders of color) who are looking to increase the number of top-quality options available to parents across the country; and through our Navigator Program, we provide coaching and support for district and charter schools who want to adopt and adapt our curriculum and instructional practices to help students achieve breakthrough results.

Why work at Achievement First? First and foremost: you should work at AF if you believe in our [values](#) and want to surround yourself with people who share them. We are committed to *leading for racial equity*. We approach our work with humility, humanity, and the recognition that both what we do and how we do it must model the equity we seek. *We strive for excellence* by setting a high bar in all areas and pursuing it relentlessly. *We care about the whole person* and are known to be as warm as we are demanding. We *choose joy* and actively seek out moments of humor, gratitude, and deeper purpose for ourselves and with each other. We know that we will *go further together* and intentionally choose to join forces on both big and small things. We name brutal facts, *embrace challenge*, and see our mistakes as opportunities to get better.

Finally, come to Achievement First if you want to help support schools that are striving to not only close the achievement gap but also to redefine what's possible in education. We are obsessed with getting better and are working to create some of the best schools in the country - schools that support not just student academic success but also their social-emotional learning, identity development, independence as learners, passion/enrichment/extracurriculars, and life-long fulfillment. AND, at AF, we believe getting better starts with looking in the mirror. We have done a lot of that lately, as we have more aggressively confronted our own biases and unacceptable gaps in our student experience. We are committed to addressing inequity within our systems, culture, and talent with resolve to walk the long road ahead to the true equity and opportunity that our kids and families deserve. *So, come to Achievement First if reflection, challenge, and growth feeds your soul.*

THE OPPORTUNITY

Position Overview

At Achievement First, the Chief Talent Officer (CTO) is our #1 people leader. They co-create and hold a talent vision for AF that puts racial equity squarely at the center of our work so that we can attract the strongest talent in our sector and develop and deploy them to cultivate a spirit of self-determination and possibility in our communities. After fourteen years at Achievement First - 4 of which were in the CTO role - incumbent CTO Tom Kaiser will be transitioning from AF. The next CTO will carry on Tom's work to foster a culture of values-driven excellence AND support AF at this critical juncture by helping us realize the next iteration of our talent vision -- operationalizing the strongest set of talent practices to fuel success and drive equity in our next chapter.

YOU should consider this role if you are...

A Big Thinker (who sweats the details)

You understand that mission and values alignment are not the same, and you are committed to the values-driven pursuit of goals and outcomes. You are not about the "status quo," but are a disruptor who encourages continuous learning and interrogation of how things are done. You are a facilitative leader who is curious and who can co-design a vision with people at all levels of the organization, and capture that vision in a talent strategic plan that will unite the talent team behind a "theory of action" in which the threads of the strategy are stronger than the sum of their parts.

A Culture Leader

You are one of the top leaders of our organizational culture. You have deep beliefs and strong views about what makes a culture "great," and you can paint a compelling picture of what AF can be for all of our employees. You deeply understand and can model *how to build* an outstanding adult culture, both with your own talent teams, and within AF's top executive team. The most important goals you will own relate to building a culture of "high equity / high excellence" teams (as evidenced through our organizational health survey) and retention of school-based staff (*especially* our teachers), so experience working directly on these or similar challenges will be highly valued.

A Technical and Tactical Talent Expert

You will leverage your talent and human resources expertise to ensure that AF has best-in-class systems to evaluate, nurture, train, and reward staff and the tremendous talent that exists in our schools, so that those who are on the front lines working with students every day are maximizing their professional potential. You will oversee initiatives to improve human resource management functions and build and support internal systems designed to support equity and minimize organizational risk.

An Equity Champion

You will shape the way the entire organization thinks about and develops talent and help Achievement First model what it looks like for one of the country's biggest charter networks to truly lead for racial equity. Your background includes getting to the root of adaptive challenges and tackling organizational systems and structures that block leaders of color from thriving and ascending. You are an empath who values and elevates the experience of people of all identities at all levels of the organization.

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Set the strategy and drive results through others.**
 - *Team Leadership.* Set and refine our talent strategic plan (goals, priorities, tactics), oversee strong sub-plans (recruitment, sustainability, etc.) and set up strong systems to monitor progress and course correct in order to ensure AF is best-in-sector at attracting/selecting, developing, engaging, and retaining top talent with no gaps along lines of race.
 - *Managing up.* Serve as a member of AF’s senior cabinet, acting as a major player in key discussions and decisions about the direction of the organization, thereby requiring the gravitas to effectively manage up and, occasionally, a willingness to push colleagues when necessary and have courageous conversations in order to do what is best for students.

- **Build and develop a team of talent leaders.** Manage and support our talent team leaders, including:
 - The Vice President of Equity, to create an execute a strong strategic plan that promotes equity for students and adults in our highest priority areas
 - The Vice President of Talent Operations, to ensure that each AF employee receives the most competitive and comprehensive compensation and benefits packages, that all AF core HR policies are strong and further equity, and that our teacher career pathway represents an empowering and equitable path for our network’s teachers
 - The Vice Presidents of Recruitment, to ensure that we are recruiting the best / most diverse talent
 - The Senior Director of School Leader Pipeline and Preparation, to ensure all schools are led by a highly effective principal and our leader pipeline is robust and diverse
 - The Senior Director of Adaptive Leadership, to ensure the strongest people leadership training for our principals and beyond
 - The Talent Chief of Staff, to ensure that the talent teams function and collaborate effectively

- **Nurture organizational culture.** Oversee the organizational culture of the entire network, including:
 - Playing an active role in building organizational culture, including robust internal communications that reinforce our core strategy and values
 - Constantly partnering with other senior leaders to ensure strong “adult culture” health in all areas of the organization
 - Overseeing implementation of the bi-annual organizational health survey
 - Setting clear goals for our organizational health (adult culture -- not financial health or student achievement) and aligning all talent teams and levers to delivering on those goals
 - Executing robust analysis of survey data from our organizational health and adult culture surveys

EXPERIENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The ideal candidate will have the following experience and characteristics:

- A minimum of 10 years of professional experience with a majority of time spent in talent management roles coupled with a strong track record of experience and equity-driven results at a senior level
- Specific expertise in attracting, selecting, developing and retaining diverse talent

- Deep familiarity with the talent challenges facing urban schools strongly preferred (especially issues of principal/teacher development and retention)
- A human capital professional with broad exposure to all HR functions who understands how various talent systems- and their corresponding legal and policy implications - impact employees and fuel - or hinder - equity within an organization
- A track record of pursuing equity within their leadership
- Deep familiarity with talent management issues and the talent challenges facing urban schools strongly preferred (especially issues of principal/teacher development and retention.)
- an exceptional manager, coach, and team leader
- Excellent communication and influencing skills to interact effectively with all levels of the organization and the school network
- Experience bringing strategic, analytical and critical thinking skills as a member of an organizational leadership team

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to: President

Manages: Five leaders of our talent teams (Recruit, Leadership, Equity, Talent Operations) and one Talent Chief of Staff. Most are currently based in NY with team presence (Talent Operations and Recruit) also in CT.

LOCATION

NY, CT, or RI.

COMPENSATION:

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience.

TO APPLY

Achievement First welcomes comments, referrals, or expressions of interest. The review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position(s) is filled. ***However, please note that the search for Achievement First's first-ever President, to whom this position reports, is also underway. Therefore, while applications submitted by 12/19 are strongly encouraged, the finalist round of interviews will not occur until after the President has been selected, which is likely to be in February 2020.*** Inquiries or applications (consisting of a letter of interest and a current resume) should be directed to CTOSearch@achievementfirst.org. 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.