

VIII.B.

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

To Be Proposed:
May 13, 2026

Resolved, That pursuant to Section 10-66bb(g) of the Connecticut General Statutes, the State Board of Education renews the charter of Achievement First Hartford Academy from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2029, subject to the Commissioner's May 13, 2026, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____, this thirteenth day of May, Two Thousand Twenty-Six.

Signed: _____
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary
State Board of Education

**Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford**

To: State Board of Education

From: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education

Date: May 13, 2026

Subject: Renewal of State Charter: Achievement First Hartford Academy, Hartford

Executive Summary

Introduction

Section (§)10-66bb(g) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) provides that upon the submission of an application for renewal, charters may be renewed for a period of up to five years in accordance with the same procedures that govern the granting of new charters under § 10-66bb. In determining the appropriateness of potential charter renewals, the State Board of Education (SBE) considers the following performance standards:

1. *School Performance, Culture and Climate:* 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, data submissions, and site visits, as appropriate. In accordance with C.G.S. §10-66bb(g), renewal may be granted upon application if the charter school has demonstrated satisfactory performance relative to the school's academic and organizational performance goals.

History/Background

Achievement First Hartford Academy (AFHA) opened in the fall of 2008 and is completing its 18th year of operation. The mission of AFHA is to “prepare students to deepen their knowledge of self and community, to excel at college, career, and life, and to lead lives of purpose and leadership.” With a maximum approved enrollment of 1,125 seats, the school currently serves 907 students in Grades K-12, of which 897 reside in the City of Hartford, Connecticut, the host district. Of those students, 79.6 percent qualify for free or reduced-price meals and 11.5 percent receive special education services. Table 1 on page 15 of the attached *Charter Renewal Report* provides the most recent audited enrollment and demographic data for the 2024-25 school year.

On April 5, 2023, AFHA was approved for a three-year state charter renewal for the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2026, subject to enhanced monitoring and the implementation of a corrective action plan acceptable to the Commissioner of Education. The corrective action plan outlined defined strategies, timelines, and measurable benchmarks to strengthen instructional quality, address chronic absenteeism, improve student academic achievement, and bring staff into certification compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

Charter Renewal Process

Application for Renewal of Charter: The CSDE accepted an application for the renewal of AFHA’s charter on September 12, 2025. The application detailed the charter school’s progress, operations, and achievement in relation to the CSDE’s previously noted charter school performance standards: (a) school performance, culture and climate; (b) stewardship, governance, and management; (c) student population; and (d) legal compliance. AFHA submitted data and evidence to substantiate the charter school’s written responses. A renewal team consisting of CSDE staff with expertise in curriculum, assessments, special education, English learners/Multilingual learners (ELs/MLs), school management, finance, and governance reviewed the renewal application, seeking clarification and additional information as needed.

Renewal Site Visit: On October 14, 2025, the CSDE renewal team conducted an onsite visit at AFHA to evaluate the school's programs, policies, practices, and procedures. The assessment focused on their effectiveness and alignment with the school’s charter and operational systems. Evidence was gathered through observations, document reviews, interviews, and focus groups. The team met with the school’s board members, administrators, staff, students, parents, and community members to ensure the school’s compliance with legal requirements and its mission. Additionally, the team verified the accuracy of the renewal application’s responses regarding compliance with the law, the CSDE’s performance framework, and the accountability plan.

Invitation for Written Comment: The CSDE requested written comments on AFHA’s charter renewal from the Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools (HPS) and the neighboring districts of Bloomfield, Newington, South Windsor, West Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor. The CSDE did not receive any responses to the solicitation.

Public Hearing: Donald F. Harris Jr., a member of the SBE and the CSDE staff, held a public hearing on November 23, 2025, in the City of Hartford, and heard from individuals on the potential charter renewal of AFHA and the impact it is having on the community. Approximately 40 individuals were in attendance, with 20 participants providing public testimony in strong support of AFHA and the renewal of its charter. No one spoke against the renewal of the school’s charter.

Review of Documents and Site Visit Findings

The charter school performance framework ensures accountability by evaluating charter schools across four standards: school performance, culture and climate; stewardship, governance, and management; student population; and legal compliance.

School Performance, Culture, and Climate: AFHA demonstrates academic progress across multiple indicators in the 2024-25 Next Generation Accountability System. AFHA's Mathematics Academic Growth - All Students and Mathematics Academic Growth - High Needs Students are areas of strength, with 66.5 percent of all students and 65.6 percent of high needs students outperforming both the host district (52.6 percent and 51.3 percent, respectively) and the state (62.3 percent and 55.9 percent, respectively). AFHA's 2024-25 Next Generation Accountability demonstrates that the school's English language arts (ELA) Academic Growth – All Students is 60.6 percent and 60.2 percent for high needs students, exceeding the host district and aligning with the state average on ELA Academic Growth – All Students. Chronic absenteeism declined from 28.7 percent in 2023-24 to 15.7 percent by the spring of 2025.

While AFHA demonstrated an increase in its college and career readiness exam passing rate from 12.0 percent to 26.2 percent, this remains an area for continued growth when compared to the state passing rate of 47.2 percent. Despite this gap, AFHA shows strong performance in several other postsecondary readiness indicators. The school's Postsecondary Entrance rate of 76.2 percent exceeds both the state average of 67 percent and the state target of 75 percent. Additionally, 98.1 percent of AFHA's Grade 11 and 12 students participate in college and career readiness courses. These outcomes are directly supported by the Foundations of Leadership program, individualized college counseling, campus visits, and career fairs, which together reflect a coherent and effective postsecondary preparation system. An analysis of the most recent student performance data is provided in the Charter Renewal Report beginning on page 8.

Stewardship, Governance, and Management: AFHA meets two of the five indicators for effective policies and practices. While the school's financial position is improving, as reflected in a surplus and stronger cash reserves, its ability to meet short-term obligations remains an area for corrective action. Key financial responsibilities, including managing bank accounts, signing checks, and executing contracts, are limited to the principals and Governing Council and cannot be delegated to the Achievement First charter management organization (CMO). The financial roles, responsibilities, and practices must be reviewed and formally documented in the school's Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM).

The AFHA Governing Council was found to be out of compliance with governance requirements. The Council did not include the required teacher or parent representatives. The Council also did not meet expectations for fulfilling its core responsibilities, including recruitment, onboarding, and training of members; participation in board training at least once per charter term; and convening a minimum of six meetings annually. The CSDE review determined that only three of the required six meetings were held, with two canceled due to lack of quorum and one lacking meeting minutes. School principals attended only one meeting. Collectively, these findings demonstrate a need for corrective actions in meeting scheduling, documentation practices, financial leadership, and overall governance oversight. Supporting evidence for these findings is provided on page 11.

Student Population: AFHA meets two of three student population indicators. The school enrolled 907 students in Grades K–12, all admitted through a blind lottery, with nearly all residing in Hartford. While AFHA reports ongoing outreach to increase enrollment of EL/ML and students with disabilities, continued efforts are needed to ensure the student population more fully reflects the Hartford community. AFHA’s enrollment does not as closely reflect HPS’s Alaskan Native/American Indian, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander; and two or more races student populations; and the school's student population is not comparative to HPS’s population for students with disabilities (11.5 percent compared to 20.7 percent for HPS) nor ELs/MLs (5.7 percent compared to 26.2 percent for HPS). Supporting evidence for these ratings is provided on page 12.

Legal Compliance: AFHA meets two of the six legal compliance indicators. AFHA’s Governing Council must take an active role in determining its annual meeting schedule and ensuring meetings are held in accordance with its bylaws, which require a minimum of six board meetings per year. In addition to strengthening governance practices, attention must also be directed toward ongoing operational challenges impacting service delivery.

Staffing gaps require immediate attention. The absence of a certified bilingual or Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) teacher leaves AFHA out of compliance with the bilingual education statute and has impacted EL/ML student performance on the LAS Links assessment. There is urgency for AFHA to address these staffing needs.

Special education staffing vacancies also continue to affect service delivery at the elementary and high school levels. Required corrective actions include hiring a special education teacher, providing compensatory service hours, and ensuring Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are implemented. AFHA has been responsive in addressing concerns and scheduling remaining Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings through June 2026.

Despite these challenges, AFHA has made progress in teacher certification compliance and implementing the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program and the Connecticut Leader and Educator Evaluation and Support Plan. Since October 2025, certification non-compliance has decreased from 17.0 to 1.5. The proportion of traditionally certified teachers increased from 36.0 percent to 41.7 percent, though it remains below the 50 percent minimum for full certificate holders. As of April 2026, all eight beginning teachers had TEAM accounts with assigned mentors, and all were on track to meet TEAM deadlines. Evidence supporting these ratings can be found on pages 13 and 14.

Charter Renewal Recommendation

As a result, the CSDE recommends AFHA to be renewed for a three-year term, from July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2029, subject to the following conditions:

1. By August 31, 2026, AFHA shall, in partnership with the CSDE, submit a detailed three-year plan for continuous improvement in teaching and learning acceptable to the Commissioner of Education. The improvement plan shall include, but is not limited to, targeted strategies to strengthen post-secondary readiness outcomes and learning outcomes for ELs/MLs.
 - a. Beginning January 31, 2027, AFHA will report annually a minimum of one status update and one progress report on student academic achievement and post-secondary preparation efforts and outcomes, monitoring its year-to-date progress toward improving academic performance and sustaining continuous growth.

- b. By January 31, 2027, AFHA will report a minimum of one status update outlining action steps to strengthen pedagogy that further develops grade-level instructional expertise in serving ELs/MLs, ensuring equal access to programming across grades and advancing student progress towards English language proficiency and broader academic achievement. By January 31, 2027, and June 30, 2027, AFHA will report annually a minimum of two progress reports on a biannual basis and again at the end of each school year, detailing data-monitoring protocols for EL/ML student data, including academic and non-academic accountability benchmarks, and assessing EL/ML student and household experiences and outcomes through established key performance indicators and impact measures.
2. By August 31, 2026, AFHA shall submit a plan, acceptable to the Commissioner of Education, that ensures compliance with legal requirements for serving English learners and outlines continuous improvement in supports for multilingual learners. The plan shall address services for identified multilingual learners, students in monitoring status, potentially eligible but not yet identified students, students with non-English home languages not designated as ELs/MLs, and their families, in accordance with all applicable laws.
 - a. By August 31, 2026, the school shall provide an update to the CSDE with documentation substantiating AFHA maintains a sufficient number of qualified staff to implement required language instructional education programs, and when applicable, bilingual programs, as well as an attestation affirming the upholding and maintaining of EL/ML students' and multilingual families' rights.
 - b. AFHA shall collect input from EL/ML students and multilingual households. The school shall conduct at least one focus group of guardians of multilingual students during the 2026–27 school year and at least one focus group of EL/ML students during the 2027–28 school year. All aspects of focus group design and implementation shall be determined in consultation with the CSDE. The school shall coordinate participant identification, outreach, and logistics in accordance with the approved plan.
 - c. By March 31, 2028, the CSDE will conduct at least one planned site visit by staff from the CSDE Academic Office, CSDE Office of Student Supports, or both.
 - d. Annually, beginning March 31, 2027, AFHA shall report a progress update detailing the school's compliance to date and the school's efforts for continuous improvement.
3. By August 31, 2026, AFHA shall submit a plan acceptable to the Commissioner of Education, focused on ensuring operational compliance related to the provision of services and supports for students with disabilities, and on improving practices related to special education, in accordance with pertinent statutory and regulatory mandates and in a lawful manner.

- a. During the 2026–2027 school year, the CSDE will conduct a randomized IEP desk audit using a single sample representing at least 10 percent of AFHA’s students with disabilities population, rounded up to the nearest whole number. This same sample will undergo reviews on a biannual schedule to monitor ongoing compliance. During the 2027–2028 school year, the CSDE will complete a minimum of one randomized IEP desk audit involving at least five students with a designated special education status.
 - b. By January 31, 2027, AFHA shall submit at least one status update to the CSDE, and a second update by June 30, 2027. By June 30, 2028, AFHA shall submit at least one progress update to the CSDE Turnaround Office and the charter renewal cross-functional team. AFHA shall also address any corrective actions or corrective action plans issued by the CSDE during the three-year renewal period.
4. The school’s governing council has bylaws in effect; however, AFHA’s policies and practices require immediate attention and intervention to ensure the school is in material compliance with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relating to governance by the governing council, oversight expectations, financial management, meeting performance goals, and promoting more effective, positive outcomes.
 - a. The school’s governing council must meet the required membership composition to comply with its governing bylaws and state statutes. By October 31, 2026, the Chair of AFHA’s governing council shall report at least one status update to the CSDE and, if requested, submit documentation on the recruitment and election for applicable vacancies.
 - b. By October 31, 2027, AFHA’s governing council shall update the Board Policy and Procedures Manual (BPPM). By June 30, 2027, the governing council must provide the CSDE with a progress update and documentation demonstrating implementation and adherence to applicable legal requirements.
 - c. By August 1, 2027, AFHA will revise its Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM), with governing council approval. By August 1, 2026, and each year thereafter, AFHA will review, update, approve, and date the APPM and all other school manuals.
 - d. Annually, the CSDE Turnaround Office’s charter renewal Cross-Functional team will conduct a randomized desk audit to assess whether the school’s governing council demonstrates the ability to provide effective leadership to oversee the operation of AFHA.
5. By August 31, 2026, AFHA shall submit a detailed plan acceptable to the Commissioner of Education, focused on ensuring legal compliance in accordance with applicable requirements, and on improving practices related to talent recruitment, development, and retention, in accordance with applicable laws and in a lawful manner.
 - a. By September 30, 2026, AFHA shall ensure all required instructional assignments are appropriately staffed and all school staff hold valid certifications, permits, or authorizations in compliance with mandated credentialing requirements, and will maintain and submit documentation to the CSDE. Annually, beginning January 31, 2027, the school will provide a minimum of one status update and one progress update. AFHA, beginning March 31, 2027, will participate in a desk audit biannually throughout the three-year renewal term.

- b. AFHA maintains a CSDE approved Evaluation and Support Plan (ESP). By November 30, 2026, the school shall ensure that sample Professional Learning Plans (PLP) are aligned to the Connecticut Guidelines 2023. During the 2026–27 school year, in coordination with the CSDE Turnaround Office, the CSDE Talent Office shall conduct at least two randomized desk audits, each reviewing a minimum of six PLPs. In each of the subsequent two school years, at least one such audit shall be conducted.
 - c. By June 30, 2027, AFHA shall ensure full and ongoing compliance with all requirements of the TEAM Program, including the proper implementation, oversight, support, documentation, and completion of all programmatic components within established timelines. The school must be prepared to provide evidence of compliance to the CSDE upon request.
6. AFHA will report, through the submission of a plan for continuous improvement, recruitment and retention strategies for students who are currently underrepresented within the demographics of the school and as compared to the host district. During the 2026–2027 school year, when requested, the school will provide a minimum of one status update on the development of this plan to the CSDE. By June 30, 2028, AFHA will report, as requested, to the CSDE, a minimum of two progress updates on the implementation of this improvement plan and to detail progress on the recruitment and retention of such students.
7. Annually, beginning May 31, 2027, AFHA and the school’s governing council may be requested to present updates to the SBE Accountability and Support Committee during the renewal period.

Prepared by: Anika Matin
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Reviewed by: Dr. Melissa Jenkins
Chief Turnaround Officer, Turnaround Office

Approved by: Dr. Charles E. Hewes
Deputy Commissioner for Academics & Innovation

CHARTER RENEWAL REPORT | 2026

Charter School Information		
Charter School Name:	Achievement First Hartford Academy	
School Director/Principal:	Sueleidy Cruz, Elementary School Principal Jessica Alhasnawi, Middle School Principal Laneka Thomas, High School Principal	
School Board Chairperson:	Erwin Hurst, Sr.	
Location (City/Town):	Hartford	
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 school falls below performance expectations with significant concerns noted, which require immediate attention and intervention.	
School Performance Indicators	Points/Max	% Points Earned
Accountability Index:	975.5/1450	67.3
2024-25 Accountability Index: Achievement First Hartford Academy: 67.3 State: 71.8 Host District: 59.0		
Current Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFHA's Accountability Index is 67.3, which places its performance in Category 3. <p>Category 3: Schools earning an Accountability Index score below 70 that have not been identified as Turnaround or Focus (Categories 4 and 5). The Accountability Index is the percentage of total possible points earned across all indicators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFHA's full Next Generation Accountability Report is shown in detail on page 9. 		

Next Generation Accountability, 2024-25 – Achievement First Hartford Academy (Grades: K-12)

School Category: 3

Indicator	Index/Rate	Target	Points Earned	Max Points	% Points Earned	State % Points Earned
1a. ELA Performance Index - All Students	60.0	75	40.0	50	80.0	86.3
1b. ELA Performance Index - High Needs Students	59.3	75	39.5	50	79.0	73.2
1c. Math Performance Index - All Students	51.7	75	34.5	50	68.9	81.5
1d. Math Performance Index - High Needs Students	51.5	75	34.3	50	68.6	67.5
1e. Science Performance Index - All Students	51.4	75	34.3	50	68.6	83.5
1f. Science Performance Index - High Needs Students	51.6	75	34.4	50	68.8	69.5
2a. ELA Academic Growth - All Students	60.6%	100%	60.6	100	60.6	60.6
2b. ELA Academic Growth - High Needs Students	60.2%	100%	60.2	100	60.2	55.7
2c. Math Academic Growth - All Students	66.5%	100%	66.5	100	66.5	62.3
2d. Math Academic Growth - High Needs Students	65.6%	100%	65.6	100	65.6	55.9
2e. Progress Toward English Proficiency - Literacy	44.0%	100%	22.0	50	44.0	58.7
2f. Progress Toward English Proficiency - Oral	27.4%	100%	13.7	50	27.4	55.7
4a. Chronic Absenteeism - All Students	15.7%	<=5%	28.7	50	57.4	51.3
4b. Chronic Absenteeism - High Needs Students	17.2%	<=5%	25.6	50	51.1	20.8
5. Preparation for CCR - Percent Taking Courses	98.1%	75%	50.0	50	100.0	100.0
6. Preparation for CCR - Percent Passing Exams	26.2%	75%	17.5	50	35.0	62.9
7. On-track to High School Graduation	74.3%	94%	39.5	50	79.1	91.4
8. 4-year Graduation: All Students (2024 Cohort)	82.4%	94%	87.6	100	87.6	94.6
9. 6-year Graduation: High Needs Students (2022 Cohort)	91.6%	94%	97.4	100	97.4	92.9
10. Postsecondary Entrance (Graduating Class 2024)	76.2%	75%	100.0	100	100.0	89.3
11. Physical Fitness (estimated participation rate = 96.7%)	35.5%	75%	23.7	50	47.4	65.4
12. Arts Access	0.0%	60%	0.0	50	0.0	91.9
Accountability Index			975.5	1450	67.3	71.8

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	64.0	59.3	4.7	16.9	N
Math Performance Index Gap	53.1	51.5	1.6	18.4	N
Science Performance Index Gap	50.8	51.6	-0.8	18.2	N
Graduation Rate Gap (2022 Cohort)	.	91.6	.	8.6	

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	99.2
ELA - High Needs Students	99.0
Math - All Students	98.8
Math - High Needs Students	98.6
Science - All Students	98.0
Science - High Needs Students	97.6

Minimum participation standard is 95%.

Standard 1: School Performance, Culture, and Climate Indicators:	Rating
1.1. Family and Community Support	☑ M ☐ PA ☐ DNM
1.2. School Performance Culture and Climate	☑ M ☐ PA ☐ DNM
1.3. Mission	☑ M ☐ PA ☐ DNM
Notes and Evidence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Indicator 1.1: The CSDE site visit found that AFHA maintains consistent family communication through ParentSquare, a comprehensive student and family handbook, and regular home-school engagement, reported by both families and students. Since 2020, AFHA has administered family and student experience surveys three times annually. Recent results show response rates of 62 percent, 574 families and 96 percent of students, with overall satisfaction at 89 percent. In response to identified communication gaps, the school implemented a handbook addendum and weekly newsletters. AFHA has also expanded family engagement through participation in the Capitol Region Education Council Welcoming Schools Initiative, as well as through monthly Parent Teacher Association, “Pastries with the Principal” sessions, an annual Hartford Block Party, and a four-part virtual social-emotional learning series in partnership with Effective School Solutions.</p> <p>Indicator 1.2: AFHA has made substantial progress in student engagement and discipline. Chronic absenteeism declined significantly from 28.7 percent in 2023–24 to 15.7 percent in 2024–25. School discipline has also improved, with suspension rates decreasing from 11.3 percent in 2022–23 to 4.1 percent in 2023–24, followed by a slight increase to 5.4 percent in 2024–25. In 2024–25, AFHA earned a Tier 1 Discipline Rating, reflecting low suspension rates and minimal disproportionality, matching the host district and outperforming the state, which was classified as Tier 3.</p> <p>While the key components of the Connecticut School Climate Guidance legislation have been implemented, the CSDE recommends the integration of a data system to inform multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), collaborative professional learning across grades and departments, expanding professional learning to include data-driven behavior management, and leveraging student voice and engagement to evaluate behavioral interventions, social and emotional learning (SEL) programming, and instructional practices. AFHA is committed to school climate continuous improvement.</p> <p>Indicator 1.3: The Achievement First mission is to prepare every student to excel in college and career, deepen their knowledge of self and community, and lead lives of purpose. In partnership with families and communities, the school works to disrupt the legacy of inequity in education. AFHA reported that they embed post-secondary preparation across all grade levels through rigorous ELA and mathematics instruction and progress report nights that support student reflection and goal setting. At the high school level, AFHA describes offering a Foundations of Leadership (FOL) program which provides a structured, grade-by-grade pathway from skill-building and interest exploration in Grades 9 and 10, to college and career research in Grade 12, to dedicated application support ensuring students graduate with concrete postsecondary plans.</p> 	

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 type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.3. Financial Viability	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.4. Governance and Management	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" 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: The CSDE site visit staff reviewed AFHA’s last three certified financial audits, and the school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations relating to financial management and oversight expectations as evidenced by annual independent audits. Indicator 2.2: Staff from the Office of Internal Audit (OIA) reviewed AFHA’s financial practices and identified several concerns related to governance and compliance. The review found that key financial responsibilities, such as managing bank accounts, signing checks, and executing contracts are limited to the principals and Governing Council only and cannot be designated to the Achievement First charter management organization. Additionally, Finance Committee meeting minutes lacked detail, were not publicly posted as required, and did not reflect meaningful financial oversight or decision-making. The Governing Council is also considering increasing the spending approval threshold beyond \$10,000, which is not considered best practice. The school’s financial policies manual has not been updated since July 2023 and contains gaps, including missing guidance on timely deposits of large amounts of cash and the absence of a required inventory of federally funded assets. A federally funded inventory list is needed. The roles, responsibilities, and practices need to be reviewed and documented in the APPM. Indicator 2.3: Staff from the OIA reviewed AFHA’s most recent independent financial audit. The review found that the school has made notable progress in strengthening its financial position. Specifically, the school is now generating a positive operating margin (7.0 percent), has reduced its debt-to-asset ratio to 70.2 percent, and has improved its days of cash on hand to 101 days, reflecting stronger cash reserves and improved fiscal management. However, one key indicator warrants continued attention. The school’s current asset ratio remains slightly below 1.0, indicating that short-term assets do not fully cover short-term liabilities. While the school is not in immediate financial distress, this measure suggests finances need to be monitored. Indicator 2.4: Staff from the OIA reviewed documentation and conducted interviews to assess governance practices. At the time of the site visit, the AFHA Governing Council did not include the required teacher or parent representatives on the governing council. Additionally, the Council is responsible for leading the recruitment, onboarding, and training of its members; participating in board training at least once per charter term; and convening a minimum of six meetings annually. The CSDE review found that only three of the required six meetings were held; two were canceled due to lack of quorum, and one lacked meeting minutes. School principals attended only one meeting. Collectively, these findings indicate the need to strengthen meeting scheduling, documentation practices, financial leadership, and overall governance oversight. Indicator 2.5: As evidenced during the site visit, AFHA has a physically safe school facility to support teaching and learning. School leadership reports efforts to collaborate with HPS to improve facilities as the charter schools rent the facility from the district. The facilities have been approved by the appropriate Fire Marshal and Building Departments. 	

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 type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
Notes and Evidence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 3.1: The latest CSDE audit of student enrollment data from AFHA’s 2024-25 reports 907 students in Grades K-12, 897 reside in Hartford, the host district, the other students come from 4 sending districts. 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 AFHA’s waitlist data (Table 5, page 16) shows from 2023-2025 a waitlist of 9, 6, and 50 students respectively. At AFHA, 99 students did not re-enroll in 2023-24 and 104 students did not re-enroll in 2024-25. The school reported preliminary enrollment attrition data will show a decrease for the 2025-26 school year. Lottery and waitlist data for 2026-27 are not yet available, but current trends suggest continued modest enrollment growth. Indicator 3.3: A review of AFHA’s 2024-25 Public School Information System (PSIS) data shows 907 students are enrolled. Similar to the host district, 79.6 percent of AFHA students qualify for free and reduced-price meals, 76.1 percent identify as Black or African American, and 20.2 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. Enrollment is nearly gender-balanced across K-12. AFHA’s enrollment does not as closely reflect HPS’s Alaskan Native/American Indian, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander; and two or more races student populations; and the school's student population is not comparative to HPS’s population for students with disabilities (11.5 percent compared to 20.7 percent for HPS) nor ELs/MLs (5.7 percent compared to 26.2 percent for HPS). To address recruitment and retention across special populations, AFHA reports that they employ targeted strategies including annual "Intent to Return" surveys for economically disadvantaged families, dedicated family meetings with network directors for Multilingual Learners, and monthly disaggregated data reviews paired with high-expectation messaging beginning at recruitment for students with disabilities. 	

Standard 4: Legal Compliance Indicators	Rating
4.1. Open Meetings/Information Management	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" 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, TEAM, and EESP	<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:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicator 4.1: AFHA's Governing Council should take an active role in determining its annual meeting schedule and ensuring meetings are held in accordance with its bylaws, which require a minimum of six board meetings per year. During the 2024-25 school year, only three board meetings were held, falling significantly short of this requirement. Additionally, OIA reported that minutes from board subcommittee meetings have not been posted, and the Governing Council should ensure that all minutes are maintained with sufficient detail to reflect meaningful oversight of school operations. The CSDE and its legal counsel met with AFHA's Governing Council to reiterate expectations for active board members. • Indicator 4.2: AFHA demonstrated compliance across six areas of special education practice: enrollment, referral, instructional access, Section 504, and funding, enrolling 128 students with disabilities through a blind lottery, maintaining a structured referral process, and reporting zero out-of-school suspensions for students with IEPs. The CSDE's IEP desk audit noted areas for correction including CT-SEDS school listings, accommodation language, and one service setting; AFHA has been responsive, addressing most concerns and scheduling remaining Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings through June 2026. Current special education staffing vacancies have affected service delivery at the elementary and high school levels, and AFHA is actively working to remediate compensatory hours missed with monthly updates committed to the CSDE until vacancies are resolved. • Indicator 4.3: The CSDE site visit found that AFHA has established foundational systems to support English Learners/Multilingual Learners (EL/ML). However, the absence of a certified bilingual or TESOL teacher limits the quality and consistency of student identification, assessment, communication, and exit procedures. While written family communication is supported through ParentSquare with multilingual translation and in-person interpretation is available through Language Line, a consistent in-person communication system has not yet been established. <p>AFHA is addressing this gap by strengthening its hiring process to include credential review by the Senior Director of Multilingual Learners; however, the school remains out of compliance with the Bilingual Education Statute (C.G.S. Sec. 10-17e-j) due to ongoing challenges in securing a certified bilingual or TESOL teacher. Declining English proficiency growth across domains further underscores the urgency of filling this role. In the interim, AFHA has partnered with Firefly Tutoring to provide bilingual-certified support, delivered professional development to strengthen Tier 1 instruction, and continues the efforts to actively recruit a qualified bilingual/TESOL teacher.</p> <p>Staffing vacancies have also impacted EL/ML student performance on the LAS Links assessment. Literacy scores, while showing a slight increase from 39.3 percent in 2023-24 to 44.0 percent in 2024-25, remain well below the state average of 58.7 percent. Progress Toward English Proficiency – Oral scores declined sharply, dropping from 49.8 percent in 2023-24 to 27.4 percent in 2024–25, compared to the state average of 55.7 percent. There is urgency for AFHA to address its staffing needs.</p>	

- **Indicator 4.4:** AFHA 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:** At the October 2025 site visit, seven beginning teachers had TEAM accounts; however, five lacked assigned mentors and had not completed any modules, and one additional teacher had no account, mentor, or completed modules. By April 2026, all eight beginning teachers had TEAM accounts with assigned mentors, seven had completed at least two modules, and all were on track to meet program deadlines. AFHA also plans to designate Reflection Paper Reviewers for training in spring 2026 in preparation for TEAM’s revised framework in 2027–28.

Although AFHA had a CSDE-approved Educator Support Plan (ESP) on file, it was not implemented at the time of the site visit. PLPs were aligned to the 2023 Connecticut Guidelines. Since October 14, 2025, AFHA has taken clear steps to address this gap and strengthen implementation in alignment with its CSDE-approved ESP and the 2023 Connecticut Guidelines.

As of October 2025, 17 of 89 staff were out of compliance with certification requirements. By April 2026, the number of staff who were not authorized, certified, or holding a charter permit decreased from 17.0 to 1.5, reflecting substantial improvement. During this period, the proportion of staff with traditional certification increased from 36.0 to 41.7 percent, but remains below the 50 percent requirement.

- **Indicator 4.6:** A review of legal actions brought against AFHA 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:
Anika Matin Associate Education Consultant	Dr. Melissa Jenkins Chief Turnaround Officer

ACHIEVEMENT FIRST HARTFORD ACADEMY DATA TABLES

Table 1: 2024-25 Student Enrollment and Demographic Information	
Grades served:	K-12
Total enrollment:	907
Percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals:	79.6
Percentage of students with disabilities:	11.5
Percentage of students identified as English learners/Multilingual learners:	5.7
Percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native students:	1.32%
Percentage of Asian students:	*
Percentage of Black or African American students:	76.1
Percentage of Hispanic or Latino students:	20.2
Percentage of students with Two or More Races:	1.7
Percentage of White students:	*

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

Table 2: School Performance: All Students									
Indicator	2022-23			2023-24			2024-25		
	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State
Accountability Index	59.4	57.2	69.3	62.9	58.1	70.8	67.3	59.0	71.8
ELA-All Students									
Performance Index (Target 75)	58.9	47.4	63.9	58.8	47.1	63.9	60.0	48.4	64.7
Academic Growth Average Percentage of Target Achieved (Target 100%)	54.8	50.8	57.2	58.8	52.2	58.7	60.6	53.2	60.6
Math-All Students									
Performance Index (Target 75)	48.6	41.8	59.7	48.7	42.8	60.2	51.7	44.5	61.1
Academic Growth Average Percentage of Target Achieved (Target 100%)	34.9	52.1	61.8	51.2	51.8	61.4	66.5	52.6	62.3
Graduation-All Students									
Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (Target 94%)	80.6	78.4	88.4	82.4	78.6	88.9	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 3: School Performance-High Needs Students									
	2022-23			2023-24			2024-25		
Indicator	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State
ELA-High Needs Students									
Performance Index (Target 75)	59.2	45.4	54.1	58.1	44.9	54.1	59.3	46.0	54.9
Academic Growth Average Percentage of Target Achieved (Target 100%)	51.8	50.1	52.5	58.7	50.9	54.2	60.2	51.7	55.7
Math-High Needs Students									
Performance Index (Target 75)	48.5	39.9	48.9	48.5	40.6	49.5	51.5	42.2	50.6
Academic Growth Average Percentage of Target Achieved (Target 100%)	33.5	51.8	55.5	52.0	50.5	55.1	65.6	51.3	55.9
Graduation-High Needs Students									
Six-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (Target 94%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 4: School Culture and Climate									
	2022-2023			2023-2024			2024-2025		
Indicator	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State
Chronic Absenteeism Rate (%)	29.8	38.9	20.0	28.7	35.2	17.7	15.7	36.2	17.2
Suspension Rate (%)	11.3	13.4	7.0	4.1	13.9	7.0	5.4	11.4	6.8
Discipline Tier	2	2	3	1	4	3	1	2	3

Table 5: Student Wait List and Mobility Information			
Performance Metric:	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Waiting number:	9	6	50
Number of enrolled students who left during the school year:	80	48	43
Number of students who did not re-enroll the next year and had not completed the highest grade at the school:	99	104	Data not yet available