

# DPA Board Meeting

October 25, 2023 – 5:30pm  
*In Person*



## OVERVIEW

- **Board Minutes Approval**
- **CEO Updates**
- **Enrollment + Rebudgeting Process**
- **Previewing Board Retreat Agenda**
- **CEO Annual Performance Review**



## Our Mission

Digital Pioneers Academy's mission is to **develop the next generation of innovators**. We prepare scholars to meet the highest academic standards, while cultivating the strengths of character necessary to both graduate from 4-year **colleges** and thrive in 21st century **careers**.



## DPA Scholar

- ★ Innovators
- ★ CEOs
- ★ College graduates
- ★ Professionals with high paying high demand jobs
- ★ Community builders



# Our Values

## **COMMITMENT**

We always hold ourselves and teammates accountable to excellence.

## **GROWTH**

We always ask how we can improve and use data to inform our actions.

## **RESULTS**

We always focus on our goals to achieve them.

## **OPTIMISM**

We always create the authentic positivity that our scholars and team need wherever we go, even in tough moments.

## **INNOVATION**

We always think critically, creatively, and thoughtfully to solve complex problems.

## **EMPATHY**

We always listen and build strong relationships to create a Known-Loved-Respected (KLR) community.





# Our Strategic Priorities

## Strategic Priorities

- 1 Leverage strengths in adult culture, collaboration, and growth to ensure **staff is equipped and supported to deliver program** with quality/ fidelity across grades 6-12
- 2 Evolve talent function to sustainably and effectively **recruit, develop, advance, and retain staff** across the org, with a focus on high school **computer science teacher pipeline**
- 3 Formalize and implement **operational systems and structures** (including leadership roles/ responsibilities/ decision making) to ensure team and org sustainability
- 4 Explore and establish **partnerships** that together will offer students and staff a comprehensive path to college and career
- 5 Explore opportunities for **expansion**

# Board Minutes Approval

### Attendance

Board Present: Orlena Nwokah Blanchard, Mashea Ashton, Sara Batterton, Henry Hipps, Kevjorik Jones, Paul O'Neill

Board Absent: Mary Wells (on sabbatical)

Others Present: Elizabeth Pillion (EdOps), Sarah Hanson, Katie Thaefer

### Action Items

- The board voted unanimously to approve the May board minutes
- The board voted unanimously to approve the FY24 budget as presented

Ms. Ashton opened the meeting by asking members of board to come off mute or share in chat what is resonating about the mission. Strength of character was something that generally resonated.

Ms. Ashton asked for a motion to approve minutes as presented from last month. Sara Batterton moved and Paul O'Neill seconded. The board minutes were unanimously approved.

To start the CEO update, Ms. Ashton shared that Ms. Scott led a teacher appreciation afternoon. People had a wonderful time. Ms. Scott brought her entire family and we want to say thank you. Then, as folks may have seen in the news, yesterday the Washington Commanders came and made a \$75,000 donation and cleats for the football team. It was amazing. They spent forty minutes with our students who were so amazed. There is a lot of news coverage and the school will share as soon as it is compiled. The Commanders want a partnership, which the school is very excited about. A number of their players have been impacted by gun violence. We are looking forward to what that partnership might look like going forward. Football isn't just for the players, it is for our whole community to come together. It is part of our character work, our SEL work and keeping our scholars busy and engaged. The final highlight of yesterday was the 8th grade promotion ceremony. Ms. Batterton was in attendance and shared that it was a high energy and joyful event. The pride and jubilation from families was on display. She also noted that Ms. Ashton gave an excellent speech and emphasized the value of believing that commitment and hard work will help you achieve your goals. DPA is now two years away from the first high school graduation.

Next, Ms. Ashton shared an enrollment update and that the school is a much stronger place than in previous years. For new high schoolers the school will have a week of orientation.

Ms. Ashton then shared a hiring update and specifically that the school has hired a principal fellow for DPA Middle School. Ms. Hunter will be principal fellow for DPA High School. Ms. Ashton will be supporting summer professional development and hiring this year. Next year she expects them to fully lead as principals. Ms. Ashton shared a proposed timeline for the CEO review which she has discussed with Ms. Blanchard and Ms. Wells. The plan is to launch in fall but will be flexible as needed. Ms. Blanchard shared that she and Ms. Ashton talked about ensuring there is a rhythm and space to have the right space and folks participating. Ms. Blanchard and Mr. Higgs will work together on the review. Ms. Ashton then shared that the school is also thinking about board recruitment and engagement.

Ms. Ashton wrapped the CEO update with sharing that the school is finalizing the calendar for next year. After that, we will finalize and share board meeting dates for next school year. Ms. Batterton had two questions: 1) how did the QSR visit go? 2) what is the update on history credits? Ms. Ashton shared that the history credit question has been resolved. The school received initial scores for QSR but the final report comes tomorrow. The initial scores indicated that our scores stayed about the same and dropped slightly. This was disappointing. For high school, the scores went up about 25 points which was more consistent with what was expected. The school can share the report once it is finalized. We are submitting an updated academic plan by July 15th and will also share with the board. We are finalizing how we will report to them annually on our process.

Ms. Pillon of EdOps then transitioned to reviewing the school's April 2023 financials: She noted the school is in a strong place with 47 days of cash. Ms. Pillon also shared that our % of grants invoiced has increased significantly in May, and that our FAR score should be 86. Ms. Ashton then transitioned to discussing the FY24 budget and shared that the finance committee went through two budget iterations. Next year will be the school's first time with a stand alone high school and stand alone middle school, and Ms. Ashton is very excited to not be moving. That said, scholars are asking for a new building at the high school. She then moved into the context of the budget and sharing that it is informed by our renewal and academic plan and our strategic plan. The priorities are academics, scholar experience and talent. Our enrollment assumption is 660 students and our operations team is working hard to ensure we meet this goal. Ms. Pillon then ran the board through the high level details of the budget. Following this discussion, the board asked about and discussing the impact of the WTU contracts. DPA is working this out now with EdOps and also hoping to learn from other schools in the district. Ms. Ashton then praised Ms. Pillon, Ms. Hanson and Ms. Thaefer for their work on the budget and opened the floor for questions. Ms. Blanchard pushed school to be thinking about high school expenses such as prom and the related security costs. Ms. Batterton noted the tension between trying to build our cash reserve for a facility and spending contingency budget on expenses such as these. Ms. Ashton also shared that Molly Melloh from EdOps will be presenting at a future board meeting about facilities financing. Mr. Jones then motioned to approve budgeted as presented and Mr. Higgs seconded. The budget was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned.

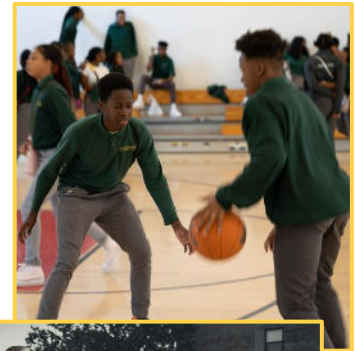
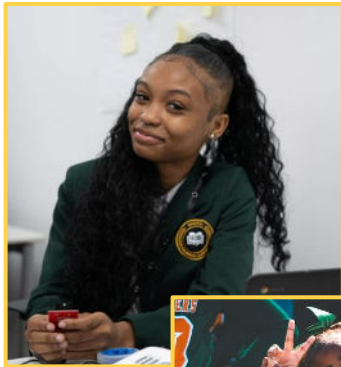


# CEO Updates



## Strong Start to Year 6 (1 of 2)

DPA Year 6 is underway! We have 606 students and for the first time, have a middle school (6th to 8th grade) campus and high school (9th to 11th grade) campus.





## Strong Start to Year 6 (2 of 2)

In year 6 we have over 90 team members, including a Principal Fellow and Director of Operations for middle school and high school. We are also working with TNTP to review and develop a long-term talent strategy to recruit, develop and retain our teachers.



**Shaniqua Wrotten**  
Principal Fellow, MS



**Teandra Lowe**  
Director of Ops, MS



**Dietra Hunter**  
Principal Fellow, HS



**Alfred Mason**  
Director of Ops, HS



## Academic Update: 22-23 PARCC Data + Partnering with TNTP in 23-24

**We are motivated by our recent PARCC performance. Specifically, our ELA PARCC proficiency rate grew by 9 percentage points from SY21-22 to SY22-23, more than 3x the city's improvement over the same period.**

- We saw 48% of students proficient in ELA and 26% proficient in math across middle and high school.
  - This was a 9% increase overall in ELA.
  - In math, we look at middle school and high school separately because of the change in content.
    - Year over year, we saw a 1% increase in middle school math.
    - At high school, we saw a year over year 1% decrease in Algebra, and this year was our first year taking Geometry.
- We are partnering with TNTP this year to support our implementation of our academic plan and prepare for our annual QSR visit in the spring. We've done our first walk-through with the TNTP team which went very well, and will have another early in 2024.



## Kicking off year with DC official visits

We've seen an increase in interest from DC officials to visit DPA this year. They have offered continued support and during their visits repeatedly commented on our safe and positive learning environment.

- Michelle Walker-Davis, Executive Director of PCSB
- Phil Mendelson, DC Council Chairman
- Kenyan McDuffie, DC Councilmember
- Trayon White, DC Councilmember
- EdForward DC Funders & Investment Committee
- Paul Kihn, Deputy Mayor for Education (meeting on 10/24)
- Christina Grant, OSSE Superintendent (meeting being scheduled)

We've also reached out/been in contact about scheduling visits with Mayor Bowser, Attorney General Schwalb and Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice.





## Showing support for Hill Havurah

**Hill Havurah is an independent Jewish community that operates a religious school out of DPA on the weekends. Particularly over the last year, they have been strong supporters of our school. Last week we shared the message below with our DPA families and staff. Overall we received positive feedback, but responses to this message highlighted the overall complexity of the conflict.**

The images of the atrocities committed by Hamas terrorists against Israelis have left me shaken. As an educator and parent, it's hard for me to fathom the hatred that could allow such evil. Our condolences go out to all the victims of violence, and we hope the people of Israel and Gaza can experience a peaceful future.

This crisis is not only impacting communities thousands of miles away; it is impacting our own community here in Washington, DC.

At DPA, we are proud to provide access to our high school facility to other organizations in the community. One such organization is Hill Havurah, an independent Jewish community that operates a religious school outside of school hours at DPA.

Today, that school lives in fear of antisemitic attacks. We are working to partner with them to provide increased security on campus for their programming.

The Hill Havurah community has always been loyal and vocal supporters of DPA and been there for us in our times of need. It's my turn to support them in their time of need.

At DPA, we are a community that provides space for students and staff to process difficult moments. We will provide resources so teachers feel prepared to talk about these acts of violence in class and we have counselors available to both students and educators. In times like these, we need to be there for one another.

We stand in solidarity with the Jewish and Muslim community in DC - and with all educators - who condemn violence and seek peace, at home and abroad.



## Identifying a Permanent Facility

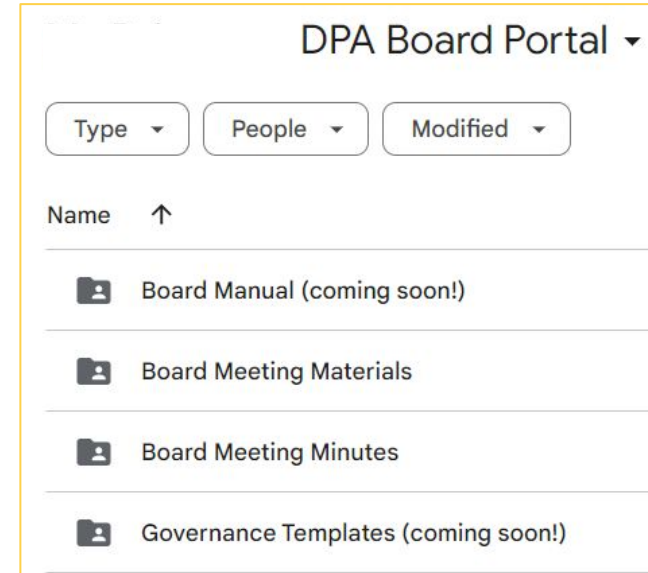
As we look ahead to the future, we are eager to focus this year on identifying a permanent facility for our program. This is becoming a top priority for a number of reasons, including:

- Current HS building does not support programmatic needs (e.g. HS is not designed to be a HS, lack of field space); costly to travel to/rent additional space.
- Ongoing facility repair issues at HS (e.g. with roof)
- Challenging lease conditions at MS (e.g. limited times when building can be accessed; right now no access on weekends)



# Upcoming Board Logistics

- <Now> SY22-23 Audit is Taking Place
- Board Meeting Dates
  - To be added/rescheduled
    - Mid-November: Mtg to be scheduled to review revised Budget
    - December 14: Mtg to be rescheduled to approve audit ahead of PCSB deadline
    - April 25: Due to conflict with VA SBOE
  - Other dates
    - Thursday, February 1st
    - Thursday, March 7th
    - Thursday, April 25th
    - Thursday, June 6th
- Coming Soon!
  - Board portal
    - One stop google drive for all board materials
  - Board meeting scope & sequence for remainder of year / upcoming years





# Enrollment + Rebudgeting Process



## 2023-24 Budget: School Enrollment (1 of 2)

- **Our original enrollment model is 120 students per grades (6 to 11) totaling 720 students.**
  - **Post-pandemic, we have adjusted down our HS projections to 100 students per grade.**
    - This is due to facility constraints and to minimize pressure around backfill needs between middle and high school.
    - We are backfilling, but we are limit the numbers of new scholars to maintain a positive school culture.
  - **For 23-24, we kept our targeted middle school enrollment at 120.**
    - Believed this would be possible given school-provided transportation, another year removed from pandemic.
    - Believe in future there is still a possibility of 120 students per grade: specifically, Achievement Prep, who we are co-located with at middle school, has 5th graders for the first time this year, and are not opening a middle school. There is a likelihood of significant numbers of students matriculating from Achievement Prep to DPA.



## 2023-24 Budget: School Enrollment (2 of 2)

Our current enrollment is 606 students (with 6 attending non-public alternatives). We had included a 20 student contingency in our budget so have ~40 less students than estimated, primarily at the middle school level. When we have fewer students, we adjust our staffing needs. For instance, at middle school instead of having five sections per grade, we will have four (and need 24 lead teachers instead of 30).

DPA Middle School	
Grade	Enrollment
6	107
7	100
8	104
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>

DPA High School	
Grade	Enrollment
9	94
10	116
11	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>



## 2023-24 Budget: Levers for Adjustment

Outside of enrollment, the driving factors behind the need to rebudget are: athletics costs, investment in violence prevention efforts, and higher than expected contracted fees (e.g. for facility maintenance and transportation). As we re-budget here are the things we are working through:

- **Staffing** - potential/likely adjustments:
  - Adjusting to four sections per grade instead of five (reducing number of lead teachers)
  - Eliminating unfilled positions, for example: HS Principal Fellow
- **Consultant Fees** - identifying potential opportunities for reduction in budgeted costs
- **Athletics & Enrichment** - identifying potential costs for reduction; identifying where external enrichment provider work could be fulfilled by full time staff
- **Potential savings from transition from PEO to be realized**
- **Fundraising** - increasing fundraising target



## 2023-24 Budget: Next Steps

- **Early October (complete):** initial conversation with Finance Committee about re-budgeting
- **October (now):** DPA and EdOps to work together to craft revised budget
- **Early November:** DPA to share draft revised budget with finance committee, and make any necessary edits (mtg to be scheduled imminently)
- **Mid November:** DPA to share revised budget with board for review and approval (mtg to be scheduled imminently)
- **November 17:** Revised budget to be submitted to PCSB

# Previewing Board Retreat Agenda



## Board Retreat (1 of 2): Goals

### Board Retreat Goals

- Deepen relationships among board members and with the senior leadership team
- Deepen board understanding of DPA programs and community
- Benchmark DPA board operations to best practices
- Re-ground in the strategic plan and vote to approve
- Discuss DRAFT SY 2023-24 goals for DPA that are aligned to the strategic plan
- Identify board goals in alignment with org priorities for SY 2023-24



# Board Retreat (2 of 2): Agenda

Timing	Goal	Activity
8:45-9:00	Breakfast	
9:00-9:30	Welcome	Intro of day, sharing the stories of DPA students
9:30-10:00	Build relationships among board members	DPA Mixtape + Personal History
10:00-11:10	Benchmark DPA board against best governance practices	Debrief self-assessment results; small group discussion
11:10-11:20	BREAK	
11:20-12:20	Re-ground in strategic plan	Discuss and vote
12:20-1:30	LUNCH DISCUSSION Deepen board understanding of DPA programs and community	Moderated conversation between board and DPA staff, parents, and students
1:30-2:30	Discuss DPA's DRAFT 2023-24 Goals	Board provides input on draft goals and confirmation of next steps
2:30-2:40	BREAK	
2:40-3:40	Board goals 2023-24	Small group brainstorms and full group discussion
3:40-4:00	Closing	



# CEO Annual Performance Review