

A Guide for  
What to Expect  
When Your Child is  
Fully in Charge of  
Their Education

From the Professionals at:

Deep Root Center

A stylized tree root system graphic where the word 'Root' is integrated into the main trunk of the tree. The roots extend downwards and outwards, symbolizing deep roots and stability.

# **A Guide for What to Expect When Your Child is Fully in Charge of Their Education**

Welcome! You are likely here for one of two reasons:

- A. School has not worked out for you or your family
- B. Your family is dedicated to unschooling (free-range learning)

In either case, you are looking for home-school support from the professionals at Deep Root Center.

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Besides our non-coercive, self-directed in-person programs at our two facilities, Deep Root Center also provides fee-based one-on-one consultations.

We offer expertise in writing home-schooling documentation and general support to find resources, set goals, and pursue a self-directed education. This process is totally individualized for each child and family.

Self-Directed learning is a completely different educational paradigm than most of us experienced. We are inviting parents & guardians to travel along on this unique journey with their kids to explore the world on a whole new level that celebrates each individual - their interests and aspirations.

We are here to hold your hand through the entire home-school/free-range/unschooling experience - whether your child is a member of one of our facilities or home-schooling at home.

# An Overview of Home-school Requirements:

## Three Documents:

- **Letter of Intent (LOI)** - This is a letter that informs the school that you are homeschooling your child. It is usually sent to the school with the IHIP. Occasionally, in certain circumstances, it is sent before the IHIP.
  - **Individualized Home Instruction Plan (IHIP)** - This is your child's plan submitted to your school district. It includes all of the subjects with a narrative description of what your child will explore in each - with resources listed.
  - **Quarterly Progress Reports (four per year)** - These are narratives of what your child has done for each subject over the previous ten weeks. (Some districts require a chart with progress grades - S, U, F. We know which ones have that requirement.) At the end of the year there is annual assessments that we can guide you through.
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## Fees:

**In Person Membership** - DRC has a Pay-What-You-Can Policy for our in-person services. This is determined through a conversation with our Exec. Director.

**Consultation Services** - see below chart

Fee Schedule for Home-school Consultation Services			
IHIP & Letter of Intent Package	Quarterly Reports	Additional Home-school Support	High School Completion Package
\$60	\$50/ea	1st 1/4 hr. free then \$50/hr	\$75

## **Steps to beginning the Home-school Journey with DRC's support:**

- Maria (our executive director) meets with each child (usually via phone call for consultations) to get to know their interests, goals, and aspirations. Her main goal is to ask questions to draw the child out and get to know them really well. Then, she asks what they would like to study in each subject and takes notes on the child's responses. She provides options and suggestions based on the early part of the conversation.
- During this process, Maria also explains home-school regulations in New York State to the parent or guardian. Within those rules, she encourages each child to take charge of their education and have fun without the restrictions of following traditional grade-level classes. She also reiterates that as a home-school family, the parent or guardian is responsible for sharing the documents with the school district.
- With the information from the child, Maria writes the Individualized Home Instruction Plan (IHIP) and Letter of Intent (LOI) for the child as a Google Doc - both documents are required by New York State. She includes information about free curricular resources available in the IHIP for the child and parent to explore on their own.
- Maria shares the Google Doc with the parent or guardian with instructions to type their name as their signature and share it with their school district. Each district has a different point person assigned to home-school documentation. We advise that you send it to the Superintendent's secretary, and they will get it to the correct person.

## ...Steps (con't):

- The districts usually respond with a home-school packet. Those can be ignored because you have already submitted the IHIP. The only detail you need is whether they are requesting more information. If that is the case, families can contact Maria for help.
- The final formal requirements are the Quarterly Progress Reports and Annual Assessments. Two weeks before the end of each quarter, The DRC staff talks to all of the student members and then contacts all the parents (members and consultees) and asks them to send a list of projects, activities, and classes the child has engaged in during that quarter.
- The Quarterly Reports are also written as Google Docs and shared with the parent or guardian with instructions to sign them and share them with the school district. The DRC staff writes the last Quarterly Report and a year-end assessment narrative in June and offers guidance on standardized assessments.
- Finishing High School - three documents that fulfill compliance for high school completion - provided by DRC
  - Home-school diploma - blank template - completed by parents.
  - Transcript - includes classes, projects, & activities as a home-schooler and high school classes completed at a previous school - with credits - no grades or GPA.
  - Letter to the District Superintendent asking them to write a letter of completion, including the statement: *this is a certification of compliance in accordance with New York State home-school regulations Section 100.10.*

# What Happens Now?

This is often the point where parents and guardians begin to contact us with “what’s next” questions and with concerns because they don’t know what their child is “supposed” to be doing. And they are afraid they will be considered “lazy” and will lose skills and fall behind their peers.

This is when we again explain the Deep Root Center philosophy of self-directed learning and the concepts of free-range learning (often referred to as unschooling in the home-school world).

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## Learning is Natural - School is Optional

- Every individual is a brilliant natural learner with their very own strengths, challenges, interests, and internal timeline, which means the artificial developmental schedule based on age and grade level makes zero sense. No child can be behind - only on their very own schedule.
- Once you really learn something, you can't lose it. Yes, if you don't use a particular piece of knowledge for a time, you may have to dig for a few seconds to find it - but if you really learned it, it will always be there in the depths.
- Even though the world is constantly changing, the knowledge considered vital 100, 50, 25, 10, or even 5 years ago is still taught - through memorization and dissemination from teacher to student, and deemed valid and current! We know that following interests and aspirations and working collaboratively in a diverse multi-age group with a trusted mentor - instead of competitively in a coercive setting is much more conducive to learning what we truly need as a society.

## Learning is Natural - School is Optional (con't.)

- We want kids to understand that learning is fun and is based solely on curiosity, creativity, exploration, and discovery - not rote memorization.
- Hence, there is no specific curriculum for this approach. We don't recommend purchasing a curriculum-based program.
- Workbooks and free apps or websites (such as Khan Academy, CK-12, or Universal Class) that are grade-level based can be used - non-linearly - they can jump around from one concept (one grade level) to another. Or, if they want to take a specific class from beginning to end, they can do that too. The world is wide open for exploration. Always follow the child's lead.
- Playing Games (gaming), using learning apps such as Khan Academy, PBS Kids, or CK-12, watching YouTube video tutorials, reading (books, comics, or graphic novels), drawing, painting, crafting, developing storylines for computer games and then creating them, writing stories based on their favorite series, cooking, baking, researching a hyper-fixation (animals, trains, world cultures, etc), building with Lego (Magna-tiles, Lincoln logs, etc.), nature studies, erecting cardboard cities, playing with toy cars and trucks, racing, running, and chasing around the yard (hide & seek or tag), stick play, tearing apart a computer, car, or ... and putting them back together - this list of projects and activities can literally include anything the child is interested in. It doesn't have to be labeled "educational" to be an utterly valid learning activity. **Everything counts!**
- The above are the types of things we ask parents to observe and list for us to write in the quarterly progress reports.

# But what are the general benefits of Self-Directed Learning?

- Kids are generally happier (more content)
- They are more creative and are motivated to follow their ideas to their natural conclusions
- They feel empowered to make decisions and will learn that the simple act of making choices will always have consequences (beneficial, neutral, or harmful)
- Kids are less fearful of change or new ideas.
- They understand that life can get messy and that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process.
- They have a profound understanding of who they are and what they like.
- They are not afraid to go after something they think will be good for them or their community.
- They recognize that learning is a fun, lifelong process.

## Final thoughts:

Trust that your child knows exactly what they need. Let them explore the world and follow their curiosity. They will show you what they are good at and what they are interested in learning about. And then, just try to keep up with all of the awesomeness that will transpire.

**Have Fun!**



# Resources:

## Learning apps:

Khan Academy - <https://www.khanacademy.org/>



### PBS KIDS

Educational games and videos from Curious George, Wild Kratts and...

[pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org)

<https://www.ck12.org/student/>



### Math Games, Math Worksheets and Practice Quizzes



### Crash Course

Crash Course is one of the best ways to educate yourself, your classmate...

[thecrashcourse.com](http://thecrashcourse.com)

## Resources available through North Country Library System - all you need is a library card

<https://www.kanopy.com/en/login>



### North Country Library System

Browse, borrow, and enjoy titles from the North Country Library System...

[northcountrylibraries.overdrive.com](http://northcountrylibraries.overdrive.com)

### UniversalClass.com

UniversalClass is the place to continue your education online and fulfill all your lifelong learning goals.

<https://learn.mangolanguages.com/login?>

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