

Chief Academic 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 (soon to be 40!) 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 is 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 our resources with 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 is 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 Academic Officer (CAO) is a leadership role that will report to the Superintendent, Stephanie Keenoy. The Chief Academic Officer will serve as a member of AF’s senior leadership team (“the Cabinet”) and will partner with other senior leaders to move the organization powerfully forward.

As the leader responsible for our curriculum and core instructional program, the Chief Academic Officer will ensure that all our scholars are engaged, learning, and growing on their journey to achieve their potential.

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Drawing on work done over the last several years as well as the organization-wide visioning process we are currently conducting, refine and implement a vision for strong instruction and curriculum across our network that is grounded in our vision of what we want all scholars at AF schools to be able to achieve
2. Drawing on existing work, design and implement our network-wide curricular response to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that we can support all of our learners who have been impacted in myriad ways by disrupted education this school year
3. Manage our VPs of Great Teaching at the Elementary, Middle, and High School level to unlock their potential and drive a strong core program at their respective academy level
4. In partnership with the Chief Program Officer, achieve both vertical (PK-16) and horizontal alignment of our entire program (CAO to focus on curriculum and assessment, CPO to focus on student experience, special services, and other support teams) to ensure that our scholars and educators experience an integrated, aligned program that develops our scholars for success in our schools and beyond
5. Ensure that our curriculum and pedagogical approach exemplify our value of Lead for Racial Equity by managing revisions to create an anti-racist curricular program, overseeing the development of diverse talent on our “Teaching & Learning” team, inclusive engagement of stakeholders on all fronts, and effective partnership with the Chief Equity Officer
6. Serve on the AF Cabinet with other senior leaders to provide strategic leadership to the network

You should consider this role if you are...

An outstanding leader with a track record of achieving excellence with equity

AF’s CAO has to have an impressive track record of results - ambitious goals set and achieved. You must have shown that you have been able to achieve excellence in curriculum / program development while being very attentive to issues of equity (ensuring that success is equally shared across different demographic groups). While we do not expect you to be an expert in all areas, you need to demonstrate baseline competence in core curriculum and an ability to learn quickly.

A “warm AND demanding” coach

The CAO will support AF in meeting its goals by effectively managing and coaching a team of senior leaders. As the leader overseeing all of our curriculum, you must be exceptionally strong at setting clear, ambitious goals and effectively coaching leaders and teams to achieve them. You must also be an effective listener and relationship-builder who creates trust with--and between--senior leaders and who successfully coaches leaders through adaptive challenges that may be holding back leaders or teams from fulfilling their potential.

A big picture thinker who can inspire a team and achieve system-wide change

As the leader of all our curriculum work and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CAO must draw from the visioning process and develop a holistic plan for our approach to curriculum, assessment, and response

to COVID-19 that lifts up the voices of stakeholders throughout the organization. The CAO must then subsequently guide and inspire the team to achieve this plan. 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.

An equity champion and organizational culture leader

The CAO will need to set the standard for how Achievement First models our core values and specifically what leading for racial equity looks like for one of the country's biggest charter networks. Therefore, you are an empath who works hard to understand the experience of people of all identities at all levels of the organization, you approach issues with an explicit values-based lens, and you are a tested organizational culture leader whose background includes getting to the root of adaptive challenges and tackling equity issues manifested at the systemic level.

IDEAL EXPERIENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

- The ideal candidate will be a results oriented, determined, skilled leader with a strong track record of academic excellence
- A minimum of 10 years of professional experience with specific experience in school leadership, curriculum development, or program leadership.
- Expertise in curriculum development, program design, and/or pedagogy
- Experience as a teacher, teacher-coach, and principal preferred
- 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 Superintendent

Location of next Chief Academic 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](#)