

Chief Operating 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 Operating Officer (COO) is a newly created leadership role that will report directly to the CEO, Richard Buery. The Chief Operating 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 of teams that coordinate administrative and operational functions for Achievement First's network of schools as well as its central office (Network Support), the COO ensures that every operational function—student recruitment and enrollment, facilities management and development, school operations, meals, transportation, procurement, student information systems, teacher certification, risk management, safety, and new school openings—is performed seamlessly and with excellence, so that student learning and joy can flourish.

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Achieve excellence across all our Network Support based operational and administrative functions (student recruitment and enrollment, facilities, school operations, meals, transportation, procurement, student information systems, teacher certification, risk management, safety, and new school openings)
 - a) Establish a clear vision of operational excellence at both our schools and Network Support and assess progress towards that vision, including our technology strategy both during remote learning and moving forward
 - b) Lead the design and implementation of any changes to our operational processes, structures, or reporting relationships at both the school and network level to achieve stronger coordination and collaboration and a seamless experience for schools
 - a) Partner with programmatic and instructional teams (e.g., Teaching and Learning, Student Experience, Special Services, etc.) to ensure alignment and seamless integration of our operational and instructional functions
 - b) Seek feedback on what's working / where we have opportunities to grow
2. Similarly, lead and achieve excellence for our school-based operational and administrative functions, serving as the senior-most leader responsible for overseeing our ~200 school-based operations teammates at 41 schools to make sure our operations teammates are learning / developing and that our schools are operating effectively.
3. Lead cross-functional teams with colleagues from other departments (e.g., Finance, Legal, Communications, and Talent) to monitor and create strategies to minimize institutional risk and maximize effectiveness
4. Coordinate our growth and expansion as a network of schools including managing decision-making relating to the opening of new schools and support of our regional and network teams as we grow
5. Manage senior operational leaders including our VPs of School Operations, Information Technology, Real Estate, and Student Enrollment (position to be hired)
6. Ensure that our operational and administrative functions exemplify our value of Lead for Racial Equity
7. 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 COO must 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 an area while being very attentive to issues of equity (ensuring that success is equally shared across different demographic groups). In addition, we are

looking to leverage your deep expertise in at least one of the areas you will lead at AF (student recruitment and enrollment, facilities, school operations, meals, transportation, procurement, student information systems, teacher certification, risk management, safety, and new school openings). While we do not expect you to be an expert in all areas, you need to demonstrate baseline competence and an ability to learn quickly.

A “warm AND demanding” coach

The COO will support AF in meeting its goals by effectively managing and coaching a team of senior leaders. As the leader overseeing many of our Network Support functions, 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 work collaborative with others to achieve a seamless user experience

As the leader of all our operational work, the Chief Operating Officer must co-develop (with the team) a holistic plan for our approach to our organization’s operations and subsequently collaborate with both your direct reports and others throughout the organization 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. And, you must possess the “user experience” mindset to create a streamlined, aligned design that consistently delivers excellent outcomes for students, staff, and families.

An equity champion and organizational culture leader

The Chief Operating Officer 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, and skilled leader with a strong track record of operational excellence
- Expertise in at least one of the areas you will oversee (student recruitment and enrollment, school operations, meals, transportation, procurement, facilities, student information systems, teacher certification, risk management, safety, and new school openings)
- A minimum of 10 years of professional experience including specific experience in an operational leadership capacity that involves managing multiple teams in a complex, multi-site organization
- 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
- Bachelor’s degree required

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to: The CEO

Location of next Chief Operating 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](#)