



North Fork Vision Home and Community Program

HANDBOOK



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OVERVIEW

THE VHCP HOME AND COMMUNITY PROGRAM (VHCP) is a publicly funded K-12, mainly **parent-guided** educational program. Parents and/or guardians of Learners in the program have primary responsibility for Learner's education. The VHCP provides support for Learner families and acts as the liaison between the Learners and the funding agencies (the Delta County School District, Colorado Board of Education, and taxpayers) to whom the program and Learners and their families are financially and academically accountable. There are three offices of the VHCP, the Delta VHCP in Delta (DVHCP), the Surface Creek VHCP in Cedaredge (SCVHCP) and the North Fork VHCP (NFVHCP) in Paonia. Each office has its own staff and operates within a designated service area. All three offices are governed by the same Board of Stewards and operate under the same contract and policies, although some procedures differ from office to office.

The VHCP began in 2000 and is one a coalition of programs which function under the same set of waivers granted to Delta County School District J50 by the Colorado State Board of Education. The other programs that are currently operating under these waivers are the North Fork Montessori School and the Delta Academy of Applied Learning.

MISSION STATEMENT

THE VHCP HOME AND COMMUNITY PROGRAM PROMOTES MEANINGFUL CHOICE AND DIVERSE OPPORTUNITY WITHIN PUBLIC EDUCATION BY SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OPTIMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR EACH LEARNER AND THE OPTIMAL TEACHING ENVIRONMENT FOR EACH TEACHER.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that children naturally learn and that in a safe, nurturing environment laden with opportunity and positive role models all people naturally grow to their highest potential. Each person is unique and must be encouraged in their search for fulfillment. Each person is also part of a community and must be encouraged in their search for common purpose and ways to serve. These two searches are mutually strengthening and inseparable.

We believe that all of us are well-served by taking to heart the following principles:

1. Support and trust each young person.
2. Support and trust each parent.
3. Approach and honor all others with love and respect.
4. Never sacrifice the wellbeing of the child for the future of the program.
5. Program accountability is built on integrity of individuals and relationships.
6. Support leadership that facilitates and membership that participates.
7. Promote open and inclusive conversation. Strive for consensus.
8. Do not hurry; the quality of the process is the goal.
9. Maintain humor, humility and flexibility.
10. Never give up on anybody; keep the door open.
11. Do not do for others what they can do for themselves.
12. The deepest learning often comes within the context of relationship.
13. Facilitate informed, careful and unpressured choices. True commitment and a sense of responsibility usually follow.
14. Examine carefully what we model, for that is what we teach.
15. When mistakes are realized, be open and accept responsibility immediately.
16. Worthwhile policies permeate every level of an organization.
17. Meaningful future lives flow from meaningful present lives.
18. Inspired teachers are learning; inspired learners are teaching.
19. Listen well and do not respond until you find compassion and respect.
20. Question everything, especially when children's eyes cease to shine.

NFVHCP FAQs

What is Parent-Guided Learning?

Parent-guided learning is learning that is done primarily in the home with a parent, guardian or other family member acting as the Learner's primary teacher. Parent-guided Learners have a significantly different educational experience from that of students in a school-based educational model. Parent-guided learning, at its best, is not about simply setting up a classroom in the home. Learning is woven into the entire fabric of the family's life. A visit to the doctor or dentist is an opportunity for a discussion about anatomy. A trip to the zoo is a chance to study zoology and learn about the animals' habitats. Cooking dinner together becomes a lesson in math (measuring and calculating) and practical chemistry (i.e. how baking powder makes a cake rise). Structured lessons are only a small part of this unique kind of experiential learning.

Parent-guided learning is a legitimate and acceptable alternative to school-based education. Currently, there are over two million registered homeschoolers in the United States. Statistics show that, as a group, homeschooled learners do as well as or better than school-based learners in their adult lives. Colleges and Universities readily accept homeschooled learners because they adapt easily to the more self-directed style of higher education. Many homeschooled learners become successful entrepreneurs and business owners. They learners have a good reputation among employers because they tend to have a high degree of adaptability, creativity and self-discipline—all 21st Century skills that are now being focused on by many States as desirable traits for the current and future employment marketplace.

Families choose parent-guided learning for a variety of reasons, and people have come up with many creative ways to incorporate education into their lives. Some families agree to scale back so they can live on one income. Some parents are able to create a staggered work schedule so they can take turns being home with their children. The bottom line, however, is that for home-based learning to work, at least one member of the family needs to make a major commitment to overseeing the children's learning. And that person needs a lot of support, both inside and outside the family, to honor such a commitment successfully.

On the one hand, parent-guided learning *is* a huge outlay of time and energy and should not be embarked upon lightly. On the other hand, having control of Learners' scheduling gives families far more flexibility in their day-to-day lives than is possible when adhering to an 8:00 to 4:00, Monday through Friday school schedule. Parent-guided learning helps build strong family relationships and creates a compendium of shared experiences, memories and values. Parent-guided learning can be, and usually is, a deeply rewarding journey for Learners and their families.

Does Our Family Have to Join VHCP to do Parent-Guided Learning?

Participation in the VHCP program is not required to be a home-based learning family. The advantage of being in our parent-guided learning program is that it gives families greater resources and a built-in support system. VHCP Learners have access to public educational funds, which can be a great help to families who might not otherwise be able to afford high quality learning materials or outside learning opportunities. Also, VHCP Learners and their families have access to a community of like-minded people with whom they can share their concerns and ideas. In a culture where the majority of students are still being educated in schoolhouse-based programs, it is a great comfort for parent-guided learners and their families to have a peer group that they can turn to for support and advice.

How Much Parental Involvement Is Needed?

Parental involvement differs from family to family and depends a great deal on the age of the Learner. Generally, however, the younger the Learner the more parental guidance is needed for a successful outcome. The VHCP and the families who contract with the program agree to see to it that VHCP Learners gain certain skills—reading and writing, math and basic science knowledge—and demonstrate on-going growth in these core areas. While these skills can be learned in a more relaxed and far less compartmentalized way in a home learning environment, they *do* still need to be addressed conscientiously and practiced regularly, and the Learner's progress *must* be documented. It is vital, therefore for VHCP Learners to have a parent or other adult willing to make sure that the Learner's acquisition of basic skills and knowledge in these areas is ongoing and well documented.

As Learners grow within the program, they gradually assume more control over their learning, and parents evolve into more of a supportive role. As a rule of thumb, Learners from about 4th grade on begin taking increasing responsibility for the development of their Learning Plan, finding Educators and resources, and documenting their learning. This transition from a parent-directed, primarily home-based learning experience to a Learner-directed, increasingly community-based learning experience is an appropriate and desirable progression and is in line with VHCP's Mission Statement and Philosophy.

The case is somewhat different for older Learners who come to VHCP after struggling, often for years, with being a poor fit for the school-based learning model. Such Learners, after a period of adjustment, usually are able to assume a great deal of responsibility for their own education, but the learning curve is steep. Family cooperation and oversight is extremely important. Even with little or no family support, however, many such older Learners have had a good VHCP experience and successful outcomes. This success takes a commitment to making and keeping program and learning agreements.

Learners who derive the greatest benefit from the program generally have the following:

- Ongoing support from at least one primary and many secondary adults. The primary support person is usually a parent, but can also be a guardian, grandparent, older sibling or other family member. Supportive secondary adults include resource consultants, educators, mentors and anyone else who takes a sincere, consistent interest in the Learner's development.
- A sense of wonder and curiosity, and a drive to learn.
- A strong tendency to be self-directed and self-motivated.
- Personal integrity and the ability to follow-through on agreements.

Of the above criteria, the most crucial element is adult support, particularly adults who possess and model the other three traits.

How Much Time Does VHCP Participation Take?

VHCP is a year-round program with a calendar that goes from July 1st of one year to June 30st of the next. Full-time Learners must document 720 hours of learning time per year. 360 of those hours must be documented in the first half of the year (July through December). This works out to a minimum of 15 hours per week of documentable learning per semester. If learning is only being documented through the school-year calendar (August through December and January through May), then it takes an average of 4 hours per day or 20 hours per week to meet the 720 required hours.

Part time participation is also a possibility for Learners who are five years old and enrolled in kindergarten and for Learners who are registered homeschoolers who wish to access limited Vision HCP services. Part-time participation at the kindergarten level means documenting at least 180 hours of learning time for the school year with at least 90 of those hours coming in the first semester. Part-time participation at all other grade levels means documenting at least 180 hours of learning time for the school year, but less than 360 hours, all of which must be under the supervision of an outside Educator not living in the home. Part-time Learners register with District 50 Special Services as home school students, follow the Colorado Homeschool Law, carry on their own home-school curricula, and access **half** of the usual Vision funding for a limited number of classes and services. Part-time enrollment is available only prior to October 1st.

In addition to documented class time for full and part-time Learners, there is a lot of planning involved—particularly at the beginning of the year. Ongoing commitments include learning documentation, keeping track of funding and driving Learner(s) to outside classes and events. Most VHCP parents estimate that they spend between 25 and 30 hours a week on their Learners' education. For a VHCP family to get full value from the program, participation is vital. Attending Community Meetings, serving on committees and helping organize classes or group activities are all excellent ways for Learner families to have a sense of ownership in the program. This participation, too, takes time, but is well worth the effort.

Who Can Enroll in VHCP?

Enrollment is open to anyone between the ages of 5 and 20 who resides within the Delta County School District. Admission shall be made without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, ancestry or special needs. Prospective VHCP Learners need to complete an application and attend a mandatory orientation before enrollment. Some Learners from adjacent School Districts have also been enrolled in the program with special permission.

Students Over 18

Any Learner over 18 must have a step-by-step plan for meeting diploma requirements as part of his/her learning plan and must demonstrate that they are staying on track.

Enrollment Deadline

Ideally, Learners complete all enrollment paperwork by September 15, although the enrollment period officially ends October 1st. For access to full funding for the 2011-2012 academic year, Learners must be enrolled and complete their Learning Plan, schedule and budget by September 19th. Learners enrolled between September 19th and October 1st will have access to a lower level of funding. NFVHCP accepts new Learners throughout the year as resources allow. Learners who enroll full-time after October 1st will have access to an RC and no more than \$500 of student funding for the year.

How Much Money Are VHCP Learners Given?

VHCP Learners aren't "given" any money. Once the Learner agreement is signed and the Individual Learning Plan completed, the District includes the Learner on its rolls as a public school student and is allocated state funds for the Learner's education. A portion of this is set aside as learning funds that may be accessed by Learners and their families to pay for resources needed to implement the Individual Learning Plan for that academic year. The rest of the State funds are divided between the District and the local VHCP program to pay the Learner's RC and offset administrative expenses. Part of an RC's job is to help Learners with funding. There are very specific guidelines for how Learner funds are accessed and what may and may not be purchased with them.

Items that funding *may* be used for, provided they are listed on the Learner's Learning Plan, include but are not limited to:

- Curriculum
- Tutors
- Classes
- Community Educator stipends
- School supplies and materials
- Technology equipment and software
- Safety Education classes (First Aide, CPR, Driver's Ed, etc.)

Items that funding **may not** be used for include but are not limited to:

- Weapons or any type of weapon related paraphernalia (hunting licenses, etc.)
- Pets, livestock, veterinary visits and animal handling/training equipment
- Personal items (everyday clothing, personal athletic gear, etc.)
- Vacations and entertainment (amusement park passes, etc.)
- Religious, partisan, sectarian or denominational books, instructional materials or activities
- Items that will financially benefit the individual Learner
- Chemicals

All non-consumable items purchased on a Learner's behalf are the property of the local VHCP and must be returned to the program when no longer being used by the Learner and/or the Learner leaves the program. If a Learner wishes to keep a non-consumable item, the District must be reimbursed for the item, the amount of the reimbursement being determined by the original cost of the item minus depreciation. (Non-consumable items are any durable goods that can be used more than once. Examples: A paintbrush is a non-consumable item, paint and paper are not; a textbook is a non-consumable item, an Educator's stipend is not.) VHCP offices keep an inventory of non-consumable items in use by Learners and/or available through the program. This list must be consulted by Resource Consultants and Learners before buying new items.

Who and What is an RC?

RC is the acronym for Resource Consultant. RCs are employees of the Delta County School District who are hired and trained by the individual VHCP offices to work directly with Learners and families, serving as liaisons between Learners and the VHCP. RCs are recommended to the Learners and families by the Learning Coordinator and are asked to interview at least three RCs to find a good match. Each RC forms an individualized written agreement with each Learner and family. Problems that come up after the agreement is signed which cannot be resolved informally must be addressed using the VHCP Grievance Procedure – See Appx A.

An RC's job includes . . .

- Being part of the Learner's Core Consensus Group and a participant in designing and implementing the Learner's Growth Path and Individual Learning Plan.
- Making sure Learners and families understand and comply with all documentation requirements and deadlines.
- Seeking community resources and educational opportunities for Learners.
- Serving as a support person for Educators working with their Learners.
- Meeting weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly with each of their Learners and families for a one hour check-in. This is based upon the RC/Learner agreement.
- Being a supportive mentor, role model and advocate for Learners.
- Helping to develop and implement needed procedures within the program.

Who Are VHCP Educators?

VHCP Educators are comprised of two groups, Family Educators and Community Educators. Both Family and Community Educators get support from the Academic Coordinator and Educator Consultants who are Highly Qualified in their subject areas. The NFBHCP also has a Learning Team that assists RCs and Learners in developing and implementing Individual Growth Paths that address areas of learning where a Learner has opportunities to grow.

- **FAMILY EDUCATORS:** Family Educators are usually parents, but other family members may also act as an Educator for a Learner. Time spent with a Family Educator can be counted as learning time (provided the learning is properly documented). However, Family Educators *cannot* be paid with Learner funds.
- **COMMUNITY EDUCATORS:** Community Educators *can* be paid with Learner funds. Community Educators come from all walks of life and teach everything from English to welding. Community Educators are independent contractors who enter into a written agreement with the Learner's family. The VHCP is not involved in this agreement. Therefore, it is the family's responsibility to be sure of the backgrounds of people to whom they entrust their child's learning. All Educators who advertise through the NFBHCP or hold classes in NFBHCP facilities must undergo an AVERT background screening every three years. **(See Educator Handbook for details on what is involved in being NFBHCP Community Educator.)**
- **ACADEMIC COORDINATOR:** The NFBHCP Academic Coordinator (AC) oversees the required testing of Learners and the overall educational health of the program. She or he works on developing classes and other learning opportunities for the program. The Academic Coordinator also acts as a resource person for Family and Community Educators and coordinates the work of the Educator Consultants.
- **EDUCATOR CONSULTANTS:** In addition to Community Educators, each VHCP office employs an Educator Consultant (EC) for each Core Subject (Language Arts, Math and Science). Educator Consultants meet the state requirements for being highly qualified in their subject area. ECs are required by the District to verify that all Learning Plans adequately address their core subject area to promote academic achievement and growth. They also assist Educators and Learners with addressing special needs in their area of expertise and offer classes for interested Learners.
- **LEARNING TEAM:** This team is made up of the RC, the NFBHCP AC, ECs and Program Director. The Learning Team develops Individual Growth Paths with Learners to offer support and enrichment to their learning experience. Learners who show low growth through the documentation of growth of Learning Plan goals, show low growth and/or are below proficient on CSAPs, or who may need more of a challenge, will be offered recommendations and resources to support better growth. A family may choose to follow these recommendations or work with the Learning Team to develop additional alternatives to address the area(s) of concern that are then approved by the ECs.

What Kind of Curriculum Does NFVHCP Use?

In the VHCP, the curriculum, or course of study, is individualized for each Learner and is determined by the Learning Plan. A copy of each year's Individual Learning Plan is filed in the NFVHCP office and a copy of the Learner Schedule is filed with the Delta County School District.

While the VHCP waivers allow for the freedom to choose and/or develop curriculum based on the individual needs of the Learner, all Learning Plans need to address the Colorado Standards for language arts, math and science. ([State Standards for every grade level can be viewed at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stdn.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stdn.htm)) **Non-secular, religious curriculum may not be purchased using Vision funds, and religious study may not be used for calculating hours/credits.**

Grade level is determined by conversations between the Learner, family and RC and by relevant assessment tests. Grade level must be established by October 1st, after which there will be no change until the following academic year.

What Kind of Documentation Does the VHCP Require?

The following forms need to be filled out and kept on file at the NFVHCP office for each NFVHCP Learner: ([See Admission – Enrollment Forms at http://nfvision.com](http://nfvision.com))

1. To be filled out once:
 - a. **Application**
 - b. **Immunization form**
 - c. **Release of Information**—This document provides information to the NFVHCP to the extent that Learners/families feel comfortable with personal information being released.
 - d. **Child Protection Screening**—By signing this form, families are officially taking responsibility for the choices they make in regards to hiring Educators.

2. To be filled out annually:
 - a. **VHCP Program Agreement**—This document states the essential commitments needed for the successful development and maintenance of a working relationship between the Learner and the program.
 - b. **RC Agreement**—This is a written agreement providing details of the working relationship between the Learner, Parent and RC (Learner's Core Consensus Group)
 - c. **Basic Skills Assessment**—Through discussion and assessment that includes the Learner, family and RC, all parties agree upon a grade level for the Learner to take the current year's mandated tests (if required).

- d. **Learning Plan**—The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a document created by Learner’s Core Consensus Group in the fall and revisited as needed throughout the year.
- e. **Learning Schedule**—A schedule of the 360 mandatory learning hours per semester. This schedule will be submitted to the District Office.
- f. **Medicaid Consent Form**—The Department of Health and Human Services sponsors a program allowing our school district to seek reimbursement for health related services to children with Medicaid health insurance. Completing this form helps our school district expand health and health-related services for all children. This form must be completed for every child each year and is sent to the District.

How Is Learning Documented?

It is important to document what is being learned and how you know that learning is taking place. Learning goals are set by the Learner’s Core Consensus Group. These are then assessed to determine the level of progress. For example, is a specific concept being introduced, practiced or mastered? What grade or credit has been earned? Documentation of learning is easier and of higher quality if it reflects both what is being learned and how you know what level of mastery occurred. Learning can be documented in many ways:

- A portfolio. This is a physical record of classes, field trips, projects or demonstrations of skill, which may include:
 - Photos
 - Video recordings
 - Certificates of completion
 - Journals
 - Examples of class work
- A computer data base
- A calendar
- Completed workbooks or packaged curriculum
- DIBBELS, CSAP, ACT and other standardized testing **(See Appendix B: Testing)**

Learning is also documented online using Paragon tracking software and reviewed periodically by the Learner’s RC, the ECs and the Learning Team. Learners/Families must log learning hours weekly. Other documentation that **must** be on file with the VHCP, which Learners should also keep a copy of at home, include:

- Enrollment Forms
- Original funding receipts
- Immunization Record
- Any additional documentation of learning that is not in the portfolio.

Transcripts: At the end of each year, the Core Consensus Group meets to reflect on that year's learning, create a transcript for the Learner and discuss possibilities for the next year. High School Learners are required to have a transcript completed at the end of each **semester**.

Can VHCP Learners Take Classes at Regular Schools?

Older Learners can take up to 3 classes in a regular middle or high school. For each class a Learner takes, \$500 per year must be transferred to that school from the Learner's available funds, and the Learner must agree to follow the school's policies. (See Appendix C: **Crossover Procedure.**)

How Do Learners Graduate?

Learners who meet the VHCP graduation requirements receive a Delta County School District diploma. There are two types of VHCP diplomas:

- Credit Diploma—Graduating Learner must . . .
 - have a transcript with the required 24 credits for graduation,
 - have documentation of skills and accomplishments in a portfolio,
 - do a public demonstration or exhibit,
 - write a personal manifesto,
 - demonstrate the means, skills and clarity to embark on his or her next step in life **and**
 - show proficiency in benchmark standards in reading, writing and math, or other documented levels accepted by the Graduation Committee.

- Community Diploma--Graduating Learner must . . .
 - have documentation of skills and accomplishments in a portfolio,
 - do a public demonstration or exhibit,
 - write a personal manifesto,
 - demonstrate the means, skills and clarity to embark on his or her next step in life **and**
 - demonstrate a strong foundation for each of the Core Qualities:
 - Endurance
 - Excellence
 - Communication
 - Wisdom
 - Sustainability
 - Inspiration
 - Courage
 - Truth
 - Service

What About Special Needs Learners?

Learners in the VHCP are eligible to receive any Special Education support necessary, subject to the terms of the existing contract between the VHCP and the Delta County School District. VHCP will comply with all District, State and Federal requirements to insure that the needs of special education students are met, in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

How Are VHCP Decisions Made?

The VHCP is a consensus based program. Decisions that are made, from the Board of Stewards on down to individual Learner's Core Consensus Group, are reached as a result of discussion and consensus whenever possible. Decisions on which consensus cannot be reached may be decided by majority vote based upon coming as close to consensus as possible. Staff may also make decisions within their designated areas of responsibilities. (See [Appendix D: Consensus.](#))

In order to continue to receive public funding, however, the program must meet certain non-negotiable requirements handed down by the District School Board and Colorado State Board of Education. Within the framework of these requirements, there is considerable flexibility, which allows each local program to come up with unique procedures for fulfilling these obligations. In the NFVHCP, Parent Advisory Committee Meetings are held regularly to communicate about various issues and make overarching procedural decisions. Standing and ad hoc committees and the NFVHCP staff develop recommendations based upon key stakeholder (Learner and family) input and feedback to the program. Procedure and program recommendations are processed with the Parent Advisory Committee, RCs, ECs and support staff. Learner and family input into the program is critical for its success and improvement. Community meetings, surveys or recommendations to RCs may be used to gather information and make decisions.

How Are Problems and Grievances Handled?

When at all possible, problems are ironed out informally through conversations and problem solving strategies with the individuals involved in the issues. If agreement cannot be achieved informally, program participants, members of the public, and VHCP employees must follow the due process procedures outlined in the Policies and Procedures manual (GOV 106). (See [Appendix A: Grievance Process.](#))

How Is VHCP Structured?

There are seven levels of accountability and oversight with regards to the VHCP:

1. **LEARNERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.** VHCP Learners are considered full partners in creating their educational experience. According to the VHCP philosophy, the educational journey must be enjoyable and meaningful, in and of itself, while at the same time helping Learners develop their basic skills and unique talents fully enough to pursue adult lives that benefit themselves, their community and the world.
2. **EDUCATORS.** Both Family and Community Educators provide an educational environment for Learners that supports the acquisition of knowledge and the opportunity for meaningful growth experiences. Educators work with Learners to document learning and with RCs and other Educators to recommend and apply responsive interventions when Learners are having difficulties. The Academic Coordinator, Educator Consultants and Learning Team work with Family and Community Educators to insure that basic standards and competencies are being addressed for each Learner.
3. **RESOURCE CONSULTANTS (RCs).** The RC position was created for the dual purposes of helping Learners and their families create and follow a Learning Plan and making sure Learner funding and documentation is in compliance with District guidelines. RCs meet with Learners regularly to monitor their educational progress. They also assist Learners with finding Educators and any other resources needed to reach their educational goals. An RC maintains contact between Learner families and the VHCP and acts as advocate, when necessary, for the Learners and families with which he or she works. RCs are hired by individual VHCP offices.
4. **INDIVIDUAL OFFICES.** Each of the three VHCP offices serves a specific population of Learners. Each office is responsible for providing educational and financial oversight of the Learners in their service area. They do this partially through providing an RC for each Learner and Educator Consultants for core academic subjects, and partially through sponsoring a variety of educational opportunities within their community. Each VHCP office has a Director who is hired and overseen by the Board of Stewards. Other staffing is done on an as-needed and funds-available basis by individual offices. (For a list of current NFVHCP staff and their roles go to: <http://nfvision.com/aboutus/staff.html>)
5. **BOARD OF STEWARDS.** The VHCP is governed by the Board of Stewards. It is their responsibility to make sure VHCP is in compliance with District requirements. It is also their responsibility to maintain a balance between the Mission Statement and Philosophy of the VHCP and the District Policies and Procedures. Stewards are elected by the members of each VHCP community and confirmed by a vote of the other Stewards. A Steward may be anyone in the community who is willing to commit to the Board of Stewards job description, but cannot be an employee of the VHCP. Only one Steward from each program may be the parent of a Learner in that program.

6. **DELTA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT.** The District enrolls VHCP Learners as public school students and receives and disburses state funds on their behalf. The District School Board negotiates with the Colorado Department of Education for the waivers needed and is answerable to the State Board of Education for the wellbeing of the Learners in the program.
7. **COLORADO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.** The State Board of Education monitors and audits the program regularly and issues the waivers to the Delta County School District that allow the program to operate using public funds.

CONCLUSION

Success in the VHCP begins and ends with the Learners and their families. We operate on keeping our agreements. If a Learner's Individual Learning Plan and Growth Path are followed with integrity, and if his or her progress is well and thoroughly documented, both individual Learners and the Vision Home and Community Program will continue to flourish.

APPENDIX A: GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Due Process

(GOV 106, 107)

GOV106 – Program participants, members of the public, and VHCP employees must follow the due process procedures in order to address grievances. The final step in the process is meeting with the Board of Stewards.

GOV 107 - Final administrative appeals in matters regarding recruitment, promotion, discipline, or termination of personnel shall rest with the Board of Stewards. *Waivers 22-63-301, 22-63-302, 22-32-110 (1)(h)*

Part of any honest and valuable relationship is a constant communication about what is and is not working. Honest feedback, given in a compassionate and caring manner, is a valuable and worthwhile service to others. It is ideal when people feel enough safety and security to ask for such feedback on a regular basis. In Vision, the preferred option is for evaluation to be an ongoing and natural part of the learning cycle. Unfortunately, the ideal isn't always realized. Because of this, we have grievance procedures, appeals, evaluation forms and methods of documenting complaints. A negative consequence of such procedures is that they encourage people to use them in place of creating positive and functional relationships. Therefore, Vision procedures have direct and open communication as the final goal.

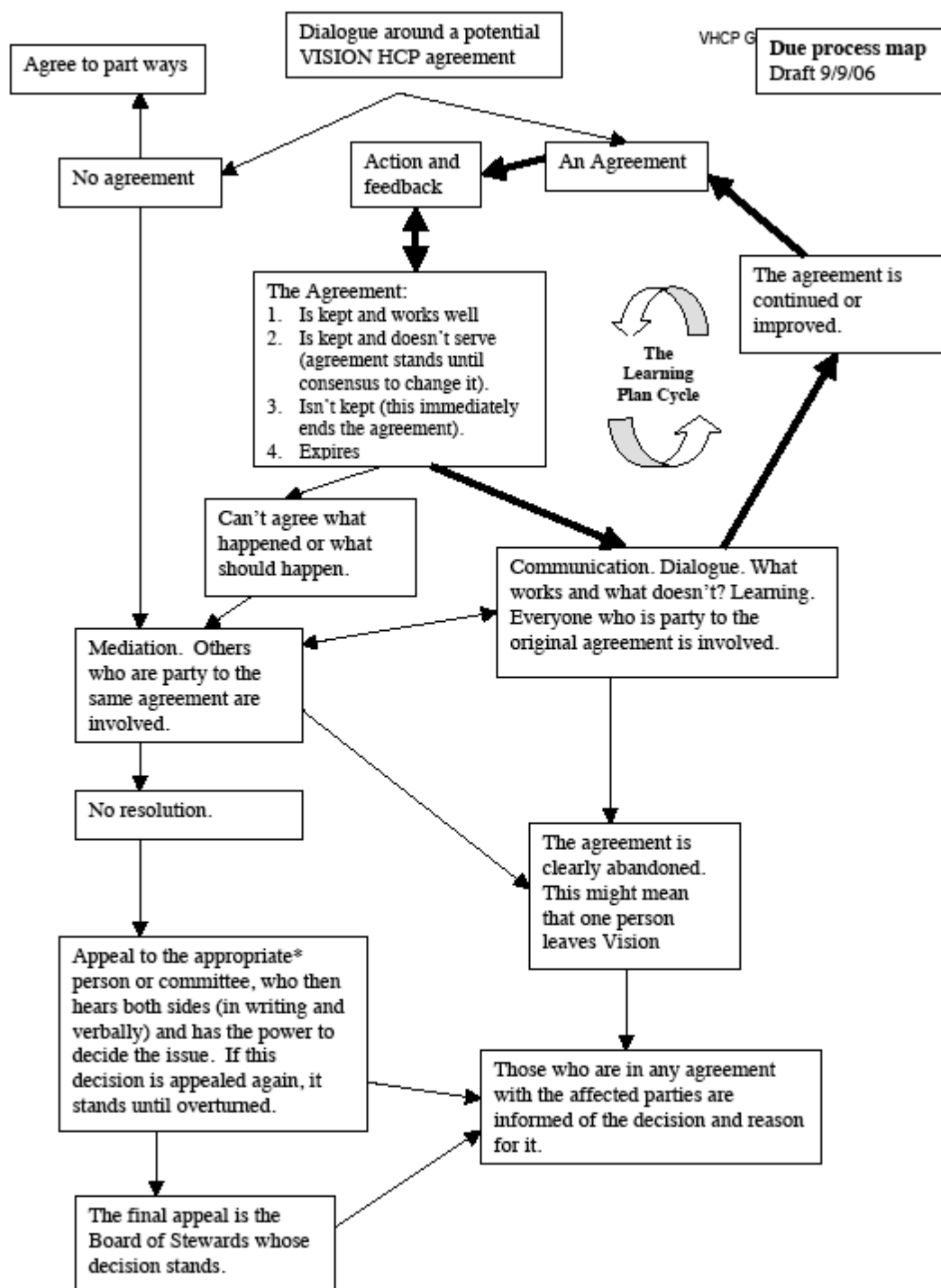
The following is the procedure for moving through disagreement. Document each step in writing and get signatures if appropriate:

1. Be proactive and anticipate potential issues. A complete agreement contains a plan for checking-in and evaluating the progress and process as well as a course of action if agreements are not met. Maintain open and ongoing communication about whether the agreement is or is not working. Listen carefully to other points of view and create a respectful environment in which disagreement can be safely and quickly aired. Anyone who decides to back out of an agreement is responsible for formally communicating this to all relevant parties.
2. Prepare yourself. Get the support you need. Be clear about what you would like to see happen. Prepare a strategy.
3. Identify the source. Decide if your disagreement is with a person or group of people, or with a policy or procedure. Then proceed to the appropriate section below **Personal Conflict**
4. Go to the source. Talk to the person or people with whom you disagree. Share your concerns and give them a chance to share theirs. If you anticipate that this conversation might be difficult, consider finding a mediator, such as the Vision advocate. Both parties should either agree upon the mediator or each party should bring their own personal support. A sense of equality is vital.
5. Be persistent. If resolution still is not present, it may be necessary to bring in other RCs, the Director or a Steward to mediate. The final step requires a hearing in front of the Board of Stewards, whose decision is final.

Policy Change

When you disagree with a NFVHCP policy or procedure, identify specific issues and any counterproposals. Your proposal is more likely to get consensus of the NFVHCP Community if you have already run it by those with differing views and found common ground. Preparation is important.

Once you've prepared your proposal, put it in writing and submit it to the NfVHCP office by the 20th of the month. It will then be discussed at the first policy meeting of the following month. Come to the meeting and be ready to share and listen in order to find a win-win solution. The following is a visual representation of the Due Process procedure:



APPENDIX B: TESTING, Learning Team Recommendations and Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP)

New Learners are encouraged to take an assessment test such as Scantron before September 15 to help identify appropriate grade level and to be used as a beginning measurement of competency in language arts, math, and science.

Kindergarten through grade 3 Learners are required to take the DIBELS test to measure reading readiness skills at least twice per year.

Since VHCP is a publicly funded program, all Learners from third to tenth grade are required to take the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests in early spring. The results provide families and Learners with basic information on strengths and areas to work on, and can be helpful in designing the Individual Learning Plan for the following year.

Eleventh graders are required to take the ACT test in April. The results of these tests will be sent to the NFBHCP office and directly to families. The NFBHCP staff and RCs organize and administer CSAP and ACT testing.

The state requires that all third grade Learners be proficient in reading, which is part of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act. If a third grade Learner does not receive a score of "Proficient" or "Advanced" in reading, then he/she and his family will need to work towards progress in reading and document that progress through an Individual Literacy Plan. There are no other required scores at this time.

The consensus team needs to address learning support and challenge areas identified through the Learning Team process in the Individual Learning Plan. Your Resource Consultant may receive recommendations from our Educator Consultants as part of the Learning Team process for areas where learners have opportunities for growth based upon last year's documentation of growth and testing information. Learners and parents need to work with their Resource Consultant to incorporate the suggestions into the ILP. Strategies can be discussed with the Resource Consultant and Educator Consultant(s) to determine agreed upon strategies that must have Educator Consultant approval.

The State of Colorado requires that each high-school student and parents or guardians, in collaboration with their school counselors/school personnel, develop an Individual Career and Academics Plan (ICAP). These plans include career planning and guidance. For more information, see the state board's Web page: <http://www.boarddocs.com/co/cde/Board.nsf/Public>

Learners and their families agree to cooperate with DIBELS, CSAPs and/or ACT testing, documentation of growth, address areas of learning where additional support or challenge is identified through the Learning Team process, and create and implement an ICAP for high school Learners when they sign their contract of agreements with the VHCP. If they fail to follow through on this agreement, the consequences for noncompliance with this contractual obligation are forfeiture of remaining funds for the school year and the possibility of being permanently exited from the program.

APPENDIX C: CROSSOVER PROCEDURE

Learners who are enrolled full-time in the Vision Home and Community Program can access classes and extra-curricular activities at Delta County's traditional public schools in the following ways:

1. Learners can participate in up to three traditional public school classes at the price of \$500 each per year (\$250 per semester) - not to exceed \$1500 per year. The classes are payable by semester at the beginning of each semester. Based on information submitted on the Learner Crossover Forms to the VHCP office, payment for the classes is made by a transfer of funds. Funds are transferred from Learner accounts to the accounts of individual schools where the classes will be taken. Learners do not fill out funding requests to pay for these classes.

Elementary school Learners do not have access to classes at traditional public school except for students with special needs as negotiated through the IEP or ILP.

Learners must register as early as possible for classes. The Learner, family and RC must complete a Learner Crossover Agreement and submit the appropriate forms to the office staff.

2. Sports and other extra-curricular activities will continue to be available free of charge. Additional class charges for special supplies and so forth may be assessed in the same way as they are for traditional public school students. Learners must pay all sports-participation fees out of their own pocket.
3. Out-of-county Learners may be able to enroll in crossover classes in their own school district, but must personally negotiate the details with their local district. They may be able, also, to participate in their local school district extra-curricular activities. Each family must reach those agreements on a yearly basis with their own local school districts.

APPENDIX D: CONSENSUS

A prerequisite to consensus is listening to and valuing others. Consensus means acknowledging that every participant deserves respect and acknowledgement of his or her views. Consensus means acknowledging that anyone might have the answer being sought and that the best way to find it is to carefully listen to each person.

What follows is the consensus process used for all official Vision meetings.

Consensus Process:

1. Make sure that the group is aware of the consensus process and agrees to follow it.
2. Identify a facilitator who is skilled and familiar with the consensus process.
3. Set the agenda. Either the agenda can be set and published in advance, or it can be determined at the beginning of the meeting with the facilitator asking for potential agenda topics and writing them all down on a blackboard or equivalent. Ask participants to be brief when giving descriptions of their proposed topics.
4. Prioritize the agenda. Once all potential topics are listed, the facilitator asks participants to vote for their top 2-4 topics (numbers depend on group size, topic length and time). Topics are then prioritized in the order of the number of votes received.
5. Begin with topic #1. If the facilitator suspects that people will have a lot to say on this topic and are not yet clear about a solution, always consider breaking into small groups (pairs are often good) before a large group discussion. Small groups allow more people to think aloud, feel heard and receive feedback quickly. Often it works well to insist that each person in the small group gets 3-5 minutes of uninterrupted time to talk (the facilitator will need to keep track of time and tell people to switch half-way through the small group time). Follow the small group time with a full group circle in which everybody or each group has a brief amount of time to share current thinking.
6. When the facilitator suspects that the group is close to consensus (this may be right at the beginning of the discussion in which case the previous step can be skipped), have a participant make an official proposal. Make sure everybody is clear about the proposal, and then ask for people's level of agreement in the form of hand signals. "Thumbs up" means that a person can support the proposal. Hands together means that a person could support the proposal but it is not optimal for him or her. Hands held up in a stopping motion, means that a person is unable to support the decision. Have participants hold their signals and look around to see what each participant's decision is:
 - a. If there is consensus with all participants demonstrating thumbs up, put the proposal in writing and have everybody sign it. Continue to the next item on the agenda.
 - b. If there are only a few people without their thumbs up, ask those people about their reservations. After the reservations are all heard, ask if anybody has an amended proposal that would address those reservations. Repeat the process and continue until all participants have thumbs up to the proposal or to the idea that the proposal be accepted even if there are still some reservations.

- c. If consensus seems far away or the details of a decision are not holding everybody's interest, consider forming a subcommittee that represents the diversity of group opinion. Make sure that subcommittee knows when and where they'll meet next (maybe after the meeting to set a time). Be clear about whether (i) the subcommittee has the power to make a final decision (get consensus from the whole group on this) or (ii) the subcommittee will reintroduce the topic at a future meeting after they have created a proposal on which they have full consensus.
 - d. Go to the next topic on the agenda.
7. There are times when a decision has to be made and there is not sufficient time to reach full consensus. In these cases the facilitator can get consensus to go with majority vote or with a temporary solution until full consensus is reached. Put these decisions in writing.
8. In some cases full consensus, although still the ideal, is not realistic. In these cases, it is permissible to make decisions without everyone's consent. One of the more difficult scenarios in consensus is when somebody's main purpose is to undermine the process rather than to find a good solution. In this scenario, it is sometimes appropriate to make a decision without full consensus. Moving forward to make a decision should only happen after people in the group have made every effort to have the dissenting participant feel like an important member of the group. If the effort fails to have positive results, and participants have talked openly and kindly about the reason for overriding that person's vote, the group can move forward with making a decision. If, in this process, people get angry or confrontational, stop and take a break from the topic. Encourage people to talk individually with the dissenter. Any decision made by overriding a participant's vote should be considered less than ideal and temporary.
9. Discuss time, place and agenda for the next meeting. Always save 5-10 minutes for this.

Some tips:

- Make sure that on every topic each person who wants to be heard has a chance to speak.
- If the facilitator isn't sure what to do next, stop and ask the group for help.
- Write suggestions for the agenda somewhere where everyone can see it. The facilitator should consider getting someone else to be the scribe.
- The facilitator should not be the primary source of information or opinion about a topic.
- Give each issue enough time to discuss it thoroughly and do it justice. Make sure all participants are clear about what was decided. Quickly moving through the agenda just to finish almost always backfires.
- Remind people often that the meeting itself is a special time. It is a place to honor each other and share thoughts and an opportunity to search for deeper truths. The quality of the meeting experience is the highest goal as are enjoyment in the process and wise decisions.
- Make sure that all people who are important players in a decision are invited to the meeting. If they have opinions but are unable to attend the meeting, ask them to write their opinions and make copies for everyone who attends the meeting. If important participants are invited but just do not attend the meeting, make decisions without them, and provide them with information detailing what occurred. Remember that within Vision, all decisions can be changed later.