



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Achievement First Endeavor Charter School

**850 Kent Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11205**

Principal: Eric Redwine

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Achievement First Endeavor Middle School is a charter school which was opened in September 2006 by the Achievement First organization. It currently has 84 students enrolled in grade 5, and will look to double this number for the next academic year when the school will reach its planned maximum of 168 students from grades 5 and 6. Enrollment is through an open lottery and there is a current waiting list for places.

The demographic composition of the students shows 96% are Black, with the remaining 4% being Hispanic. No students are currently designated as English language learners. The school is Title 1 funded. Of the total student numbers, 9.5% are special education students with an individual education plan. Current student attendance is running at 96%, which is well above the city average. The average daily teacher attendance for the current academic year is 100%.

As a new school there has been no previous oversight report with areas raised as needing to be addressed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides clear, focused leadership and a clear vision for success.
- The commitment and expertise of the teachers and the Board creates an environment where students can learn and make good progress.
- The extensive use of data allows the school to monitor and track the achievement of cohorts, groups and individual students.
- The pace and rigor of instruction fully engages students in learning.
- The high expectation of success motivates both teachers and students and creates a learning partnership.
- The positive behavior strategies reinforce the atmosphere of learning and study.
- Rigorous systems ensure that attendance and punctuality are well above the City average.
- The ability to learn from and adapt best practice reinforces the good teaching.
- Comparisons of performance with similar schools in the organization, and with other schools in the District, City and State provide a measure of progress and achievement.
- The development of very positive links with parents encourages them to be active partners in the education of their children.
- Adequate internal controls and segregated staff functions are in place.
- The school has created comprehensive and clearly outlined fiscal policies.
- Parents are highly satisfied with the school and see strong potential in the school.
- Little or no time is wasted disciplining kids in the school.
- A collaborative model exists with teachers and the principal working as a team.

What the school needs to improve

- The development of facilities for teaching science and physical education to enhance provision in these areas.
- Continuing development of differentiated instruction to allow practice to be further refined.
- The strengthening of peer professional development opportunities and the program of intervisitation to allow teachers to share good practice and learn from the expertise of colleagues.
- The introduction of computers as tools for teaching and learning to strengthen the ability of students to undertake individual study and research.
- Put inventory policy in practice.

- School should communicate in languages other than English to accommodate parent's needs.
- Tag DYCD funded assets as "property of DYCD."

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

Using a wealth of data gathered throughout the school year, the progress and achievement of every student is tracked and monitored with care. This is also supported through the involvement of parents, who, for example, track the nightly reading undertaken by their children and report this back to classroom teachers. When data has revealed some disappointing areas of growth, the school has shown itself to be reflective and able to develop strategies to address this. The comparison the school makes with district, city and state schools shows that in reading it is now outperforming them all, though it also identifies mathematics as an area needing further development.

The pace and rigor of teaching, coupled with the commitment and enthusiasm of the students, has created a positive learning environment where adults and children work towards a common goal of academic achievement and the maximizing of potential. The school is well supported by its knowledgeable and committed Board, while the inspirational leadership of the principal is at the heart of everything undertaken in the school.

Achievement First Endeavor's (AFE) board has provided effective oversight in all aspects of the school's operation. The board demonstrates fair capacity and a mix of skill sets that has delivered for the school. The school has a good organic structure that allows the school leader to spend time on strategic planning needs and provide external and internal leadership feedback integral to any successful organization. The board plans to evaluate services provided by Achievement First, the partner organization. The school has established solid internal controls and policies to guide its day to day operation.

Overall, the school displays a good financial outlook as well as high parent satisfaction. However, it is understood that the school is in its first year of operation and much remains to be seen in coming months. Nonetheless, the school has done a good job of identifying pillars (not all) that may lead to high success in the long run.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has rigorous procedures for acquiring data on student performance throughout the year from an initial baseline. The Stanford-10 test administered at the start and mid-point of the year provides evidence of progress in mathematics, while reading progress is similarly tested, for example through use of the DRA. Interim assessments measure progress in reading, grammar and mathematics every six weeks, with each assessment carefully aligned with city and state standards. Students are assigned to one of four flexibly grouped classes from the results of the baseline assessments, with the lowest performing students in a smaller class to maximize the support they can receive.

While the school does not yet look at data for any differences among ethnic groups – the present students are nearly all Black – the two students who entered as English language learners had their progress carefully tracked as they gained language proficiency. Special education students are carefully monitored as individuals and care is taken to ensure that the services specified in their individual education plans are implemented. Data is used to look at the progress of each individual, rather than at groups, in what is a very small school. The information gained from the interim assessments is recorded by each class teacher on a data analysis sheet which breaks results down into individual strands for each student, clearly reflecting individual strengths and areas for development. While each teacher maintains the data for his or her own class, the information is also logged on a central database maintained by the principal. When analysis showed gains in some areas were disappointing there was a careful analysis of the reasons for this and action taken to address the situation.

Comparisons are made with the performance of other schools in the group, and with the other schools in the District, City and State. While this shows that there is a need for further development in mathematics, in reading the performance is already outstripping that of schools in the City and State.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

After each round of interim assessments teachers meet to analyze results from the item analysis and strands that have been clearly grasped are identified as needing only quick reinforcement while those areas where there has been mixed comprehension become the topics for mini-lessons and those concepts that have not been understood are re-taught. This process involves each student’s results and reflects school wide focus on careful planning to ensure that individual needs are met.

Particular attention is given to the performance and progress of those in greatest need of improvement in addition to them being grouped into a smaller class. Students identified as having reading weaknesses are placed in one of four guided reading groups. They are withdrawn from Advisory time to join these groups, which focus on areas of specific weakness. Teachers meet in child study teams every 60 days where the special education teachers share their work with other staff so that progress is monitored, possible interventions can be discussed and emerging concerns can be raised.

The school’s high expectations are also conveyed to students, for example in the highly motivational use of Thursday morning whole-school circle time, and to parents. For example, parents are expected to monitor the reading undertaken every evening and to relay this information back to the school on the daily individual reading check. Even before a student enters the school the principal makes a home visit to discuss the high expectations of the school and to gain signatures for the ‘contract’ that they are expected to sign regarding their commitment to the school’s expectations. Parents also complete an annual questionnaire that allows levels of satisfaction to be checked against that of the other schools in the group.

All adults in the school share high expectations, which are conveyed to the students. For example, students have the cell phone numbers of their teachers so that they can call for

help with homework when necessary. They are also expected to support the incentive based behavior policy that is implemented with vigor. Goals and plans for improving performance and progress certainly drive the activity of all members of the school community.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Care is taken to ensure that instruction is fully aligned to State and City expectations. The whole curriculum is used to generate data so that objective evidence of individual progress is maintained for every student. Good practice observed elsewhere is used to further improve instruction, for example from visits to other charter schools working with similar student populations.

Teachers are individually accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes and are supported by the school’s data recording systems. Teaching is characterized by pace and vigor, and the excellent relationships between teachers and students. Differentiation is still a work in progress, but the stress on individual student outcomes puts the school in a very strong position to take this forward. Currently, provision for science and physical education is limited by the lack of specialist facilities, and there has been a lack of computers for use by students.

The budget supports learning effectively. For example, individual teachers can request resources to help meet their professional development needs, while for students the DRA data on reading levels will be used to purchase leveled reading resources. Similarly, the needs revealed by the emerging data has influenced decisions on staffing, so the principal is looking to appoint an Elementary teacher to work with students needing support in making the transition to Middle School. Scheduling decisions are also data driven in that groupings are derived from the interim assessments and the weakest students are put into a smaller class with a skilled teacher.

The students are, on the whole, highly motivated. Only one has left during the year and that was as a result of transportation difficulties. They enjoy attending and are actively engaged in the instructional programs. As a result attendance is well above the city average, and also of note is the average attendance of the teachers, which is currently at 100%. While there are procedures to trigger immediate intervention to deal with absence and tardiness they do not have to be frequently used.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The principal is providing inspirational leadership and in this he is very well supported by a faculty that shows total commitment. Throughout the school there are high expectations of student performance and progress, supported by the wealth of data that is gathered on individual performance.

Professional development is well supported by the Achievement First organization and by the school leadership. Each Friday afternoon is put aside to focus on aspects of professional development, focused around the ability to use data to improve individual student achievement. Each teacher has a professional growth plan which is compiled around the mid-point of the year and reviewed at the end. Such is the scope for professional development, matched by the commitment of the teachers, that there is at the moment room to expand the program of intervisitation and peer professional development. The emerging strengths of staff members are not always being fully utilized at present in sharing best practice.

The principal and deans informally observe classrooms on a daily basis. The administration is well aware of which are the struggling students and are looking for the ways in which they are being supported. In addition the principal also undertakes formal observations three or four times a year for all teachers.

Planning and evaluation takes place at a whole school level as there are currently only five teachers. They are an effective team. Teacher meetings are the venues for unit and lesson planning and the principal has established clear expectations for what is required around long and short term planning. These focus on collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

There are currently no ongoing links with external youth development and support services beyond the support provided by the Achievement First group.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school and the Achievement First group have very clear ideals and goals based around high expectations of student performance and progress. In measuring progress the school is very well supported by the wealth of data on each student. This includes the careful monitoring and recording of homework completion rates. Since much of the data on academic progress is broken down into strands covering the whole curriculum it allows for a detailed analysis of individual achievement. It also allows the school to be reflective about its performance, and to implement changes in areas where progress has been disappointing. When such amendments have been necessary the whole staff has been involved in the discussions on possible amendments.

The interim assessments are used to measure progress across the school and also as a tool for promoting the flexibility of the class groupings. In this way there can be movement within the groups to best meet the emerging needs of individual students.

Although it is only in its first year, the school has shown itself able to be flexible and responsive to needs, while at the same time challenging every student to achieve their fullest potential.

Quality Statement 6 – School’s Board has provided “effective” oversight and leadership as needed and is functioning in accordance with the agreed upon charter.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The Board is responsible for the overall direction and fiscal well being of the school. As such, the Board has the authority and duty to adopt policies and by-laws that are necessary to meet its statutory responsibilities and produce optimal academic results. Those administrative and daily operational responsibilities need to be delegated to principals, senior management/administrators, and board appointed officers to manage the school within the established policies. The principal /senior administrators, and board appointed officers should then be held accountable for performance.

AFE’s board of trustees is functioning as stipulated by charter contract. The board is equipped with legal, finance, community member, parent, operations, and education expertise to continue providing guidance in policy implementation. The board has a formal evaluation process to evaluate the school leader.

The board of trustees has been presented with sufficient financial and other relevant information during board meetings to make informed decisions and work collaboratively towards the school’s stated mission. With several other competing priorities, the board may want to consider adopting a document that integrates the school’s progress towards goals stated in the charter. The board approved budget is consistently monitored and compared to year-to-date expense, variance analyzed, and justifications provided by staff. The budget preparation process involves board members, teacher inputs, school leader, and school’s business manager. Finally, the board has adequately provided oversight in several aspects of school operations.

Quality Statement 7 – School has developed internal controls in place to detect and prevent financial fraud. School has written policies to guide ongoing operations and those policies are followed by school employees.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

AFE maintains excellent internal controls to prevent fraud and the school has done well in segregating staff functions. The school is advised to have an inventory practice and tag *all* fixed assets (including DYCD assets) that will help the school become an efficient organization and strengthen the asset balance sheet. A sampling of invoices, purchase orders, and proof of payment was conducted during the site visit. No material weakness was found. AFE has proper documentation in place and the school is following policies adopted by the board of trustees.

Quality Statement 8 – Based on the most recent financial statements, the school is in sound fiscal condition.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

A charter school should be able to operate with an annual budget that reflects the expected revenue and expenses for the fiscal year. Since the revenue stream for charter schools tend to be based upon the number of students served (per pupil revenue) and the State and Federal grant (Title funding, etc...) funding, a continued and growing negative

net balance poses threat to school's stability and the ability to fulfill its short and long-term financial obligations.

AFE is in its first year of operation and will provide its audited financial statements on November 1, 2007. At that point, OCS will analyze the expenses incurred on education and administrative expenses as well as school's financial outlook.

Quality Statement 9 – School has the structure to integrate parents and community partners in the school.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school continues to enjoy excellence in this category and has several avenues to formulate parental input into the program. AFE has various planned parent awareness events and meeting opportunities in place to encourage continued parent and community participation.

They praised the user friendly progress reports, teachers' willingness to communicate (email, cell phone, etc.) and provide feedback as needed. They mentioned their kids being independent in their daily homework and described the school as a place where learning continues to be fun for their kids. Parents also expressed concerns on absence of a foreign language, math not very challenging, and that more practical approach (real life applications) was needed in science labs. A need for a physical education program was also discussed in the meeting.

The school is advised to reach out to all parents and accommodate their language needs during communication. Parents were aware of the Board meetings and their rights (appeals process) as parents at the school. They felt good at Board meetings as the Board was very accommodating and responsive to parents' needs and to hearing parental input.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Achievement First Endeavor Charter School

∅ ✓ +

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X
Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X

Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student’s and group of students’ outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other’s classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan’s interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X
Quality Statement 6 – School’s Board has provided “effective” oversight and leadership as needed and is functioning in accordance with the agreed upon charter.	∅	✓	+
6.1 The Board size, structure and composition are appropriate. The membership is diverse (G/S/E) and complements a broad skill set.			X
6.2 Board functions as stipulated by contract, and is a well-functioning organization.			X
6.3 Board has adopted and communicated the whistleblower policy with staff members.			X
6.4 Board has provided effective oversight in operational, fiscal, academic, hiring & firing (as appropriate) issues of the school.			X
6.5 Board conflicts (if any) were resolved in timely fashion and had no effect on school operations.			X
6.6 Board evaluates partner organization at least once a year. OCS was notified of any changes in partnership agreement.			X
6.7 Board has been responsive to both parent and school staff concerns/complaints (if any)			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 6			X
Quality Statement 7 – School has developed internal controls in place to detect and prevent financial fraud. School has written policies to guide ongoing operations and those policies are followed by school employees.	∅	✓	+
7.1 School has a comprehensive financial control system in place. Check signing, procurement, inventory controls, bank reconciliation, travel reimbursement, investment, petty cash, conflict of interest, vacation and sick leave, bonus relocation, etc. policy is in place.			X
7.2 School has segregated staff duties to prevent and detect fraud.			X
7.3 School is consistently following its adopted financial procedures for requisition approval, certification of funds and placing of orders for goods.			X

7.4 School's employees are familiar with school's established financial procedures.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 7			X
Quality Statement 8 – Based on the most recent financial statements, school is in sound fiscal condition.	Ø	✓	+
8.1 School's total educational expense / total expense ratio is above 70% for this fiscal year.		n/a	
8.2 School's administrative ratio is under 30% for this fiscal year.		n/a	
8.3 School's current ratio is greater than or equal to 2.0.		n/a	
8.4 School's debt to asset ratio is less than or equal to 1.0.		n/a	
Overall score for Quality Statement 8			n/a
Quality Statement 9 – School has structure to integrate parents and community partners in the school.	Ø	✓	+
9.1 School has a parent organization or a parent teacher organization.			X
9.2 School has special events for parents to meet, discuss issues and socialize with each other.			X
9.3 Parents are informed of the time and location of the open Board meetings.			X
9.4 Newsletters are sent in all predominant languages of the neighborhood to encourage parent participation and eliminate cultural and language barriers.			X
9.5 Parent handbook stipulates the appeals process should a conflict arise.			X
9.6 Has a clear idea of how the pupil has improved since attending this school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 9			X

***Note on Statement 8: School's current year in operation and other extenuating circumstances (facilities acquisition, capital renovation, etc..) will be taken into account while assigning a grade.**