

President

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 more than 14,300 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's 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 of our resources with all 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 striving to not only close the achievement gap but also to redefine what's 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 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 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

Position Overview

At the end of the 2019-20 school year, Doug McCurry, Achievement First's Co-CEO and Superintendent, will be leaving AF after 20 years of service. As a network, we are using Doug's transition as an opportunity to redesign our organizational structure. Dacia Toll, Co-CEO, will remain as sole CEO and is seeking two exceptional senior leaders to fill two new roles and help her lead AF's next chapter: a President and a Superintendent.

Achievement First's President will be the leader of our 220+ person Network Support team and ultimately responsible for overseeing many of the functions which support our schools at the network level: talent, external, financial, and operations. As such, the President must ensure that the efforts of all our network support teams are cohesive, equitable, and result in student success and school satisfaction. The President will manage and lead our C-Suite, comprising the Chief Financial Officer, Chief Talent Officer, Chief External Officer, Chief of Staff, and a newly created Chief Operating Officer role. In partnership with our CEO and Superintendent, the President will be one of the three most senior officials responsible for overall leadership of the entire network.

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **Manage and coach a team of senior network leaders, including:**
 - the Chief Financial Officer, who oversees our financial policies and procedures, manages all of our network-wide real estate, and ensures we're on the path to financial sustainability
 - the Chief Talent Officer, who oversees recruitment, HR, leadership development, ensures that we retain our strongest people, and creates a high-performing and high-equity adult culture
 - the Chief External Officer, who oversees our advocacy, development, and communications efforts to help ensure strong philanthropic funding and community support
 - the Chief of Staff, who works hand-in-hand with the President to ensure that these functions operate seamlessly together, that the overall network support culture is strong, and that we have strong multi-year plans aligned to our goals and priorities
 - a Chief Operating Officer, likely to be added in 2020-21, who will oversee our Operations, IT, Systems & Data, and Enrollment teams to ensure all these functions are consistently strong and we have robust, multi-year expansion planning
- **Ensure great service, support delivery, and communication between Network Support and our schools**
 - Work with the Chief of Staff to oversee the process for two-way feedback between Network Support and Schools and ensure we respond effectively to the feedback
 - Address alignment and cohesion issues across Network Support to reduce the overall volume and complexity of asks and tasks that we are making of our school leaders
 - Ensure AF's Intranet (Many Minds) serves as a key knowledge management and support tool; assist teams in defining the what, where, when, and who for critical organizational knowledge management and hold them accountable for meeting that vision
 - As needed, problem-solve support and communication challenges and rally the team to meet essential school needs

- **Lead annual and multi-year planning processes to ensure alignment with strategic goals and priorities**
 - Develop and regularly update a rolling 3-year plan for AF and Network Support that is aligned to our strategic plan and ensures that we intentionally plan backwards from our most important goals and strategic priorities
 - Clearly define, communicate, and manage toward strong outcomes and timelines for this planning process -- including Team First Class Plans, staffing, budgets, individual goals -- ensuring alignment across the organization
 - Lead the effort to have disciplined processes to create and track progress on organizational and team goals/wins, including ensuring that the CEO, Cabinet, and Leadership team are aware of any “alarm bells” in the interim data around teams’ performance against their annual plans and are coordinating responses
- **Lead the development and continued enhancement of AF’s Network Support team culture**
 - Working with the Chief of Staff, ensure Network Support culture is grounded in a clear purpose and set of essential mindsets so that we are a best-in-class support organization for our schools
 - Oversee implementation of a two-way, org-wide communication strategy that ensures people have the essential information they need to be effective, that we leverage their voice and insight, and that we strengthen our overall culture
 - Refine a set of essential talent practices for all Network employees and ensure they are consistently implemented to ensure equitable talent development
 - Through modeling and feedback, serve as a powerful culture leader of AF, ensuring we all consistently walk the talk of our core values
- **Serve as a key senior leader and steward for our network**
 - Along with the CEO and Superintendent, serve as one of the most senior leaders in our organization helping us achieve our excellence and growth goals; exercise strong judgment in making critical decisions about what we prioritize and how we operate
 - Serve internally and externally (e.g., at large network gatherings, with public officials, at Board meetings, at public events) as a representative of Achievement First’s leadership

You should consider this role if you are...

An outstanding leader with a track record of achieving excellence with equity

AF’s President has to have an impressive track record of results - ambitious goals set and achieved. Our preference is that you have achieved results in K-12 or K-16 education, but we are open to candidates whose professional experience is broader but equally impressive. 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 (finance/facilities, talent, external relations, strategy, operations). 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. We are looking to create a Network Support team that is the best in the country - and we are looking to our President to be able to leverage their personal experience and learning to lead the way.

A “warm AND demanding” coach

The President will support AF in meetings 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 inspire and align a team to achieve breakthrough results

As the leader of all our Network Support teams, you must develop a holistic vision for how our network team collaborates together to support our schools. You must not only develop this vision, but you must also inspire the team to achieve it. Finally, you will need the planning, change management, and organizational development skills to implement this vision across teams to ensure that we operate in support of schools in a coherent and maximally effective way. Specifically, we want you to be able to bring historically siloed groups together to achieve shared goals. You will need to be vigilant about naming and managing the team to go after areas where we are not delivering for schools at the level we need to.

An equity champion and organizational culture leader

The President 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.

EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS, AND CHARACTERISTICS

- While the President is not expected to have expertise in all of the C-level areas they will oversee (finance/facilities, talent, external relations, strategy, operations), the President needs to have direct expertise in at least one of the functional areas and baseline expertise in a number of the others
- A minimum of 10 years of professional experience in leadership / management
- 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
- A reputation as an exceptional manager, coach, and team leader
- Excellent communication and influencing skills that lend themselves to effective influence across all levels of the organization
- Exceptional strategic and critical thinking skills

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to: the Chief Executive Officer

Manages: Four C-level officers overseeing Talent, External, Operations, Finance, and our Chief of Staff. Most leaders are currently based in NY with team presence (CEO, Finance) also in CT.

Location of next President: NY, CT or Rhode Island

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 12/6 to PresidentSearch@achievementfirst.org