

DaVinci Charter School

A HISTORY of SUCCESSES

Prepared as per banker's request
by Cindy Hoovel, Administrator and the DaVinci Board of Directors
September 21, 2011

It's all about the children...

as a community of learners and as individual learners through the integration of the arts and real-life experiences!

HISTORY

- 1) Prior to our current administrator, Cindy Hoovel, being hired in summer 2007, the school's original director had resigned and they had received two letters of defect from the Idaho Public Charter School Commission (IPCSC): one for their financial situation and one for concerns that they were not following every educational and behavioral aspect stated in their original charter. The board developed a sound financial CAP (correction action plan) which was further tightened by Cindy and the board later in the year. Cindy developed a CAP to address the second letter which required some re-writing of the charter and highly focused staff professional development.
- 2) Commendations were received by the Idaho Charter Commission (IPCSC) in spring 2008 for completing all corrective action plan requirements stating they were impressed with the improvements – both financially and educationally. NOTE: Our district is considered a Title I school with 60% students at risk for various factors – usually financial and family situations.
- 3) Commendations were received by the IPCSC chairman and each commissioner individually in January 2011 following the administrator's presentation of our required school updates covering the past three years. They were specifically impressed with how far the school had come financially as they “didn't think the school could recover from the first year's financial challenges” and felt we had been very creative staying fiscally responsible while dealing with changes in state funding.
- 4) Through the IPCSC's recommendations, the administrator was invited by the Idaho Board of Education to present our school's educational philosophy and financial creativity during their Boise legislative session winter 2011. Commendations were received by the Board and State Education Superintendent, Tom Luna, regarding the school's performance-based learning methods (versus teaching students at computers only to be prepared for high stakes testing required by the state and federal government) and financial creativity.
- 5) Prior to the opening of the school in 2006, financial challenges arose regarding their potential facility so alternative arrangements were made in order to open the school and all original contracts were re-negotiated and paid off. The school has always met all financial obligations from the time it opened and are debt free.
- 6) Student enrollment was 89 when current administrator was hired. As of the start of the 2011-2012 school enrollment was at 160. When a permanent building can be started, we confidently project we will have full enrollment (200+) with a large waiting list!

FINANCING

- 7) When our three years of federal Charter Starts grants (total of \$827,000) were completed (see financials from 2006-2009), we successfully made the lowered income adjustments through meetings with parents, teachers, students and the board to gain all stakeholders' feedback regarding budget cut ideas. Through months of meetings to give everyone an opportunity to be heard – and develop buy-in – The following were implemented:
 - a. Students and staff decided to clean their own rooms and all areas of the school, so custodian contract was dropped: Savings: \$13,000/year
 - b. Our receptionist/secretary was rified (reduction in force) and in her place volunteer parents answered phones and greeted guests: Savings: \$ 22,000/year
 - c. Changed our lunch caterers to Boys & Girls Club who were trying to develop a business to coordinate with their development of a federal food program: Savings: \$39,000/year
 - d. Implemented a “backwards auction” during our annual school auction for attendees to donate money to be used for our curriculum field trips (which the state discontinued) : Additional Funds \$5600
 - e. Director substituted for teachers and safety monitors when necessary: Savings: \$2,000/year
 - f. Director taught the Art Studio sessions for each class and coordinated professional artists and events for two years until another grant could be written to re-hire a part-time art coordinator: Savings: \$12,000/year
 - g. We negotiated to lower our building lease costs during the 2010-2011 year: Savings: \$10,000/year
 - h. Parents chose to give \$50/trimester to help with costs of special programs – specifically the arts. Additional Funds \$20,000/year (*cannot legally require this to be paid, so this varies, but is often higher*)
 - i. All staff applies for at least two grants per year to cover special projects or trips
 - j. Small increase to our classroom caps for number of students allowed to enroll to enable us to receive more money through the state. We continue to have smaller classes than surrounding districts, though.
- 8) In order to learn to implement our unique educational and behavioral philosophies, our staff logged more professional development hours than any other school in Idaho.
- 9) The administrator brought in a bookkeeper she had known from another school district as a student aide until the appropriate time came to be able to hire her as the school's business manager to keep the books and manage technology needs for both staff and the Idaho Department of Education. This employee has attended all possible educational finances and technological trainings and has become an expert resource often called upon by other school districts.
- 10) No pay cuts or position cuts to staff in 2011-2012 and a 1% increase in 2010-2011 due to careful budgeting. Most districts cut all teachers salaries and many positions during this time.
- 11) Dave Evans Construction has partnered with DaVinci by allowing us to place modulars on their land, rent-free for our temporary location during the 2011-2012 school year while we continue to develop a financial package to enable us to build a permanent location.
- 12) The administrator negotiated with a modular building company to donate our administrative building, bathrooms and some ramps in order to afford the move to our current temporary location.
- 13) Through administrator's grant writing, we receive all possible federal grants to cover school improvement and special needs children.
- 14) A financial committee was developed in 2009 which includes the administrator, board treasurer, past board treasurer, school business manager and a community member who is an educational auditor. This group meets each month prior to board meetings to over see financials and make recommendations to the board as needed.

OTHER

- 15) Received special commendations for our Special Education program the last two years
- 16) Received special commendations for our business manager's implementation of the new Idaho System for Educational Excellence data system
- 17) Continuous improvement on stakeholders' satisfaction survey data which is given each year to teachers, students and all parents. We have a 90% response result from families.
- 18) Partnerships with the community are very important and have included: Trey McIntyre Project, GC Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, St Luke's hospital, BSU and NNU arts programs and student teachers, local professional artists, Bells for Books, GC library, Boise Watershed (we are their pilot school for curriculum development), Shakespeare Festival, our local and state legislators, Micron, HP, etc.

Bottom line success: improving our financial situation and developing the ability to project and follow our budget closely in order to end the year on track to start developing reserve funds.