

Director of Advocacy - Connecticut

Start Date: Immediately
Team: External Relations
Location: New Haven, Bridgeport or Hartford, CT

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; 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. Achievement First is also an engaged and prominent partner in the broader education-reform movement, partnering with schools and networks 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 our Charter Network Accelerator and Navigator partnership organizations.

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. We choose joy and actively seek out moments of humor, gratitude, and deeper purpose. We know that we will go further together and intentionally join forces on both big and small things. We name brutal facts and see our mistakes as opportunities to get better. Finally, come to Achievement First if you want to help schools redefine what's possible in education. We 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, passions, 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 our kids and families deserve. So, come to Achievement First if reflection, challenge, and growth feed your soul.

The Opportunity:

Achievement First (AF) seeks a Director of Advocacy for Connecticut. Achievement First was founded in New Haven, CT 21 years ago before growing to 10 schools in New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford. The Director will lead our advocacy initiatives and community engagement efforts across all three communities. This is a unique opportunity for a talented, committed, and results-oriented individual who is passionate about advancing educational social justice through the work of engaging, supporting and partnering with families, schools, community-based organizations, fellow advocates, our state authorizer, and elected officials.

The Director of Advocacy in CT will report directly to the Chief External Officer and will collaborate with teams across the network including their counterparts in New York and Rhode Island. The Director will collaborate with advocacy partners throughout Connecticut to develop and advance policies in the State Capitol and our host cities that support the needs of our scholars and families and that improve the operating conditions for our ten schools in Connecticut. In particular, we need to ensure that we have the financial resources and regulatory framework we require to operate excellent schools for our scholars. The Director will work to provide our families and school leaders with information about critical issues facing our communities and to connect them to opportunities to get involved. The Director will also develop strategies to connect parents and school staff to elected officials and community leaders in order to educate those leaders about the work being done in our schools. In addition, the Director will collaborate with the student recruitment team to support that teams' efforts.

This is a unique opportunity to work closely with other individuals who are passionate about providing children with a high-quality education, while working at one the leading charter school networks in the country. Please note that some early morning, late evening and weekend work is required, along with frequent travel to schools and community sites in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport, CT, as well as occasional travel to RI and NY.

Responsibilities of the Director of Advocacy include but are not limited to:

Advocacy Planning & Execution:

- Help develop, guide and implement winning strategies and tactics to advance AF's policy, budgetary, and regulatory priorities in Connecticut so that our scholars and schools receive the funding, facilities and freedom they need to succeed.
- Actively build relationships with local leaders (elected and not) and organizations in the communities we serve, in a manner that builds connections, strengthens bonds and wins "hearts and minds" in support of our schools and shared priorities.

- Develop and execute on a Connecticut elected official (both state-level leaders and leaders in each of our cities) engagement strategy and support our schools with their elected engagement and advocacy efforts, including:
 - Encourage, equip and empower school-based staff with materials, tools, resources and supports to increase the level of public engagement and building strong cultures of advocacy within their schools
 - Facilitate engagement of AF families and board members in our own and partners' advocacy efforts
 - Keep elected leaders informed of important news, highlights and happenings about our schools and network on a regular basis via emails, meetings, calls, etc.
 - Invite, plan and execute school visits and opportunities for elected leaders to see, experience and learn about AF first-hand.

Community Engagement & Partnerships:

- Developing community based partnerships between AF schools and local organizations around shared interests, initiatives and priorities.
- Identify, equip, empower and connect our AF Team & Family with opportunities (ex. public events, meetings, hearings, etc.) to advance the interests of our schools, schools and communities, including supporting the student recruitment team's work.
- Manage our partnerships with Connecticut coalition partners, participate in coalition meetings and advise AF leadership of ongoing advocacy efforts.
- Identify and develop plans to mobilize current and potential stakeholders around region-wide initiatives that advocate for or advance relevant priorities for our schools and network.
- Identify and develop plans where AF and community associates can engage and leverage parent groups, and parent leaders in our advocacy, student recruitment, community-based and school-based initiatives.
- Help develop high-quality and impactful communications, materials, tools and resources for schools/network in service of our collective work

Project Planning & Knowledge Management:

- Develop and execute strong project plans marked by air-tight operations, coordination, execution and knowledge management
- Manage relevant data and organize reports which can be used to track and inform ongoing work and future initiatives.
- Participate in broader Team External Relations and Achievement First meetings, initiatives and coaching sessions
- Develop and pursue a personalized Learning & Development Plan, in consultation with your manager, the Chief External Officer, to support your continued professional growth, advancement and interests

Skills and Characteristics:

- Detail-oriented, highly organized and exceptional project planner who can manage multiple complex, collaborative projects, with impeccable follow-through on execution.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including an ability to effectively interact, communicate and persuade internal and external partners and stakeholders at all levels
- Strong political acumen, knowledge and savviness
- Training, management and/or coaching experience
- Strong work ethic and a self-starter “roll-up-my-sleeves” attitude
- Exceptional communication skills
- Belief in the Achievement First mission and educational model
- Spanish language proficiency is a plus

Desired Background and Work Experience:

- 7+ years of work experience
- Demonstrated results in one or more of the following: advocacy, political campaigns, governmental affairs, or community engagement/organizing in Connecticut, either statewide or locally.
- Knowledge of the current educational and political landscape in Connecticut and across the country.

Compensation:

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

To Apply:

Achievement First reviews applications on a rolling basis – please apply immediately.

Send Resume and Cover Letter to: AFCareers@achievementfirst.org. Due to the high volume of applications we receive, we will unfortunately only be able to notify those who advance to a phone interview.

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>.