



## Achievement First, Inc. | New York

### SUMMARY

Achievement First Inc. operates a growing network of public charter schools. Approximately 80 percent of the students in the schools are African American, and 19 percent are Hispanic. Seventy-four percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The Achievement First Teacher Career Pathway (AF TCP) recognizes, develops, and rewards excellent teachers as they advance through five career stages. Teachers receive evaluations on the outcomes of their teaching (student academic growth and student character) as well as on their inputs (quality instruction and professional core values/contributions to team achievement). All teachers in the AF public charter school network participate in the AF TCP.

### PROGRAM GOALS AND EVALUATION

The AF TCP supports the goal of every student having an effective teacher by:

- Celebrating excellence in the teaching profession through recognition and reward
- Investing in the ongoing support and development of teachers at all stages of their careers
- Setting clear standards for instructional excellence and providing frequent training and feedback to help teachers learn and grow
- Developing schools with strong teams of teachers working together for student success

Evaluation of the AF program includes collecting quantitative and qualitative data. The primary measure of success is increased student achievement.

**State:** Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island

**Location:** Bridgeport-Hartford-New Haven, CT; Brooklyn, NY; Providence, RI

**Award amount:** \$6,331,875

**TIF Cohort:** 3

**STEM Grantee:** No

**Number of LEAs participating:** 3

**Number of schools participating:** 29

**Number of teachers eligible:** 583

**Number of principals eligible:** 29

**Superintendent:**

Doug McCurry Co-CEO and Superintendent

**Key program staff:**

Genna Weinstein, Project Director

**Email:** gennaweinstein@achievementfirst.org

Sharon Richards, CT Representative

Other quantitative data will include teacher effectiveness; retention; and survey results from teachers, students, parents, and network support team members. Evaluators will collect qualitative data at principal meetings, teacher and leader input group meetings, and open-ended survey questions.

## REWARD STRUCTURE

AF TCP rewards are based the following five stages of professional growth:

- Stage 1 – Teacher-in-Residence: New teachers who should be prepared to matriculate into full-time teaching positions after a year or two of service
- Stage 2 – New Teacher: Teachers in their first three years of teaching
- Stage 3 – Teacher: Teachers whose classrooms average more than one year of growth
- Stage 4 – Distinguished Teacher: Strong, effective teachers with proven records of quality instruction and student achievement growth
- Stage 5 – Master Teacher: Role model teachers who have consistently positive or exemplary results and are on pace to eliminate the achievement gap of the children they serve within three years

## YEARS 1-4 HIGHLIGHTS

- Principals and participating teachers whose students demonstrated growth on the state assessments received PBCS awards.
- All AF schools participated in grant-sponsored professional development focused on individual needs based on student, observational, and survey data.
- AF leaders participated in training on providing effective feedback during the observation cycle that highlights instructional strategies to improve practice.
- AF teacher career stages 4 and 5 are markedly more effective than stages 2 and 3, indicating a strong delineation in their rating system.

## YEAR 5 OUTLOOK

We will continue to evaluate and reward our teachers based on the TCP, with modifications based on the lessons learned in Years 1-4. We are looking forward to announcing our first cohort of master teachers in the 2014–15 school year and employing teachers in all five stages of professional growth as defined by the TCP. AF will request a no-cost extension to ensure that we are

able to pay out all incentive payments from the 2014–15 school year prior to the end of the grant.

## SUSTAINABILITY

After the grant period ends, AF plans to continue with the implementation of TCP with some cost-cutting modifications because of the completion of the TIF grant as a funding source. AF has already begun the process of migrating much of the TCP duties from our central office to our individual schools. Principals have gradually taken on more responsibility, both in programmatic support and financial support for TCP. Payouts will begin to come from each individual school's budget, instead of being financed through the grant. AF also anticipates changing our compensation model and teacher evaluation rubric as we continue to research, refine, and vet with experts in the field to maintain a sound model that is financially sustainable for the AF network and does not adversely affect student achievement or teacher satisfaction.

## PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPENSATION

Please note that the performance based compensation information—total dollars and total recipients—is pending and will be added to the profile shortly.

**Schoolwide Bonus for Teachers and Principals:** An annual performance bonus is available to all members of a school team based on the results of the AF Report Card. The AF Report Card is a comprehensive measure of a school's performance (primarily academic measures with some operational measures). School teams can earn 0 percent, 2.5 percent, 5 percent or 10 percent of their annual core salary as a bonus, depending on the score they receive on the AF Report Card. For example, if a school earns a 5 percent bonus, then all teachers will receive a 5 percent bonus based on their salary in the year the results were achieved.

**Individual Compensation Increases for Teachers:** Teachers can also earn a substantial salary increase as they advance through five career stages. Individual compensation increases are earned by teachers who meet both an overall score and a minimum threshold for each component of the TCP for two consecutive years.