THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Mid-Year Evaluation
Liguori Academy Fortis

Provider:
Liguori, Inc.

Site Visit Date:
Monday, December 18, 2017- 8:00 a.m.

Contract Term:
FY 2018 - 2022

Child Count Compliance:
100%

Program Capacity:
125

Percent of students attending at least 85% of school days: 21.4%

Site Visit Review Team:
Patricia Lesesne, Executive Director, Opportunity Network
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways to Graduation, Opportunity Network
Elvis Mucaj, Strategy Analyst, Opportunity Network
Luis Rosario, Project U-Turn Fellow, Opportunity Network
Ebony McCormick, Executive Assistant, Opportunity Network

Program Staff:
Michael Marrone, President, Liguori Academy, Inc.
Rebecca Tomlinson-White, Principal, Liguori Academy
William Corazo, Director of Student Services, Liguori Academy Fortis
Heather Belmonte, Director of Special Education, Liguori Academy Fortis
Michael Phipps, Postsecondary Counselor, Liguori Academy Fortis

Domains and Performance Levels:
Programs were rated according to **seven domains**: 1) **Vision for Learning**, 2) **Family & Community Relationships**, 3) **School Safety**, 4) **Positive Environment**, 5) **High Quality Instruction**, 6) **Talent Development** and 7) **Data**. The domains are aligned to the School District's evidence-based High Performing School Practices and the Essential Features of Alternative Education Programs, as well as the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Leadership Framework. Each domain includes three to seven components that are rated according to **three performance levels**: 1) **Failing**, 2) **Needs Improvement,** and 3) **Proficient**. **Failing** indicates that a program could not demonstrate or did not develop practices identified within a domain component. **Needs Improvement** indicates that a program has made some progress or effort towards practices identified within a domain component, but has not sufficiently developed the practice. **Proficient** indicates that a program has made adequate progress towards the implementation of practices identified within a domain component.

Comments/ Considerations:
Liguori Academy Fortis is an Accelerated program in its first year of operation. Liguori, Inc. was awarded a contract to operate an Accelerated program via the Request for Proposals 520 competitive bid process for Alternative Education Programs.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Vision for Learning

Rating: PROFICIENT [4 of 5 components met]

Strategy for literacy and numeracy skill-building (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis administers the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment to students at the beginning of the school year and when new students enroll. MAP scores are used to determine students' reading and mathematics skill levels. Students with very low skill levels are rostered for a computer-based remediation class. The MAP assessment directly aligns with the program's blended learning platform, Edgenuity, and helps program staff to determine the correct course level each student should take. Program staff meet weekly to discuss the progress of individual students. On a daily basis, staff monitors the progress of students in Edgenuity classes. The program monitors student progress using data reports and dashboards from Edgenuity, and they use this information to gauge student progress and to apply different interventions as needed. **Retention plan implementation** (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis staff emphasized consistent and frequent communication with students and their families as their main strategy for retention. Program staff are dedicated to establishing a good rapport with students so that they feel physically and emotionally safe within the learning community. The program reaches out to parents at least once per week to provide positive phone calls about their children's progress. Each Liguori Academy Fortis teacher has a group of students that they get to know very well through advisory. In that way, teachers are able to have individual conversations with students to learn more about their strengths and challenges. **Orientation for new students** (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis holds orientation for new students on Wednesday afternoons. Students and their parents meet the program's administrators and teachers, and learn about expectations for attendance, behavior, and academics. Students and their parents receive the program's student handbook, and they also receive an introduction to the Edgenuity blended learning platform. Students sign off on the program's acceptable use of technology form and receive their logins to access Edgenuity. Group orientation provides new students with a cohort of peers that they are familiar with on their first day of class. **Family engagement plan** (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis' plan to engage families begins with orientation for new students. Parents attend orientation with their children and are introduced to the program's mission, policy, and procedures. Liguori Academy Fortis invites parents to open house events that include program updates, food, and the opportunity for parents to talk with staff and provide any feedback. Liguori Academy Fortis staff reaches out to each student's parent at least once per week in order to provide positive phone calls about their child's progress. In addition, parents are contacted any time that a student is absent from the program. **Individual graduation plans** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis presented sample individual graduation plans for a group of students. There are four sections in the program's individual graduation plans: general information, intake process, postsecondary goals, and transition plan. None of the plans reviewed were complete and all lacked transition plans and postsecondary goals. Individual graduation plans also include a credit review and mapping of courses for each student. However, course maps were incomplete and did not provide projected graduation dates.

Family and Community Relationships

Rating: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT [2 of 5 components met]

Parent surveys (No). Liguori Academy Fortis has not administered parent surveys. The program's leadership stated that they plan to administer parent surveys after the winter break. **Parent/community outreach** (Yes). As mentioned in the Vision for Learning section of this report, the program reaches out to parents consistently and frequently to provide updates on their children's progress. Parents are invited to open house events and report card conferences, and they attend orientation with their children. In addition, Liguori Academy Fortis reaches out to the community on a regular basis to garner resources that will improve and enhance the program. Liguori Academy Fortis has developed partnerships with numerous businesses, non-profit organizations, and individual philanthropists. Resources secured through community partnerships include student internships, building renovations, technology, and social services for students and their families. **Communication logs** (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis uses Microsoft OneNote to maintain a database of all efforts to reach out to parents. The program's communication logs were comprehensive and provided detailed descriptions of outreach efforts. **Strategy to improve family engagement** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis has not yet developed a strategy to improve family engagement. The program's leadership stated that they are waiting to administer the parent survey in order to develop their strategy. **Partnerships with employers and postsecondary institutions** (No). As previously mentioned in this report, the program has numerous partnerships with employers to hire students for paid employment and internships. However, the program has not established formal partnerships with postsecondary institutions. The program has drafted a partnership letter for colleges and trade schools, and plans to begin the work of establishing partnerships after the winter break.

School Safety

Rating: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT [3 of 6 components met]

Average daily attendance (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis presented attendance documentation for the day of the site visit and was able to calculate average daily attendance. **Number of students present in each classroom** (Yes). Review team members' count of students present in class aligned with the program's stated average daily attendance. **Attendance policy and truancy plan implementation** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis reaches out to parents anytime that a student is absent. Program staff facilitate parent-student conferences for students with poor attendance. The program plans to begin home visits in January for students who are chronically absent. Attendance expectations are provided in the student handbook and reviewed during orientation for new students. Program leadership noted that student punctuality has been a challenge, and they are working to develop strategies to address lateness, however, the program has not developed a formal policy and implementation plan for attendance and truancy. **Orderly daily routines and transitions** (No). Review team members observed the transition between class periods. Students from the history class were dismissed prior to the end of the class period and walked into other classes that were still in session. **Use of Scholarchip with fidelity** (Yes). The program has experienced technical difficulties with Scholarchip. The system's camera malfunctioned and the power cord for the computer kiosk was missing. Both issues have been recently

resolved. Nevertheless, the program continued to maintain attendance by manually entering the data into Scholarchip. **Program-wide positive behavior system** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis is still in the process of developing their comprehensive system for behavioral expectations, consequences, and incentives. The program rewards students for exemplary attendance, behavior and academics, however, it has not moved toward implementing a comprehensive system of consequences and rewards.

Positive Environment

Rating: PROFICIENT [4 of 4 components met]

Engagement of students and families in building a positive environment (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis discussed efforts made to engage students and families in building a positive environment. Parents are invited to open house events at the program and receive weekly communications about their children's progress. Open house events were held twice per month in October and November. Program staff constantly remind parents that they are partners together for the sake of student achievement. The program ensures extra-curricular and enrichment activities for students, including the Liguori Art Studio that gives students a platform to exhibit and sell their artwork. The program's leadership noted their commitment to supporting the whole student and their family. In that way, staff work to provide resources for students and their families in order to eliminate barriers that negatively impact student success. **Respectful interactions between staff, students, and families** (Yes). Review team members observed respectful interactions between staff and students. **Staff have a good rapport with students** (Yes). Review team members observed a good rapport between students and staff. **Team building activities for staff and students** (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis holds staff retreats at a beach compound in New Jersey that was donated by one of the program's partners. The retreat features team building activities and the opportunity for staff to reset their mission and vision for the program. The program's leadership develops team building activities for staff on a monthly basis in order to improve and maintain camaraderie and cohesion. Program staff also work to build a team environment among students and adults in the learning community. Activities include the Story of Self, which guides students and staff through an exercise designed to share and learn about each other. Teachers develop lesson plans for the Story of Self and each lesson plan builds upon the previous one.

High Quality Instruction

Rating: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT [4 of 7 components met]

Students actively engaged in class (No). Review team members observed that about half of the student population was not actively engaged with learning. Students were playing games on their cell phones or were engaged in neither computer-based instruction nor direct instruction. **Early warning system for academic interventions** (Yes). Liguori Academy staff monitors student progress on a daily basis. Staff utilizes data dashboards and reports through Edgenuity to determine how well students are progressing. The program's staff meet together each week to discuss the progress of individual students and to collaborate on academic interventions. **Students enrolled in the courses they need to meet graduation requirements** (Yes). Review

team members examined credit profiles and rosters for a group of students. All students were rostered for remaining courses that they need in order to meet graduation requirements. **Program has identified students eligible for the Keystone Exams** (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis presented a list of students eligible for Keystone Exams by subject area and test date. **Strategies used to prepare students for Keystone Exams** (Yes). The program's Edgenuity curriculum aligns with eligible content from Keystone Exams. Program staff ensure that students are progressing well through Algebra, English, and Biology, and provide academic interventions for students who are struggling. **Postsecondary bridging plan** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis has not yet moved toward the development of a postsecondary bridging plan for students. **Postsecondary exploration and preparation** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis has not yet implemented comprehensive activities to ensure that students are guided through postsecondary exploration and preparation. The program has made some efforts toward postsecondary exploration and preparation, which includes the administration of the Holland Interest Inventory and a review of students' results on the inventory. Additionally, the program has connected some students to internships in their career of choice. However, individual graduation plans were incomplete and program leadership noted that they will improve their efforts for postsecondary readiness in January.

Talent Development

Rating: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT [4 of 7 components met]

Common planning time for teachers (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis' weekly schedule includes common planning time for teachers nearly every day after school. **Differentiated staff supports** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis has not made specific or documented efforts to provide individualized supports to teachers based on their needs and performance. **Principals conduct regular observations and provide constructive feedback** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis has not yet moved toward the implementation of regular teacher observations and documented feedback. The program plans to begin formal observations using the Charlotte Danielson Framework. **Staff turnover** (Yes). The program has had very little turnover since opening in September. One staff person, who was a retiree, left the program as a result of issues related to her pension. **Professional development calendar** (No). The program has not yet developed a professional development calendar for the school year. **Staff selection process** (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis' process for recruiting and hiring staff starts with a clear and comprehensive job posting on typical employment websites. Top candidates are called in for an interview that focuses on gauging their flexibility and adaptability within an accelerated learning community. This helps program leadership to determine whether the program and the candidate are a good fit for each other. **New staff induction** (Yes). The program held orientation with its staff prior to the start of the school year that included goal-setting, the development of a mission and vision, and professional development on the blended learning platform.

Data

Rating: Needs Improvement [1 of 4 components met]

Strategy to track student academic progress and provide interventions (Yes). Liguori Academy Fortis monitors student progress on a daily basis using reports and dashboards from Edgenuity. Program staff reviews the number of attempts students have made to pass quizzes and tests, the grades students have earned, and the amount of idle time spent. Teachers collaborate to develop strategies for academic interventions on a daily basis. **System to collect and analyze data** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis is currently relying on standard reports generated from the MAP assessment and Edgenuity dashboards to gauge student performance at an individual level. The program's leadership plans to create their own reports moving forward in order to actively track program-wide academic progress, trends in daily attendance, postsecondary outcomes, and gains in reading and mathematics. **Program improvement plans and related data reports** (No). Liguori Academy Fortis' strategic plan is currently mission-based and includes high-level, qualitative goals that the program developed this past summer. Program administrators will work to create a more quantifiable strategic plan as they begin collecting additional program-wide data. **Formative and summative assessments** (No). Teachers leverage Edgenuity quizzes and short assignments to track student progress in each course. Teachers also rely on Edgenuity summative assessments at the end of each unit. Program leadership noted that students sometimes struggle to complete these exams individually, and as a result, the exams will be taken as a class. The review team recommended that teachers administer other summative assessments outside of Edgenuity in order to more effectively check for understanding. Each student must demonstrate mastery of course content. In addition, hand-written notes are currently optional for students in Edgenuity classes and should be mandatory moving forward.