

DCA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes February 26th, 2025

Date and Location

Wednesday February 26th, 2025

11:30 AM

6067 Decatur Blvd

Indianapolis, IN 46241

Board Members Present

Lyle Coleman

Bernice Garcia

Monique Johnson

Dr. Sam Moya

Brittney Kalmas

Others Present (Staff, Public)

Octavius Molton, CFO Damar Services

Aimee Brown, DCA, School Leader

Julie Fenton, DCA, Director of Student Services

Katie McCoy, Chief Executive Associate

Kristen Blake, Chief Executive Assistant

Dr. Jim Dalton, Superintendent

Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 AM.

A quorum was present, and minutes from the December 2024 meeting were approved motioned by Lyle Coleman and seconded by Brittney Kalmas.

Operation Highlights

DCA hosted its annual Title I Family Engagement evening on December 18th, with over 100 attendees. The second semester began on January 7th after a weather-related closure.

DCA met its enrollment goal of 180 students in the February 3rd census. The school's charter was renewed for 15 years, and discussions on expansion are ongoing.

Dr. Jim Dalton opened the floor for discussion regarding potential opportunities for DCA's growth. He shared that, at this time, expansion into Marion County is not a viable option. However, he proposed that Damar could explore the possibility of creating a statute that would authorize the organization to expand into other parts of the state.

In addition to this, Dr. Jim Dalton highlighted some specific locations where expansion could be considered. One such location was East Chicago (Damar North), which could offer new opportunities for DCA. The Wernle Property was mentioned as another potential site for expansion, which could further enhance DCA's reach and services.

The board discussed the possibility of expanding the board based on location and the needs of different sites. A question was raised as to whether the North location would be established with its own separate board and function as an independent school, or if it would be integrated into the current school structure. This discussion was aimed at determining the best governance structure to accommodate any future expansion. No decisions were made at this time, but the matter will continue to be evaluated as DCA's growth progresses.

Curriculum and Programming

The Board discussed significant changes in curriculum and assessments. For the first time, all students in grades two and three will be required to take the spring IREAD-3 assessment. Beginning this summer, Senate Enrolled Act 1 (2024) mandates summer school for students who score "At Risk" in second grade or "Did Not Pass" in third grade. Additionally, schools with an IREAD-3 passing rate below 70% are required to hire a literacy coach trained in the Science of Reading. Cora Collier has completed this training and is awaiting certification pending the PRAXIS test results.

The Indiana Department of Education has mandated that all schools adopt one of five approved reading curriculums. Since DCA's current HMH Into Reading curriculum is not on the approved list, a new curriculum must be adopted for the 2025-2026 school year. The State Board of Education has also approved a final diploma rule that modifies graduation requirements. The new requirements provide increased flexibility in course options and introduce readiness seals that allow students to adjust their graduation plans as their interests evolve. The updated requirements will take effect for the class of 2029.

The Director of Accountability and Instruction has been meeting with academic teams to encourage collaboration and ensure curriculum fidelity. The vocational team is continuing its skills training initiatives, including operating an in-house print shop, seasonal lawn care services, and the Dragon's Den and Dragon Boutique. Three students who have met the requirements for a Core 40 diploma are currently participating in Work-Based Learning opportunities, including paid internships at the Indianapolis International Airport and employment at Meijer locations.

DCA continues to utilize various curriculum resources, including **Into Math/Reading** for elementary students, **Imagine Learning** for high school diploma-track students, **Life-**

Centered Education for high school vocational-track students, **Unique Learning System** for life skills development, and **Moby Max** and **Learning A-Z** for elementary education. Additional instructional tools include **Google Classroom**, **Community-Based Instruction**, and **onsite job skills** training.

School Safety

The School Safety Committee has resumed its monthly meetings under the direction of School Resource Officer Jon Komorek. A hard lockdown drill was conducted earlier this month, and an upcoming fire drill has been scheduled. Feedback from these drills has been reviewed, and necessary updates have been made to the school safety plan. Officer Komorek and the committee will ensure that all staff receive training in updated safety protocols.

Leadership/Personnel

The Board was informed that DCA successfully filled the open Teaching Assistant position. Dawn Miller, a long-time employee at Damar, has joined the team and has been a great addition to Ms. Dee's life skills classroom.

Financials

The financial report was presented, showing that DCA is in a good financial position. However, there was a small loss recorded for the month of January. Additionally, it was mentioned that a new back door is being purchased for the facility to replace the old one.

DCA recently completed another round of grants and is now undergoing a fiscal audit for compliance. Grant funds have supported wages for instructional staff, the purchase of Chromebooks, and the Social-Emotional Learning Specialist position. Additionally, DCA underwent a Title Grants Risk Assessment and received a Low-Risk designation, meaning no further programmatic auditing is required this year. The administration continues to collaborate with Damar Services to ensure grant deadlines and compliance requirements are met. A revised School Improvement Plan was completed, focusing on literacy instruction, social-emotional education, and work-based learning initiatives.

Governance

Board engagement remains strong. Expansion discussions continue, though a planned meeting with the State Charter Board was delayed. Conversations with City Councilman Derek Cahill and OEI leadership are ongoing. Further research is needed on potential expansion to the Fall Creek ABA clinic. Kristen Blake has joined as Executive Assistant, assuming responsibilities from Katie McCoy, who has transitioned to Executive Associate.

Advocacy and Community

The Advocacy and Community Committee will be meeting on Friday March 7th.

Members include Julie Fenton, Amber Fields, Monique Johnson, Brittney Kalmas, and Berenice Torres.

Furthermore, DCA has been working with Lilly and successfully secured a \$50,000 endowment to expand opportunities.

Damar Services Update

Dr. Dalton shared that the Gala event is scheduled for this weekend, and Damar Services has been approved for reimbursement through the Federal Qualified Health Center (FQHC) program.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM.