



DaVinci Connection

DATES TO REMEMBER

Scholastic Book Fair

Thursday & Friday,
October 10 & 11
8:00 am-3:30 pm

No School

October 14-18

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Monday & Tuesday,
October 14 & 15

Scholastic Book Fair

Monday, October 14
Noon-8:00 pm

Scholastic Book Fair

Tuesday, October 15
8:00 am-4:00 pm

School Board Meeting

Monday, October 21
6:00 pm

Find more upcoming events
on the DaVinci Academy
home page, or go to the
"Calendar" page for future
important dates.

[http://davincicharterschool.org/
Calendar.aspx](http://davincicharterschool.org/Calendar.aspx)

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A New Way of Reporting Student Achievement (Terry Moffatt, Academic Director)

For the past two years, we have been using standards-based reporting measures in Kindergarten through Grade Two. Teachers assess students according to the Minnesota State Standards for reading and math, which gives a much clearer picture of what information students have mastered and what information they need more time to grasp. Parents receive reports at the end of each trimester indicating the standards that have been met.

During this school year, we are expanding the grades that will use standards-based reporting. Grades 3 – 5 will use this method of reporting for reading and math and Grade 6 will use it in math only. This type of reporting means that parents are getting more information about their students' achievement. Standards-based reporting provides more consistency about student performance because all students are evaluated on the same grade-appropriate skills. Parents can see exactly which skills and knowledge their children have learned. This means that grades will not be entered into Powerschool for reading and math.

What are state standards?

Every state has adopted its own list of the skills that students should learn at each grade level from kindergarten through high school. These lists are the state content and learning standards. To confuse things a bit more, however, we now also have the Common Core National Standards. These are standards that most states have adopted and are the same from state to state. Minnesota has adopted the Common Core for English Language Arts. This means that teachers are using a combination of Minnesota State Standards and Common Core standards to deter-

mine the proficiency level of each child. Rather a daunting task! However, we know that parents will have a much better understanding of what their students know and don't know by reporting on the standards.

How will progress be reported?

Teachers of reading and math in grades 3 – 5 and math in grade 6 have created progress sheets to report student progress after each unit. The number of standards covered in each unit will vary.

1. These progress sheets will be sent home after each unit is completed.
2. Teachers will send an email approximately three days prior to sending the progress report in order to alert parents to the fact that it will be coming home.
3. The reports will be stapled into the planner and must be signed by a parent and returned to the teacher.

On the report, parents will be able to see which standards were covered in that unit and the achievement level of their child on each standard. Teachers will be explaining this during conferences on October 14 and 15 as well.

If you have any questions about standards-based reporting, please feel free to ask your child's teacher or Terry Moffatt at tmoffatt@davincicharterschool.org.

FINANCE UPDATE

(by Ross Meisner, Treasurer)

Last month, the chair of the DaVinci Academy Board of Directors, Doug Hiatt, touched on several of the top issues the Board is currently working on: the timing to restart the high school program, the need for additional space, the re-authorization of our charter with Friends of Education, and the importance of having school stakeholders (parents, teachers,

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and community members) engage through participation on the board. Here's some additional info on how we ended last year, and the fiscal outlook for the new year.

Last year was our tightest budget year in our five years of existence. Our staff has grown (the biggest expense for a school), and our student enrollment was basically flat from last year as we implemented an enrollment policy that only provides for filling vacancies as they arise during the year to certain identified criteria rather than filling every new vacancy as it occurs. Actual revenues came in at \$4.14M vs. our forecasted revenue of \$4.08M, and actual expenses were \$4.02M vs. our budget of \$4.05M (i.e. 99% of budget). Our net result was a positive ending balance for the year of \$120,000, which is a fairly narrow margin given the many moving parts in a school's budget. I thank the staff for their diligent expense management at the end of last year. Keep in mind that it is essential to not overspend in any year for at least two reasons: it's required by our authorizer, and if we end a year with a negative balance, it precludes us from various activities, including forming an affiliated building corporation for at least five years. An affiliated building corporation is a key element to adding an additional site (e.g. for the high school or other programming needs) that keeps our costs down, and without it we would almost certainly pay more for a second building.

Our cash position remains strong, with \$1.1M in the bank at the end of last year. This is also critically important, not just because we need the buffer for cash flow purposes, but because our charter contract currently requires us to maintain a 35% cash balance to total expenses ratio. This means that as the school grows and our expenses grow, each year we must spend less than our revenue and add the positive balance to our total cash balance to make sure it keeps pace with our growing budget. Also, we are just finishing up our audit for 2012-13, and those results will be available and posted shortly.

For this new year, DaVinci Academy's budget did not change much from last year, as enrollment may be only slightly higher than last year. Our projected income for this year is \$4.15M, and our projected expenses are \$4.09M. During the year, we will usually update the budget twice: once this fall when we can refine our enrollment forecast (which directly drives our revenue) and other large expense estimates (e.g. staff

headcount and salaries), and once in the spring to make sure we are on a path to end the year with a definite positive balance.

The school's annual financials and audit results are available on the DaVinci Academy web site (look for Board Meeting Minutes and School Documents). Finally, I again encourage you to bring your skills and energy to the board or a committee: the school thrives when we all participate, share the load, and contribute our talents on behalf of all our kids.

ART CORNER

(by Holly Fischer, Instructional Coordinator)

These are the students whose artwork has earned them the "Artist of the Month" title. Their work will be placed in a frame in the front hall of the school. Artist of the Month projects are created during art class and judged by the art teachers. Nice work, artists!

K - Jack B.
1st - Clare P.
2nd - Roshni
3rd - Trinity
4th - Andra G.
5th - Cassie S.
6th - Jack L.
7th - Kallie
8th - Andrea F.

Ms. Gibault also awards "Artist of the Week" prizes for student work created outside the classroom. She says she got a record number of entries this week with 96 different sketches and drawings submitted by students. Those pieces are changed out weekly and displayed on the shelves in the school entry. Keep up the amazing work students - you are blowing the art teachers away!





VOLUNTEER CORNER

(by Lee Swearingen, Volunteer Coordinator)

Now that school is in full swing, there are many volunteer opportunities available for families. If you are interested in any of the following one-time or ongoing opportunities, please email Lee Swearingen (lswearingen@davincicharterschool.org) or the contact person listed.

- ♦ **Office Volunteer Pool** – If you are interested in helping in the office on a regular basis, join the Office Volunteer Pool. This volunteer will help with anything from copying, laminating, organizing, and basic "housekeeping." Just pick your day of the week and the number of times per month you want to come in, and we will get you started!
- ♦ **Communications Advisory Group** – We are seeking one more parent volunteer who is interested in working alongside administrators and teachers to come up with recommendations for streamlining district-wide communications. This group will meet two Tuesday's a month immediately after school. If you are interested, contact Lee Swearingen
- ♦ **Book Fair** – The Scholastic Book Fair will again be open during the week of Parent/Teacher conferences. We need several individuals to help set up and/or work at the book fair. Please contact Miranda TenNapel with questions at mtennapel@davincicharterschool.org. The book fair will be open at the following times:
 - Thursday, October 10, 8:00 am-3:30 pm
 - Friday, October 11, 8:00 am-3:30 pm
 - Monday, October 14, Noon-8:00 pm
 - Tuesday, October 15, 8:00 am-4:00 pm
- ♦ **Outside Maintenance**
 - Clean all windows and sills before winter
 - Sweep sidewalks and along the curbs
 - Remove white plastic mesh from the playground
- ♦ **Inside Maintenance**
 - Regular dusting
 - Spot clean walls; especially around garbage cans and in the entryways
 - Clean all inside windows and sills

- ♦ **Grant Writing** – Do you have grant writing experience? We have a few grants we would like to apply for, and this is a great volunteer opportunity for the right person.
- ♦ **Small Group Math Help** – Assist the 6th grade class from 11:40 am-12:15 pm any day of the week during small group math time.

If you have questions about any of these opportunities, please contact Lee Swearingen. Every minute you spend volunteering for our school is greatly appreciated by all of our students and staff. Thank you for your consideration.

