

# DaVinci Connection

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

Communication Committee  
Tuesday, October 2  
5:00 pm

Picture Retake Order Forms  
Due  
Friday, October 5

School Development  
Committee  
Monday, October 8  
4:30 pm

Policies and Procedures  
Committee  
Monday, October 8  
5:00 pm

Compensation Committee  
Monday, October 8  
6:00 pm

Facilities Committee  
Monday, October 8  
6:00 pm

Technology Committee  
Monday, October 8  
6:00 pm

Finance Committee  
Monday, October 8  
7:30 pm

No School  
Monday, October 15-Friday,  
October 19

Parent/Teacher Conferences  
Monday & Tuesday, October  
15 & 16  
3:00-8:00 pm

Parent/Teacher Conferences  
Wednesday, October 17  
8:00 am-3:00 pm

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

13001 Central Ave NE  
Blaine, MN 55434  
763-754-6577

[www.davincicharterschool.org](http://www.davincicharterschool.org)

## **WELCOME INTERIM DIRECTOR DEBRA LACH**

Debra Lach comes with knowledge and experience of our school community, having previously served as Interim Director at DaVinci, both during its pre-start phase and during the first year of operation. Ms. Lach has education, training, and experience in the fields of education, business, non-profit leadership, and finance, which all come together in her work with charter schools. She has served as the start-up Director for two charter schools, an elementary and a high school, both of which continue to be successful. She currently serves as a consultant to several charter schools and other non-profit organizations. Ms. Lach is passionate about alternative models of education that support academic excellence, interpersonal growth, and success for students.

## **NEW CONFERENCE ROUTINE (by Holly Fischer, Instructional Coordinator)**

DaVinci Academy fall parent/teacher conferences will be held Monday-Wednesday, October 15-17. The conferences times are Monday from 3:00-8:00 pm, Tuesday from 3:00-8:00 pm, and Wednesday from 8:00 am-3:00 pm. Call the office to schedule a conference, or stop by to sign up.

We made a few changes to our conferences for grades 4 and up this year. First of all, teachers in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grades will conference with families together. Students in those grades work with both teachers, so this is a more efficient way of scheduling your time.

If, for example, you are a parent of a 4<sup>th</sup> grader, you will meet with both Mr. and Mrs. Cauley. Fifth grade parents will meet with Ms. Savering and Ms. Nelson together, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents will meet with Mr. Sirovy and Mrs. Andringa. Conference time is expanded to 20 minutes to accommodate an

additional teacher to the conversation.

Secondly, in order to move towards more of a high school model for parent/teacher conferences, we will not ask you to schedule conferences with the middle school teachers. Mrs. Maeckelbergh, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Melander, and Mrs. Severson will have tables set up in the gym, and parents are encouraged to drop in any time during the conference periods on Monday and Wednesday to meet with the teachers individually. You may need to wait for a period of time for teachers to be available, but it should give you more flexibility. Tuesday night will be reserved for middle school teachers to have group conferences with families they have made prior arrangements with. The specialist teachers will be available as well for drop-in conferences (in their classrooms) during those days.

If you have any questions, call the DaVinci Academy office or contact your child's teacher directly.

## **NEW AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

Attached to this newsletter, you will find the sign-up for extra-curricular activities. Please remember that some activities from the first session are continuing. This is spelled out on the form. Most activities will begin the week of October 22, but again, please look at the form for clarification. We would like to emphasize that the activities end at 4:15. Please respect the time commitments of our teachers and pick up your children on time.

I am still waiting to hear if the YMCA has approved our school as a site for an after-school program. I know that some parents are waiting to hear the outcome. As soon as I am told the outcome, I will certainly let everyone know. Thank you for your support and your patience!



## COMPENSATION COMMITTEE – STILL WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES

*(by Dale Lieb, Compensation Committee Chair)*

The success of any school is highly dependent on the quality of its people – administrators, teachers, and staff. DaVinci Academy is fortunate to have a very talented, dedicated group of people who are constantly focused on delivering a quality learning experience for our children. Attracting and retaining these education professionals is a challenge we take very seriously, and that is why the work of our Compensation Committee is so important. The committee is made up of School Board members, parents, and administrative staff, and meetings are typically attended by teachers.

Most of you have probably not heard of our committee. It's that way because the majority of our work is done behind the scenes, where salary ranges, bonus programs, and employee benefits are closely scrutinized. A lot of effort has gone into comparing our overall compensation program with that of other charter schools. It is critical that we offer an attractive, competitive compensation package in order to attract and retain quality educators.

Our work begins all over at the beginning of a new school year to monitor and maintain our compensation package for our staff. We still continue to make recommendations to the School Board for further overall compensation improvements as our budget allows for in the 2012-13 school year. We welcome more participants to help in these efforts and are grateful for those who currently participate.

Since our last update, we have focused on updating committee goals and employee salary and benefit policies and schedules, improving staff pay and bonus programs, even creating a longevity bonus program for most staff members who have worked at our school for over three years. We have increased the pay for all staff, based on experience and performance, for the new school year.

The Minnesota Department of Education just approved our Q-Comp proposal which could potentially allow all teachers to earn an additional \$1500 annual bonus. Teachers would need to meet the state's requirements in order to receive the funding. The program only add minimum costs to DaVinci Academy.

We obviously have school budget constraints. We try to work closely with the Finance Committee to assure that we maximize resources and employee satisfaction in an attempt to motivate each staff member to reach his/her personal potential at our school. We also applaud the efforts of the School Development Committee, which has been successful in generating more resources for our school.

All of these are efforts to improve staff job satisfaction and morale while achieving our key goal of attracting and retaining DaVinci Academy staff, our most treasured asset after our students.

## CALLING ALL SECRETARIES OR SECRETARY WANNABES

*(by Terri Sheehan, School Board President)*

The DaVinci Academy School Board needs someone with basic computer skills to serve as the School Board Secretary during monthly board meetings. The position entails keeping minutes of meeting activities.

We know there are stakeholders with these talents, and we want to hear from you. We will provide the computer and any training needed for the job. This is a great opportunity to satisfy your annual volunteering commitment to DaVinci Academy and at the same time keep informed of what's happening at our school.

Our monthly board meetings are held at the school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month, at 6:00 pm. If you are interested in this position or have any questions, contact [Terri Sheehan](#).







## RECESS REMINDERS

*(by Gregg Eldred, Student Development Coord.)*

Fall is here, and the temperature is starting to drop. Kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> grade students go outside for recess throughout the whole school year unless it's raining or the temperature is below zero (including wind chill). Please remember to dress your child for the colder weather. Recess lasts about 25 minutes.

Our recesses are divided into four groups: 10:15-10:40 am (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade), 10:40-11:05 am (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade), 11:05-11:30 am (kindergarten) and 11:30-11:55 am (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade).

To help keep our students safe, we have divided the playground into four zones, and staff members are assigned to each zone. Supervision at recess averages out to about one staff member for every 20-25 students.

We want to thank our PTO for donating money to purchase playground equipment for each recess and a storage unit to keep it in. The equipment is color-coded for each grade level recess.

Our biggest priority during recess is to keep our students safe. Some common rules for all recesses are listed below:

- Be respectful to other students and staff
- Be responsible for playground equipment
- Rocks, sticks, and snow must stay on the ground
- Students must stay in the designated recess zones
- Keep your hands and body to yourself
- Be safe at all times

## EAGLE BLUFF TRIP

*(by Holly Fischer, Instructional Coordinator)*

"I can't wait to go back next year!" was what I heard from one parent chaperone after the seventh, eighth and ninth grade retreat to Eagle Bluff Learning Center. We planned the retreat at the beginning of the school year to serve as a team building experience for both the students and the teachers, and it was a tremendous success. Students were challenged with completing a high ropes course through the tree tops, using leadership skills to solve group problems, canoeing

and creating new friendships. We all returned to school exhausted and a bit bedraggled for the upcoming holiday break, but the opportunity to see our students in a new light, working together and bonding with each other and their teachers was truly exceptional. We understand that making this trip happen took some work on the part of many families, but the positive and supportive culture that was created during those few days will last the whole year.

"It was really great chaperoning the Eagle Bluff field trip. I am so impressed with all of you and thankful and proud to be a part of this school. Need a chaperone? Please call me! The way you all relate to and respect one another and the students, as much as possible, :), is impressive and so refreshing to see. NOT all schools are like this!!!"

## ART CORNER

### ARTIST OF THE MONTH IS BACK

*(by Holly Fischer, Instructional Coordinator)*

Our art wall is once again filled with beautiful pieces created by our students in Ms. Platisha and Ms. Larson's classes. "Artist of the Month" work will be displayed during the month of October, and students were awarded a certificate at the September assembly.

Congratulations to these students on their "Artist of the Month" achievement:

Cameron L. – Kindergarten  
 Gracie K. – 1<sup>st</sup> grade  
 Amelia O. – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade  
 Lizzie H. – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade  
 Leah S. – 4<sup>th</sup> grade  
 Dessa K. – 5<sup>th</sup> grade  
 Claire Y. – 6<sup>th</sup> grade  
 Genna S. – 7<sup>th</sup> grade  
 Emma N. – 8<sup>th</sup> grade  
 Brandon P. – 9<sup>th</sup> grade