



## Board Meeting Minutes

### **Date and Location**

Wednesday October 23, 2019  
11:30 am  
Damar Services, Inc.  
6067 Decatur Blvd  
Indianapolis, IN 46241

### **Board Members Present**

Carlos Alexander  
Lyle Coleman  
Karen Snyder  
Jordan Maitland  
Tifini McClyde  
Allyson Strother  
Joey Wright

### **Board Members Absent**

Chuck Ellis  
Patricia Edwards

### **Others Present (Staff, Public)**

Aimee Brown, DCA, School Leader  
Cora Collier, DCA  
Paul Dennison, Damar, Finance Director  
Elaine Showalter, CFO  
Katie McCoy, Chief Executive Assistant

## **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the August 2019 meeting were approved.

## **Current Environment**

Damar Charter Academy concluded its first quarter on Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, after being in session for 47 days. Fall Break was only one week this year and began Monday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, and ended on Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. This change allowed for the first day of school to be pushed back a week to August 7<sup>th</sup>, versus starting at the end of July, which seems to have worked out well. Staff and students were still able to enjoy a much-needed time of rest and relaxation before kicking off the second quarter this past week on Monday, October 21<sup>st</sup>.

Two of DCA's four seniors expected to earn a high school diploma this year already completed their requirements! As you may have known, Public Law 192-2018 amended the graduation requirements for students in the 2019 (last year's graduates) through 2022 cohorts to allow these students to meet such graduation requirements by passing the graduation qualifying exam (GQE) **OR** successfully completing a graduation pathway. Students in the 2023 cohort (current freshmen) and beyond will no longer have a GQE (formerly the ISTEP 10 assessment), and instead, they will only graduate via the pathways. Due to the flexibility, our current seniors have all opted to graduate by fulfilling the requirements under the pathways, which includes three key areas: credit attainment, employability skills, and post-secondary readiness. As with route, a waiver option does still exist that would allow a student who does not meet the post-secondary readiness benchmark to graduate with a high school diploma regardless, provided he/she has met the waiver criteria (95% attendance rate; "C" average or better; attempt at least 3 post-secondary readiness competencies). A copy of the graduation pathways overview is included for your review.

Scores from the first administration of the new state assessment systems, ILEARN and I AM, were much lower than anticipated around the state. IDOE released the following statement on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019: "When compared to past ISTEP+ scores, ILEARN indicated lower achievement levels across the state in both English/language arts and mathematics. While performance dips to some degree were expected, the combination of the rigors associated with this newly aligned CCR assessment, national normative data, and the defined established performance cuts all contributed to the lower performance levels. With the negative impact assessment results have on educators, schools, districts, and communities, IDOE will advocate for responsive legislative action."

"While the 2019 ILEARN results do not provide a true reflection of the performance of Indiana's schools, they do once again show us the importance of developing a modernized state legislated accountability system that is fair, accurate, and transparent," said State Superintendent Dr. Jennifer McCormick. "With this in mind, the Department will propose the following legislative actions: place a 'hold harmless' year on 2018-2019 letter grades, pause intervention timelines for all schools, and provide the State Board of Education with emergency rulemaking authority to review and reestablish the state accountability system. The success and wellbeing of our students, educators, and schools are dependent upon these actions."

Another priority focus area of the IDOE for schools is incorporating Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for all students. In short, educational leaders understand the importance of “educating the whole child” and are shifting gears away from strictly teaching academic skills and are moving toward a more comprehensive approach that also includes a student’s social and emotional well-being. Schools are encouraged to collaborate with community stakeholders to develop partnerships and provide resources for students and their families. DCA is happy to announce that it will soon be offering therapeutic services to any interested families, not just those who have Medicaid. The school therapist will shift her current caseload, which includes clients outside of DCA, to focus on providing services solely to DCA families through either Medicaid or private-pay insurance. In addition, funds from the Title IV grant will be used to enhance our current level of SEL and MTSS interventions with the addition of more classroom lessons, small group counseling, and school-wide initiatives next semester.

With regard to enrollment, fifty new students have been enrolled so far this school year. The first IDOE Membership “count day” was Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, and DCA had 193 students on the roster that day. The school was two students shy of its maximum capacity of 195 due to one student transitioning to another school at the last minute, and a second student who did not begin attending until the Monday immediately following the count day. The next funding count will be the Special Education Count Day on Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>. As you may recall, this count typically yields more than a million dollars in revenue. New students will be enrolled to fill any openings prior to this date so that funding will be maximized. As a reminder, our targeted enrollment with the Mayor’s Office is 185 students.

### **Events of Note**

The planning of the December DCA Board Meeting and Family Night are now underway. Families will be encouraged to join us for the board meeting on Wednesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30pm. They will be invited to participate in an evening of fun, family-friendly activities immediately following the meeting. Board Members agreed to make and donate food baskets to give to DCA families that need support with groceries.

### **Curriculum and Programming**

Cora Collier has continued meeting with teachers who are now officially organized into three teams: Academic, Vocational, and Life Skills. Each team gathers weekly to collaborate on curriculum and develop programming ideas. In addition, Cora reviews all educational data collected with each team on a monthly basis to help inform their instruction and identify areas of program need.

This year, the scope of implementation of the Unique Learning System program (previously only used with our life skills classrooms) has broadened to include the high school vocational program. The vocational teachers have completed an initial employability skills assessment for each of their students and have begun utilizing the transition curriculum. Data from ULS will be

reviewed regularly and will help DCA measure each student's growth and proficiency with regard to employability skills.

A new online career exploration program, Kuder Galaxy, was recently purchased with funds from the Lilly Comprehensive Counseling Grant to fulfill the need for a curriculum spanning all grade levels at DCA. Training is set for the end of October, and implementation should soon follow.

In an effort to address another goal set forth in the Lilly Counseling Grant, DCA will be sending a team of two administrators and two teachers to Detroit, Michigan, in early November to tour the Charles R. Drew Transition Center. Charles R. Drew is a school that offers vocational training to high school special education students ages 18-25. Cora Collier visited previously and is excited to share what she learned with her colleagues. The goal is for the DCA team to observe the program at the center and bring back curriculum, assessment, and evaluation resources that can be implemented at DCA.

A group of high school vocational students recently attended the Project SEARCH open house at Community East Hospital. Project SEARCH is a collaboration between IPS, Easterseals Crossroads, and Community East Hospital that provides students who have recently graduated with a Certificate of Completion (diplomas are not allowed) the opportunity to train in various positions throughout the hospital. This year-long, unpaid internship translates into paid employment for individuals who successfully complete the program. Julie Gurulé is working with the guardians of four interested students to help them apply for the program and learn more about this phenomenal opportunity. In addition, the Project SEARCH instructor will be presenting to a group of students at DCA in early November.

## **School Safety**

Aimee Brown and Matt Hohman, DCA's School Safety Specialist, recently completed the annual two-day training/certification hosted by IDOE. The training reviews policies and best practices for school officials. As a result, Aimee and Matt will be forming a school safety committee to assist with policy-making, safety education, and modifying plans as needed.

DCA has had one incident so far this year that involved a student bringing an unloaded BB gun to school. The student turned himself in, along with the gun, and was suspended as a result. The school administration talked to both the student and his father to ensure they understood our policy and to discuss measures that would be taken to help ensure the safety of everyone at DCA. A letter was sent out to all of our families, informing them of the incident, as well. To satisfy one of the Mayor's Office's criteria for the board's governance, an incident communication plan has been developed for situations such as this. The members agreed that the report met the criteria of the request.

## **Grants/Fundraising**

The Lilly Comprehensive Counseling Initiative goals are at the forefront of many programming decisions being made this year, as mentioned throughout this report. DCA remains steadfast in its efforts to enhance the current career education program for all students. Plans to contract with Nancy Washburn, Transition Specialist, to develop a full-spectrum career education curriculum and evaluation process have been delayed this school year due to a medial leave. However, we fully anticipate resuming those plans once her leave is over. Additionally, a box trailer has been purchased with LCC grant funds that will be used to create a “mobile” clothing pantry for DCA families, thus alleviating the issue with finding space for it within the building, and also enhancing vocational opportunities for students who will be working in the pantry.

As previously mentioned, the DCA Life Skills program celebrated the receipt of a generous \$25,000 grant from the Damar Foundation. Thus far, the awarded funds have been used to remodel the kitchen space and incorporate it into the classroom setting with a new access point, appliances, and needed supplies. The sensory area also received a complete makeover, adding various textures to the walls, lighting, equipment, and manipulatives throughout.

The implementation of the Chromebooks purchased through the Damar Foundation Technology Grant has gone well! Not only are the students loving them, but the teachers are enjoying having them as an engaging tool to use with students. DCA’s internet bandwidth was also recently upgraded with funding from this grant, to ensure these new devices could all be used effectively. DCA wishes to thank the Foundation for their extremely generous and continued support!

## **Leadership/Personnel**

There have been no changes to leadership or school personnel since the beginning of the school year. Per the Mayor’s Office’s requirements for the board/governance, a school leader evaluation has been conducted for Dr. Dalton, and the results shared.

## **GOVERNANCE**

Carlos Alexander will be stepping down as Chair of the DCA Board of Directors. He and his wife will be relocating to Arizona. Tifini McClyde was asked to take the responsibilities of the Chair. Motion was made by Allyson Strother and seconded by Joey Wright, all members agreed.

## **FINANCIALS**

The financials show a \$24000. Loss. Two grants have now been presented which keeps DCA in the margin that is practiced. The balance sheet remains stable.

Next Board of Directors Meeting will take place at DCA on December 18, 2019 at 6 pm . DCA will have a holiday event for students so that parents may attend the meeting.

Chair Carlos adjourned meeting at 12:25 pm.