

# DaVinci Connection

## DATES TO REMEMBER

Picture Retakes  
Friday, September 14

School Development  
Committee  
Monday, September 17  
4:30 pm

Compensation Committee  
Monday, September 17  
6:00 pm

Finance Committee  
Monday, September 17  
7:30 pm

Special Education Advisory  
Council (SEAC)  
Thursday, September 20  
6:00-8:00 pm

School Board Meeting  
Monday, September 24  
6:00 pm

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

## **DAVINCI ACADEMY AGAIN RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF MINNESOTA'S TOP SCHOOLS**

*(by Doug Dinndorf,  
Communications Committee Chair)*

Once again, DaVinci Academy has been recognized as one of Minnesota's "Reward" schools by the Minnesota Department of Education, for the 2011-12 school year. Reward schools are the state's highest performing schools, recognized for their quality education practices. Only 126 Minnesota schools were recently awarded the state's Reward school status. DaVinci Academy also received this prestigious Reward designation earlier this year based on results for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years.

"We are extremely proud of the results our school and students continue to achieve," advised Terry Moffatt, DaVinci Academy's Academic Director. "Our dedicated administrators, teachers, and staff have done exceptional work, and our students are excelling with their studies."

Based on the Multiple Measurement Ratings (MMR) system used by the Minnesota Department of Education, and results for the 2011-12 school year, DaVinci Academy is rated the 14<sup>th</sup> best charter school in the state, among the 120 charter schools receiving Federal funding to help low-income and at-risk students. The MMR rating measures student proficiency, student growth, achievement gap reduction, and graduation rates. The percentage of possible points a school earns is its MMR score. DaVinci Academy's MMR score for 2011-12 was 86%.

Students at DaVinci Academy continue to achieve very high scores in both reading and math proficiency, with ratings of 90% and 81% respectively. Among all Minnesota school districts,

DaVinci Academy students rank in the top 10% for both reading and math proficiency, a record they have maintained for the past three years.

"We are beginning our fifth year at DaVinci Academy and are building a strong record of academic excellence," stated Moffatt. "We have developed a rigorous academic program that challenges our students, and they have consistently met that challenge. Quality educators, involved families, and students focused on learning have combined to produce excellent results for our school, and our students will continue to excel."

Congratulations to our students, teachers, administrators, and staff, as well as our families, for everything you do to help DaVinci Academy achieve its record of continued academic excellence!

## **ARTSTART GRANT**

*(by Holly Fischer, Instructional  
Coordinator, & Cristina Mitchell,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher)*

During the months of September and October, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes will be hosting an artist and poet as part of a grant program called ArtStart. Students will take a field trip to Fort Snelling and cover the Core Knowledge topics of the water cycle and river ecology. They will then work with poet Marie Olofsdotter and artist Julie Kastigar-Boada to create poetry and artwork inspired by the nature they find on the trip. The experience will culminate in a performance created by the students. Watch for their poetry books and masks displayed throughout the school by the end of October.

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## 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. The purpose of the Finance Committee is to manage the finances of DaVinci Academy with the highest integrity and ensure professional accounting practices are followed. The committee has successfully managed some difficult years with the 35% and 40% holdbacks and has met its goals.

DaVinci Academy received a clean audit report last year and has received the School Finance Award the last two years. This year's audit has been in process since late July, and the external auditor was onsite to perform the field work on September 5 and 6. At its next meeting, the committee will discuss its goals for the 2012-13 school year and the current audit, and a few other agenda items.

This year, the committee will be asked to interact with other committees more than in past years, as those committees look at a few longer term issues that require multi-year budget planning. The Facilities Committee, for example, will consider the next building expansion timing and may file a site expansion application with Friends of Education, and the School Development Committee will look at whether and when to create an affiliated building corporation that would purchase all or part of the facilities used by DaVinci Academy. A site expansion application requires the submission of five different budgets which the Finance Committee would be asked to create.

Affiliated building company? Charter schools are not allowed to own their facilities, but are allowed, after five operating years, to create what is called an affiliated building company that can own the facilities and lease them to the school. Under current law, the property owned by the affiliated building corporation would be exempt from property taxes which would allow it to charge lower rent to the school. There are other significant financial and audit issues related to an affiliated building corporation that need to be considered, too. Those require a number of budgets and other financial scenarios, and the Finance Committee will be asked to create those.

We need volunteers and parent input on these and other important finance, audit, and budget matters. If you have an interest in budgets, numbers, and spreadsheets, or general interest in the finances of DaVinci Academy, your participation is needed on this committee. Come help us out! If you are interested in volunteering or have general ideas to share with the Finance Committee, please email [Doug Hiatt](#).

## TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE UPDATE

*(by Ravi Raghavapudi, Technology Committee Chair)*

Lots of things have happened in the DaVinci Academy technology world since the last time I wrote an article for the *DaVinci Connection*. We have received approval for our long term (2015) technology plan from the Minnesota Department of Education. We will start implementing elements of the plan by surveying the staff on current technology use and future needs.

Also, last time I wrote an article, we were considering adding Samsung Chromebooks to our school, and I described some of the features of these devices. I am happy to say that we have made the decision to purchase Chromebooks, and they will be used by students this year. Based on this experience, we will consider Chromebooks for replacement of laptops in the future.

All teachers are using classroom specific web sites to streamline communication with parents. We are implementing a helpline to streamline and react to internal technology issues that arise during the school day. The idea here is to track issues that come up frequently and also be able to react and help staff and students with minimal interruption. We are also continuing the process of inventorying and recording all technology devices in the school. Lots going on, all aimed at making better use of our technology resources.

If you have ideas or want to volunteer on the Technology Committee, please reach out to [Ravi Raghavapudi](#).



## VOLUNTEER CORNER

*(by Lee Swearingen, Volunteer Coordinator)*

If you can assist with any of the following items, please email [Lee Swearingen](#).

5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Enrichment Assistance - Ms. Savering and Mr. Sirovy need four individuals who are willing to listen to students read out loud on C-days from 2:00-2:45 pm.

Volunteer Office Pool - Come in any Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday and help out in the front office. Do anything from copying, laminating, cutting, organizing, cleaning, sorting, and assembling documents. Simply set your schedule with me, and show up ready to work! It can be once a month, once a week, all day, or just an hour or two. The choice is yours.

School Spruce up Squad - We need several individuals to help Mr. Chad keep our school looking great. Similar to the Volunteer Office Pool, you can set your own schedule any Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, one day a month or every week, all day or just an hour. Tasks will include wiping down the front and tops of lockers, washing windows, cleaning hard to reach corners, cleaning the dividers in the girls' bathrooms (ladies only!), and anything else Mr. Chad comes up with.

Lunch Supervision - We always need volunteers to supervise students over the lunch period. If you can help from 10:15 am-12:00 pm, please let me know. I will send you a link to select the days and shifts you want to help.

On-Call Lunch Server - Are you available on short notice to help serve lunch? We would like to put you on our on-call list if one of our food service employees is unexpectedly out for the day.

## PICTURE RETAKES ON SEPTEMBER 14

School picture retakes have been re-scheduled for this Friday, September 14. If you would like to have a retake of your student's photo, please turn the student's proof in to his/her child's teacher with "RETAKE" written on the form. All photo order forms are due on Wednesday, September 12.



**Volunteerism is the voice of the people put into action. These actions shape and mold the present into a future of which we can all be proud.**

*--Helen Dyer*