

DCA Board Meeting Minutes

Date and Location

Wednesday September 2, 2020
11:30 AM
Zoom

Board Members Present

Lyle Coleman
Patricia Edwards
Amber Fields
Jordan Maitland
Allyson Strother
Joey Wright

Others Present (Staff, Public)

Aimee Brown, DCA, School Leader
Dr. Jim Dalton DCA, Superintendent
Cora Collier, DCA
Julie Gurule, DCA
Paul Dennison, Damar Finance Director
Elaine Showalter, CFO
Yolanda Means, CHRO
Katie McCoy, Chief Executive Assistant

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the June 2020 meeting were approved.

Operation Highlights

After carefully considering recommendations issued by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), and the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), the decision was made to delay the start of the 2020-2021 school year from Wednesday, August 5th, to Monday, August 17th. This allowed for additional time to prepare

the school environment in accordance with guidelines issued by state and local agencies. Upon further consultation with the Marion County Health Department (MCHD), the decision was made to switch to a virtual learning environment for the first quarter of the school year in an effort to ensure the health and safety of DCA's vulnerable population. Pending any further guidance from the CDC, ISDH, IDOE, and/or MCHD, DCA plans to return to in-person instruction following Fall Break on Monday, October 19th.

Due to the delayed start date, DCA has modified the school calendar for the current school year. To help offset the 8-day delay, Spring Break will now only be one week in duration, and the additional 3 days have been added to the end of the school year. A revised calendar has been included for review.

New enrollments are well underway, with the current total being 41 students added. This brings the overall enrollment to 192 students—just shy of the targeted 195. Discussion pertaining to moving the first funding count date of the year back from September 18th to December has circulated amongst state leaders; however, no updates have officially been made. Therefore, DCA is forging ahead as planned. Given the current circumstances, some families have been hesitant to enroll at this time, so efforts will be made to reach out to other schools and local organizations in an effort to grow our waiting list once again and ensure the maximum enrollment target is met.

Curriculum and Programming

DCA staff returned to work on Monday, August 3rd, for 2 full days of in-person training and professional development. Topics included Bullying Prevention, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, School Safety, Organized Crime, Child Abuse, Positive Behavior Intervention Supports, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, and CPR Recertification. DCA's plan for continuous learning, along with expectations for virtual instruction, were also discussed. Teachers were encouraged to work together in teams to set up virtual learning platforms for educating all students, versus utilizing paper/pencil packets that proved to be cumbersome for all involved during the initial spring shut-down.

Many teachers have chosen to utilize Google Classroom as their virtual platform, and middle school teacher, Shay Daily, held a training for anyone interested in learning more about it. Despite a relatively large learning curve, the teachers have embraced this "new" way of

teaching and are meeting the challenge head-on with success. Most have voiced their desire to continue incorporating Google Classroom into their daily lessons, even after returning to in-person instruction. This will help to create a smoother transition for students re-acclimating, as well as provide continuous education for those opting to sustain virtual instruction for the remainder of the school year (all public schools must offer the alternative of virtual instruction for the 2020-2021 year, with no penalty to the student).

In addition to Google Classroom, DCA's curriculum has expanded to include programs such as Learning A-Z, Brain Pop, Prodigy, CNN 10, Unique Learning Systems, and Boom Cards. The Life Centered Education Curriculum produced by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is also being considered for the high school vocational program.

As previously noted, DCA has made it a priority to ensure students continue to have access to their education and related services such as counseling, speech, and other therapies during the shut-down of the physical building space. A variety of methods have been instituted in an effort to reach all of our students and adhere to their IEPs, regardless of any barriers that might exist. Additionally, each teacher and TA has organized in-person individual or small group tutoring sessions for any student who wishes to take advantage of the opportunity. Temperature screenings are conducted and the mask requirement followed for any student entering the building.

Plans have continued to move forward with construction in the upstairs area at DCA to create spaces for The Dapper Dragon Boutique and The Dragon Depot. Both are an extension of DCA's current Dragon Works vocational program and will provide additional opportunities for students to develop job skills and appropriate work attitudes and behaviors. In addition to the work experience, the Dapper Dragon Boutique will also serve as an incentive-based store for students to "purchase" items using Dragon Dollars they have earned for positive behaviors, academic achievements, and in-school jobs. Donations of new or gently used items will be solicited and appreciated.

SCHOOL SAFETY

DCA leaders will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will adhere to any guidance set forth by the CDC, ISDH, IDOE, and/or MCHD. The Re-entry guidelines will be updated as modifications become necessary.

LEADERSHIP/PERSONNEL

DCA recently welcomed a new teacher, Natalie Morehouse, to the team. Natalie previously taught special education in the Zionsville school district and will be replacing retired teacher, Bob Leventhal, as one of the high school vocational teachers. Her passion for teaching special education is already evident, as she has embraced her new role with great enthusiasm and effort!

Per the Mayor's Office's requirements, DCA will be conducting its third year (of the school's second charter term) audit in late September. Dr. Mary Jo Rattermann and Dr. Addie Angelov of Research & Evaluation Resources, LLC, will be coming on site to evaluate the school according to OEI's Core Question 4 Framework. As a reminder, Core Question 4 asks: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success? Sub indicators include:

- 4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?
- 4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?
- 4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support preparation for post-secondary options?
- 4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?
- 4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?
- 4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?
- 4.7. Is the school climate responsive to the needs of students, staff, and families?
- 4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?
- 4.9. Do the school's special education files demonstrate that it is in legal compliance and is moving towards best practice?
- 4.10. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?

GRANTS/FUNDRAISING

DCA submitted a grant application to the Damar Foundation and was graciously awarded the request. The funds totaling \$150,000 will be used to purchase additional technology for the school, including hardware such as Chromebooks and tablets, as well as educational software. The unanticipated pandemic and resulting consequences led to an even greater need for reliable technology, and thus an increased strain on DCA's capacity to provide it for every student in need of it. Sixty additional Chromebooks have already been ordered to help meet the current demand. Updates to the current PA system will also be made to ensure an effective means of communication throughout the school, should any safety concerns arise.

Elementary teacher, Molly Wells, was also awarded a grant from the Damar Foundation. As a result, students will now have access to an indoor playground to be located directly outside of her classroom. The equipment has been ordered, and students from the high school vocational program will be constructing the playset. DCA wishes to thank the Foundation for their continued support of our teachers and students!

A-F ACCOUNTABILITY

DCA continues to advocate for considerations for our special school and our special population of students. To that end, DCA will be hosting BJ Watts, Chair of the State Board of Education and Governor Appointee, Katie Mote, Vice Chair of the Board and Governor Appointee, and Pat Mapes, Senate President Pro Tem and Appointee of Roderic Bray. These State Board of Education Officials will be on site at DCA on October 6th to discuss DCA's proposed alternative assessment plan. Also attending that day will be DCA's lobbyist professionals from Barnes and Thornburg – Brian Burdick, Managing Partner, and Sabra Northam, Associate.

DCA BOARD COMMITTEES

At the June DCA Board meeting, the following Committees were established:

Academics

Cora Collier, Chair
Allyson Strothers
Patricia Edwards

Finance

Paul Dennison, Chair
Lyle Coleman
Chuck Ellis
Jim Dalton
Elaine Showalter

Governance

Jim Dalton, Chair

Jordan Maitland

Joey Wright

Aimee Brown

Community/Advocacy

Julie Gurule, Chair

Amber Fields

Karen Snyder

Committees were not scheduled to meet in August and will be further discussed at the next Board meeting. A notice to DCA parents will go out in late August – inviting participation on various committees.

The DCA Board of Directors are scheduled to meet via zoom October 28, 2020 at 11:30 am.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm.