

Surface Creek Vision

# Guide to Graduation

2011-2012

Everything you need to know about:

Assembling your committee  
Demonstrating your preparedness  
Paperwork & other requirements  
Credits  
Core Qualities

& more!

# GRADUATION

## GRADUATION GUIDELINES

*The best preparation for a meaningful future life is the creation of a meaningful present life.*

Within Vision our goal is to build a diploma around you rather than the other way around. We want you to graduate from the Vision Program knowing yourself and knowing that you have the skills, qualities of character and support to successfully begin the next step of your life. A Vision diploma is accredited through the Delta County School District and represents a body of work that is an excellent foundation for life, college or a trade.

The Vision credit diploma and the Vision community diploma are both flexible and challenging. We believe that learning happens best when there is choice, and these diplomas come with many options and choices. With choice, however, comes responsibility. You must be able to communicate and demonstrate what you have learned. We ask that you be able to convince yourself and others that you have earned this diploma.

## I. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- A. A Graduation Committee who will certify that all graduation requirements have been met. This committee will meet at least twice for a learner that is earning a credit diploma or at least four times for a learner that is earning a community diploma.
- B. **For Credit Diploma:** Twenty-four credits of high school level work.

**For Community Diploma:** Demonstration of a strong foundation for each of the core qualities and components.

- C. A public presentation or exhibit.
- D. A demonstration of self-knowledge and the means, skills and clarity to embark on the next step of life. This may be demonstrated in a personal manifesto.
- E. Show proficiency in benchmark standards in reading, writing and math with either a composite score of 16 or above on the ACT or by testing out of a Vision approved assessment at 80% or higher.

#### **A. Assembling the Committee**

The graduation committee will include at a minimum the resource consultant, another person active in the Vision program, a peer, a mentor in a main area of interest and one other respected member of the community. These people will support you and eventually decide if you have earned a diploma. Ideally, the committee should be as diverse as possible. Parents may not be on their child's committee but are encouraged to attend and participate in meetings.

#### **B. For *Credit Diploma*: Twenty-four Credits**

##### **Definition of Credit**

We recognize that high school level work may occur at any age. We will count for credit towards the diploma any activity that meets the following standards:

- 1) If learning happened in a classroom setting, the level of credit assigned for learning must be in line with traditional Carnegie units/credits (one Carnegie unit equals 180 hours of classroom time). In local schools, one high school semester class is approximately 90 hours or 1/2 of a credit.
- 2) If learning happened during individualized learning hours, then one credit equals at least 120 learning hours, which are engaged discovery time that is demonstrated and compatible with the learning plan.
- 3) If credit is to be earned through testing, then 80% or more proficiency on local high school class final exams or 80% or more proficiency on other examinations approved by the Vision program must be documented in the portfolio.

## **Documentation of Credit**

- 1) Activity must be documented in a manner that communicates clearly the nature, quality and skill level of the activity for which credit is being given.
- 2) Portfolios are a recommended means of documenting learning. Portfolios are a collection of your work and achievements. Your portfolio may include journal entries, essays, artwork, pictures, recommendations, videos or anything else that helps explain what you have accomplished. You may choose to select what you feel are your strongest works, or present examples of progress over time.
- 3) Transcripts are a required means of documenting learning. Transcripts are a document that represents all the learning that has occurred during a learner's time in Vision and are a required part of each year's end-of-year paperwork.

## **For *Community Diploma*: Demonstration of a strong foundation for each of the core qualities and components**

1. Endurance (perseverance, patience, commitment, surrender, self-motivation, promise)
2. Excellence (ease, beauty, fulfillment, aspiration, completion)
3. Communication (expression, understanding, empathy)
4. Wisdom (perspective, integration, self-knowledge, world knowledge, insight, curiosity)
5. Sustainability (self-reliance, interdependence, stewardship)
6. Inspiration (love, delight, playfulness, passion, vibrancy, universality)
7. Courage (facing fear, compassion, decisiveness, trust)
8. Truth (integrity, responsibility, honesty, humility)
9. Service (family, friends, community, world)

## **C. A Public Presentation or Exhibit**

Learners in the Vision program learn and receive support from the community. A presentation is a way to give back to the community by sharing ideas, creations and learning. It is also a way to receive recognition for achievements. A quality presentation involves significant preparation and practice and may count for credit. Vision requires that you work with a mentor specifically for the purpose of preparing your presentation. Selection of this mentor is by consensus of you, your RC and family. The presentation must be advertised as a presentation for graduation purposes and open to the public. Gatherings of the Vision community for the purpose of hearing and supporting such presentations will be encouraged. The RC and committee need to feel good about the quality of the presentation and should be in a position not to be surprised by it. Everybody who sees the presentation must know that it has the intended purpose of meeting the graduation requirement and know how they can give feedback if so inclined. The Vision office will schedule one graduate presentation evening to which all graduates are invited to participate. Graduates who plan to participate in this event will be expected to assist in its planning and execution.

#### **D. Personal Manifesto**

The personal manifesto is a coherent statement of a person's beliefs, goals, motivations and history. The manifesto can take many forms. It may be a collection of poems, a radio or video presentation, or an essay. What is important is that the author communicates who he is and where he is going in a way that others can feel and understand. Before we award a diploma, we want to know that you are familiar with the steps and skills necessary to succeed in these goals and that you have already begun taking the necessary steps.

#### **E. Proficiency in Benchmark Standards in Reading, Writing and Math**

All students in the Delta County School District are required to take the ACT test, and we use these test scores as one measure of proficiency. Currently, a score of 19 in each subject is the minimum requirement for acceptance into Colorado colleges. Nationally, a score of 16-19 seems to indicate basic knowledge. Vision uses 16 as the minimum required score in a subject as one way to show proficiency. In cases where ACT scores are below 16, the graduation committee may

determine an alternative method by which proficiency can be demonstrated.

## II. GRADUATION PROCESS

### A. **Assemble a graduation committee at least nine months before the diploma is to be received.**

The learner is responsible for doing the footwork of assembling the committee and finding a time that all can meet. For more information, see p. 30.

### B. **Work with your resource consultant and/or mentor to prepare the following:**

1. **A portfolio (recommended)** that documents at least 3 learning activities from the past is strongly recommended. Learning activities are anything you spent significant amounts of time learning, from horseback riding to algebra. You can use samples of your own writing, journal entries, photographs, art, etc. The portfolio should demonstrate not only that you have worthwhile experiences and skills but also that you know how to communicate these to others.
2. **A graduation plan (required)** that describes what you intend to do, learn and achieve by the time of your graduation. This is a statement of intent and is subject to change as you change. It is important, however, that your graduation committee have an idea of what you intend to accomplish.

Also include in your graduation plan your intent to accomplish the diploma requirements for a public presentation, the creation of a personal manifesto, a portfolio and a demonstration of your readiness to embark on your next step after Vision.

### C. **Submit an *Intent to Graduate* form to the Vision office.**

For returning learners this form must be submitted by August 30, or at least nine months prior to the graduation date and will include names of committee members as well as a plan for meeting graduation requirements. New learners will have until November 15 to turn in their Intent to Graduate Form, their Graduation Plan and to hold their first committee meeting.

**D. Orient the committee by hosting your first meeting.**

The purposes of this first meeting are:

1. Making sure members of the graduation committee understand their role.
2. Sharing of plans, ideas and concerns.
3. Introducing the graduation plan and portfolio.
4. Scheduling future meetings. We strongly recommend scheduling them at a regular time well in advance. A minimum of two meetings is required for a learner earning a credit diploma or a minimum of four meetings is required for a learner earning a community diploma, before the learner can graduate.

Introduce yourself to the committee by answering the following queries either verbally or in writing. These also may be good questions for developing the manifesto or presentation.

- What did you learn in the past year that you consider most significant?
- What are you excited about doing and learning and why?
- What do you see as your strengths?
- What do you want to improve and why?
- How do you take care of yourself physically, mentally, emotionally and/or spiritually?
- What's your favorite way to spend time with others? By yourself?
- Describe your optimal learning environment and how it supports learning.
- How have you helped others and how do others help you?
- Who and what inspires you?

**E. Organize and facilitate graduation committee meetings. Work with committee members until all are satisfied that graduation requirements are met.**

At each committee meeting describe your progress to your committee members. Make sure they agree with your self-assessment. Listen to feedback. Ask for support. Explain changes that

you make or wish to make on your graduation plan and make sure that committee approval for these changes is received.

The granting of a diploma is not a final exam. It is simply the culmination of the process outlined in this document. Over a period of time the committee will raise any concerns they may have with your progress. You can then deal with these concerns so that when it is time to discuss graduation all major issues will already be resolved.

When everybody on the committee agrees that all the requirements for a diploma have been met, obtain everybody's signature. This certification will be turned in to the Vision office and a diploma will be issued.

#### **F. Celebrate your achievement.**

Vision will organize a fairly traditional graduation ceremony for those learners who want one. Learners who participate in this ceremony have access to a cap and gown. The learners' resource consultants, parents, friends and/or mentors are invited to speak on behalf of each of the graduates. A reception is hosted by the program after the ceremony. By February 1, those who wish to participate in the Vision ceremony must have filed in the office an *Intent to Participate in Graduation Ceremony* form.

Because Vision focuses on choice, a learner can plan his or her own graduation ceremony or celebration. However, because Vision organizes a graduation ceremony, the program does not provide funds for additional ceremonies.

## **GRADUATION COMMITTEE ROLES**

### **Role of the RC**

- Let the learner know that they must take charge of their own graduation process at least a year prior to graduating as the committee needs to be oriented at least 9 months ahead of time and this will require preparatory work.
- Facilitate the learner and the committee members to understand and feel empowered in their

roles. Help all to understand their options and their power.

- Be clear about what you think in regards to the learner graduating. Give the learner clear and honest feedback early on in the process about what it will take for you to be satisfied awarding a diploma. Be ready to state your opinion to the committee early on as well.
- Insist on full consensus before a diploma is given. Get the necessary signatures from the committee.
- If you and/or the committee have questions or things don't feel right, discuss concerns with the director.
- Keep the Vision office updated on the progress of the graduate.

## **Role of the Learner**

- To make things happen.
- To understand that part of your role is educating the committee. The Vision diploma is unique and anyone who is new to it needs to do some thinking. There may be times, for example, when the discussion is not really about you but rather is about committee members thinking aloud about what math skills are needed in society. Your role is to listen, learn, ask questions and be ready to advocate for your position.
- To get committee members' commitment to the process and then to carefully and respectfully draw out the advice, support and concerns of each committee member. Work with them until their concerns are met.
- To be prepared for each meeting. Do your homework. Talk one-on-one with each committee member in between meetings. Know your goals for each meeting and be ready to state them clearly. If committee members feel like showing up was worthwhile, you are doing your job.
- Be clear about each of the graduation requirements and present a plan for how you will meet or have met each one.

- Make sure that every committee member is at each meeting. If they are to be absent, work with them to find a substitute committee member that both of you can support OR go over your goals for the meeting with them ahead of time and receive their input. Update them later about what actually happened.
- When possible get everything in writing. It is your job to make sure that clear communication happened and that nobody is surprised by your interpretation of things.
- Thank everybody for helping you. There are many ways to do this. Consider feeding people well at meetings.

## **Role of the Committee Members**

- Understand the intent of each graduation requirement and insist that each is met to your satisfaction. It is essential to the integrity of this process that for any learner you graduate, you can give a strong and convincing argument for how each requirement was met and why, in general, you believe that he/she is ready and qualified to receive a diploma.
- It will take some time for you to really get to know the learner, to understand your role and power in the committee, and to understand the graduation requirements. Insist that you get this time. One of the learner's roles is to prepare you adequately to make this decision. If you don't feel prepared, then the learner is not ready to graduate. Stand your ground if you feel pressured or unclear. It is okay not to hurry, even if the learner feels the need. The learner can stay in this program and do practically anything they could do after graduation. Age is not an issue as long as the learner is clearly working hard towards a diploma.
- The graduation process is new to most of us, and it has all kinds of potential to generate big questions about what really is important and right. Get the support you need between meetings to find clarity. It is essential that you can put words to your feelings and questions and describe them to the committee and learner.
- One of your most important responsibilities is to be a role model for the learner. Support the learner in clarifying goals, presenting work, and deciding when the goals have been met.

Help celebrate.

- You were chosen by the learner to be on her committee because she values you and your values. This means it is a gift to the learner if you insist on what it takes for you to fully back the learner in graduating. Yes, support the learner, but also feel free to totally rock the boat if it is needed. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to let a learner get mad at you.
- The graduation committee really has the last word on when a diploma is received. You know the learner best.
- Consider the following skills when deciding if the learner really has what it takes to move on to the next step of life. Does the learner have:
  - At least one realistic and inspiring option for what to do after graduation? “Realistic” means that they have researched the option and have all they need to begin. Multiple options are strongly recommended. Sometimes the relevant question is not “what you will do” but “how you will be.”
  - A marketable skill? She can show such a skill by holding a job that utilizes that skill, having a letter of reference from a master, showing that she is already admitted to college, etc.
  - Support? Demonstrate the necessary relationships, assets and sources of inspiration to thrive on her chosen path after graduation.
  - Basic skills needed for life? Everyone on the committee should be aware of the learner’s skill levels for reading, writing, math, cooking, etc. and be convinced that these skill levels are sufficient for her not only to function in society but to contribute to it.

## **Things That Might Come Up**

1. If the committee wants to discuss among themselves without learner or parents present, they are encouraged to do so.

2. Parents are not on the committee but are to be invited to participate, to be listened to and to be respected. The ideal is for each graduate to have his parent's support or blessings. If parental support is not present, the committee has the right to serve as mediator or to ask for mediation. It is important to do what is in your power to bring agreement before graduation.
3. If the learner wants to change a committee member he may do so only with the full consensus of the rest of the committee and after the committee member in question is heard from.
4. Sometimes it is obvious after the first meeting that the learner is nowhere close to being ready for graduation. That's okay. The committee experience is much more valuable when each member has been able to know the learner over time and an early start is therefore very desirable. Suggest ways that the committee gatherings would be meaningful to you and suggest them.
5. One of the biggest and most important requirements is built into the process. The learner is expected to have the skill and responsibility necessary to organize and facilitate the necessary committee meetings. Do not jump in and rescue the learner if they don't do this. If the first meeting is poorly facilitated, committee members need to describe to the learner exactly what they want to see in the future. Maintaining a committee over time and developing a meaningful and respectful relationship with each member is one of the largest requirements and must be emphasized.
6. These requirements are purposely vague. The diploma is not about following a formula. It is about figuring out your life and being able to stand up and communicate to others who you are and what is important to you. The learner is expected to be able to interpret the requirements in a way that is meaningful to him/her and then give a strong sales pitch to the committee. Finding meaning out of ambiguity is an important skill. Sometimes it is very tempting for committee members wanting to help to jump in and solve the ambiguity. Try to resist this temptation. If the learner's attitude is "Is this good enough?" and the answer is "NO, it

isn't," then say so. The learner must know it's good and be proud of it.

# GRADUATION DETAILS

## CORE QUALITIES

These are qualities that we all aspire to achieve during the whole of our lives. The motivation of the community diploma is that all graduates understand and have first-hand experience with all of these qualities and their components. This may happen naturally as you pursue your interests, or you may have to seek out activities that fulfill a certain quality. Vision believes that at the core of any learning experience you will find one or several of these qualities. If you find different qualities that are important to you, you may substitute them, with the approval of your committee, for the ones suggested below.

### **ENDURANCE:**

- **Perseverance:** resilience; persistence in the pursuit of an end in spite of counter influences, opposition or discouragement.
- **Patience:** calmly waiting for that which one desires, undisturbed by obstacles, delays or failures.
- **Commitment:** a promise or pledge to do something, a strong feeling of responsibility to complete an action.
- **Surrender:** to yield to the power of another; to submit; to give thanks; to let go, to forgive or grieve, to release; to keep to the goal.
- **Self-motivation:** drive; determination; incentive; the ability to undertake an action on one's own volition; a sense of inner purpose.
- **Promise:** a declaration made with respect to the future, giving assurance; indication of future excellence and achievement.

### **EXCELLENCE:**

- Ease: tranquility; security; facility; effortlessness.
- Beauty: a particular grace, adornment or excellence; a trait or combination of traits calling forth praise, admiration or respect; perfection of form attained through the sensible manifestation of an artist's conception.
- Fulfillment: completion; realization of full potential.
- Aspiration: a strong desire for realization; healthy ambition; a goal aspired to.

### **COMMUNICATION:**

- Expression: a full and explicit statement, representation or symbol; conveying thoughts or feelings.
- Understanding: the power of comprehending, analyzing, or distinguishing; friendly or harmonious relationship(s); agreement of opinion or feeling; adjustment of differences.
- Empathy: the capacity for experiencing, as one's own, the feelings of another.

### **WISDOM:**

- Perspective: the ability to look at a subject from different points of view; the relation of parts to one another and to the whole.
- Integration: behavior in harmony with the environment; formation into a whole by the addition or combination of parts or elements.
- Self-knowledge: understanding of one's own character, feelings or motivations.
- World knowledge: the ability to function in a larger context; awareness of and connection with the affairs, interests and pleasures of the world.
- Insight: discernment; apprehending the inner nature of things; intuitive understanding; immediate and clear learning; to create new meaning from context.
- Gratitude: appreciation; thankfulness; reverence.
- Curiosity: desire to know; interest leading to inquiry; desire to investigate and learn.

## **SUSTAINABILITY:**

- Self-reliance: confidence in and exercise of one's own power or judgment; the ability to meet one's basic needs (e.g. shelter, food and companionship).
- Interdependence: the ability to rely on and be relied upon; necessity of relationship; recognition of consequences of one's own actions on the human and nonhuman world; ecological relationships; cooperation.
- Stewardship: responsibility for sharing one's time and talent for the benefit of others; the ability to exercise responsible care. Living in a benevolent and nondestructive way with one's environment.

## **INSPIRATION:**

- Love: benevolence; devotion; tenderness; the ability to cherish something. Full immersion into experience or thought.
- Delight: lively pleasure; extreme satisfaction; keen enjoyment.
- Playfulness: lighthearted, benevolent fun; providing amusement or enjoyment; to move or function freely within prescribed limits; free, unimpeded motion; humor.
- Passion: intense feeling or emotion of compelling force; a strong or extravagant fondness, enthusiasm or desire for anything.
- Vibrancy: the quality of pulsating with life, vigor or activity, open and responsive to environment, events and other people.
- Universality: relation, extension or applicability to all; unrestricted versatility or power of adaptation; resonance.

## **COURAGE:**

- Facing fear: the ability to respond pro-actively in the presence of feelings between anxiety and terror be those feelings natural and well grounded or unreasoned and blind.
- Compassion: a deep feeling for, and understanding of, misery or suffering along with the

desire to promote its alleviation; spiritual consciousness of the personal tragedy of another or others and selfless tenderness directed toward it.

- **Decisiveness:** the ability to dispel doubt; to arrive at a choice or solution which ends uncertainty or contention; to bring to an end definitely and conclusively; to find direction and act.
- **Trust:** assured reliance on the character, ability or strength of someone or something; to believe; to constructively act in a difficult situation based upon faith.

### **TRUTH:**

- **Integrity:** soundness; uncompromising adherence to a code of moral, artistic or other values; the state of being undivided; harmony of action and belief.
- **Responsibility:** reliability; trustworthiness; able to answer for one's conduct and obligations; able to choose for oneself between right and wrong.
- **Honesty:** authenticity; sincerity; straightforwardness of conduct; adherence to the facts; fairness; to see, state and hear the truth, even if it's unpleasant.
- **Humility:** modest sense of one's own significance; a heightened sense of others' significance and openness to others' input and ideas.

### **SERVICE:**

- A commitment to helpful activity towards family, friends, community and world, and to make another's needs or will a basis for action.

## **EXAMPLES OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES**

Following is a list of possible ways to demonstrate qualities. The learner and their committee will determine the actual qualities demonstrated by an activity.

- Identify some skill or task you would like to master. Identify as well a master teacher whom

you can model and who is capable of recognizing excellence. Submit to the guidance of that master until the skill is learned to the point of ease. (Surrender, ease, trust, humility and/or facing a fear.)

- Prepare and plant a vegetable garden and care for it for a year, journaling by season what is required and the results. Include care of the soil, pest management, yields, nutrient values and your own thoughts and feelings about the process. (Interdependence, stewardship, perseverance, self-motivation, perspective and/or expression.)
- Attend town meetings for six months. Interview at least one council member. Read reports about what is happening in town in the local paper. Find out how the council is formed, what jurisdiction they have, what the annual budget is, how it is financed, and what powers citizens have. Identify one controversial issue and interview at least one person with each viewpoint. Form your own viewpoint, articulate it on paper and send it to the newspaper. (Perspective, understanding, honesty, integration, interdependence, expression and/or service to the community.)
- Write your own poetry in a blank book you either buy or make yourself. Write poetry from the heart that speaks the truth from your perspective. In the course of two years fill all the pages in the book with finished, carefully handwritten versions of poems you have completed. (Perseverance, promise, beauty, aspiration, insight, truth, self-motivation, fulfillment, self-knowledge, expression, perspective, honesty, passion, vibrancy.)
- DJ at KVNF weekly for six months individually or with someone else. Attend DJ meetings, one meeting of the Mediation Committee and the Annual Membership Meeting. (Promise, expression, interdependence, vibrancy, facing fear and/or service to the community.)
- Plan and prepare three meals a week for your family for one month. Do the dishes, too! Talk with family members to find out what they enjoy or dislike. Balance the menu for nutrition, taste, texture and eye-appeal. For the ingredients that are not on hand, shop within a budget agreed upon by whomever is paying for them. Ask someone in advance to help you prepare and do clean up after some of the meals. Prepare some of the meals yourself. Invite friends to

join in at least one of the meals and pay particular attention to creating a special mood and table setting. (Service to family and friends, self-reliance, beauty, fulfillment, self-motivation, promise, interdependence, understanding, love, gratitude, perseverance.)

- Do a survey of local history covering several centuries. Visit local museums, talk with elders who have been in the area a long time, study any written material that is available and choose a topic that interests you to research in greater depth. Write a ballad or poem about an historical incident and perform it publicly and/or write an article about it for a magazine and submit it for publication. (Perspective, understanding, expression, compassion.)
- Identify three people in the community who inspire you. Visit with those people and summarize what you learned from them with particular attention to how they developed the trait or traits that you admire. Read at least one fictional book and one factual book with a character or characters that inspire you. Summarize creatively what inspired you. What would you like to incorporate into your own life? How does that integrate with your present and future goals? How can you go about developing these desirable qualities? Work to arrange the optimal circumstances for yourself and see if it leads to an experience of inspiration. Report on the results. Is inspiration something that just happens or can one seek and find it? (Love, delight, passion, vibrancy, universality, empathy, insight.)
- Be a mentor, tutor, Big Brother or Big Sister for a younger person. Work with the young person to help develop his/her goals, decide what he/she wants to learn and do, spend time doing it, and then evaluate how the mentorship went. (Compassion, decisiveness, trust, empathy, integrity, passion, ease, service to community.)
- With the help of elders, generate a list of 50 important topics from diverse subjects with which to become familiar. These could be concepts and skills critical to your understanding before entering the world. Ask these people to explain the topics and capture their ideas and information on paper or tape. Examples: how a combustion engine works; teachings of Buddha; how to make a flaky pie crust; world-origin theories; democracy; harmony; world trade; the Renaissance period; etc. (World knowledge, humility, understanding, integration,

gratitude, universality, trust.)

- Identify a person outside of your household who needs love and support and who is not getting enough. Devote a year to identifying her needs and serving her - this may mean letting her teach you, feeding her, listening, yard care, etc. (Empathy, compassion, humility, service to friends or community.)
- Study the conditions in a developing country. Learn about their economy, culture, religious beliefs, etc. Contact an organization that works in this country and start a dialogue with them (UNICEF, Oxfam, CARE, other local non-governmental organizations) to see how you can help. Find a way to help the people of that country. Make this a sustained effort for at least six months. (World knowledge, humility, integrity, service to world, compassion, decisiveness, perspective.)
- Facilitate 10 or more people coming to consensus on difficult philosophical issues, such as a learner bill of rights, etc. (Understanding, empathy, perspective, integration, insight, trust, universality.)
- Spend significant time in the woods with a camera capturing images that move you. Show your work in an exhibit. (Beauty, expression, passion, fulfillment.)
- Hire a tutor and work individually with him on ACT preparation. Document your improvement in score over time. (World knowledge, perseverance, ease, aspiration.)

## GRADUATION GUIDELINES FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Learners with special needs are often not able to show proficiency in benchmark standards that are required of the community and credit diplomas.

To give special-needs learners a challenging course of study while maintaining the Vision standards for graduation. Whether the learner is completing the credit diploma or community diploma there are circumstances that need to be considered for these learners.

Graduation Guidelines for people with special needs are to be established by the graduation

committee, based on the learner's needs. The Graduation Committee will consist of four people outside of the learner's parents, and should include support from the people that will be in the next step after graduation. The Graduation Committee will consider the level of independence the learners want for themselves and write down criteria the learner will need to meet to reach that level of independence, and graduate. These criteria will include defining the level of independence in the following categories. Some of these skills will not apply, depending on the level of independence. The goal is to help the learner succeed in life, to go forth with the tools necessary for a happy and productive life that is tailored to their needs, while being challenging for the learner, so that their diploma means something for them.

### **Criteria To Be Considered By the Graduation Committee Could Include:**

1. Social Skills (Does the learner have the ability to express herself? Does the learner have friends and family that will support her in her life? Does the learner have the skills to act appropriately in the community situations she will encounter? Does the learner understand personal space?)
2. Work Skills (Does the learner have a career he wants to study? Will the learner go into a sheltered workshop? If yes, is he set up for placement? If no, how will the learner spend his time after school ends? Does the learner have the support needed to succeed in this adventure of life after high school? If no, where is the learner going to find that support so he can succeed?)
3. Health and Medical Skills (Does the learner know the difference between a major medical concern and a minor injury? Does the learner know how to call 911? Does the learner know when to call 911? Does the learner know how to make doctor appointments? Does the learner understand the importance of taking medication at the right time, by the right route, and in the right dosage? Does the learner know how to fill a prescription?)
4. Transportation (How is the learner going to get around? Is she going to learn to drive; what support is there for success? Is the learner going to use friends and family to get around? Are

friends and family willing to support the learner in this decision? Is the learner able to use public transportation?)

5. Safety Skills (Does the learner possess the necessary skills to be safe in his environment? Does the learner know how to avoid dangerous situations? Does the learner know the dangers of driving/riding with a person that has been drinking? Does the learner know what to do if a stranger comes to his door? Does the learner know how to answer the phone? Does the learner know what to do if a prank phone call is received, or if someone selling life insurance policies calls? Define the level of knowledge the learner needs to have in order to remain safe.)
6. Leisure Skills (What does the learner do for fun? Will she participate in Special Olympics? Will she join a team of some sort? Does she have a recreation pass that will enable her to continue to be active? Does the learner have a library card?)
7. Money Skills (Does the learner have an account payee? Will that person continue to be the account payee? Does the learner have the skills to be his own account payee if that is what he wants? Does the learner know how to budget his money? Can the learner differentiate between a need and a want? Does the learner know the difference between a gift and a loan? Does he know what “good time” friends are? And is he able to hold onto his money? Does the learner have a savings account or a checking account? Does he know how to manage these accounts?)
8. Life Skills (Does the learner know how to prepare a meal, do the shopping for that meal? Can the learner do her own laundry? Does the learner know how to safely handle food? Does the learner know the significance of keeping a clean home? Does the learner know what to do with mice infestations? Does the learner know what to do during a heat wave? Does the learner know what to do if it is cold? Can the learner light a pilot light? If not, who does? Can the learner express emotions appropriately? If not, what support is available?)
9. Public Presentation or Exhibit. The Vision special needs learner should be able to meet this

requirement, and needs to be an active member of the community. Perhaps the public presentation will be modified to fit the learner's interests and ability.

10. Personal Manifesto/Resume. A special-needs learner may or may not need this depending on his personal goals and placement into society after graduation.

The most important aspect of this process is to ensure that the learner will graduate from high school with the support in place for her continued success. The ideas and questions asked here are a suggestion, and are not exhaustive. Each learner will have specific goals and needs to meet her criteria for the life she wants to live.

## EARLY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

**DEFINITION OF EARLY GRADUATION IS ANY LEARNER WANTING TO GRADUATE BEFORE THE COMPLETION OF SIX SEMESTERS OF A VISION-APPROVED HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM.**

- A. Presentation of an early graduation proposal (why do you want to graduate early and how will you complete the Graduate requirements?) to an in house committee that will accept or deny the proposal and may amend the proposal.
- B. Graduation Committee who will certify that all graduation requirements have been met. This committee will meet at least twice for a learner that is earning a credit diploma or at least four times for a learner that is earning a community diploma.
- C. **For Credit Diploma:** Twenty-four credits of high school level work.  
**For Community Diploma:** Demonstration of a strong foundation for each of the core qualities and components
- D. A public presentation or exhibit.

- E. A demonstration of self-knowledge and the means, skills and clarity to embark on the next step of life. This may be demonstrated in a personal manifesto (p. 31.)
- F. Show proficiency in benchmark standards in reading, writing and math with either a composite score of 16 or above on the ACT or by testing out of a Vision approved assessment at 80% or higher.