

**Achievement First  
Clear Fund Grant Applications  
Round Two – October 15, 2007**

**I. School design.**

A. Please list the significant ways in which your schools' operating policies differ from those of:

**1. A typical NYC public school.**

There are many ways that the Achievement First model differs from those of a traditional New York City public school. The most obvious difference is our ***unwavering focus on breakthrough student achievement***. At Achievement First we fully believe that every single student, regardless of race or socio-economic status, has the ability to be accepted to and graduate from top-tier colleges as long as they have an excellent education. As such, our model is dependent on a proven and rigorous college-preparatory curriculum that will ensure that every single student will achieve mastery in every single subject. To do this, Achievement First has chosen or developed curricula that dramatically accelerate the learning of its students. In selecting curricula, AF looked for or developed programs that exceeded New York and Connecticut standards, had strong internal assessments, and came with rigorous professional development. Combining structure and creativity in a thoughtful way, the curriculum is teacher-friendly and dovetails with the top-notch, ongoing teacher training and coaching AF provides for all teachers. In addition, Achievement First's academic program is designed to create a consistent model that can be replicated across multiple school sites. Multiple sites using a common curriculum fosters teacher-to-teacher collaboration across schools and allows for more targeted and focused professional development. Within each school, having a common curriculum prevents the hand-wringing and blaming that can occur when each teacher "does her own thing" or a curriculum doesn't logically build from one grade level to the next.

To give you a more-detailed example, Achievement First has an intensive focus around literacy and mathematics will ensure that our students are very strong in the fundamental skills they will need to tackle challenging, higher level material. Every single day students spend as much as 3 ½ hours focus on literacy and up to 2 hours focused on math. Student schedules emphasize on the core ELA (reading and writing), math, science, and social studies. We are also to having all students meet and exceed rigorous standards in these areas. In addition, the school also is committed to providing rich instruction in the arts, health, family and consumer sciences, career development and occupational studies, and languages other than English.

In most public schools time is the constant, so achievement varies by natural ability. At Achievement First, achievement is the constant so time is the variable. For example, some students need more time to master the materials, and we are committed to providing the individual support to ensure that every student attains proficiency. Our intensive Saturday tutoring program is a great example of this philosophy at work.

What is also characteristically and dramatically different at Achievement First is our emphasis on REACH values. REACH is our character development program that focuses on five core values: Respect, Enthusiasm, Achievement, Citizenship and Hard Work. This philosophy is borne out of the concept that while we want to prepare students - or scholars as they are called - for college; we also want to prepare respectful leaders. We want our students to model great behavior and to ultimately become model citizens where they respect the world and the environment around them, their peers, colleagues and the communities around them.

Below please find our key program pillars that set us apart from traditional public schools:

**(1) An Unwavering focus on breakthrough student achievement**

- Student performance is the lead factor in school, principal & teacher evaluation.
- Our goal is to FULLY CLOSE – not just reduce – the achievement gap (to bring our urban students up to and beyond state averages so that they are on par with suburban-level performance).
- The expectation is that every Achievement First graduates will be accepted into a competitive 4-year college and fully prepared to succeed there.

**(2) Consistent, proven, standards-based curriculum**

- WHAT is taught at every grade level (the New York state standards and beyond) is defined clearly and systematically so that all essential content is mastered over time.
- Proven curricula are consistently implemented across the school to ensure quality instruction (Saxon Math, SRA Reading, Amistad Middle School Writing, etc.).

**(3) Interim assessments & strategic use of performance data**

- Interim standards-based assessments (IAs) are given every 6 weeks in all the core subjects.
- Teachers use a structured process for analyzing data and then use the data to plan future instruction. Following each 6-week assessment cycle, every teacher will sit down with the Principal or Academic Dean for an IA conference where they review the data and develop an instructional plan, identifying which concepts need to be re-taught and which students need small group or one-on-one tutoring. The Principal then knows how every student is doing in every subject every 6 weeks.

**(4) More time on task**

- The school day will run from 7:30 am – 4:00 p.m., providing an extra 2.2 hours of instruction every day beyond the traditional public school schedule.
- Within the school day, elementary school students will have three sacred hours of reading instruction, and the middle school students will have three sacred hours of reading & writing instruction daily.
- The school will provide during-school, after-school, and Saturday tutoring for students who need extra support.
- Students will have homework every night, ranging from an average of 30 minutes for the lower elementary students to 2-3 hours each night for middle and high school students. Every student will be required to do at least 20 minutes of independent reading every night, with the parent signing a required reading log.

**(5) Principals with the power to lead**

- The Principal will have total control over hiring, evaluation, and termination of all employees.
- The Principal, in conjunction with the Board of Trustees and AF, will set the annual budget so as to best meet student and school needs.

**(6) Increased supervision of the quality of instruction**

- The school will have a site-based Director of School Operations who will handle most non-instructional issues (state reporting, busing, food service, field trips, facility, etc.), thereby freeing up the principal to spend almost all of his or her time focused on instruction. In addition, the Director of School Operations and Principal will be supported by Achievement First's efficient, high-quality start-up and back office services.

- Starting in the first year, the Principal is supported by a full-time Dean of Students, who will take the lead on student discipline issues and parent involvement, and a full-time Academic Dean, a second instructional leader to support the principal in the coaching of teachers, analysis of instructional data, and planning of staff development.
- With both the Principal and Academic Dean focused on coaching teachers, each will have a caseload of no more than 10-15 teachers. Working with this manageable group, these leaders will be able to devote significant attention to the professional growth of each teacher. Both leaders will spend at least 3 hours a day in classrooms, doing walkthroughs of all the classes and at least one full-class informal observation a day. With extensive informal observations and regular data analysis conversations, the Principal will complete a comprehensive evaluation of every teacher's performance two times a year.

**(7) Aggressive recruitment of talent**

- Achievement First's central office will devote considerable resources to finding great teachers (one full-time recruiter, in addition to the Principal, for every 25 teachers who need to be hired). The comprehensive recruitment strategy includes extensive advertising, outreach to organizations like Teach for America, the NYC Teaching Fellows, and top schools of education, as well as an overall "leave no stone unturned" approach.
- Compensation for every staff member will be performance-based and driven by his/her contribution to the mission.
- Achievement First teachers will be able to participate in AF-wide programs to "grow" our teacher and leader talent such as the AF Leadership Fellowship.

**(8) Disciplined, achievement-oriented school culture**

- Achievement First school will be strict, structured schools with high expectations for student conduct (REACH values). The staff will work intentionally to create an achievement-oriented culture where it is cool to be smart and to treat other people well.
- Great behavior and good character will be taught and practiced as explicitly as math instruction.

**(9) Rigorous, high-quality, focused training for principals & leaders**

- Principals of Achievement First schools will spend nearly a full year training to further develop his or her leadership skills. This "residency" year will include extended visits to high-performing schools and a significant amount of hands-on experience coaching teachers, analyzing data, and refining the curriculum.
- All teachers will receive more than 3 weeks of high-quality training before the school year starts and then ongoing training (2 hours every Friday, as well as one day every other month)
- All teachers will have the ability to participate in an exciting new teacher training program (providing full NY State Certification and a Master's Degree) being designed by Achievement First, KIPP, Uncommon Schools, and Hunter College.

**(10) Parents and community as partners**

- Through symbolic "contracts" signed at the beginning of each school year, Achievement First schools will form a three-way partnership – students, teachers, parents – that will work as a team to achieve academic breakthroughs and ensure that no student falls through the cracks.
- Achievement First will work with the broader Brooklyn and New York communities to access resources to enable our students to succeed at the highest level.

## 2. Other NYC charter schools, particularly those run by KIPP and Uncommon Schools.

It goes without saying that much of our work has been informed by countless partners in education including our partners at KIPP and Uncommon Schools. Through shared resources and best practices our schools have become stronger by building a growing network of high-performing schools particularly in New York City. As we build our network, our organization emphasizes growth to create two high performing school districts rather than isolated, successful schools. Just as Amistad has proven that a single successful school is possible, these two “districts” of schools will prove that success is possible at scale. Similarly, the systems, structures, and policies required to operate successful districts will inform the practices of other school districts, just as Amistad has been an inspiration and model for other schools.

The decision to replicate the Amistad model in two very different geographies, New Haven and Brooklyn, NY, was a conscious one – aimed at both reducing risk and establishing a solid proof of concept. When AF operates in two distinct geographies, it will be harder for potential critics to dismiss or limit the implications of AF’s success. Specifically, Achievement First has chosen to expand in New York City because it is the most complex, high-profile school district in the country. Given this complexity, our success in New York will test our ability to further our mission to close the achievement gap.

Numbered below please find what we consider to be key program differences between Achievement First and other public charter schools:

### (1) Two School Districts in Two Geographies

Concentrating a significant number of schools in a fairly tight geography will result in significant market penetration and the opportunity for “tipping point” impact well beyond the students served by AF schools. Moreover, this level of concentration will minimize travel time, oversight expenses, and a feeling of isolation among disparate staffs. Rather, by focusing intensely on concentrated geographies, AF will be able to capitalize on an easier sharing of best practices, more formal and informal programmatic links, and a greater sense of shared mission.

### (2) Slow, steady growth

Achievement First’s growth strategy to open two to three schools per school year is realistic and sustainable. As experienced charter school operators, AF knows how hard this work is and how much details matter. AF will grow slowly enough to guarantee Amistad-level results through Amistad-level attention to countless critical operational details.

### (3) Replicable Model

Achievement First’s school unit model, focused on a set of systems and a well articulated plan, is highly replicable. Although AF will systematically recruit a corps of strong instructional leaders and committed teachers, the model can be implemented by “mere mortals.” AF will create a sustainable system to support its schools, but the focus will not be on the system but on the school units themselves. Reflecting upon the words of Joel Klein, New York City’s dynamic, reform-minded chancellor, “We are not trying to create a great school system but rather a system of great schools.”

### (4) Efficiencies of Scale

Achievement First’s operational plan is as thoughtful and articulated as its school unit model, and it is focused on leveraging knowledge, expertise, and resources to create efficiencies as soon as possible. AF has been set up to provide support and resources to its network of schools by centralizing many “back-office”

and some educational functions (purchasing, staff recruitment, professional development, technology, etc.), which all too often take educators away from doing what they do best – educating students.

**(5) The Right Leadership**

Achievement First staff is composed of a team of professionals who have both the skill and determination to move the organization forward. The fact that the organization is led by two dynamic leaders, Dacia Toll, President and Co-CEO, and Doug McCurry, Superintendent and Co-CEO, is one of its greatest strengths, allowing each to focus on what he or she does best. Ms. Toll devotes time and attention to managing the Board of Directors, fundraising, and community and government affairs, while Mr. McCurry focuses on school leadership, instruction, curriculum, and central office and school operations. In addition to these core responsibilities, both Ms. Toll and Mr. McCurry divide their time amongst supporting principals and providing critical leadership coaching to ensure school success.

**(6) The Model is Financially Sustainable**

Achievement First's model anticipates a large enough scale that there will be a self-sustaining system after the ninth year. Although there is a need for significant start up investment, the AF model ensures that each school is independent within a number of years (NYC schools almost immediately, CT schools within three years pending policy changes). Further, after reaching scale, AF itself will be self-sustaining, based on revenues derived from a portion of per pupil funding that schools pay to AF as a per student fee.

AF is in the process of ramping up operations in preparation for a controlled expansion. We have developed an operational plan and an operating and reporting structure, and we are now in the process of hiring additional staff and expanding the current Board of Directors. To support these start up and expansion costs, AF is looking for a total investment of \$16,275,000 for the nine-year period from FY 2005 – FY 2013. During the period FY 2005 (current year) through FY 2007, fundraising needs increase every year as Achievement First ensures all new school start-ups are high quality and develops and strengthens its core academic and operational systems to support scale.

After FY 2007, fundraising needs decrease every year as Achievement First takes advantage of economies of scale. After our ninth year of operation, 2012-2013, Achievement First will be fully self-sufficient; its schools will continue to operate fully on public revenues, and the central office will be completely funded on the per pupil fee schools pay back to the central office.

In return for this initial private investment, AF will create two self-sustaining school districts, providing an outstanding education to more than 7,300 students every year – and creating effective, impossible-to-ignore models for urban school districts across the country.

**B. Please describe the process by which your principals are selected and evaluated.**

1. Who is responsible for selecting and evaluating your principals?
2. What criteria are used to select principals?
3. How often does formal evaluation of principals take place?
4. Does evaluation of principals include monitoring of school policies and practices? If so, what specific policies and practices are expected?
5. Does evaluation include assessment of outcomes (attendance, grade promotion, graduation, test score performance)? If so, what outcomes are expected?
6. What are the consequences for principals who underperform expectations? For principals who outperform?

Achievement First has developed a rigorous principal selection process in order to attract and hire top school leaders from across the country. Achievement First's leadership and talent development team worked to develop a set of selection criteria driven by the core competencies we hope our school leaders will demonstrate and embrace. As we continue to expand and grow, we continue to tweak our model to provide training for school leaders and those in training. Quite simply, we hire principals for their grit, and their ability to implement the model in a way that will yield successful student performance results.

Our principals come through many pipelines including organizations like New Leaders for New Schools, Teach for America and our own pool of aspiring leaders consisting of our Academic Deans and Deans of Students, who serve as assistant principals. Very similar to teachers, these principal candidates will undergo a rigorous and thorough process including an application, interview and "working interview" consisting of a school walk-through and feedback session where the candidate spends a day in the life of a school leader. Once identified, co-CEO and Superintendent Doug McCurry, along with co-CEO and President Dacia Toll, will spend the one full academic year working very closely with the principal candidate to ensure that he or she is completely ready to take on the leadership of her own high-performing charter school. AF's year-long training opportunity is set up to allow principals-in-residence to build on their already extensive experience by visiting other successful charter schools, fully immersing themselves in the AF model, and practicing all of the leadership skills necessary to do an outstanding job. Each principal candidate will likely serve in the position as a Dean of Students or Academic Dean in an existing school prior to the opening of the new charter school. In addition to duties as Dean of Students or Academic Dean, in preparation of opening the new school the principal candidate will be responsible for completing the following:

- Shadowing of Achievement First School Principals and Deans (Brooklyn and Connecticut)
- Observing and then conducting interim assessment teacher debriefs on school data
- Observing and then running staff meetings, professional development for staff, and Morning Circle and Town Meeting celebrations
- Participating once a month in formal principal training seminars and attending the monthly AF principal meetings and annual principal retreat
- Conducting formal observations with teachers and Achievement First Superintendent, Doug McCurry
- Teaching a minimum of three weeks in different content areas (math, reading, textual analysis, and writing). These weeks of teaching are to ensure a high level of proficiency with the Achievement First instructional model (including aims, lesson structure, I-WE-YOU).
- Visiting other high performing elementary and/or middle schools in New York City as well as across the country
- Fully participating in teacher recruitment and interview processes for Achievement First
- Reaching out to the communities we intend to serve.

To further refine this process and create a long-standing structure for new school leaders, Achievement First recently recruited Maia Heyck-Merlin to join AF's leadership Team as the Vice-President of Talent Development. Maia comes from Teach for America where she served as the Managing Director and creator of the Teacher Preparation Team at the national level. In this role, Ms. Heyck-Merlin will concentrate on her time and energies on create invaluable professional development and leadership training for principals.

As described above, we are focused on hiring a school leader that is able to run a successful school. When considering leadership we value the candidate's ability to serve in three distinct roles: as a leader of people by running a successful instructional staff; as a leader who sets the "no-excuses" school culture; and an instructional leader who has a thorough understanding of curriculum, instruction, and what it takes to produce high levels of student achievement. In addition to these three areas, below please find the core school leadership competencies that we value in each potential school leader.

#### **Commitment to Mission/Vision**



- Conveys strong sense of urgency; strong commitment to mission and a belief in the potential of all children to excel academically
- Makes decisions guided by what's best for students, motivated by love and respect for students and their families; builds strong personal relationships with kids and parents
- Conveys an inspirational vision for the school
- Exudes energy and optimism; conveys strong belief that we will prevail

#### **Focus on Excellence**

- Demonstrates persistence, determination, and relentless drive to achieve goals and results; not satisfied with so-so but rather sets high expectations and is focused on achieving excellence in all areas
- Takes personal responsibility for results; takes initiative; does not wait for others to fix problems; no excuses
- Demonstrates grit, tenacity, and self-reliance; will overcome challenges and setbacks
- Focused on results; obsessed with data and interim indicators of success
- Demonstrates willingness to confront difficult situations and brutal facts head-on and willingness to hold others accountable for ensuring the success of all kids

#### **People-Orientation / Interpersonal Skills**

- Demonstrates real empathy and genuine caring about others and the impact of decisions on others
- Exudes personal warmth and openness
- Builds strong relationships with teachers and colleagues and is able to foster an environment in which others do the same
- Is a good listener, non-judgmental, inclusive
- Has a sense of humor, fun to be around
- Has a track record of being an effective team player
- Demonstrates good emotional intelligence; reads people and situations accurately and reacts accordingly; understands the perspectives of others

#### **Constant Learning**

- Demonstrates self-awareness, humility, and a commitment to personal growth; accurately identifies personal strengths and weaknesses; understands how he/she is perceived by others
- Actively seeks feedback and uses it to improve performance
- Willing to admit mistakes/shortcomings and address them; reflective
- Seeks mentors, thought-partners, and professional development

#### **Communication**

- Possesses written and verbal skills to communicate with clarity, conciseness and appropriateness to multiple audiences
- Has a strong, leader-like presence, inspires confidence; calm under pressure
- Persuasive; able to influence others to achieve outcomes

#### **Organization & Planning**

- Plans ahead; works the plan
- Demonstrates excellent follow-up and follow-through
- Focuses on both the big picture and on details
- Possesses strong personal organization and time-management skills
- Effectively multi-tasks

- Anticipates problems before they arise and plans preventatively
- Serves as an effective project manager; delegates effectively, setting others up for success

#### **Problem-Solving**

- Leads the team through a problem-solving process with high levels of buy in and effectiveness
- Demonstrates systematic, analytic, problem-solving skills
  - Identifies and accurately prioritizes problems and key issues
  - Defines the opportunity/problem in clear, compelling, actionable terms
  - Analyzes and diagnoses complex issues and develops effective solutions to solve a variety of problem
  - Identifies concrete outcomes/metrics as a way to evaluate results
- Accurately identifies factors that make school organizations strong and weak

#### **Character**

- Impeccably demonstrates integrity, honesty, REACH values, and a willingness to stand up for personal beliefs
- Makes sacrifices for the good of students and staff; has a very strong work ethic
- Talks about our work, students, families, and communities in an impeccably respectful way
- Has a strong track record of effectively engaging with students and families to develop strong character, not just academics
- Demonstrates professionalism (dress, body language, speech)

#### **People Leadership**

- Has experience effectively managing people and leading teams
  - Sets clear vision and goals
  - Mobilizes adults to take action; builds a sense of team
  - Regularly provides specific positive reinforcement for team and individual efforts
  - Gives effective feedback and has “difficult conversations” that result in improved performance
  - Facilitates meetings effectively to achieve desired outcomes; structures opportunities for shared reflection and problem-solving;
  - Engages and empowers others to take responsibility to achieve results
- Operates effectively during times of uncertainty and is able to overcome adversity

#### **Instructional Leadership**

- Has a proven track record of outstanding student achievement results
- Demonstrates knowledge of exemplary teaching and the capacity to distinguish among poor; mediocre, and outstanding teaching; good instructional eye to identify “big rocks” in lessons; able to deliver targeted, actionable feedback
- Able to lead coherent alignment of curriculum, assessment, instruction & professional development; personal approach is consistent with the AF model
- Uses data to inform instruction and continuously improve student achievement
- Possesses adequate content knowledge in math and/or language arts
- Able to design and lead high-quality professional development



C. Please describe the process by which your teachers are selected and evaluated. To the extent that this varies by school, please provide information for as many of your existing New York schools as possible.

1. How many teachers are hired in a typical year, out of how many applicants?

2. What background qualifications are required? Preferred?

3. Does your organization provide any additional training?

4. Does evaluation of teachers include monitoring of their adherence to specific classroom practices? What practices?

5. Does evaluation of teachers include review of their students' test scores?

6. What are the consequences for teachers who underperform expectations? For teachers who outperform?

7. What is the range of compensation for teachers?

At Achievement First, all teacher candidates undergo a rigorous application process. Achievement First employs a growing, full-time teacher recruitment staff of four people to ensure that only the best candidates are brought on board to work in our twelve academies. The multi-step application process begins with submission of a lengthy written application and resume. Upon positive review, the recruitment staff conducts a phone interview and invites the candidate for an in-person interview. As part of this stage, all candidates must prepare and present a mini lesson plan: no teachers are hired without having a lesson observed beforehand. The work is demanding but critical to support our mission of preparing all scholars for success in college and beyond.

Achievement First teachers are paid commensurate with experience. The typical teacher salary is set at 10-15% above the equivalent local Department of Education pay scale offering, to reflect the additional time our teachers commit during the longer school day and school year, and in gratitude for their hard work and tremendous commitment to the work we are doing.

AF has worked to put in place the capacity necessary to recruit an outstanding team of educators who will make the real difference every day in their work with the students and parents. The principal has final hiring authority, but the AF team is poised to deliver dozens of top-notch candidates for his or her consideration. In the months before start-up, new charter school principals are often bombarded with all the details involved in starting up a school and cannot fully focus on the most important task: finding great teachers. Moreover, they may not have the recruiting budgets or contacts to spread the word about their openings. Achievement First recognizes that finding great people is its number one job. AF already has four, full-time talented recruiters on staff and will add two more in the coming school year – maintaining a ratio of approximately one recruiter for every 25-30 teachers who need to be hired. T

he recruitment team uses an online application management system to track all candidates through the application process; this system makes it possible for the recruiters to handle the flow of thousands of candidates each year. The iRecruiter system also gives the recruiters the capacity to post all specific job openings in real time to both the AF website and outside locations, such as careerbuilder.com. Beyond the staff capacity necessary to build a talent pool and rigorously screen candidates, the AF recruitment team has been working for nearly four years to refine its recruitment strategy and build strategic alliances with organizations like Teach for America, New Leaders for New Schools, the NYC Teaching Fellows,

and a variety of colleges of education. During the autumn months, the recruiters travel the country, presenting to groups of teachers and recruiting top talent to join our staffs. This past year, the recruitment team piloted a college summer internship program, designed to get rising college seniors from Historically Black Colleges and Universities interested in working at an Achievement First school after graduation. AF has a “leave no stone unturned” approach to building a talent pool.

In terms of results, last year, the AF recruitment team built a pool of more than 2,000 resumes to fill 100 open positions in New York and Connecticut, invited hundreds of candidates to teach guest lessons, and successfully hired the full team of teachers needed for 2006-2007. In our Brooklyn schools, approximately 65% of these teachers self-identified as teachers of color and 75% had Masters degrees. The average undergraduate GPA of these teachers was 3.44 and the average graduate GPS was 3.89. For the 2007-2008 academic year have brought on 124 new teachers and leaders, across Connecticut and New York.

Another exciting development is the launch of the AF-KIPP-Uncommon-Hunter College Institute for Urban Teaching. Through this innovative partnership between high-performing CMOs and a traditional school of education, AF will be able to provide high-quality training to all new teachers, grant short-term certification with a Trans B certificate, and eventually ensure that all of our teachers have full NY State certification and at least a Master’s Degree.

Achievement First goes to great lengths to recruit a talented pool of teachers. At, Achievement First every teacher is viewed as the essential ingredient to ensuring that the school’s mission is met. Staff input is not just expected, but it is actively invited at all levels. Achievement First-creates professional, collaborative work environment in which everyone is a teacher, and teaching is a highly-valued activity. Rather than having a top-down, labor-management relationship, the school leaders and teachers will often engage in shared reflection, problem-solving, and planning. We believe in strong leadership, and this school will be led by a dynamic principal with the power, skill, and will to make tough decisions and lead the team. However, we believe also in teacher input and leadership and know that the kind of teachers we hire do not want to be passive employees; they will want to really invest in making the school and its students as successful as possible.

At our sister schools in New Haven and Brooklyn, the school leaders have done an excellent job of really investing teachers in the mission by regularly asking their opinion and inviting them to be a part of problem-solving and planning processes. Every Friday, the staff gets together for meetings or training and you will often see teachers working as a full staff or in teams to address an issue of school-wide concern, to analyze data or student work, or to plan instruction or special events for the weeks ahead. This general culture of ongoing, collaborative reflection and planning is especially evident at the annual mid-year staff retreat. Every AF school takes a full day in February or March to systematically assess what’s working, what’s not, and what the staff feels the school needs to do to take its instruction and culture to the next level. At the other AF schools, this annual retreat of the full staff has been a powerful tool in pushing each school to get better, stronger, and more effective every year – and in ensuring that the full team is bought in to that continuous improvement.

In addition, every AF teacher is asked to complete an anonymous mid-year staff survey that provides feedback on the school as a whole (e.g. the level of support, the extent of communication, the quality of professional development, etc.) as well as feedback on the specific

performance of every school administrator. The school leadership team will take this feedback very seriously, will respond thoroughly and thoughtfully to any constructive feedback they receive, and will share both the feedback and their response with the Board of Trustees.

**D. Please describe any formal procedures by which your students are assessed. To the extent that this varies by school, please provide information for as many of your existing schools as possible. Do you require formal interventions for students who are academically behind? For students with disciplinary problems?**

Achievement First is focused on providing a college-preparatory education for all of its students. Therefore, all students complete a series of academic assessments when they first arrive at the school. Students take reading assessments such as the DRA or DRP to gauge general reading level, fluency, and comprehension. For math, we will use both the Terra Nova test., Stanford 10 and our own internal Interim Assessments to help ascertain the skill level of our students. Achievement First the yearly New York State ELA and Math tests as further benchmarks for progress.

Student Assessments	
Kindergarten	DRA, Terra Nova-Math
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	DRA, Terra Nova-Math
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	DRA, Terra Nova-Math, DRP, AF Interim Assessments
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	DRA, DRP, AF Interim Assessments, NYS ELA, NYS Mathematics
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	AF-IAs, NYS ELA, NYS Mathematics, DRP
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	AF-IAs, NYS ELA, NYS Mathematics, NYS Social Studies, NYS ESLAT I and II (ELL only), DRP
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	AF-IAs, NYS ELA, NYS Mathematics, NYS ESLAT I and II (ELL only), DRP
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	AF-IAs, NYS ELA, NYS Mathematics, NYS ESLAT I and II (ELL only), DRP
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade *Only qualifying students take NYS Regents Exams	AF-IAs, NYS ELA, NYS Mathematics, NYS Social Studies, NYS Science, NYS Regents Exams*, Specialized High School Test, NYS ESLAT I and II (ELL only), DRP
High School	AF-IAs, Regents Exams*, NYS ESLAT I and II (ELL only)

In addition to taking the required New York State assessments, all students will be required to take a battery of tests at several points throughout the academic year. At the start of the school year Achievement First will give the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to entering kindergarten and first grade students. This test helps to establish a baseline to inform principals, teachers, and trustees on how to make programmatic decisions for our students. Achievement First schools will also administer the Terra Nova Mathematics test and the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) test. Please see testing information below:

**Test:** Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)

**Type:** Nationally recognized reading assessment  
**Relevant Grade Level:** Kindergarten to Third Grade

Achievement First administers the DRA as a baseline test when a child enters the school and every January and May in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade. The DRA is a nationally recognized reading assessment. The test is administered one-on-one, and the results of the test allow teachers to determine the DRA and Guided Reading levels of students. These levels correspond to grade levels.

**Test:** Terra Nova – Mathematics  
**Type:** Nationally Normed Test  
**Relevant Grade Level:** Baseline upon entering school; June of K, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup>

The Terra Nova is a nationally-normed mathematics assessment that all Achievement First students in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade take. The results on these assessments allow AF to get a nationally-normed result for mathematics. Because AF can convert state test results to national norms starting in third grade, AF does not administer the Terra Nova after second grade.

**Test:** Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)  
**Type:** Reading (specifically close passage comprehension test)  
 Nationally Normed Test  
**Relevant Grade Level:** Kindergarten to Twelfth Grade

In June and February of each year, students take the DRP. The DRP does not measure true reading comprehension skills (fact versus opinion, main idea, author's purpose, etc.), but it does measure the ability of students to infer meaning from the text. The DRP gives us a rough guide for student improvement in reading, and it also aids in helping us select independent reading books. The DRP also allows Achievement First to have a consistent, nationally normed reading result for every student along the K-12 continuum.

**E. Please list the curricula your schools use for each subject and grade level, and provide any available independent evidence for the effectiveness of these curricula.**

### The Achievement First Curriculum

Our academic program starts with New York's rigorous learning standards, which form the backbone of our rich, college preparatory curriculum. Teachers work toward real student mastery and comprehension, making our students competitive with the top suburban districts. Achievement First has created top-quality standards-aligned materials (e.g. math practice, grammar practice, novel units) that teachers in grades 3 to 8 will use in the classroom. For grades K-2, we will supplement standards-based, research-proven curricula with practice materials that are directly aligned to the New York state standards. Specifically, we plan to use the following curricula, all of which have produced exceptional results in urban schools and meet or exceed New York's rigorous standards, as a base for the core academic subjects:

#### ACHIEVEMENT FIRST CURRICULUM

Grade	Core Academic Subject	Curricula	Company
K-3	Reading	Reading Mastery	SRA
K-3	Reading	Achievement First Guided Reading	AF
4-8	Reading	Achievement First Reading	AF
K-2	Reading Supplements	Waterford Reading	Waterford Institute
4-6	Reading Intervention	Corrective Reading Decoding	SRA
K-8	Reading Supplement	Worldly Wise 3000	EPS
K-3	Writing	Open Court or Reasoning and Writing	SRA
K-3	Writing Intervention	Reasoning and Writing	SRA
4-8	Writing	Achievement First Writing	AF
K-2	Math	Saxon Mathematics	Saxon
3-7	Math	Achievement First Math	AF
8	Math	Algebra	Addison-Wesley
K-8	Science	FOSS Science	FOSS
K-8	History	Core Knowledge and History Alive!	Core Knowledge

#### Language Arts

Achievement First builds on the latest research in literacy education to create a rigorous program in which all students are fluent readers by the end of the second grade. Beyond the second grade, we will develop students who are able to rigorously analyze text using explicit comprehension strategies. Our overall program is based on the five components of excellent reading outlined by the federal government: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

#### Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

In the grades K-2, we “overwhelm the problem” of early literacy through over 3 hours of language arts instruction daily. Students who need intensive remediation will go through an intensive 6 weeks of using the Literacy Links or SRA intervention programs, highly effective programs that directly teach sound-symbol relationships and gives both students and teachers the language and knowledge necessary for success in later reading. Students also spend 20 minutes a day in individualized, computer-based instruction using the Waterford Early Reading Program. This program, developed over 20 years and costing over \$30 million, has had dramatic success making up for the over 3000 hours of literacy experiences that most urban students have missed before they enter school. Finally, as the core phonics instructional program, Achievement First uses Reading Mastery, which provides a balanced literacy approach while directly teaching sound-symbol relationships and including ample practice with phonemic awareness and phonics.

In addition, middle school students with decoding needs will be receive the Corrective Reading Decoding program, which has been enormously successful at closing the phonics gaps that many middle school students still have.

#### Fluency

In order to ensure that all our readers are fluent readers, Achievement First gives a fluency test to all entering students in grades 3 and above. Those students who need fluency practice will receive instruction using the Corrective Reading Decoding program. Many of our entering fifth graders in the first year will need this supplemental decoding instruction to close the gaps that remain in their phonics skills. The SRA Corrective Reading Decoding program has been used with great success at highly successful

urban schools; the program is designed to, in a two-year sequence, take students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels in reading fluency.

### **Vocabulary**

Embedded in the Reading Mastery, Guided Reading, and Waterford programs are strong vocabulary strands, and teachers will use these programs to build the vocabulary skills of our students. At the middle school level, all teachers will highlight and explain vocabulary words as they arise in the text that students are reading. They will also teach students important vocabulary in context skills so that students are able to use context clues to figure out by themselves what an unknown word means. As a supplement to this more organic vocabulary instruction, all middle school teachers will use Worldly Wise 3000 as a basis for 10 minutes of explicit vocabulary instruction/day during reading class.

### **Independent Reading**

All Achievement First students will have a 20-30 minute independent reading class during which each teacher will work to get all of his or her students to be avid, active readers. It is the job of the reading teacher to find appropriate books, inspire students to read, and monitor their independent reading. This in-school independent reading will be supplemented with 20 minutes of required independent reading at home. The student will complete an independent reading journal, and a parent/guardian is required to sign off on the child's reading log indicating that they supervised the reading.

### **Comprehension**

While working to build fluent readers, teachers will also focus on developing strong comprehension skills. For the elementary students, the Guided Reading, Reading Mastery, and Waterford programs all have very strong comprehension strands that align to state and national standards. At the middle school level, teachers will build student comprehension skills through the study of literature (each grade level reads a mix of fiction and non-fiction). Teachers will systematically teach mini-lessons and guide students in the practice of comprehension skills. AF has developed a standards-based novel unit creation tool that aids teachers in developing standards-based questions for novels, and completed novel units are available as a resource to teachers through the AF curriculum intranet.

In addition to building comprehension through novels and non-fiction books, our students will learn and practice their comprehension skills using a Textual Analysis program that leverages strong standards-aligned mini-lessons with targeted student practice. The program, which was first developed Urban Education Exchange and later modified by AF, includes teacher-developed standard-by-standard resources and mini-lessons to teach each reading skill or strategy (e.g. finding the main idea). Once the skills have been taught through the mini-lesson, students then practice this newly acquired skill using short fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and task passages. As part of their practice, students are required to answer questions, and to defend and prove their answers during rich classroom discussions about question types and text proofs, which help build students' analytical skills. AF has built six years of this seven-year sequence, and these Textual Analysis resources and practice materials, which have been in use at all of our AF Middle Schools, are now available for use by all teachers.

### **Writing**

In addition to the five key components of excellent reading instruction, Achievement First offers a rigorous writing curriculum that is designed to have students produce writing with excellent organization, elaboration, and flow across multiple genres. Teachers will begin with a heavy focus on sentence structure, basic grammar, and paragraph formation. Students are expected to complete Daily Oral



Language activities to improve their grammar skills, and teachers will use a variety of standards-aligned grammar materials in daily mini-lessons. Moreover, students will learn step-by-step how to write excellent sentences, paragraphs, and essays using templates and teacher modeling until they are confident enough to tackle the task without scaffolding. Extensive prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing will take place on all pieces of writing. Students graduating AF middle schools will be able to produce top-quality narratives, research papers, and expository, persuasive, and literary analysis essays.

### **Social Studies**

The K-4 social studies curriculum will follow the comprehensive and challenging Core Knowledge Sequence, developed by E.D. Hirsch at the University of Virginia. Hirsch and his team completed a comprehensive analysis of the key information students needed to know to be literate, culturally-aware citizens, and they mapped it in a clear, grade-level specific curriculum. At the middle school level, this curriculum will be enhanced and directly aligned to New York's state social studies standards. This curriculum will be presented in a way that is engaging and challenging, and teachers will expect students to master the key concepts and vocabulary while they will teach them to analyze primary sources, debate different points of view, and make cause-and-effect connections. Social studies class will be a fast-paced, multi-modal class in which students hone their non-fiction reading skills, learn important content, and apply it in written essays and oral presentations.

### **Mathematics**

The AF mathematics program will produce students who have mastered all middle school mathematics standards and Algebra I by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and all Calculus standards by the time they graduate from high school. The curriculum recognizes that students need basic facts knowledge and "automaticity" with procedural computation, coupled with a deep conceptual understanding of mathematics. As a means to that end, in grades K-2, students will use Saxon Mathematics, a highly effective curriculum that gives students an exceptionally strong foundation in the basic skills, procedural computation, and conceptual understanding. Teachers will require students to apply this strong basic skills knowledge in challenging problem-solving situations. AF uses a problem-solving supplement to Saxon math, and starting in third grade, students will begin Achievement First's math curriculum, which mirrors New York's rigorous standards and requires daily demonstration of problem-solving skills.

### **Science**

AF implements the FOSS Science curriculum, which correlates very strongly to New York and national science standards. In addition, AF has been working to develop a rigorous 5-8 science curriculum that builds on the FOSS curriculum and reflects all New York Science standards. Science instruction combines student mastery of core vocabulary and conceptual knowledge with the application of scientific principals in laboratory settings. Science assessments, for example, will include sections that focus on the key terms and ideas of a unit as well as a performance task component that will require students to synthesize and analyze data from laboratory experiments. Science teachers will also actively work to reinforce key mathematical concepts, especially graphing and measurement skills.

### **Physical Education**

Our physical education curriculum reflects our belief that a fit and healthy lifestyle is important for learning and life. Elementary and middle school physical education teachers use the CATCH-PE curriculum; this curriculum uses continual motion and P.E. games to build athletic skills and an appreciation for lifelong fitness. In addition, they will also teach students how to play a variety of different

sports, as well as reinforcing messages about nutrition, teamwork, and fair play. Starting in the second year of the middle school, students have the opportunity to play on competitive sports teams.

### **Spanish**

Beginning in 2007-2008, Achievement First is launching a pilot program to introduce Spanish language instruction into the classroom. Currently Achievement First Crown Heights provides first-year instruction, and we plan to expand this program to all of our schools to ensure second language fluency by the end of high school.

### **Music**

All AF students will have music instruction that is aligned to the New York and national standards for music education. Over the course of their time at AF, students will learn to play an instrument and read music, and middle school students will have the option of participating in a school orchestra.

### **Technology**

All students will receive explicit instruction in basic typing skills, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Explorer, and Outlook. By the time they graduate, students will be able to proficiently use these programs; they will be technologically literate. Especially in the lower grades, students will also use computer-based learning programs to master material. All K-2 students will use the Waterford Early Reading System for 20 to 30 minutes daily.

### **Cross-Curricular Instructional Strategies**

#### **Standards-Aligned and Data-Driven Instruction**

AF teachers will use periodic, standards-aligned assessments, given every six weeks (five times per year) to track individual student progress towards mastery of each standard in all core content areas (Reading, Writing, Math, Science, History, Technology, and Spanish). By systematically using individual student data, instruction can be targeted to better meet individual student needs and to better identify standards that need to be re-taught to the whole class, those that need to be re-taught to small groups of students who have struggled with particular concepts, as well as to identify students who need intensive one-on-one tutoring. In addition, teachers will meet periodically in grade-level and subject-area teams, using the student performance data as a basis for discussion, to share successes, challenges, teaching strategies, and instructional resources. As such, instruction at AF Brownsville will be strategic. Teachers will not simply work to cover content; rather, they will assess student needs and target instruction to address specific deficiencies so that all students reach mastery on all standards.

#### **Instructional Consistency**

AF schools will not be a set of isolated and idiosyncratic classrooms, inspired by the styles of the particular teachers. Rather, Achievement First provides an instructional model, supported by the skills and insights of a talented team of teachers. Across every classroom, there will be common curricula, strategies, systems, and templates. Such consistency greatly aids the learning process of students, the professional development of teachers, and the refining of proven instructional practices.

#### **I-WE-YOU**

Perhaps the most powerful pedagogical strategy AF teachers will use is the consistent, clear modeling of both new behaviors and new academic skills. In doing so, teachers will I-WE-YOU all new concepts. In the "I" stage, the teacher models the behavioral or academic skill by having students watch while they talk through the new skill step-by-step. They then allow the modeling to shift to the "WE" stage. Teachers

might allow the students a chance to talk through each step of similar problems, reinforcing the same skill. Teachers then slowly let students take more and more of a role in solving the skill. Finally, when the teacher is confident that students can handle the task/skill on their own, they move to the "YOU" stage. Teachers then expect silent, independent work by students. The I-WE-YOU process will be used in each class throughout the day. Teachers will constantly I-WE-YOU new behaviors, routines, and skills – the way to pass in papers, compare fractions, write a topic sentence, line up after technology class, or fill in a REACH rubric.

Please note that the key to the success of the I-WE-YOU technique is the teacher's judgment on when to go from one step to the next. Teachers should only move to the "WE" stage (guided practice) when students have had ample teacher modeling, and in the most important piece of teacher judgment, students should only move to the "YOU" portion (independent practice) when the teacher is confident that the students can do the task independently.

#### Cumulative Review

AF will commit a significant proportion of instruction to systematic cumulative review. During class, teachers will constantly revisit skills learned earlier in the year, and most homework will involve systematic cumulative review. Math students will still add decimals in March, and reading students will still find the main idea in June. In doing so, teachers are developing the fluency of students to perform skills clearly outlined in the various curricula. With repeated practice and cumulative review, teachers help students to maintain learned skills and look for opportunities to apply them in new settings.

#### Research-Based Lesson Plan Formats

All classes at Achievement First schools will follow a common research-based lesson plan format. These lesson plans build on an understanding of the phases of learning. In order to truly master a concept, students go through the following stages: acquisition, fluency, maintenance, generalization, and adaptation. While students are acquiring new information, they are using cumulative review to build fluency and maintain the skills they have. Once a group of skills are mastered, the students are able to generalize and adapt the skills to other settings (i.e. use division in fractions, graphing skills in science class). Although the format varies for each class (for example, the math lesson plan includes basic facts review while the writing lesson plan includes a grammar section), all lesson plans share a similar format.

Achievement First Lesson Plan Format			
General	Writing	Reading	Mathematics
Quick Questions Aim and Agenda Cumulative Review	Quick Questions (DOL) Aim and Agenda	Quick Questions Aim and Agenda Vocabulary	Quick Questions Aim and Agenda Problem of the Day



## Round 2

## Grant Application -

Interesting Idea Lesson Summary Homework	Journal Grammar Mini-lesson Grammar Practice Writing lesson Summary Homework	Before Reading During Reading After Reading Summary Homework	Basic Facts Review Mental Math Other Review Lesson Summary Homework
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Each section of the lesson does not take the same amount of time. For example, quick questions are designed to be five minutes or less, but the lesson or reading portion may take 30 to 45 minutes. As is seen above, a lesson using the Achievement First General Lesson Plan Format has seven sections within a 65-minute class. This keeps teachers moving quickly from section to section, keeping the attention of students, and forcing a fast-paced, multi-modal lesson. Moreover, we will train our teachers to vary the modality of the instruction. A typical lesson might have the following modalities:

### 65 Minutes: Achievement First's Lesson Plan Format in Action

Quick Questions Aim and Agenda Cumulative Review Interesting Idea Lesson  Summary Homework	Student-led Teacher-directed Call-and-response verbal, kinesthetic-based game Short video clip or read aloud Teacher-directed followed by small group work, discussion Think-pair-share groups Teacher-directed
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Having a common method of planning and a common language shared by all teachers also allows for greater collaboration and sharing among teachers. In addition, this common vocabulary can help enhance principal observation and feedback for teachers. If a teacher is spending 20 minutes for quick questions or not varying modalities, the principal can engage the teacher around this while referencing the research-based lesson plan design.

**II. New York schools.** Please provide the following for **each** of the schools you operate in New York.

#### AF Crown Heights

##### A. Grades served.

Achievement First Crown Heights opened in 2005-2006 serving grades K and 1 in the elementary academy and grade 5 in the middle school academy. It is growing one grade per year to eventually serve grades K-12. Current students are in grades K-3 and 5-7.

##### B. Years in operation.

Achievement First Crown Heights is in its third year of operation.

Achievement First  
EIN # 65-1203744  
Cause 4

**C. Total number of students served, by grade.**

School Year	K graders	1 graders	2 graders	3 graders	4 graders	5 graders	6 graders	7 graders	Total
2004-2005									0
2005-2006	81	81				81			243
2006-2007	84	84	84			84	84		420
2007-2008	84	84	84	84		84	84	84	588

**D. Breakdown of students by ethnicity and gender.**

Achievement First Crown Heights Elementary

Boys: 48.1% Girls 51.9%

Black: 98.2% Latino: 1.8%

Achievement First Crown Heights Middle

Boys: 50.8% Girls 49.2%

Black: 96.9% Latino: 3.1%

**E. Proportion of students eligible for *free lunch* under the Federal program, by grade.**

At Achievement First, we track the combined number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. At Achievement First Crown Heights Elementary, the total percentage of eligible students is 61.0%. At Achievement First Crown Heights Middle, the total percentage is 72.0%.

**F. Proportion of students eligible for *reduced-price lunch* under the Federal program, by grade.**

Please see above.

**G. Any other available information on family incomes of students.**

We do not collect additional information on family income.

**H. Weeks per year, days per week, and hours per day of required attendance.**

Students attend school from 7:30 am – 4:00 pm, every Monday-Thursday, with after school programming available from 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm. On Fridays, students attend school from 7:30 am – 1:45 pm to allow time for teacher professional development sessions on Friday afternoons.

The school year is in session from August 29 – June 26 and incorporates the standard Department of Education holidays.

Achievement First students are also required to attend a mandatory 15 day Summer Academy in July from 7:30 am – 1:45 pm daily.

**I. Average class size, by grade.**

Average class size across Achievement First is 27 students. All K-2 classrooms support two full time teachers, and students in all grades are broken into smaller groups by ability level for reading and math instruction.

**J. Attendance rate, by grade.**

Data is not yet available for 2007-2008 attendance rates. In 2006-2007, average attendance at Achievement First Crown Heights elementary school was 96%. At AF Crown Heights Middle, average attendance was also 96%.

**K. Geographic location, and nearest school districts.**

Achievement First Crown Heights is located at 790 East New York Avenue, in the Mahalia Jackson school building. This building is located in District 17.

**L. How many students applied to the school in each of the last five years (or as far back as possible), and how many were accepted.**

Students are typically accepted to Achievement First through blind lotteries in kindergarten (elementary academy) and fifth grade (middle academy). While applications are accepted for waiting lists in the other grades, we strongly encourage and solicit applications primarily for K and 5. In 2007-2008, 374 students applied for the 84 available seats in the kindergarten class, and 215 applied for fifth grade. Including students on other grade waiting lists, 1254 applications were received for Achievement First Crown Heights.

**M. What schools the students likely attend *after* leaving your school (i.e., for a middle school, list the schools that students likely enter after completing middle school; for an elementary school, list the middle schools that students likely enter after completing elementary school).**

N/A. No students have yet matriculated out of Achievement First Crown Heights. When our first middle school students complete the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we will be opening a high school in collaboration with KIPP and Uncommon Schools to support our students through the high school years.

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<b>AF East New York</b>
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**A. Grades served.**

Achievement First East New York opened in 2005-2006 serving grades K and 1 in the elementary academy. It is growing one grade per year to eventually serve grades K-12. Currently students are in grades K-3.



**B. Years in operation.**

Achievement First East New York is in its third year of operation.

**C. Total number of students served, by grade.**

School Year	K graders	1 graders	2 graders	3 graders	4 graders	5 graders	6 graders	7 graders	Total
2004-2005									0
2005-2006	81	81							162
2006-2007	84	84	84						252
2007-2008	84	84	84	84					336

**D. Breakdown of students by ethnicity and gender.**

Achievement First East New York

Boys: 49.2% Girls 51.8%

Black: 90.8% Latino: 8.2%

**E. Proportion of students eligible for *free lunch* under the Federal program, by grade.**

At Achievement First, we track the combined number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. At Achievement First East New York, the total percentage of eligible students is 80.0%.

**F. Proportion of students eligible for *reduced-price* lunch under the Federal program, by grade.**

Please see above.

**G. Any other available information on family incomes of students.**

We do not collect additional information on family income.

**H. Weeks per year, days per week, and hours per day of required attendance.**

Students attend school from 7:30 am – 4:00 pm, every Monday-Thursday, with after school programming available from 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm. On Fridays, students attend school from 7:30 am – 1:45 pm to allow time for teacher professional development sessions on Friday afternoons.

The school year is in session from August 29 – June 26 and incorporates the standard Department of Education holidays.

Achievement First students are also required to attend a mandatory 15 day Summer Academy in July from 7:30 am – 1:45 pm daily.

**I. Average class size, by grade.**

Average class size across Achievement First is 27 students. All K-2 classrooms support two full time teachers, and students in all grades are broken into smaller groups by ability level for reading and math instruction.

**J. Attendance rate, by grade.**

Data is not yet available for 2007-2008 attendance rates. In 2006-2007, average attendance at Achievement First East New York was 95%.

**K. Geographic location, and nearest school districts.**

Achievement First East New York is located at 557 Pennsylvania Avenue, in the PS 13 school building. This building is located in District 19.

**L. How many students applied to the school in each of the last five years (or as far back as possible), and how many were accepted.**

Students are typically accepted to Achievement First through blind lotteries in kindergarten (elementary academy) and fifth grade (middle academy). While applications are accepted for waiting lists in the other grades, we strongly encourage and solicit applications primarily for K and 5. In 2007-2008, 329 students applied for the 84 available seats in the kindergarten class. Including students on other grade waiting lists, 652 applications were received for Achievement First East New York.

**M. What schools the students likely attend *after* leaving your school (i.e., for a middle school, list the schools that students likely enter after completing middle school; for an elementary school, list the middle schools that students likely enter after completing elementary school).**

N/A. No students have yet matriculated out of Achievement First East New York. When our middle school students complete the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we will be opening a high school in collaboration with KIPP and Uncommon Schools to support our students through the high school years.

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<b>AF Endeavor</b>
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**A. Grades served.**

Achievement First Endeavor opened in 2006-2007 serving grade 5. It is growing one grade per year to eventually serve grades K-12. Currently students are in grades 5-6.

**B. Years in operation.**

Achievement First Endeavor is in its second year of operation.

**C. Total number of students served, by grade.**

School Year	K graders	1 graders	2 graders	3 graders	4 graders	5 graders	6 graders	7 graders	Total
2004-2005									0
2005-2006									0
2006-2007						84			84
2007-2008						84	84		168

**D. Breakdown of students by ethnicity and gender.**

Achievement First Endeavor

Boys: 49% Girls 51%

Black: 94% Latino: 4% White 1% Asian and other 1%

**E. Proportion of students eligible for *free lunch* under the Federal program, by grade.**

At Achievement First, we track the combined number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. At Achievement First Endeavor, the total percentage of eligible students is 59.0%.

**F. Proportion of students eligible for *reduced-price lunch* under the Federal program, by grade.**

Please see above.

**G. Any other available information on family incomes of students.**

We do not collect additional information on family income.

**H. Weeks per year, days per week, and hours per day of required attendance.**

Students attend school from 7:30 am – 4:00 pm, every Monday-Thursday, with after school programming available from 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm. On Fridays, students attend school from 7:30 am – 1:45 pm to allow time for teacher professional development sessions on Friday afternoons.

The school year is in session from August 29 – June 26 and incorporates the standard Department of Education holidays.

Achievement First students are also required to attend a mandatory 15 day Summer Academy in July from 7:30 am – 1:45 pm daily.

**I. Average class size, by grade.**

Average class size across Achievement First is 27 students. All K-2 classrooms support two full time teachers, and students in all grades are broken into smaller groups by ability level for reading and math instruction.

**J. Attendance rate, by grade.**

Data is not yet available for 2007-2008 attendance rates. In 2006-2007, average attendance at Achievement First Endeavor was 96%.

**K. Geographic location, and nearest school districts.**

Achievement First Endeavor is located at 850 Kent Avenue, in the PS 157 school building. This building is located in District 14.

**L. How many students applied to the school in each of the last five years (or as far back as possible), and how many were accepted.**

Students are typically accepted to Achievement First through blind lotteries in kindergarten (elementary academy) and fifth grade (middle academy). While applications are accepted for waiting lists in the other grades, we strongly encourage and solicit applications primarily for K and 5. In 2007-2008, 232 students applied for 84 available seats in fifth grade at AF Endeavor. Including students on the sixth grade waiting lists, 323 applications were received for Achievement First Endeavor.

**M. What schools the students likely attend *after* leaving your school (i.e., for a middle school, list the schools that students likely enter after completing middle school; for an elementary school, list the middle schools that students likely enter after completing elementary school).**

N/A. No students have yet matriculated out of Achievement First East New York. When our middle school students complete the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we will be opening a high school in collaboration with KIPP and Uncommon Schools to support our students through the high school years.

<b>AF Bushwick</b>
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**A. Grades served.**

Achievement First Bushwick opened in 2006-2007 serving grades K and 1 in the elementary academy. Achievement First Bushwick Middle Academy opened in 2007-2008 serving grade The school is growing one grade per year to eventually serve grades K-12. Current students are in grades K-2 and 5.

**B. Years in operation.**

Achievement First Bushwick is in its second year of operation.

### C. Total number of students served, by grade.

School Year	K graders	1 graders	2 graders	3 graders	4 graders	5 graders	6 graders	7 graders	Total
2004-2005									0
2005-2006									0
2006-2007	84	84							168
2007-2008	84	84	84			84			336

### D. Breakdown of students by ethnicity and gender.

Achievement First Bushwick Elementary

Boys: 49%      Girls 52%  
 Black: 65%      Latino: 34%      Asian and other 1%

Achievement First Bushwick Middle

Boys: 45%      Girls 54%  
 Black: 94%      Latino: 5%      Asian and other 1%

### E. Proportion of students eligible for *free lunch* under the Federal program, by grade.

At Achievement First, we track the combined number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. At Achievement First Bushwick Elementary, the total percentage of eligible students is 75%. At Achievement First Bushwick Middle, the total percentage is 67%.

### F. Proportion of students eligible for *reduced-price* lunch under the Federal program, by grade.

Please see above.

### G. Any other available information on family incomes of students.

We do not collect additional information on family income.

### H. Weeks per year, days per week, and hours per day of required attendance.

Students attend school from 7:30 am – 4:00 pm, every Monday-Thursday, with after school programming available from 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm. On Fridays, students attend school from 7:30 am – 1:45 pm to allow time for teacher professional development sessions on Friday afternoons.

The school year is in session from August 29 – June 26 and incorporates the standard Department of Education holidays.

Achievement First students are also required to attend a mandatory 15 day Summer Academy in July from 7:30 am – 1:45 pm daily.

**I. Average class size, by grade.**

Average class size across Achievement First is 27 students. All K-2 classrooms support two full time teachers, and students in all grades are broken into smaller groups by ability level for reading and math instruction.

**J. Attendance rate, by grade.**

Data is not yet available for 2007-2008 attendance rates. In 2006-2007, average attendance at Achievement First Bushwick elementary school was 96%.

**K. Geographic location, and nearest school districts.**

Achievement First Bushwick Elementary is located at 1137 Herkimer. This building is located in District 23. Achievement First Bushwick Middle is located at 45 Schaefer St, in the PS 45 building, District 32.

**L. How many students applied to the school in each of the last five years (or as far back as possible), and how many were accepted.**

Students are typically accepted to Achievement First through blind lotteries in kindergarten (elementary academy) and fifth grade (middle academy). While applications are accepted for waiting lists in the other grades, we strongly encourage and solicit applications primarily for K and 5. In 2007-2008, 346 students applied for the 84 available seats in the kindergarten class, and 214 applied for fifth grade. Including students on other grade waiting lists, 800 applications were received for Achievement First Crown Heights.

**M. What schools the students likely attend *after* leaving your school (i.e., for a middle school, list the schools that students likely enter after completing middle school; for an elementary school, list the middle schools that students likely enter after completing elementary school).**

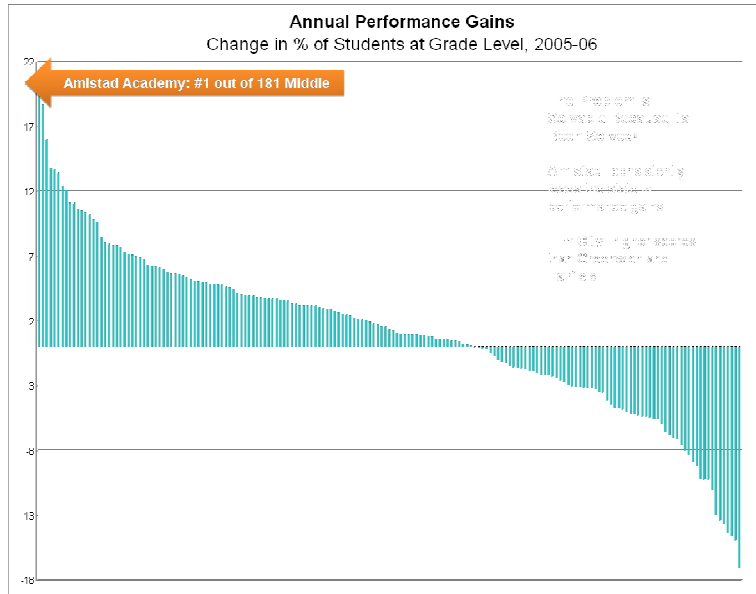
N/A. No students have yet matriculated out of Achievement First Bushwick. When our first middle school students complete the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we will be opening a high school in collaboration with KIPP and Uncommon Schools to support our students through the high school years.

**III. Outcomes and evidence of effectiveness. Please provide the following for as many Achievement First schools as possible, including those outside of New York.**

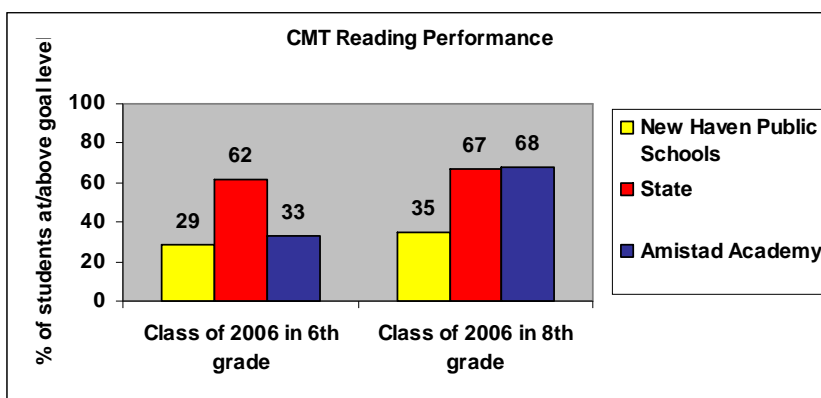
**A. Comparative studies of academic performance (particularly test scores), examining the likely impact of participation in Achievement First.**

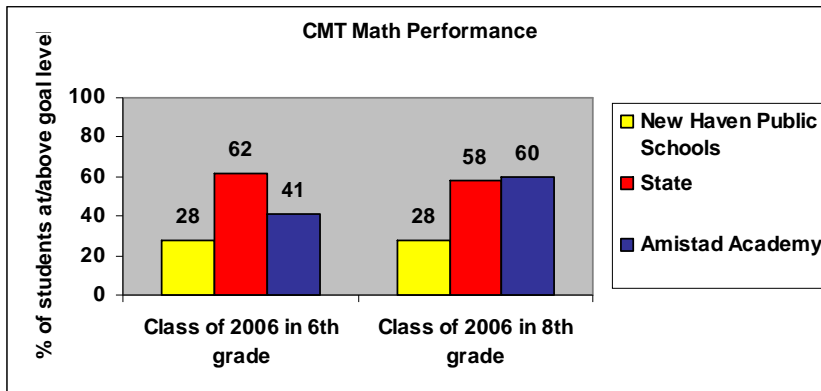


Achievement First is a non-profit charter school management organization started by the leaders of Amistad Academy. In 2005, Amistad Academy was the subject of a nationally televised PBS documentary, "Closing the Achievement Gap," which identified Amistad as one of the country's top urban schools of excellence, dramatically improving academic outcomes for students from low-income backgrounds. Amistad students – who are 98% black and Latino and 80% free/reduced lunch – are selected by lottery from the city of New Haven and arrive in the fifth grade, on average, testing two years below grade level. After three years at Amistad, these same students as 8<sup>th</sup> graders consistently post test scores that are double or even triple the New Haven district, beat state-wide averages, and even outperform many of Connecticut's wealthiest suburbs. In 2006, Amistad Academy was named Connecticut's only Title I Distinguished School after posting the greatest performance gains of any middle school in the state. This remarkable achievement is depicted in the graph below.



The graphs below show the growth of a single cohort of students (Amistad's most recent 8<sup>th</sup> grade class) from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade in reading and math performance. Both of the graphs tell a similar story: These students entered Amistad in the fall of 5<sup>th</sup> grade on par with their New Haven peers – and well below the state. After one year at Amistad, they took the Connecticut Mastery Test in the fall of 6<sup>th</sup> grade. While the Amistad students had begun to break away from their New Haven peers, they still lagged well behind the state average with 33% proficiency in reading and 41% in math. Two years later, these same students had made dramatic gains and now exceed state averages in both reading and math.



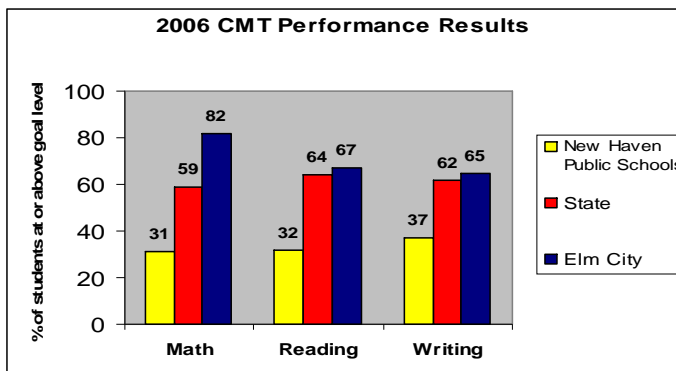


### Elm City College Prep: The First AF Replication

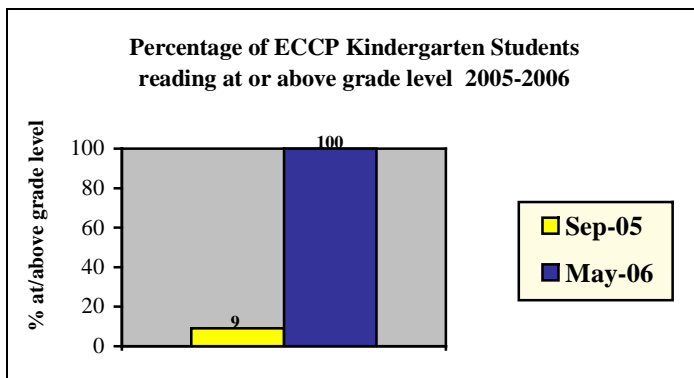
Based on the success at Amistad Academy, Achievement First was granted a second Connecticut charter in 2004 to open Elm City College Prep. ECCP opened in September 2004 with kindergarten, first, and fifth grades and has grown one grade every year to serve grades K-8 in 2007-2008.

What's promising is that the results at ECCP already exceed those of the award-winning Amistad Academy. For example, in comparing 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores at Amistad and ECCP, the Elm City students actually made greater gains in their first year. During the 2004-2005 school year, Amistad increased the percentage of fifth graders reading at grade level from 14% to 45%. During that same year, ECCP increased its percentage of grade-level readers from 18% to 55%.

The graph below shows the CMT performance results for 6th grade students at Elm City College Prep in 2006 (the sixth grade was the oldest cohort at ECCP since the school only opened in 2004). After just two years at Elm City College Prep, these students outperformed state averages in every subject. On the math section, Elm City scholars even outscored their counterparts from some of Connecticut's wealthiest districts, including Greenwich and Westport.

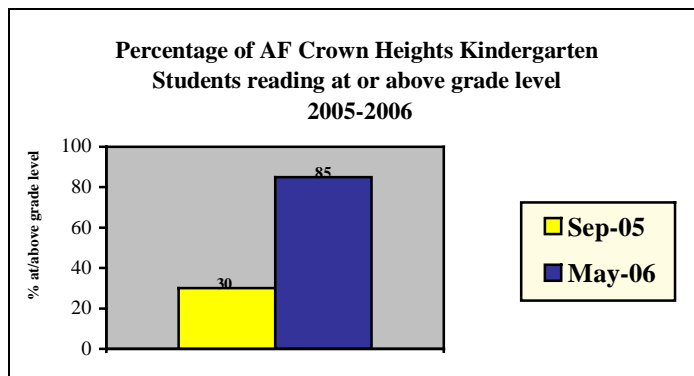


At the elementary academy, Elm City College Prep scholars also posted impressive results. As incoming kindergarteners in fall 2005, only nine percent of ECCP students were reading at grade level according to the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), a nationally normed elementary school reading exam. By the end of the academic year, a full 100% of students were reading at or above grade level! This level of performance sets our scholars up for continued success as they stay at Achievement First through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

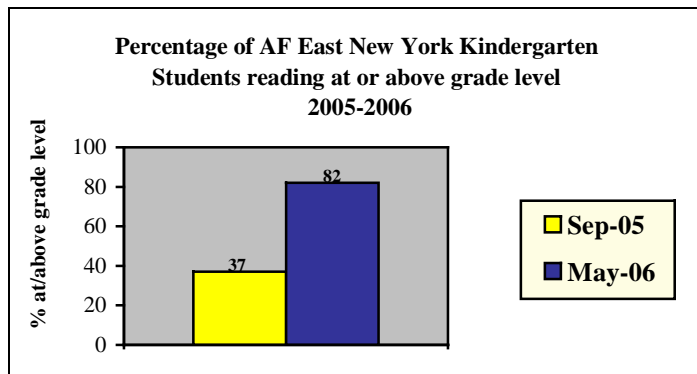


#### Achievement First Crown Heights and Achievement First East New York

In 2005, Achievement First was invited to expand its network to New York City. Our first Brooklyn-based schools, Achievement First Crown Heights (middle and elementary school) and Achievement First East New York (elementary) posted impressive results in their first year of operation, 2005-2006. After only one year, 85% of the kindergarten class at AF Crown Heights was rated Proficient or Advanced in reading, up from 30% at the beginning of the year according to the Developmental Reading Assessment test.



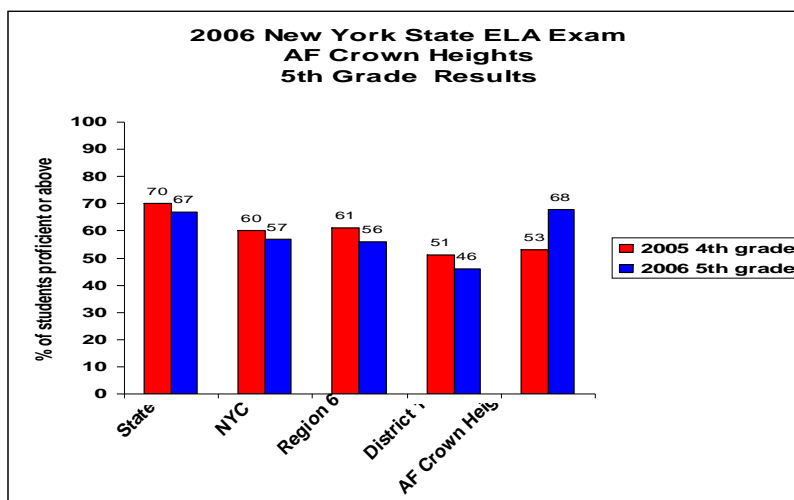
Similarly, at Achievement First East New York, after only one year, 82% of the kindergarten class at AF East New York was rated Proficient or Advanced in reading, up from 37% at the beginning of the year.



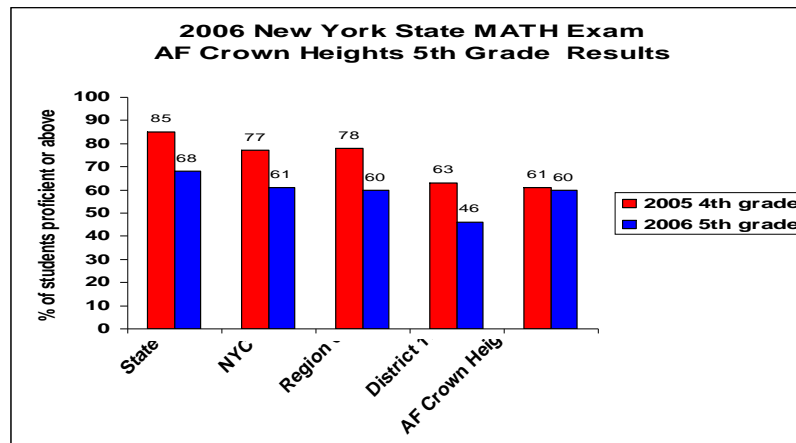
The incoming first grade students at AF Crown Heights and AF East New York made similarly impressive gains and their results can be found in Exhibit B. Elementary school data for this school year (2006-2007) is still being gathered at both of these schools (as well as at Achievement First Bushwick Charter School which is just completing its first year). Based on mid-year results, it appears that all three elementary schools have helped their students achieve similarly impressive gains. AF has agreed to forward the 2006-2007 school year data to SUNY CSI as soon as it is available.

At the middle school level, fifth grade scholars at Achievement First Crown Heights in 2005-2006 rivaled the success of Amistad Academy and Elm City College Prep on the Degrees of Reading Power exam, a nationally recognized reading assessment. As noted above, ECCP beat Amistad in terms of performance gains – and AF Crown Heights, the newest member of the middle school network, beat them both! AF Crown Heights students increased from 5% to 46% reading at or above grade level (defined as the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on the nationally-normed DRP). This DRP data, along with equally strong Stanford 9 math results, is presented in Exhibit B.

On the 2006 New York State English Language Arts test, the first class of fifth grade students at AF Crown Heights beat district, region, city, and state averages – and increased from 53% proficient as 4<sup>th</sup> graders to 68% proficient as 5<sup>th</sup> graders.



On the 2006 New York State Math test, scholars significantly outperformed the district average, as evidence below



**B. High school graduation rates of Achievement First graduates, going back as many years as possible.**

Achievement First will graduate its first class of high school students in 2010 from the Amistad-Elm City College Preparatory High School. However, prior to the opening of Achievement First's high school in New Haven students graduated and attended competitive prep schools and local New Have Public Schools. We are working very aggressively to track students who leave our schools and we continue to compile data on Amistad 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduates. At the time of the publishing of this proposal the information is not available. We can provide this information at a later time.

**C. 2-year and 4-year college matriculation rates of Achievement First graduates, going back as many years as possible.**

We continue to compile this data, however this information is not available at this time.

**D. Colleges attended by Achievement First graduates, going back as many years as possible.**

The first students to graduate from Amistad Academy did so in 2006, and approximately 80% of those students are currently enrolled in four-year colleges.

**E. Any available data on college performance of Achievement First graduates, including college graduation rates.**

We do not currently have college graduation data. The first cohort of students is expected to graduate from college in 2010.

**IV. Information on expansion.****A. Do you have any plans to create more schools in New York? If so, please be specific about where and when you plan to create new schools.**

The original Achievement First business plan called for creation of 15 academies consisting of six elementary schools, six middle schools, and three high schools. Currently we are on target towards reaching this goal. Achievement First schools are broken into three units including elementary, middle and high school academies. Achievement First currently manages four charters consisting of six academies. This current configuration will grow to twelve units or academies. After the reauthorization of the New York Charter Law last April, Achievement First is poised to open two more charter schools, Achievement First Brownsville for 2008 and Achievement first North Crown Heights which will open in 2009. The two additional charters will give Achievement First four additional academies.

**B. Please describe the process of creating a new school in New York. What is the time and financial investment required from your organization? What is the government's contribution, in terms of (a) funding (b) oversight and technical assistance?**

The process of creating a new school in New York is complex and time-intensive. However, as our goal is scale we work hard to ensure we're not focused on the single successful school, but growing and building a network or district of schools. As described above we have submitted applications for six charters in New York State. Our first attempt was in 2004, and we have since increased our capacity to meet the ambitious authorizer deadlines and paper production requirements. As noted, our goal is to increase our capacity to replicate the model. To describe the process in detail, each time we submit a charter application we have to assemble a board of trustees consisting of six to seven committed business, public and private leaders; assemble volumes of binders that articulate our plans to open a new school; secure names (200 signatures) for petitions to show community need; raise funds to meet the demands of start-up; and find a facility where the school will be located. This requires all-hands-on-deck to meet the demands of opening the new schools while maintaining school operations. In total, we spend about a year planning prior to the opening of a new school. We estimate that the start-up costs to open a new school ranges anywhere between \$300,000 to \$400,000. These costs are borne by Achievement First, and not the individual schools.

**V. Impact of donations. What would an increase in donations (from individuals – beyond any funds received from us) allow your organization to do that it could not otherwise?**

During the critical start-up years, Achievement First needs consistent investment to support school start-up. While Achievement First schools will ultimately enjoy financial independence through our self-sustaining growth model, their first eight years require considerable investment to grow the program to scale. Beyond the anticipated yearly deficits, as the model continues to mature and best practices and areas for growth are identified, supplementary funding allows the Achievement First opportunity to incorporate new innovations. The Saturday tutoring program is a prime example of a need that was identified to provide sufficient time on task for our scholars to

achieve grade-level proficiency. Launching this program, which will initially serve 15-20% of students at every middle school academy in Brooklyn and Connecticut and grow to serve the elementary and high school academies, requires significant curriculum development, tutor recruitment and training, and weekly program administration overhead. Achievement First believes strongly in the value of such program additions, and relies on the generous support of individuals and foundations to make it possible for all of our scholars to climb the mountain to college and find success beyond.