

# DaVinci Connection

## DATES TO REMEMBER

Spring Break  
Monday, March 25-  
Wednesday, April 3

School Resumes  
Thursday, April 4

Communications Committee  
Tuesday, April 9  
6:00 pm

School Development  
Committee  
Monday, April 15  
4:30 pm

Policies and Procedures  
Committee  
Monday, April 15  
5:00 pm

Compensation Committee  
Monday, April 15  
6:00 pm

Facilities Committee  
Monday, April 15  
6:00 pm

Technology Committee  
Monday, April 15  
6:00 pm

Finance Committee  
Monday, April 15  
7:30 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)

## NEWS FROM FINANCE

*(by Ross Meisner, School Board  
Treasurer)*

DaVinci Academy has enjoyed something that many schools lack: a sound financial footing and disciplined fiscal management that supports our academic goals. For example, DaVinci Academy earned the Minnesota Department of Education's School Finance Award again this year. This award recognizes schools that meet specific submission deadlines throughout the year, deliver key reports and audits error-free, and maintain required positive fund balances. Note that one in four Minnesota schools did not achieve this award.

Balancing the many demands of running a successful school is never easy, and I'd like to commend the administration and the DaVinci Academy school board, in particular former Treasurer Doug Hiatt, for years of thoughtful and prudent financial management while achieving excellent academic results and enabling the growth of our school. As the new Treasurer, I'm excited to help the school build on this record of success while maintaining our high fiscal standards and budgetary discipline.

Let me give you an update on the Finance Committee, which coordinates the school's budget and finances. The Finance Committee includes the Board Chair and Treasurer, the School Administrator and Curriculum Director, and parent volunteers. We work with every other committee and the administration in order to gather and synthesize school objectives, enrollment, staffing, expenses, and revenues (from the state) into an annual budget, then manage the school to that budget. There are many variables and trade-offs to be made, but in the end, there is just one goal: to deliver the best possible education to our students with the resources we are given by the Minnesota legislature.

Currently, we are in the process of developing the budget for the 2013-14 school year. The Board reviews this budget in April and May, approving it as the basis for the coming year's operations. This is a reminder to all board committees, administrators, and teachers: submit your budget request items by April 12! This budget process will need to incorporate several big moving parts (our enrollment policy and its impact on revenue, our staffing and compensation requirements, the ongoing planning around facility expansion, and our strategy for the high school program) while meeting our authorizer's requirement for a large cushion in our Fund 1 balance (currently 35% of our annual expenditures). There is one bit of good news: the Minnesota legislature has reduced the school hold back from 40% to around 14%, making our cash flow management much less troublesome.

As you can see, there is much to be done, and the Finance Committee would greatly benefit from an additional parent member or two. If you are in a position to help with this essential work, contact [me](#). The committee meets monthly on Mondays at 7:30 pm.

## ART CORNER

*(by Holly Fischer, Instructional  
Coordinator)*

This month in Art, our students participated in a contest sponsored by Google. It's called "Doodle for Google," and it asks artists to redesign the Google logo using the theme "My best day ever." The winning design will be posted on the Google home page for a 24-hour period, and the winner will earn a college scholarship and \$50,000 towards a technology lab for his/her school. This was a fun project, and if you'd like more details, [click here](#). The public will have an opportunity to vote for a winner starting on May 1. I'll keep you posted about whether one of our students makes it into the final round for judging.



## UNCHARTED TERRITORY -- HIGH SCHOOL REGISTRATION

*(by Stephanie Severson, Middle School Language Arts)*

I have the unique opportunity of being both a teacher at DaVinci Academy and a parent of three students here. We choose this school for some very specific reasons. I believe one of the keys to the success my children have had at DaVinci Academy is that their teachers know them in a way that allows them to personalize their education. The youngest is sent an email by her teacher encouraging her to keep up the work in spelling this week. The 7<sup>th</sup> grader is stopped in the hall by her art teacher and asked about the songs she is learning on the ukulele. The oldest is pushed by his math teacher to keep finding the answers to the problems he doesn't know -- and always encouraged to work hard. This is the personalized education we have had at DaVinci Academy.

As a staff member, I am held to a high standard -- know your students. Figure out what they need to succeed, and share that success with them. How does this work in my classroom? I know the areas your child needs to work on. I can't use real names here, but I can tell you that Cindy Lou likes to read adventure books, but I need to push her to try new genres. I can tell you that Albert never remembers the rule to capitalize pronouns when he is writing -- but he knows how to use formal English when speaking. I can tell you that the 9<sup>th</sup> graders tell me they hate poetry, and yet turned in some of the most honest writing I've seen in my career. As a teacher, I care about these kids and want them to leave this middle school as life-long readers.

This leaves us with not only an excellent elementary program, but a wonderful middle school program. I've taught in other middle schools. DaVinci Academy students are some of the hardest working, kindest, and funniest students I've had the privilege to teach. I've heard some parents talk recently about their children not attending middle school at DaVinci Academy so they will be more ready for traditional public high school. Everyone has their own experience, but I want to encourage you to keep your middle school student with DaVinci Academy. We can provide a quality education that prepares you for any high school you choose.

Two weeks ago I registered my eldest for high school at Centennial -- the district where we live. We walked around the open house, and he spoke with his future

teachers. He could explain to each one what he was currently working on in class and what material his middle school teachers had covered. Each teacher knew of DaVinci Academy and had good things to say about what they heard from our students. *(And they didn't know I was a teacher here.)* I won't know until next year if he was truly prepared for high school, but I know after talking with the Centennial teachers, he feels confident that he can handle it. I know from looking at the hand-outs the teachers had prepared for the open house, his dad and I feel confident that he can handle it.

And as a teacher, I feel confident that we are preparing all our students for success at whatever school they attend after DaVinci Academy. And I know, it will be hard to hear this without taking into consideration that I'm biased. Of course I'm biased...I'm a mom of DaVinci Academy students, I'm the teacher of the best our school has to offer. As a mom and a teacher, I am navigating uncharted territory, and our experience registering for high school has been smooth sailing.

## TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE UPDATE

*(by Mike Hebert, Technology Committee Chair)*

The Technology Committee has changed leadership in the past month, so a huge thank you to Ravi Raghavapudi is in order. His leadership on the Technology Committee has been something to be celebrated. He has set up the current committee with the tools and vision to move forward with confidence. Thank you for all of your incredible work, Ravi!

The Technology Committee is currently chaired by Michael Hebert and vice-chaired by Kevin Furst. We meet the second Monday of every month at 6:00 pm. We exist to serve DaVinci Academy in any way possible with regards to all things technological. At our next meeting on April 15, we will discuss how to best upgrade our school's wireless system. We are at a point where we have more devices in our school than our bandwidth can handle. We are working with our technology consultant, Scott Neslund, and school administration to find the best solution for this need.

The second project we are working on has to do with developing a decision making model for our committee. We want to be proactive and decisive when working on future projects. A clear and purposeful model will help the Technology Committee take on more work with confidence. If you have any questions or ideas, please contact [Michael Hebert](#).