

# Instructional time a challenge for charter school

By Jolene Guzman  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — An Oregon School Boards' Association review of Dallas Community School, a charter school in Dallas, found it is out of compliance with state instructional hours requirements.

The finding isn't surprising given that DCS' model has parents — not licensed teachers — providing most of the instruction to students, said Kristen Miles, board development specialist with OSBA who also conducts evaluations on charter schools. The school, which is in its third year, is designed to provide resources and guidance to families who home-school their children.

As a public charter school, though, the school and its sponsor Dallas School District are accountable to state requirements.

Miles bases evaluations on the National Association of Charter School Authorizers' "Core Performance Framework and Guid-



Miles

ance." The review, called an "annual performance framework and report," analyzes a charter school's academic performance, financial standing and organizational management.

Miles offered commendations on strong performance areas and recommendations for improvement in others.

"My goal is to provide a useful tool for the board, the district and the charter school to work from," she said Monday at the Dallas School Board meeting.

Miles said she noted the instructional hours compliance issue because it is Dallas School District's obligation as the authorizer of the charter to determine if its charter schools are following the law.

"The main question is, are they providing a comprehensive instructional program, and are they pro-



Johnstone

viding the required instructional time, which is defined in OARs as provided by a licensed teacher," Miles said.

She said DCS is using a model of accounting for attendance and instructional time that online schools use, but her determination is that the school is falling short of the requirement as it tries to blend home-school and traditional school elements.

"The whole purpose of the school is to combine those things, to allow students to have a home school environment but also function as a charter school," Miles said. "I think my note about that is to point out that there may be a tension in here in trying to do both. That is hard to do in a charter school model."

DCS isn't alone in this predicament. Dallas Superintendent Michelle John-



Wilkins

stone said other similar charter schools in the state are dealing with this concern.

"Some districts have said that's not OK, like Bend, other districts have allowed it, like Medford," Johnstone said.

DCS Director Bill Conlon said the school is researching and working with the Oregon Department of Education to find a solution.

"We want to be in compliance," he said. "We don't want an issue for Dallas School District that they have something that is going to come back at them, so we are going to work hard to make it correct and figure out what it is we need to do."

Miles commended the school on having 84 percent of its students participate in state assessments, an achievement, she noted, for a school serving a population not accustomed to such testing.

However, scores on those tests were lower than state and Dallas district averages.

"I'm recommending that the specific plan of improvement be written," she said.

Miles also presented Luckiamute Valley Charter School's evaluation on Monday night.

In a letter accompanying the evaluation, LVCS Executive Director Christy Wilkins said the school is regrouping after difficult years before and after the former director retired due to illness. She said he had been director for 13 years, and his mid-year departure last school year was challenging.

State assessment scores also suffered during that time.

"It was disappointing to the entire LVCS community that results on the state assessment were so poor, because academic achievement has always been a point of pride for students, staff and parents," Wilkins wrote in the letter. "I believe those results do not accurately reflect the skills of our students or our teachers."

Wilkins in the evaluation and on Monday detailed programs and plans to improve performance, including better alignment between the grades, better interventions and professional development opportunities.

"We are implementing a lot of changes. I think good changes," Wilkins said. "We are very focused on instruction and improving student achievement."

Miles said parents she interviewed for the evaluation were satisfied with class sizes and relationships with teachers and staff.

"They also hired a new ED (executive director) who is strong and competent. I think that she will really serve that school well," Miles said. "They are really focused on improving student growth and achievement."

For more information or to see the annual performance reports, see the Dallas School District Jan. 8 meeting packet at: <https://www.dallas.k12.or.us/school-board>.

## SMART needs more Dallas readers

Itemizer-Observer staff report

DALLAS — The Start Making a Reader Today (SMART) program needs more volunteer readers at Lyle and Oakdale Heights Elementary Schools in Dallas.

Volunteers read one-on-one with children in kindergarten through third grade for at least one hour per week. Training is provided for volunteers.

The program runs during school hours from October to May. Volunteers must v one hour per week, but can spend more time reading with children.

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## Western to celebrate MLK week

Itemizer-Observer staff report

MONMOUTH — Oregon public scholar and activist Walidah Imarisha will speak at Western Oregon University's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Dinner. Several of WOU's diversity-related groups will present additional events surrounding the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day from Monday to Jan. 18.

Imarisha is an educator, writer, public scholar and spoken-word artist. Imarisha has presented statewide as a public scholar with Oregon Humanities' Conversation Project on topics such as

Oregon Black history, alternatives to incarceration and the history of hip hop.

Her nonfiction book *Angels with Dirty Faces: Three Stories of Crime, Prison, and Redemption* won a 2017 Oregon Book Award.

• On the observed holiday, Monday, WOU students and local community members are invited to make a difference by volunteering to pack care packages for the Western Oregon University community. The event will be 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Historic Gentle House, 855 Monmouth Ave. N. Helpers must submit a volunteer

form before the event.

• On Tuesday, WOU will host a "poverty simulation," during which students, employees and community members will gain a broader understanding of poverty and its impact on individuals through an experiential learning and critical analysis activity. The session will be from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Pacific Room at the Werner University Center. It is free to attend.

• The MLK Jr. Celebration dinner will be at 6 p.m. Jan. 17. Held in the Werner University Center and featuring a keynote by Imarisha. Tickets are \$3 for students and \$5 for general admission

(including dinner) and can be purchased at the Werner University Center front desk or in Disability Services.

• The final event of the MLK Jr. commemoration week will be a Jan. 18 student-led forum on the topic of "Media's Representation of Marginalized Communities." Members of the WOU Black Student Union will facilitate a critical analysis of media representations including the different perspectives of attendees. The conversation will be 4 to 6 p.m. in the Willamette Room in the WUC.

For more information about MLK Jr. Celebration week, visit [wou.edu](http://wou.edu).

**Sudoku**  
Difficulty: ★★★★★

**Solution on Page 9A**

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By Ben Arnoldy

**How to do Sudoku**  
Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in every column, row, and three-by-three square. See example above.

The Christian Science Monitor

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