

## Mission Statement

The mission of Achievement First Hartford Academy is to strengthen the academic and character skills needed for all students to graduate from top-tier high schools and colleges, to achieve success in a competitive world, and to serve as the next generation of leaders in their communities.

Achievement First Hartford Academy has three overarching goals:

**Academic excellence:** To accelerate the learning of our students so that they achieve academic breakthroughs that are essential for success in high school, college and life—especially with an emphasis on reading, writing, math and science.

**Public citizenship:** To develop students who take responsibility for themselves, their school and their community by embodying the REACH values of Respect, Enthusiasm, Achievement, Citizenship and Hard Work.

**Partnership in public school reform:** To develop and share an instructional program that consistently produces dramatic student achievement gains and to work with like-minded organizations and traditional public schools to promote excellence in public education.

**Table of Contents**

Achievement First Hartford Academy ..... 1

Mission Statement ..... 2

Table of Contents ..... 3

Letter from the Directors of the School and Governing Board Chairperson ..... 4

About Our School ..... 6

Curriculum Design and Instructional Method and Modification ..... 8

School Goals ..... 14

    I. Educational Progress of Students ..... 14

    II. Accomplishment of Mission, Purpose and Specialized Focus ..... 18

    III. Efforts to Reduce Racial, Ethnic and Economic Isolation to Increase the Racial and Ethnic  
        Diversity of the Student Body ..... 22

Efforts to Effectively Attract, Enroll and Retain Students from Among High Need Populations..... 27

Financial Information ..... 28

Best Practices: Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction - College Readiness Program ..... 29

    College Process ..... 29

    College-Going-Culture..... 30

    College Readiness Seminar ..... 31

    College Entrance Exams ..... 31

    Summer Programs ..... 32

    Alumni Program ..... 32

Status of Charter Renewal Findings and Follow-Up Activities..... 34

Governance ..... 36

Summary of Other Key Accomplishments ..... 37

List of Attachments ..... 39

## Letter from the Directors of the School and Governing Board Chairperson

October 21, 2013

Dear Commissioner Pryor,

We are pleased to submit Achievement First Hartford Academy's annual report for the 2012-13 school year and are proud to report another year of progress in our mission to provide all of our students with the academic and character skills they need to graduate from college, to succeed in a competitive world and to serve as the next generation of leaders for our communities.

Achievement First Hartford Academy opened in August 2008 with grades kindergarten through one and five. In the 2012-13 school year, we served more than 803 students combined in elementary (K-4), middle (5-8), and high school (9) grade levels. As a public charter school, all Achievement First Hartford Academy students are enrolled via a blind lottery run by Hartford Public Schools, and our student body is comparable to Hartford Public Schools. In the 2012-13 school year, nearly 100 percent of our students were African-American or Latino and approximately 93 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. We are very happy to have added our first high school class with the 2012-2013 ninth graders.

At Achievement First Hartford Academy Elementary School, on the 2013 Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), 86 percent of Achievement First Hartford Academy Elementary School fourth graders tested at or above proficiency in an average of math, reading and writing. We are confident that Principal Elizabeth Ferguson and her team are providing students with an essential foundation to ensure their success at every stage of their climb to college.

At Achievement First Hartford Academy Middle School, average proficiency on the CMT was 82 percent, with writing at the fifth and eighth grade levels standing out with proficiency rates of 96 percent 92 percent respectively. With increased parent engagement a key goal for the coming year, the middle school is very encouraged by the nearly 50 parents that have attended the first two Parent Leadership Council meetings of the year. Scholar engagement also remains high as evidenced by the school's higher than 97 percent attendance rate.

Our partnership with Jumoke Academy continues to prosper. Together, we oversee the Hartford Academy High School. Nineteen Jumoke Academy students have matriculated to ninth grade at Achievement First Hartford High School this year.

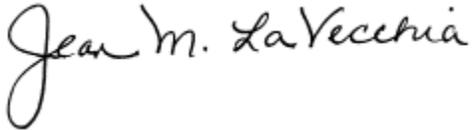
In addition to our laser-like focus on continued academic excellence, we remain committed to character development. At our elementary and middle schools, students strive to embody the REACH values of Respect, Enthusiasm, Achievement, Citizenship and Hard Work. Achievement First Hartford High School focuses on a more mature set of core values that are appropriate for their age—Grit, Independence, Judgment, Integrity and Citizenship. We believe that these skills will equip them to persevere in college, a step that is only a few years away. Our goal at every level is to develop well-rounded students, and we teach these character values as explicitly as we teach academics.

After the realization that our schools were suspending students at unacceptable rates, our Principals and Deans, along with support from Achievement First's network support staff, undertook a thorough examination of the practices that led to those high numbers and have

implemented significant changes to drastically reduce both the number of suspensions and the amount of time that children spend out of the classroom setting.

As always, we appreciate the opportunity to operate a Connecticut charter school and for the faith that you, the State Board of Education and the Connecticut General Assembly have placed in us. We hope to continue to build that relationship and to make further strides in providing an excellent education for our students in the 2013-2014 school year.

Sincerely,



Jean LaVecchia  
Chairman, Board of Directors



Elizabeth Ferguson  
Principal, Elementary School



Jeff House  
Principal, Middle School



Emily Banks  
Principal, High School

## About Our School

### School Program

#### Description of Student Admissions Process

Achievement First Hartford Academy admits students through Hartford's Regional School Choice admissions lottery, which includes traditional public schools, charter schools and magnet schools across the City of Hartford. The lottery application asks parents/guardians to list their top five school choices, one of which may be Achievement First Hartford Academy, and students are assigned to a school by blind selection. If a student's top school choice(s) is full, the student is placed on the waiting list at their school of choice and assigned to attend a different school. Hartford's Regional School Choice Office allows schools to give preference to applicants based on geography or family legacy. Achievement First Hartford Academy gives preference to applicants based on family legacy, meaning that siblings automatically receive a seat in the school if there is a seat available. Achievement First Hartford Academy also gives preference to students based on geography; students residing in Hartford's North End are given preference in the lottery for Achievement First Hartford Academy. The decision to provide preference to students from Hartford's North End, which includes many of the city's most underserved neighborhoods, was made in conjunction with the City of Hartford upon the opening of Achievement First Hartford Academy. Hartford's Regional School Choice lottery for the 2012-13 school year took place in April 2012.

#### Student Recruitment Methods

Prior to Hartford's Regional School Choice enrollment lottery, Achievement First Hartford Academy's student recruitment outreach efforts included multiple direct mailings to Hartford Public Schools students based on a contact list provided by Hartford Public Schools. Additional mailings were sent to grade-eligible families residing in Achievement First Hartford Academy's catchment area—Hartford's North End. In addition, Achievement First Hartford Academy utilized print and radio advertisements, neighborhood canvassing, and partnerships with community organizations, including churches, community centers, daycare centers and after-school programs. Achievement First Hartford Academy also held open houses and information sessions at the school and participated in the city-wide school choice fair, which provided families with an opportunity to learn more about all school options before completing an application. Information about Achievement First Hartford Academy and our student admission process is also available at [www.achievementfirst.org](http://www.achievementfirst.org).

#### Student Transportation

The majority of our students ride buses provided by Hartford Public Schools to and from school.

## Student Information

### Number of Applications, Openings, and Wait list candidates 2012/2013

**Achievement First Hartford Academy  
Student Recruitment Metrics  
2012-2013 School Year**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Applications</u>	<u>Openings</u>	<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Wait List</u>
K	351	90	35:9	171
1	19	3	19:3	13
2	20	5	4:1	10
3	16	1	16:1	14
4	21	1	21:1	19
5	67	40	5:3	0
6	27	7	27:7	13
7	14	1	14:1	12
8	12	0		
<b>Total:</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>11:3</b>	<b>252</b>

### Number of Applications, Openings, and Wait list candidates 2013/2014

**Achievement First Hartford Academy  
Student Recruitment Metrics  
2013-2014 School Year**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Applications</u>	<u>Openings</u>	<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Wait List</u>
K	356	90	4:1	266
1	19	3	19:3	16
2	20	5	4:1	15
3	16	1	16:1	15
4	21	1	21:1	20
5	67	40	5:3	27
6	27	7	27:7	20
7	14	1	14:1	13
8	11	0		11
<b>Total:</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>26:7</b>	<b>403</b>

## Curriculum Design and Instructional Method and Modification

### Curriculum Design

Connecticut's rigorous state standards form the backbone of Achievement First Hartford Academy's rich, college-preparatory curriculum. In collaboration with our charter management organization, Achievement First, Inc., Achievement First Hartford Academy has invested considerable time and resources in developing a top-quality, research-proven, standards-based curriculum, which forms the core of our classroom instruction.

Elementary School Program: We believe that literacy is fundamental to success across all disciplines, and our students spend almost four hours a day on reading and writing activities, gaining a solid foundation in phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. In kindergarten and first grade, literacy instruction focuses on the development of strong foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, oral language skills, knowledge of concepts of print, knowledge of basic comprehension skills, and reading stamina. Beginning in kindergarten, all students have a 20- to 30-minute independent reading class aimed at developing avid, active readers. Teachers guide students in identifying books appropriate for their individual reading levels, inspire students to read and monitor their reading. This in-school independent reading is supplemented with 20 minutes of required independent reading at home each night. Students complete an independent reading journal, and a parent/guardian is required to sign off on the reading log indicating that they supervised the reading.

Achievement First Hartford Academy also uses a proven, research-based math program to provide students with a strong mathematical knowledge base. Math instruction combines inquiry-based instruction and cumulative review to ensure that students master and retain concepts throughout the year. We supplement external curricula with practice materials that are directly aligned to the Connecticut State standards.

FOSS Science and Core Knowledge and History Alive! curricula are used to advance students toward critical science and history standards, while providing teachers with diagnostic feedback on their progress.

The following chart outlines our elementary curricula across all subjects. All of these curricula have produced exceptional results at Achievement First Hartford Academy and meet the Connecticut State standards.

ACHIEVEMENT FIRST HARTFORD ACADEMY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM (Kindergarten through fourth grade)				
Grade	Academic Area	Subject	Curricula	Content Provider
K-2	Reading	Reading Mastery	Reading Mastery	SRA
K-2	Reading	Word Work	Words Their Way Activities	Pearson

**ACHIEVEMENT FIRST HARTFORD ACADEMY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM  
(Kindergarten through fourth grade)**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Academic Area</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Curricula</b>	<b>Content Provider</b>
			Teacher designed activities	Achievement First
K-2	Reading	Read Aloud	Linda Hoyt's Interactive Read Aloud Teacher designed lessons	Heinemann Achievement First
K-1	Reading	Computer Based Reading Centers	LEXIA	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
K-4	Reading	Reading Comp/ Literature	Achievement First designed lessons	Achievement First
K-4	Reading	Guided Reading	Foutnas and Pinnell	Heinemann
K-4	Reading	Independent Reading		
2-4	Reading	Textual Analysis	Achievement First designed lessons	Achievement First
2-4	Reading	Vocab/Word Study	Wordly Wise	EPS
K-4	Writing	Writing	Achievement First designed scope & sequence and unit overviews	Achievement First, Heinemann (Calkins), Empowering Writers
K-1	Writing	Writing	Lucy Calkins Writer's Workshop + AF scope and sequence	
K-2	Math	Math Meeting	Everyday Counts Calendar Math Achievement First designed lessons	Houghton, Mifflin, Harcour, and Achievement First
K-2	Math	Math Lesson	Investigations	Scott Foresman and Achievement First
3-4	Math	Math Lesson	Achievement First	Achievement First
K-4	Science	Science	FOSS Science	FOSS
K-4	History	History	History Alive!	History Alive

**Middle School Program:** Achievement First Hartford Academy’s middle school program is focused on two goals: 1) ensuring that all students, regardless of their incoming achievement level, are mastering grade-level standards by the end of sixth grade, and 2) ensuring that every eighth grader matriculates with the skills necessary for success in a rigorous, college-preparatory high school program. To achieve these goals, Achievement First Hartford Academy’s curriculum is aligned to both Connecticut State and rigorous high school standards.

Our math program is designed to produce students who have mastered all middle school mathematics standards, as well as Algebra I, by the end of eighth grade. Our curriculum combines basic facts knowledge and “automaticity” with procedural computation with a deep conceptual understanding of mathematics. This combination of basic skills and conceptual understanding equips students with the knowledge and skills to solve complex mathematical application problems. Math classes follow a structured lesson plan designed for maximum success. Class begins with cumulative review, followed by the introduction of a new concept. Teachers use I-We-You instruction to introduce new concepts, including modeling the new concept for students, solving problems with students during guided practice and then, giving students time to practice independently. At the end of each class, teachers administer an “exit ticket” that assesses how well students mastered the day’s lesson and use “exit ticket” results to inform the next day’s instruction.

Achievement First Hartford Academy’s middle school reading program is focused on maintaining an obsessive, school-wide focus on reading, increasing the volume of independent reading being done by our students, setting clear and measureable reading goals for all students and regularly tracking their progress, establishing clear and structured interventions for struggling readers, teaching good reading habits and core comprehension strategies as a foundation for teaching state standards and more sophisticated literary concepts, and systematically teaching and reinforcing essential vocabulary. Achievement First Hartford Academy’s middle school reading program includes three key components: reading comprehension instruction, literature class and independent reading.

IQWST and internal Achievement First developed curricula are used to advance students toward critical science and history standards, while providing teachers with diagnostic feedback on their progress. Achievement First currently employs directors of science achievement and history achievement.

<b>ACHIEVEMENT FIRST HARTFORD ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMIC PROGRAM</b> (Fifth through eighth grade)				
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Academic Area</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Instructional Program</b>	<b>Content Provider</b>
5-8	Reading	Literature	AF Created Unit Plans based on the Common Core State Standards	Achievement First

**ACHIEVEMENT FIRST HARTFORD ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMIC PROGRAM**  
(Fifth through eighth grade)

Grade	Academic Area	Subject	Instructional Program	Content Provider
5-8	Reading	Vocabulary	AF Created Tier 2 word lists and assessments	Achievement First
5-8	Reading	Independent Reading	School created reading logs	
5-8	Writing	Grammar	Achievement First designed grammar scope & sequence and binders	Achievement First
5-8	Writing	Writing	Achievement First designed scope & sequence and unit overviews aligned to the CCSS	Achievement First, Heinemann
5	Math	Math Lesson	Envisions with Achievement First supplements	Scott Foresman and Achievement First
6-8	Math	Math Lesson	Achievement First *Scholars in Algebra do use Prentice Hall Algebra 1 text	Achievement First
5	Science	Science	Achievement First	Achievement First
6-8	Science	Science	IQWST	IQWST
6-8	History	History	Achievement First	Achievement First

High School Program: At Achievement First Achievement First Hartford High School, the emphasis is on acceptance to and success in college. Our curriculum is designed to combine the academic rigor and intimacy of a private school with the exciting elements of a traditional public school. Students at Achievement First Hartford High School far exceed the baseline of 20 credits mandated by the state for high school graduation. In all, Achievement First Hartford High School graduates earn over 30 credits. The tenets of our high school program include:

- *Rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum:* We believe that the best preparation for college is considerable time devoted to reading, writing and thinking critically about English, math, history and science. This is why our curriculum focuses intensely on these skill sets and subject areas. All students take college-preparatory courses, including at least one Advanced Placement course, and all courses last 57 minutes. In some cases,

scholars receive additional time in math and ELA in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades to ensure their success in high school. In addition, there are no “Ds” at AF Achievement First Hartford High School, passing a class requires a 70 or better.

- *College counseling:* All students take a college readiness seminar, which provides them with the experience and skills essential for success in high school and college. Through the college readiness seminar, students in grades nine through 11 received guidance in drafting resumes, cover letters and applications, as well as interview practice for summer programs and college admission. In grade 12, the college skills seminar guides students through the college and financial aid application and admission process.
- *Summer enrichment programs:* Students in grades nine through 11 are required to participate in a summer program or internship. In addition to helping students become well-rounded individuals that are attractive to top-caliber colleges and universities, summer programs provide students with important opportunities to explore their interests and develop an understanding of the role college plays in pursuing those interests. Many of the summer programs are also hosted on college campuses and are eligible for college credit.
- *Student life programs:* While providing a strong academic foundation will always be our first priority, we also realize that our students need opportunities to have varied experiences, including a fun and memorable high school experience made possible through awards ceremonies, senior privileges, dances and other popular high school rituals. Achievement First Hartford High School offers an expanding extracurricular program including, cross country, basketball, , , track, dance, , student government, Honor Council, and more.

The following chart outlines our current high school program for grades nine and ten, and planned program for grades 11 and 12.

<b>ACHIEVEMENT FIRST HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade)</b>				
<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>
Math	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II Or Pre-Calc	Pre-Calc Or AP Calculus
English	Literature 1 and Composition I	Literature II and Composition II	American Literature and Composition III	Honors Literature and Composition
History	Pre-AP World History	World History or AP World History	AP United States History Part II	UCONN ECE American Studies
Science	Conceptual Physics	Chemistry	Honors Biology	AP Biology

## **Instructional Method**

Achievement First Hartford Academy's instructional methods are not driven by the need to "cover" material; they are aimed at real student mastery. We have clear performance standards, based on national and state curriculum frameworks, for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, and all instruction is purposefully designed to help students meet ambitious educational standards. The tenants of our instructional program are data, consistency and research-based lesson planning.

Achievement First Hartford Academy's instruction is highly data driven, and every six weeks, teachers give interim assessments (IAs) that measure whether students have actually mastered what was taught. Teachers and school leaders spend a "Data Day" after each IA dedicated to reviewing the assessment data and together creating data-driven instructional plans that target whole class, small group and one-on-one instruction to address any gaps in student learning.

Achievement First Hartford is not a series of isolated and idiosyncratic classrooms, inspired by the styles of different teachers. Instead, our team of teachers and school leaders work together to develop a clear instructional model so that every classroom employs common curricula, strategies, systems and templates. This consistency greatly supports student learning, teacher professional development and instructional refinement.

Our teachers follow a research-based lesson planning format that builds on the five phases of learning: acquisition, fluency, maintenance, generalization and adaptation. After introducing new concepts, teachers consistently revisit them through cumulative review, enabling students to master, generalize and adapt knowledge and skills.

## **Modifications**

Achievement First Hartford Academy remains committed to the instructional vision outlined in our original charter application: high expectations, a rigorous core academic program, regular and systematic use of assessments, and data-driven planning and instruction that address whole class, small group and individual needs. We continuously refine our curriculum design and instructional methods to ensure maximum student learning, but we have not made any significant modifications to the core program vision outlined in our original charter application or in our subsequent annual school reports.

## School Goals

### I. Educational Progress of Students

**Goal A:** Achievement First Hartford Academy students will achieve at high levels in the core subjects.

**Measurable Objective A.1:** The percentage of Achievement First Hartford Academy kindergarteners, first graders and second graders reading at or above grade level (proficient) as measured by the Fountas & Pinnell assessment will be 80 percent. The percentage of Achievement First Hartford Academy kindergarteners, first graders and second graders reading at an advanced level as measured by the Fountas & Pinnell assessment will be 40 percent.

- *Measurement Tool:* Fountas & Pinnell assessment results
- *Benchmark:* Fountas & Pinnell assessment standards for proficient and advanced reading levels
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Only Achievement First Hartford Academy first graders surpassed the Fountas & Pinnell benchmark at the proficient advanced levels,
- *Modification in Goal/Objective for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* School leadership remains focused on driving improvement in ELA outcomes for our K – 2 scholars. In preparation for the shift to common core standards, we will implement our previously piloted NY curriculum which aligns with the more rigorous common core state standards. Through our well established coaching structure each teacher will receive additional observations and feedback to support them in implementing the new more challenging curriculum.

Achievement First Hartford Academy			
Grade	% At/Above Grade Level	Benchmark	Difference
K	79.8%	80%	-0.2%
1	92.1%	80%	12.1%
2	71.9%	80%	-8.1%

Achievement First Hartford Academy			
Grade	% At/Above Advanced	Benchmark	Difference
K	31.5%	40%	-8.5%
1	42.7%	40%	2.7%
2	15.7%	40%	-24.3%

Measurable Objective A.2: In grade three, Achievement First Hartford Academy students will exceed district proficiency averages in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools’ (HPS) third-grade CMT proficiency scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy third graders outperformed HPS third graders by 24, 13, and 10 percentage points, respectively, in math, reading and writing proficiency.
- *Modification in Goal/Objective for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* None.

Subject	AFHA 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade % Proficient	District 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade % Proficient	Difference
Math	83.1%	59.5%	23.6%
Reading	64.6%	51.6%	13.0%
Writing	78.4%	68.1%	10.3%

Measurable Objective A.3: In grade four, Achievement First Hartford Academy (Achievement First Hartford Academy or AFHA) students will meet or exceed district and state proficiency and mastery averages in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools’ (HPS) and Connecticut State fourth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* AFHA fourth graders outperformed HPS fourth graders in math, reading and writing proficiency and mastery. AFHA fourth graders also outperformed Connecticut fourth graders in math, reading and writing proficiency and math, writing mastery, but only attained or slightly lagged behind the state in mastery.
- *Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* As referenced above, we continue to focus on ELA progress.

Subject	AFHA 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	District 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	State 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	AF-District	AF-State
Math	92.8%	58.0%	83.8%	34.8%	9.0%
Reading	80.6%	52.0%	77.6%	28.6%	3.0%
Writing	86.1%	67.1%	83.5%	19.0%	2.6%

Subject	AFHA Grade 4 % At Goal	District % At Goal	State Percent At Goal	AF-District	AF-State
Math	65.2%	32.0%	65.4%	33.2%	-0.2%
Reading	59.7%	34.6%	62.7%	25.1%	-3.0%
Writing	65.3%	36.5%	63.1%	28.8%	2.2%

Measurable Objective A.4: In grades five through seven, Achievement First Hartford Academy students will exceed district proficiency averages in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools' (HPS) fifth-grade, sixth-grade and seventh-grade CMT proficiency scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy fifth, sixth and seventh graders outperformed HPS fifth, sixth and seventh graders in math, reading and writing proficiency.
- *Modification in Goal/Objective for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvement Planned for 2013-14:* None.

Subject	AFHA 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	District 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	AF - District
Math	89.0%	53.5%	35.5%
Reading	73.0%	53.3%	19.7%
Writing	96.2%	70.6%	25.6%

Subject	AFHA 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	District 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	AF - District
Math	89.2%	68.7%	20.5%
Reading	72.3%	69.5%	2.8%
Writing	85.2%	43.3%	41.9%

Subject	AFHFA 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	District 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	AF - District
Math	78.5%	60.6%	17.9%
Reading	72.2%	69.4%	2.8%
Writing	72.8%	64.6%	8.2%

Measurable Objective A.5: In grade eight, Achievement First Hartford Academy students will meet or exceed district and state proficiency and mastery averages in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools' (HPS) and Connecticut State eighth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy eighth graders outperformed HPS eighth graders in math, reading and writing proficiency and mastery by double-digit margins. Achievement First Hartford Academy eighth graders met or surpassed Connecticut eighth graders in math and writing proficiency and mastery, but fell short in reading at both levels.
- *Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* None.

Subject	AFHFA Grade 8 % Proficient	District 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	State 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	AF - District	AF - State
Math	86.7%	62.6%	86.1%	24.1%	0.6%
Reading	81.7%	64.2%	85.7%	17.5%	-4.0%
Writing	91.7%	67.2%	85.7%	24.5%	6.0%

Subject	AFHFA Grade 8 % At/Above Mastery	District % At/Above Mastery	State % At Above Mastery	AF - District	AF - State
Math	68.3%	32.5%	65.2%	35.8%	3.1%
Reading	65.0%	48.3%	76.3%	16.7%	-11.3%
Writing	73.3%	36.6%	67.3%	36.7%	6.0%

## II. Accomplishment of Mission, Purpose and Specialized Focus

**Goal A:** In our capstone grades—fourth and eighth—Achievement First Hartford Academy will close the racial and economic achievement gap for our African-American, Hispanic and low-income students.

Measurable Objective A.1: In grade four, Achievement First Hartford Academy African-American students and Achievement First Hartford Academy Hispanic students will exceed state proficiency and mastery averages for fourth graders in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Connecticut State fourth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy African-American fourth graders outperformed Connecticut fourth graders in math, reading and writing proficiency and are on par in math, reading and writing mastery. Achievement First Hartford Academy Hispanic fourth graders outperformed Connecticut fourth graders in math and writing proficiency and underperformed Connecticut fourth graders in reading proficiency. Achievement First Hartford Academy Hispanic fourth graders lagged behind Connecticut fourth graders in mastery of all subjects.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* Achievement First Hartford Academy African-American and Hispanic fourth graders have not yet consistently and firmly closed the achievement gap with Connecticut students across all subjects. We remain focused on developing and delivering a rigorous common core aligned curriculum that emphasizes mastery of content skills and concepts. Additionally, through our well established coaching structure each teacher will receive additional observations and feedback to support them in implementing the new more challenging curriculum.

Subject	AF African American Students Proficient	State 4th Grade Proficient	Difference
Math	93.5%	83.8%	9.7%
Reading	83.6%	77.6%	6.0%
Writing	86.2%	63.1%	23.1%

Subject	AF African American Students At/Above Mastery	State 4th Grade At/Above Mastery	Difference
Math	67.7%	65.4%	2.3%
Reading	62.3%	62.7%	-0.4%
Writing	66.2%	63.1%	3.1%

Subject	AF Hispanic Students Proficient	State 4th Grade Proficient	Difference
Math	85.7%	83.8%	1.9%
Reading	50.0%	77.6%	-27.6%
Writing	85.7%	63.1%	22.6%

Subject	AF Hispanic Students At/Above Mastery	State 4th Grade At/Above Mastery	Difference
Math	42.9%	65.4%	-22.5%
Reading	33.3%	62.7%	-29.4%
Writing	57.1%	63.1%	-6.0%

Measurable Objective A.2: In grade four, Achievement First Hartford Academy’s low-income students will exceed state proficiency and mastery averages for fourth graders in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Connecticut State fourth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy’s low-income fourth graders outperformed Connecticut fourth graders in math, reading and writing proficiency. Achievement First Hartford Academy’s low-income fourth graders were on par with Connecticut fourth graders in math and writing mastery.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* As referenced elsewhere, Achievement First Hartford Academy is developing and delivering a rigorous common core aligned curriculum that emphasizes mastery of content skills and concepts. Additionally, through our well established coaching structure each teacher will receive additional observations and feedback to support them in implementing the new more challenging curriculum.

Subject	AF Low-Income Students Proficient	State 4th Grade Proficient	Difference
Math	92.8%	83.8%	9.0%
Reading	80.6%	77.6%	3.0%
Writing	86.1%	63.1%	23.0%

Subject	AF Low-Income Students At/Above Mastery	State 4th Grade At/Above Mastery	Difference
Math	65.2%	65.4%	-0.2%
Reading	59.7%	62.7%	-3.0%
Writing	65.3%	63.1%	2.2%

Measurable Objective A.3: In grade eight, Achievement First Hartford Academy African-American students and Achievement First Hartford Academy Hispanic students will exceed state proficiency and mastery averages for eighth graders in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Connecticut State eighth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy African-American eighth graders outperformed Connecticut eighth graders in writing proficiency and mastery, and matched or outperformed state in math proficiency and mastery. Achievement First Hartford Academy Hispanic eighth graders outperformed Connecticut eighth graders in writing proficiency and mastery, but lagged Connecticut eighth graders in math and reading proficiency and mastery.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* Increased time on task is a pillar of our instructional model going beyond longer school years and days, in which our schools strive to provide afterschool and Saturday opportunities to assist struggling scholars and make up for lost instructional time out of our control (i.e. weather related closures).

Subject	AF African American 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Students Proficient	State 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	AF - State
Math	85.2%	86.1%	-0.9%
Reading	83.3%	85.7%	-2.4%
Writing	90.7%	67.3%	23.4%

Subject	AF African American 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	State 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	AF - State
Math	70.4%	65.2%	5.2%
Reading	64.8%	76.3%	-11.5%
Writing	72.2%	67.3%	4.9%

Subject	AF Hispanic 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	State 8 <sup>th</sup> % Grade Proficient	AF - State
Math	85.7%	86.1%	-0.4%
Reading	57.1%	85.7%	-28.6%
Writing	85.7%	67.3%	18.4%

Subject	AF Hispanic 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	State 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade %At/Above Mastery	AF - State
Math	42.9%	65.2%	-22.3%
Reading	57.1%	76.3%	-19.2%
Writing	71.4%	67.3%	4.1%

Measurable Objective A.4: In grade eight, Achievement First Hartford Academy low-income students will exceed state proficiency and mastery averages for eighth graders in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Connecticut State eighth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy low-income eighth graders outperformed Connecticut eighth graders in writing proficiency and mastery and were on par in math proficiency and mastery.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* We will continue to focus on developing and delivering a rigorous curriculum that emphasizes mastery of content skills and concepts, as well as the application of this content knowledge toward achieving our mission of closing the achievement gap. We are continuing to evaluate and adjust our ELA curriculum.

Subject	AF Low-Income 8th Grade	State 8th Grade At/above Proficient	Difference
Math	86.7%	86.1%	0.6%
Reading	81.7%	85.7%	-4.0%
Writing	91.7%	67.3%	24.4%

8th grade

Subject	AF Low-Income Students At/Above Mastery	State 8th Grade At/Above Mastery	Difference
Math	68.3%	65.2%	3.1%
Reading	65.0%	76.3%	-11.3%
Writing	73.3%	67.3%	6.0%

**III. Efforts to Reduce Racial, Ethnic and Economic Isolation to Increase the Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Student Body**

**Goal A:** In our capstone grades—fourth and eighth—Achievement First Hartford Academy’s African-American, Hispanic and low-income students will outperform African-American, Hispanic and low-income students in their host district and state-wide, reducing racial, ethnic and economic isolation among these historically underserved subgroups by fostering high student achievement that prepares them for success in college and life beyond.

Measurable Objective A.1: In grade four, Achievement First Hartford Academy’s African-American students will exceed district and state proficiency averages for African-American students in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools’ (HPS) and Connecticut State African-American Fourth-grade CMT proficiency scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy African-American fourth graders out performed HPS and Connecticut African-American fourth graders by double digit percentages in math, reading and writing proficiency and mastery.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* None.

Subject	AF African American Proficient	District African American Proficient	State African American Proficient	AF - District	AF - State
Math	93.5%	56.4%	63.6%	37.1%	29.9%
Reading	83.6%	55.5%	56.5%	28.1%	27.1%
Writing	86.2%	66.8%	70.2%	19.4%	16.0%

Subject	AF African American Mastery	District African American Mastery	State African American Mastery	AF - District	AF - State
Math	67.7%	28.4%	37.4%	39.3%	30.3%
Reading	62.3%	35.3%	37.0%	27.0%	25.3%
Writing	66.2%	35.7%	40.8%	30.5%	25.4%

Measurable Objective A.2: In grade four, Achievement First Hartford Academy’s Hispanic students will exceed district and state proficiency and mastery averages for Hispanic students in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results

- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools’ (HPS) and Connecticut State Hispanic fourth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy’s Hispanic fourth graders met or outperformed Hispanic fourth graders in HPS and state-wide in math and writing proficiency and mastery but trailed in reading proficiency and mastery as compared with the State.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* Achievement First Hartford Academy will continue to review and address appropriate adjustments to our math and ELA curriculum in 2013-14 based on state test results and our rigorous diagnostic Internal Assessments. Adjustments include implementing a more rigorous, Common Core-aligned curriculum that has been piloted in New York over the past two years. In addition to revisions to the curriculum, we continue to refine targeted interventions for students who are below grade level, as part of our Response to Intervention framework.

Subject	AF Hispanic Proficient	District Hispanic Proficient	State Hispanic Proficient	AF - District	AF - State
Math	85.7%	52.5%	68.5%	33.2%	17.2%
Reading	50.0%	43.2%	56.4%	6.8%	-6.4%
Writing	85.7%	64.3%	71.5%	21.4%	14.2%

Subject	AF Hispanic Mastery	District Hispanic Mastery	State Hispanic Mastery	AF - District	AF - State
Math	42.9%	26.1%	43.1%	16.8%	-0.2%
Reading	33.3%	25.1%	37.7%	8.2%	-4.4%
Writing	57.1%	30.8%	43.0%	26.3%	14.1%

Measurable Objective A.3: In grade Four, Achievement First Hartford Academy’s low-income students will exceed district and state proficiency and mastery averages for low-income students in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools’ (HPS) and Connecticut State low-income third-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy’s low-income fourth graders outperformed low-income fourth graders in HPS and state-wide by double-digit margins in math, reading and writing proficiency and mastery.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* None.

Subject	AF Low-Income 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	District Low-Income 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	State Low-Income 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	AF - District	AF - State
Math	88.9%	55.4%	67.9%	33.5%	21.0%
Reading	75.0%	48.4%	58.1%	26.6%	16.9%
Writing	86.1%	34.6%	70.6%	51.5%	15.5%

Subject	AF Low-Income 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	District Low-Income 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	State Low-Income 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	AF - District	AF - State
Math	62.5%	28.6%	42.2%	33.9%	20.3%
Reading	55.6%	30.5%	38.7%	25.1%	16.9%
Writing	65.3%	34.6%	42.4%	30.7%	22.9%

**Measurable Objective A.4:** In grade eight, Achievement First Hartford Academy's African-American students will exceed district and state proficiency and mastery averages for African-American students in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools' (HPS) and Connecticut State African-American eighth grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* AF Hartford Academy's African-American eighth graders outperformed African-American eighth graders in HPS and state-wide by significant margins in math, reading and writing proficiency and mastery.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* None.

Subject	AF African American Proficient	District African American Proficient	State African American Proficient	AF - District	AF - State
Math	86.8%	64.2%	69.4%	22.6%	17.4%
Reading	84.9%	67.6%	71.8%	17.3%	13.1%
Writing	92.5%	72.2%	74.0%	20.3%	18.5%

Subject	AF African American Mastery	District African American Mastery	State African American Mastery	AF - District	AF - State
Math	71.7%	29.2%	37.4%	42.5%	34.3%
Reading	66.0%	51.6%	55.1%	14.4%	10.9%
Writing	73.6%	38.6%	44.9%	35.0%	28.7%

Measurable Objective A.5: In grade eight, Achievement First Hartford Academy’s Hispanic students will exceed district and state proficiency and mastery averages for Hispanic students in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools’ (HPS) and Connecticut State Hispanic eighth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy’s Hispanic eighth graders outperformed Hispanic eighth graders in HPS and state-wide in math and writing proficiency and mastery, but fell short of state performance in reading proficiency.
- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year:* None.
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14:* Among the objectives of the updated curriculum are a promotion of higher order thinking and analysis skills necessary to perform on future assessments. In ELA, the curriculum changes focus on increased complexity of texts, supporting students to make evidence-based analyses, and exposing students to a wider array of genres, especially non-fiction.

Subject	AF Hispanic 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	District Hispanic 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	State Hispanic 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % Proficient	AF - District	AF - State
Math	85.7%	53.1%	69.4%	32.6%	16.3%
Reading	57.1%	55.0%	68.7%	2.1%	11.6%
Writing	85.7%	58.7%	71.0%	27.0%	14.7%

Subject	AF Hispanic 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	District Hispanic 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	State Hispanic 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade % At/Above Mastery	AF - District	AF - State
Math	42.9%	24.0%	38.7%	18.9%	4.2%
Reading	57.1%	36.7%	53.2%	20.4%	3.9%
Writing	71.4%	27.5%	42.9%	43.9%	28.5%

Measurable Objective A.6: In grade eight, Achievement First Hartford Academy’s low-income students will exceed district and state proficiency and mastery averages for low-income students in math, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

- *Measurement Tool:* CMT results
- *Benchmark:* Hartford Public Schools’ (HPS) and Connecticut State low-income eighth-grade CMT proficiency and mastery scores
- *Progress in Meeting the Goal:* Achievement First Hartford Academy’s low-income eighth graders outperformed low-income eighth graders in HPS and state-wide by significant margins in math, reading and writing proficiency and mastery.

- *Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year: None.*
- *Improvements Planned for 2013-14: None.*

Subject	AF Low-Income Proficient	District Low-Income Proficient	State Low-Income Proficient	AF - District	AF - State
Math	86.7%	58.4%	70.3%	28.3%	16.4%
Reading	81.7%	60.1%	70.3%	21.6%	11.4%
Writing	91.7%	63.6%	71.9%	28.1%	19.8%

Subject	AF Low-Income Mastery	District Low-Income Mastery	State Low-Income Mastery	AF - District	AF - State
Math	68.3%	26.9%	39.1%	41.4%	29.2%
Reading	65.0%	42.9%	54.7%	22.1%	10.3%
Writing	73.3%	31.6%	43.7%	41.7%	29.6%

## Efforts to Effectively Attract, Enroll and Retain Students from Among High Need Populations

Achievement First Hartford Academy cannot achieve our mission without being an exemplar of both excellence AND equity. We have made significant efforts to reach out to students who face multiple risk factors, and these are reflected in the demographics cited in this annual report.

In the coming year, we will redouble these efforts. The Achievement First Community Outreach & Student Recruitment Team has shifted staffing responsibilities to have a full time staff member focused on broadening community outreach in Hartford and expanding community partnerships. Additionally, in the 2013-14 student recruiting season, we will be hiring a “parent outreach fellow” to lead on-the-ground, door-to-door recruitment of students to ensure that all families are aware that Achievement First Hartford Academy is an option for them.

We will be employing strategies that have already been proven successful in Achievement First Schools in New York, including:

- Partnering with day cares that serve a high percentage of English Language Learners and students with disabilities.
- Partnering with social service agencies to conduct targeted outreach to their clients.
- Neighborhood “street teams” consisting of current parents who recruit at-risk students in person in the communities we serve, visiting churches, libraries, laundromats, and other locations where they can meet community members.
- Continuing to produce all marketing materials in both English and Spanish (the most common first language other than English in our population)
- Partnering with experts at SDE to ensure that our ESL offerings are of the highest quality, to ensure families are confident their scholars will receive the services they need.

Making sure that Achievement First Hartford Academy is a welcoming environment for ALL the families in our community, especially those with students who face additional risk factors, is among our highest priorities.

## Financial Information

### Achievement First Hartford Academy FY14 (2013-14) Budget

<b>INCOME</b>	
Total Public Revenue	11,929,512
Total Private Revenue	55,000
Total Other Revenue	7,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>11,991,512</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Total Personnel Expenses	8,574,757
Total Program Support Activities	381,800
Total Program Materials and Supplies	577,202
Total Operations	8,500
Total Technology	522,399
Total General and Administrative	258,128
Total Physical Plant	120,023
Total Supplemental Program	21,000
Total Ancillary Services	210,000
Total Charter Management Fee	1,143,753
Total Non-Personnel Expenses	3,242,804
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>11,817,561</b>
Contingency	147,720
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>11,965,280</b>
Intercharter Transfers	212
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>26,444</b>

The Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors approved the FY14 operating budget at their June 2013 meeting.

## Best Practices: Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction - College Readiness Program

On May 29, 2013, the seniors at Achievement First Amistad High School stood before their community of families, friends and classmates to announce their colleges and universities of choice. This annual "Signing Day" tradition began in 2010, with Achievement First's initial graduating 12th graders, and continued with the class of 2013 -- the fourth consecutive class to achieve 100 percent college acceptance. An exciting occasion for the scholars and Achievement First network more broadly, Signing Day is made possible by hard work in every grade and subject area, and by Achievement First's pioneering, multifaceted college-readiness program.

The program encompasses six critical features, which are described in depth through our [Achievement First College Program](#) overview documents.



### College Process

Our college process builds off the solid foundation of understanding tied to academic performance, financial need and self-advocacy scholars learn through their required College Readiness Seminar. For seniors, this process serves as a guide by giving scholars and their families the tools and support to select colleges that best fit their goals and needs. Counselors help scholars like Travis through every step of their college decision-making process: from college list creation to financial aid research to matriculation decisions. By the time they leave their senior-level College Readiness Seminar, scholars have a complete binder of tools they will need to navigate college—including a map highlighting on-campus resources and a checklist of time-management strategies and helpful hints.

At AF, guidance through the college process is in-depth and deliberate; we understand that scholars who select colleges that best fit their needs are more likely to succeed and persist toward graduation. That's why we provide the highest degree of individualized attention, meeting with scholars and their families to ensure they are well-informed about each college of interest, and supporting scholars in putting forth the strongest possible applications. At AF high schools, college counselors help scholars build their "best-fit" college lists based on three considerations that ensure college admission and success: academic fit, financial fit and social-emotional fit.



We only recommend schools that offer significant financial aid and provide robust support for first-generation, low-income students. We suggest schools with high graduation rates for students of color and strong retention rates for underclassmen.

In helping scholars and their families create best-fit lists, we carefully consider GPA, SAT scores and character record. A scholar's preference survey is used to determine whether the school makes a good social fit, weighing factors including distance from home and the size of the campus. The result takes the guesswork out of college list creation. Once the list is developed, we walk scholars and families through the complex application process.

### College-Going-Culture

To help scholars understand the high-stakes nature of their secondary school years, Achievement First takes a multi-faceted approach to building its comprehensive college-going culture. Beyond the rhetoric of rigor and high expectations shared across teachers, leaders and staff, the pennants and posters lining our physical space stand as a steady reminder of the common goal behind the day-to-day hard work. Walking the hallways, classmates find the alma maters of great public figures, peruse the respective GPA and SAT scores required for admission to various colleges and universities, stroll past a map that shows where AF alumni are attending college, and glance at individual teacher bios detailing where they went to school, how they got there and how their experiences shaped their futures.

Meanwhile, school calendars jam-packed with special events, trips and recognition ceremonies keep scholars motivated and focused on the goal ahead. On trips to colleges throughout their four years, scholars not only take the usual admissions tour, but also visit dorms, eat meals in the dining hall and sit in on lectures—all to help them gain a clear picture of the excitement and independence of college life. As freshmen and sophomores, our scholars participate in large groups geared to increase college knowledge and build enthusiasm. By junior year, scholars visit

colleges in smaller, differentiated groups based on their academic performance. As college acceptance letters roll in, school leaders share admissions news at the daily culture breakfast to the sounds of scholar snaps and shout outs.

### **College Readiness Seminar**

Given that 85 percent of our scholars will be the first in their families to attend college, we have profound responsibility to prepare them to understand and meet admissions requirements and to learn the skills required to navigate the complex application and enrollment process.

To meet this pressing need, Achievement First requires four years of completed coursework in our College Readiness Seminar—the class in which scholars acquire the tools and information to take control of their academic futures. By incorporating college readiness into the daily schedule, our high schools amplify their college-going cultures and unwavering commitment to 100 percent college acceptance and enrollment.

Being closely aligned with the college application process, the course curriculum for the College Readiness Seminar progresses through a sequence that follows our scholars as they move through their high school careers.

In 9th and 10th grades, the class meets two days per week with a focus on academic performance and academic awareness. During these early years of high school, the College Readiness Seminar supports scholars through the pivotal transition from middle school to high school. The explicit instruction provided in the College Readiness Seminar helps our scholars understand the relationship between rigorous high school experience and college persistence. It also helps them take ownership of their academic futures and learn to communicate professionally with teachers and other adults with whom they are trying to develop relationships—from emails and phone calls to interviews and impromptu encounters.

In 11th grade, the focus shifts to time management, building preliminary college lists and extensive SAT preparation. By 12th grade, the class meets four times per week and guides scholars through every academic and financial step of the application process, including writing personal statements, requesting recommendations, compiling supplemental materials and comparing financial aid packages. In the spring semester, once scholars have matriculated to their colleges of choice, college readiness shifts to a Transitions Class to ensure that scholars are academically, financially and socially prepared for what they will encounter on campus.

### **College Entrance Exams**

When our scholars take college-board tests, such as AP exams and SATs, we know how much their answers matter. Although these tests are just one indicator of an individual scholar's overall college readiness, they stand as critical gatekeepers to college acceptance and are an important reflection of overall preparation. That is why Achievement First approaches the SAT as the single most important test scholars take. With the stakes so high, our high schools employ a three-pronged, comprehensive approach designed to close a critical gap between the preparation available to our scholars and that provided to their more affluent peers.

### **Integrated Curriculum**

By embedding SAT and AP skills and content into every course, AF teachers ensure that scholars develop strong vocabularies, learn to read and analyze rigorous texts, and feel comfortable attacking complex word problems long before testing dates approach. This whole-school integration is embodied by colorful SAT vocabulary magnets adorning rows of lockers and school-wide events designed to pump up scholars before their exams.

### **Practice Exams & Prep**

Achievement First scholars take a practice PSAT in 9th grade, actual PSATs in 10th and 11th grades, SAT and SAT IIs beginning in 11th grade, and AP exams in 10th to 12th grades. To prepare for high-stakes, 11th-grade testing, all juniors receive two days per week of differentiated SAT prep taught by talented, committed English and math teachers.

### **Saturday Academy & Summer Boot Camp**

Juniors receive three hours of SAT tutoring on Saturdays, along with a no-holds-barred, three-week SAT summer boot camp in advance of their 12th-grade year.

### **SAT Growth & Results**

Since our first graduating class in 2010, AF has nearly doubled the percentage of scholars scoring above 1,000 on the SAT—a critical access point for the most competitive college admissions and a promising indicator of the effectiveness of our integrated curriculum and expanded test-preparation approach.

### **Summer Programs**

Our broad array of summer opportunities are crucial to our mission: they foster college persistence by pushing scholars beyond their comfort zones as they explore future opportunities. These experiences also make them more competitive applicants for prized college seats and scholarships. All AF high school scholars are required to complete summer programs after 9th, 10th and 11th grades.

These programs also serve as a dry run for the college application process. While in pursuit of summer opportunities, our scholars practice résumé writing, interviewing and writing personal statements, and, through this process, they also gather information they will later need to make informed choices about colleges and majors. The impact of these programs on our scholars' development is monumental; almost all of our scholars write about their summer program experiences on their college essays, highlighting growth and enrichment opportunities historically afforded only to their more affluent peers.

Summer programs greatly enhance our college-going culture since scholars don't have to wait until the college application season in their senior year to learn how their grades and character records impact admissions decisions. For scholars who maintain a GPA above 3.0 and have strong character records at their schools, a summer program includes a several-week stay on a college campus. Every summer, AF scholars receive more than \$60,000 in financial aid to attend programs at Choate Rosemary Hall, Yale, Boston University and a variety of other prestigious institutions.

AF aims to provide each scholar with the opportunity to complete at least one pre-college program, during which they learn many valuable skills. Scholars in good academic and character standing earn internships at organizations including Moody's and the American Civil Liberties Union.

### **Alumni Program**

At Achievement First, we celebrate the tremendous accomplishments of our high school graduates, but we recognize that the journey for these scholars is just beginning. Nationally, only 8.3 percent of low-income students graduate from college within six years. This is the reason that our work extends far beyond the intensive programming provided at the high school level to targeted alumni support designed to foster persistence and help scholars reach their college goals.

AF's alumni counselors provide this critical support while working in partnership with college officials, alumni and families to ensure college success and degree attainment for all of our college scholars. Our counselors maintain a vital connection with our alumni through emails, phone calls and on-campus meetings, and by helping to connect them with campus resources. An alumni counselor helps alums break down obstacles into manageable, bite-sized pieces.

Through our Alumni Program, scholars can receive scholarships each semester in exchange for sharing their academic performance, course schedule and other information. This not only allows us to maintain a vital link with our alumni and identify areas where they may need outreach, it also provides us with data we can use to help our current scholars improve. For example, when counselors saw some of our scholars struggling in psychology and physics, we began a process to modify the high school science curriculum to help future alumni succeed. In order to help our scholars feel more comfortable meeting with their professors, we instituted teacher office hours for high school juniors and seniors.

## Status of Charter Renewal Findings and Follow-Up Activities

### Arts Curriculum Recommendation

Arts: Arts curricula documents provided do not consistently contain specific components needed for complete curricular guides. The arts documents provided lack or are unclear regarding details of instructional time, equipment, and other resources that are key to delivering the outcomes listed. Some documents provide very few actual student learning objectives. There is no indication in the documents of how learning outcomes sequence across grade levels. Assessments are often vague, i.e., groups of 5 assessment and whole group assessment.

Recommendation: That the school consult Connecticut's Guide to K-12 Program Development in the Arts to further its work in completing its arts curricula. Also, you may contact Scott Shuler, Art Consultant at 860-713-6746 or via e-mail at [scott.shuler@ct.gov](mailto:scott.shuler@ct.gov).

In preparation for the transition to the Common Core State Standards, the curriculum development efforts at the network and the school level have prioritized developing a robust set of supporting materials for academic programs. A similar curriculum development effort is under way for the arts, and we will be guided by the Guide to K-12 Program Development in the Arts as we document additional guiding materials for these subject areas.

### Health Curriculum Recommendation

Health: The Health curricula documents provided were reviewed in depth (please see attachments). The reviews of the documents indicate what curricular components are evident and those that are deficient.

Recommendation: That the school consult the review and strengthen the components deemed deficient. It is recommended that the school consult Connecticut's Curriculum Development Guide to assist in this process <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=333744>. Also, you may contact Jean Mee, Comprehensive School Health and Physical Education Consultant at 860-807-2016 or via e-mail at [jean.mee@ct.gov](mailto:jean.mee@ct.gov).

A sample curriculum unit was provided in the initial response to site visit feedback, and we will continue our curriculum documentation efforts over the course of the 2013-14 school year, until the entire health program is documented. This updated curriculum will be guided by the "Guide to Curriculum Development: Purpose, Practices, and Procedures" as well as the "Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework."

### Board Oversight Recommendation

Recommendation: That the additional approval required for expenditures equal to or exceeding \$10,000 be provided by the Board Treasurer who represents a higher level oversight. We also recommend that accounting policies and procedures be revised to align with Board responsibilities. The Board representatives present at the site visit agreed with our recommendations.

On July 26, 2012 the Board of Achievement First Hartford Academy had voted to revise the fiscal policies to modify the signatories on disbursements and contracts valued at or greater than \$10,000 to be restricted to school and board leadership. This proactive change had resulted from renewal visits to our sister schools in New Haven and Bridgeport. Furthermore, school leaders alone (Principals and Deans) can only sign for previously budgeted and Board approved items, and Deans cannot be sole signatories without Board Treasurer approval. These policies and procedures reflect the reality that our Board Chairs and Treasurers are not always readily accessible to sign operational documents.

That said, the Board is working with AF Network Support to more closely mirror the State Department of Education's recommendations, and the subject will be specifically taken up during the November meeting.

### **English Language Learner Recommendation**

Recommendation: Correct the coding of the students eligible for Bilingual education noted above. Present sample letters of parents of bilingual eligible students indicating that they have declined the bilingual programming. In the event that parents have requested Bilingual education submit a plan outlining how the bilingual program will be implemented. Please contact Megan Alubicki, ELL Education Consultant at 860-713-6786 or via e-mail at [megan.alubicki@ct.gov](mailto:megan.alubicki@ct.gov).

As explained in the initial response to our renewal site visit, dated April 30, 2013, we have reviewed the coding of students eligible for Bilingual education and believe that based on statute, Achievement First Hartford Academy is not required at this time to provide Bilingual education to students at any of the individual schools.

### **Teacher Certification Recommendation**

We continue to work with the recruiting and operations teams to ensure that teachers meeting certification requirements and that requests for CSEP are complete.

## Governance

### Governing Board Meetings Held In 2012-13

During the 2012-13 school year, Achievement First Hartford Academy's Board of Directors met on the following dates:

July 26, 2012  
September 24, 2012  
December 3, 2012  
January 23, 2013  
April 11, 2013  
June 3, 2013

### Summary of Major Policy Decisions

In the 2012-13 school year, Achievement First Hartford Academy's Board of Directors continued to provide strong, stable governance for the school. The following summarizes the major policy decisions of the Board during the 2012-13 school year.

- The Board amended the fiscal policies related to authorized signatories to allow only school leadership (Principals and/or Deans) and Board members (Chairman and/or Treasurer) to sign disbursements and execute contracts in excess of \$10,000.
- The Board re-elected current Class I directors to serve an additional 3-year term, expiring on June 30, 2015: Jean LaVecchia, Nancy Zwiener, and Laura Estes.
- The Board passed a resolution enabling alternate board members to sign on behalf of the Secretary to fulfill responsibilities when the secretary is unable to act.
- The Board elected Parent Representative Tina Rendon to a two-year term ending 6/30/14. (Ms. Rendon subsequently resigned her seat in July 2013 after accepting a teaching position with our sister school, Elm City College Preparatory in New Haven.)
- The Board appointed a "PGP Committee" (Professional Growth Plan) to oversee and review the performance appraisal of school leaders for the 2012-2013 school year. Committee members Jean LaVecchia, Laura Estes, and Nancy Zwiener will serve a one year term.
- The Board approved the use of a credit card account with a transaction limit of \$30,000 for use by the schools' Directors of Operations for payment of previously approved and budgeted operating expenses.
- The Board voted to submit the Teacher Career Pathways plan as an Alternate Educator Evaluation Plan to the State of Connecticut Department of Education.
- The Board re-appointed CohnReznik as the independent auditors.

## Summary of Other Key Accomplishments

The 2012-13 school year saw continued growth and achievement at Achievement First Hartford Academy, and we are pleased to highlight the following successes.

- **Talent Development and School Leader Pipeline:** A key metric in our organization's health and position for continued growth, Achievement First's internal pipeline for principal talent continues to get stronger. Between the 2012-13 school year and 2013-14 school year, we retained 19 out of 22 principals in the AF Network and 8 out of 10 principals in our Connecticut academies. Two of our new principals for 2013-14 in Connecticut have had two full years of preparation in the Principal-in-Residence (PIR) program – a two-year program designed to train principals before they officially lead an Achievement First school. In 2013-14, we will have 11 Phase I PIRs and 5 Phase II PIRs. For the first time, we will meet our Pipeline Projections goal of having at least 1.5 PIRs in the pipeline for every projected opening over the next two years. For the 2014-15 school year, Achievement First has identified all the new founding principles for new school openings scheduled to occur in that year, pending charter approvals. We have also identified two people in our PIR pipeline as being successor principals to mitigate for the risk of principal attrition.
- **Hartford Community Support:** We are proud to have the support of our parents and community members who spoke in support of replicating the successful AF Hartford Academy model in Hartford to the city's Board of Education. Parents and students in search of additional high quality public education choices let their voices be heard, helping to secure the approval of the Hartford Board of Education for a new middle school.
- **Collaboration with Hartford Public Schools** Achievement First partnered with Jumoke Academy to help the Hartford Public Schools secure a \$5 million grant to support collaboration between traditional district schools and charter schools. The grant will support the following activities:
  - A collaborative plan to develop high-impact school leaders building on Achievement First's Residency Program and increasing Hartford Public Schools' capacity to implement leadership development programs throughout the district.
  - An increase in the number of effective teachers by sharing the practices developed in the Achievement First Career Pathway program and the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching adopted by the district.
  - Improve student achievement at district and charter schools by implementing the Common Core based curriculum and assessments.
  - Expand on the Jumoke Academy's capacity to successfully manage and transform low-performing schools.
- **Co-teaching model implemented:** Co-Teaching is a special education service delivery option, a way to provide students with disabilities the special instruction to

which they are entitled while ensuring that they can access the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment. Co-teaching uses two teachers (one general education and one special education) to provide more effective learning experiences -- in order to more effectively educate a wide range of students. Co-teaching allows teachers to collect more data, provide more feedback, and offer more targeted support to lead students to the same rigorous academic and behavioral outcomes. Co-Teaching is proactive and reflective because both the special and general educators collaborate and share the responsibilities for a group of students; both teachers are responsible for assessing scholar needs, planning instruction, implementing instruction, and evaluating the instructional outcomes of students. Additionally, co-teaching allows teachers to provide targeted direct instruction to address students' IEP goals and objectives within a general education classroom and followed up, when necessary, by supplemental instruction, designed to provide re-teaching and extra at-bats needed by the student in spite of appropriate instruction in the classroom.

- **Diversity and Inclusiveness:** We continue to improve on our efforts related to Diversity and Inclusiveness and named it as an organizational priority for the 2013-2014 year. Based on organizational health survey results, AF is gaining ground on improving engagement and retention of Black, Latino and multi-racial staff members relative to other AF staff members. Other important milestones in this aspect of our work:
  - Launched a Mentoring Pilot Program with 37 Black/Latino/Multi-racial and 1st Generation Mentees (17 school leaders) and 19 mentors. Over 90% of mentees wished to participate in the program next year.
  - Launched Employee Resource Groups (called “Community Groups”) for People of Color and 1st Generation Staff Members and hosted 7 events with over 100 attendees.
  - Over 250 Achievement First staff members participated in a series professional development sessions for Diversity & Inclusiveness. 80% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that these sessions increased their self-awareness and built skills needed to be effective in their work

## List of Attachments

No additional attachments.