

Director of Special Services Achievement

Start Date: June 2019, but flexible
Team: Team Special Services
Location: New Haven, Bridgeport, or Hartford (Connecticut)

About Achievement First

Achievement First, a non-profit 501(c)3 charter school management organization, operates 37 public charter schools in Brooklyn, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. The mission of Achievement First is to deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all of America's children. We know that every child—regardless of race, zip code, or economic status—deserves access to great schools. Achievement First currently educates more than 14,000 students in historically underserved neighborhoods, with over 90% of our students identifying as Black or Latinx. For more information about the Achievement First mission, model, our schools and team, please visit our website at www.achievementfirst.org.

Summary

Achievement First is committed to meeting the needs of scholars who enter our schools. As we grow roots within our communities and seek to educate student populations that mirror our neighboring community school districts, we have the opportunity to serve students with more diverse needs. Over the past 5 years, we have seen an increase in the number of students with significant needs applying to our schools and we are excited to see parents and guardians exercising choice for their scholars.

As such, we have adopted a direct model where a network team provides support and accountability to school based Special Services Leaders. The Director of Special Services will support a portfolio of 5-8 schools to achieve outcomes for students. The primary role of the Director of Special Services is to develop school-based leaders to manage and drive special services at their school site.

The ideal candidate will be passionate about meeting the needs of all students, have specialized expertise working in special education, and have a “make it happen” attitude.

The charter movement evolved to be innovative in the world of public education and this is an opportunity to revolutionize our program to truly serve the needs of all children. ***We are seeking hard-working candidates who are fanatical about doing right by all students.***

Primary Responsibilities Include:

- **Manage a portfolio of 5-8 schools to outcomes: Drive student achievement by ensuring schools implement strong special services**
 - Ensure students with disabilities, students with potential disabilities, and students who struggle are served across the continuum of services and interventions
 - Ensure IEPs, 504 plans, and behavior intervention plans are implemented with fidelity and live authentically as part of a scholar's academic experience
 - Support Child Find by ensuring students below triggers receive quality academic and behavioral interventions and are referred when appropriate
 - Ensure schools are in 100% legal compliance

- **Develop Leaders who are responsible for special services at the school site: Support the Special Services Leader (SSL) and Principal relationship**
 - Drive SSL development through bi-weekly check-ins, bi-weekly school visits (focused on development via instructional walkthroughs, co-observations, coaching, etc.), and data reviews
 - Provide accountability and support (actionable feedback and coaching) to school leaders
 - Communicate clearly (orally and in writing) with the Principal to support her/his management of the SSL
 - Differentiate support depending on school leader skill and capacity
- **Oversee District Communication: Ensure schools' communication to district partners is clear and take responsibility for communication when troubleshooting is necessary**
 - Support multiple district partnerships (Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven) by attending meetings with the school, providing actionable feedback around communication, etc.
 - If challenges arise, communicate directly to the district to advocate on behalf of schools
 - If necessary, "play the heavy" to ensure kids get what they need from our district partners
- **Team and Cohort Support: Contribute to Team Special Services to support the entire special services cohort**
 - Create and deliver practice-based professional development to school-based leaders
 - Develop tools and resources to document best practices
 - Promote sharing and communication across schools
- **Core Values: Model AF Core Values including creating a network of schools that serve ALL children**

Skills and Characteristics

- Passion for progressive special education excellence and reform
- Strong instructional leader with a track record of improving teacher and leader effectiveness and the achievement of students
- A flexible thinker who understands the chief metric is student achievement and experience
- Ability to inspire and influence others; strong relationship-builder
- Knowledge of special education
- Specific experience in differentiating and specializing curriculum, implementing Response to Intervention, and providing behavioral supports
- Exceptional teacher in his/her own right, who achieved dramatic student achievement gains and served as a model or teacher leader for other teachers within their school, network or district
- Ability to thrive in an entrepreneurial environment; flexible, able to work autonomously as well as take direction as needed
- Commitment to the Achievement First mission and educational model
- Maturity, humility, strong work ethic, sense of humor and roll-up-my-sleeves attitude

Educational Background and Work Experience

- Bachelor's degree from a competitive college or university
- At least four years of highly effective teaching experience demonstrating a strong track record of student performance gains with students with IEPs
- At least two of those years include school leadership experience (e.g. coaching)

Depending on location, this position will require frequent travel amongst regions in Connecticut (approximately 3 – 4 days per week to be at schools,) so the ideal candidate is Hartford, Bridgeport, or New Haven-based, or VERY comfortable with traveling throughout Connecticut. Infrequent night or weekend work may be required.

To Apply:

Interested applicants should send a resume and cover letter to:

- Paige Carstensen
Senior Director of Special Services, Network Support, Team Special Services
- Christina Braganza
Vice President of Special Services, Network Support, Team Special Services

Email resume and cover letter to:

paigecarstensen@achievementfirst.org, christinabraganza@achievementfirst.org, and cc Senior Associate, emilysiefkin@achievementfirst.org.

Achievement First is an equal opportunity employer and people from all diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply. We place particular emphasis on recruiting individuals who share the racial or socio-economic backgrounds of the students we teach, 90% of whom are Black or Latino. Learn more about diversity at Achievement First here: <http://www.achievementfirst.org/about-us/diversity/>.