

Damar Charter Academy  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday October 22, 2014  
11:30 am  
Damar Charter Academy  
5125 Decatur Blvd., Suite D  
Indianapolis, IN 46241

Attendance: Dr. Jim Dalton - Superintendent, Rich Harcourt – Board Chair, Dr. Jim Van Tassel – Board Member, Paul Dennison – DCA Staff Accountant, Lyle Coleman – Board Member, Doug Stewart – Board Treasurer, Gwynetta Hill-Guest.

Packets with the following information were mailed to all attendees:

1. Board Agenda
2. August 2014 Board Minutes
3. DCA Report

The meeting was called to order by Rich Harcourt at 11:40 am. The minutes from the August 2014 meeting were accepted.

Gwynetta Hill attended the board meeting as a student assignment from IVY Tech. Gwynetta also is an employee with our CLaSS program.

### **Current Environment**

The Indiana State Board of Education (INSBOE) was set to initiate rulemaking on the new method for calculating A-F school letter grades at their October 15 meeting. Details of the new rules are still unclear, but speculation includes an even more complex grading scale.

However, the October 15 meeting became controversial (again) when the board attempted to approve the annual release of school grades and disagreements erupted over accuracy of some of the schools grades. The Board moved the release of the grades to November 5 in order for the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) to have an opportunity to provide further analysis and input. News reports remain unclear as to what if any recommendations or approvals were provided regarding the possible modified A-F model.

Continually kicking the A-F can down the road just shortens the time frame in which outlier schools like the DCA will have to work on alternate accountability measurement once the revised system is put in place. Fortunately, the DCA has an accountability plan with the Mayor's Office and hopefully much or all of that can be adopted by the State when the time comes.

The ICSLA (the quasi charter school association) continues to make slow progress towards becoming a more formal organization with an active voice around charter school issues. However, whether or not there is a formal organization in place before the upcoming Indiana General Assembly legislative (long) session is questionable. A meeting was scheduled, then

postponed, (fall break got in the way) with Betsy Wiley of the Institute for Quality Education (IQE). Ms. Wiley is the executive director of IQE which is a not for profit working with the Friedman Foundation and others on school choice. The IQE may be a potential funding source for a new charter school association. Ms. Wiley is the sister of Brian Burdick who is Damar Services' executive lobbyist.

The DCA remains an active voice in the ICCLA and a proponent of having a strong provider association; however, getting other charter schools on board is a slow and painful process particularly given how poorly the former organization performed before failing.

### **DCS Update**

Services and DCS were part of an article that ran in the IndyStar in which the death of a DCS client (Linda Kelly) was detailed. Ms. Kelly was involved with DCS as a result of medical neglect by her parents. DCS hired Services to provide family centered treatment (FCT) which included family counseling with specific goals to include getting Ms. Kelly to doctors' appointments and getting her back to school. Damar successfully completed that assignment.

DCS's role was to deal with the medical neglect and health issues surrounding Ms. Kelly. Without going into detail, DCS closed the case and several weeks later Ms. Kelly died of sepsis, a condition brought on by medical neglect. In what appeared to be DCS's panic, they looked for others to blame for the death, and Damar Services was targeted. Two days of court hearings in front of Marion County Juvenile Judge Marilyn Moores determined that Damar has no fault in the death and the mismanagement of the case is a DCS issue. However, as expected, the relationship between Services and DCS has again become further strained.

As you will recall, about half of the DCA's student population are DCS reimbursed clients of Services. When those students walk in the front doors of the DCA, they are accompanied by 20 Damar staff that attend and provide additional support in the classrooms. The additional Damar staff help drive a 1:3 staff to student ratio which leads to success in the classroom. Those Services' staff members support the DCA students without any cost to the DCA.

It is fair to know that Damar's relationship w/DCS remains strained and that Damar is developing plans on how to go forward with less of DCS, or without DCS. Those plans may have a material impact of how the DCA performs in the future. For now, an open and transparent dialogue between the DCA and Services needs to continue. DCA will form an adhoc committee with Dr. Jim Dalton, Lyle Coleman and Doug Stewart, other's that will fill positions on the committee will be a teacher and teacher's assistant to evaluate future moves of DCA.

### **Finance Report**

The income statement is tracking close to budget and the positive margin variance is mostly driven by savings in the vacant principle's position. Enrollment for the DCA at August 21, 2014 equaled 162 (165 is max) and the mix was 77 Services and 85 day students. The enrollment mix is a little skewed outside of the ideal 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Damar and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> day students and subsequently, monitoring appropriate staffing support will be important over the school year.

**Board Recruitment**

Dr. Dalton and Rich Harcourt will soon have an initial meeting with the now retired CFO of the Christel House Schools, Carlos Alexander who may be a candidate for board membership.

**Programs**

The school this year has been led by Aimee Brown and Julie Gurule and has been very successful. Dr. Dalton recommends rewarding them and the board recommends \$5000 each for the extra duties performed. Motion was made by Dr. Jim Van Tassel and seconded by Doug Stewart and the motion was approved.

Dr. Dalton will meet with Brandon Brown on October 29, 2014 to give general updates and new actions in the Mayor's office.

School resumed this week from a two week fall break.

**Audit**

The 4 year school and academic audit is upon DCA. There are no concerns about this audit. Dr. Ratterman will be leading the audit.

**Principal**

An offer has been made to Liz McNamara for the Principal position. She has accepted and will begin in late December.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm.