

DCA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes December 18, 2024

Date and Location

Wednesday December 18, 2024

5:00 PM

5125 Decatur Blvd

Indianapolis, IN 46241

Board Members Present

Lyle Coleman

Brittney Kalmas

Sam Moya

Julie Pitts

Allyson Strother

Bernice Garcia

Joey Wright

Others Present (Staff, Public)

Aimee Brown, DCA, School Leader

Julie Fenton, Director of Student Services

Cora Collier, Instruction and Accountability Director

Octavius Molton, CFO Damar Services

Katie McCoy, Chief Executive Associate

Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm.

A quorum was present, and minutes from the October 2024 meeting were approved.

Operation Highlights

Damar Charter Academy will conclude the first semester on Thursday, December 19th.

Students will observe Winter Break from December 20th-January 3rd, returning to class on January 6th. Teachers will have a workday, including training for Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) recertification, on December 20th.

The first special education funding count of the year occurred on December 2nd. DCA will receive funding for the special education students who were actively enrolled on that date. Of the total 180 enrolled, 169 students had eligibilities that qualified. For those 11 students who did not qualify, some are siblings to students who do qualify, some have not yet been identified as needing special education services, and others have been evaluated but did not qualify. It is anticipated that DCA will receive nearly \$1.5 million in funding from this count. The breakdown is as follows: 109 Level I funded students @\$11,659/student

58 Level II funded students @\$2,930/student

103 Level III (secondary) funded students @\$551/student

DCA is hosting its annual Title I Family Engagement evening on Wednesday, December 18th, from 5:00-8:00pm. Activities will include signing up for library cards; writing letters to Santa; enjoying pizza, hot chocolate and popcorn; and watching a popular Christmas movie. Thanks to an extremely generous donation by board member, Julie Pitts (coordinated by board member Amber Fields), each family in attendance will receive a hardback copy of the book *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

DCA has received gift card donations for families from Board Members. The staff and students at DCA wish to thank our dedicated board members for their amazing support!

DCA's charter renewal through OEI is nearing the finish line! The final Renewal Hearing occurred with OEI staff on December 11th, 2024, at the Indianapolis City-County Building. Several supporters were in attendance, and Dr. Dalton, Aimee Brown, and Octavius Molton represented the school well. Two of DCA's parents, along with a student, provided moving testimonies that brought several people to tears.

Curriculum and Programming

The SBOE unanimously approved the [final diploma rule](#) for the new diploma types. The requirements for the base diploma are similar to the former Core 40 requirements but include increased flexibility and course options for earning credits in core content areas. In addition to the core content areas, students will also take personalized electives which can include a variety of courses, such as career and technical education (CTE courses), performing or fine arts and/or world languages. The majority of the updates between the second draft and the final rule were improvements to the readiness seals (Enrollment Honors/Honors Plus; Employment Honors/Honors Plus; Enlistment Honors/Honors Plus). The readiness seals are designed to be permeable, allowing students to update their graduation plan if their original interests and goals change. Per statute, Indiana's current graduation requirements will sunset October 1, 2028, making the new diploma requirements effective for all students beginning with the class of 2029, or students currently in eighth grade. Indiana will also continue to offer the federally-required alternate diploma, which is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Cora Collier, Director of Accountability and Instruction, has been meeting with each of DCA's academic teams to encourage collaboration and ensure the various curriculum resources are being implemented with fidelity. Additional trainings regarding curriculum implementation have also been provided to the teachers and interested TAs.

To help ease the paraprofessional shortage, the US Department of Education has approved the Indiana Department of Education's request to allow LEAs who meet the requirements to utilize the more flexible state defined paraprofessional requirements for highly qualified rather than the current federal requirements. Damar Charter Academy has applied for the Ed-Flex waiver. These requirements apply to all instructional paraprofessionals regardless of how they are funded due to DCA being a Title-I Schoolwide program.

DCA is seeking the paraprofessional to be determined to be highly qualified if he or she has:

- Two years of college experience
- A two-year college degree
- Passed the Para-Pro Assessment (within the first year of employment)
- One year or 1,000 hours of previous employment experience in a school or working with children
- Completed LEA required professional development modules/training

Stakeholders had the opportunity to comment during the school's December Board Meeting. In addition, a handout was distributed during the December Title I Family Engagement/Literacy Night, including a link to an online survey <https://forms.office.com/r/CvPazMCYXh> where feedback could be provided. A copy of the survey link was also emailed to all parents/guardians prior to the Family Engagement Night. Comments will be recorded via the Microsoft Form's responses and/or as part of the Board Meeting minutes, which are made available to the public on the school's website. Based on the first public notice, the school received the following comment: "Damar Charter does so much for the children and go above and beyond. I have 2 children receiving education there. Very happy." No additional comments have been made at this time.

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

School Safety

DCA recently hired Officer Jon Komorek as the new School Resource Officer (SRO) and Safety Specialist. Officer Jon will lead the School Safety Committee and ensure all staff are aware of and trained on updated safety protocols and procedures.

Leadership/Personnel

DCA currently has one open Teaching Assistant position, and an interested candidate has been identified and interviewed. Pending the transfer timeline between Damar departments, the position should be filled at the start of the second semester.

Grants/Fundraising

DCA recently closed out another round of grants, including: **ESSER III (\$408,108.36)** Wages for 9 TAs, the intervention specialist (Kevin Collier), and the Director of Instruction and Accountability (Cora Collier) for the federal fiscal period 10/01/2023 to 09/30/2024
60 new Chromebooks for students

- **FY24 Title I (\$45,101.76; an additional \$6,696.96 will carry over to FY25 Title I)** ■ Wages for SEL Specialist, Bella Williams 10/01/2023 to 09/30/2024
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- **FY23 Sped Part B 619 (\$622)** ■ Wages for Sped TA 10/01/2023 to 09/30/2024
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- **FY23 Sped Part B 611 (\$102,227.72)** ■ Wages for 3 Sped TAs 10/01/2023 to 09/30/2024
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- Admin continues to collaborate with Damar Services to ensure deadlines for applications, expenditures, and reimbursements are met. DCA has been awarded multiple grants, including the Title I, Title II, Title IV, IDEA 611 and IDEA 619. 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, to provide staffing and training, and to fund the Social-Emotional Learning Specialist position.
- Per recent guidance, DCA will need to submit for reimbursement of Sped 619 and 611 grants on a monthly basis, beginning with FY24 funds. A reimbursement request for FY24 funds has been submitted for 3 TA wages 10/01/2024 to 11/30/2024.

A revised School Improvement Plan has been completed, as required by IDOE. Areas of focus in the new plan include literacy instruction, social/emotional education, and work-based learning, which align to the needs of the school, as well as the priorities recently identified by IDOE. The next round of grant funding has been budgeted to support these initiatives.

Governance

DCA leadership, faculty, staff, and parents successfully presented on December 11th in support of the Charter Renewal. The presentation occurred without controversy or concern and seemed to be well-received by the Mayor's Office of Education Innovation. Next steps are for the OEI staff to make recommendations to the Mayor for Charter Renewal. DCS will be notified of its Charter status in early January of 2025.

Finance

DCA continues to monitor financial stability with weekly meetings between the CFO and DCA Staff. The final payout of DCA remodeling was shown this period.

Other Business

Members were invited to attend the School Holiday Celebration immediately following the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.