

LEARNING

TOGETHER

AND

APART



2020



Dear friends,

“Embrace Challenge” is one of AF’s core values—though we had no idea at the beginning of 2020 that we would need to channel this value so much. We have faced a global pandemic, the resulting economic downturn, and the most significant racial justice reckoning since the Civil Rights Movement. Through it all, the AF team has rallied to support our scholars, families, and each other—coming together to set the standard for what excellence looks like during this time as we have in every other chapter in our history.

When schools shuttered in March to slow the spread of COVID-19, the AF team quickly and effectively reinvented school online. In the weeks after schools closed, our team distributed more than 9,000 Chromebooks and more than a thousand wireless devices to ensure we closed the digital divide. Simultaneously, our incredible team of teachers, leaders, and curriculum designers developed, launched, and continuously improved effective remote learning. In addition to four or five core classes on Zoom every day, our scholars had quality enrichment classes (dance, PE, arts), afterschool clubs, small group tutoring, and daily advisory so they could stay connected to each other and to a caring adult. The resulting remote learning—and remote community—was recognized as being amongst the best in the country.

This summer, many members of the AF community joined in the large-scale Black Lives Matter protests that demanded justice everywhere from Minneapolis to Providence to New York City. As we stood up against police brutality outside our walls, we also looked inward. AF was founded to address the deep inequities that have long existed in public education in this country. We recommitted to ensuring that our practices in pursuit of that mission are anti-racist, our culture is consistently affirming and inclusive, and our staff and scholars have the conditions they need to thrive. Through town halls and listening sessions, we connected with our community and together, we identified the steps we would take to realize this vision.

Amid a year unlike any we’ve ever seen, we continue to move forward—setting an ambitious vision, celebrating what’s working, naming clearly what’s not, thinking creatively about how to address our challenge areas, and continuously getting better. Thank you for continuing to support our work. In this time of crisis, never before has our mission been more critical. The need to provide an excellent education for all of America’s children is in even sharper focus. It is the time, if ever there was one, to build the future we all want to see.

With love,



Dacia M. Toll
CEO

Andy Boas
Board Chair







“

From my experience, they give the children the opportunity to be themselves. It is structured, but at the same time there's enough room for children to be who they are individually. Amir likes band. Amadi likes dancing. Amir's learned chess. They're all able to do different things.

— Tomeka, New Haven Parent

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Who We Are

We're one of the top-performing public charter school networks in the country. We set high expectations because our students can exceed them. Our students, more than 79% of whom receive free or reduced-price lunch, achieve results that are on par with those of their affluent peers. They are a powerful testament to what excellence and equity mean.

We're 37 schools and 15,000 students strong across three states. We are Connecticut. New York. Rhode Island. And we're growing in our communities.

We were founded to address the legacy of racism in education that has persisted in our country through generations and continues to harm our communities today. We must ensure every child has access to a great school.

We want to help build a future that unleashes the boundless potential of children, communities, and our society. We work toward that future by building excellent schools that prepare our students to succeed in a competitive world and become the next generation of leaders we so desperately need.



Our Mission

Our mission 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.

At Achievement First, our students realize their potential and develop the skills they need to graduate from college, succeed in a competitive world, and serve as the next generation of leaders in our community.

79%

of students receive
free or reduced-
price lunch.



5X

Our students attend
college at far higher
rates than their peers,
are better prepared
when they get there,
and complete college
at 5x the national rate.

■ Where We Work

Connecticut

Bridgeport
Hartford
New Haven

⋮

Rhode Island

Cranston
Providence

⋮

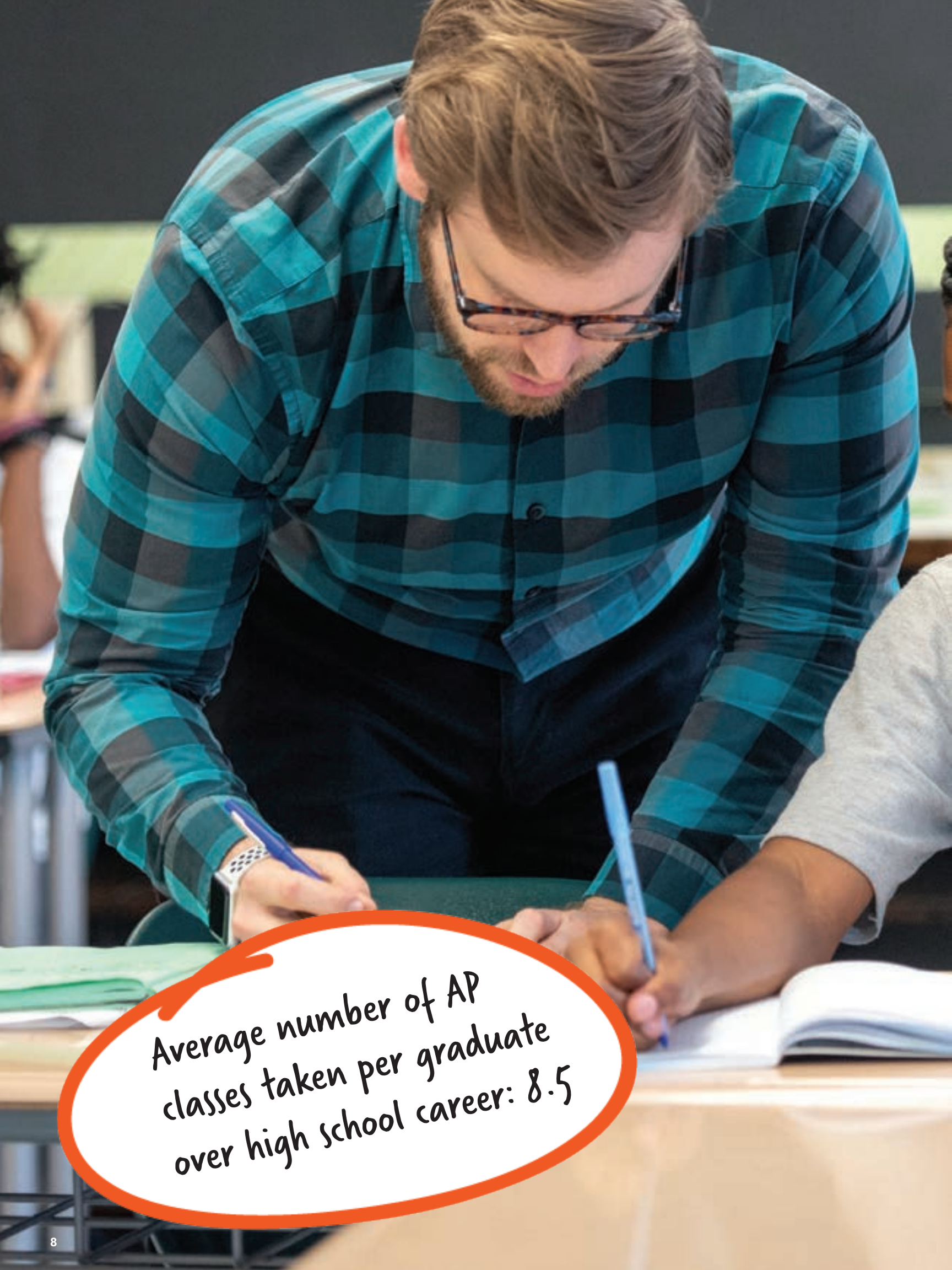
New York

Brooklyn





We are also serving students across the country through AF Accelerate. We are completely open source, and explicitly partnered with charter and district public schools nationwide. Through the years, AF Accelerate's programs have reached 75,000 students outside of AF.



Average number of AP
classes taken per graduate
over high school career: 8.5



3

We have a track record across three states of completely **closing achievement gaps in reading and math.**



5

In 2020, AF grew to **five full-size high schools** with the first graduating class at AF East Brooklyn High.



98%

Advanced Placement
98% of graduates took an AP class.



2,499

Total college acceptances
Total number of graduates: **392**
Average number of acceptances per graduate: **6**



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I am so happy my girls are going to a school that stands up to racial inequality and supports Black Lives Matter. It's nice to know that AF shares the same core values as my family and my daughters' voices will be heard.

— Mikayla, Providence Parent

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Our Values

Our core values define and reflect who we are, what we stand for, and how we must act as the organization that our students, families, and staff deserve.

LEAD FOR RACIAL EQUITY.

AF exists to address the legacy of racism in education. We look at ourselves first. We reflect and talk about the role race plays in our work, experiences, and decisions. We strive to be constantly anti-racist in our words and actions.

STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE.

We set ambitious goals and don't stop until we achieve them. Then, we set new goals.

EMBRACE CHALLENGE.

We grow when we're challenged. That's why we welcome mistakes and challenges as opportunities to learn and get better.

CARE FOR THE WHOLE PERSON.

We share a journey to fulfill our potential as whole people. We support that journey by honoring each other's identities, emotions, and dreams and by pushing each other from a place of belief and love.

CHOOSE JOY.

We choose to see the purpose and joy that is within and around us, and we actively work to spread joy to others throughout each day.

GO FURTHER TOGETHER.

We accomplish more together than we can alone. We join forces on big and small things. We do what we say we will do. We make choices with our team and family in mind.

**LEAD FOR
RACIAL EQUITY**

**STRIVE FOR
EXCELLENCE**

**EMBRACE
CHALLENGE**

**CARE FOR THE
WHOLE PERSON**

**CHOOSE
JOY**

**GO FURTHER
TOGETHER**



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My son was in an ELL (English Language Learner) program and within six months, he tested out because of how fast he was learning English. My daughter is on the honor roll and the dance team. She doesn't stop. Even when things get hard—my kids don't give up.

— Yaneli, Providence Parent

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■ Tristan

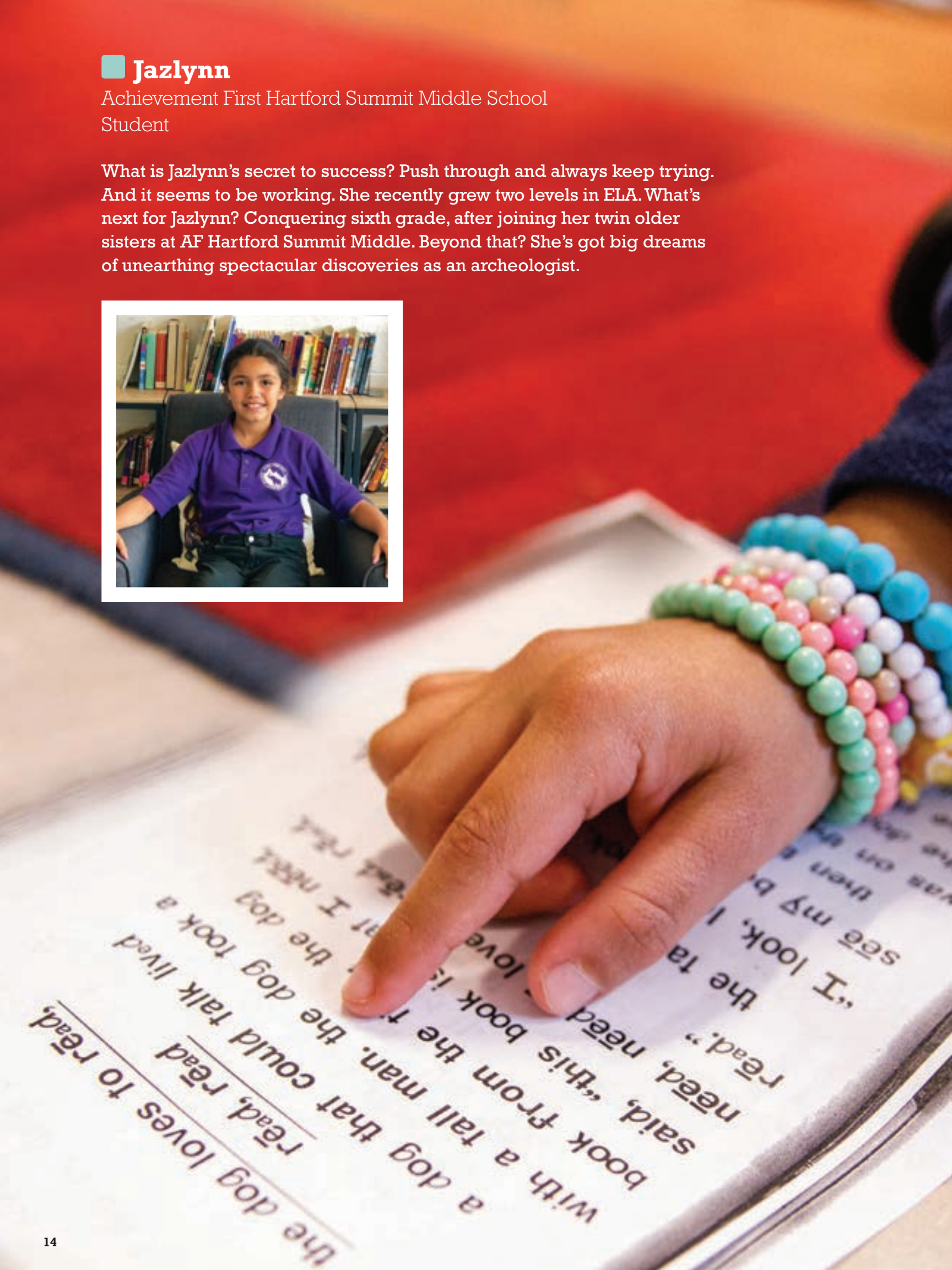
Achievement First Brooklyn High School Student

When Tristan learned that schools would remain closed for the rest of the school year last March, he had a simple, six-word response: “I’ve got it in the bag.” Sure, school looked vastly different, but regular Zoom classes and small group advisory helped Tristan continue to thrive. He also developed a newfound independence and ability to manage lessons on his own—something he shared with a national reporter in a *New York Times for Kids* piece on remote learning. Now, he’s taking on high school.



Achievement First Hartford Summit Middle School
Student

What is Jazlynn's secret to success? Push through and always keep trying. And it seems to be working. She recently grew two levels in ELA. What's next for Jazlynn? Conquering sixth grade, after joining her twin older sisters at AF Hartford Summit Middle. Beyond that? She's got big dreams of unearthing spectacular discoveries as an archeologist.



“

The best part about being an AF dad is seeing my daughter enjoy herself at school. I love how dedicated the teachers are, and I'm so thankful for their hard work. With everything going on around us with social injustice, AF gives our children a platform to express themselves and that's amazing. These kids are the future and they can make the change that we all need.

— Tyshawn, Brooklyn Parent

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Beyond Achievement First

It's never been just about test scores. It's about the students we've served—who they are and where their journeys take them at Achievement First and beyond. Some of our best innovations were born from alumni feedback, including Greenfield, a model that fosters student success and agency with more self-directed assignments, social-emotional learning, and opportunities for students to find their interests and passions through expeditions.



Spencer

Achievement First Amistad High School '14,
Yale University '18
Google Sales Associate

Minds change, doors open, and new dreams take root. Alumnus Spencer knows this firsthand. His original plan was to pursue medical school after college, but he kept his mind open to exploring a different passion: business. This path led him to a role at one of the most prominent global technology firms in the world. His motto: keep doors open; you never know where your skills and interests may take you.



Grace

AF University Prep High School '18,
Baruch College '22

Pre-college programs at Princeton and Stanford sparked Grace's passion for international relations. Now a public and international affairs major at Baruch, she balances her time in the classroom with campus activities. With a strong Trinidadian bloodline, she naturally found herself at home in the college's West Indian Culture Club. What's next for Grace? After college, she's interested in entering the political arena where she'll advocate for an inclusive democracy and a reimagining of the electoral system.

Our People

We call them our educational dream team. They're the changemakers. The innovators. The ones who bring magic to classrooms and Zoom rooms alike. Their passion is a force, their commitment undeniable. They have the great responsibility of guiding the next generation of leaders, teaching them to embrace challenges, dream big, and work hard in service of their audacious goals.

Connecting with students and families has remained one of our top priorities during this uniquely challenging time. From virtual check-ins to TikTok videos, our educators rolled up their sleeves to deliver a one-of-a-kind educational experience for our students under never-before-seen circumstances. Their efforts to offer stability during a time of uncertainty and unrest are nothing short of remarkable.

The pandemic has disproportionately impacted low-income communities of color, further exacerbating pre-existing inequities. Now more than ever, we know that community is essential. And it's important that our community of teachers increasingly reflects the backgrounds of our students. This year, 57% of new school staff identify as Black, Latinx, or multi-racial.

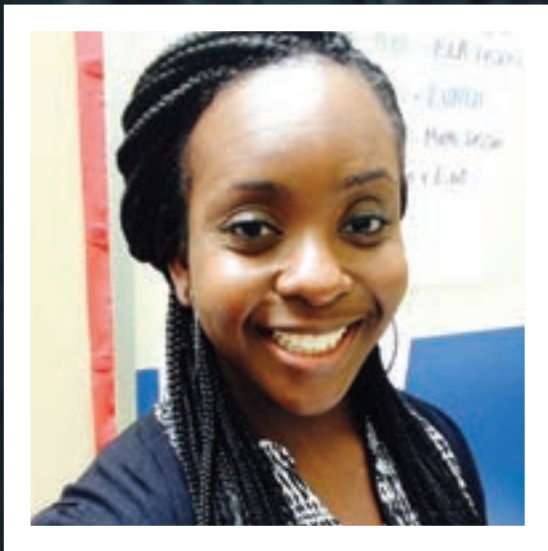




Justin Cox

AF Endeavor Middle School
Teacher

After graduate school and a stint as a D.C. political reporter, Justin was ready for his next professional challenge. When he realized that his childhood friends did not have the same opportunities as he did, he knew something was deeply wrong with the educational system. That realization was the catalyst for his teaching career. He wanted to be part of the solution and not the problem, terms he knows well as a veteran math teacher at AF Endeavor Middle.



■ Jessica Eddy-Lewis

Achievement First North Brooklyn Prep Elementary School
Academic Dean & Principal-in-Residence

Every day, Jessica gets to create spaces for students to actualize their potential and identify their dreams. As the academic dean and principal-in-residence at AF North Brooklyn Prep Elementary, she builds on the great legacy of the teachers who taught her throughout the years, providing life lessons beyond textbook pages. They validated her lived experiences, encouraged her to embrace her introversion as a strength, and empowered her to create her own life story. In a school year like no other, Jessica knows it's even more critical that she help all children tap into their unique essence, celebrate it, and draw strength from it during challenging times.





Mindy Salinaz Rice

Achievement First Promesa Elementary School
Founding Principal

Mindy trains hard and works harder. The triathlete and educator is the founding principal of AF Promesa Elementary, the newest addition to Achievement First's Rhode Island schools. Her own journey as a first-generation college student inspired her to pursue a career in education. That made her ready to welcome the first class of students when doors (and laptops, too!) opened this fall.



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Achievement First is serving as a model of how a school system that has a strong grasp on quality instruction and learning can quickly stabilize in a crisis. The fact that they were able to set up effective remote learning so quickly is a testament to their internal systems, culture, and belief system. It's helping us set a higher bar for what parents and families can expect from their schools.

— Bree Dusseault, Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE)

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IRL to URL: Remote Learning

From homeroom to learning from home—this year, schools closed across the country in March to slow the spread of COVID-19. But when school doors closed, learning continued for our Achievement First students.

We transitioned to a strong remote learning model that provided students and families stability during an unpredictable time. We were able to achieve a 95% attendance rate during the crisis. Through our open source curriculum and AF Accelerate, we also helped schools across the country transition to remote learning.

Within a week of school closures, staff began distributing 9,000 Chromebooks and more than one thousand Wi-Fi devices. Our school doors may have closed, but our teachers' incredible creativity and hard work built a culture of remote learning and remote community that never faltered. During remote learning, students receive an average of five hours daily live instruction, in addition to one-on-ones, advisories, and virtual gatherings like dance parties and yoga classes.

Our top priority was connecting our families, alumni, and staff members with the necessary resources to meet their immediate needs, including groceries, housing, and medical expenses. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we raised nearly \$210,000 through the Team & Family Support Fund with 100% of all donations used to support our Achievement First family in need.





Leading for Racial Equity

George Floyd in Minnesota, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta, and Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia: four tragic deaths among the countless others that sparked a national (and international) racial reckoning.

The racial justice uprising inspired us to recommit to our founding principles, acknowledge our areas of excellence and, most importantly, confront our shortcomings. It wasn't enough to declare our support of the movement because we know that commitment requires more than words; it requires action. With this in mind, our Board of Directors approved a resolution that requires us to review all of our practices with an anti-racist lens, ensuring that our culture is affirming, inclusive, and creates the conditions for all of our staff and students to thrive. Our work included an extensive listening tour, including 23 staff and family town halls focused on reopening, 52 staff and leader Leading for Racial Equity listening sessions, and seven alumni town halls. We must never forget that our ultimate—and original—purpose is to address the legacy of racism in education and ensure every child receives a great education.





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It surprised me when I learned that other public schools get more funding. My daughters' school gives a high-quality education to low-income children free of cost, and we need to focus on aiming for equal funding for all children who attend public schools in New Haven.

— Anais, New Haven Parent

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School Funding

It's no secret that a charter funding gap exists. Studies show that charter schools receive significantly less per-pupil funding than their public school counterparts. This is especially true in Connecticut where students receive \$4,000 less per pupil than the state average for public schools, even though our schools serve some of the highest-need students. In Rhode Island, students face facilities inequities that make it hard for us to open schools.

Students should receive equitable public funding regardless of their school choice. We remain resolute in our pursuit to secure the resources necessary to deliver the excellent public school education our students deserve.



Financials

AF is committed to running a K-12 public school network at scale with the same resources that are currently available to our host districts. AF schools pay a 10% Network Support fee to cover the cost of all the central support services the school receives, which is significantly less than the percent of total expenses that most districts allocate to their central offices.

Our School Finances

	NY	CT	RI
District spending per pupil*	\$20,724	\$17,935	\$18,992
AF revenues per pupil**			
Philanthropy	\$32	\$1,915	\$440
Federal	\$805	\$965	\$946
State/district	\$17,883	\$11,764	\$15,812
Total per pupil revenues	\$18,720	\$14,644	\$17,198
AF expenses per pupil**			
Personnel	\$12,892	\$10,662	\$9,993
Non-personnel	\$4,896	\$3,967	\$6,352
Total per pupil expenses	\$17,788	\$14,629	\$16,345

* District spending data is the most recent available (from the 2018-19 school year) and is controlled for services provided in kind (facilities, food services, debt, and pension costs).

** Achievement First data encompasses the 2019-2020 fiscal year and excludes AF programs and schools that are still scaling (AF Aspire Middle, AF Bushwick Empower Program, AF East Brooklyn High, AF Illuminar Middle, AF Linden Middle, AF North Brooklyn Prep Middle, AF Providence Middle, AF Voyager Elementary, AF Voyager Middle).

Network Support Expenses

Core Operations+	
Revenues	
Network Support fee	\$26,387,519
Public grants	\$850,000
Philanthropy	\$1,810,000
Other	\$1,685,000
Total revenues	\$30,732,519

Core Expenses	
Personnel expenses	\$24,872,392
Non-personnel expenses	\$5,359,668

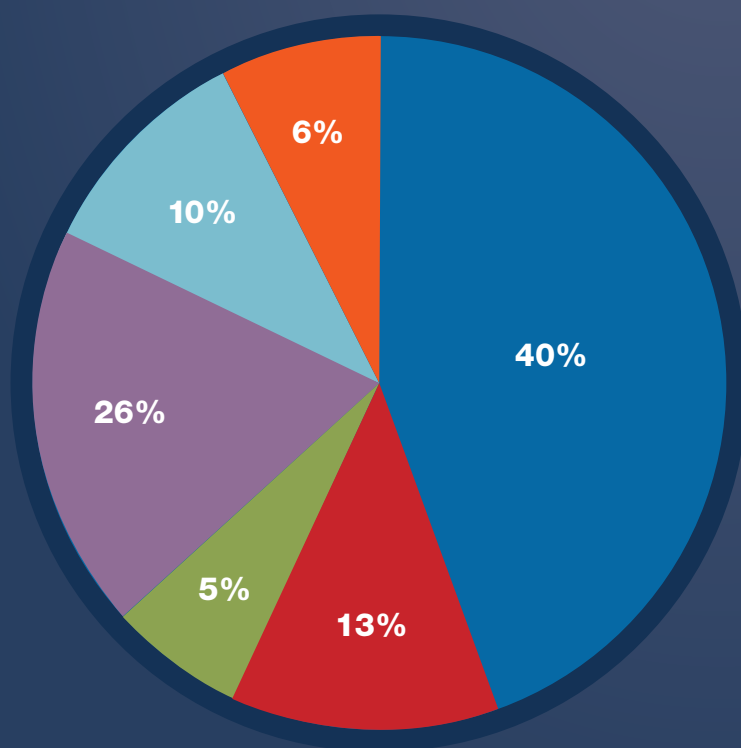
Total expenses	\$30,232,060
Surplus/(deficit)	\$500,459

Accelerate Initiatives++	
Accelerate revenues	\$5,350,000
Accelerate expenses	
Personnel expenses	\$4,350,208
Non-personnel expenses	\$967,804
Total expenses	\$5,318,012
Accelerate net surplus/(deficit)	\$31,988

+ Core operations include the revenue and services provided for in the management agreement between AF and its schools and include the key activities that AF does to support our K-12 program.

++ Accelerate initiatives include programs which either lie outside our core K-12 program, such as our AF Through College initiative, or our "R&D" work with independent sources of funding, such as our Greenfield program.

■	School Support and Curriculum Development
■	Talent Development and Recruiting
■	Development and Community Relations
■	Operations and Finance
■	Information Technology and Data
■	Leadership and Administration





“

Even before this crisis, our state's schools were underfunded. In a time when our communities are already struggling to cope with the disproportionate impact of the nationwide pandemic, we cannot allow for our elected leaders to place our children at an even larger disadvantage and health risk by cutting funding for education.

— Bria, Bridgeport Parent

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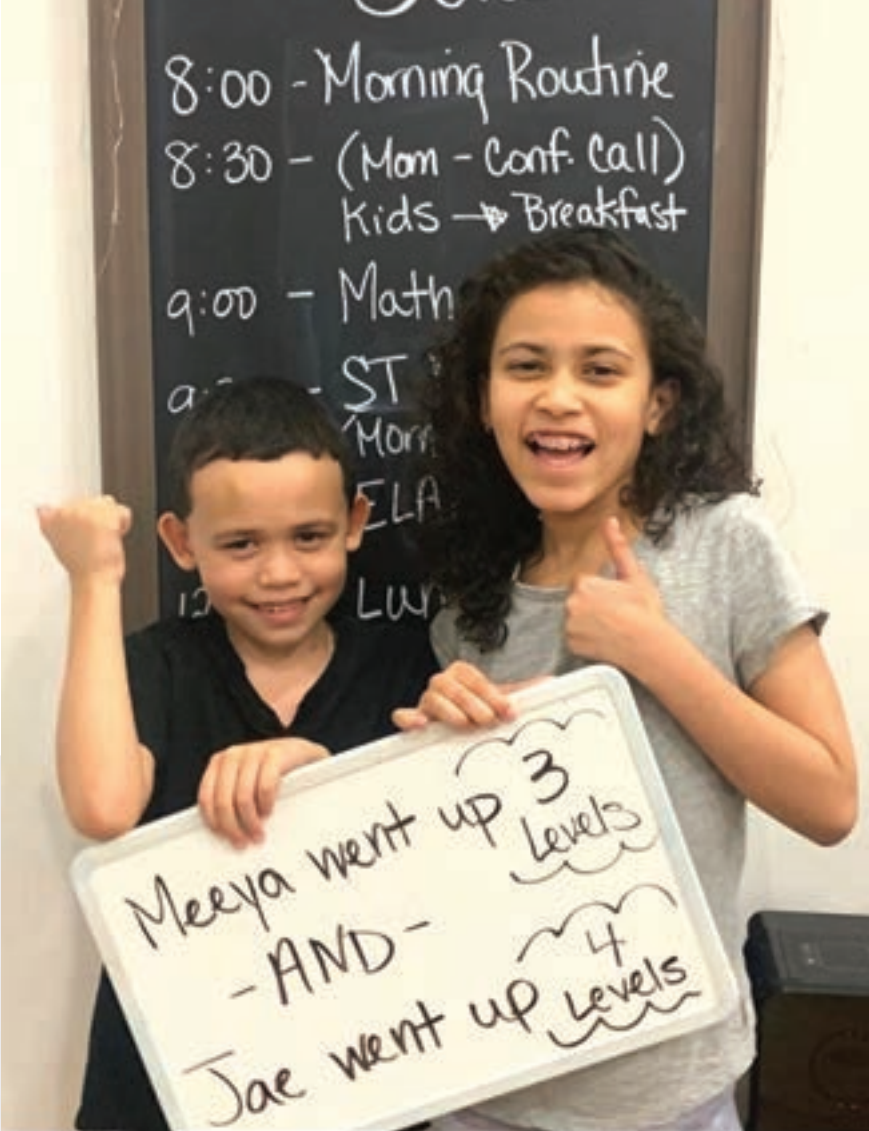
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15,000

students
served.

47,000

nationwide students
served by schools
currently partnering
with AF Accelerate.



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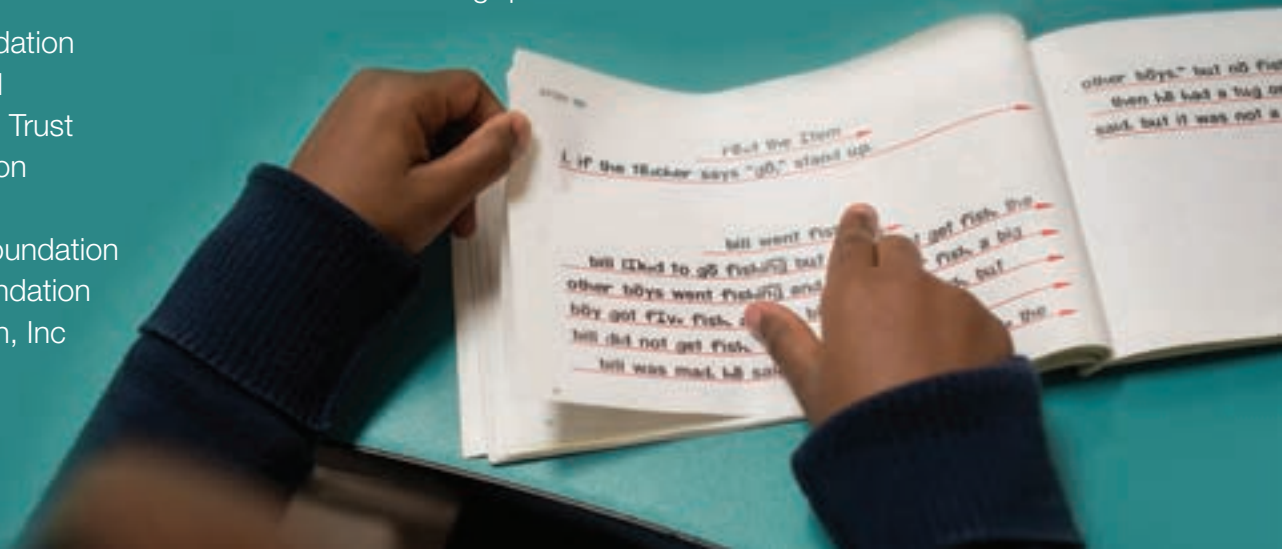
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