

Director of Reading K-12, Team Special Services (Overview)

Start Date: Effectively immediately
Team: Team Special Services
Location: Brooklyn, NY; New Haven, CT; OR Providence, RI

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 41 (soon to be 41!) 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 challenges, 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 Director of Reading K-12 is a new leadership role that will report to the Chief Academic Officer (interim until CAO is hired VP of Team Special Services, Payal Seth). In alignment with our organizational strategic plan and shift to prioritize reading development for all scholars, the director will serve as the person who will set a vision for reading development K-12. They will be focused on two main job functions 1) defining our vision for K-12 reading development and 2) moving our program towards the vision. The director will be working with a range of stakeholders across our network from K-12 schools and network support teams that design and implement strong curriculum and student experience.

The Director of Reading K-12 would be responsible for ensuring that we have a unified vision and working theory on how learners at Achievement First develop as readers within our program. 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 a candidate dedicated to the belief that all scholars can learn and committed to creating the conditions for this to happen.

Key Outcome Goals: The following outcomes are for 21-22 school year and will be revised each year.

- Phase I - Year 1 by June of 2022
 - Scholar Outcomes:
 - K-4 - Growth on STEP (for all students and for focus students)
 - MS/HS - (TBD)% of students grow at or above the (TBD)th growth percentile as measured by STAR Reading SGP
 - Evaluation and Analysis:
 - Create a succinct and clear evaluation and diagnosis of Achievement First’s current program and how it does and does not support reading development; this program analysis must be grounded in data and reflect input from across a range of stakeholders from K-12, across regions, varying roles, from staff, teacher, and student experience and grounded in research around supporting K-12 reading development.
 - Research and Development & Action Planning for 22-23 + Beyond:
 - 90% or more of leaders agree or strongly agree that they had an opportunity to provide feedback and input on the program evaluation and diagnosis.
 - 100% of working group members agree or strongly agree at the end of the school year that they see their feedback and input reflected in the vision for reading development.
 - Conduct 1-2 pilots that result in codified learnings for how we will improve reading development K-12 with an emphasis on MS & HS
 - Top Line: STAR reading assessment and TOWRE pre-post test will demonstrate significant improvement as a result of the pilot.
 - 90% of teachers and leaders share that they have improved their knowledge/skill in teaching reading to scholars.
 - Professional Development on Reading Development

- >90% of participants share that they are clear on how reading is developed and know of 2-3 ways they can improve their practices either as a leader or teacher.
- Phase II- Year 2 by June 2023
 - Strong Implementation of Action Plan from Phase 1
 - 90% or more of leaders agree or strongly agree that we are making shifts to our program to ensure stronger reading development of scholars in the 2022-2023 School year.
 - 90% of actions and deliverables are on time and have input from stakeholders at each academy and across stakeholders at NS + Schools.
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 - As a result of programmatic shifts, based on Phase I work
 - 70% of students in 5-12th grade have growth from BOY to EOY at the 67th SPG (student growth percentile) according to the STAR Reading Assessment.
 - 60% of students in 5-12th are at or above the network wide trigger for interventions.
 - Students currently in intervention make significant growth (K-2 Measured by __ and 4-5 measured by __ and 5-12 measured by SGP on STAR Reading).
- Phase III- Year 3 by June 2024
 - Strong Implementation of Action Plan from Phase 1
 - 90% or more of leaders agree or strongly agree that we are making shifts to our program to ensure stronger reading development of scholars in the 2022-2023 School year.
 - 90% of actions and deliverables are on time and have input from stakeholders at each academy and across stakeholders at NS + Schools.
 - As a result of programmatic shifts, based on Phase I & II work
 - 80% of students in 5-12th grade have growth from BOY to EOY at the 67th SPG (student growth percentile) according to the STAR Reading Assessment.
 - 70% of students in 5-12th are at or above the network wide trigger for interventions.
 - Students currently in intervention make significant growth (K-2 Measured by __ and 4-5 measured by __ and 5-12 measured by SGP on STAR Reading).

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Responsibility: Develop a vision for reading development K-12 through leading a cross-functional working group (including learning from the experiences of students and teachers) and leveraging external expertise

Core Actions:

- Create an accurate diagnosis of our current “state of teaching reading” including what is working and not working.
- Partner with VPs of Great Teaching, Regional Supes, Principals, Teaching and Learning Humanities teams, teachers, and School Leaders to create a strong guiding coalition that will work to develop a vision and learning agenda.
- Lead and facilitate a strong working group that drives towards outcomes and ensures that every member of the team is engaged and included as part of the process.

- Lead a process that is keeping Liberatory Design Mindsets at its forefront by designing with not for by learning from student and teacher experiences.
- Bring in and learn from external expertise outside of the organization on teaching reading effectively across K-12.

Responsibility: Develop a vision and learning agenda for reading development K-12 through leading a cross-functional working group (including learning from the experiences of students and teachers) and leveraging external expertise

Core Actions:

- Lead the development of theory of reading development for scholars as well as clear learning agenda and implementation plan which will ensure 80% of scholars at AF K-12 are reading on grade level or higher.
- Analyzed the scope of the project based on program analysis, interviews with stakeholders (teachers, families, students, leaders at schools and network support) across the organization, and historical data analysis.
- Set deadlines for incremental goals, allocated budget and worked across school and networks support teams to ensure all teams were engaged for input.
- Share strong consistent and regular communication on the status of the plan, progress and roadblocks to stakeholders including executive management and made proactive recommendations to remove roadblocks leading to the on-time and on-budget delivery of the project

Responsibility: Create a Working Theory of Learning to articulate the foundational pillars, essentially what must be true about teaching reading, learning to read in order to cultivate thriving readers K-12.

Core Actions:

- Document best practices based on research and within Achievement First to share a cohesive vision K-12 of how Achievement First drives and supports the development of reading grounded in the knowledge and understanding from the Science of Reading.
- Partner with stakeholders to get many rounds of feedback and input across K-12 and network support teams to do a gap analysis about how our current program does or does not support reading development.
- Train on and share the vision and working theory with all stakeholders so that every teacher at AF is clear on how we develop readers in our program K-12 and what we do when a reader struggles to support them.
- Develop a multi-year approach to adjusting our program to support reading development with alignment and in-service of stronger K-12 that programmatically supports reading development.

Responsibility: Lead and run 1-2 reading program pilots across regions and focused in MS and HS to put into action our vision AND support reading achievement.

Core Actions:

- Select reading program pilots (either external programming or programmatic shifts to existing work) to conduct at a select few schools with input from various stakeholders including the working group.
- Monitor the pilot with folks who are implementing the programs and make appropriate data driven tweaks.
- Codify what works and doesn't work in a clear, shareable way.

- Maintain a strong knowledge management system that captures video, artifacts, testimonials, interviews, data, and other mediums that help show what went well and what areas to get stronger.
- Synthesize the results of the pilot using both quantitative and qualitative data sets with clear recommendations for MS and HS reading programs.

Responsibility: Support a strong external reading development professional development for K-12 that is grounded in research and science.

Core Actions:

- Conduct a thorough review of external professional development options that will meet Achievement First needs.
- Determine the best external professional development opportunity for our organization at this moment and time by gathering input from key stakeholders K-12 and network support teams as well.
- Bring in external professional development for K-12 teachers that is grounded in research and the science of reading to expand the knowledge of all teachers K-12 around what reading development is and how we can build it into our program.
- Coordinate with operations teams to ensure all relevant teachers, leaders, and network support teammates can join and be developed across the 2021-2022 school year.
- Plan for how the professional development will live beyond the training and will be supported by leaders in the organization towards continual learning, skill building, and programmatic changes.

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

- Stay abreast of research and best practices in the fields of literacy and reading development.
- Develop communication and knowledge management systems to share resources, promising practices to and keep staff apprised of key initiatives and activities around reading development.
- Support and develop Achievement First's vision, theory on how AF scholars develop as thriving readers within our core program and supplemental intervention programs.
- Provide direct support and consultation to various AF work streams that are directly related to or overlap reading development and curriculum design/core program.
- Partner with senior leaders and schools to lead strategy and change management to ensure stronger programming for developing all scholars into thriving readers K-12.

Skills and Characteristics

- Passion for progressive reading development education excellence and reform
- Effective instructional leader with a track record of improving teacher and leader effectiveness and the achievement of their students in reading. Preference will be given to those with skills and experiences with accelerating growth of older readers in grades 5-12.
- A flexible thinker who understands the chief metric is student achievement and experience
- Ability to inspire and influence others; strong relationship-builder
- Highly skilled and knowledgeable on research and science of reading as well as various models and programs that are currently available
- Specific experience in running pilots and research on reading development programs
- 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 and in particular the understanding that this work is directly addressing the legacy of anti-literacy programming for black and brown scholars.
- Extremely skilled in building relationships with a diverse group of stakeholders that are grounded in relational trust, accountability, community, and transformation.
- Systems-level thinker who can craft a vision for how an organization should implement a stronger K-12 reading program that supports all learners. Strong problem solving and critical thinking skills; able to formulate hypotheses, gather and synthesize data, develop and assess alternatives and build a case for recommendations
- Maturity, humility, strong work ethic, sense of humor, and “roll-up-my-sleeves” attitude

Educational **Background and Work Experience**

- Bachelor’s degree from a college or university
- At least four years of highly effective teaching experience demonstrating a strong track record of student performance especially in reading
- At least two of those years include school leadership experience (e.g. coaching)
- Preferred - Advanced degree in reading or reading intervention, training/certification in the science of reading, Certifications in LETRS, Teacher College programs, or comparable certification or degree.

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 Director of Reading K-12, first talk to your manager. Then, send 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.

External candidates: If you are interested in applying for the Director of Reading K-12, , 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/>.

Achievement First requires vaccination against COVID-19 for all employees. Reasonable Accommodations based on a qualifying disability or sincerely held religious belief are being considered in accordance with applicable law. [Click here](#) to read our full policy.