

VI.D.

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO BE PROPOSED:

February 6, 2020

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Achievement First Bridgeport Academy from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2022, subject to the Commissioner's February 6, 2020, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____, this sixth day of February, Two Thousand Twenty.

Signed: _____
Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Secretary
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education

DATE: February 6, 2020

SUBJECT: Renewal of State Charter – Achievement First Bridgeport Academy, Bridgeport

Executive Summary

Introduction

In accordance with subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), charters may be renewed, upon application, in accordance with the provisions for the granting of new charters. The State Board of Education (SBE) may renew a charter for a period of up to five years. The SBE makes renewal decisions based on evidence of the following performance standards:

1. *School Performance:* Is the school a successful model resulting in strong student outcomes and a positive school climate?
2. *Stewardship, Governance and Management:* Is the school financially and organizationally healthy and viable?
3. *Student Population:* Is the school promoting equity by effectively attracting, enrolling and retaining students, particularly among targeted populations?
4. *Legal Compliance:* Is the school acting in compliance with applicable laws and regulations?

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the SBE carefully evaluate qualitative and quantitative evidence, and longitudinal data aligned to the four performance standards outlined above when making charter renewal decisions. The charter performance framework drives the CSDE's charter school accountability systems and processes, including initial approval decisions, annual monitoring and renewal determinations. From inception to renewal, charter schools must abide by the CSDE's charter school accountability procedures and performance framework. Charter monitoring takes place through annual reporting, meetings, correspondence and site visits, as appropriate. In accordance with C.G.S. § 10-66bb(g), a charter may be renewed upon application, if the charter school has demonstrated satisfactory performance relative to the four performance standards.

History/Background

Achievement First Bridgeport Academy (AFBA) opened in the fall of 2007 and is completing its thirteenth year in operation. The latest CSDE audited student enrollment data from 2018-19 reported 756 students in Grades K-12 with 100 percent residing in Bridgeport (the host district). AFBA has a maximum approved student enrollment of 1,094 seats. Table 1, on page 14, of the attached Charter Renewal Report provides 2018-19 student enrollment and demographic data. Sixty-five point six percent of AFBA students qualify for free or reduced price meals and 8.9 percent of the students receive special education services. The mission of AFBA is to “deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all of America’s children.”

Charter Renewal Process

Application for Renewal of Charter: The CSDE accepted an application for the renewal of AFBA’s charter on September 6, 2019. The application detailed the charter school’s progress, operations, and achievement in relation to the CSDE’s charter school performance standards: (a) school performance; (b) stewardship, governance and management; (c) student population; and (d) legal compliance. AFBA submitted data and evidence to substantiate the charter school’s written responses.

A renewal team comprised of CSDE staff with expertise in curriculum, assessments, special education, English Learners (ELs), school management, finance, and school governance reviewed the renewal application and requested clarification and additional information, where necessary.

Renewal Site Visit: On October 23, 2019, the CSDE renewal team conducted an on-site visit at AFBA. The purpose of the on-site visit was to observe AFBA’s programs, policies, practices, and procedures to assess their efficacy and fidelity to the school’s charter and aligned operating systems. Evidence was collected through the on-site visit observations, document reviews, interviews, and focus groups. The team spoke with board members, administrators, staff, parents, and community members. The team used this process to ensure that the school is functioning in compliance with the law and the school’s mission. The team verified the responses detailed in the renewal application regarding compliance with the law and the CSDE’s performance framework and accountability plan.

Invitation for Written Comment: The CSDE solicited written comments on the renewal of AFBA from the Superintendent of Bridgeport Public Schools and from contiguous school districts: Fairfield, Stratford and Trumbull. The CSDE received a letter of support from Senator Dennis Bradley, 23rd District, Bridgeport and Stratford (see Attachment A) which provided no reason or comment that reflects poorly on the school. The CSDE received no letters against the renewal of the school’s charter.

Public Hearing: Robert J. Trefry, member of the SBE, and CSDE staff held a public hearing on November 14, 2019, in the city of Bridgeport, and heard from individuals on the potential charter renewal of AFBA and the impact it is having on the community. Public hearing participants included members of the AFBA community, family members, students, school staff and community members. Over 45 people attended the public hearing. Twenty-one individuals offered testimony supporting the school's efforts and the renewal of the charter. No one spoke against the renewal of the school's charter.

Site Visit Findings

The most recent available data and information contained in the Charter Renewal Report (on page 4), including the Next Generation Accountability Report 2017-18 (pages 7 and 8), indicate AFBA's performance according to the four performance standards. The report highlights school strengths and areas for continued growth.

Strengths include:

- No significant findings, conditions, or internal weaknesses were uncovered in AFBA's last certified financial audit.
- Overall the student body reflects the demographics of the surrounding community.
- The school demonstrates strong community support as evidenced by testimony provided by individuals at the public hearing and interviews with parents during the site visit.
- AFBA's website and Governing Board documents demonstrate that the Governing Board meetings are open and accessible to the public.
- AFBA's 2018-19 school culture and climate data reports a chronic absenteeism rate of 5.7 percent which is below state rate of 10.4 percent. The school's 2018-19 average daily attendance rate of 96.5 percent is above the CSDE's goal of 95 percent.
- AFBA's 2017-18 Accountability Index of 82.0 percent is above the state average of 74.9 percent.
- The school has exceeded the state testing participation rate of 95 percent in all areas tested for all students and high needs students over the last three testing periods.
- The 2018-19 Smarter Balanced Assessment average percentage of growth target achieved of AFBA students in ELA is 70.6 percent for all students, exceeding the state's 59.9 percent.
- The 2018-19 Smarter Balanced percentage of AFBA students achieving at or above proficiency (level 3 and 4) in ELA for all students, (Table 4), is 64.1 percent, 36.7 percentage points above Bridgeport's 27.4 percent, the host district, and 8.4 percentage points above the state's 55.7 percent.
- The 2018-19 Smarter Balanced percentage of AFBA students achieving at or above proficiency (level 3 and 4) in mathematics for all students, (Table 4), is 53.3 percent, 37.6 percentage points above Bridgeport's 15.7 percent, the host district, and 5.2 percentage points above the state's 48.1 percent.
- The 2018-19 Smarter Balanced percentage of AFBA students achieving at or above proficiency (level 3 and 4) in ELA for students in Grades 3-8, (Table 4) exceeded Bridgeport, the host district, and Grades 3, 4, 5 and 8 exceeded the state.
- The 2018-19 Smarter Balanced percentage of AFBA students achieving at or above proficiency (level 3 and 4) in mathematics for students in Grades 3-8, (Table 4) exceeded Bridgeport, the host district, and Grades 3, 4, and 5 exceeded the state.
- AFBA's On-track to High School Graduation of 94.0 percent is above the state average of 87.5 percent.

Areas of Concern:

- While AFBA's suspension rate has trended downward over the last three years from 18.6 percent in 2016-17 to 14.6 percent in 2018-19, it is above the state rate of 6.7 percent and Bridgeport rate of 12.0 percent.
- Pursuant to Section 10-17e-j of the C.G.S., AFBA is required to provide a transitional bilingual program to eligible ELs. The school provides transitional bilingual supports afterschool, outside the school day servicing a portion of the eligible EL population. Furthermore, it was determined that no transportation is offered to the students. The program's existence outside the school day is not a permissible replacement for bilingual programming. The transitional bilingual program must be part of the school's core programming.
- AFBA is not in compliance with the teacher certification statute. A condition of AFBA's charter renewal of March 1, 2017, required the school to comply with the teacher certification statute by October 31, 2019. AFBA provided updates to SBE on January 3, 2018 and February 6, 2019, on its progress. A report as of December 30, 2019, shows 86.6 percent of staff to be in compliance with certification. It is the responsibility of the school to take steps to ensure that 100 percent of the staff holds appropriate certificates, permits, or authorizations for their positions. Current legislation requires that at least 50 percent of educators serving in a charter school must hold a valid certificate (Initial, Provisional, or Professional Certificate) and the remaining 50 percent may hold other interim certificates, permits or authorizations. Of the 82 staff members requiring certification, 36 staff or 43.9 percent hold a valid certificate, and 35 staff members or 42.7 percent hold other permits or authorizations.
- AFBA is not in compliance with TEAM. AFBA is required to implement the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program with fidelity to the statutory requirements by ensuring 100 percent of beginning teachers complete the TEAM program by their completion deadline date (within three years of hire) to be eligible to advance their certificate. Beginning teachers must be assigned a mentor within 30 days of hire, receive and log a minimum of 20 hours of mentoring and complete two modules per year. Mentors may be assigned no more than two beginning teachers unless granted prior permission by the CSDE. On January 3, 2018, and February 6, 2019, AFBA provided updates to the SBE on its progress to bring its beginning teachers into TEAM compliance.

As of November 14, 2019, 12 out of the 13 teachers have been assigned a mentor. Due to the insufficient number of AF mentors for the 2019-20 school year, AF requested special permission for mentors to mentor more than two beginning teachers. One mentor has been assigned three beginning teachers. One out of the 13 staff has a completion deadline date of September 1, 2020. The staff member has received zero hours of mentoring during the current school year and only completed two modules. One out of 13 has received between 10 – 20 hours of mentoring during the current school year. Two teachers have received less than 4 hours of mentoring and ten teachers have received zero mentoring hours during the current school year.

Charter Renewal Recommendation

AFBA is financially and organizationally stable. The school's chronic absenteeism rate is below the state average. As previously mentioned, however, the school is not in compliance with TEAM or teacher certification legislation. Based on AFBA's long-standing inability to comply with teacher certification legislation, the CSDE recommends that the SBE renew the school's charter for a period of two years, with the knowledge that pursuant to subsection (h) of Sec.10-66bb(h), of the C.G.S., the Commissioner will place AFBA on probation and require the charter school to file a corrective action plan within the statutorily-prescribed timelines.

While the Commissioner recommends the renewal of AFBA from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2022, the Commissioner's letter of probation, separate from this action, will include the following provisions:

1. By February 11, 2020, as required by C.G.S. § 10-66bb(h), the Commissioner shall provide written notice to AFBA of the length and reasons for probation.
2. By February 11, 2020, as required by C.G.S. § 10-66bb(h), the Commissioner shall notify parents and guardians of students attending the school of the probationary status and the reasons for such status.
3. By March 6, 2020, AFBA shall submit a plan for the CSDE review and approval to bring its staff into certification compliance by October 31, 2020 by: (a) ensuring staff responsible for hiring clearly understand the certification requirements of each position; (b) providing a clear pathway and support to certification with established milestones and timelines; (c) including monitoring and interventions for non-compliance; and (d) reporting of non-compliant staff including certification targets, schedules, action steps, including responsible school staff, on August 3, 2020 to ensure compliance. The plan shall be developed in consultation with the CSDE's Talent Office. AFBA shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner's acceptance of the plan.
4. By March 6, 2020, AFBA shall submit a plan for the CSDE review and approval to implement the TEAM Program with fidelity to the statutory requirements by ensuring 100 percent of beginning teachers complete the TEAM program by their completion deadline date (within three years of hire) to be eligible to advance their certificate by October 31, 2020 by: (a) ensuring 100 percent of new beginning teachers are assigned a mentor within 30 days of hire; (b) matching no more than two beginning teachers to each mentor; and (c) requiring beginning teachers to complete two modules each year and log a minimum of 20 mentor hours.

5. By March 6, 2020, AFBA shall submit a plan for the CSDE review and approval to provide a transitional bilingual program to all eligible ELs within the core programming of the school day with no impact on student transportation.
6. In the fall of 2020, AFBA will be required to appear before the SBE to provide an update on the status of teacher certification compliance, TEAM and transitional bilingual program.
7. In the spring of 2021, pending SBE notification, the Commissioner will evaluate AFBA's satisfaction of the forgoing issues and determine the status of AFBA's probation.

The CSDE will notify Achievement First Bridgeport Academy of action taken by the SBE following its meeting on February 6, 2020. The school will be advised to take advantage of relevant technical assistance opportunities designed to improve its educational program. The CSDE will conduct follow-up visits to ensure that Achievement First Bridgeport Academy is addressing the issues raised in this memorandum.

Prepared by: Robert E. Kelly, Charter School Program Manager
Turnaround Office

Reviewed by: Lisa Lamenzo, Bureau Chief
Turnaround Office

Approved by: Desi D. Nesmith, Deputy Commissioner

CHARTER RENEWAL REPORT | 2020

Charter School Information:		
Charter School Name:	Achievement First Bridgeport Academy	
School Director:	Samantha Lucky	
School Board Chairperson:	Richard Kalt	
Location (City/Town):	Bridgeport	
Rating Key:		
Meets	The school demonstrates effective policies and practices, resulting in positive outcomes.	
Pending Action	The school requires minor modifications to its policies and/or practices. The school is taking satisfactory measures to remedy and address these issues in a timely manner.	
Does Not Meet	The schools falls below performance expectations with significant concerns noted, which require immediate attention and intervention.	
Standard 1: School Performance Indicators	Points/Max	% Points Earned
Accountability Index:	1,024.8/1250	82.0
Notes and Evidence:		
<p>The 2017-18 AFBA Accountability Index of 82.0 is above average when compared to the state school Accountability Index of 74.9. Schools that meet Standard 1: are schools earning an accountability index from 85 to 100 (Category 1) and schools earning an accountability index from 70 to 84.9 (Category 2). AFBA’s Accountability Index score of 82.0 places its performance in Category 2, which earns a meets for Standard 1. AFBA’s 2017-18 Next Generation Accountability Report shown in detail on the next page.</p>		

Next Generation Accountability, 2017-18
Achievement First Bridgeport Academy (Grades: K-12)
 School Category: 2

Indicator	Index/Rate	Target	Points Earned	Max Points	% Points Earned	State Average % Points Earned
1a. ELA Performance Index - All Students	69.3	75	46.2	50	92.4	90.1
1b. ELA Performance Index - High Needs Students	69.3	75	46.2	50	92.4	76.7
1c. Math Performance Index - All Students	65.5	75	43.7	50	87.3	83.6
1d. Math Performance Index - High Needs Students	65.5	75	43.7	50	87.3	69.3
1e. Science Performance Index - All Students	.	75
1f. Science Performance Index - High Needs Students	.	75
2a. ELA Academic Growth - All Students	67.9%	100%	67.9	100	67.9	60.7
2b. ELA Academic Growth - High Needs Students	67.9%	100%	67.9	100	67.9	55.6
2c. Math Academic Growth - All Students	59.0%	100%	59.0	100	59.0	61.9
2d. Math Academic Growth - High Needs Students	59.0%	100%	59.0	100	59.0	55.4
4a. Chronic Absenteeism - All Students	6.1%	<=5%	47.7	50	95.4	77.2
4b. Chronic Absenteeism - High Needs Students	6.2%	<=5%	47.6	50	95.3	53.6
5. Preparation for CCR - Percent Taking Courses	100.0%	75%	50.0	50	100.0	99.7
6. Preparation for CCR - Percent Passing Exams	48.8%	75%	32.5	50	65.0	59.7
7. On-track to High School Graduation	94.0%	94%	50.0	50	100.0	93.1
8. 4-year Graduation: All Students (2017 Cohort)	80.6%	94%	85.8	100	85.8	93.5
9. 6-year Graduation: High Needs Students (2015 Cohort)	96.6%	94%	100.0	100	100.0	87.0
10. Postsecondary Entrance (Graduating Class 2017)	90.0%	75%	100.0	100	100.0	94.5
11. Physical Fitness (estimated participation rate = 97.5%)	41.5%	75%	27.7	50	55.3	66.8
12. Arts Access	60.1%	60%	50.0	50	100.0	85.3
Accountability Index	.	.	1024.8	1250	82.0	74.9

Gap Indicators

Indicator	Non-High Needs Rate	High Needs Rate	Size of Gap	State Gap Mean +1 Standard Deviation	Is Gap an Outlier?
ELA Performance Index Gap	.	69.3	.	15.6	
Math Performance Index Gap	.	65.5	.	17.7	
Science Performance Index Gap	
Graduation Rate Gap (2015 Cohort)	.	96.6	.	9.1	

If the Non-High Needs Rate exceeds the ultimate target (75 for Performance Index and 94% for Graduation Rate), the ultimate target is used for gap calculations.
 If the size of the gap exceeds the state mean gap plus one standard deviation, the gap is an outlier.

Assessment Participation Rates

Indicator	Participation Rate (%)
ELA - All Students	98.3
ELA - High Needs Students	98.3
Math - All Students	98.1
Math - High Needs Students	98.1
Science - All Students	97.9
Science - High Needs Students	97.9

Minimum participation standard is 95%.

Standard 2: Stewardship, Governance and Management Indicators:	Rating
2.1. Fiscal Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.2. Financial Reporting and Compliance	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.3. Financial Viability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.4. Governance and Management	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.5. School Facility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
Notes and Evidence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicator 2.1: CSDE site visit staff reviewed AFBA’s last certified financial audit and uncovered no significant findings, conditions or internal control weakness. • Indicator 2.2: CSDE site visit staff reviewed AFBA’s last certified financial audit, Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM) and budgets, and interviewed the school principals, Director of Operations and governing board members. Staff from the CSDE’s Office of Internal Audit determined the APPM contains the standard sections of an APPM. However, the APPM requires some minor amendments in the areas of credit card review. The AFBA Board of Directors and its Finance and Audit Committee have specific roles and responsibilities for financial oversight of the school. However, the roles and responsibilities are not formally documented in a Board Policies and Procedures Manual (BPPM) to ensure consistency and continuity. The missing items include the monthly credit card review, annual review of school policy by governing board, charter school management organization (CMO) evaluation in compliance with the CMO contract and response to audit findings. The reviewers determined AFBA completed on-time submission of certified audits and annual budgets. The school is in the process of amending the APPM and developing the BPPM. • Indicator 2.3: Staff from the CSDE’s Office of Internal Audit reviewed AFBA’s latest certified financial audit and determined AFBA’s debt to asset ratio (total liabilities/total assets), total margin (net income/revenue), current asset ratio (current assets / current liabilities), unrestricted days of cash (unrestricted cash divided by ((total expenses minus depreciation expenses)/365 days)), cash flow (multi-year cash flow = year 3 total cash minus year 1 total cash; one-year cash flow = year 2 total cash minus year 1 total cash) and debt service coverage ratio (net income + depreciation + interest expense) / (principal + interest payments) meets or exceeds the ranges recommended by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), signifying overall financial health. • Indicator 2.4: A review of AFBA’s school policies regarding anti-nepotism and conflict of interest were found to be in compliance with CSDE administrative oversight guidelines. AFBA’s policies and procedures regarding background checks of staff and board members, open board meetings and board membership training were reviewed and found to comply with state and federal laws, rules, and regulations. This finding is supported by a review of background checks, board training records, school website and governing board meeting minutes. A review of AFBA’s Bylaws require some amendments to be compliant with state statute. The school is in the process of amending the Bylaws to comply. • Indicator 2.5: As evidenced during the site visit, AFBA has a safe and well-maintained school facilities to support teaching and learning. The facility has been approved by the Bridgeport Fire Marshal and Building Department. The school has proof of property insurance. 	

Standard 3: Student Population Indicators	Rating
3.1. Recruitment and Enrollment Process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
3.2. Waitlist and Enrollment Data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
3.3. Demographic Representation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
3.4. Family and Community Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
3.5. School Culture and Climate	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM

Notes and Evidence:

- Indicator 3.1:** The latest CSDE audited student enrollment data from 2018-19 reported 1,093 students in Grades K-12 with 99.9 percent residing in Bridgeport (the host district) and a number data suppressed to ensure confidentiality from the Bridgeport area. A review of the school’s student enrollment policy, and interviews with school staff, board members and parents determined all students are admitted through a blind lottery.
- Indicator 3.2:** A review of AFBA’s waitlist information (Table 3, page 14) determined it maintains a waitlist of families beyond the available number of seats. In 2019-20, 828 students were on the waiting list. The waitlist has included more than 827 students each year for the past three years.
- Indicator 3.3:** A review of AFBA’s 2018-19 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reports students of color represent 98.8 percent of AFBA’s student population and 65.6 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced-price meals. The EL population is 12.0 percent. The percentage of special education students at AFBA is 8.9 percent. Overall the student body reflects the demographics of the surrounding community.
- Indicator 3.4:** AFBA demonstrates strong community support, as evidenced by parent interviews conducted by the CSDE renewal team. Parent focus groups described various communication methods between the school and families including texts, phone calls and written communication including translations in second languages. Currently, parents receive weekly reports that detail student academics and behavior. Parents expressed support for what they perceive is a rigorous educational model that prepares their children for college. Parents indicated they were satisfied with the school’s commitment to serving students with diverse needs. Students testified during the public hearing that they are happy with the educational choice opportunity the school provides. Over 45 individuals attended the November 14, 2019, renewal public hearing, and 21 individuals offered testimony supporting the school’s efforts and the renewal of its charter.
- Indicator 3.5:** School culture and climate policies reviewed by CSDE site visit staff were clear and concise. Classroom observations revealed consistent implementation of behavior management model. A review of AFBA’s 2018-19 school culture and climate data reports a chronic absenteeism rate of 5.7 percent which is well below the state rate of 10.4 percent, and an average daily attendance rate of 96.5 percent which is above the CSDE’s goal of 95 percent. AFBA’s 2018-19 student suspension rate of 14.6 percent is above the state rate of 6.7 percent and Bridgeport rate of 12.0 percent. The suspension rate is trending downward from the 2016-17 suspension rate of 18.6 percent. The school has been implementing a corrective action plan it developed in the spring of 2017, to improve school culture and climate and lower student suspensions. AFBA should continue to refine efforts to improve the suspension rate.

Standard 4: Legal Compliance Indicators	Rating
4.1. Open Meetings/Information Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.2. Students with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.3. English Learners	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.4. Rights of Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.5. Teacher/Staff Credentials	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.6. Employee Rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM

Notes and Evidence:

- Indicator 4.1:** The school website and Governing Board documents demonstrate that Governing Board meetings are open and accessible to the public. The Governing Board meeting schedule for the year and meeting agendas are posted on the school’s website. Education records and testing data are secured in locked file cabinets in the school director’s office.
- Indicator 4.2:** A review of AFBA’s 2018-19 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reports the percentage of special education students at the school is 8.9 percent. AFBA provides special education supports and services within the least restrictive environment continuum as determined by the identified student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP). To address student needs, AFBA uses a co-teaching model in all grades. Classes with students with IEPs are co-taught by a special education teacher and a general education teacher. When applicable paraprofessional support is provided to classrooms through general education. Other instructional models include push-in, pull-out and small group instruction within the class. Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) provides related service providers that makes available speech, language pathology and psychology to meet student needs. Social workers are available to meet the social service needs of students. BPS verifies related services through their Medicaid logs. The school has developed a related services verification log and is working with BPS related service providers to complete them as services are provided. This must be done to ensure that required services are provided.

Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings are conducted by the school district in which the student resides and held at AFBA. This allows for more robust participation of the school’s staff. Parents/Guardians, students (as appropriate), and required PPT members from the host district and AFBA are invited to participate in the meeting. The PPT develops, reviews, and revises the IEP based upon the student’s individualized needs. Student education files are kept in locked file cabinets.

AFBA’s special education staff expressed an interest in technical assistance targeting co-teaching, instructional strategies and differentiating instruction. The school is currently in the process of arranging training in these areas with the State Education Resource Center (SERC) facilitated by the CSDE Bureau of Special Education.

- **Indicator 4.3:** A review of AFBA's 2018-19 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reports the percentage of students identified as English Learners (ELs) at the school as 12.0 percent. The school has developed an EL plan. The plan contains sections including: EL identification, serving EL students, parent communication and rights, annual assessment and exit criteria. The school has added the LAS Links annual English language proficiency test to the assessment calendar. The EL plan is part of AFBA's Special Services Playbook (special education policy) and as a subsection contains the school's EL plan. For clarity about EL services offered by the school, AFBA has been asked by the CSDE to consider creating a standalone EL document.

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 10-17e-j, AFBA is mandated to provide a transitional bilingual program to eligible ELs. As AFBA has done, the school must send a letter to the parent/guardian of all eligible students informing them of their right to receive these services. If one or more parents request the service for their child, a bilingual program must be provided for those ELs. In the event that a certified bilingual staff person is not hired, the school must send a letter to the Commissioner of Education requesting a certified TESOL teacher be used in lieu of a bilingual teacher and describing how native language support will be provided. While the school's current letter on file with the CSDE includes TESOL certified staff to support students, the native language supports are provided afterschool, outside the school day servicing a portion of the EL population. Furthermore, it was confirmed that no transportation was offered to these students, limiting accessibility to this program. The program's existence outside the school day is not a permissible replacement for bilingual programming. The transitional bilingual program must be part of the school's core programming.

- **Indicator 4.4:** AFBA student rights policies and procedures include admissions, handling of student information, due process protections and state nondiscrimination laws. Interviews with parents and staff at the school supported the proper implementation and use of the policies.
- **Indicator 4.5:** A condition of AFBA's charter renewal of March 1, 2017, required the school to comply with the teacher certification statute by October 31, 2019. Staff from the CSDE Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification reviewed the state certified staff file and the school's employee roster. A review of AFBA's staff file of December 30, 2019, reports 86.6 percent of staff in compliance with certification. It is the responsibility of the school to take steps to ensure that 100 percent of the staff holds appropriate certificates, permits, or authorizations for their positions. Current legislation requires that at least 50 percent of educators serving in a charter school must hold a valid certificate (Initial, Provisional, or Professional Certificate) and the remaining 50 percent may hold other interim certificates, permits or authorizations. Of the 82 staff requiring certification, 36 or 43.9 percent hold a valid certificate, and 35 or 42.7 percent hold other permits or authorizations. Of the 11 staff out of compliance some have applications for certification or permits pending and have received letters indicating which credentials are missing in order for the application to be processed.

Of the 50 percent allowed to serve under other certificates, permits or authorizations, legislation also allows for the issuance of a Charter School Educator Permit (CSEP) for no more than 30 percent of the educators serving in a charter school. AFBA currently has 36 percent holding a CSEP. Other options to bring staff into compliance for certification, pending they met criteria for each option, include a Long-Term Substitute Certificate, a Durational Shortage Area permit (DSAP), a Temporary 90-Day Certificate, an Interim Educator Certificate or a Resident Educator Permit.

AFBA is required to implement the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program with fidelity to the statutory requirements by ensuring 100 percent of beginning teachers complete the TEAM program by their completion deadline date (within three years of hire) to be eligible to advance their certificate. Beginning teachers must be assigned a mentor within 30 days of hire, receive and log a minimum of 20 hours of mentoring and complete two modules per year. Mentors may be assigned no more than two beginning teachers unless granted prior permission by the CSDE. On January 3, 2018, and February 6, 2019, AFBA established a corrective action plan and provided updates to SBE to bring its beginning teachers into TEAM compliance. As of November 14, 2019, 12 out of the 13 teachers have been assigned a mentor. Due to the insufficient number of AF mentors for the 2019-20 school year, AF requested special permission for mentors to mentor more than two beginning teachers. One mentor has been assigned three beginning teachers. One out of the 13 staff has a completion deadline date of September 1, 2020. The staff member has received zero hours of mentoring during the current school year and only completed two modules. One out of 13 has received between 10 – 20 hours of mentoring during the current school year. Two teachers have received less than 4 hours of mentoring and ten teachers have received zero mentoring hours during the current school year. AFBA is not in compliance with TEAM.

The Evaluation and Support Plan (EESP) that is currently on file for AFBA was initially submitted for the 2015-16 school year. Since the *Guidelines for Educator Evaluation* were updated in 2017, the school is required to make revisions to align with the 2017 Guidelines.

The CSDE has requested that AFBA’s Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC), revise the EESP to align with the 2017 Guidelines and submit by May 1, 2020.

- **Indicator 4.6:** A review of legal actions brought against AFBA determined that no government agency alleged the violation of any law by the school, or undertaken any investigation of any violation of law by the school.

Prepared by:	Reviewed by:	Approved by:
Robert Kelly Charter School Program Manager	Lisa Lamenzo Turnaround Office, Bureau Chief	Desi D. Nesmith Deputy Commissioner

ACHIEVEMENT FIRST BRIDGEPORT ACADEMY DATA

Table 1: 2018-19 Student Enrollment and Demographic Information (latest audited student data)

Grades served:	K-12
Total enrollment:	1,093
Percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced price meals:	65.6%
Percentage of special education students:	8.9%
Percentage of students with limited English proficiency:	12.0%
Percentage American Indian or Alaska Native:	*
Percentage of Asian students:	0.8%
Percentage of Black students:	53.4%
Percentage of Hispanic students:	43.9%
Percentage of Two or More Races:	*
Percentage of Caucasian students:	1.2%

*N<=5. Data suppressed to ensure student data privacy.

Table 2: School Culture and Climate Data

Performance Metric:	School 2016-17:	School 2017-18:	School 2018-19:	State 2018-19:
Average daily attendance rate:	96.3%	96.3%	96.5 %	
Chronic absenteeism rate:	5.5%	6.1%	5.7%	10.4%
Number of in-school suspensions:	408	93	56	
Number of out-of-school suspensions:	295	232	234	
Suspension rate (% students with 1+ suspension):	18.6%	14.8%	14.6%	6.7%
Number of expulsions:	*	0	0	
Cohort graduation rate (if applicable):	80.6	73.3	N/A	N/A
Six Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (if applicable):	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 3: Student Waitlist and Mobility Information

Performance Metric:	2017-18:	2018-19:	2019-20:
Waitlist number:	1035	1017	828
Number of enrolled students who left during the school year, or who did not re-enroll the next school year and did not complete the highest grade at the school:	13.6	9.6	N/A

ACHIEVEMENT FIRST BRIDGEPORT ACADEMY STATE TEST DATA

Table 4:

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) - Percentage of students at level 3 and 4 (met/exceeded)

	School 2017-18	School Average Score	School 2018-19	School Average Score	District 2018-19	District Average Score	State 2018-19	State Average Score
ELA	62.2	510	*	488	30.1	435	61.6	514
MATH	*	490	27.7	487	12.6	413	40.6	500

Grades 3-8

Smarter Balanced Assessment - Percentage of students at level 3 and 4 (met/exceeded)

GRADE	ELA				MATH			
	School	School	District	State	School	School	District	State
	2017-18	2018-19	2018-19	2018-19	2017-18	2018-19	2018-19	2018-19
All Grades Combined	58.1	64.1	27.4	55.7	54.4	53.3	15.7	48.1
3	67.4	67.4	26.6	54.3	80.9	78.7	22.2	55.0
4	80.9	79.5	23.4	54.6	87.6	72.7	16.5	52.5
5	56.5	73.9	29.4	58.1	43.5	56.0	12.1	46.5
6	48.8	50.0	28.2	55.3	35.8	38.5	16.0	45.4
7	42.7	50.5	27.6	56.1	31.7	40.7	14.1	46.1
8	50.6	64.4	29.8	55.8	43.8	34.5	13.0	43.5

Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Next Generation Science Standards Assessment Data

Table 5: Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)

Assessment-Percentage of students at level 3 and 4 (met/exceeded)

GRADE	School 2018-19	District 2018-19	State 2018-19
All Grades Combined	50.5	20.3	51.2
5	*	22.8	53.6
8	*	20.1	52.2
11	*	17.1	47.7

*The data are suppressed to ensure confidentiality.

Dear State Board of Education Members,

Below please find additional testimony submitted in support of the renewal for Achievement First Bridgeport and The Bridge Academy.

**Sen. Bradley Testimony in Support of Charter Renewals for
The Bridge Academy and Achievement First Bridgeport Academy
Thursday, November 14th, 2019**

Good evening, members of the State Board of Education and State Department of Education, it's a pleasure to be here with you this evening. I am Senator Dennis Bradley and I proudly represent Bridgeport and Stratford in the 23rd senatorial district. I'm here to support the charter renewals for the two Bridgeport schools before you this evening, The Bridge Academy and Achievement First Bridgeport Academy.

I am a Bridgeport resident, practicing attorney and former Bridgeport Board of Education chairperson. During this time, I saw firsthand the many challenges that we face, including a rising parent and family demand for great schools in our city. I hear from my constituents about their experiences and know that we need great educational options for our city. Too many kids are falling behind, not graduating, not prepared for the workforce and tomorrow's jobs, and we can no longer afford to accept the way things are if we have any hope of improving things for the better.

As I serve and represent the city of Bridgeport, I reflect on the importance of investing back into our great city, and we know that one of the most important investments that we can make for our city's future and our state's future is in education and investing back into our youth. I deeply believe in the power of our city and what it offers and can grow into, but that requires our state investing in what's working for our kids and families.

Bridge and AF are among schools in our city working hard to prepare the workforce of tomorrow, many of whom are low income and minority kids and who are often forgotten about and left behind. Both schools educate a combined 1300+ students, nearly 100% of whom are Black and Brown and more than 2/3rds are from low-income families. And when you look at their academic and overall results, it is clear that they are providing a quality option in a city that needs them, building the future leaders for their generation that we will need.

And that is why I'm here to support the renewal for Bridge and Achievement First Bridgeport Academy. I've had the pleasure of visiting Achievement First and can tell you from firsthand experience that the commitment to excellence for our young students is palpable in everything Achievement First does.

We are regularly reading in the news about people leaving our state and giving up on our cities like Bridgeport, and we simply cannot accept that. I joined the Senate because I know that we can do better and want to work towards that. Connecticut and our city have immense potential ahead if we do what's right for our families and kids, and that starts with great schools and options like Bridge and AF.

In short, we are a better Bridgeport for having these schools and ask you to support their renewal. Please renew these schools and let's continue to work together for the people of Bridgeport and for our great state.

Thank you for your time and consideration this evening.

Sincerely,

Senator Dennis Bradley
23rd District, Bridgeport and Stratford

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