

Senior Director, Team Special Services

Start Date: Effectively immediately
Team: Team Special Services
Location: Brooklyn, NY

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.

Role description: Team Special Services leads the organization's charge to ensure that special services at Achievement First is exceptional and equitable. 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 families exercising choice for their scholars. As such, we have adopted a direct support model where a network team provides support and accountability to school based Special Services Leaders. The team develops resources & practices and provides training and weekly on-the-ground support to school leaders, including tiered reading intervention, tiered behavior intervention, authentic compliance and specialized instruction to provide access to all scholars. The team is currently comprised of a Vice President, an Associate, and five directors that support across K-12.

The Senior Director would directly manage the NY Directors. All ideal candidates 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.

Key Outcome Goals for 20-21- *The following outcomes are for 20-21. Typically, the outcomes for this role are both academic and student experience outcomes.*

- Special Services:
 - Academic Outcomes (varies by academy and context)
 - ADA Attendance > (or equal to) 93% for K-4 , >95% for 5-12 and no gap between SWDs and Sw/oDs.
 - Compliance >85% (or equal to) IEP meetings held on-time within a 15-month window and 100% of services are being provided to students.
- Special Services School Support:
 - 90% or more of principals/SSL agree or strongly agree that Team SS gets the "what" - they consistently provide strong support, services and/or expertise and deliver on agreed-upon outcomes

- 90% or more of principals/SSL agree or strongly agree that Team SS gets the "how" right - they are responsive and communicate in a way that is consistent with our Core Values
- No Gap for SSLs/Principals who identify as BML
- Organizational Health:
 - > (or equal to) 85% on a Q10 set of questions we use to assess the health of our team.

Essential responsibilities of the Senior Director include but are not limited to:

- ***Manage 2-5 team members to achieve outcomes***
 - Ensure direct reports are successful (clear Roles & Responsibilities, measures for success, achieving outcomes), learning (working toward transferable development goals, frequent mechanisms for formal and informal feedback), and happy (80%+ team retention).
 - Create and execute management structures (weekly check-ins, stepbacks, career conversations).
 - Ensure cohesion with and support coordination with other NS Teams.
- ***Fulfill essential shared responsibilities below (which also include some of the Director roles and responsibilities).***

Drive student achievement by supporting schools to actualize the vision for an exceptional special services:

Responsibility: Supporting a portfolio of 1-3 schools to outcomes: Drive Student achievement by ensuring schools implement strong special services

Core Actions:

- Ensure students with disabilities, students with potential disabilities, and students who struggle are served across the continuum of services and interventions.
- Ensure IEPs and 504 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 through bi-weekly check-ins, bi-weekly school visits (focused on development via instructional walkthroughs, co-observations, coaching., etc.) and data review.
- Ensure schools' communication to the district is clear and take responsibility for communication when troubleshooting is necessary.

Responsibility: Manage a region of schools to outcomes.

Core Actions:

- Communicate and over-communicate Team Special Services' roles and goals for this year ("TSS leverages a portfolio based approach ... this means ... you will expect to see").
- Analyze data and ensure Directors are focused on the highest impact action steps at each school.
- Utilize direct and indirect data to ensure school support time is high leverage (both increases capacity and improves support for students).
- Problem-solve tricky situations as they arise.
- Actively engage a variety of stakeholders when issues require (e.g. when more problem-solving is necessary, when there are implications on other teams, etc.).

- Own and coordinate regional superintendent formal portfolio reviews.
- Ensure ad hoc communication with superintendents is clear and actionable.

Responsibility: Contribute to network Special Services knowledge building, with special emphasis on the SSL cohort.

Core Actions:

- Create and deliver practice-based professional development.
- Oversee the development of practiced based professional development.
- Promote communication across schools by actively seeking out best practices and sharing information across regions.
- Own coordination and communication across the region.
- Own, oversee, or contribute to core practice development and rollout.

Responsibility: Deeply understand and know region and district-specific special services issues and oversee communication with the sending district to ensure partnership is effective, collaborative and authentically compliant with the law.

Core Actions:

- Continue to develop a deep understanding of district regulations, expectations and standard operating procedures (varies greatly among AF's five regions) and actively build bridges.
- Contribute to all bodies of knowledge that are region and district-specific (e.g. Special Services Playbook, BOY checklist, Behavior Intervention guidance, etc.).
- Seeking out PD and collaborative opportunities with members of sending districts (e.g. CSEs, NYDOE, Bureau of Special Education in CT, ARISE in RI, ELL Coordinator Cohort in RI, etc.).
- Lead problem solving with the district as issues arise.
- Communicate directly to the district—playing “the heavy” as necessary.
- Coordinate with AF's legal team as needed to ensure our students receive appropriate education and, in very rare instances, that we respond swiftly and effectively to complaints.

***** Depending on the candidate's previous experience and management competencies, we may hire a Director who will not manage other teammates. In this case, the start date can be flexible.**

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 their 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
- Belief in 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)

Compensation

Salary for this position is competitive and commensurate with experience. Additionally, Achievement First offers a comprehensive benefits package.

To Apply

Internal (AF) candidates: If you are interested in applying for the Senior Director, Special Services role, first talk to your manager. Then, send your resume and a letter of interest to [Payal Seth](#) and [Emily Siefken](#) (recommended by **January 15th**). In your letter, please explain why you are interested in the position and what experiences make you qualified for this role. We will follow up with candidates to name the next steps in the process from there.

External candidates: If you are interested in applying for the Director, Special Services role, email your resume and a letter of interest to [Payal Seth](#) and [Emily Siefken](#). In your letter, please explain why you are interested in the position and what experiences make you qualified for this role. We will follow up with candidates to name the next steps in the process from there.

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/>.