



Da Vinci Board of Trustees Special Meeting

Monday, December 11, 2017

Special Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

The Special Da Vinci Board of Trustees Meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. by Mr. Chet Pipkin, President.

Attendance

Members present:

Chet Pipkin, Jennifer Morgan, Israel Mora, Roger Bañuelos

Administrators present:

Dr. Matthew Wunder, Chief Executive Officer, Da Vinci Schools

Dr. Chris Jones, Chief Operating Officer, Da Vinci Schools

Marshall Mayotte, Chief Financial Officer, Da Vinci Schools

Michelle Rainey, Principal, Da Vinci Innovation Academy

Kaitlin Toon, Dean, Da Vinci Innovation Academy

Alison Wohlwerth, Administrative Manager, Da Vinci Schools

Dr. Tom Johnstone, Superintendent, Wiseburn Unified School District

Public Comments

No comments.

From the Board

The Board commented on the amazing Grand Opening Celebration on Saturday, December 9.

From the CEO

No comments.

Presentation: DVIA

Dr. Wunder introduced the presentation, saying that it was meant to discuss DVIA's position in the Da Vinci Schools, and its high standing in the community. He commended Ms. Rainey's thoughtful, thorough work on this issue.

Ms. Rainey described her own educational experience as a non-traditional learner, saying that it enables her to empathize and work with those DVIA students who are also non-traditional learners. Most families attend DVIA not because of the homeschool/independent study model (less than 25% of current families meant to homeschool their children). They come to DVIA because of the opportunity to give their children the advantages of the homeschool model.

Ms. Rainey discussed the demographics of DVIA, saying that the 58% of the students are white (consistent with national norms), 11% are African American, 6% Latino, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 18% Other. The number of Latino families inquiring about and enrolling in DVIA has more than doubled in four years, and more families where parents who haven't completed high school are homeschooling. DVIA is committed to re-examining their model to better support the changing demographics of

independent study and the surrounding communities, including Wiseburn. 16% of DVIA students are Wiseburn residents.

Ms. Rainey discussed DVIA's benefits for the Wiseburn Unified School District and Da Vinci Schools, both from an educational service and a financial perspective. DVIA serves students who are not thriving in a traditional school setting, and serving parents whose educational philosophies do not mesh with or are not feasible in a traditional school setting. DVIA is capturing those students, serving them, and putting their ADA into Da Vinci's programs.

Ms. Rainey also presented some of the results of a survey given to families, saying that when asked why they chose DVIA, the responses in order of frequency were: homeschooling; social emotional learning; project-based learning; to address student's alternative learning style or health needs; personalization of learning; flexible schedule; and DVIA's reputation.

Five years ago, 3% of families homeschooled. Now, 6 to 8% do. Nationwide, homeschooling families are seeking a safe school environment; unique, non-traditional educational models; school that meets the needs of special needs students; more family time; and accommodation of parent travel schedules. Homeschooled students outperform their peers, regardless of parental income or education level. Homeschooled students graduate from college at higher rates than their peers as well.

DVIA began with a two-day, hybrid homeschool model. But as time went on, more families sought greater flexibility. Ms. Rainey acknowledged that DVIA grew even beyond the intentions of its founder. Ms. Rainey went to the Da Vinci CEO and Wiseburn Superintendent to discuss the growth based on enrollment projections. There was enough interest to create a full-time independent study program, now known as the Collaborative program. This program increased financial sustainability without increasing the number of staff. All families in the program complete work journals; DVIA holds families to very high standards. ADA is collected every day, reflected in DVIA's healthy finances.

DVIA families are not afraid to express their needs, expecting high quality instruction and a social emotional learning environment that fosters collaboration, a culture of kindness, intrinsic motivation, and a de-emphasis on testing to achieve high results, as well as collaborative support for the homeschooling parents. DVIA faculty works hard and meets these needs and expectations.

Families at DVIA, including those from Wiseburn, were surveyed on what they most value at DVIA: the sense of community, the teachers/staff, the social-emotional learning, the learning at the student's pace, the PBL, upward differentiation; quality time, and flexibility of the model. Ms. Rainey stressed that the number one response was the value of the community. This is in the face of an independent study model, which can be the most isolating learning that a student encounters.

DVIA success markers include robust enrollment; alternative learners; high satisfaction/net promoter scores; high test scores; 98.6% attendance rate; and high retention of students. DVIA is in line with other public schools, and outperforms other independent study schools. As an alternative model, it attracts students and families who are dissatisfied with or who are not thriving in traditional educational models, and it is probable that some of those students have socio-emotional, academic, and learning needs. The question is to what extent, and is it sustainable?

Concerns:

End enrollment "scope creep"

DVIA was intended to be smaller. There are 200 – 288 students on campus at any one time. On Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, there are 200 students on campus. On Wednesday, Enrichment Program day, there are currently 288 students on campus. Ms. Rainey would like to adjust that to a 250 student-on-campus-at-any-one-time limit. Ms. Rainey spoke exploring a 9-12 hybrid high school (within the 250 limit), and other options.

Branding

DVIA does not openly recruit. It offers a few information meetings. Word got out anyway, resulting in long waitlists. DVIA lost control of its own marketing and recruitment; consumers recruited others they thought would benefit from the program. This is a concern due to budgetary reasons.

Mr. Pipkin asked if there is a rush to make changes. Dr. Johnstone replied that all Da Vinci charters need to be renewed July 1, 2018. He went on to say that DVIA is a special place, is financially viable, and provides Wiseburn Unified School District with a viable educational alternative program.

Mr. Mayotte presented several slides in support of Ms. Rainey's presentation.

(No Closed Session)

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

The next Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Monday, January 22, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.