

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Courtney Saretzky

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Achievement First Bushwick Charter School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 125 Covert Street

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Brooklyn City NY State 11207-1101 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Kings County

Telephone (347) 471-2550

Fax (718) 228-9540

Web site/URL

<https://www.achievementfirst.org/school/achievement-first-bushwick-elementary-school/>

E-mail courtneysaretzky@achievementfirst.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Ms. Stephanie Keenoy

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

E-mail stephanieKeenoy@achievementfirst.org

District Name Achievement First-Bushwick Charter School Tel. (203) 521-2461

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Dr. Deborah Shanley

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 2 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	47	45	92
1	62	38	100
2	47	58	105
3	53	51	104
4	65	45	110
5	53	58	111
6	55	44	99
7	50	48	98
8	43	52	95
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	475	439	914

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 27 % Black or African American
 - 70 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 2 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 9%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	71
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	77
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	887
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 16 %
143 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Tibetan, Mandarin, Mandingo, Creole-Cape Verdean, Arabic, Twi/Fante

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 89 %
Total number students who qualify: 813

8. Students receiving special education services: 23 %
206 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>12</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>57</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>117</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	85
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	20
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	22

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 11:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	98%	97%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

The mission of Achievement First Bushwick is to deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all of America's children. We believe that all children, regardless of race or economic status, can succeed if they have access to a great education. We provide all our students with the academic and character skills they need to graduate from top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world, and to serve as the next generation of leaders in our communities.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Students are selected for admission to AF Bushwick by blind lottery. Siblings of current scholars and children of current staff are eligible for an absolute preference, earning a seat as long as one is available, otherwise they will be added to a waitlist with other siblings and children of staff. Applicants receive a weighted preference in the lottery (increase chances to be drawn) if they reside in the same community school district as the school serves, and/or if they belong to one or more at risk categories: English Language Learner, special education, free or reduced lunch recipient. Families offered a seat are contacted by email, text, and telephone. If they decline the seat, the next waitlisted applicant is contacted until all available seats are filled.

PART III – SUMMARY

Largely made up of Community School District 32 (CSD 32), Bushwick is a community facing a dramatic need for high quality public education options. The population of Bushwick is predominantly Hispanic, with large Dominican and Puerto Rican populations. Highlighting the need for college preparatory options in this area, among the population in Bushwick only 9% of adults have attained a Bachelor's degree by age 25. In CSD 32 in 2012, only 51% and 43.3% of students scored at or above proficient on the state math and English language arts exams.

Achievement First (AF) Bushwick opened in August 2006 with 160 kindergarten and 1st grade scholars and added 90 5th graders the following year. Since that founding the school grew two grades per year until it was a full-grown K-8 campus in 2010-11. In 2011-12, AF Bushwick's first middle school cohort matriculated AF Brooklyn High School, our sister Achievement First high school.

Our new kindergarten families are welcomed each year into their scholar's college graduating class cohort. Classroom advisories are all named after the colleges that their teachers graduated from. In this way we establish a college-going (and graduating) culture that permeates our building.

In February of 2018, AF Bushwick was named a New York State Reward School for placing in the top 20 percent of schools on state tests during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. Never satisfied and always striving for the next high bar, AF Bushwick surpassed those levels again the following year.

On the 2017-18 NY State Tests, AF Bushwick achieved 76% proficiency in ELA and 91% in Math, gains of 11 and 8 percentage points from the prior year respectively. Our ELA performance is on par with the wealthy suburban districts that we use as our benchmark, while our Math performance exceeds the benchmark districts by 10 percentage points.

Central to our success is our approach to teacher development. We've invested a significant amount time and energy in formal professional development sessions, from nearly three weeks before the school year starts to weekly Friday afternoon skill-building to periodic development days throughout the school year. We also believe fundamentally that great teaching is one of, if not the key variable to produce excellent outcomes for students. Each teacher at our schools has a coach that supports and guides their development. Coaches observe teachers' lessons at least once per week and meet weekly to debrief, plan, and practice their craft. Our coaches regularly film teacher lessons to use to illuminate strengths and weaknesses with teachers and engage in regular looking-at-student-work (LASW) meetings to pinpoint the areas of student need.

This investment in coaching leads directly to another core component of our success: teacher retention. We believe that when teachers feel heavily supported and developed, they feel successful and want to stay and build their career here. As a result, we've steadily pushed teacher retention north of 80% each year, and in some recent years, over 90%. This produces several benefits for our students. First, teachers continue to develop excellent practices, and our school features "anchor" teachers in each grade and subject area who can model exemplary teaching for others. Second, continuity and rapport among teachers leads to consistent routines and expectations for students, year over year. Our culture, traditions, and community are stable in large part because they have been honed and maintained by a consistent set of committed adults over years of time.

Furthermore, we believe firmly in teacher collaboration as a necessity for a strong learning environment. Our teachers are not islands in their own classrooms with the door closed. We think that, even if some or even all of those individual teachers are great at their practice, it is not enough to create a strong school community. We take a collective approach, instead. Teacher desks are located in classrooms. At any given point, you're likely to see two or even three teachers in a room, even if only one is engaged in the actual teaching at that moment. Teachers regularly observe one another and provide feedback to push and support colleagues, beyond our coaching structures. When students struggle with behavior or academics, teachers regularly work together to support them, address in-the-moment issues, and create plans to problem solve.

It is well understood and accepted that teacher effectiveness is the single largest factor on student achievement and success. This fact drives AF Bushwick leaders to devote most of our time to teacher focused initiatives like the ones detailed above, resulting in exceptional achievement levels for our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

In aligning the ELA program with the Common Core State Standards, the Bushwick teaching and learning team was guided by the conceptual framework enunciated in trainings provided by David Coleman, architect of the ELA Common Core standards. As applied to the existing Achievement First literacy program, this framework entails four major shifts: 1) A significant increase in the number of content-rich, informational texts students read; 2) An emphasis on grade level texts that are significantly more complex (both in terms of language and content); 3) An increased focus on “text dependent” questions, which require students to draw on text-based evidence in reading, writing, and speaking; and 4) A focus on teaching increasingly advanced academic vocabulary to help students access more difficult texts.

During a reading class, our teachers use two different approaches: 1) In a close reading lesson, students will closely read a dense, rich text and demonstrate deep understanding of the text’s core meaning and authorial moves via reading for the literal meaning, the deeper meaning, author’s craft, and thematic understanding. Students deepen understanding through multiple reads, discourse, and writing. 2) In a “reading workout” lesson, scholars read several pages of text for the first time for the purpose of establishing meaning first and then, when appropriate, analyzing. The lesson leverages mostly independent reading, annotation, discussion, and writing to deepen student thinking. The combination of these two different lesson types allows scholars to read substantial amounts of text throughout the year while also building their skill in comprehension, annotation, discussion, and writing.

Our writing program mixes narrative writing with literary essays and persuasive writing. Our scholars move through a writing cycle where they learn skills and spend a significant portion of the class writing and revising their own works.

The centerpiece of the AF Bushwick assessment system in all subjects is the sequence of standards-aligned Interim Assessments (IAs) that measure the skills taught over the course of the previous six weeks. About a week after each Interim Assessment, AF Bushwick holds a “data day” – a full day of professional development during which teachers, deans, and principals analyze their IA data, discuss instructional priorities and create data-driven instructional plans for the subsequent six weeks.

Achievement First (AF) created IAs are supplemented with STEP (grade K-2) or F&P (grades 3-4) testing five times per year to assess reading levels, after which reading groups are adjusted to either remediate or accelerate student performance.

1b. Mathematics:

The AF Bushwick math program aligns to the rigor of Common Core State Standards and places an emphasis on year-to-year mastery of skills. In the math program, students solve story problems, practice skill fluency, and work to solve new problems in math classes. Students engage in math instruction during two class periods each day. In the core math block, AF Bushwick teachers encourage scholars to grapple with math problems and identify the different ways they can solve the problems by applying strategies they have previously learned. This allows students to develop conceptual understanding of math topics and strategy to persevere by making connections to previously learned content, applying mathematical practices, thinking flexibly, and solving real-world problems. In addition, it ensures that students will understand the rationale for how the problem was solved and not just what the correct answer is. By building this conceptual understanding, students are then more likely to transfer this knowledge to other math problems. In the other class period, students review previously learned math content and practice skill fluency. By having a two-class period approach, our scholars to get multiple opportunities to practice already learned content as well as develop their critical thinking skills and math content knowledge.

In Math, AF assessments are supplemented with NWEA MAP testing three times per year, providing an independent benchmark to compare to IA results. AF Interim Assessments, which are common across Achievement First schools and administered approximately every 6 weeks, were originally created by Achievement Network, but have been modified over time to maintain closer alignment to curriculum. Our teachers and deans also use ongoing data from curriculum-aligned weekly quizzes to assess scholar learning and respond to data on an ongoing basis.

1c. Science:

The AF Bushwick science curriculum is guided by the Framework for K-12 Science Education by the National Research Council (NRC). Developed by a committee of internationally renowned scientists, researchers, and educators, the Framework is the centerpiece of new science standards to be developed by a coalition of 20 states, including New York. This process parallels the development of the Common Core standards in math and English language arts, and the new standards raised the bar for science education in the state of New York. As with the Common Core standards, making a seamless transition to the new science standards is crucial and requires significant prior planning. Our review of the middle school science program was a key element of this planning process.

At the elementary level, curriculum is driven by FOSS science. This curriculum correlates exceptionally well to New York and national science standards and provides robust assessments to track student progress towards mastery on these essential standards. Middle school science is based on scope and sequences created by Achievement First and are designed to increase our scholars' ability to integrate scientific concepts with the practical application of scientific inquiry. The middle school science curriculum is infused with materials from IQWST, an inquiry-driven science program developed at the University of Michigan Center for Curriculum Materials in Science. IQWST will allow us to link together science kits and conceptual lessons into coherent, interrelated projects.

In Science, AF created assessments correspond to each completed unit and are common across the network. 5th - 8th grade teachers come together regularly to norm on open response questions, aligning on what makes a strong response and discussing next steps based on the data.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

AF Bushwick's social studies curriculum draws on the Scott Foresman curriculum, but is guided by a scope and sequence developed by Achievement First to align with New York State and national standards. Consistent with the Common Core standards, the curriculum balances nonfiction reading instruction with the acquisition of important content knowledge. Based on the expanding framework for teaching social studies, the social studies curriculum presents content in a developmentally appropriate way, beginning with the self and expanding outward to an ever-widening circle of community. Guided by a series of essential questions that help develop critical thinking and questioning skills, students become versed in essential knowledge about the community and world in which they live, thus being prepared to engage successfully with the rigorous middle school social studies curriculum.

This social studies curriculum is presented in a way that is engaging and challenging. Teachers expect students to master the key concepts and vocabulary, and they also teach them to analyze primary sources, debate different points of view, and make cause-and-effect connections. Social studies class is a fast-paced, multi-modal class in which students hone their non-fiction reading skills, learn important content, and apply it in written essays and oral presentations.

Students learn content and concepts through reading, guided inquiry or modeling-based learning experiences, discussing, and writing. Learning experiences help make the abstract content and concepts described in the text more concrete. In addition to these learning experiences, AF Bushwick students employ historical thinking skills to conduct an inquiry into a historical questions and compose sound historical claims supported by evidence. This approach builds content knowledge of what has happened in history as well as provides our scholars with the skills needed to be historians, researchers, and critical thinkers.

All Social Studies assessments are created by the AF Network. Elementary scholars take a test at the end of each unit, while middle school scholars adhere to a standard Interim Assessment schedule when teachers assess scholar learning, come together across schools to align on strong responses, review the results and create an action plan for reteaching or reviewing the content with scholars. Across K-8th grade, our school has comparative data from across the network on these assessments allowing our teachers and deans to understand how scholars are performing within our school and across the broader network.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In 2003, the US Surgeon General declared obesity to be “the fastest-growing cause of disease and death in America” also noting that it is “completely preventable.” AF Bushwick offers a robust physical education curriculum that teaches students how to keep a fit and healthy lifestyle, which is important to teaching and learning as well as to each individual student’s well-being. All children will have physical education classes during their entire tenure at AF Bushwick.

AF Bushwick physical education teachers use the CATCH-PE curriculum. This curriculum features using continual motion and P.E. games to build athletic skills and an appreciation for lifelong fitness. In addition, they will also teach students how to play different sports and games as well as reinforcing messages about nutrition, teamwork and fair play.

Scholars attending AF Bushwick receive a foundation in basic Spanish. A strong foundation with a second language in elementary school is a major step toward achieving fluency and proficiency in Spanish.

The AF Bushwick music curriculum is focused on music literacy and music appreciation and has a strong performance component. Students learn to play an instrument and read music during the school day, and the curriculum follows the standards and goals of the National Association for Music Education (NAME). AF Bushwick offers additional music opportunities through after school enrichment programs.

AF Bushwick believes that students need to be technologically literate; that is, they need to know how to use the computer in the ways that professionals do daily. We also believe that the computer can be an instructional aid. Especially in the lower grades, students will use computer-based learning programs to master material.

In addition to the school-day specials program, AF Bushwick offers a series of after-school and extra curricular activities for our elementary scholars including Capoeira, Mindfulness Yoga, Piano, Choir, World Drumming Ensemble, Step Team, Track Team, Art Club & Beacon after-school program. In the middle school grades, we offer Dance, Step, Engineering, Mentoring in Medicine, Soccer, Basketball, Volleyball, Journalism, Debate, Strings, Percussion, Financial Literacy, Math Tutoring, Culinary Arts, Quiz Bowl, Art, Fitness, & Yoga. We are most proud of the fact that our scholars’ artwork is frequently displayed in area businesses and community centers.

Beyond instilling scholars with a sense of the possible through our powerful, college-going culture, our teaching staff, deans, and college counselors in our high schools work to equip each and every scholar with the skills, self-knowledge and extensive preparation required to bridge the gap between the expectation of college and what it takes to make it a reality. Given that 85 percent of our scholars are likely to be the first in their families to graduate from college, we have the profound responsibility to prepare our scholars to understand and meet admissions requirements and to learn the skills required to navigate the complex

application and enrollment process. While elementary school students are not required to complete the four years of College Readiness Seminar our Upper Grade students are expected to participate in, they will still be exposed daily to the expectation of college attendance for all AF Bushwick scholars.

3. Special Populations:

AF Bushwick is proud to serve the highest percentage of students with disabilities of any school in the Achievement First network, even before counting those students in our Empower Program. Inclusive of Empower, nearly 25% of our scholar population is a current or former student with disability. Similarly, AF Bushwick serves a high percentage of current or former ELL students, over 20% in 2018-19.

General education scholars receive targeted academic interventions in many different ways including at-risk counseling for those who demonstrate social or behavior challenges, guided reading and fluency intervention, Wilson/Fundations/Reading Mastery, and small group instruction in English Language Arts, Math, Science, and social studies when they struggle with grade level material. Scholars are identified for these services through an RTI process that universally screens all scholars twice per year (4x in elementary grades) to determine further assessments required to match appropriate interventions. Student progress monitoring occurs monthly at a minimum, depending on the specific interventions.

The school's leadership team coordinates the assessments and intervention matching, before students receive services from a minimum of one intervention teacher per grade plus the school's social worker. School leaders and intervention teachers receive dedicated professional development four times per year in addition to all new and returning staff have multiple sessions during the summer professional development cycle in how and what it means to serve all scholars. Deans of Special Services attend quarterly Cohort Days with other leaders from across the AF Network to foster sharing and learning among schools.

Students with disabilities (SWD) receive all the supports above with greater frequency and duration and smaller group sizes. In addition, SWDs received mandated related services in the areas of speech, hearing, occupational and physical therapy, vision and paraprofessional support. Additionally, AF Bushwick provides integrated co-teaching and/or special education teacher support services in ELA, Literature, Math and Writing. AF Bushwick Elementary and Middle is home to the AF Bushwick Empower Program – Achievement First's intensive program serving students with disabilities. The Empower Program design builds on the three pillars of our special services program: meaningful inclusion, intervention and specialized instruction to access grade-level curriculum. As a small-scale program beginning in 2017-18, it serves 49 students in grades 1-5. The program is transitional in nature, with the ultimate goal for many students to have a thoughtfully planned and supported transition back to co-taught and general education classrooms at their original Achievement First school.

In addition to the staffing levels described above, the Empower Program includes a dedicated leader, dean, social worker, and 4-8 additional staff. These staff receive specific PD sessions and regular (weekly) coaching.

Our English Language Learners (ELL) receive the same levels of support as our general at-risk populations described above. Our ELL team, including a dedicated ESL teacher, provides push-in and pull-out language support and accommodations based on content data. Additionally, the AF Network Special Services team works closely with our Deans of Special Education to provide ELL guidance and support.

Identification begins with optional demographic questions on our lottery application, in which SWD and ELL students receive a preference for admission during the lottery. If selected for admission during the lottery, ELL preferenced students will take the NYSITELL assessment during orientation sessions to aid in placement and program design for them. Subsequently on an annual basis in the spring, scholars will take the NYSESLAT to determine when they meet proficiency on both the Reading/Writing and Speaking/Listening sections of the NYSESLAT.

At AF Bushwick, we know that meeting students where they are and holding a high academic bar are not mutually exclusive—we CAN do both and our mission compels us to do so. This is why our special services

NBRS 2019

program is so important; our mission and responsibility is to serve and support all scholars who walk through our doors, which is inherent in our mission to close the achievement gap.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At AF Bushwick, we value and focus on teacher--student relationships. Our scholars and teachers build authentic relationships from the first day of school and throughout the year. These relationships allow for scholars to take academic risks. Our school permeates with love: love of self, love of peers, love of teachers, love of students, and the love of learning. Our teachers work towards knowing the whole child and being able to connect with who they are individually. We stress the importance of knowing each child and what each individual child needs to be successful.

Our scholars love coming to school and it shows in our high attendance. Each day, we celebrate each class and grade that has perfect attendance. We speak to students every day about the importance of coming to school and building that life long habit of fulfilling commitments. When our school reaches 100% attendance, we celebrate by having our mascot pie (yes pie) our administration in the face during our daily assembly. Our staff does its best to infuse fun and joy to incentivize our students.

Every morning, we have a whole school family meeting that we call ‘morning motivation’. During this daily morning meeting, we shoutout attendance, celebrate the academic accomplishments of our students, praise students who go above and beyond to demonstrate perseverance, citizenship, enthusiasm, advocacy, and other character virtues, and end with one of our many school pride cheers. At the middle school level, this tradition transforms into a Town Hall in which scholars discuss issues at school and current events in the world, and practice using their voice to speak powerfully to their community. We believe that a strong and energetic start to the day will carry into the classroom and the remainder of the day.

We know that our teachers drive our scholars’ results. As such, all teachers have a coach that provides consistent support and professional development through a minimum of weekly observations, coaching meetings, intellectual prep protocols, looking at student work meetings, unit unpackings, and lesson plan review. In addition, we have team professional development each Friday, during which content teams review weekly data and plan forward and/or have a whole school professional development session that is connected to school priorities. It is also important that our teachers are appreciated for the hard work that they put in each day and also recognize that their voice is critical in identifying how our school can become even stronger. Therefore, all staff members are invited to have 1:1 meetings with the principal at least three times a year. Staff are released early at least four times a year for “wellness” days and there are weekly staff appreciation events to show our tangible appreciation for our staff. The combination of coaching, support and appreciation has resulted in 90%+ staff retention.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

AF Bushwick developed and continue a tradition of strong partnerships with families and the community. We invite family presence and it is common to see parents in the building for many reasons.

The Parent/Family Leadership Council provides a monthly time for families to meet, learn about progress to goals, hear about upcoming activities/events, and raise their questions and concerns. It is also one of many spaces for parents to ask questions and learn about how to participate in various aspects of their scholar’s days (e.g. testing strategies, interpreting grades, different homework strategies, community service opportunities, socio-emotional support strategies, etc). Given the large Spanish-speaking population, all meetings are offered in English and Spanish.

There are multiple family events throughout the year. Outside of the regular communication between our staff and families, families learn about their scholars’ academic achievements and challenges through mandatory report card nights and other one-on-one meetings as needed. Several cultural/celebratory events also foster a sense of community between our parents and school, allowing us to showcase other aspects of our scholars’ work (e.g. extracurricular, art/music/theater classwork). These includes performances for Black History Month, Latino Heritage Month, family feasts, plays, and after school performances.

The school also collaborates with other entities in the Bushwick community. This includes working with NYC Department of Youth and Community Development afterschool programs through our partnership with the co-located Beacon/Advantage/Empire State program and our direct work with DYCD. This results in a variety of after school options for our students led by providers from the community. Our 5-8th grade scholars' art work can also be seen hanging in several neighborhood restaurants and our annual K-4 art show takes place at a local gallery. Additionally, the school primarily use vendors in the community for school events to give exposure and opportunities to neighborhood businesses.

3. Professional Development:

AF Bushwick teachers participate in comprehensive annual professional development opportunities. School leaders are committed to developing teacher knowledge and skill during 1) individual coaching sessions following weekly observations; 2) Friday afternoon all staff PD sessions and 3) scheduled day-long professional development organized and run by the AF Network.

During the course of any given year, teaching staff will participate in 15-29 days of organized professional development and training. Teachers new to the school will participate 2 weeks of new teacher training in July; returning teachers will receive approximately 3-5 days of PD at the beginning of the year, plus all staff members receive an additional 4 days of training with the entire school staff. Throughout the school year, all staff members will participate in 3 additional training days during the year when cohorts will come together to work on content and skills and 3 "Data Days" where teachers analyze data and determine how to respond to it.

The training teachers receive over the summer focuses on building content knowledge in the subjects the teachers teach, intellectually preparing for upcoming lessons with other teachers in their grade and content areas, and practicing executing the lessons. Then, throughout the year, teachers have Data Days where they work with their coach and other teachers in their content area to analyze data and determine what to review or reteach based on the results. On an ongoing basis, AF Bushwick develops teachers by building their content knowledge as well as focusing on specific skills teachers should use in the classroom.

4. School Leadership:

AF Bushwick, like all Achievement First schools employs a bifurcated organizational structure with the principal concentrating almost solely on instruction and a director of operations managing all other aspects of the school day including transportation, security, meal services, finance, student information and legal compliance. This structure enables the principal to focus entirely on teachers, students, and the learning environment.

The principal of each academy level is supported by 2-3 academic deans, 1-2 deans of students, and a dean of special services. The director of school operations is supported by 1-2 student services managers who oversee enrollment, testing, and reporting. With direct accountability to the school's Board of Directors, the principal and DSO have indirect reporting relationships to the network regional superintendents and regional directors of operations.

Our school leadership team provides comprehensive and hands on support that is primarily focused on developing teachers' intellectual preparation, analysis and response to data, and real time execution skills. Academic Deans and principals lead teachers through multiple analysis, planning, and feedback meetings weekly to support student achievement and rapid teacher development. Principals lead in-school PD sessions on Friday afternoons when scholars are dismissed at 1:00 pm that focus on skill development and building a high functioning team.

Deans of School Culture work to ensure that the student experience for all scholars is positive, supportive, and safe. They do this by managing and supporting school wide culture systems, and by coaching teachers and working directly with students who may be struggling. Our deans of special services work to ensure that all scholars who have special needs in our school are thriving. They organize, monitor, and coach our

interventions and related services. The create and adjust plans to provide additional scaffolding and support in classrooms.

On the operations side, the director, the student services manager, and their staff are responsible for scheduling and overseeing all routine movements in, out, and within the building including arrival, lunch periods, and dismissal. A primary role of the “Ops Team” is student attendance; the operations staff will begin calling the families of absent students within minutes of the first bell and will take all reasonable steps to insure scholars make it to school. With these efforts, AF Bushwick boasts an attendance rate of 96%.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Achievement First Bushwick we believe that instruction hinges on one audacious goal—outstanding student achievement that prepares our students to attend the college of their choice. We attribute our success in achieving this goal not to a single practice, but a suite of interconnected instructional practices implemented with complete fidelity.

Rigorous standards are set for students and the school provides high-quality curriculum and ongoing professional development. Teachers regularly analyze student data to drive daily instruction and long-term planning. Simultaneously, teachers and staff work hard to build a warm, joyful environment, where scholars feel loved, supported, and WANT to work hard every day.

In math, teachers strategically respond to weekly quiz data & look at student work in order to address misconceptions immediately, and close gaps within a single week. The first step is to administer a quiz which is followed by a looking at student work (LASW) protocol to identify the biggest conceptual gaps for the most commonly missed questions. The teacher will then plan a strategic questioning preview for students to discuss, identify, and fix their misunderstanding. And finally, they will redesign materials for our “Cumulative Review” block based on data, so students can get multiple at bats at practicing the skill (and skills taught in the prior week) before the next weekly quiz. Each of the practices uses effective in-the-moment rapid feedback & strategic interventions based on recent data (e.g. pull-out groups, prioritized circulation/feedback during independent practice, parallel teaching of core instruction in specific grades, after-school homework support, daily intervention for most struggling scholars).

In English Language Arts (ELA), teachers deliver a daily rigorous program that focuses on all aspects of literacy development – phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. Similar to the math practice, teachers will administer a quiz and apply the looking at student work protocol before planning the reteach lesson to address the most common misconceptions. The foundation of our ELA program is reading, which is why our scholars get to read for over 90 minutes each day, and they read books across many genres that are at their independent level and instructional level. This creates a love of reading across grades.

Teachers and staff practice robust RTI, consistently collecting and monitoring data throughout the year in both ELA and math. By doing so, the school is able to support scholars who are not yet meeting grade level benchmarks and provide targeted, small-group intervention.