
Lift for Life Academy

2021-22 Annual Review

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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-5 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-5 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
- IV Empowering Culture of Achievement
- 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 March 2022.

Areas of Strength

Here are the top strengths that you can leverage to continuously improve and move toward your vision.

Vision

Stakeholders continue to maintain a strong commitment to the school's mission.

Academic Achievement

The school has embraced data driven instruction and is working with students on individual growth targets.

Curriculum and Instruction

LFL continues to evolve the instructional model and delivery to address the changing needs of students during these uncertain times.

Culture of Achievement

The instructional staff has moved quickly to modify and address the needs of their learners and subsequent learning loss caused by the pandemic.

Leadership

The leadership has grown and expanded to meet the needs of a growing Academy.

Teachers

Despite extremely challenging years due to covid, the majority of teaching staff are highly committed to delivering quality instruction to all learners.

Student Support Systems

The instructional and emotional student support system has grown to address immediate needs.

Governance

LFL's board is a working board that is appropriately knowledgeable and involved in the school.

The board has executed a board development and onboarding plan.

A student member has been added to the board.

Finances

LFL is on sound financial footing and has a fully staffed finance department.

Parents

Parents/guardians are committed to the school and seek to increase their partnership.

Areas for Growth

Vision

All actions toward achieving Lifts vision should be aligned and addressed systemically.

Curriculum and Instruction

Student needs should be addressed through multiple access points to learning.

Leadership

Now that the leadership team is fully staffed, the team should develop a cohesive vision for learning.

Develop and implement a self-evaluation and mentoring plan for all those new to their positions.

Teachers

Develop and implement a K-12 onboarding and mentoring program for teachers.

Implement a K-12 teacher development and retention program.

Student Support System

Utilize existing staff to clarify and develop a K-12 social emotional learning program, mental health support, and trauma informed care.

Board Governance

Continue to address board growth, development, and turnover.

Revisit the strategic plan and align priorities and the Boards short- and long-term vision.

Parents

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

I. Transformative and Innovative Vision

Areas of Strength

- A. The vast majority of teachers, staff and administration clearly share the same mission and vision for the school.
- B. The vast majority of stakeholder interviews indicate the existence of a strong sense of community and collaboration.
- C. Most stakeholders report involvement in decision making.
- D. LFL has a current charter and amendment.

Areas for Growth

- A. The vision and mission for the school is evolving and needs continued clarification.

II. Substantive Student Academic Achievement

Areas of Strength

- A. Student achievement targets have been established in the performance contract.
- B. Students are demonstrating growth toward the performance contract.
- C. Schools utilize formative and summative student data to improve performance.
- D. While attendance has been challenging, the Academy has worked toward meeting all attendance targets.
- E. Students have a strong desire to attend school in person.
- F. Classroom observations and interviews indicate a joy of learning and teaching.

- G. Professional development for teaching staff has focused on Common Formative Assessments, Academic Vocabulary and Literacy.
- H. The Middle School is continuing to participate in a state Literacy Grant.
- I. The majority of staff, parent and student interviews point to high expectations for students.
- J. The Academy is a caring community where staff has relationships with students and families.
- K. Targeted instruction and flexible grouping have been implemented at the elementary and middle school.
- L. Tutoring has been provided for students to address learning gaps and help them achieve on the state assessment.
- M. Career pathways have begun to provide clarity for students.

Areas for Growth

- A. Expand goal setting with students.
- B. Continue to work toward personalized learning/competency-based instruction.
- C. Continue to focus on growth targets for students.
- D. Expand recognition of student academic achievement and growth tying incentives and recognition into academic rewards.

III. Transformational Curriculum/Technology

Areas of Strength

- A. The Academy uses Build Your Own Curriculum software to enhance student learning.
- B. LFL continues to make progress developing its documented curriculum.
- C. Curriculum for core classes is strong.
- D. Students are provided opportunities to learn about post-secondary options and receive support in their areas of interest.
- E. Dual credit offerings have been expanded.

- F. Staff, parent and student interviews indicate that overall the curriculum is challenging.
- G. Lift has fully embraced Chromebooks and digital content for student use and refined policies to address usage.
- H. Formative assessments include NWEA, i ready, Fountes and Pinnell, and Exit Tickets have been implemented.
- I. NWEA incentives led to improved student performance.
- J. The Academy provides wi-fi hotspots for student use.
- K. Teachers support the professional development at the school.
- L. Curriculum has been modified to meet the needs of learners.
- M. The Academy has begun to implement a writing curriculum.
- N. The Academy has implemented Common Formative Assessments to monitor student achievement and learning standards.
- O. Numerous electives are offered K-12.
- P. Teachers report instructional supplies needs are met.
- Q. Teachers report some autonomy with lesson design and delivery.

Areas for Growth

- A. Teachers report a need for vertical curricular meetings and planning.
- B. Assessments should be fully aligned K-12.
- C. Ensure core curriculum aligns to standards.
- D. Expand phonics instruction at the elementary.
- E. Clearly articulate a plan for PBL and S.O.A.R.
- F. Develop teachers' knowledge of standards K-12.
- G. Continue work on common assessments.
- H. Continue expanded use of BYOC to document curriculum.
- I. Ensure all electives align with the Academy mission.

- J. Student and staff requests from curriculum expansion include additional electives and the middle and high school and a health unit in upper elementary to address students changing bodies.
- K. Several students recommended ACT prep at M.S. and coding at the elementary and middle.
- L. Teachers requested additional writers workshop training.

IV. Empowering Culture of Achievement/Athletics

Areas of Strength

- A. All students, staff and parents interviewed prefer in person learning to virtual.
- B. The Academy is developing learners with a strong sense of efficacy.
- C. Student interviews continue to indicate what makes LFLA better than other schools is a sense of family and a challenge to be your best.
- D. The school continues to operate as a caring community where all are supported. Many teachers know students and families.
- E. Classroom observations indicate a strong sense of student engagement.
- F. Students state they can get help from any teacher.
- G. The majority of students are making academic growth.
- H. Overall, students feel safe at school.
- I. Elementary students report enjoying school and are eager to attend.
- J. Four Teaching Assistants have been added at the elementary.
- K. M.S. students interviewed believed the new honors courses were more rigorous.
- L. H.S. students interviewed stated most courses were rigorous.
- M. All students interviewed identified specific teachers who helped and supported them.

Athletics

- A. The Athletic program has increased student participation and pride in the school.

- B. Athletics has expanded to upper elementary level.
- C. Students have many opportunities to participate in athletics activities.
- D. Student athletes are often recruited to colleges.

Areas for Growth

- A. Students and teachers expressed a strong desire for increased academic recognition.
- B. Most students interviewed indicate coursework could be more rigorous.
- C. Secondary students interviewed seek more test prep.
- D. Most students interviewed desired after school academic clubs, i.e. chess, yearbook, robotics, mathletes, STEM, dance. Consider surveying students to determine interests.
- E. Students request more meaningful homework.

Athletics

- A. Student-athletes and parents/guardians should sign a code of conduct contract at the beginning of each school year.

V. Strong Leadership and Operations

Areas of Strength

- A. Leadership is focused on meeting performance targets.
- B. Leadership is energized to be in their positions.
- C. Staff have completed surveys to assess work satisfaction and the majority are satisfied with working conditions.
- D. The majority of school leaders have participated in professional development relevant to their current position.
- E. Student data is acquired, assessed and evaluated at regular intervals.
- F. Leaders collaborate with Board Committee Chairs to assess and monitor school progress including finance, academics, and operations.

- G. The vast majority of staff interviews indicate they value LFL's ability to quickly implement improvements and change.
- H. Staff, parent and student interviews strongly indicate that Leadership is available and prepared to hear concerns or suggestions.
- I. Lift for Life publishes its Annual Report on its website.
- J. The staff has addressed the changing school requirements of COVID, and state and local directives.
- K. The vast majority of staff support leadership and the direction of the Academy.
- L. Staff, parent and student interviews indicate that leadership is willing to listen to concerns and suggestions.
- M. With student enrollment in decline in other public/charter schools, Lift has wait lists at many grade levels.
- N. The Academy is compliant with state and federal statutes.
- O. Teacher interviews indicate that school leadership supports their work.
- P. Most teachers report their classroom supply and student behavioral needs are met.
- Q. Teachers have a voice in most decisions that impact their work
- R. Teacher interviews indicate strong support for the role of instructional coaches in improving teaching and learning.
- S. 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 of Strength

- A. The physical space continues to expand at the academy.
- B. A Director of Operations has been in place since summer 2021.
- C. The Human Resources department is fully staffed.
- D. Transportation is fully staffed. Incentives have been helpful.
- E. Custodial and maintenance is fully staffed with low turnover.
- F. Lift has engaged in a supplemental maintenance contract.

- G. LFL limits access to MOSIS and Core Data to appropriate staff.
- H. All LFL staff have cleared Criminal Background checks and FCSR registration.
- I. The Academy website is being updated.
- J. Facilities are well maintained.
- K. Policies and procedure are improving in all operational areas.

Areas of Growth

Leadership

- A. Leaders should conduct an annual self-evaluation to be shared with the Board.
- B. Teacher and student interviews indicate some inconsistencies in student discipline at the middle and high school. Some students report concerns about bullying and fighting.
- C. Consider developing clear leadership pathways within the academy.
- D. Parent/guardian interviews indicate a need for increased digital communication at the middle and high school level.
- E. Teachers express a desire to return Undoing Racism to the academy.
- F. Consider revisiting and clarifying roles and responsibilities to increase leadership effectiveness.

Operations/HR/Facilities/Food Service

- A. Consider centralized Academy wide staff change announcements.
- B. Technology and accurate data is critically important to Academy functioning. Consider hiring a registrar/data analyst to address unmet needs.
- C. Ensure all staff positions have appropriate training and support relevant to their role.
- D. Consider expansion of commodities use for Food Service.

VI. Transformational Teachers

Areas of Strength

- A. A majority of teachers are highly engaged with students and have strong expectations.

- B. The Academy has been ambitious in addressing an ever changing instructional landscape.
- C. All teachers interviewed are committed to LFL and the LFL community.
- D. The majority of teachers inspire and motivate students to achieve at high levels.
- E. Parent/guardian and student interviews indicate teachers build strong relationship with students and families.
- F. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods and assessments in their classrooms.
- G. Student and parent/guardian interviews state that teachers provide help to students beyond the instructional day.
- H. Teachers state they believe all students can learn and provide assistance for those who struggle.
- I. A majority of teachers go above and beyond standard teaching expectations.
- J. Several teachers have embraced S.O.A.R. and PBL.
- K. New teacher mentoring programs are beginning to make a difference.
- L. Beginning teacher support groups have been helpful.
- M. Teachers enjoy classroom autonomy.
- N. A majority of teachers have strong backgrounds and experience.
- O. Teachers appreciate and respond to feedback from instructional coaches.
- P. The academy has implemented a dual credit intro to education course for high school students.

Areas for Growth

- A. Increase staff/teacher support and recognition systems.
- B. Work toward increasing teacher retention.
- C. Develop regular on boarding process for all staff.
- D. Develop an instructional technology master plan

VII. Comprehensive Student Support System

Areas of Strength

- A. The Academy provides counseling, social work and behavior intervention at all levels.
- B. The Academy has conducted a Title I needs assessment.
- C. Teachers stated that the commitment to the emotional wellness of children is a huge motivator and a reason they love teaching at LFLA. Staff describe LFL's social-emotional-behavioral supports and services to be strong and growing.
- D. The Academy has implemented tiered levels of academic support.
- E. LFL has implemented student support/CARE teams.
- F. Staff members are expected to form relationships and to know students as individuals.
- G. Grade level and building level leadership teams are highly collaborative and support classroom teachers with a "whatever it takes" approach.
- H. Restorative practices are included throughout middle and high school settings.
- I. Staff report a strong response to behavioral concerns.
- J. Secondary students with IEP's are connected with Vocational Rehabilitation.
- K. Many students are provided group or individual counseling/therapy.
- L. A Board and Community team has been working with the school to address the comprehensive need for student support.
- M. Students are offered dozens of outside partnerships and activities including Camp Wyman.
- N. LFL partners with Affinia Health providing health care and support.
- O. Parents interviews indicate increased student interest for college after meeting with the college counselor and other LFL staff.

Areas for Growth

- A. Consider developing a comprehensive K-12 tiered Social Emotional, Counseling and Mental Health program based on student needs.
- B. Clarify roles and responsibilities of Deans, Social Workers and Behavior Support staff to improve delivery of supports.

- C. Students interviewed stated many have home issues and these should be addressed in the classroom.
- D. Consider parent/guardian education in SEL, trauma and mental health issues to better address the needs of students.
- E. Consider expanding intervention materials including Foundations and Ready - Lets Go Learn for students with IEP's and others that may benefit.
- F. Expand flexible grouping at all levels.
- G. Consider gifted student identification and programming. In lieu of a dedicated teacher, students could be clustered in classes.

VIII. Responsible Governance

Areas of Strength

- A. The Board has implemented a development and on boarding process.
- B. A student member has been added to the board.
- C. The board has developed a policy review and adoption process and publishes all policies on the school website.
- D. Board committees review and assess relevant school goals on a regular basis.
- E. The Board works to ensure compliance with the Sunshine Law.
- F. Some board members attend professional development beyond board meetings development sessions.
- G. LFL Board is a working board that continues to be appropriately involved in oversight.
- H. The Board monitors ED performance, student achievement and financials. ED evaluation is based on measurable goals and completed each year.
- I. The board monitors the Executive Directors performance every six months.
- J. Board policies are up to date.
- K. The Board has all proper insurance policies in place.
- L. A policy adoption and revision process has been fully implemented.

- M. The governing board reviews academy and school level dashboards at each board meeting.
- N. The Board fulfills its responsibilities to SEMO as defined by contract.
- O. Board members have strong community ties and continue to support the Academy through these relationships.
- P. School Leader and Board member relationships remain strong.
- Q. The Board is working toward updating its strategic plan
- R. All board members have cleared Criminal Background checks.

Areas of Growth

- A. There is a need for clarity and unified support of the Academy's mission, vision and values.
- B. Ensure that all board members file their political subdivision documents.
- C. Policies are reviewed and updated regularly but remain reliant on the Budget Director for maintenance.
- D. Several issues have arisen throughout the year requiring unscheduled meetings. A majority of these issues could be addressed by increased proactive and regular communication between leadership and the board.
- E. The Board would benefit from a clerical person on staff to organize board meetings, policies and take meeting minutes.
- F. Consider parent/guardian membership on board committees where appropriate.

IX. Sound Financial Operations

Areas of Strength

- A. The Finance department is fully staffed.
- B. The Academy continues to exceed the minimum required fund balance.
- C. The Finance department adheres to all fiscal policies and procedures.
- D. A budget process has been implemented ensuring teaching and learning needs are high priorities.

- E. Priorities have also addressed the physical plant including upgrades, renovations and new construction.
- F. The Academy fulfills its fiduciary duties and responsibilities.
- G. The Board Finance Committee meets quarterly and is actively engaged in fiscal oversight.
- H. The LFL Foundation continues to provide strong support for capital projects and other academy needs.
- I. The audit bid process went smoothly and a new audit firm has been selected.
- J. The Finance department is responsive to the needs of the Academy.

Areas for Growth

- A. Board governance meeting prep and policy should be assigned to a staff Board Secretary.
- B. Train all key staff to access and manage their budgets.
- C. Budget should be attached to each position prior to hiring.
- D. Support staff salary schedules should be board adopted.
- E. An extracurricular pay schedule should be adopted.

X. Engaged Parents and Community

Areas of Strength

- A. A new software has been implemented allowing parents/guardians to access student progress and information.
- B. There has been an increase in alumni outreach and activities.
- C. Parent activities have increased including a PTA at the elementary.
- D. Many community members volunteer at the school.
- E. Numerous organizations partner with Lift to provide activities and after school programming.
- F. Parents/Guardians report that staff is responsive to their emails/calls.

- G. Parents/Guardians report feeling safe sending to students to school.
- H. Parents/Guardians have met one another mostly through athletics.

Areas for Growth

- A. Increase parent/guardian knowledge and engagement with Power School.
- B. Consider sending all parents/guardians a regular Academy newsletter and include information about student activities and opportunities.
- C. Increase opportunities for parents/guardians to meet one another.