

Date and Location

Wednesday June 28, 2023

11:30 AM

6067 Decatur Blvd

Indianapolis, IN 46241

Board Members Present

Joey Wright

Allyson Strother

Brittney Kalmas

Julie Pitts

Dr. Sam Moya

Amber Fields

Others Present (Staff, Public)

Aimee Brown, DCA, School Leader

Julie Fenton, Director of Student Services

Cora Collier, DCA

Dr. Jim Dalton, DCA Superintendent

Octavius Molton, CFO Damar Services

Katie McCoy, Chief Executive Assistant

Approval of Minutes

The Minutes from the April 2023 meeting were approved.

Operation Highlights

Damar Charter Academy finished the 2022-2023 school year on Friday, May 26th. After navigating the challenges of COVID the previous two years, it was encouraging to be able to refocus on improving academic, behavioral, and social/emotional outcomes for students. Though there is still much work to be done, progress seems to be headed in a forward motion again.

Graduation was held on Friday, May 19th. Four students earned their high school diplomas, and 16 others received their certificate of completion. Former student and recent University of Indianapolis graduate, Alex Deuel, provided opening remarks, and board member, Dr. Sam Moya, gave the commencement address. Though it was our most off-script ceremony yet, the energy amongst both the graduates and the audience were high, and it was an evening full of warm and enthusiastic celebrations!

Thanks to grant funds, a remodel of the nurse's office is underway to allow for student access to the bathroom within. The replacement of carpet in classrooms with new tiling is also in the works. The floors of the other bathrooms, stairway areas, cafeteria, and several classrooms that had old tile were already replaced last summer. Each of these projects is/has been supported by a portion of the ESSER III Covid-relief grant DCA received, which requires the school to use the funds to improve the health and safety and reduce learning loss for students.

DCA's annual lottery was held virtually on Wednesday, May 3rd, at 2:00pm. At that time, over 200 current waiting list entries were randomly assigned a number via an excel formula and then ranked according to that number. All new enrollments for the 2023-2024 school year will utilize this waiting list order. Notifications to selected families have begun and will continue throughout the summer, until all openings are filled. Any remaining students will continue to be on the waiting list for the year until an opening becomes available.

House Bill 1001 moved the fall ADM count day to October 1, or a date determined by SBOE, to align with the federal pupil enrollment count, eliminate redundant counting of students, and reduce administrative burden on schools. In response to this statutory change, SBOE has set the fall 2023 ADM count day to Monday, October 2. This is a change from the previous date which occurred on the second Friday in September.

- Additionally, following the close of the legislative session, the IDOE provided [this document](#), as guidance for the new laws. The work at IDOE continues to be centered around [three key pillars](#):
- Student learning and opportunity,
- Educator talent, quality, and value, and
- System alignment and capacity

Curriculum and Programming

DCA students finished taking the state's accountability assessments. IREAD, a reading test for 3rd graders, was successfully completed prior to Spring Break, along with the SAT for diploma-track 11th graders and the WIDA for English Learners. Students in grades 3-8 were assessed primarily in the areas of math and language arts via ILEARN or IAM (alternate assessment). Results will hopefully be released over the summer and used toward calculating DCA's academic achievement results.

Per the IDOE, Streamlined K-12 Indiana Academic Standards in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science and Computer Science were approved on Wednesday, June 7, by SBOE. The adoption of these prioritized standards followed IDOE's statutorily required work to update standards in key content areas to align with the essential skills and traits necessary for students to be successful after high school graduation. SBOE also adopted updated Indiana Academic Standards for Physical Education, Health and Wellness, and Fine Arts per the regularly scheduled standards revision cycle, as well as Early Learning Standards and newly developed integrated STEM standards. All updated standards are now accessible on [IDOE's Indiana Academic Standards](#) webpage. This update of standards will require yet another change to the state's accountability assessments for the Spring of 2024.

Pursuant to Indiana Code (IC) 20-32-4-1.5, the Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) established the use of the ASVAB to meet graduation pathway requirements. **Beginning with the 2025 graduation cohort, HEA 1635 requires students electing to use the ASVAB as a means for meeting graduation pathway requirements to also fill out the Military Enlistment Intent Form.** As you may recall, passing the ASVAB with a score of 31 was a more obtainable option for meeting the Post-Secondary Readiness Competency requirement for students attempting to graduate. DCA Admin have been discussing ways to provide other attainable options for students in light of this news.

DCA continues to utilize the following curriculum resources:

- **Into Math/Reading** (elementary)
- **Imagine Learning (formerly Edgenuity)** (high school diploma-track) ○ **Life-Centered Education** (high school vocational-track) ○ **Unique Learning System** (life skills) ○ **Moby Max** (elementary) ○ **Learning A-Z** (elementary)
- **Google classroom** (various curriculum for all levels)
- **Community-Based Instruction (CBI)**
- **Onsite Job Skills**

Plans are being made to reinstate the academic program area team meetings for next school year. This will allow for stronger collaboration and teamwork within each of DCA's three program areas: academic, vocational, and essential skills. It will also provide an opportunity for teachers to increase their knowledge of our existing curriculum resources, including the STEAM Lab and Makerspace and to grow our Dragon Works program once again.

School Safety

The School Safety Committee met on April 24th to discuss any outstanding areas of concern and review safety policies and procedures in need of updates for the next school year. A new backpack policy is being drafted, and other policies will be developed as necessary.

DCA is looking forward to the installation of a video intercom system for the outside door at the front of the building which would require visitors to be buzzed in from outside, instead of just from within the lobby, thus providing another layer of protection for staff and students. Visiting Damar employees will continue to sign in on paper upon entering the building, and all outside visitors will continue to present their drivers licenses to be run through the Safe Visitors program which provides an immediate check against the sex offender registry.

DCA's EMO, Damar Services, implemented an armed officer presence at the main campus from 6am to 11pm daily – 365 days per year. The main purpose of this initiative is in response to the senseless shootings that have occurred in schools, public gatherings and businesses over the past several years. With the addition of the armed officer presence at the main campus, Damar's in-house security personnel make more frequent rounds at DCA.

Leadership/Personnel

DCA is thrilled to announce the hiring of a Title grant-funded Social Emotional Coordinator to provide social/emotional education to all students and serve as a member of a crisis intervention team when needed. Bella Brown comes to us with years of experience working with children with special needs in ABA clinics and other settings, and we are excited to welcome her aboard!

Staff are set to return to DCA for two days of in-service training on July 31st and August 1st, with students returning for the first day of school on Wednesday, August 2nd. The professional development will kick off with guest speaker, Dr. Lori Desautels. Dr. Desautels has been an Assistant Professor at Butler University since 2016, and she was previously an Assistant Professor at Marian University, where she founded the Educational Neuroscience Symposium, now sponsored by Butler. She helps educators, parents and the community understand how adversity, trauma and resiliency impact the developing nervous system in order to help them feel a sense of autonomy and purpose along with social, emotional and cognitive well-being. We look forward to learning more about how to better serve our students in the coming school year.

Grants/Fundraising

DCA Admin and Damar's CFO, Octavius Molton, continue to meet monthly. During this time, the budget and financials are reviewed, and all federal and state grants are discussed to ensure deadlines for applications, expenditures, and reimbursements are met. DCA was recently awarded multiple grants, including the SIG, Title I, Title II, Title IV, IDEA 611 and 619, and COVID relief grants (ESSER I, II, and III). These funds, which target specific areas of improvement and are required to be spent on supplemental activities and resources beyond normal operating costs, have been used to enhance DCA's program offerings and to provide staff training.

Contractor Nancy Washburn will be wrapping up her work as the DCA Career Specialist this fall. Nancy has worked both individually and with groups of students to provide career education and 1:1 transition support to various post-secondary opportunities, including paid jobs, training programs, and independent (or semi-independent) living situations. She has been instrumental in helping graduating students connect to outside resources and has even secured placement in the Project SEARCH post-secondary training program for two of the 2023 graduates. She will be greatly missed! DCA administrators will be exploring ways to provide these services to students going forward.

The following was presented at the DCA Board of Directors meeting, motion was made by Amber Fields and seconded by Dr. Sam Moya and all members agreed to accept.

House Enrolled Act 1001-Teacher Appreciation Grants Policy-Damar Charter Academy School year 2023-2024.

The School Board for Damar Charter Academy shall annually adopt a policy concerning the distribution of teacher appreciation grants. This policy shall be submitted by the Superintendent or designee to the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) by September 15 of each year.

Eligibility

All Certified teachers whose primary responsibility is the instruction of students in the classroom. In order to receive a Teacher Appreciation Grant distribution, the teacher must have been rated as Highly Effective or Effective during the previous school year. They must have been employed at the time of the evaluation and must still be employed by Damar Charter Academy at the time of the distribution of the Teacher Appreciation Grant awards. All eligible teachers will be submitted to the Indiana Department of Education.

Awards

The total amount of the annual award for the Teacher Appreciation Grant will be divided up among all eligible teachers, employed as of December 1, 2023. The awards granted to Highly Effective teachers will be at least 25% higher than the awards given to Effective teachers.

Distribution

Distribution of awards to qualifying teachers will occur within 20 business days of the receipt from the Department of Education.

Finance Committee

Members Present

Octavius Molton, Jim Dalton, Lyle Coleman

The Finance Committee met electronically this month to review the proposed DCA budget for school year 2023/2024. Damar's CFO will present the specifics of the budget and the financial strategies at the June Board meeting.

The Budget was presented. Motion was made by Amber Fields and seconded by Allyson Strother. All members agreed to accept the Budget for the 2023/2024.

Governance

Members Present

Dr. Jim Dalton

Aimee Brown

Joey Wright

Julie Pitts (New Member appointed)

The Governance Committee has been working closely with professionals and businesses in Decatur Township to find/recruit for the one open board seat. The demographics and expertise for the position have been made clear – as a way to better match the demographics of the community and of the school. Damar is expecting that a recommendation will come from the Decatur Township Drug Free Coalition in the next week or so. When proposed, the Governance Committee will complete the vetting process.

The DCA Board Manual is complete and ready for reference/use/training.

The Governance Committee is overseeing the annual board activities and evaluations required and submitted to the Office of Education Innovation (OEI). These materials include:

- Board Self-Evaluation
- School Leader Self-Evaluation
- Superintendent Evaluation of School Leader
- Board Assurance and Open-Door Policy Form
- Board and Staff Evaluation of EMO

DCA Community/Advocacy Committee

Members Present

Julie Fenton, Chair

Amber Fields

Brittney Kalmes

Karen Snyder

Meeting Focus: to identify ways the committee can support DCA

- Suggestions
 - Organizing the sponsoring of families at Christmas
 - Attending one of our parent-led Family Engagement Group meetings and hearing directly from them what they would like to see/know/have access to/etc.
 - Helping compile a list of community resources and/or helping families connect to them
 - Hosting a community resource fair for families
 - Assisting with our EOY family engagement event
 - Developing partnerships with businesses that would like to donate money, resources, and/or the opportunity for students to become employed
 - Helping DCA promote the Dragon Works program and increase its scope... and also helping DCA to develop an actual enterprise out of student made products (similar to Purposeful Design <https://pdindy.com/>)
 - Assisting with fundraising efforts and/or donor connections to eventually provide DCA with new or additional space to grow programs
- Additional discussion/follow-up (February updates)
 - Amber suggested providing blankets to families as next year's Family Night take-away
 - Amber will contact Guild member, Linda, to see if she may be able to assist
 - Amber would like to see the Guild be more involved with DCA
 - Amber will provide an email introduction with Guild President, Jeannie, to initiate communication (update: intro made 12/9/22; Julie sent another email 2/21/23 after not hearing anything more; Jeannie responded on 2/22/23 that they were not interested in assisting DCA at this time, but might be in the future)
 - We discussed the possibility of having the Guild assist with DCA's EOY family event, a teacher supply drive, etc.
 - Karen suggested DCA securing a vendor booth at local professional conferences and various craft fairs to sell Dragon Works items

- She also suggested setting up a booth at the Gala
- Brittney suggested working with Meijer (a new Damar partner) for donations and employment opportunities
- Brittney will look at providing a resource list for services (update: provided 12/15/22)
- Amber shared that Providence Cristo Rey sends out a large number of students for employment each week
 - Amber will reach out to a contact there to see if we could meet and get ideas (update: intro made 12/8/22; Julie sent follow up email 2/21/23; no response yet)
 - She will also reach out to a contact at the Chamber of Commerce
- The committee would like DCA to survey the families to identify specific needs
- April Update: Amber would like us to develop an information packet that could be sent to potential business partners, after an initial conversation has been had with them