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Mission

At Deep Root Center (DRC), we believe that all young people deserve a safe educational environment where they feel like they are part of a community - and where they are free to explore all the possibilities. Learning can only happen when kids intuitively understand that they are secure, accepted, and trusted to make decisions, make mistakes, and explore all their interests to achieve their ever-evolving aspirations.

Vision

Deep Root Center, a member of the Liberated Learners Network, strives to provide all young people with access to interest-driven, life-long learning practices outside of a formalized school setting. DRC provides resources and community connections that empower families to successfully navigate the legal and social aspects of educating without school.

Taglines

Learning is natural. School is optional. And - Explore the Possibilities!

Background and History

Deep Root Center for Self-Directed Learning (DRC) is an innovative educational facility located in Canton, NY, where real-world, personalized learning - meets real world kids. Deep Root Center, a 501(c)3 NYS Not-For-Profit, was founded in January 2014. DRC replicates a non-coercive and non-compulsory educational model that has been developed and used by North Star: Self-Directed Learning for Teens in Amherst, MA, since 1996. DRC has two Centers – the original in Canton at 48 Riverside Dr., a house we purchased in 2018, and our satellite Center in N. Lawrence.

DRC currently serves nearly 40 young people (ages 5-19), between the two Centers from all over St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties in Northern New York, who were unhappy, disengaged, and disenfranchised in the public-school setting. In addition, several of our students have also experienced childhood trauma in many of its various forms, including exposure to extreme poverty, bullying, divorce, severe medical issues, and deaths of siblings. Many would leave school altogether, if they did not have the option of joining DRC. As you know St. Lawrence County is consistently ranked in the top ten poorest and economically depressed counties in New York State and the local school districts have high drop-out rates. These communities also have a history of high rates of teen-age pregnancy, generational unemployment and reliance on public assistance, as well as an extensive drug culture.

With our staff's mentoring support, our students are empowered to take charge of their education and create a unique learning plan designed around their specific interests and goals. DRC provides the facilities and resources for our students to take classes, create hands-on projects (including art, cooking, crafts, sewing, and carpentry), complete independent research,

take on-line classes, play and write music, and socialize in a safe, multi-age environment. Our older students are able to audit classes at SUNY Canton and SUNY Potsdam. Deep Root Center has also developed collaborative relationships with many businesses, organizations, institutions, and individuals in the community who provide services, advice, and equipment to borrow, as well as volunteer and community service opportunities for our students.

DRC programs are unique in that they bring the concept of learner-centered, non-coercive, self-directed learning into the real world. Our one rule is respect for oneself, each other, and the space. Within this very loose structure, our students are completely free to explore the world on their own terms, which we believe builds self-confidence, intrinsic motivation, empathy, and a desire to create a positive future.

Deep Root Center relies on the many community volunteers who are attracted to our mission and philosophy. Volunteers teach classes, assist with hands-on and independent research projects, and spend time with the students as positive role models. They appreciate DRC's open, non-coercive environment, which inspires a level of positive energy and respect, where they have the opportunity to share their talents and knowledge with engaged students who are excited about learning. "The students are happy here," is one of the most common comments we hear from both visitors and volunteers.

DRC has a "pay what you can policy," which means we subsidize annual fees which total over \$125,500.00 this academic year. Our students have chosen DRC as an educational alternative because public school has not worked for various reasons. The DRC Staff and Board are dedicated to providing an educational experience that supports and encourages independence, authenticity, flexibility, autonomy, collaboration, and fun in a safe, non-coercive, dynamic environment filled with materials and resources, where youth can create a positive educational plan based on their interests and aspirations, whether a child's family has the ability to pay our full tuition fee, or not.

More information is available at deeprootcenter.org