
Lift for Life Academy

2022-23 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-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 monthly 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 March 2023.

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 strategic planning process is aligning all actions toward achieving the Academy vision.

Academic Achievement

The Academy continues to provide whatever it takes to meet the needs of learners.

Curriculum/Technology

Newly purchased ELA and Mathematics instructional materials will provide a strong basis to support new and current staff.

Instructional coaching and mentoring have been key to supporting and retaining all staff.

Technology tools are available in the classrooms.

Culture of Achievement/Athletics/Activities

Student and staff needs have been addressed through increased focus on safety and security, mental health and academic supports.

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

Leadership/Operations

Leadership longevity and professional growth is foundational to Academy stability and success.

Leadership is committed to the Academy and to the organizations success.

There has been a focus on staff well being.

A mid level management structure and support have improved operational effectiveness.

Teachers

Teachers are committed to the Academy. Many provide instructional and programmatic innovation.

Teachers continually go above and beyond in meeting the needs of learners.

Student Support Systems

A K-12 student support system with tiered levels of support is in place.

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

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 is completing a strategic planning process.

Finances

Key staff are more involved in the budgeting process.

Parents/Community

The Academy has increased parent/guardian engagement activities

Areas for Growth

Vision

Ensure all staff are aware of and committed to the Academy vision.

Curriculum/Technology

Develop and implement a K-12 scope and sequence.

Provide all teachers with curriculum and instructional materials.

Implement a K-12 Literacy and Numeracy plan.

Update the Academy technology plan.

Leadership/Operations

Adopt and implement a team hiring process with technology screening.

Provide hiring and performance evaluation training.

Teachers

Develop a clearly defined K-12 mentoring and coaching program.

Implement a K-12 teacher development and retention program.

Student Support System

Ensure all students have a caring adult at school.

Assess impact of all intervention resources and prioritize effectiveness.

Develop a wide array of extra curricular activities to ensure engagement of all students.

Board Governance

Continue to address board diversity and development.

Consider alumni or parent/guardian committee/board membership.

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. A majority of teachers, staff and administration clearly share the same mission for the school.
- B. The vast majority of stakeholder interviews indicate the existence of a strong sense of community and collaboration.
- C. The Board is in the process of clarifying the vision and mission through strategic planning.

Areas for Growth

- A. The vision and mission for the school is evolving and needs continued clarification.
- B. Most staff are not aware of the Academy's vision.

II. Substantive Student Academic Achievement

Areas of Strength

- A. Student achievement targets have been established in the performance contract.
- B. Full time instructional coaches are employed for the core content areas.
- C. There is a designated instructional coach for special education and a part time electives coach.
- D. Students are demonstrating growth toward the performance contract.
- E. The Academy has surpassed the state graduation rate the last 2 out of 3 past years.
- F. Teachers are involved in analyzing student data.
- G. Classrooms are provided instructional technology to increase student engagement and learning.
- H. Curriculum work continues to expand.
- I. The Academy utilizes formative and summative student data to improve performance.
- J. Classroom observations and interviews 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. Targeted instruction and flexible grouping is being implemented at the elementary and middle school.
- N. Targeted tutoring has been provided for students to address learning gaps and help them achieve on the state assessment.
- O. Career pathways have improved post secondary decision making for students.
- P. SOAR has expanded and is a high interest offering providing real life learning.
- Q. Special Education services have improved at the elementary level.

Areas for Growth

- A. Teacher turnover contributes to learning loss, leadership time and discipline referrals. Work to improve the hiring process and teacher support and retention.
- B. Content is often taught at a lower level than the students current grade. Classrooms should provide scaffolding opportunities for all students.
- C. Continue to work toward personalized learning/competency based instruction.
- D. Develop a K-12 coaching plan including electives and special education.
- E. Ensure ALL teachers benefit from coaching.

III. Transformational Curriculum/Technology

Areas of Strength

- A. Core instructional materials for English Language Arts and Mathematics are budgeted for purchase.
- B. Students are provided opportunities to learn about post secondary options and receive support in their areas of interest.
- C. SOAR experiences and internships have increased providing students with real life learning.
- D. The academy has a K-12 testing plan.
- E. A gifted program has been implemented at the middle school.

- F. Visual and Performing arts classes have increased in scope and academy wide visibility.
- G. Science and the culinary arts are providing a farm to table experience.
- H. Interventionists have been hired in english language arts and mathematics.
- I. Lift has embraced chromebooks and digital content for student use and refined policies to address usage.
- J. Formative assessments include NWEA, i ready, Fountes and Pinnell, and Exit Tickets.
- K. NWEA incentives led to improved student performance.
- L. Teachers support professional development at the school.
- M. The Academy has expanded its partnerships with SEMO.
- N. LETRS training has been implemented K-5.
- O. Curriculum has been modified to meet the needs of learners.
- P. The Academy has expanded Common Formative Assessments to monitor student achievement and learning standards.
- Q. Teachers report instructional supplies requests are always met.
- R. Core data and Power School staff have been hired.
- S. Significant progress has been made toward improving safety through expanded use of technology including cameras and monitors.

Areas for Growth

- A. Teachers report a continuing need for increased vertical curricular meetings and planning.
- B. Ensure all teachers have a written curriculum and appropriate instructional materials.
- C. Consider participating in the Missouri Student Success Network to expand competency based instruction and apply for an assessment waiver.
- D. Consider 5/6 and 7/8 skill based classes.
- E. Consider gifted student programming 1 - 8. In lieu of a dedicated teacher, students could be accelerated or clustered in classes.
- F. Ensure all teachers understand the scope and breath of academy offerings.
- G. Clearly articulate a K -12 plan for PBL and provide training for new teachers in content and lesson design to increase student engagement and reduce student discipline.

- H. Consider improving elementary intervention delivery by assigning interventionists to grade levels.
- I. Ensure all teachers knowledge of standards K-12. Consider mid year PD for mid year hires.
- J. Develop/adopt a K-12 scope and sequence and pacing guides for teachers
- K. Consider a K-12 Farm to Table curricular strand.
- H. Teachers interviewed prefer personalized PD. Considered content and skills based PD.
- I. Determine a consistent policy to address student technology damage and loss.
- J. Due to learning loss, consider skills based math courses at the middle and high school.
- K. Train all appropriate staff in Power School with special attention to daily users.
- L. Continue to work to improve the attendance process to increase accuracy and funding.

IV. Empowering Culture of Achievement/Athletics/Activities

Areas of Strength

- A. The schools have focused on increasing and improving student culture through activities, houses, recognition, parent/guardian involvement and other activities and structures.
- B. The Academy continues to operate as a caring community where all are supported. Many teachers and staff know students and families.
- C. Classroom observations indicate a high sense of student engagement.
- D. The majority of students are making academic growth.
- E. Security officers have been hired and safety measures increased.
- F. The Academy has increased their partnership with outside agencies to provide support to students and families.
- G. The Academy partners to provide health care services for students including dental, and vision clinics, among others.
- H. The Academy houses Affinia Health care. It is available to Lift two days a week.
- I. All students interviewed identified specific teachers who helped and supported them.

- J. The Academy has complied with the Missouri Safe Schools Act and the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

Athletics/Activities

- A. The Athletic program has increased student participation and pride in the school.
- B. Athletics has expanded at all levels.
- C. Students have many opportunities to participate in athletics and activities.
- D. Student athletes are frequently recruited to colleges.
- E. Non athletes are provided opportunities to be involved in athletics.

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 college prep.
- D. Consider yearly transcript review with high school students.
- E. Balance academic focused activities with athletics.

Athletics/Activities

- A. Clarify the role of the Assistant Athletic Director
- B. Work to forecast the athletic budget.
- C. Continue to evaluate and expand activity offerings.

V. Strong Leadership and Operations

Areas of Strength

- A. Leadership is focused on meeting performance targets.
- B. Staff appreciates leadership visibility and access.
- C. Leadership is collaborating with the Board to develop a strategic plan that includes school performance, human resource management, facilities, financial management, and quality improvement.

- D. Leadership and staff participate in mid year evaluations.
- E. Lift allocates resources based primarily on their impact on student achievement, learning and well being.
- F. Leadership participates in on going professional development.
- G. Staff have completed surveys to assess work satisfaction and the majority are satisfied with working conditions.
- H. The majority of school leaders have participated in professional development relevant to their current position.
- I. Student data is acquired, assessed and evaluated at regular intervals.
- J. Leaders collaborate with Board Committee Chairs to assess and monitor school progress including finance, academics, and operations.
- K. The vast majority of staff interviews indicate they value LFL's ability to quickly implement improvements and change.
- L. Staff, parent and student interviews strongly indicate that Leadership is available and prepared to hear concerns or suggestions.
- M. The vast majority of staff support leadership and the direction of the Academy.
- N. Staff, parent and student interviews indicate that leadership is willing to listen to concerns and suggestions.
- O. With student enrollment in decline in other public/charter schools, Lift has wait lists at many grade levels.
- P. The Academy is compliant with state and federal statues.
- Q. Teacher interviews indicate that school leadership supports their work.
- R. Most teachers report their classroom supply and student behavioral needs are met.
- S. Teacher interviews indicate strong support for the role of instructional coaches in improving teaching and learning.
- T. 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 school wide wellness program has been implemented.
- C. The Human Resources department is fully staffed.
- D. Academy wide announcements and communication have improved culture.
- E. Transportation is fully staffed. Incentives have been helpful.
- F. Custodial and maintenance is fully staffed with defined supervisors.
- G. LFL limits access to MOSIS and Core Data to appropriate staff.
- H. The Academy website is updated.
- I. A Building and Grounds Manager has been hired.
- J. Facilities are well maintained.
- K. Custodial work ethic is improving.
- L. Policies and procedures continue to improve in all operational areas.

Areas of Growth

Leadership

- A. Leaders should conduct an annual self evaluation to be shared with the Board.
- B. Consider developing clear staff promotion pathways within the academy.
- C. Implement a team hiring process to improve candidate quality and reduce staff turnover.
- D. Building leader and instructional coaches spend a significant amount of time addressing discipline issues, class coverage and developing lesson plans, etc. for low performing teachers/new hires. Consider additional ways to address this issue.

Operations/HR/Facilities/Food Service

- A. Develop a technology skills assessment for all new hires.
- B. Develop and implement a team hiring process focused to reduce turnover. (35% terminations/resignations occurred during the first 30 days of employment)
- C. Provide annual staff training on hiring and employee performance evaluation.
- D. Develop a facilities master plan.
- E. Ensure all staff positions have appropriate training and support relevant to their role.

- G. Clarify food service roles at the ms/hs.
- H. Consider salary differentiation for full and part time custodial staff.
- I. Expand storage for inventory to increase purchasing efficiencies and capacity to store equipment.

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 the needs of low performing students through tutoring, intervention, and additional instructional time.
- C. Required submission of lesson plans has increased.
- D. Educational staff appreciate the opportunity to attend off site professional development training.
- E. All teachers interviewed are committed to LFL and the LFL community.
- F. The majority of teachers inspire and motivate students to achieve at higher levels.
- G. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods and assessments in their classrooms.
- H. Student and parent/guardian interviews state that teachers provide help to students beyond the instructional day.
- I. A majority of teachers go above and beyond standard teaching expectations.
- J. The Academy has embraced S.O.A.R. and PBL.
- K. A tiered teacher coaching model has been implemented.
- L. Teachers enjoy classroom autonomy.
- M. A majority of teachers have strong backgrounds and experience.
- N. Teachers appreciate and respond to feedback from instructional coaches.
- O. Staff/teacher support and recognition has increased
- P. There is a focus toward increasing teacher retention.
- Q. There is a regular on boarding process for all staff.

Areas for Growth

- A. Provide a strong framework for PBL instruction and lesson design.
- B. Ensure all teachers/content areas have a written curriculum and instructional materials.
- C. Clarify mentors role and expectations.
- D. Ensure all teachers receive coaching.

VII. Comprehensive Student Support System

Areas of Strength

- A. The Academy provides counseling, social work and behavior intervention at all levels.
- B. Behavior and attendance data is monitored.
- 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. Teachers stated that the commitment to the emotional wellness of children is a huge motivator and a reason they enjoy teaching at LFLA.
- F. The Academy has implemented tiered levels of social, emotional and mental health support.
- G. Staff have been trained in Mental Health First Aid.
- H. Students have participated in Suicide Awareness and Prevention education.
- I. Staff have been trained in the special education referral process.
- J. LFL has implemented student support/CARE teams.
- K. Staff members are expected to form relationships and to know students as individuals.
- L. Grade level and building level leadership teams are collaborative and support classroom teachers with a “whatever it takes” approach.
- M. Restorative practices are included throughout middle and high school settings.
- N. Staff report a quick response to behavioral concerns.

- O. Secondary students with IEP's are connected with Vocational Rehabilitation.
- P. High needs students are referred to Affinia for individual counseling.
- Q. Each Academy is providing social work led groups including grief support.
- R. Students are provided individual counseling.
- S. Parents interviews indicate increased student interest for college after meeting with a college counselor and other LFL staff.

Areas for Growth

- A. Examine the effectiveness of Character Strong. Consider piloting a K - 12 Pro Social skill program.
- B. Consider parent/guardian education in SEL, trauma and mental health issues to better address the needs of students.
- C. Consider restorative practice beginning at grade 3.
- D. Train key staff in restorative practice.
- E. Teachers request leadership presence at grade level meetings.

VIII. Responsible Governance

Areas of Strength

- A. The Board has employed an Executive Assistant.
- B. Board meetings are regularly scheduled and appropriately conducted.
- C. The Board has increased internal communication through quarterly committee chair meetings.
- D. The Board has adopted a new software platform to increase transparency and internal and external communication.
- E. The Board has implemented an on boarding process for new members.
- F. The board has developed a policy review and adoption process and publishes all policies on the school website.
- G. Board committees review and assess relevant school goals on a regular basis.

- H. The Board works to ensure compliance with the Sunshine Law.
- I. Some board members attend professional development beyond board meeting development sessions.
- J. LFL Board is a working board that continues to be appropriately involved in oversight.
- K. The Board monitors ED performance, student achievement and financials. ED evaluation is based on measurable goals and completed each year.
- 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.
- S. School Leader and Board member relationships remain strong.
- T. The Board is working toward updating its strategic plan.

Areas of Growth

- A. The Board should consider increasing board diversity.
- B. Committees should consider membership numbers and identify and recruit new members.
- C. There is a need for clarity and unified support of the Academy's mission, vision and values.
- D. 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 budgeting process, training and staff participation has greatly improved.
- C. The Board has established a 10% minimum fund balance reserve goal
- D. The Finance department adheres to all fiscal policies and procedures.
- E. Priorities have addressed the physical plant including upgrades, renovations and new construction.
- F. The Academy successfully completed this years audit with a new firm.
- G. Finance has increase participation in major purchasing and expansion.
- 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. Budget should be attached to each position prior to hiring.
- C. Consider impact of expansions on short and long term budget.
- D. Improve enrollment projections.
- E. Improve attendance processes and accuracy.

X. Engaged Parents and Community

Areas of Strength

- A. There has been an increase in alumni outreach and activities.
- B. Numerous organizations partner with Lift to provide activities and after school programming.
- C. Parents/Guardians report feeling safe sending to students to school.
- D. Additional parent engagement activities have been added this year.

Areas for Growth

- A. Increase parent/guardian knowledge and engagement with Power School.
- B. Consider sending all parents/guardians a K-12 Academy newsletter and include information about student activities and opportunities including upcoming events, tryouts and other calendar days.
- C. Parents request picture day and yearbook