

## Superintendent

**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'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 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.

In this revised structure, the Superintendent will lead our team in ensuring that we keep the sacred promises we make to students and families: that our scholars will graduate with the skills and mindsets they need to succeed in college and career and to have a fulfilling, empowered life. To deliver on these promises, the Superintendent will lead both our program and regional superintendent team. This means they will coach and manage the Academy Leads of all three academy levels (elementary, middle, and high school), as well as (directly or indirectly) the leaders of our school program teams (Teaching & Learning, Student Experience, Special Services, and Academic Operations). In partnership with our CEO and President, the Superintendent will be one of the three most senior officials responsible for the overall leadership of the entire network.

### MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **Manage and coach a team of senior school and program leaders, including:**
  - The three leaders of each of our Academy Levels (Elementary, Middle, and High School); these Academy Leads then manage and coach Regional Superintendents and are responsible for the achievement of all schools within their grade band
  - The leaders (Vice-Presidents) of our K-12 instructional support teams including Teaching & Learning, Team Student Experience, Team Special Services, and Academic Operations (these leaders may be directly or indirectly managed by the Superintendent)
  - Ensure a strong culture among Regional Superintendents and program teams that spikes in care, challenge, and psychological safety - and creates the conditions for equity among senior leaders
  - Ensure strong attention-to-results practices within and across our K-12 schools so that we achieve our two North Star goals: (1) More Consistent Excellence across AF schools: At least 85% of AF schools achieving strong or exemplary status on our comprehensive AF Report Card (our summative measure for school success, including student achievement, investment, equity, and talent measures) and (2) Long-Term Alumni Success: At least 65% Expected College Completion (which would be greater than the average for top-income quartile families); in addition to the K-12 program alignment work outlined below, achieving these goals will require more effective support of AF schools that are currently in the bottom third of our performance distribution
- **Set the standards and ensure we have a strong, ever-evolving core program to achieve our goals and our vision of "great teaching fueling an exceptional student experience"**
  - In partnership with the Superintendent and program teams, co-design a shared, inspiring, and crystal-clear vision of what an AF school/classroom should look like grounded in our priorities of great teaching and student experience that does not stop at eliminating the achievement gap but that provides a truly world-class education to our scholars

- Ensure that this vision is translated into a strong, aligned, K-12 program (curriculum/schedule, assessments, student experience elements, talent and culture practices, etc.); this will require the Superintendent to identify and work through the biggest K-12 alignment pain points
- Ensure that we leverage both internal and external bright spots to constantly evolve our core program and school support practices
- Build team alignment around the shared commitments made by leaders across all AF schools and the areas where teachers / school leaders are encouraged to innovate
- Lead the process of integrating lessons learned from our [Greenfield school design](#) with our “classic” model, leveraging the most successful elements of both school models
- Oversee the systems/processes to assess progress against our vision and course correct when gaps develop
- Oversee systems/processes to ensure equitable implementation of these systems that serve ALL students (including equity across students with disabilities and English Language Learner subpopulations)
- **Serve as a key senior leader and steward for our network**
  - Along with the CEO and President, serve as one of the most senior leaders in our organization, helping us achieve our goals and exercising strong judgment in making critical decisions about what we prioritize and how we operate
  - Through modeling and feedback, serve as a powerful culture leader of AF to help ensure that we all consistently walk the talk of our core values
  - Serving internally and externally (e.g., at large network gatherings, with public officials, at Board meetings) 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 Superintendent has to have personal experience - as a teacher, principal, and systems leader - of achieving gap-closing student achievement results AND leading schools that are affirming, empowering, and position students for long-term success. You must have first-hand experience leading a culture and program that achieves excellence (strong academic results for ALL students) with equity (e.g., low suspensions, low attrition). We are looking to create more schools that are amongst the best in the country - and we are looking to our Superintendent to be able to leverage their personal experience and learning to lead the way.

**A “warm AND demanding” coach**

The Superintendent will support AF in meeting its goals by effectively managing and coaching a team of senior academic leaders. Therefore, as the leader overseeing our school management and program 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 of our instructional teams, the Superintendent must co-develop (with the team) a holistic vision for our K-16 program and subsequently guide and inspire the team to achieve that vision. You

will need the change management and organizational development skills to implement this vision across teams and schools to create a coherent, K-16 aligned school design that consistently delivers excellent outcomes for students. You will need to be vigilant about naming and managing the team to go after areas where we are not delivering for students at the level we need to.

### **An equity champion and organizational culture leader**

The Superintendent will be a standard-bearer for how Achievement First models our core values and, specifically, what leading for racial equity looks like at one of the country's biggest charter networks. You must approach all issues with an explicit values-based lens and bring a skill set that includes getting to the root of adaptive challenges and tackling equity issues manifested at the systemic level. It is particularly important that the Superintendent ensures that our school design is culturally competent, enrichment-oriented, and designed to unleash the intellect and confidence of our scholars. You must be an empath who works hard to understand the experience of people of all identities at all levels of the organization.

### **Passionate and knowledgeable about great instruction**

The Superintendent must define--and hold--the bar for what instruction should look/feel/sound like across our growing network. To do that, you must be deeply passionate about supporting all of our scholars through strong school model and curriculum design, socio-emotional learning, teaching, and pedagogy. In this context you will be more than just a manager; you will be a "chief learner" -- someone who will continue learning about great instruction and continually pushing our network to get better.

## **IDEAL EXPERIENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS**

- The ideal candidate will be a results oriented, determined, skilled instructional leader with a strong track record of gap-closing student achievement results as a teacher, principal, and systems leader
- A minimum of 10 years of professional experience in school 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
- Deep familiarity with pedagogy, instructional methods, and program design
- This candidate should be an exceptional manager, coach, and team leader
- Excellent communication and influencing skills to interact effectively with all levels of the organization and the school network
- Exceptional strategic, analytical and critical thinking skills

## **KEY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Reports to:** The Chief Executive Officer

**Manages:** Three Academy Leads for each grade level (Elementary, Middle, High Schools) and, directly or indirectly, the regional superintendent who leads our [Greenfield](#) model and the VPs of Student Experience, Student Services, Academic Operations, and Teaching & Learning. Most leaders are currently based in NY with team presence also in CT and RI.

**Location of next Superintendent:** 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 [SuperintendentSearch@achievementfirst.org](mailto:SuperintendentSearch@achievementfirst.org)