

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

**Minutes June 23rd, 2022**  
**Board Meeting (via conference call)**  
**3:00pm**

## **Attendance**

Board Present: Mashea Ashton, Paul O'Neil, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard, Mary Wells, Ms. Glass, Kevjorik Jones

DPA Members Also Present: Erin Swide, Chelsea Allen,

### **Action items**

- The board votes to unanimously to approve the SY22-23 budget

### **Discussion**

**Paul O'Neil motioned to approved the budget. Mary wells seconded to approve**

Chelsea Allen presented the SEL approach and using The St. James for athletic enrichment. She explained the correlation between academics/behavior and student participation in the program. Chelsea also explained the vision for the growth of the program throughout the next few years. Specifically she shared that we hope to grow this program over the next 4 years to provide SEL learning for all grades. The board then asked several questions around the pricing and what The St. James can provide that other facilities cannot provide. The board requested more information around what other contracts we had looked at and if we are getting a market fair price. The board did not take action. Mashea will provide more information about details from The St. James and other competitors at the next board meeting.

Erin Swide then presented on Aliss Williams' business, Anointed Gifts. Erin informed the board that we have spent over \$25K on staff/student gifts that Aliss Williams' company has made. The board was informed that Aliss Williams is a staff member and leader at DPA and given her leader role, this is seen as a conflict of interest. Mashea Ashton clarified that the payments throughout the year added up to over \$25K; it was not one \$25K payment made at once. In the next school year, the board has approved up to \$10,000 of services/goods from Anointed Gifts. We additionally will continue to get multiple bids and options to ensure best pricing.

Mashea Ashton then discussed the painters action the board needed to take. Mashea stated that she was waiting for one more quote for approval from the board. Next steps around this will be taken via email

**Minutes May 26th, 2022**  
**Board Meeting (via conference call)**  
**3:00pm**

## **Attendance**

Board Present: Mashea Ashton, Sara Batterton, Henry Hipps, Mary Wells, Shelley Hughes, Kevjorik Jones, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard, Chase Glass

DPA Members Also Present: Erin Swide, Jacob Crouse, Michael Watts, Shelley Hughes

### **Action items**

- The Board voted unanimously to approve the board minutes for April 14, 2022 meeting as modified.

### **Discussion**

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Ms. Ashton reviewed some high level concerns. She discussed the brutal facts of where DPA stands around behavior issues. She informed the board of recent situations and recent fights that have happened at dismissal. She informed the board of possible next steps around expulsions if we need to move that direction.

Ms. Ashton discussed our current enrollment numbers as of May 20th She stated that we are currently consistent to where we usually are at this time.

Ms. Ashton then discussed our organizational chart for next year. She explained the 6-7 vs 8-10 school for next year and how this affects the budget overview.

Next Mr. Watts then discussed the budget overview. He stated that we will be at 78 days of cash with the budget which is better than the PCSB recommendation of 60. Ms. Ashton discussed the budget in relation to salaries. The 5.87% increase for the per pupil funding is reflected in the 5.87% increase for staff. Ms. Ashton stated that by the end of next week we will know how many people will be returning. Mary Wells asked questions around contingency plan around enrollment and what it will mean if we are under enrolled. Sara asked questions around the comparison of last years contingency vs this year contingency. Ms. Ashton discussed gaps related to special education services and emphasis on if we have to downsize classes we can still keep special education teachers. Ms. Ashton discussed how having Achievement prep facilities can likely help us save money by having access to a gym and cafe on site.

For future meetings Sara asked if we could meet the head of high school and middle school so that we can learn and understand their vision.

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**Minutes April 14, 2022**  
**Board Meeting (via conference call)**  
**4:00pm**

## **Attendance**

Board Present: Sara Batterton, Henry Hipps, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard, Mashea Ashton, Chase Glass, and Paul O'Neill

Board Absent: Mary Wells, Legand Burge, Keyjorik Jones,

## **Action items**

- (Sara Batterton motion, Henry Hipps second) The Board voted unanimously to approve the Achievement Prep lease as presented.

## **Discussion**

Ms. Ashton reviewed the mission and some high level highlights. She discussed that we are now 50 days away from Parcc and how we are working hard to ensure we are ready for all ways. She also discussed some of our biggest wins among scholars and families, emphasizing our empathy value and all the positive momentum at DPA.

Next Ms. Ashton discussed our current lease with Wahler Place. Ms. Ashton stated that our lease is currently a 3 year lease with a 2 year optional renewal. Ms. Ashton then continued to discuss the remaining updates from our last call with the lease lawyers.

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## Minutes April 7th, 2021

### Board Meeting (via Zoom call)

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

#### Attendance

Board Present: Mashea Ashton, Paul O'Neil, Sara Batterton, Chase Glass, Kevjorik Jones.

Also present: Erin Swide (Director of Operations), Michal Watts (Ed Ops Finance), Shelly Hughes (Ed Ops Finance), and Jake Crouse (Ed Ops Finance)

#### Action items

- (Sara Batterton motion, Mary Wells second) The Board voted unanimously to approve the board minutes for January 18th, 2021 meeting as modified.
- (Kevjorik Jones motion, Henry Hipps second) The Board voted 5-0-2 to approve the Bellwether Contract for \$32,500 for strategic growth institute partnership.

#### Discussion

Ms. Ashton reviewed the mission and some high level highlights. She discussed that we are now 50 days away from Parcc and how we are working hard to ensure we are ready for all ways. She also discussed some of our biggest wins among scholars and families, emphasizing our empathy value and all the positive momentum at DPA.

Next Ms. Ashton discussed our enrollment update. She reviewed our current enrollment and lottery offers. She stated that we extended 153 offers via the lottery. Ms. Ashton then stated we are working towards a goal of 600 students for SY22-23. Ms. Ashton stated that our biggest challenge has been in ranking lower than KIPP DC Schools and or DC Prep.

Next Ms. Ashton moved on to discuss our current lease with Wahler Place. Ms. Ashton stated that our lease is currently a 3 year lease with a 2 year optional renewal. Ms. Ashton then continued to discuss the remaining updates from our last call with the lease lawyers. She stated that we should receive a final lease by end of day Friday, April 8th. Paul O'Neil asked a question around what investments would we want to make around the building. Ms. Ashton stated that the building is currently in great shape and does not expect to need to or want to make changes to throughout a 3 year lease.

Next Michael Watts discussed how the financials in regards to the budget being affected by the finances of the new lease. He stated that the lease will still allow us to still be in a good place in terms of day of cash on hand.

## Minutes February 17th, 2021

### Board Meeting (via Zoom call)

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

#### Attendance

Board Present: Mary Wells, Sara Batterton, Kevjorik Jones, Henry Hipps, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard, Mashea Ashton, and Paul O'Neil

Board Absent: Chase Glass and Legand Burge

Also present: Erin Swide (Director of Operations), Steven Sheffield (Ed Ops Finance), and Jake Crouse (Ed Ops Finance)

#### Action items

- (Sara Batterton motion, Mary Wells second) The Board voted unanimously to approve the board minutes for January 18th, 2021 meeting as modified.

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- (Kevjorik Jones motion, Henry Hipps second) The Board voted 5-0-2 to approve the Bellwether Contract for \$32,500 for strategic growth institute partnership.

## Discussion

Ms. Ashton reviewed the Bellwether Contract (Mary Wells abstained from the discussion and vote). Ms. Ashton discussed our partnership with the Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF) and their partnership in strategic planning with Bellwether. The proposal includes a five month long stakeholder engagement process as well a cohort professional development experience for charter schools considering growth and expansion. Ms. Ashton discussed the specific benefit of Bellwether and the cohort experience. The proposed scope of work is valued at \$60,000, however the CSGF will subsidize half of the cost through DPA's partnership with CSGF. Kevjorik Jones asked questions related to comparison organization and benefits of Bellwether. Ms. Ashton shared some distinguishing benefits are CSGF track record, the cohort experience, and Bellwethers track record of supporting charter schools with strategic plans. Ms. Hipps discussed his work, knowledge and positive experience with CSGF. Mr. Hipps raised the question on how Ms. Ashton is using the process to help with DPA strategic goals compared to strengthening existing programs. Ms. Ashton stated that while we have grown we could benefit from a more solidified strategic model and that going through this process will also allow us to be even more strategic about future growth opportunities.

Next we discussed adding a parent board member. The board needs to add a new parent/family member as required by PCSB. The board discussed Ashli Jordan, founding parent and parent of a current 9th grade scholar. No action was taken by the board. Orlena Blanchard will convene the governance committee and present final candidates(s) for board approval in April.

Ms. Ashton then discussed our CEO Update. Ms. Ashton shared highlights of new hires including, our 7th grade dean Mr. Singleton and how much positivity he has added to 7th grade. Ms. Ashton also shared several examples of scholars across all grades that have demonstrated academic and behavior growth since the beginning of the year. Ms. Ashton also complimented the 6th grade campus for the positive environment created there by AP Divinda Willis and Dean Aliss Williams. Ms. Ashton reflected this back on the mission statement and how All Means All at DPA. Ms. Ashton reviewed DPA current enrollment. We are currently at 442 and our goal is to stay around 445. Ms. Ashton then discussed recruitment and where we currently stand from a 2022-2023 school year recruitment. Ms. Ashton stated that recruitment is strong compared to previous years and discussed the pros and cons of mid year enrollment. Ms. Ashton reviewed our covid positivity data for the year. Ms. Ashton stated that DPA has a .0014% positivity rate with 120 positive cases this year. Ms. Ashton then moved into discussion about the Achievement Prep LOI. Ms. Ashton is still waiting to hear back about more information around the lease and next steps from legal counsel. Sara Batterton asked questions about the lease terms and how the lease renewal process works. Ms. Ashton said she would review questions with the legal team.

Next Steven Sheffield led the discussion on DPA finances. He reviewed the executive summary, stating that there are several positions that have not been filled which were originally budgeted for. DPA also budgeted to spend more on field trips and student after school activities but due to covid DPA has not. Mr. Sheffield stated that we have 91 days of cash on hand with a balance of \$3.06 million. Mr. Sheffield stated that we planned for a break even year and that DPA is on track for that. Steven discussed the 5.9% increase of cost per pupil for next year that has been proposed by the Mayor.

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**Minutes January 13, 2021**  
**Board Meeting (via Zoom call)**  
**3:15 pm - 4:30 pm**  
**Attendance**

Present: Board - Mashea Ashton, Lee Burge, Sara Batterton, Henry Hipps, Mary Wells, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard, Paul O'Neill, Kevjork Jones, and Chase Glass.

Also present: Erin Swide (Director of Operations) and Steven Sheffield (Finance)

## Action items

- (Mary Wells motion, Kevjork Jones second) The board voted to unanimously approve the board minutes November 18th, 2021 minutes .

## Discussion

We reviewed the DPA mission statement and reflected on what it meant to our board.

Ms. Ashton went over our CEO update. We reviewed exciting moments at DPA. We reviewed the recent change to back and forth with virtual learning. Due to many factors at the moment, DPA transitioned to virtual navigate the received Covid surge. Next Ms. Ashton reviewed the student enrollment status. We have a number of scholars who have withdrawn (moved out of the area) and we have extended offers to scholars who are on the waitlist for mid-year transfer.

Ms. Ashton then introduced our current Covid Data. We reviewed our reopening plan following the break and how we were able to keep our community safe. DPA currently has a 95% staff vaccination rate, but approximately 40% scholar vaccination rate. Ms. Ashton reviewed our student instructional days in the new DC guidelines. DC guidelines provide schools up to 10 days that can be 100% virtual days in a way to mostly safely accommodate our students.

Next Steven Sheffield presented on the finances. He stated that the student enrollment audit is now complete and money has been secured. He spoke to our increase in private donations. Mr. Sheffield stated that we are forecasting about 60 days of cash at year's end.

Ms. Ashton then reviewed the current LOI from Achievement Prep. We reviewed the terms given to us by Wahler Place. Mr. Sheffield stated that we are looking to counter the current security deposit offered. Mr. Sheffield also stated that we are looking into furniture rental options which Achievement Prep. Ms. Ashton discussed the want for more than a 3 year lease, however we are waiting for more information from Achievement Prep after they go through their renewal charter process.

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**Minutes November 18th, 2021**

**Board Meeting (via Zoom call)**

**3:15 pm - 4:30 pm**

**Attendance**

Present: Board - Mashea Ashton (CEO), Lee Burge, Chase Glass, Sara Bratterton, Henry Hipps, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard, Paul Oneil, Mary Wells, and Kevjorik Jones,

Also present: Erin Swide (Director of Operations) and Steven Sheffield (Finance)

Ms. Ashton went over our CEO update. We reviewed DPA Spirit week and joyful and exciting moments at DPA. In order to get a pulse of DPA feedback from parents and staff we are partnering with Mango strategies. The biggest positive data was that 96% of families would recommend DPA. The biggest strategy around parent investment is likely Covid. Next Ms. Ashton went into informal staff feedback and that we we want to increase the response to the team being satisfied with their job to 85%.

Ms. Ashton then began speaking about facilities. We discussed renting space from achievement first. We are possibly going to rent space from them. The plan is a 3 year lease with a 2 year option renewal. They are proposing we play our per pupil cost. Steven also spoke to this and said he would be presenting more information at our next meeting as he develops terms.

Next Steven Sheffield presented on the finances. He stated that we are still waiting for the results of the financial audit. The final draft will be submitted on the 1st. The separate audit committee will then approve the final audit draft.

**Minutes October 18, 2021**

**Board Meeting (via Zoom call)**

**3:00pm - 4:00pm**

## **Attendance**

Present: Board - Mashea Ashton (CEO), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Sara Batterton (Board Member), Mary Wells (Board Chair), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Chase Glass (Board Member)

Also present: Erin Swide (Director of Operations), Shelley Hughes (Finance), Alexis Brown (Director of Curriculum and Instruction)

Ms. Brown discussed map testing and the results of DPA. Ms. Brown explained that the data was related to PARCC testing, i.e. where scholars would land on PARCC based on MAP

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Testing. Based on the data Ms. Brown stated that the priorities right now are supporting teachers to analyze the data to improve instruction during weekly data meetings. Brown shared that the team is looking to track where scholars are in order to use data analysis to improve scholars. The second goal is around intellectual preparation and planning for teachers. Ms. Brown stated that DPA needs to use our instructional partners to connect and understand how we can close classroom gaps.

Ms. Ashton then introduced enrollment update. Ms. Ashton said that DPA is planning on consolidating 8th graders into 4 sections (currently 5). She then said our new 9th grade plan is to switch to 6th core teachers in 9th grade rather than 12. This will allow three high school teachers to move to middle school teaching positions.

Ms Ashton discussed our new goals around remote scholars. Ms. Ashton stated that going forward we will have one class for 6th - 8th grade and high school virtual scholars will be partnering with Friendship Collegiate Academies in order to receive an excellent virtual high school experience.

Next the budget was discussed and how we will adjust to the \$950K loss based on under enrollment by 28 scholars. DPA currently has a contiguous plan of \$250K which brings the loss to \$750K. Ms. Ashton stated that we will need to think through new ways in which we go about funding, and use private funding and new grant opportunities to pursue. Ms. Ashton stated that additionally since we are not fully staffed we anticipate this will help close the financial gap. However, we still project ending the year with 75 days of cash on hand, meeting our ~60 days of cash yearly goal.



**Minutes September 30, 2021**  
**Board Meeting (via Zoom call)**  
**3:00pm - 4:00pm**

**Attendance**

Present:

Board - Mashea Ashton (CEO), Chase Glass (Board Member), Legand Burge (Board Member), Mary Wells (Board Chair), Sara Batteron (Board Member)

Also present: Erin Swide (Director of Operations), Steven Sheffield (Finance), Carolyn Reynolds (Administrative Assistant),

Absent: Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Paul O'Neill (Board Member)

Ms. Ashton went over current enrollment and our final enrollment count. Our budget is based on 480 with a contingency of 410. We currently have 458 scholars enrolled but not all have paperwork. We currently have 8 no shows across all grades. Our budget is based on 480 kids with a contingency plan of 10 scholars.

Ms. Ashton went over updates on covid testing. Ms. Ashton explained we are 4 weeks into testing. We have had 456 scholars and staff tested on site. 1239 positive cases and 64 close contacts required to quarantine

Ms. Ashton Discussed DPA Hiring Goals. Ms. Ashton stated that we are currently fully staffed but seeking to hire additional support positions. This includes a Technology Specialist, Associate Director of Operations, and Data Analysis.

After this Ms. Ashton concluded the discussion.

The Board then entered into Executive Session.

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**Minute from July 15, 2021**  
**Board Meeting (via Conference call)**  
**8:30 pm - 9:00 pm**

**Attendance**

Present: Board - Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Chase Glass (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Legand Burge (Board Member), Mary Wells (Board Chair), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Sara Batteron (Board Member)

Also present: Ryan Benjamin (Director of Operations), Steven Sheffield (Finance), Carolyn Reynolds (Administrative Assistant)

Absent: Henry Hipps (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

DPA is applying for the At-Risk Preference for the My School DC Lottery. DPA wants to secure spots for at-risk students because it is rooted in our mission. The board reviewed a [memo](#) about it as well. DPA is 68% at-risk.

Ms. Ashton went over the planned renovations at 9th St. Palencia is the main contractor, which will cost just over \$200,000. Renovations will total about \$400,000 including a contingency. DPA is also investing in cameras, new doors, new technology and troffers to combat the spread of covid-19 and other airborne diseases.

Paul O'Neill made a motion to approve the At-Risk Preference. Mary Wells seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Kevjorik Jones made a motion to approve the renovation costs for 9th St. Sara Batterton seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Minutes from June 24, 2021**  
**Board Meeting (via Conference call)**  
**3:00 pm - 3:20 pm**

**Attendance**

Present: Board - Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Chase Glass (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Legand Burge (Board Member)

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Also present: Ryan Benjamin (Director of Operations), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Carolyn Reynolds (Executive Assistant), Erin Swide (Associate Director of Operations)

Absent: Mary Wells (Board Chair), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member), Sara Batteron (Board Member), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member)

## **CEO Update**

Ms. Ashton called the meeting to order. Ms. Ashton asked if the Board could vote on a consent agenda. No objections. She then provided the following updates.

There were no budget changes from the previous meeting. We are on track to 470 for enrollment and are expecting to get to our goal of 480 by October 15, which is count day in DC. We have a contingency for 10 students in case we do not hit 480. We are budgeting for a net income of \$250,000 and 48 days of cash, which is \$1.7 million.

All DC high schools require at least 24 credits to graduate. The 24 include 4 math credits, 4 English credits, 4 science credits, 4 social studies credits, 2 world language credits, music, art, PE/Health, and elective credits. We have surpassed the 24 credits and propose requiring 26.5 credits to graduate. This will include additional computer science credits and internship/leadership credits.

We have a partnership with Cadence for summer school, which is supported by Bellwether. Mary Wells, our board chair, is the President of Bellwether. We are paying Bellwether the same rate as every other school. We need to disclose this to the Board and ask for a vote to follow our financial guidelines and those of PCSB.

Legend Burge moved to approve the consent agenda, which included approving the budget, graduation requirements and the Bellwether contract. Orlena Nwokah Blanchard seconded. There was unanimous approval. Legend Burge moved to adjourn the meeting. Henry Hipps seconded. All approved.

## **Minutes from June 9, 2021**

### **Board Meeting (via Conference call)**

**3:00 pm - 5:00 pm**

#### **Attendance**

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Chase Glass (Board Member), Sara Batterton (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member), Legend Burge (Board Member)

Also present: Ryan Benjamin (Director of Operations), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Carolyn Reynolds (Executive Assistant)

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Absent: Henry Hipps (Board Member)

## CEO Update

Ms. Ashton called the meeting to order. She then provided the following updates.

For recruitment, we have 386 fully enrolled. We have 474 students expected to enroll, and we are working hard to get this paperwork. Our sixth grade is lower than our target, but we have taken in some new 7th grade scholars. We have a lot of 8th grade scholars. There are scholars in other schools who are having negative experiences and want to come to DPA. Our budget is built on 480, but we have contingencies for 10 below that number, at 470. We are doing a lot for recruitment: community outreach, marketing, canvassing, etc.

For staff hiring, 10 offers were accepted so far, but we are not at our targets, as there are lots of moving parts with the pandemic ending. We have a leadership fellow and new Associate DOO. We are hired for our computer science and math teachers in high school, and those are difficult areas to staff. We have 17 teaching positions open and 5 non-teaching positions open. 97.5% of teachers who were given offers have returned!

We had great end-of-year events, including the St. James and two field days. We had a wonderful 8th grade promotion video that was broadcast last night. Ms. Glass shared good memories from her time as a parent at DPA. The founders have a special place in our heart.

Johnny Taylor asked about general academic performance during the pandemic. We use two data points: MAP and ANet, and we will have updates at the next board meeting. Our high performers and even some with behavioral challenges did well during the pandemic.

Mashea and Steven Sheffield presented around the budget. We will not take action today. We were meeting three goals: launching a high school, investing in required facilities upgrades, and maintaining financial stability during growth. We are investing in adult/student social/emotional learning, staffing, uniforms, expeditions, and esports/sports programs. Steven broke out some SEL spending to show how we are supporting the team's capacity.

Some additional context: Growing schools spend more, high schools require higher spending, and campus expansion requires additional spending. We have a few risks we considered during the process: enrollment revenue, staffing, private revenue, facilities at 9th Street, and our general 1% contingency applied in addition to the other risks.

We expect 48 days of cash at the end of next year. Our FAR metrics are expected to be strong next year. We will have 3 years of financial performance.

Shawn Samuel and Mark Cager from JDC presented about their facilities work. They are a project and construction management firm since 2003. They are leaders of the team. To date, we've conducted site visits at both properties, worked with the architect at 9th St, walked with the contractors at 12th St. We meet three times weekly. The scope of work for both campuses will be wrapped up this week. Then we can work on pricing and scheduling. For the short term, at 9th street we are looking at updating the paint, doors, ceilings,

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and cleaning up the building space. On the exterior, we are looking at demolishing the playground and add athletic areas. We also will want to add ADA accessibility. We will spend roughly \$500,000 in year 2 for modulars, and then less than that for this summer to make the building comfortable and safe. We believe we can be at this location for two years.

Mary Wells adjourned the meeting. Ms. Glass seconded the motion at 4:40 pm.

## Action items

- Unanimous approval of May 13 minutes (Kevjorik Jones moved, Johnny Taylor seconded).

## Minutes from May 13, 2021

### Board Meeting (via Conference call)

3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

## Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Chase Glass (Board Member), Sara Batterton (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Legand Burge (Board Member)

Also present: Ryan Benjamin (Director of Operations), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Carolyn Reynolds (Executive Assistant)

Absent: Johnny Taylor (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member)

## CEO Update

Ms. Ashton called the meeting to order. She then provided the following updates.

DPA is heavily recruiting 6th graders and is 100% fully enrolled for 7-9th and 75% fully enrolled for 6th grade. This includes community outreach, social media, paid ads, referral incentives, special events and elementary school outreach. Most of DPA's new recruits live in Ward 8. About 10 8th graders are going elsewhere for high school. Half were admitted to selective schools, while the other half want to be with other family members.

For teacher recruitment, DPA had over 800 applications with 160 advancing to DPA 101. This is an opportunity for an applicant to opt into DPA. About 30 people have advanced to sample lessons. DPA has 16 teaching positions and 5 non-teaching positions open. Almost 90% of current teachers were offered a position, and some are moving into leadership positions. DPA relies on direct outreach, social media, paid ads, career fairs, teacher town halls, and referral incentives.

DPA reopened for CARES classrooms on 5/3/21 with 38 scholars and 20 staff. Scholars feel welcome, but 6th graders have never been to middle school before. The KLR team is leading CARES classrooms. DPA is focused on screening, testing, social distancing, masks, and facilities improvements. DPA has a 100% testing program for all staff. Ms. Glass spoke of her daughter's enrollment in CARES classrooms, and she spoke of the high expectations for academic and health standards. Her daughter spoke about how she is enjoying being back.

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DPA is in a strong financial position. DPA has 86 days cash on hand. The revenue forecast has increased by \$120,000 due to the reopening grant. Sarah and Kevjorik are working on negotiating with the landlord for a potential release of some rent due to ongoing renovations. The budget will be sent to the finance committee on June 3 and to the full board on June 9. It is due to PCSB on July 28.

Mary Wells adjourned the meeting. Ms. Glass seconded the motion at 4:19 pm.

## Action items

- Unanimous approval of April 8 minutes (Mary Wells moved, Paul O'Neil seconded).

## Minutes from April 8, 2021

### Board Meeting (via Conference call)

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

## Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Chase Glass (Board Member), Sara Batterton (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Legend Burge (Board Member)

Also present: Ryan Benjamin (Director of Operations), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Steven Sheffield (Ed-Ops), Carolyn Reynolds (Executive Assistant)

Absent: Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

## CEO Update

Ms. Ashton called the meeting to order. She then provided the following updates. Digital Pioneers has prioritized safety for students, staff and families, and DPA wants to follow city guidelines. DPA is aiming to reopen on May 3, 2021. DPA staff shared this with families and will have an additional meeting tonight to discuss more details. DPA is preparing for as many as 120 students but estimates about 50-60. There are some concerns from families about coming back due to high-risk scholars or family members. Over 70% of the staff has been partially or fully vaccinated.

Digital Pioneers has made many improvements to the building, including: touchless sinks, toilets and water bottles; installation of air troffers, costing \$118,000; and portable air purifiers. DPA has notified the property manager of these improvements and has requested some rent credits from the landlord. The board can be helpful in this ask.

Digital Pioneers is also doing some extensive renovations this summer, totaling about \$348,000. DPA is adding bathrooms on the second floor. DPA is also creating clerestories in some of the classrooms that do not have any natural light, costing about \$40,000. DPA can use a variety of funds, including federal and local grants.

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The enrollment process has begun, and Digital Pioneers is on track to meet its goals. DPA is sending offer letters in a few days and will hire for about 20 new positions for middle and high school. DPA's attendance was 94% for Quarter 3, and learning loss has not been as much as expected. Over 80% of families believe DPA is moving in the right direction, and 84% have said they wish to return to DPA. Over 96% of staff believe DPA is moving in the right direction. DPA is focused on increasing student engagement in a remote setting. Digital Pioneers is working on programs for high-dosage tutoring during the summer, and thinking about partnerships for athletic programs.

DPA can connect with Ward 6 Mutual Aid to help families get vaccinated.

## Finance Updates

Cash on 6/30/21 is forecast to be \$1.71 million, which is 75 days of cash on hand and \$351,000 over budget. Facilities improvements will be higher than expected. Some staff roles will not be filled, resulting in savings.

Digital Pioneers has had strong fundraising this year and will receive a series of federal grants.

## Action items

- Unanimous approval of January 14 and February 1 Minutes (Mary Wells moved, Kevjorik Jones seconds)
- Unanimous approval of Air Quality Proposal at \$118,000 and projection of MCN work at \$348,000 (Kevjorik Jones moved, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard seconds)

## Minutes from February 1, 2021

### Finance Committee Call Board Meeting (via Video Conference)

3-4pm EST

## Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member)

Also present: Steven Sheffield (Ed-Ops)

**Finance Committee Update**

Ms. Ashton first updated the board on the audit for next year. Ms. Ashton shared that Kendall, Prebola & Jones are on the DCPS approved audit list and have been strong partners with DPA since our founding. The board discussed the pros and cons of continuing with the same audit firm. The board agreed that annually reviewing the audit firm and changing audit firms every three to five years is a best practice. After a brief discussion, the finance committee took action.

**Action items**

- Unanimous approval of the audit firm Kendall, Prebola, & Jones For FY20-21.

Ms. Ashton provided an update on moving forward with M & T Insurance Agency. After a brief discussion, the board wanted to confirm we have all the appropriate insurance in place.

Mr. Sheffield presented on DPA Finances for February. Mr. Sheffield noted that DPA finances have not changed much since the last presentation. Mr. Sheffield alerted the board that DPA should expect a doubling in Carer Act II funding from the federal government to support Re-opening. There was a brief discussion related to how the federal resources could be leveraged to support opening and to be cautious about using the funding for staff positions that could not be sustained when the federal resources were not continued. The Committee discussed pros and cons of securing low interest loans to support the facilities Covid readiness work that is needed. The Committee agreed to pursue all options and further discuss during the SY21-22 Budget process.

Ms. Ashton provided an update on DPA facilities and potential renovation costs related to Covid readiness, short term renovation work needed at 70912th Street and 4025 Wahler place. The Committee discussed short term and long term options for facilities. Ms. Ashton discussed the long term goal of being housed under one building for the high school expansion which would allow 6th - 12th grade scholars to be in one building.

**Minutes from February 1, 2021****Called Meeting of the Board of Directors****Board Meeting (via Conference call)****8:00 am - 8:30 am****Attendance**

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (CEO) , Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Henry Higgs (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Chase Glass (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair)

Also present: Jerry Levin (DPA lawyer), Alex Shaw (Levelfield), and Jimmy Henderson (Levelfield)



### **CEO Update**

Ms. Ashton first updated the board on the final terms of the facilities lease with the Baptist Convention. Jerry Levin, legal council for DPA, provided an update on the potential risks of the lease. Lastly, DPA's facilities partners Alex Shawe and Jimmy Henderson, provided an update on the sixty day review period, the short term, and long term options for the lease. The board discussed the conditions of the lease, as well as their questions and concerns.

### **Action items**

- Unanimous approval of the lease proposal for 4025 9th St. SE, Washington, DC to locate DPA's rising sixth grade scholars.

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

## Minutes from January 14th, 2021

### Board Meeting (via Conference call)

5:15-5:45pm EST

#### Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Chase Glass (Board Member)

Also present: Kate Tynan (Executive Assistant), Mashea Ashton (CEO), Alex Shawe (Level Field), Jimmy Henderson (Level Field), Gil Perkins (Ed-Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed-Ops)

Absent: Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

#### CEO Update

Ms. Ashton and the board welcome Ms. Glass. She then provided the following updates. Digital Pioneers will not be returning to school in person until at least March 1st due to the ongoing pandemic. The schedule was also recently revised based on scholar/family responses to our Q1 survey. 80% of parents believe DPA is on the right track and are satisfied. 75% of parents say that we are exceeding expectations for remote learning. Parent/teacher/scholar relationships are also strong and have driven success this year. DPA needs to continue to grow in serving students with disabilities, creating opportunities for socialization and balancing screen time throughout the day to avoid Zoom fatigue.

Ms. Ashton shared an update that a Letter of Intent has been signed for a facility for one year. For finance, Ms. Ashton shared the year-end forecast of 82 days of cash on hand.

Ms. Ashton also shared that she will meet with Orlena Nwokah Blanchard and Chase Glass to discuss a second parent board member.

#### Action items

- Unanimous approval of November/December minutes (Mary Wells moved, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard seconds)

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

## Minutes from December 8, 2020

### Board Meeting (via Conference call) 5:15-5:45pm EST

#### Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

Also present: Kate Tynan (Executive Assistant), Mashea Ashton (CEO)

Absent: Paul O'Neill (Board Member)

#### High School Update

Hearing is Thursday at 5pm, ahead of EdFest (student recruitment) on Saturday. Board is recommending against approval, but we still have a chance. We need four votes and we have a strong three with a possible two. We have LOI from 111 families. We have five letters of support from major donors. We are trying to get our families and scholars to sign up for public comment and attend the meeting to show support/demand. Working on a LOI for 9th street location facility. Middle school would go to 9th street, HS kids would be in the current facility. We are working on financial analysis to ensure everything is financially feasible short and long term.

#### Action items

- Unanimous approval of Financial Audit (Paul O'Neil moved, Johnny Taylor seconds)
- Unanimous approval of Chase Glass as Parent Board Representative (Orlena Nwokah Blanchard moved, Mary Wells seconds)
- Meeting adjourned at 4:51pm.

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

## Minutes from November 18, 2020 Board Meeting (via Conference call) 3:00 - 5:00pm EST

### Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Paul O'Neil, Legand Burge (Board member)

Also present: Lam Nguyen (Executive Assistant), Kate Tynan (Special Assistant), Alexis Brown (DCI), Josh Boots (Empower K12), Gilbert Perkins (Ed-Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed-Ops)

Absent: Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

### CEO Update

Josh Boots from Empower K12 came to walk us through their DPA performance report and recent academic data. Highlighted PMF estimates, Points Proficient Above expectations, and Ward 7 middle school comparisons. Noted that COVID-19 affected the normal assessment data points, particularly Fall 20-21 MAP data. The "COVID slide" at DPA was not as strong as similar schools, however. DPA must continue improving approach this year and into the recovery. DPA must close gaps among non-readers. SPED achievement is a bright spot.

The board also reviewed June financial materials. Net impact of enrollment shortfall is \$115k. DPA will bring in 1.2M in fundraising this year. Savings in salaries/benefits from staff restructuring is forecast at more than \$800k. Additional federal revenue is forecast at \$155k more than budgeted. DPA will end FY21 with 85 days of cash on hand (\$2M).

High school update: looks like we are poised to get approval from DCPCSB. Mashea showed map of facility options we are pursuing.

Discussed covid reopening updates, city announcements, part time in-person instruction potential for February. Parents are 50/50 on going back to classrooms.

### Action Items

- Unanimous approval of October minutes (Lee moved, Mary seconds)
- Meeting adjourned at 4:38pm

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

## **Minutes from October 8, 2020 Meeting Board Meeting (via Conference call) 3:00 - 5:00pm EST**

### **Attendance**

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member)

Also present: Alexis Brown (Director of Operations), Lam Nguyen (Executive Assistant), Rhonda Henderson (Ed Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed Ops), Chase Glass (DPA Parent), Julia Pergola (DPA Parent)

Absent: Johnny Taylor (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member)

### **CEO Update**

Ms. Glass and Ms. Pergola commenced the meeting by sharing their experiences with enrolling their scholars in DPA. Ms. Pergola highlighted her scholar's recent enrollment in DPA's partnership with Washington Leadership Academy to offer Algebra courses to DPA scholars, raising the possibility of more course offerings from high school partners in the future. Ms. Glass shared updates on the launch of DPA's parent action committee and their initial goals of advocating for DPA High School. Ms. Ashton provided additional updates on final enrollment numbers of 338 scholars, year-to-date attendance success of 96% daily attendance, DPA's commitment to parent engagement with 99% of digital home visits completed, and DPA having met its hiring goals. Ms. Ashton also shared the high school founding team's preparation progress for the public hearing in November, as well as updates on two promising facilities options that will viably house both middle and high schools.

The finance committee was unable to convene prior to the board meeting so review of DPA financials was tabled for the next board meeting.

### **Action Items**

Unanimous approval of August minutes

## **Minutes from September 15, 2020 Meeting**

**Board Meeting (via Conference call)  
8:00-9:00pm EST**

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

## Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member)

Also present: Lam Nguyen (Executive Assistant)

Absent: Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Board Vice Chair), Johnny Taylor (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member)

## CEO Update

Ms. Ashton provided updates on high school planning and the application process. Ms. Ashton shared the academic, socio-emotional, and social/cultural aspects of the high school, including academic benchmarks and goals, opportunities for internships and community-based projects, and key initiatives to support 100% of scholars to get to and through college and/or career (presentation materials attached). In the update, Ms. Ashton also shared the primary takeaways with conversations with the entire 8th grade class for their feedback and suggestions on what the high school should include. In short, 8th grade scholars envision a high school that includes diverse and enriching course offerings and extracurriculars, opportunities to step develop skills of ownership and independence, and continuing the extensive relationship-building with their teachers and peers.

The Board of Directors, having read the application, discussed feedback and recommendations of their own for DPA High School. The board expressed confidence in the proposed budget model and its conservative approach, and suggested additional ways to structure staffing and scholar enrollment to ensure that our budget can provide for the ideal class sizes and teacher:student ratios. The board additionally expressed strong support for the rich curriculum and discussed further ways to structure the curriculum to meet the ambitious, necessary, and achievable goals outlined in the application.

## Action Items

Motion to approve the submission of application for DPA High School - Sara Batterton  
Second - Henry Hipps.

Yes - Mary Wells, Sara Batterton, Dr. Legand Burge, Henry Hipps, Kevjorik Jones

## Minutes from August 27, 2020 Meeting

Board Meeting (via Conference call)

3:00 - 5:00pm EST

## Attendance

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Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member)

Also present: Alexis Brown (Director of Operations), Lam Nguyen (Executive Assistant), Rhonda Henderson (Ed Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed Ops)

Absent: Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

## **CEO Update**

Ms. Ashton provided updates on hiring, scholar recruitment projections and contingency budget plans to account for recruitment gaps, updates on the high school expansion application, and the plan to secure a new facility. Additional updates included the status of DPA's Summer Institute, a 3 week program to prepare our 47 staff members for the academic year. DPA has prepared the team to be as ready for the new school year as possible, as well as touching base with every DPA scholar and family to discuss expectations and home challenges. In terms of the high school application, board members were assured that the application is on track to be completed with high quality prior to the September 17 deadline.

The board also reviewed June financial materials. In short, DPA ended the previous fiscal year at a strong point and continued to adjust staffing roles to meet the needs of remote school.

## **Action Items**

Unanimous approval of July minutes

Unanimous approval of FY21 Budget

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

## Minutes from July 16, 2020 Meeting

Board Meeting (via Conference call)

3:00 - 5:00pm EST

### Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member), Kevjorik Jones (Board Member)

Also present: Alexis Brown (Director of Operations), Lam Nguyen (Executive Assistant), Rhonda Henderson (Ed Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed Ops), Shelley Hughes (Ed Ops)

Absent: Dr. Legand Burge (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member)

### CEO Update

Ms. Ashton provided updates on hiring, scholar recruitment and strategies to complete recruitment goals, plans to expand DPA into a high school with an application due to the DCPCSB in September, leadership promotions, and summer academy progress. Additional updates include DPA's plan for Fall 2020, which entail having each grade of scholars be in-person for 1 day a week and remote for 4 days a week, with an evaluation every 6 weeks to decide if more in-person learning is feasible. The board was assured that these plans align well with guidance from city and health officials, as well as plans from schools across DC. DPA had much early success with remote learning, and depending on what Mayor Bowser decides will be the course of DC schools, DPA will be able to accommodate both a fully virtual schedule and a gradual transition to in-person learning. The board offered insightful discussion into whether our plan was best for our scholars and ultimately expressed support for the plan as is.

The board also reviewed the proposed FY21 budget. The main points of discussion included DPA's long-term philanthropic goals and strategies, as well as considering rent elevations in the coming years. The board expressed support for how DPA will leverage fundraising as supplemental support as it plans to scale to more schools, as well as confidence in DPA's ability to account for future rent elevations.

### Action Items

Unanimous approval of June minutes

Unanimous approval of FY21 Budget



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## **Minutes from June 11, 2020 Meeting**

### **Board Meeting (via Conference call)**

**3:00 - 5:00pm est**

#### **Attendance**

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Dr. Legand Burge (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

Also present: Alexis Brown (Director of Operations), Lam Nguyen (Executive Assistant), Rhonda Henderson (Ed Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed Ops), Dennis Perkins (CIVITAS), Anthony King (CIVITAS)

#### **CEO Update**

Ms. Ashton provided updates on annual achievement, operational/financial, and staff/student/family satisfaction goals for SY19-20. The transition to remote learning altered academic goals, but final exam data demonstrates scholar growth in reading performance and effort in math. Prior to remote learning, DPA was tracking at 92% attendance, meeting the attendance goal. In remote learning, attendance was 81%, bringing annual attendance to approximately 86%, which was strong in the context of remote learning. Re-enrollment, parent satisfaction, and scholar satisfaction goals were met with 94% re-enrollment, Panorama data, and parent surveys indicating strong satisfaction. DPA exceeded fundraising and financial goals - the remaining operational goal to meet is 6th grade enrollment, which DPA is awaiting incoming data to create a strategy across the summer to enroll 30 more students. Surveys demonstrate that returning staff feel supported and well-resourced to support scholar learning. DPA is 55% hired and has invested resources and goals across the summer to be adequately prepared to open next year. To prepare for Year 3, DPA leadership and the finance committee are finalizing the budget with multiple re-opening scenarios in mind to be approved from the board and the DCPCSB.

The Board also considered factors and questions to expand DPA to a high school. CIVITAS, DPA's facilities partner, joined the meeting to propose a RFP and strategy for acquiring a Ward 7 facility by 2023. No action required or taken at this time regarding high school expansion and facilities acquisition.

#### **Action Items**

Unanimous approval of April minutes

Unanimous approval of Kevjorik Jones joining DPA board

## **Minutes from April 30, 2020 Meeting**

### **Board Meeting (via Conference call)**

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

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**3:00 - 5:00pm est**

## **Attendance**

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Nwokah Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Dr. Legand Burge (Board Member), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

Also present: Alexis Brown (Director of Operations), Shelly Hughes (Ed Ops), Rhonda Henderson (Ed Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed Ops)

## **CEO Update**

Ms. Ashton provided the following updates. The current enrollment status for the incoming 6th grade class includes 60 matched students, with the goal being 120 total matched students. DPA expects these numbers to increase because of school partners to drive more families and scholars to enroll in DPA. Given the strength of our remote model and an extended enrollment deadline, DPA is on track to meet enrollment goals. As of April 26, 61% of DPA families verbally confirmed that they will re-enroll. Trends for re-enrollment are typically backloaded, so we expect to meet our re-enrollment goals given our steadfast outreach and the extended enrollment deadline.

Ms. Ashton also provided an update on Remote School. DPA is closing in on 100% of scholars having internet access, and DPA is an exemplar in DC for device acquisition and distribution. Remote School has provided for extensive professional development, technology safety training, and hotlines and strategies for technology support. DPA followed DC's guidance for school closures and contracted with a consultant during the advanced spring break to design an online curriculum. DPA plans for closures extending well into next year, if not for the entire school year. There is widespread parent support for our model and full-day schedule and DPA will continue to roll out Computer Science and enrichment programming.

Ms. Ashton also provided a financial update. DPA expects to conclude the school year with 14 days of cash and is setting the goal of reaching 45 days of cash. DPA is preparing for a 1% decline in budget and is conservatively budget planning for SY21-22, which is when the largest budget cuts are expected to occur. DPA has applied a line of credit from Charter School Growth Fund, applied for PPP, and is well on track with fundraising goals. The final deadline for our budget process is July 1.

## **Action Items**

None

**Minutes from March 12, 2019 Meeting**

**Board Meeting (via Conference call)**

**3:00pm - 4:00pm est**

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

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## Attendance

Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Paul O'Neill (Board Member), Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

Also present: Alexis (Director of Operations), Shelly Hughes (Ed Ops), Rhonda Henderson (Ed Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed Ops)

Absent: Henry Hipps (Board Member)

## CEO Update

Ms. Ashton provided the following update on budget, technology and the recently announced school closure decision by DCPS for Covid-19.

Ms. Ashton discussed the decision of DPA to attempt to stay in coordination with DCPS because of the impact on families managing multiple school calendars. Given the uncertainty of when school would return, MS. Ashton discussed with the board on distributing chromebooks to scholars. The board discussed the pros and cons and supported overall direction to make sure scholars have chromebooks to support remote learning. Ms. Ashton discussed the desire to work with the staff to ensure we had time to organize chromebooks and ensure proper labeling for tracking purposes. Ms. Ashton also shared that she would send a survey to families to get a more accurate count of family technology needs- both device and wi-fi access. With that information, DPA would make plans to distribute chromebooks and ensure scholars are able to access online learning from DPA.

## Action Items

The board voted unanimously to approve the following item:

Approved the motion to elect Dr. Legand Burge to the DPA board of Directors.

## Minutes from December 19, 2019 Meeting

Board Meeting (via Conference call)

3:00 - 5:00pm est

## Attendance

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Present: Board - Mary Wells (Chair), Orlena Blanchard (Vice Chair), Sara Batterton (Treasurer), Mashea Ashton (Secretary), Henry Hipps (Board Member), Paul O'Neill (Board Member)

Also present: Alexis (Director of Operations), Shelly Hughes (Ed Ops), Rhonda Henderson (Ed Ops), Steven Sheffield (Ed Ops)

Absent: Johnny Taylor (Board Member)

## CEO Update

Ms. Ashton provided the following updates. The current enrollment includes 241 scholars with over fifty students on the waitlist. The DPA goal is 120 per grade level. On Count Day (October 10), we had 243 scholars enrolled: 121 sixth and 122 seventh graders.

We have had about 8 scholars withdraw since then, mostly due to moving to a different state. We have filled most of those seats.

Ms. Ashton also provided a brief staffing update. DPA started the year with 39 team members, approximately 90% fully hired. We had to make some shifts, and currently have about 4 positions vacant (2 teachers, teacher's aide, and a social worker). Most of the shifts allowed for scholars to now enjoy lunch and breakfast in the cafeteria and increased the course offerings for electives. Scholars now have a range of electives including wrestling, step, basketball, art, performing arts, music, and PE. The 7th grade experienced the most changes shifting out of the semi-self contained model. Scholars will still remain in their cohorts, however teachers will shift to teaching one content area compared to teaching three content areas previously.

## Audit Committee

The audit committee presented the findings for audit. DPA received a clean opinion for our first Audit. There were several recommended improvements from the auditor which the team has already begun to implement.

## Action Items

The board voted unanimously to approve the following items:

Approved to receive the audit management letter as presented.

Approve the policies and procedures manual as revised. The changes include: improved explanation of federal procurement policy and DPA's adherence to it (per audit suggestion) increased Anybill approval threshold to \$25,000. Second signature only required for purchases over \$25K. (per staff suggestion).



### **Minutes from September 4, 2019 Meeting**

A special meeting of the Board of Trustees ("Board") of Digital Pioneers Academy Public Charter School ("DPA") was held on September 4, 2019 at 7am by conference call.

The following members of the Board were present:

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Johnny C. Taylor, Mary Wells, Paul O'Neill, Sara Batterton, and Mashea Ashton. Orlena Blanchard, Henry Hipps, and Stephney Riley were absent. Greg Foster, Managing Director of Finance and Operation was also present.

### Board Action:

Mrs. Ashton presented the terms of modified loan agreement between DPA and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education ("OSSE"). DPA is seeking a \$510,163 increase for building renovations at the 709 12<sup>th</sup> St SE site. The loan increase is to be added to the existing balance of \$306,168 owed on the original loan. The amended loan is \$816,400, payable over 5 years.

After the discussion, the Board voted to unanimously adopt the resolutions to allow DPA to undertake the 2019 OSSE Financing Transaction.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15am.

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## Board Meeting (via Conference call)

November 8, 2019

3:00 - 4:00pm est

## Meeting Minutes

### Attendance

#### Board:

Mary Wells, Henry Hipps, Orlena Blanchard, Paul O'Neill, Sara Batterton, Johnny Taylor, Mashea Ashton

#### Staff:

EdOps: Rhonda Henderson and Shelley Hughes

### Discussion Summary

The Board met and discussed a number of key updates in relation to the overall business and health of the organization.

General topics discussed included: CEO update, Audit update and Financial Update. The Board also discussed strategic questions and priorities related to DPA growth and indicators of success.

### Discussion

Quick update on Committee calls: in the next two weeks i'd like to connect and go deeper into the work. Want to touch base before the end of the calendar year so we have good next steps moving forward in 2020.

#### CEO Report:

Tried to highlight some of the major indicators around where we are from a staffing, culture and academic perspective. Overall we are having a very strong start

*Academic Perspective:* One of the primary indicators is the attached document which has our PMF scores. This is what the authorizer puts out in september which says you are tier 1,2 or 3. We will get our official tier rating next year, we are currently at 56% strong tier 2 9 points off from being a tier 1. Our goal is to consistently rank tier 1. 4 categories of scoring; proficiency, growth, attendance, retention

- Attendance:
  - Easy points are around attendance, if he had had the attendance at the 95% we would have gotten the 3 extra points which would have gotten us to 59 and so this year we have focused on working towards attendance and the clarity around attendance and the importance around it. We want to engage our families and use data systems to be able to track attendance everyday.
  - Alexis and the ops team identified a new partner for us in schoolrunner and this is a great program that allows us to target the scholars who are below our attendance % and we can now

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all target our scholars and support them. We are currently at 92% with a handful of scholars who are chronically absent so there is definitely work to do

- Interim math assessment data:
  - Says we have a lot of work to do 6th grade scholars came in lower than our 7th grade scholars but making good progress in Math and ELA. When you see the ANet data we are compared to network schools like KIPP DC Prep who are all tier 1 schools so we know we are on track
  - We need to continue monitoring this data and use the data to differentiate and make sure our scholars are getting intervention and needs and we can close the gap. Last year we were unable to look at the data and respond to where our kids are. These are two good actions and initiatives we are taking.

Had conversations with Scott our authorizer and asked for honest feedback and reflection:

- We want every school to be tier 1 however, it is incredibly hard to do that in your first year because you don't get re enrollment credit or data. They want every first year school to at least get 50 points and we got 56 so this is very promising.
- This is a bright spot as a first year school. We serve families in wards 7 and 8 which have low socioeconomic statuses and 100% african american scholars and even still they outperform their peers in proficiency.

This specific feedback from Scott feels good and we are right now on track to being tier 1 school

*Staffing Perspective:*

- Race and ethnicity: strong staff we need the time training and skills to build them out. We have almost an 80% minority staff which I am proud of. We recruit people who are aligned to the mission and vision and I believe this makes a difference to our culture and community.

*Culture Perspective:*

- Josh Norman Press: continues to be another bright spot. They already sent the check for 60K. Leveraging communication with this so we can bring in more resources

Pause for Q&A from Board members:

1. 6th grade cohort came in lower than last year. Was your spending school different or the same? Half of our scholars came from 5 partner feeder schools and that's why our data was stronger coming in to this year. This year a third of our scholars came from those feeder schools. Democracy Prep scholars came in this year and their data is lower. Reflection point in our recruiting strategies. Founding year we had more girls than boys and this year we are 60/40 boys to girls and next year we want to focus on recruiting more girls.
2. In the partnership with relay, are you using them for instructional coaching? They do both, they do walkthrough, they do data they observe the implementation of the work and use the appropriate follow up. Their approach is building the capacity. We also just restarted our coaching supervision and observation planning.



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3. Follow up question on projected score: looking at where we are mid performing what are the things that you think we need to get us to tier 1 and high performing that the board can focus on;
  - a. Zooming in on the easy points: attendance and reenrollment.
  - b. Day to day interaction: students approaching and growth. We did not demonstrate best practice in data driven instruction and we will focus on that this year. Individualize instruction based on individual student data verses teaching to the whole group.
  - c. Relay: We worked to get trained on data driven instruction with this organization and this will help us work through the data, action planning and differentiatie.
    - Scholars who were proficient and advanced stayed in that area but did not grow. We didn't target their instruction enough so using the data you should be able to see the growth
    - MAP data basically confirmed this: 2 years of growth in one year is a very aggressive goal. A more realistic goal is 1 year and 4months of growth for an elementary tier but for middle school will be harder. 1 year 2 months is what we accomplished last year but not enough to get us to tier 1.
    - I think we need a reading specialist: someone who can guide us in the curriculum and show us how to get scholars moving up and closing the gap for those scholars. If we had some more expertise there we would see greater achievement
    - Coaching is something we have increased in our capacity and have done for the last two weeks and they are focused on the data analysis and focusing on the capacity

### Audit:

Headline: We are still finishing up our audit it is in final stages. We transitioned to Edops in July 1st but the previous company is finishing our audit and EdOps is working closely with us to get a strong audit. We will set up an audit call with the board in the next few weeks.

No significant deficiencies or concerns. Two things that they flagged for us are

1. Debit card that we use extensively for staples and orders and lot for the receipts and tracking in emails and we did not follow strong protocols around the use of the debit card.
2. Not going through the procurement process for contract over 25K. We continued to use the same companies. We did not use the same protocol and did not do the public procurement.

Shoutout to Alexis: the changes that are happening and adjusting the procedures in real time.

### Financial Update

Forecasted we would close the year around 20 days of cash but since then we have had some change that has moved us downward to 6 days.

Please refer to the executive summary

- *Expense side:* we say increased staff development spending this is more like investments. We will be making investments into the staff so they have the opportunity to meet all the goals we are trying to accomplish.

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- When the team brought this to my attention I was most concerned about the SPED count and final enrollment which totals 126K less than anticipated. Now I understand there were a couple of miss steps we took that we now have adjusted for. We sent projections on SPED numbers that were in our original application. When we submitted the numbers again we stayed with the projection numbers instead of adjusting for the reality of what we had.

Next steps: We cleaned up our numbers to project the reality and moving forward we will have a better sense. We will have a finance meeting where we can dive deep into the report. Where can we reduce spending? Hiring and what that will look like in the future.

- Overall thoughts from EdOps: 6 days is concerning but it is better than negative days. This means that after June 30th we will only be able to run for 6 days before we need actual cash. On July 15th we get our first per pupil payment. We will have to work these 6 days into 15 days. We will have to find 180k this is not impossible.
  - The target for us moving forward is 45 days of cash. We would want DPA to have at least 30 days. It is important to have a gameplan early on so that you can meet your financial goals and also your academic goals so that we can have a high quality experience.

Additional fundraising opportunities that you have in mind that would be helpful that are not included here: STEM corporate donors we need to start to build relationships there and gifts that seem small to them can be really meaningful to us.

- Absolutely there are a number of funders I am in connection with in the past 6 months that are very focused on STEM and computer science.
- When I look at the staff positions that we need to fill, there are really only 2 DFO and electives that are absolutely critical for the long term everything else is on hold.

Strategic Board Question: What are the conditions for quality growth that we should prioritize?

- Johnny: In addition to the traditional 3Rs are we also building in life ready skills. Those skills that say that when they leave they can actually function as productive human beings. We see a lot of people in the workforce now that are brilliant technically but do not have the best life skills.
- Sara: Come up with a sense of what the most important criteria to evaluate when the green light is to grow. What are the top 3 or 5 that help us decide if we are going to grow. Do we have an instructional leader identified?
- Mary: High school is a different animal than middle school and it is a different question. That much more complicated to plan for and grow a high school. I have also come to a view that a network of schools feels more sustainable than a smaller school. That's why I want to get to the small network at the very least rather than multiple middle schools thinking about expansion for DPA its always been the plan to have a high school but how do we think about enrollment.
- Orlina: Partnerships strategic partnerships for the long term are going to be critical. The vision long term and what the students path should look like. How do we identify those partnerships and how do we secure those from a real estate perspective, funding, marketing perspective. The pipeline to high school we need to consider the academic pipeline to establish.

**DIGITAL PIONEERS**  
ACADEMY

- Henry: Sharing my excitement on the prospect for the right kind of growth and a thank you for your resilience through this period of time and reflecting on the fire and how that happened at the worst possible time yet things are still moving along.

**Wednesday, June 5, 2019 (8:00-9:30 PM)**

Attended

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

Present: Board - Mary (Chair), Orlena (Vice Chair), Sara (Treasurer), Mashea (Secretary), Henry (Board Member), Johnny (Board Member)

Staff: Nima (Director of Operations), Alexis (Special Assistant to the CEO)

Absent: Paul

## Committee Updates: Mary

Executive Committee - Fold in responsibilities of Governance Committee with bylaws. Mashea's evaluation

Consists of Chair - Mary, Vice Chair - Johnny, Secretary - Orlena, Treasurer - Sara

Finances and Facilities Committee - Sara (Chair) and Mary on as well. Looking for an additional person with

financial expertise on this committee. Potentially new members to join the board and the committee. Sara has drafted the first charter for this committee. Had first oversight of budget. Audit should be separated from this committee, so the powers here are split.

Academic Committee - Paul will chair this committee. Henry is on the committee as well. Parent board member could be a great fit here too!

Development and Marketing Committee - Johnny and Orlena will be running this committee. Parent board member will be a great fit on this committee as well. The audit will be overseen by this committee.

## DPA Updates: Mashea

Data - We have completed our MAP testing. We will have data in 48 hours and will share with the board. We will have our PARCC data released in July unofficially and officially in August. We will have an unofficial Tier Ranking this fall and an official one the following year.

Student Enrollment - We are going through the MySchoolDC enrollment process. 83 fully enrolled. Only 3 are not re-enrolling next year. 1 is going to private school. 2 are moving out of DC. Scholars have until next week to fully re-enroll.

Staff Hiring - 22 staff are part of our Founding Staff. 14 are returning next year. Split between not being asked back and pursuing other options. We have hired many new teachers, and are still pushing for STEM teachers. 5 of our 6 candidates have moved forward from last weekends' hiring fair. We are pushing forward to finding the right people and are attending conferences and have hired a recruiter as well. Goal is to have all teaching positions by June 15. Also looking for Operations and Academic role. New hires are mostly coming from other charters looking for switches and online searches. Not as many from out of town. It is very much a referral network. Uptick of applicants post PARCC testing. We have a returner retreat upcoming to engage our staff. Our founders are excited to return. Our teachers have also taken the TNTP survey for teacher satisfaction and internal surveys as well.

Facilities - Have finalized lease for building. In the process of receiving an environmental report for the building. We are in the process painting the building, renovating the floors, changing the lockers, and fixing the locks and doors. We will start school August 26th - the same day as DCPS. We are in the process of finalizing a new 5 year loan for \$510,000. Further renovations the following summer. Rethinking our student furniture and student desks to have maximum flexibility with the maximum students. We have engaged our ANC as well through meetings and email communication.

## Action Taken: Budget Approval

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

- This budget is very close to the budget we shared in March for facilities approval. We have updated this model with our projected staff roster and updated real student costs. Teacher costs have also gone up. Fundraising was based off commitments last year. This year's fundraising is based off expected goal with a specific pipeline. We have 75% of the goal committed. Have additional non vital positions that we can release if we do not fundraise appropriately. We will look into the impact of staffing on the team and also the funding market for charter schools in the future. Have funders open doors to other funders. Having support from Charter School Growth Fund is vital.
- We will pass the budget in 48 hours by Friday.

## Action Taken: Auditor Approval

- Kendall, Prebola, and Jones to audit Digital Pioneers Academy.
- Motion: Johnny
- Second: Mary
- Vote: Passes 6-0
- Motion carries.

## Action Taken: Johnny becomes Vice Chair

- Johnny becomes Vice Chair
- Motion: Henry
- Second: Mary
- Vote: Passes 6-0
- Motion carries.

## Action Taken: Orlena as Secretary

- Orlena becomes Secretary
- Motion: Henry
- Second: Mary
- Vote: Passes 6-0
- Motion carries.

## Next Steps

- Board calendar for the rest of the year
- Board approval for the loan coming soon

## **Minutes from September 20, 2018 Meeting**

Date: Thursday, September 20, 2018 (6-8PM)

Action Taken: None

**DIGITAL PIONEERS**  
ACADEMY

Attended: Mashea Ashton, Sara Batterton, Shayna Hammond, Paul O'Neill

Notes: Ms. Mashea Ashton gave the board updates on student enrollment, staff recruitment, and facilities.

**Minutes from August 8, 2018 Meeting**

Date: Wednesday, August 8, 2018 (10:30 – 11:30AM)

Action Taken: None

Attended via Conference Call: Mashea Ashton, Alicia Robinson, Henry Hipps, Mary Wells, Orlena Blanchard, Shayna Hammond, Sara Batterton

**DIGITAL PIONEERS**  
ACADEMY

Notes: Ms. Mashea Ashton gave the board updates on student enrollment, staff recruitment, and facilities.

Digital Pioneers Academy  
Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes from June 4, 2018 Meeting

At a regular meeting of the Digital Pioneers Academy Board of Directors, held in their WeWork space, on Tuesday morning, June 4, 2018, with the secretary in the chair, the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. Principal Ashton presented general updates. On motion of Sara Batterton and seconded by

# DIGITAL PIONEERS

ACADEMY

Alicia Robinson, the FPA Financial Policies and Procedures, DPCSB - DPA Public Charter School Agreement, DPA Year 1 Goals, and the board membership of Johnny Taylor were approved. On motion of Alicia Robinson and seconded by Shayna Hammond, the budget was approved. On motion of Sara Batterton and seconded by Alicia Robinson, the OSSE loan for facilities was approved. On motion of Sara Batterton and seconded by Shayna Hammond, the East Washington Height Baptist Church Project Cost was approved.

On motion of Mashea Ashton the board adjourned at 12:02 P.M.

- [Board Consent to Mashea Ashton signing the loan](#)
- [Board Signatures to consent form](#)
- [Mashea Ashton witness signature](#)
- [Nima Farshchi witness signature](#)

*Mashea Ashton*

Board Secretary