
Lift for Life Academy

2023-24 Annual Review

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April 2024**

Annual Review Process

SEMO fulfills its oversight responsibilities by conducting an ongoing standards-based annual review process in a variety of ways throughout the school year. It begins with an examination of a host of information about the school, some of it provided by the school to our liaison; including sponsor-required documents, assessment data, and financial audits that provide evidence of academic and organizational health. The Charter School Liaison carefully reviews this information along with DESE generated reports including annual MSIP-6 data and the Annual Performance Review (APR). While such documentation provides important information on how a school is performing, the SEMO Charter Liaison understands “seeing is believing” and has incorporated informal monthly site visits into its charter school annual review process along with in-depth full day site visits held in the spring. The SEMO Charter Liaison reviews all board meeting agendas, minutes and document packets and attends all board and committee meetings. SEMO also stays in close communication with various offices within DESE to monitor school compliance with state and federal guidelines and works with schools to address any issues that may arise. Upon release of MSIP-6 and APR data, SEMO finalizes the school’s Annual Review Report that identifies areas of strength and growth. The report is presented to school leadership and the Board. The school’s board of directors is required to review this report.

Interviews, Document Reviews and Site Visits

The site visit, interviews and document reviews, provides a mechanism for SEMO to verify and corroborate information collected throughout the year by gauging the culture and climate of a school and gathering additional evidence on school performance from a range of perspectives. This year interviews and classroom observations were conducted virtually as well as in person. The SEMO Charter Liaison’s onsite and virtual visits include:

School Leader Interviews

Teacher Interviews

Staff Interviews

Parent/Guardian Interviews

Student Interviews

Board Member Interviews

Support Staff Interviews

Classroom Observations

Document Submissions School

Day Observations Financial

Review

Review of Student Support Systems

Review of LEA Operations and HR

Findings from site visits are incorporated into the Annual Review Report.

Required Document Submission

To better assure that schools meet and maintain all of their State/Federal/Local compliance and reporting responsibilities, the SEMO Charter Liaison has developed a required Document Submission Checklist located in the Charter Handbook. While many documents require an annual submission, some are quarterly (enrollment numbers) and others are monthly (financial reports, board meeting minutes, agenda and board packets).

Evaluation Standards Elements of School Evaluation:

- I. Transformative and Innovative Vision
- II. Substantive Student Achievement
- III. Transformational Curriculum/Technology
- IV. Empowering Culture of Achievement/Athletics/Activities
- V. Strong School Leaders and Operations
- VI. Transformational Teachers
- VII. Comprehensive Student Support System
- VIII. Responsible Governance
- IX. Sound Financial Operations
- X. Engaged Parents and Community

Summary

Please note that the comments in this report reflect the analysis as of April 2024.

Areas of Strength

Here are the top strengths Lift for Life Academy can leverage to continuously improve and move toward the schools vision:

Vision

The Academy's vision is being clarified through curriculum implementation.

Academic Achievement

The Academy has increased its focus on data driven instruction and personalized learning.

Curriculum/Technology

ELA and Mathematics instructional materials have led to increased instructional rigor.

Dedicated instructional coaching has made a positive impact in curriculum implementation.

Technology, including Power School, has increased communication, enhanced student and parent engagement and improved efficiencies.

Culture of Achievement/Athletics/Activities

The Academy increased student engagement through a focus on individualized instruction and pathways.

Lift has addressed student needs through individual, data driven instruction.

Students have a clearer vision of post secondary choices through expanded opportunities.

A strong athletic and activities program provides opportunities for students to engage in interests outside the school day.

Leadership/Operations

Leadership is unified in their efforts to address the learning gap and meet student's individual needs.

Academy operations have raised performance, developed systems and improved efficiencies.

Transformational Teachers

Teachers have embraced new curricular materials and seek expansion to additional content areas.

Teacher quality and commitment has increased.

Student Support Systems

Staff address students emotional and academic needs on a daily basis.

Social workers, behavior interventionists and counselors are on staff.

Student basic health needs are met.

Students have increased opportunities to explore post secondary interests.

Governance

LFL's board continues to provide strong leadership and support for a growing academy.

The board has completed a strategic planning process.

The Board works well together and has a collaborative relationship.

Finances

Internal budgeting processes and communication continue to improve.

Finance meets all internal and external deadlines.

Parents/Community

An Alumni Board is fully operational and active in the LFL community.

Enrollment and admissions practices have dramatically improved.

There has been increased Parent/Guardian communication regarding student learning gaps.

Areas for Growth

Vision

Ensure all Lift for Life stakeholders are aware of and committed to the Academy vision.

Academic Achievement

Improved academic achievement through a relentless focus on high quality classroom instruction and curriculum fidelity.

Develop building academic scorecards to increase accountability and transparency.

Curriculum/Technology

Develop an Academy wide technology plan.

Expand curriculum materials to the high school level and elective courses.

Culture of Achievement/Athletics/Activities

Define and implement consistent student/staff expectations by building.

Continue to expand recognition of student achievement.

Expand activities offerings and increase student participation.

Leadership/Operations

Define high quality teaching and learning.

Focus leadership on improving staff quality and job execution.

Develop a comprehensive facilities plan.

Transformational Teachers

Fully develop and implement a 3 year teacher mentoring program.

Review and update existing teacher evaluation system.

Student Support System

Ensure Care Teams are fully trained and the process is executed with fidelity.

Develop a comprehensive student support plan.

Board Governance

Develop a board leadership succession plan.

Ensure fiscal management of Academy through budget oversight.

Finance

Include the finance department in all major budgetary decisions.

Parents/Community

Develop and implement a K-12 parent/guardian engagement plan.

I. Transformative and Innovative Vision

Areas of Strength

- A. The mission of the school is becoming more operable.
- B. Many teachers are implementing the vision.
- C. The Board strategic plan is integrated into the CSIP and committee dashboards.

Areas for Growth

- A. Define academy outcomes i.e, personalized learning through competency based instruction.
- B. Continue to increase awareness of vision and innovative practices.

II. Substantive Student Academic Achievement

Areas of Strength

- A. All buildings have increased data driven instruction.
- B. Building leadership communicates student academic levels to parents/guardians.
- C. Dedicated content specialists/instructional coaches have made a positive impact at the classroom level.
- D. Instructional coaching in special education and electives has made significant impact on classroom management and content knowledge.
- E. Students have demonstrated increased growth toward the performance contract.
- F. Teachers are increasingly using student data in planning and teaching.
- G. Classrooms have increased instructional technology, (i.e., chromebooks and display panels), to facilitate digital content and increase student engagement and learning.
- H. Curriculum alignment along with instructional materials has made a significant impact.
- I. The Academy utilizes formative and summative student data to improve performance.
- J. Classroom observations and interviews continue to indicate a joy of learning and teaching.
- K. The majority of staff, parent and student interviews point to high expectations for students.

- L. The Academy is a caring community where staff have relationships with students and families.
- M. Data driven, targeted intervention is being implemented at all levels.
- N. Personalized career options have improved post secondary decision making for students.
- O. SOAR has expanded and gained traction.
- P. Special Education services have improved at all levels.

Areas for Growth

- A. Teacher turnover continues to contribute to learning loss, leadership time and discipline referrals. Fully implement the teacher hiring process focused on increasing High Quality Teachers.
- B. Continue to work toward personalized learning/competency based instruction.
- C. Train all coaches and principals in Cognitive Coaching to develop a comprehensive coaching framework leading to increased teacher performance.
- D. Ensure ALL teachers benefit from coaching.

III. Transformational Curriculum/Technology

Areas of Strength

- A. Core instructional materials for English Language Arts and Mathematics have been implemented.
- B. Content and instructional coaching has positively impacted new curriculum adoptions.
- C. Digital content implementation is supported by the technology department,
- D. Students are provided opportunities to learn about post secondary options and receive support in their individual areas of interest.
- E. SOAR experiences and internships have expanded, providing students with real life learning.
- F. The academy has a K-12 testing plan.
- G. Elementary departmentalization in grades 2 - 4 has been beneficial for student growth.
- H. The Clever rollout has synced data and applications.

- I. Progress has been made on enrollment and digitizing student records.
- J. Improvements have been made in digital security.
- F. Visual and Performing arts classes continue to increase in scope and academy wide visibility.
- G. Drama has made a significant contribution to curriculum offerings and school culture.
- H. Interventionists have been hired in english language arts and mathematics.
- I. NWEA incentives led to improved student performance.
- J. Teachers receive regular, building level professional development.
- K. The Academy continues to expand its partnerships with SEMO.
- L. Teachers have received training in new curriculum.
- M. Curriculum has been adjusted to meet the needs of students who lag behind.
- N. Power School has provided training and support to teachers with expanded capabilities.
- O. Significant progress has been made toward improving safety through expanded use of technology including Centegex.

Areas for Growth

- A. Teachers report a continuing need for increased vertical curricular meetings and planning.
- B. Adopt curriculum for all teachers with supporting instructional materials including math (pre algebra, geometry and algebra 1 and 2), english language arts at the secondary level as well as electives.
- C. Consider including parents/guardians in curriculum evaluation and selection.
- D. Evaluate student impact of existing academic and social emotional interventions.
- E. Continue participation in the Missouri Student Success Network to expand competency based instruction and apply for an assessment waiver.
- F. Conduct an annual audit of student chromebooks using current digital inventory system.
- G. Continue to expand Power School use through staff training.
- H. Develop Academy wide tech plan.
- I. Review existing technology processes and evaluate for need to integrate into student information systems.

- J. Include technology when planning expansion and/or renovations.
- K. The Academy has expanded digital use and facilities. Consider expanding tech staff to support this growth.
- L. Implement a K-8 gifted instruction. In lieu of a dedicated teacher, students could be accelerated or clustered in classes.
- M. Fully articulate a K-12 plan for PBL.
- N. Provide training for new teachers in content and lesson design to increase student engagement and reduce student discipline.
- O. Differentiate professional development for master level teachers.
- P. Ensure all teachers knowledge of content standards.
- Q. Offer professional development to address the needs of non traditional teacher hires.
- H. Teachers interviewed prefer personalized PD. Considered content and skills based PD.
- I. Apply a consistent policy to address student technology damage and loss.

IV. Empowering Culture of Achievement/Athletics/Activities

Areas of Strength

- A. Building leaders are focused on improving student achievement.
- B. School start time changes have had a positive impact on attendance, behavior and student engagement.
- C. The Academy continues to operate as a caring community where all are supported and teachers and staff know students and families.
- D. The majority of staff feel safe in the school.
- E. Student support teams at all levels have made a positive impact.
- F. A majority of teachers are focused on improving student achievement through high quality instruction.
- G. Increased focus on individual student learning gaps has shown positive traction.
- H. Classroom, hallway and campus wide observations indicate a high sense of student engagement and empowerment.
- I. The majority of students are making academic growth.

- J. Security officers are a positive presence in the Academy.
- K. Increased safety measures have improved staff sense of well being.
- L. The Academy partners to provide health care services for students including dental, and vision clinics, among others resulting in improvement student achievement and attendance.
- M. All students interviewed can identify a positive adult they can talk with in the school.
- N. The Academy has complied with the Missouri Safe Schools Act and the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act.
- O. There is increased recognition of student academics.
- P. Students report an increase in post secondary prep activities.
- Q. There has been an expansion of post secondary options for student.

Athletics/Activities

- A. The Athletic program has increased student participation and pride in the school.
- B. Athletics continues to expand at all levels.
- C. The majority of students participate in an extra curricular activity.
- D. All students are provided opportunities to be involved in activities including coding, drama and chess club.

Areas for Growth

- A. Expand parent/guardian involvement in improving student academic performance.
- B. Evaluate impact of extrinsic motivators for students academic achievement.
- C. Identify non negotiables by building, i.e., bell to bell instruction, teacher response time to parent communication, teacher demeanor in the classroom.
- D. Define and implement consistent student/staff expectations/rituals and routines in each building.
- E. Review student cell phone use/practices by building.

Athletics/Activities

- A. Balance academic focused activities with athletics.
- B. Ensure participation in student athletic/activities standards are adhered too, i.e., attendance,

missing homework, etc.

- A. Continue to evaluate and expand activity offerings, i.e., debate, robotics, science fair.

V. Strong Leadership and Operations

Areas of Strength

- A. Leadership is focused on meeting individual and academic performance targets.
- B. Staff appreciates leadership visibility and access.
- C. Leadership has worked with instructional staff to fully implement new instructional materials.
- D. Leadership has integrated the strategic plan into the CSIP.
- E. Leadership and staff participate in mid year evaluations.
- F. Leadership facilitates and participates in professional development.
- G. The majority of staff are satisfied with working conditions.
- H. The majority of school leaders have participated in professional development relevant to their current position.
- I. Leaders works with Board Committee Chairs to address Academy needs.
- J. The vast majority of staff interviews indicate they value LFL's ability to quickly implement improvements and change.
- K. Staff, parent and student interviews indicate that Leadership is responsive.
- L. The vast majority of staff support leadership and the direction of the Academy.
- M. Staff, parent and student interviews indicate that leadership is willing to listen to concerns and suggestions.
- N. The Academy is compliant with state and federal statutes.
- O. Teacher interviews indicate that school leadership supports their work.
- P. The Academy is compliant with Health and Safety, Special Education, Title I, Homeless and ELL, and state testing requirements.

Operations/HR/Facilities/Food Service Areas

Strength

- A. The physical space continues to expand at the academy.
- B. Expanded incentives and benefits have been added to recruit and retain high quality staff.
- C. Lift has identified a dedicated registrar to facilitate student enrollment and admissions.
- D. The Human Resources department has implemented a hiring process to improve employee quality and retention.
- E. Increased academy wide communication continues to improve culture.
- F. Transportation has provided quality services in spite of staffing challenges.
- G. Food service continues to provide quality meals for staff and students.
- H. Custodial and maintenance is fully staffed with defined supervisors.
- I. LFL limits access to MOSIS and Core Data to appropriate staff.
- J. The Academy website continues to be refined and updated.
- K. Facilities are well maintained.
- L. Signage, paint and other exterior work has helped to unified the Academy buildings.
- M. Policies and procedures continue to improve in all operational areas.

Areas of Growth Leadership

- A. Develop individual leadership professional development plans.
- B. Involve those that are impacted by leadership decisions in the decision making process.
- C. Consider school dashboards to increase accountability and transparency.
- D. Consider developing clear staff promotion pathways within the academy.
- E. Fully implement the HR hiring process to improve candidate quality and reduce staff turnover.

Operations/HR/Facilities/Food Service

- A. Implement a technology skills assessment for all new hires.
- B. Fully implement the team hiring process focused to reduce turnover and increase

staff quality.

- C. Provide annual staff training on hiring and employee performance evaluation.
- D. Develop a facilities master plan including potential expansion and budget that includes total cost of operation, i.e., technology, utilities, custodial and maintenance.
- E. Ensure all staff positions have appropriate training and support relevant to their role.
- F. Continue to expand storage for inventory to increase purchasing efficiencies and capacity to store equipment.
- G. Continue to evaluate transportation needs and efficiencies.

VI. Transformational Teachers

Areas of Strength

- A. There has been an increased focus on teacher certification and high quality teaching.
- B. A majority of teachers are highly engaged with students and have strong expectations.
- C. Dedicated instructional coaches have made a significant positive impact on instruction.
- D. Teachers have embraced the new curriculum materials and have worked diligently to implement them.
- E. The Academy continues to promote a focus on under achieving students through tutoring, intervention, and additional instructional time.
- F. Educational staff have attended off site professional development in addition to Academy offerings.
- G. The majority of teachers inspire and motivate students to achieve at higher levels.
- H. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods and assessments in their classrooms.
- I. Student and parent/guardian interviews state that teachers provide help to students beyond the instructional day.
- J. A majority of teachers go above and beyond standard teaching expectations.
- K. Teachers enjoy classroom autonomy.
- L. Teachers appreciate and respond to feedback from instructional coaches.
- M. There is a regular onboarding process for all staff.

Areas for Growth

- A. Continue to increase the number and quality of certified teachers.
- B. Focus on high quality classroom instruction thus reducing the need for fellows and/or remediation.
- C. Increase teacher knowledge and use of interventions.
- D. Continue to ensure new teachers complete LETRS training.
- E. Train all school leaders on an instructional coaching model, i.e., cognitive coaching.
- F. Increase consistency of teacher responsiveness to parents/guardians.
- G. Update the teacher evaluation system to a new digital system.
- H. Implement an Academy wide 3 year teacher mentoring program.
- I. Ensure all content and elective areas have a written curriculum and instructional materials.
- J. Ensure all teachers receive coaching.

VII. Comprehensive Student Support System

Areas of Strength

- A. The Academy provides counseling, social work and behavior intervention.
- B. Behavior and attendance data accuracy has greatly improved.
- C. The Academy has improved safety through increased technology and safety and security officers.
- D. A College and Career counseling team has increased exposure to careers, colleges and other post secondary opportunities
- E. The Social Worker's role is more defined this year.
- F. Teachers stated that the commitment to the whole child is a huge motivator and a reason they enjoy teaching at LFLA.
- G. LFL has implemented student CARE teams.
- H. Staff members are expected to form positive relationships and to know students as individuals.
- I. Grade level and building level leadership teams are collaborative and support classroom teachers with a "whatever it takes" approach.

- J. Staff report a quick response to behavioral concerns.
- O. Secondary students with IEP's are connected to post high school options.
- P. Each Academy is providing social work led groups including grief support.
- Q. Some students are provided individual counseling.
- R. Parent/guardian/student interviews indicate increased student interest for post secondary options after exposure to career options and pathways.

Areas for Growth

- A. Examine the effectiveness of current SEL programs to determine impact.
- B. Provide time for social workers to meet, align services, etc.
- C. Ensure those evaluating Social workers understand their roles and responsibilities.
- D. Ensure Care Teams are fully trained and the process is executed with fidelity.
- E. Consider parent/guardian education in SEL, trauma and mental health issues to better address the needs of students.
- F. Continue to expand staff training in restorative practices.

VIII. Responsible Governance

Areas of Strength

- A. The Board has developed a strategic plan.
- B. The Board works well together and has a collaborative relationship.
- C. Board Committees have developed dashboard reporting systems.
- D. Board meetings are regularly scheduled and conducted appropriately.
- E. The Board's new software platform continues to improve internal and external communication.
- F. The Board is developing a recruitment and selection process.
- G. The board has developed a policy review and adoption process and publishes all policies on its new platform.

- H. Board committees review and assess relevant school goals on a regular basis.
- I. The Board works to ensure compliance with the Sunshine Law.
- J. LFL Board is a working board that continues to be appropriately involved in oversight.
- K. The Board monitors ED performance, student achievement, financials and operations.
- L. The board monitors the Executive Director's performance every six months.
- M. Board policies are up to date.
- N. The Board has all proper insurance policies in place.
- O. A policy adoption and revision process has been fully implemented.
- P. The governing board monitors academy and school level progress at each board meeting.
- Q. The Board fulfills its responsibilities to SEMO as defined by contract.
- R. Board members have strong community ties and continue to support the Academy through these relationships.

Areas of Growth

- A. Committees should consider publishing dashboards.
- B. Develop a board leadership succession plan.
- C. Continue to work on increasing board diversity.
- D. Committees should consider membership numbers and identify and recruit new members.
- E. Consider parent/guardian membership on board committees where appropriate.

IX. Sound Financial Operations

Areas of Strength

- A. Internal budget communication and processes have improved.
- B. Attendance process had significantly improved.
- C. The budgeting process, training and staff participation continues to grow and develop.

- D. The Board has established a 10% minimum fund balance reserve goal.
- E. The Finance department adheres to all fiscal policies and procedures.
- F. The Academy continues to have clean audits.
- G. The Academy renewed their relationship with the audit firm.
- H. The Academy fulfills its fiduciary duties and responsibilities.
- I. The Board Finance Committee meets quarterly and is actively engaged in fiscal oversight.
- J. The LFL Foundation continues to provide strong support for capital projects and other academy needs.
- K. The Finance department is responsive to the needs of the Academy.

Areas for Growth

- A. Continue to train all key staff to access and manage their budgets.
- B. Improve budget transparency with board and leadership.
- C. Reduce unbudgeted projects and other expenses.
- D. Increase evidence of documented quotes.
- E. Develop board debt policy and a plan for debt reduction.
- F. Develop and fully implement consistent cash management procedures for athletics and other student activities.

X. Engaged Parents and Community

Areas of Strength

- A. An Alumni Board is fully operational and active in the LFL community.
- B. Enrollment/admissions practices have dramatically improved.
- C. There has been increased Parent/Guardian communication regarding student learning gaps.
- D. Parents/Guardians report feeling safe sending students to school.
- E. Additional parent engagement activities have been added this year.

Areas for Growth

- A. Continue to increase parent/guardian knowledge and engagement with Power School.
- B. Hold building level parent/guardian focus groups to determine ways in which parents desire to increase engagement.
- C. Each school should send out a weekly newsletter to all/parents guardians.
- D. Develop Academy and Building level Parent/Guardian engagement plans.