

## Chief Equity 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 nearly 15,000 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 redefining 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's 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 and staff 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 feed your soul.*

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The Chief Equity Officer (CEqO) is a newly created leadership role that will report directly to the CEO, Dacia Toll. The Chief Equity Officer will serve as a member of AF's senior leadership team and will partner with other senior leaders to move the organization powerfully forward.

As we have begun the process of looking in the mirror and confronting our own unacceptable gaps, we have made a clear [commitment](#) to ensure that our value of Lead for Racial Equity is embedded in everything we do as an organization. As part of this commitment, we have started down the path of creating an equity strategic plan that both addresses the areas we already know must change and listens to our students, staff, families, and alumni about what else is needed to be the diverse, anti-racist, inclusive, and equitable organization we need to be. The Chief Equity Officer will be responsible for building off our starting point to develop, implement, and continuously refine our overarching plan for how we will lead for racial equity—both at the network level and throughout our schools. We do not outsource our equity and inclusion efforts to this leader, but we look to them for leadership, alignment, support, and accountability.

We are looking to actively promote inclusion and anti-racist practices through our culture, structures, customs, and leadership.

## MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. **Lead the Development of our Equity Strategic Plan** - and ensure equity work is embedded in all of our planning processes; regularly monitor and communicate progress against our equity goals and milestones and regularly refine the plan based on our learnings.
  - a. Manage the overall process to solicit input from staff, families, and students to highlight the biggest Lead for Racial Equity pain points and opportunities at AF -- and ensure we institutionalize mechanisms for ongoing listening, learning, and co-creating with all of these core AF constituents
  - b. Develop and regularly refine our three (3) year plan for improving and embedding Equity in all of our core work at AF, including include specific goals and actions in each of the following areas: Organizational culture & inclusive decision-making, Student Experience/School Culture (including student discipline policies & practices), Talent (including equitable development, promotion, and compensation), Instruction/Curriculum/Program, How We Spend Our Money, and External Advocacy; ensure these plans then live and evolve as part of AF's overall 5-year strategic plan and in our annual planning processes.
  - c. Develop an organization-wide scorecard and systems to collect input, analyze data (both qualitative and quantitative). Use these tools to regularly monitor and communicate progress towards our equity goals and the next frontier of the work.
2. **Lead, support, and influence colleagues to operationalize our equity plans and achieve our goals.:** In a network of our size, MANY different groups need to move together to support our plan for achieving equity. The Chief Equity Officer's job is to both lead and support teams and other senior leaders in walking the talk of our values and commitments.
  - a. Partner with CEO, Superintendent, and President to create/enhance structures of collaboration, performance management, and accountability.
  - b. Provide leadership, collaboration, and support to teammates to differentiate our organizational plan

for Leading for Racial Equity into role-specific actions and performance management/accountability systems; and to ensure that our Leading for Racial Equity plan is infused into the DNA of the organization through its systems, tools, policies, structures, and practices.

- c. Lead overall network Equity Council and support Academy-specific and Focus Area-specific Equity Councils to realize our goal of racial equity in our schools and network support tea and ensure alignment between academic materials, talent, school culture, and other equity initiatives
- d. Partner with the Superintendent, Chief Talent Officer, Academy Leads to ensure equity in org health, retention, promotion, and performance of staff at every level of the organization.
- e. Lead and support key equity-focused, network-wide professional development; manage relationships with external partners as needed to deliver training and support to achieve our plan
- f. Participate as a full and active member of the AF Cabinet, helping to make key strategic decisions and provide overall leadership for the network as a whole

### **3. Lead on internal and external learning and communication of our equity work**

- a. Develop communication systems to share best practices, highlight bright spots, and keep leaders/staff apprised of key initiatives and activities.
- b. Stay abreast of research and best practice in equity and inclusion and infuse/adapt to AF
- c. Partner with our Chief External Officer and other external facing teams to communicate our commitment, our practices, our accomplishments and our learnings more broadly and, where possible, influence policy.

**You should consider this role if you are...**

**An outstanding leader with a track record of achieving excellence with equity** AF's Chief Equity Officer has to have personal experience of achieving equitable outcomes for students (e.g., erasing gaps by race / gender in student achievement, attendance, student and family satisfaction, reactive discipline, etc.) and adults (e.g., no gaps in retention or engagement by race, equitable performance management, compensation, and promotion).

**A big picture thinker who can inspire a team and achieve system-wide change** As the leader of all of our equity work, the Chief Equity Officer must co-develop (with the team) a holistic plan for our approach to Leading for Racial Equity and subsequently guide and inspire the team to achieve it. You will need the change management and organizational development skills to implement this vision across teams and schools, especially in an organization like ours that is large and multi-region, to create a coherent, aligned design that consistently delivers excellent outcomes for students, staff, and families. You will need to be vigilant about naming and managing the team to go after areas where we are not delivering, and celebrate the areas where we are.

**A “warm AND demanding” coach** The Chief Equity Officer will support AF in meeting its goals by effectively coaching and collaborating with senior leaders from across the organization. Therefore, you must be exceptionally strong at building trusting relationships, holding colleagues to a high bar for equity, and creating thriving cultures that allow our team to access our full potential. In short, the Chief Equity Officer must be able to both “hold our hand” AND “hold our feet to the fire.”

**A Gifted Communicator and Diplomat** The Chief Equity Officer must have superb communications skills, both written and verbal, and strong diplomacy skills. The CEqO is a strong

listener and able to build a robust network of partnerships across the organization and community in order to achieve our equity goals.

**An equity champion and organizational culture leader** The Chief Equity Officer will be a standard-bearer for how Achievement First models our core values and, specifically, what leading for racial equity looks like at one of the country's biggest charter networks. You must approach all issues with an explicit values-based lens and bring a skill set that includes getting to the root of adaptive challenges and tackling equity issues manifested at the systemic level. You must be an empath who works hard to understand the experience of people of all identities at all levels of the organization. And, you must have the courage and skill to interrupt the status quo and help guide individuals and groups to ensure that we are operating in anti-racist, equitable manner.

## IDEAL EXPERIENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

- The ideal candidate will be a results oriented, determined, skilled leader with a strong track record of managing change throughout a distributed system of entities and teams
- A minimum of 10 years of professional experience
- Deep content knowledge of the diversity, equity, and inclusiveness research base and best practices for organizations striving to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive
- A demonstrable commitment to pursuing equity
- A strong track record of experience and results as a trusted member of an organization's senior leadership team
- Excellent communication and influencing skills to interact effectively with all levels of the organization and the school network
- Exceptional strategic, analytical and critical thinking skills

## KEY RELATIONSHIPS

**Reports to:** The CEO

**Location of next Chief Equity Officer:** NY, CT or RI

**COMPENSATION:** Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience. 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/> .

## TO APPLY

Achievement First welcomes comments, referrals, or expressions of interest. If you would like to refer someone or to apply, please send a resume and any supporting materials by [Paul Astuto](#)