

DCA Board Meeting Minutes

Date and Location

Wednesday October 28, 2020

11:30 AM

Zoom

Board Members Present

Lyle Coleman

Patricia Edwards

Amber Fields

Jordan Maitland

Karen Snyder

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

Ken File, President of Damar Foundation

Katie McCoy, Chief Executive Assistant

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the September 2020 meeting were approved.

Operation Highlights

Damar Charter Academy commenced the end of the first quarter on Friday, October 9th, after an initial 10-day delay to the start of the school year from August 5th to August 17th. Instruction was delivered virtually to all students during the first quarter, with opportunities for small group and 1:1 tutoring available to all students, including both residential and non-residential

students. Services such as speech, occupational therapy, and counseling continued for any student/family choosing to participate during this time.

After Fall Break, 72 students opted to return to in-person instruction, beginning on Monday, October 19th. Each student receives a temperature screening prior to entering the building, and masks are required. The remaining students will continue with virtual instruction for the balance of the school year. Nursing and Administration are carefully monitoring the health and safety of students and will follow guidance from the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) when making decisions about quarantining in response to COVID-19. Any known cases must be reported by the administration to the ISDH on a weekly basis.

Despite discussion amongst state leaders to push back the initial Membership Enrollment (ME) “count day,” the first count of the year occurred as planned on Friday, September 18th. Fortunately, the State Board of Education voted in early September to fully fund impacted students who receive virtual instruction due to COVID-19. Therefore, DCA will receive 100% funding for the 194 students who were actively enrolled on that date. The first Special Education (SE) count day is scheduled for December 1st, with the goal being to meet the maximum enrollment target of 195 students. Thus far, there have been a total of 59 new enrollees admitted to DCA this year.

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 DCA Re-entry guidelines were updated prior to the students return on October 19th and will continue to be updated as modifications become necessary.

LEADERSHIP/PERSONNEL

DCA conducted its third year (of the school’s second charter term) audit on September 28th and 29th. Dr. Mary Jo Rattermann and Dr. Addie Angelov were on site to evaluate the school according to OEI’s Core Question 4: “Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?” Although the draft report is not expected to be available until later this fall, the initial debriefing session and various discussions held during and after the process lead the administration to believe it will be favorable. Once received, DCA will have the opportunity to review the report and rebut and/or provide additional information if necessary. The final report will then be created and published to OEI. As a reminder, the sub-indicators the school was evaluated on included:

- 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

At this time, there are no new grants or fundraising initiatives underway at DCA. With regard to the previously awarded Damar Foundation technology grant, the funds totaling \$150,000 are being used to purchase additional technology for the school, including hardware such as Chromebooks and tablets, as well as educational software. 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.

DCA recently submitted its year two annual report for The Lilly Comprehensive Counseling Initiative. Though some objectives outlined in the original grant proposal were unmet due to the pandemic, several strategies have been implemented with great success. In addition to the significant increase in Dragon Works programming, Nancy Washburn has officially been

contracted as DCA's Career Specialist in order to develop a full-spectrum career education curriculum and evaluation process for all students. Nancy brings more than 30 years of experience with career and transition planning to DCA and will be integral in moving our program forward to the level envisioned in the Lilly CCI proposal. The staff and students alike are thrilled to officially welcome her!

A-F ACCOUNTABILITY

Along with DCA's lobbying firm (Barnes and Thornburg), several members of DCA's leadership team met with members of the State Department of Education on October 6th (via Zoom) to present the most recent version of DCA's proposed Alternative Assessment Framework. As the Board is aware, 99% DCA's student population is special education eligible. Consequently, traditional accountability measures fail to adequately reflect DCA student performance and growth each year. As a result, DCA has always received a failing grade "F" or a null grade "N."

DCA leaders have conducted informational meetings with State Representatives and DOE leaders for the last 10-years in hopes the state would adopt an alternative accountability model for DCA. The legislation has even ordered the Department of Education to work with DCA to establish an alternative model. All of these actions have not resulted in the necessary interest and follow-up to establish a new model for DCA. That said, the meeting held on October 6th was the most impressive and most hopeful to date. All in the meeting were extremely supportive of the proposed model, asked great questions and had follow-up plans.

Those in attendance included:

Brian Burdick -	Managing Partner, BT
Sabra Northam –	Associate, BT
BJ Watts –	State Board of Ed.
Patrick Mapes –	State Board of Ed.
Katie Mote –	State Board of Ed
Aimee Brown –	DCA School Leader
Jim Dalton –	DCA Superintendent
Julie Gurule –	DCA School Leader
Cora Collier –	DCA School Leader
Paul Dennison –	DCA Controller

DCA Leadership, with the assistance of BT, will continue to follow-up on the momentum from this meeting. Expected next steps will include the presentation of the proposed Alternative Assessment Framework at a State Board of Ed. Meeting.

Board members interested in reviewing the rough draft of the alternative framework proposed can request a rough draft copy.

DCA BOARD COMMITTEES

While the work of the Board Committees has been delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions and the impact on DCA operations, Committees are now well established.

Academics Committee

Supporting and monitoring best practice educational supports to ensure the highest possible and practical outcomes are achieved.

Cora Collier, Chair
Allyson Strothers
Patricia Edwards

Finance

Supporting and monitoring the financial resources, revenues and expenses of the school to ensure stability and the availability of strategic growth opportunities.

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

Governance

Responsible for the overall functions of the Board, the culture of the Board and aspects of the operations to include the Board Self-Assessment and the annual review of the school leader. In addition, Governance ensures that the Board has adequate representation of expertise and to reflect students and families served.

Jim Dalton, Chair
Jordan Maitland
Joey Wright

Aimee Brown

Community/Advocacy

Supports the goals of students and the school to achieve appropriate community supports and advocacy for DCA students – including the need for specialized education alternatives.

Julie Gurule, Chair
Amber Fields
Karen Snyder

NEW BUSINESS

The Board of Directors would like to keep B&T as lobbyists for the charter academy on a month to month basis. The board will make this an agenda item for future meetings. A motion was made by Patricia Edwards and seconded by Lyle Coleman and all members agreed to keep the contract on a month to month basis.

With the holidays right around the corner, DCA is working on ways to support the families. Staff will work on a plan to distribute toys and baskets to families in need. The Board of Directors are willing to assist. Staff will reach out to members when a plan is in place.

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