DECEMBER 2021

The Vision Voice

Voice. Choice. Achieve.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

12/8 EXPLORATIONS- 1:30 @ LEARNING CENTER- COOKIE DECORATING

12/15 EXPLORATIONS- 1:30 @ LEARNING CENTER- JOURNEY INTO THE NORTH POLE

12/17 FIELD TRIP- COVERED BRIDGE- MONTROSE, CO

12/20-1/3 CHRISTMAS BREAK

A WORD FROM CARYN...

by Caryn Braddy

"Expect change. Analyze the landscape. Take the opportunities. Stop being the chess piece; become the player. It's your move." Tony Robbins

For several years now, I have tried to start my monthly department meetings with a meaningful quote. It sets the mood for the meeting while hopefully providing some inspiration. Last month, I shared my belief that being in public education is not for the faint of heart. There are always new rules and regulations often set by people who will never meet our staff, parents or learners. At Vision Charter Academy (VCA), we often feel these changes more deeply than traditional schools because we have never fit into that box in a tidy way. Most of the time we find ourselves analyzing the new rule or requirements and translating them into how our school can comply with the new mandate. Over the past few years, I have been discussing and debating with the Colorado Department of Education's Attendance Auditors regarding our school's attendance policies and documentation that "proves" we are serving our learners and our learner's attendance during the count window is valid for funding. Recent personnel changes at the state level have caused a reinterpretation of whether how we count the instructional time scheduled for our learners can actually count per the School Finance Act of 1994. Our school has always been on the cutting edge of innovation, unfortunately we are under the rules of a twenty-seven-year-old finance act that was developed long before innovation became a buzzword in education. What does that mean for us right now?

- VCA is an innovative school that has been serving learners and parents for over twenty years and will continue to serve our community using our mission to guide us.
- The Colorado Department of Education Finance Division and the Assistant Attorney General believe that our current funding structure which counts parent instruction as part of the required 720 teacher pupil contact hours does not meet the requirements within the Finance Act or the provisions for in-field teacher requirements for Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- The Assistant Attorney General presented his findings to the State Board of Education who directed him to be helpful and creative in finding a solution with VCA in order to continue the school's mission while meeting the statute requirements.
- Based on an exhaustive review of these requirements and the continued position of the CDE Finance Department and the Assistant Attorney General, VCA must pursue becoming a multi-district online school which is a funding structure that works with our model as it measures content not seat time. It does not require us to become a traditional online school.

Therefore, VCA will be pursuing authorization as a multi-district online school through the required state application process. This does not change our model necessarily and does provide us with opportunity to: look at current practices, analyze whether they serve our mission, determine if they are within the requirements of the laws that govern public schools and online schools, and choose to refine our practices to better meet the needs of our families while being in a stronger position with the state attendance auditors. In this process, three things we will continue to do:

1. Serve our families and learners by providing meaningful support through our highly qualified personnel, individualized resources, and unique learning opportunities within the community.
2. Focus our policies and procedures to support families, learners, and staff while complying with all rules that regulate public schools and specifically utilize the Quality Standards Outline for online schools to best represent the work our parents and learners do instead of trying to prove seat time.
3. Continue to welcome change as opportunities to learn, grow, and succeed in individualized education through partnerships with families and communities.

This is an opportunity to grow from our roots and reach for the stars while continuing to challenge the boundaries of what education can be in this state. I look forward to finding the opportunities that are before us as we keep our foundation firm and see what is possible within this new school designation. We have been given the boundaries – it's our move next to see what we can achieve.

Caryn L. Braddy

Executive Director

EXPLORATIONS / FIELD TRIP

by Naomi Sutliff

Wednesdays 1:30-3:00ish

12/01/21 NO EXPLORATION

12/08/21 Cooking Decorating @ Learning Center

12/15/21 Journey into the North Pole & Learning Center

12/17/21 FIELD TRIP- Covered Bridge Ranch, 17249 6250 Rd., Montrose, CO (Dress Warm, we will be outside)
We will meet @ 10:00 a.m.

(All field trips will be the last Friday of the month)

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR EXPLORATIONS & FIELD TRIPS

Please remember that almost all Explorations and Field Trips are limited to a specific number of learners. If you RSVP, please show up for the event. If you cannot make it, please email Naomi Sutliff @ nsutliff@visioncharteracademy.org and cancel. We have waiting lists and your cancellation allows other learners to attend. For those that have sent a cancellation, thank you.

SPOTLIGHT ON LEARNERS/PARENTS

by Stephanie Barnett

Anyone involved in the homeschooling world will attest that one of the greatest support systems you can have in place are other like-minded families regarding education. These individuals understand the drive for schooling kids at home and the importance of creating individualized educational opportunities. No one understands that philosophy better, and embraces those ideals more, than Becky Weider. A homeschooling mom of two daughters and co-organizer of the Mountain View Coop in Montrose, Becky and her committee members have crafted a learning environment that not only meets her learner's needs, but incorporates several other families in direct instruction opportunities. The cooperative group creates age appropriate classroom learning environments from K-8 through high school that are beneficial for learners who benefit from the collaborative expertise of homeschooling parents. These classes not only meet state content standards, but also create cohesive group learning opportunities that can sometimes be difficult to come by in the homeschooling world.

Now in its eighth year, the coop is running as smoothly as ever. With the help of other contributing partners, the high school World Geography course is planned for the entire year and includes a variety of interactive and engaging classroom assignments (cooking around the globe...yum!). This group of educators ensures learners are making the most out of their time together, completing direct course instruction, class discussions, and guided practice through hands-on learning. Becky and her teaching partner have embraced the challenge of ensuring the coordination of this high school social studies course to allow families the opportunity for reteach and guided practice during the remainder of the week. Ultimately, these family partners are shaping a love for learning with like-minded students that is sure to direct their future paths. VCA is thankful for our families who have committed their time and talents to support learner success and academic achievement. Thank you, Becky, for leading the way!

SPOTLIGHT ON LEARNERS/PARENTS

by Jane Knob

The High School team selected Vanessa Sullivan as Parent Spotlight for December. Vanessa has been in VCA for 9 years. The biggest reason she chose to homeschool in 2013 was because God put it on her heart that they needed to do something different about schooling their children. Her daughter was in kindergarten at that time and she was very shy so this seemed to be the right thing to do. Homeschooling helped her to come out of her shell and show her personality.

Her biggest challenge that she faces is schooling several grade levels. Keeping everyone on track is a challenge at times.

One of her greatest joys about homeschooling is the flexibility in adjusting their schedule or their day. She likes following a schedule, but sometimes it needs to be adjusted to fit a child or the entire family.

Vanessa is also a great support of VCA and serves on the Board of Stewards.

SPOTLIGHT ON LEARNERS/PARENTS

by Jennifer Wray

The High School team has enthusiastically nominated Breonna Giron as a Spotlight Student this month. Breonna has an infectious positive attitude that brightens everyone's day. At the beginning of this school year, Breonna faced difficult obstacles but has been able to overcome them with grace and perseverance.

Breonna is in both English and Algebra II campus classes where she is a wonderful role model to other students. She works hard and does her best with all her studies. Breonna is a joy to meet with because she speaks with so much enthusiasm and passion concerning what she is learning about. She is especially passionate about Social Studies and beams when she is discussing the founding of the US and Civil Rights.

Breonna also is a great example of taking risks. She has pushed her comfort zone in the Horizons class by jumping into activities like rafting and doing the ropes course. She is a valuable member of our community coming up with the idea of having a Murder Mystery dinner and helping with the food for thought drive. She also did a brilliant performance of a play she wrote herself for the Open Mic Night at the coffee house which was met with enthusiastic applause.

Thank you for all you do for our community, Breonna! We are lucky to have you here!

SPOTLIGHT ON LEARNERS/PARENTS

by Jennifer Wray

Vision works with so many amazing family partners! This month we are excited to spotlight Dede Acevedo. Dede is the family partner for Lisa, a thriving sophomore at Vision. Dede and Lisa began their journey at Vision for medical reasons but even after medical concerns had passed, they found that Vision is able to fit well with Lisa's interests. Dede plays an active and essential role in Lisa's education at Vision by setting daily and monthly goals. Lisa has learned to be self disciplined and organized with guidance from her family partner. Dede works well with the high school team by being present in meetings and submitting work samples when needed.

Dede has helped to foster Lisa's creativity through Vision's platform of choice. Lisa is an incredibly creative student and Dede has been able to help foster that creativity. Lisa takes sewing, Harp, culinary arts, Literature of the Middle Ages, and other classes specifically tailored to her passions. Dede also informs the high school team about upcoming performances so our staff at Vision can see Lisa's talents on the stage!

Dede deeply understands her daughter's interests which enables her to seek out unique opportunities for Lisa. This semester alone, Lisa has baked jalapeno cheese bread, sewed pajamas and skirts, played the harp for audiences, and discovered real world money management skills with Dede engaged and learning alongside her daughter.

Thank you for all you do and all your support, Dede! We are so happy to have you and your family be part of the VCA community!

PARIS TRIP

by Heidi Reese

Bonjour!

Our High School Science HQC, Heidi Reese, was recently invited by Education First (EF) Tours to attend an all-expenses paid training tour of Paris. She joined 19 other teachers from across the country, in France, to experience the history and culture of Paris. The trip also helped prepare her to lead Delta County students and community members for this summer's European travel tour, where they'll travel to the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, and England. If you'd like more info on students or parents joining this tour, please contact Heidi at hreese@visioncharteracademy.org.

Heidi Reese
High School Science HQC
Vision Charter Academy

WRITING WORKSHOP – FRIDAY MORNINGS

Writing Workshop on Friday Mornings

Just a reminder that every Friday morning we have a virtual workshop/study hall for grades 3-8. If your learner has an assignment to work on, would like to brainstorm with others, or they just need extra support in Language Arts - they are welcome to join! We meet on GOOGLE MEET (see link for each level below).

The "class" is set up to provide a mini lesson each week, depending on the needs of the learners that day. I do not assign homework, nor grade any materials. Here is an example of some topics we have looked at already this year:
Grades 6-8: History of Language & Writing / How to Paraphrase / Using a Thesaurus/ Keeping a Gratitude Journal / Review of types of Essays / Topic Sentences / Persuasive Essay / Grammar Puzzle / Word Ladders / Note Taking Skills
Friday's from 9-10am Link for Grades 6-8:
Google Meet joining: https://meet.google.com/syz-wuww-izf

Grades 3-5: History of Written Language / Who Writes? / Language as a Secret Code / Intro to Paraphrasing and using a Thesaurus / Adverbs / Limericks / Greek and Latin Roots - decoding words / English Words from other Languages.
Friday's from 10:00 – 11:00am; Link for Grades 3-5:
Google Meet joining: https://meet.google.com/ptv-kmrj-pgz

Let me know if you have any questions - Angie
Email: agauthier@visioncharteracademy.org

DECEMBER 2021

HIGH SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

by Darci Hellman

Important news you can use for High School Learners 2021-2022

High School Happenings

Join a tour of the Technical College of the Rockies on
January 14, 2021 at 1:00 pm

Learners, families and staff are invited to join a campus tour and learn more about the outstanding career programs available right here in delta county.
Sign up on this TCR Tour Sign Up Form.
Watch this video for an introduction of the opportunities they offer. TCR VIDEO

Watch for future high school field trips to Colorado Mesa University, Western Colorado Community College and Collbran Job Corp.

Junior Summit Class

You are climbing the Summit towards Graduation
and getting closer to the Peak.
Join the Junior Summit Class 2nd Semester
Virtually Each Friday at 10:00 am
Via Google Classroom starting January 17th to May 18, 2022

At VCA we are always striving to meet the needs of all Learners on their individual pathways toward Graduation and your future goals. The Summit Class will offer resources to help you prepare for Senior Year and Graduation and is your required ICAP credit for the year. We want to hear what you would like to learn more about and are giving you the opportunity to share your input on what topics you would like to have us include in the course. Complete this Juniors Summit Survey to provide your feedback.

KUDO'S KORNER

by Amanda Gerhardt

For the month of November we had the following staff highlighted for Kudos!
Way to go VCA!

- **Amy Winston by Angie Gauthier:**
  - “She has saved me so many times with families and is always cheerful and kind. She is so responsive and supportive. I am not sure how she does it with the amount of items she is managing but I really appreciate her so much! I feel she deserves a medal but perhaps just a HUGE THANK YOU will do.”

- **Maria Adame and Veronica Diaz-Adame by Naomi Sutliff:**
  - “Maria Adame and Veronica Diaz Adame went WAY above and beyond when filling FFT Bags on Friday. They not only filled 150 bags, labeled and boxed them, they organized and cleaned the FFT shed. It looks absolutely amazing right now. I cannot thank them enough for their hard work and the extra effort they put in to help.”

- **Theresa Hardin by Amy Winston:**
  - Theresa, a K-8 HQC, was caught in action going above and beyond helping a Senior edit her essay for college while they were in the Resource Center. Way to go Theresa!

- **Kayleigh Higginbottom, Debbie Johnson, Kersea Calhoun, & Kerstin Owens by Amanda Gerhardt:**
  - Kudos for going way above the call of duty on the Friday before Thanksgiving Break to offer our learners an amazing and engaging event that I am certain no one will forget!

➪ Winners of the $5 gift card will be drawn and announced at staff All Access on 12/06/2021 and printed in our next newsletter!

Want to earn a shot at winning a $5 gift card of your own? Send kudos when you catch staff going above and beyond to: hrdocuments@visioncharteracademy.org

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

by Kayleigh Higginbottom

As we start to gear up for this holiday season and end of the year. There is often a whirlwind of emotions and activities. This time of year can vary among everyone for experiences. However, one thing that is relatable across the board is the wrap up of a year and leaving space for new beginnings. Here are some tips and ideas to help make the most of this darker time

When making goals for change, using the Specific, Measurable, achievable, Realistic and Time (SMART) can be a helpful way to form goals that are personal to you and allow accountability with flexibility. Here are some tips highlighted in the New York Times to support a Resolution to stick

Another common experience for people is the association of feeling down and worn out with the loss of daylight hours. This has been described as seasonal depression and has become a common term that can also be a clinical diagnosis called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Less daylight can have impacts regardless of having SAD, Here are some tips to make the most of these winter months.

1. Go out and enjoy winter activities (even if it's for a short time). Getting outside with fresh air and vitamin D can go a long way.
2. Take up a new hobby (cooking, reading, new craft)
3. Practice random acts of kindness towards others.
4. Get plenty of rest (like animals that hibernate for the winter, we humans need rest too)

If interested in checking out some ways to get outside with others check out some local happenings with the Nature connection and in CO.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

by Kayleigh Higginbottom

Downhill skiing and snowboarding for 4th & 5th graders Ski Passports

National Park Passes Every Kid Outdoors