

DCA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes August 27th, 2025

Date and Location

Wednesday August 27, 2025

11:30 AM

6067 Decatur Blvd, Indianapolis, IN 46241

Board Members Present

Brittney Kalmas

Allyson Strother

Joey Wright

Lyle Coleman

Dr. Sam Moya

Others Present (Staff, Public)

Aimee Brown, DCA, School Leader

Julie Fenton, Director of Student Services

Cora Collier, Instruction and Accountability Director

Dr. Jim Dalton, Superintendent

Octavius Molton, CFO Damar Services

Katie McCoy, Chief Executive Associate

Kristen Blake, Chief Executive Assistant

Matthew Derringer, General Counsel

Brielle Petty, Senior Governance Performance Analyst

Approval of Minutes

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

A quorum was present, and minutes from the June 2025 meeting were approved, motioned by Brittney Kalmas and seconded by Dr. Sam Moya.

Curriculum and Programming

After the close of last spring's legislative session, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) released a guidance document on newly enacted laws, which is still being updated. The 2025 legislative priorities focus on improving foundational math, preparing students for life after high school, creating flexible licensure options, addressing attendance and discipline, and prioritizing school safety.

Under IC 20-32-8.5-2, schools where fewer than 70% of students pass IREAD-3 must use an IDOE-approved science of reading curriculum, employ a trained instructional coach, test second graders with IREAD-3, and use IDOE-approved benchmark or interim assessments. McGraw Hill's *Open Court* reading program has been purchased and is now in use.

DCA is implementing various curriculum resources, including Edgenuity, Life-Centered Education, Unique Learning System, McGraw Hill Open Court ELA, HMH Into Math, Moby Max, Learning A-Z, Community-Based Instruction, Makerspace/STEM Lab, and Onsite Job Skills.

Starting with the class of 2029, students must meet the new Indiana diploma requirements. The base Indiana Diploma replaces the Core 40 with more flexibility, and students can earn Honors or Honors Plus seals in Enrollment, Employment, or Enlistment/Service by completing advanced requirements. The Alternate Diploma remains available for eligible students.

DCA continues to utilize a range of instructional resources, including:

- Into Math/Reading (elementary)
- Imagine Learning (high school diploma-track)
- Life-Centered Education (vocational high school)
- Unique Learning System (life skills)
- Moby Max and Learning A-Z (elementary)
- Google Classroom (various levels)
- Community-Based Instruction (CBI)
- Onsite Job Skills training

School Safety

The School Resource Officer led a “Stop the Bleed” training during staff professional development days. A revised School Safety Plan has been shared with all staff, with training scheduled throughout the year, and mandatory drills have already started.

Leadership and Personnel

At this time, all personnel returned to DCA after the summer break, and all openings are currently filled.

Grants and Fundraising

DCA is closing out another round of grants while working with Damar Services to meet application, spending, and reimbursement deadlines. The school has received several grants, including Title I, II, IV, and IDEA 611 and 619, which fund supplemental activities such as program enhancements, staff training, and the Social-Emotional Learning Specialist. The next grant applications are due in September, and a revised School Improvement Plan—focused on literacy, social-emotional learning, and work-based learning—is due in October.

School expansion remains a priority. At its June meeting, the Board approved exploring the State Charter School Board as a potential authorizer, which would allow expansion beyond Marion County. This comes as Damar expands residential services to East Chicago and prepares to serve students in Richmond in 2026.

DCA also submitted a joint proposal with Damar’s private school to expand specialized programs for students with severe disabilities. The plan includes expanding facilities to reduce waitlists, creating a 30–40K sq. ft. Comprehensive/Multi-Service Center with vocational training and healthcare services, and increasing job opportunities for students in Marion County. The Lilly Endowment reviewed the proposal in July, requested clarifications, and is expected to decide by the end of September.

Additionally, Damar is pursuing the purchase of Raymond Brandes School #65 from Indianapolis Public Schools under Indiana's "\$1 Law." IPS initially opposed the sale, but the courts ordered compliance. IPS must notify the IDOE by August 23, 2025, after which charter operators can express interest within 90 days. If Damar is the only applicant, the building will be transferred for \$1; if others apply, a competitive process will follow.

A letter was drafted and presented to the Board Members for approval regarding Damar's schools' interest in acquiring the IPS #65 building. **A motion was made by Lyle Coleman, and seconded by Allyson Strother.**

Governance

The DCA Community/Advocacy Committee met on August 26th, 2025. Monique shared information about an IndyGo grant that could provide bus passes for students learning to use public transportation for work and independent living skills, with the application opening on September 15, 2025. Brittney will explore opportunities with Lilly to support work-based learning, while Monique will connect with IU Health's Mosaic Center to identify potential K-12 pipeline opportunities. Brittney will also reach out to Damar Health Services to explore ways DCA could better partner with them for social-emotional learning, and Amber will contact Indy Reads about potential literacy support. Suggestions for committee support include sponsoring families at Christmas, attending Family Engagement Group meetings to hear directly from parents, hosting a community resource fair, and assisting with the end-of-year family event. Additional ideas include developing partnerships with businesses to provide donations, resources, or student employment opportunities, helping to expand the Dragon Works program into an enterprise, and supporting fundraising and donor connections to secure new program space. For literacy, the committee could support book donations for the December Family Literacy Night and work with community agencies that provide literacy instruction and resources for families.

Finance

A financial update was presented to the board members along with a detailed report. It was noted that the first month of the fiscal year does not include salary expenses, and this absence is clearly reflected in the current financials. In the coming months, slight adjustments may be seen in the food and supply budget line as spending patterns begin to stabilize with program needs. Additionally, health-related costs are expected to see some changes as updated billing and benefit expenses are processed, which will provide a more accurate financial picture moving forward.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM, motioned by Brittney Kalmas and seconded by Lyle Coleman.