



DaVinci Connection

DATES TO REMEMBER

Grades K-2 Music Concert
Tuesday, December 11
6:00 pm

Grades 3-4 & Green Choir
Music Concert
Thursday, December 13
6:00 pm

School Board Meeting
Monday, December 17
6:00 pm

Band, Orchestra, Choir
Concert
Tuesday, December 18
6:00 pm

No School
Monday, December 24-
Friday, January 4

Mandatory Intersession
Monday-Friday,
January 7-11

Communications Committee
Tuesday, January 8
6:00 pm

Find more events on the
DaVinci Academy home
page, or go to the "[Calendar](#)"
page for future important
dates.

BUDGET, FINANCE, AND AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE

*(by Doug Hiatt, Finance Committee
Chair)*

The Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee (often referred to as just the Finance Committee) is one of the standing committees of the Board of Directors at DaVinci Academy. In September, I highlighted the purpose of the committee and some of the main items being worked on this year. Since then, we did receive our final audit report related to the 2011-12 school year, and we have again received a clean audit.

In this article, I want to focus on some recent news regarding school finance and explain the actual or potential impact on DaVinci Academy. Two times each year, the Minnesota Office of Management and Budget ("OMB") does a forecast related to the current two-year budget cycle. This week, the OMB announced the latest forecast which predicted a surplus in the current cycle of a little more than \$1.3 billion. Minnesota law requires that the current surplus be used to pay school districts for the holdback. The payments from the surplus will allow schools to collect 82.5% of the revenue owed for this school year. While this is welcome news, this does not mean that schools have been given more money to use for education, but rather, schools simply will not have to borrow as much to fund current year operations.

Also this week, the Minnesota Department of Education ("MDE") published its proposal for changes to school funding beginning with next school year. In order to implement the proposals, the Minnesota House and Senate would have to revise the law and the Governor would have to sign

it, so at this point, it is only a proposal. The proposal changes almost all parts of school funding (the basic education aid, the pupil unit ratios, the funding for special education, and the payment required by resident districts, etc.). As a result, while the MDE has indicated and published a schedule of the estimated increase per pupil unit that will be received by each school district, the analysis does not take into account that, even if more revenue is received by charter schools, some of the changes require charter schools to pay more expenses. It will take some time to try to determine the actual impact if the proposals are implemented as proposed. The Finance Committee began reviewing the proposal at its meeting on December 10 and will look at it again at its January meeting.

My early view on the proposal is that DaVinci Academy will either end up close to the same or will be slightly worse off overall under the proposal than under the current school funding formulas, and that regular school districts will actually get a double benefit from the revisions (increased revenue and reduced expenses from pushing a portion of certain expenses that are allowed to be billed to the districts by charter schools back to the charter schools). After the Finance Committee reviews the proposal, we intend to communicate the impact on DaVinci Academy to you, and might ask you to contact your Senator, Representative, and the Governor's office regarding the proposal.

As always, the Finance Committee and other committees need volunteers and parents. Come help us out! If you are interested in volunteering or have general ideas to share with the Finance Committee, email [Doug Hiatt](mailto:Doug.Hiatt).



FACILITIES PLANNING: EXPANSION DISCUSSION CONTINUES

(by Kami Peterson, Facilities Committee Chair)

The Facilities Committee is considering several possible expansion options. We are discussing the logistics of the options, including expansion of the current site, purchase of a new building, and the addition of modular classrooms. We continue to have discussions regarding the appropriate grades to have at a second site, transportation for both sites versus one site, parking, and other related topics.

At the writing of this article, there is a Board Retreat scheduled for December 8, and a report of the findings of the Facilities Committee to this point will be presented. A Facilities Committee meeting on December 10 will review those discussions and begin priority work based on those outcomes. The January meeting will include next steps and action items. The committee also continues to look for ways to maintain and improve our current building.

We need volunteers and parent input on these and other important facilities matters. If you have ideas about creative space planning, current school facilities, or general interest in next steps for facilities planning for DaVinci Academy, your participation is needed on the Facilities Committee. Email [Kami Peterson](mailto:Kami.Peterson@DaVinciAcademy.org) or call 612-599-7437.

CHARACTER TRAIT OF THE MONTH: APPRECIATION

(by Holly Fischer, Instructional Coordinator)

During this month of December when our character trait focus is on "appreciation," I encourage you to show the teachers that their hard work with your children on a daily basis is valued.

As the Instructional Coordinator, I am often copied on emails to and from teachers. They are usually quick exchanges about how your children are doing, but sometimes they are concerns about particular things. I am dismayed by the number of negative and harsh phone calls and email messages that teachers are receiving from parents.

Our mission at DaVinci Academy is that "students, parents and teachers will work together to ensure positive character development and build a strong foundation for higher education." As educators, our goal is to help students develop academically and personally and to learn responsibility and

accountability. We have to account for the individual needs of students and the good of the entire school community.

We welcome your input, your questions, and your concerns. Please consider the teachers' work load, class schedules, school and classroom policies, and model positive partnerships in all of your communications as we work together for the good of all DaVinci Academy students. Thank you for your active involvement in the education of your children and your commitment to DaVinci Academy.

Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.

Dalai Lama

ARTSTART GRANT

(by Cristina Mitchell, 2nd Grade Teacher)

During the months of September, October, and November, the 2nd and 3rd grade classes hosted an artist and poet as part of a grant program called ArtStart. The experience began with a field trip to Fort Snelling State Park to meet Julie Kastigar-Boada, a visual artist, and Marie Olofsdotter, a poet, and to collect nature that helped inspire the poetry and art that we created in the classroom.

Marie and Julie then spent five hours in each classroom, sharing their passions with the students. Marie made the children excited about writing poetry, and the students each published four poems in poetry books that they made using nature from the field trip. Julie worked with each class to create animal puppets and masks using cardboard and papier-mâché, and when they were finished, she taught them how to make their animals come alive. Marie and Julie worked with the 2nd and 3rd grade teachers to tie this whole experience in with the Core Knowledge topics of the water cycle and river ecology.

On November 8, the students had a unique way of showing off their artwork and poetry. Julie created a special performance in which the students presented their animal puppets and masks on the stage by making them come alive to show the different parts of the water cycle, the way we use water, and the importance of water. The performance was narrated using poetry that the students wrote with Marie. This was certainly an unforgettable learning experience for these students!