

# DaVinci Connection

## DATES TO REMEMBER

Mandatory Intersession  
Monday-Friday,  
January 7-11

Communications Committee  
Tuesday, January 8  
6:00 pm

School Development  
Committee  
Monday, January 14  
4:30 pm

Policies and Procedures  
Committee  
Monday, January 14  
5:00 pm

Compensation Committee  
Monday, January 14  
6:00 pm

Facilities Committee  
Monday, January 14  
6:00 pm

Technology Committee  
Monday, January 14  
6:00 pm

Finance Committee  
Monday, January 14  
7:30 pm

Special Education Advisory  
Council (SEAC)  
Thursday, January 17  
6:00 pm

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

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

## **INTENT TO RETURN FORMS DUE JANUARY 25**

By Friday, January 25, all current kindergarten-7<sup>th</sup> grade students intending to attend DaVinci Academy for the 2013-14 school year must have an Intent to Return form completed and turned in to the school office. This will help DaVinci Academy plan for next fall. See the attached form.

Also, if you have any siblings of your student that you would like to attend DaVinci Academy, please complete and turn in the Student Application by January 25 as well. DaVinci Academy's Open Enrollment Period is currently open through January 31. New families who are interested in attending DaVinci Academy may turn in a Student Application to the school office to be included in the lottery.

For more information regarding enrollment, please see our [Admission Policy](#). Student Application forms are also available on our web site, or click [here](#).

## **SCIENCE CORNER (by Michelle Cauley, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher)**

Students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade had the exciting opportunity to dissect deer hearts in the classroom as a way to wrap up their month-long circulatory system unit in science. Students paired off and spent their last science classes of 2012 identifying and locating parts of the heart and exploring the similarities between deer hearts and our very own blood-pumping devices.

After spending a month analyzing the different areas that make up our circulatory system and how each part is interconnected, students spent time using their observation skills to investigate a real heart. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade students worked to correctly identify all the parts of the heart and made observations of how texture and size relate to function and durability. Students also discussed heart health and what animals and people do to keep their hearts healthy. Students were able to

make many real life connections and multiple compare and contrast notes as they also spent time comparing geese and grouse hearts during the process.

Thanks again to the many parents who donated hearts to allow our students this fascinating opportunity

## **VOLUNTEER CORNER (by Lee Swearingen, Volunteer Coordinator)**



**Long-term volunteer(s) needed** – A staff member will go on maternity leave in February, and this individual supervises a lunch period from 11:30-11:55 am every day. She will be out a minimum of six weeks. We need a group of volunteers that will commit to cover her lunch shift while she is out on leave. These volunteers will assist other teachers and staff to supervise students during lunch and help clean-up after lunch. If you can cover one or more days on a weekly basis, please contact [Lee Swearingen](#).



## COMPENSATION COMMITTEE – MOVING FORWARD BEHIND THE SCENES

*(by Dale Lieb, Compensation Committee Chair)*

All of us appreciate that the success of any school is highly dependent on the quality of its people – administrators, teachers, and staff. At DaVinci Academy, we are 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 where the work of our Compensation Committee is so important. The committee is made up of school board members, parents, administrative staff, and typically attended by teachers. We welcome more participants to help in these efforts and are grateful for those who currently participate.

Many of you have probably not heard of our committee. This is 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 are able to offer an attractive, competitive compensation package in order to attract and retain quality educators.

Since our last update, we are able to share a first time success in being approved by the state for a Q Comp bonus program for our teachers. Q Comp could potentially allow all teachers to earn an additional \$1,500 annual bonus, provided we meet the state's requirements and our mutual goals without adding any costs to DaVinci Academy. Obviously we have school budget constraints. The great news with this new Q Comp program is our school budget remains intact since the state funds most of the program. This is a result of the strong collaborative effort between the state, our administration, and the teachers to create our school's first Q Comp program for DaVinci Academy. Many thanks to you all! We continue to work toward making it a successful, ongoing program for our school.

We have also been working on administrator bonuses and other staff benefits to assure that they remain competitive. 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 and remain within

our budgetary limits. We also applaud the efforts of the School Development Committee, which has been successful in generating more resources for our school.

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

## TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE UPDATE

*(by Ravi Raghavapudi, Technology Committee Chair)*

In the ever-changing world of technology, I am happy to report that DaVinci Academy is keeping pace with new devices to enhance education. As you all are aware, we have been using iPads for lower grades for some time now. Starting this academic year (August 2012), we have deployed two sets of 26 Samsung Chromebooks as a trial. Coincidentally, the school moved towards an online language program at the same time. That is where the Chromebooks are primarily used – 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades for online language program. They are also used in middle school science class by students researching topics they are studying. These Chromebooks are a big hit with both staff and students and are always in demand. They are a huge time saver in terms of start up, and students can get going right away in class. Based on such feedback from staff, the Technology Committee unanimously approved buying another cart-full of 26 Chromebooks to replace some of the older/slower laptops.

On another note, the Technology Committee conducted parent surveys on the use of classroom web sites during the recent parent-teacher conferences. We had a great response from the parents who attended the conferences – thank you to all of you. Based on the surveys, an overwhelming majority of parents use classroom web sites regularly and find them useful. Web sites are visited mostly for checking homework followed by looking for calendars and daily events. This is great positive reinforcement for staff who keep the web sites updated with new information. So thank you. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to improve the flow of information.

*Cont. on page 3*





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The next major project that the Technology Committee intends to undertake is defining the scope and sequence of technology knowledge and required curriculum for each grade. This effort will define the level of technology knowledge students should have at each grade level and in turn will help define what technology elements need to be embedded in the curriculum. If you have any ideas, please reach out to [Ravi Raghavapudi](#).

### STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Congratulations to Zennon K., who completed a whole year of Spanish 1 before winter break and will now start Spanish 2. He is the first DaVinci Academy student to finish all of the activities and exams in the Spanish 1 Middlebury online program after working diligently on weekends and breaks. You should be very proud of your accomplishment, Zennon, and we'll be listening for that Spanish when we see you in the halls!



This school year, we have partnered with a program called Young Rembrandts. This is an outside group that comes in to the school once a week to offer art courses to students in grades K – 6 after school. Courses are offered all around the Twin Cities and hundreds of students participate.

Every month, work that stands out from the rest is chosen and the student is named as a Young Rembrandt Star Artist. We have our first Star Artist here at DaVinci Academy. Chloe B in third grade was chosen as the Star Artist for December. Her artwork is featured on the Young Rembrandt website and can be viewed

at: <http://www.youngrembrandts.com/twincities/default.aspx>.

This is a tremendous honor for Chloe and we are very proud of her!!



Kayleigh S., Sierra S. and Isaac S. will be performing in "Pirates! The Musical" with Ashland Productions at the Maplewood Community Center on Thursday, Feb. 21 at 7:00 pm; Saturday, Feb. 23 at 7:00 pm; and Sunday, Feb. 24 at 2:00 pm. Go to <http://www.ashlandproductions.org> for tickets. Please note that although there will be 6 shows listed, Kayleigh, Sierra, and Isaac will only perform in the 3 show times listed above in the "Adventure Galley cast". Ashland has a double cast for this show and the other 3 dates/times are the other cast. Hope to see you there!

### PIANO & VIOLIN LESSONS

If your child is interested in taking piano or violin lessons, contact Marsha Emmons at 612-991-0058. She has Tuesday and Wednesday after-school lesson times available at DaVinci Academy.

### FROM THE MUSIC ROOM

New this year! We are offering a DVD version of each concert from December 2012! We are so proud of our students' achievements, and we are happy to offer this to you for FREE! All you need to do is send in a blank -DVD RW for each concert night you wish to receive. Please label your disc(s) with your student's name and have them dropped off in Mrs. Hunter's / Mr. Hebert's classroom or at the front office.

