

**Appropriations Committee Testimony**  
**SUPPORT: Executive Budget Charter School Per Pupil Increase**  
**Tuesday, March 9, 2021**

Greetings, my name is Marc Michaelson and I am the Senior Director of Greenfield Expeditions & Enrichment at Achievement First public charter schools. I'm a Connecticut native - I grew up in the public schools of Bloomfield and have lived in New Haven and its suburbs for the past 20 years. During this time, I taught at Achievement First's Amistad Academy and served as Elm City College Prep's founding middle school principal. Over the past six years, my work has involved supporting enrichment programs to help students discover their passions, strengths and areas of interest as they grow as leaders.

Today, I am asking that you pass an education funding bill that funds all our children fairly. Education should be funded based on what children need - not based on the type of public school they attend.

The programs I've been working on at Elm City included both Enrichment and Expeditions. The enrichment offerings include sports, dance, band, and coding & robotics. Our students have the chance to learn to play flute and trombone and to perform as in ensembles. Our robotics teams compete in First Lego League competitions and one of our students was featured [in this piece on the local news](#). These enrichment programs are extremely popular with students and are possible when our schools have equitable funding.

Over the past several years, our Elm City College Prep students have also participated in our Expeditions program, getting first-hand experience with a broad range of careers - from graphic design to neuroscience, forensic science to photojournalism, nutrition to architecture, and so much more. As part of these innovative programs, students get out into the community to meet and work with experts. Our architecture students visited a local building construction site, our debate students worked with Yale Law Students, and our photojournalism students documented manufacturing at a local factory. We know the true test of a meaningful education is how long it sticks. So, our team thought about how our students would view their Expeditions 40 years from now, how they might look back and see that the experience opened doors for them to pursue a field of study in college or in a career, or develop certain hobbies in their lives.

Throughout my 20+ years at Achievement First, I've been a teacher, principal and regional superintendent. I've worked in our schools in New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford, and I've gotten the chance to see our kids learn and grow into amazing young adults, head off to college and many have come back to work in our communities...and our schools. It's been inspiring to see our students blossom and use their education to do great things. Earlier this week, one of my former students sent me [this message](#) on LinkedIn. Education is a team sport and Achievement First has an incredibly dedicated team of teachers and leaders who love our kids and work tirelessly to build great schools that help them achieve their goals and dreams.

Our kids-- most of whom are Black and Latinx-- come from Fair Haven and other historically underserved neighborhoods in our city. Our schools connect potential with opportunity, and given the opportunity -- our students are doing incredible work every day. There is no reason that they should receive less funding than a student who goes to a district public school.

We have to change the system that underfunds our kids. I am asking that you support the increase to public charter school funding proposed in Governor Lamont's . Please begin to fund all public school students equitably and provide weighted funding based on students' needs. This investment in our students is an investment in the future of Connecticut. Thank you for your time!

Marc Michaelson  
Senior Director  
Achievement First