

March 14, 2022

Dear AFIA Community,

I am writing to share Academy for Integrated Arts' [2021 – 2022 Annual Performance Report \(APR\)](#), which was released last week by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). These reports (APR) measure the progress all Missouri schools are making towards meeting the Standards and Indicators in the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 6). This letter provides a summary of the most salient points regarding this year's APR.

### **Celebrations**

We are encouraged to see that student growth continues to be strong at AFIA. For multiple years, AFIA educators have demonstrated the ability to accelerate academic progress. Once again, we see evidence of this as AFIA's growth was designated as **Above Average** in both ELA and Math. Our school earned 97% of the possible points in ELA and 98% of the possible points in Math for growth.

Out of 553 Missouri Local Education Agencies (LEAs), **AFIA ranks FIFTH in our growth scores**. This means that AFIA was in the top 1% of all Missouri LEAs, district and charter. Compared to similar students, students at AFIA improved academically at rates substantially more than their peers from 2021 to 2022, reflective of the growth mindset and academic environment for kids at AFIA; if they continue at this pace, we are confident our children will surpass their peers statewide.

Additionally, we are proud to share that in May 2022, AFIA's sixth graders outperformed the state average on both the ELA and math tests! AFIA's fifth graders outperformed the state average on the ELA test. This is noteworthy considering that research indicates the pandemic had a more significant impact on urban schools.

### **Growth Opportunities**

While we are pleased with the growth our students are making, we are committed to continuing to increase the percentage of students who earn a score of proficient or advanced on the state test. However, we also recognize that standardized testing has limitations and is not the only, or best, way to determine what a student knows and can do. We recognize our students have many strengths and talents that may not always be reflected on the state test. We also recognize it is important that our students make significant growth. To that end, we are implementing a team based approach to teaching to allow for learning in small groups and greater differentiation for students.

Additionally, attendance is another measure on the APR report. Based on our attendance percentage last year, we did not earn any attendance points. We understand last year's attendance was impacted by COVID quarantines, as many students and teachers were quarantined at least once during the school year. AFIA fully appreciates the importance of our children being in school, which is measured by attendance, but at the same time we will continue to work with you, as parents and caregivers, to ensure that our school is safe and we are following all health precautions. We aim for all students to be at school more than 90% of the time. Thank you for your partnership in helping us strive to meet this goal in the future.

As you review, the APR reports, please note:

- This is the first release of APR since the start of COVID-19. Nationwide, test scores have dropped, with the most profound impact in urban schools.
- Annual Performance Report scores do not provide an accurate picture when comparing an entire school district to individual charter schools.
- What's most important is that our students are learning! Growth scores in the APR indicate our students are regaining the ground lost during the pandemic. If you review AFIA's growth in the APR report, you will see that our growth was designated as **Above Average** in both ELA and Math. For context:
  - Growth is the change in a student's performance over time.
  - Proficiency scores are mile-markers and growth scores are speedometers.
  - Focusing on how quickly students make academic progress is more important than where they are, as we know that accelerated growth over time empowers students to meet and exceed academic goals.

The Annual Performance Report is based on a variety of indicators that include three sections:

1. **Performance** considers academic status and growth of all students, as well as student groups.
2. **Success-Ready Students** considers attendance, our participation in the kindergarten entry assessment and includes other elements such as graduation rate, that are not included in AFIA's APR report since we are PK – 6<sup>th</sup> grade school
3. **Continuous Improvement** includes elements such as the timely submission of required documentation to DESE, such as our yearly financial audit and core data.

Information on how DESE calculates each indicator can be found [here](#).

I am proud of the entire AFIA community. I appreciate the hard work and partnership of our students, families and educators in making significant academic growth, while also continuing to ensure that arts are integrated throughout the curriculum, as we know integration of the arts helps our students academically and socially. Thank you for all that you do to ensure that learning is joyous and meaningful. Please feel free to reach out with any questions at [tricia.degraff@afiakc.org](mailto:tricia.degraff@afiakc.org)

With appreciation,

Tricia DeGraff, Ph.D.  
Executive Director