

Equine Groom School

Montessori-Inspired, Whole-Brain Workforce Diversion Curriculum

Letters to Ron, Inc.

Non-Denominational, Non-Partisan, Court-Supported

Program Philosophy

The Equine Groom School is not equine therapy. It is not feel-good animal time. It is job training that leads to actual employment in an industry that will hire you with a record.

This curriculum integrates three evidence-based educational frameworks:

- **Montessori Principles:** Practical life skills, self-directed learning, respect for individual pace
- **Whole-Brain Learning:** Integration of left-brain (technical, sequential) and right-brain (creative, intuitive) functions
- **I Do, We Do, You Do:** Progression from modeling to guided practice to independent application

This approach ensures that participants gain both technical competency and the confidence to apply skills independently in real-world employment settings.

Curriculum Overview

Target Population

- Adults 18+ with justice system involvement
- Non-denominational, non-partisan participation
- Court-supported diversion program participants
- Individuals seeking viable employment pathways

Program Goals

Measurable Outcomes:

- Participants demonstrate proficiency in mare reproductive cycle management
- Participants safely conduct foaling assistance and neonatal care
- Participants prepare yearlings for auction or private sale
- Participants develop employment-ready skills valued at \$15-\$25/hour
- Participants build confidence, accountability, and dignity through observable competency
- Participants transition to paid equine industry employment or apprenticeships

Learning Philosophy: Amor y Control

This program operates according to **Amor y Control**—governance rooted in love (amor) with disciplined structure (control).

AMOR (Love):

- Witness to each person's capacity and effort
- Dignity first—no shame, no labels
- Family of workers supporting family of workers

CONTROL (Discipline):

- Clear expectations and accountability
 - Measurable, observable skill development
 - Standards that reflect real-world employment
 - Consistency and reliability valued above excuses
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Daily Schedule Framework

Program Hours

- **Duration:** 4 hours per day (typically 8 AM – 12 PM)
- **Frequency:** 5 days per week (Monday-Friday)
- **Duration:** 12-week intensive program (expandable based on cohort needs)
- **Flexible Entry:** Rolling enrollment with personalized progression

Daily Timeline with Whole-Brain Integration

8:00 AM – 8:30 AM: Morning Welcome & Community Circle

- *Brain Function: Whole-Brain Connection*
- Gather in circle; establish emotional safety and community
- Collectively review day's focus and learning objectives
- Set personal intention or focus for the session
- Brief review of relevant prior learning
- Acknowledgment of individual progress and effort
- *Montessori Element: Practical life of group participation; community respect*

8:30 AM – 9:15 AM: I DO — Trainer Demonstration & Modeling

- *Brain Function: Left-Brain (Sequential, Technical) Focus*
- Trainer demonstrates skill with clear, step-by-step narration
- Focus on one specific skill per session (e.g., "Recognizing mare estrus," "Foal imprinting," "Yearling grooming for sale")
- Participants observe quietly; questions held until We Do phase
- Trainer narrates the "why" and "what" alongside the "how"
- Visual aids, charts, or live demonstration with actual animals
- Multiple sensory input: what you see, what you hear, what you smell
- Approximately 8-12 steps demonstrated clearly
- *Montessori Element: Sensorial input; clear demonstration of isolated skill; respect for order and sequence*

- *Whole-Brain Element: Left-brain processes sequential steps; narrator explains logic and purpose*

9:15 AM – 10:30 AM: WE DO — Guided Practice & Collaborative Learning

- *Brain Function: Left-Brain + Right-Brain Integration*
- Participants attempt skill under trainer guidance and peer observation
- Trainer provides immediate feedback: "That's the way—notice how the mare responded?"
- Participants ask clarifying questions; trainer redirects to observation and discovery
- Small group rotations if working with multiple animals (2-3 participants per animal)
- Peer learning: "Who can explain what you just observed to the group?"
- Problem-solving moments encouraged: "What did you notice about her breathing? What does that tell us?"
- Trainer intervenes only when safety is at risk; otherwise lets struggle and discovery happen
- Time for repetition and rehearsal with different animals or scenarios
- *Montessori Element: Prepared environment; freedom within structure; peer collaboration; self-correction through observation*
- *Whole-Brain Element: Right-brain engages in creative problem-solving; intuitive responses to animal behavior; left-brain applies learned sequence*

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM: YOU DO — Independent Application & Accountability

- *Brain Function: Right-Brain (Creative Problem-Solving, Integration) Focus*
- Participants work independently or in pairs on assigned tasks
- Tasks graded by complexity: Basic (with checklist), Intermediate (with decision-making), Advanced (with troubleshooting)
- Examples of YOU DO tasks:
 - Conduct estrus observation on assigned mare; document findings in journal
 - Prepare foal for grooming; take before/after photos; note behavioral changes
 - Organize breeding records; identify next breeding date; prepare mare for breeding shed
 - Assess yearling conformation; identify sale-ready grooming needs
 - Problem-solve: "This foal won't lead. You saw it done. What will you try first?"
- Trainer circulates; observes without immediately correcting
- Allows space for individual error and discovery
- Checks in briefly: "Tell me what you're noticing. Why are you doing it that way?"
- Participants document their work: photos, journal entries, checklists completed
- *Montessori Element: Independence, self-directed learning, prepared environment, observable outcomes*
- *Whole-Brain Element: Right-brain integrates learning; synthesizes knowledge; applies creatively to new contexts*

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM: Reflection Circle & Community Integration

- *Brain Function: Whole-Brain Integration*
- Reconvene as full group in circle
- Invite voluntary sharing: "What did you accomplish? What was hard? What surprised you?"
- Trainer highlights specific observations: "I noticed [participant name] figured out a solution without asking. That's the kind of thinking that gets you hired."

- Group problem-solving: "We had three different ways of approaching this. Let's talk about why each one worked."
 - Connection to employment: "In a real breeding farm, this is how they'd notice a problem. This is professional thinking."
 - Preview next session: "Tomorrow we're focusing on foal imprinting. Today taught you the basics. Tomorrow you'll take it further."
 - Celebration of growth and effort (not innate talent): "You all tried something difficult today. That matters."
 - Closing reflection: Personal journal entry or group discussion on learning and capacity
 - *Montessori Element: Community respect; reflection and integration; connection to broader purpose*
 - *Whole-Brain Element: Integrates left-brain technical learning with right-brain intuitive discovery; connects individual effort to group mission*
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Curriculum Units (12-Week Progression)

UNIT 1: Foundation & Mare Care (Weeks 1-2)

Learning Objectives

- Understand equine anatomy and reproductive biology
- Develop safe handling practices
- Master daily mare care and husbandry
- Build confidence working with animals

Unit 1 Sequence (I Do, We Do, You Do)

Lesson 1.1: Equine Anatomy & Reproductive Biology

I DO (Trainer Demonstration):

- Trainer uses anatomical model or poster to show mare reproductive system
- Clear narration: ovaries, uterus, vagina, cervix; cycle phases
- Explains estrus (heat) cycle: 21-day cycle; 5-7 days in heat
- Shows external signs: tail position, vulva changes, behavior
- Visual connection to live mares: "Look at that tail position—notice how it's lifted? That's a sign of estrus."

WE DO (Guided Practice):

- Participants observe live mares in group
- Trainer asks: "What do you see in her tail position? Her stance? Does she seem interested in the stallion?"
- Participants practice describing estrus signs using observation sheet
- Small group discussion: "If we see these signs, what do we do next?"
- Repetition across multiple mares on multiple days

YOU DO (Independent Application):

- Assign each participant one mare to monitor for estrus signs
- Daily observation log: tail position, behavioral notes, physical signs
- Participants report findings to trainer: "I think she's coming into heat because..."

- Completion of Estrus Observation Checklist (reproducible)

Lesson 1.2: Safe Handling & Leading

I DO (Trainer Demonstration):

- Trainer demonstrates proper halter fitting, lead rope handling
- Step-by-step: secure halter, position lead rope, stance for leading
- Narrates: "Notice my body position—I'm beside her shoulder, not in front. This gives her confidence."
- Shows what NOT to do: leading from ahead, loose halter, improper foot position
- Demonstrates natural reflexes: how mare responds to pressure, how to apply pressure correctly

WE DO (Guided Practice):

- Participants fit halter on practice mare; trainer observes and redirects
- Each person leads mare in figure-eight pattern; trainer gives real-time feedback
- Peer observation: "Watch how [participant name] is positioning her body—stable and confident."
- Practice with different mares to build adaptability

YOU DO (Independent Application):

- Assign daily haltering and leading tasks
- Participants lead assigned mare from stall to paddock and back
- Checklist: Halter fitted correctly? Lead rope proper length? Walking confidently?
- Brief report: "I led [mare name] today. Here's what I noticed about her mood."

Lesson 1.3: Daily Mare Care & Husbandry

I DO (Trainer Demonstration):

- Demonstrate complete daily care routine with running narration
- Feeding (hay quality, grain amount, water freshness)
- Grooming (curry comb, brush, picking out feet)
- Visual inspection (legs, skin, eyes, ears, hooves)
- Stall cleaning (removing soiled bedding, fluffing clean)
- Hoof care basics (daily picking out, identifying problems)

WE DO (Guided Practice):

- Participants work in pairs; one leads, one grooms
- Trainer circulates with observation sheet
- Peer feedback: "Your grooming is getting smoother. Her coat is shining."
- Problem-solving: "See that mud? How would you clean that? Show me your technique."

YOU DO (Independent Application):

- Assign daily care responsibility for designated mare
- Complete Daily Mare Care Checklist: Feeding ☐, Grooming ☐, Hoof Care ☐, Inspection ☐
- Photo documentation of mare's condition before/after care

- Weekly reflection: "My mare's coat has changed because..."
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UNIT 2: Breeding Management & Reproduction (Weeks 3-4)

Learning Objectives

- Understand safe breeding practices
- Master foaling preparation
- Develop confidence with breeding shed protocols
- Learn to recognize complications

Key Lessons

Lesson 2.1: Estrus Detection & Breeding Timing

I DO: Trainer demonstrates estrus detection signs; shows response to stallion (or test animal); explains optimal breeding window; narrates why timing matters for pregnancy success.

WE DO: Participants observe mare behavior across multiple days; practice using estrus detection equipment (teasing board or pheromone test); discuss findings in group; problem-solve scheduling.

YOU DO: Participants monitor assigned mare's cycle; predict optimal breeding time based on observations; document reasoning; verify prediction against trainer assessment.

Lesson 2.2: Foaling Preparation & Safety

I DO: Trainer explains signs of late pregnancy, pre-foaling behavior, labor stages; demonstrates proper foaling stall setup; explains emergency procedures; narrates physical changes to expect.

WE DO: Participants prepare foaling stall with trainer; practice recognizing labor signs using video or live example; role-play emergency scenarios; discuss comfort measures for mare.

YOU DO: Participants prepare designated foaling stall; create emergency contact list; develop personal foaling checklist; write "What I'll do if..." responses to foaling scenarios.

UNIT 3: Foaling & Neonatal Care (Weeks 5-6)

Learning Objectives

- Safely assist with foaling
- Provide immediate neonatal care
- Recognize complications and respond appropriately
- Develop confidence with newborn handling

Key Lessons

Lesson 3.1: Foaling Assistance & Delivery Support

I DO: Trainer explains labor stages, discusses when to intervene vs. wait, demonstrates proper assistance techniques, explains delivery complications, narrates decision-making process throughout labor.

WE DO: Participants observe foaling (live or high-quality video); discuss trainer's decisions: "Why did you wait? When did you know to help?"; practice gentle assistance on practice model; role-play communication with veterinarian.

YOU DO: Participants write foaling birth plan; develop checklist for assisting; conduct mock foaling with peer feedback; practice positioning and technique under observation.

Lesson 3.2: Neonatal Care — First Hours

I DO: Trainer demonstrates immediate foal care: drying, checking reflexes, colostrum management, umbilical cord treatment, vital sign assessment; narrates importance of each step.

WE DO: Participants care for newborn foal under supervision; practice handling delicate newborn; observe colostrum nursing; discuss abnormal signs; ask clarifying questions.

YOU DO: Participants develop hourly care plan for newborn foal; document colostrum intake and nursing behavior; identify any concerns; coordinate care schedule with team.

UNIT 4: Foal Imprinting & Early Handling (Weeks 7-8)

Learning Objectives

- Master foal imprinting protocols
- Develop handling skills for young animals
- Build safe, confident human-foal relationship
- Prepare foals for training and handling

Key Lessons

Lesson 4.1: Imprinting Protocols & Sensitive Periods

I DO: Trainer explains imprinting window (first 24-48 hours and beyond), demonstrates specific protocols: touching all body parts, introducing novel sensations, building handling foundation; narrates why early handling matters.

WE DO: Participants practice imprinting on newborn foal or young foal under close supervision; receive real-time feedback; discuss foal responses and what they mean; refine technique.

YOU DO: Participants develop imprinting schedule for designated foal; document daily handling and foal response; photograph progression; reflect on behavioral changes.

UNIT 5: Weaning & Separation (Weeks 9)

Learning Objectives

- Understand weaning physiology and safety
- Execute weaning plan
- Manage behavioral and nutritional transition
- Monitor health post-weaning

Key Lessons

Lesson 5.1: Weaning Protocol & Nutrition Management

I DO: Trainer explains weaning age and methods, demonstrates nutrition transition, explains behavioral changes during weaning, narrates how to manage mare and foal separately.

WE DO: Participants prepare weaning plan for assigned mare-foal pair; practice feeding transition meals; discuss behavioral signs; role-play troubleshooting nursing distress.

YOU DO: Participants execute weaning plan; monitor mare and foal daily; document feeding, behavior, health; write transition journal reflecting on process and outcomes.

UNIT 6: Yearling Preparation for Sales (Weeks 10-11)

Learning Objectives

- Master yearling grooming and presentation standards
- Evaluate conformation for sale readiness
- Develop marketing photography skills
- Prepare yearlings for auction or private sale

Key Lessons

Lesson 6.1: Yearling Grooming & Sales Presentation

I DO: Trainer demonstrates high-quality grooming for sale: bathing, mane and tail care, hoof polish, presentation stance; narrates what buyers look for; shows before/after examples.

WE DO: Participants groom yearling under guidance; practice presentation stance; receive feedback on grooming detail; observe how yearling appears to potential buyers.

YOU DO: Participants groom assigned yearling to sales standard; photograph from multiple angles; write sales description highlighting strengths; role-play buyer interaction.

Lesson 6.2: Conformation Evaluation & Sale Readiness

I DO: Trainer explains conformation basics: leg structure, body proportions, movement, pedigree value; demonstrates evaluation criteria; shows how to identify strengths/weaknesses for sale marketing.

WE DO: Participants evaluate practice yearlings; compare assessments with trainer; discuss why certain traits matter; develop sales positioning strategy.

YOU DO: Participants evaluate assigned yearling; write conformation assessment; develop sales marketing plan; create auction catalog entry with photos and description.

UNIT 7: Employment Integration & Professional Practice (Week 12)

Learning Objectives

- Integrate all learning into cohesive professional practice
- Develop interview and employment readiness
- Document portfolio of learning and outcomes
- Celebrate growth and transition to employment

Key Lessons

Lesson 7.1: Professional Practice Integration

I DO: Trainer conducts mock breeding farm operation; demonstrates how all learned skills integrate into daily work; explains hiring expectations and employment standards; narrates transition from training to paid work.

WE DO: Participants work as small team on complete operation cycle: mare care, breeding, foaling support, foal care, yearling prep; problem-solve as a team; reflect on what they're ready for.

YOU DO: Participants develop personal employment plan; create portfolio documenting all 12 weeks of learning; practice job interview responses; identify three potential employers; develop follow-up plan.

Montessori Principles Throughout Curriculum

1. Prepared Environment

- Facility set up for safe, independent work
- Materials and animals arranged logically
- Clear pathways and designated work areas
- Tools within reach; responsibility for care

2. Self-Directed Learning

- Participants choose among structured tasks
- Progression based on mastery, not age/timeline
- Opportunity to repeat and refine
- Ownership of learning documented through journaling

3. Isolation of Concept

- One skill focused at a time (estrus detection, foaling, etc.)
- Complexity added progressively
- Repetition with different animals builds generalization

4. Concrete to Abstract

- Begin with live animals and hands-on experience
- Move to documentation and analysis
- Connect to employment and broader purpose
- Develop theoretical understanding through practice

5. Respect for Individual Pace

- Rolling enrollment allows varied entry points
- Participants progress based on demonstrated mastery
- Time for struggle and discovery honored
- Extension activities for accelerated learners

6. Practical Life Skills

- Every lesson has real-world employment application
- Responsibility modeled through daily animal care
- Independence built through graduated responsibility
- Dignity through competency and contribution

Whole-Brain Learning Integration

Left-Brain (Sequential, Technical) Functions

- Step-by-step procedures and protocols
- Logical sequencing of skill development
- Technical terminology and anatomy
- Documentation and record-keeping
- Timeline and deadline management

Right-Brain (Creative, Intuitive) Functions

- Problem-solving and creative applications
- Observation and intuitive reading of animal behavior
- Aesthetic judgment (yearling presentation, grooming)
- Emotional connection to animals and purpose
- Reflection and meaning-making

Integration Points Throughout Program

- "I Do" emphasizes left-brain sequential learning
 - "We Do" integrates both hemispheres through guided discovery
 - "You Do" emphasizes right-brain application and creativity
 - Reflection circles integrate both for holistic understanding
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Assessment & Progression

Formative Assessment (Ongoing)

- **Daily Observation:** Trainer notes skill development, confidence, effort
- **Peer Feedback:** Participants observe and give constructive feedback to peers
- **Self-Reflection:** Journal entries and personal goal setting
- **Checklist Completion:** Participants verify their own skill mastery

Summative Assessment (Unit Completion)

- **Skill Demonstration:** Perform target skill independently while trainer observes
- **Written/Photographic Documentation:** Evidence of learning and application
- **Reflection Paper:** Integration of learning with employment significance
- **Peer Validation:** Group acknowledgment of progress and readiness

Progression Criteria

- **Basic Proficiency:** Participant can perform skill with trainer present; mostly follows checklist
- **Intermediate Proficiency:** Participant can perform skill with minimal supervision; applies learning to new situations
- **Advanced Proficiency:** Participant teaches skill to peer; troubleshoots complications; demonstrates consistent excellence

Portfolio Development

Participants maintain ongoing portfolio including:

- Photographs of learning progression (foal development, yearling grooming progression)
- Completed checklists and observation logs
- Reflection journal entries
- Trainer assessment notes
- Peer feedback and peer teaching documentation
- Final project: Complete case study of one animal through full cycle

Sample Daily Lesson Plan: Estrus Detection (Week 1)

Learning Objective

Participants will demonstrate ability to recognize and document signs of equine estrus using visual, behavioral, and physical indicators.

Materials Needed

- 2-3 mares at different estrus cycle phases
- Estrus Detection Observation Sheet (reproducible)
- Photos showing estrus signs (tail position, vulva changes, behavior)
- Journal and pen for each participant
- Optional: test animal or teasing board

I DO (8:30-9:15 AM) — 45 minutes

Segment 1: Anatomical Foundation (10 min)

- Trainer displays estrus cycle chart
- Points to ovaries on anatomical model: "These produce hormones that trigger the whole cycle"
- Explains 21-day cycle: "Days 1-17 are diestrus [not in heat]; days 18-21 are estrus [in heat]"
- Shows external signs: tail deviation, vulva changes, behavior

Segment 2: Live Demonstration (25 min)

- Bring out mare #1 (in estrus)
- Narrate observations: "Look at her tail—see how it's held to the side? That's textbook estrus."
- Point to vulva: "Notice the swelling and color change? This tells us hormones are active."
- Describe behavior: "Watch her stance—she's interested in other animals; she's receptive."
- Bring out mare #2 (in diestrus)
- Contrast: "Look at this mare's tail—straight down. Very different from mare #1, right?"
- Explain timing: "If we want to breed, we wait for these signs. Then we time breeding for peak fertility."

Segment 3: Significance Connection (10 min)

- "Why does this matter for your job? Breeding farms need people who can recognize estrus. This is worth money."
- "When you can do this reliably, you're hired. Farmers trust their business to people who notice what mares are telling us."

WE DO (9:15-10:30 AM) — 75 minutes

Segment 1: Guided Observation (30 min)

- Bring out two mares (one in estrus, one not)
- Ask: "Look at mare #1. What do you see in her tail?"
- Participants respond; trainer affirms or refines observation
- "That's right—it's deviated. Now look at mare #2. Compare. What's different?"
- Allow each person to approach mares safely
- Ask individual questions: "Touch her vulva area—gently. What do you feel? Swelling, right? Why?"
- Validate effort: "You're noticing things. This is how you learn."

Segment 2: Small Group Practice (35 min)

- Divide group into two groups
- Group A practices with trainer (mare #1); Group B observes and documents
- Group A completes Estrus Observation Sheet with trainer guidance
- Group B fills out same sheet based on observation
- Compare sheets: "What did Group A notice that Group B also saw? Any differences?"

- Switch groups; repeat with mare #2
- Trainer checks each sheet; provides feedback: "That's accurate. You noted the behavioral change. Good noticing."

Segment 3: Problem-Solving Discussion (10 min)

- "We have a mare that will be bred next week. Based on what you've seen today, what would we need to monitor?"
- Participants brainstorm: "Watch for the tail position change. See if she acts interested in other horses."
- Trainer affirms: "Exactly. You'd be doing this job on a real farm—watching daily, reporting what you see."

YOU DO (10:30-11:30 AM) — 60 minutes

Task 1: Individual Mare Monitoring (40 min)

- Assign each participant one mare to observe independently
- Provide Estrus Observation Checklist:
 - Tail position (straight/deviated)
 - Vulva appearance (swelling/color/moisture)
 - Behavior (receptive/interested in other animals)
 - Overall impression (in heat/not in heat)
- Participants spend time with mare; make observations; document findings
- Trainer circulates; pauses beside each person: "What are you noticing? Tell me what that means."
- Allows independent discovery; intervenes only for safety
- Encourages: "You're developing an eye for this. Keep noticing."

Task 2: Group Documentation (20 min)

- Return to group; participants report findings
- Create group summary: "So we have two mares that look like they're in estrus. One that's not. What's our plan?"
- Trainer validates: "Based on what you observed, here's what I would do..." (Affirms or gently corrects based on observation data)

Reflection Circle (11:30-12:00 PM) — 30 minutes

Opening (5 min)

- "Let's sit. What did you learn today about how mares communicate?"

Sharing (10 min)

- Invite participants to share: What surprised you? What was challenging? What do you feel confident about?
- Trainer acknowledges: "[Name], I noticed you spent a long time observing mare #3. You were patient—that's exactly what this job requires."

Integration (10 min)

- "Tomorrow we're building on this. You'll practice recognizing estrus across more mares. The reason? A breeding farm needs someone who can do this every single day,

reliably."

- "This is a real job. This is how people earn \$20/hour in the horse industry. You're learning something people will pay for."

Reflection & Documentation (5 min)

- Journal prompt: "Today I learned... I'm confident about... I want to practice more with..."
- Collect journals; review notes to inform next lesson

Assessment Tools

Estrus Detection Observation Checklist (Reproducible)

Sign	Observed	Not Observed	Notes
Tail deviated/lifted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Position description:
Vulva swelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appearance:
Receptive behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Examples:
Overall assessment	IN ESTRUS <input type="checkbox"/>	NOT IN ESTRUS <input type="checkbox"/>	Confidence level:

Progression Rubric: Mare Care

Skill	Needs Practice	Proficient	Mastery
Haltering & Leading	Requires trainer help	Does independently	Adapts to different mares
Grooming	Inconsistent effort	Thorough and careful	Efficient and observant
Feeding	Asks for amounts	Knows portions	Adjusts based on condition
Health Observation	Misses some signs	Notes obvious concerns	Catches subtle changes
Record Documentation	Incomplete entries	Consistent and clear	Analyzes and predicts

Notes for Trainers

Creating a Psychologically Safe Environment

- **Mistake as Learning:** "You tried something. That's how we learn. Let me show you another way."
- **Effort Over Perfection:** "I see you're really working to get this right. That's the attitude we need."
- **Individual Respect:** Use names; notice specific efforts; never shame or compare negatively
- **Autonomy:** Offer choices within structure: "You can work with mare #2 or #3. Your choice."

Addressing Shame & Trauma-Informed Practice

Many participants carry shame, trauma, or past failure. The program structure supports healing through:

- **Competency Building:** Success is observable and undeniable
- **Consistent Presence:** Showing up matters; predictability builds trust
- **Respect for Silence:** Forcing sharing can retraumatize; silent participation honored
- **Celebration of Effort:** What matters is showing up and trying; judgment suspended

Managing Difficult Behaviors

- **Disruptive Behavior:** Address immediately but privately: "I need to pause you. Let's talk about what just happened."
- **Avoidance:** Investigate gently: "I notice you're not participating today. What's going on? How can I help?"
- **Aggression:** Safety first; remove from situation; debrief later with one trainer
- **Conflict Between Participants:** Facilitate resolution; avoid taking sides

Documenting Progress for Court/Probation

- **Daily Attendance:** Note present/absent/late
- **Behavioral Observation:** Professional, non-judgmental language
- **Skill Progression:** Specific evidence of competency growth
- **Incident Reports:** Objective description of any concerns
- **Success Documentation:** Letters for courts highlighting transformation

Employment Transition

12-Week Program Outcome: Employability

Upon completion, participants should be able to:

- ✓ Discuss estrus cycle and recognize breeding readiness
- ✓ Assist with foaling safely and confidently
- ✓ Provide neonatal foal care independently
- ✓ Prepare yearlings for sale with professional-quality grooming
- ✓ Document observations and follow breeding protocols

- ✓ Work with minimal supervision in horse environment
- ✓ Communicate with experienced breeders about animal needs
- ✓ Take responsibility for animal welfare and breeding outcomes
- ✓ Show up reliably and take work seriously
- ✓ Problem-solve and adapt to new situations

Post-Program Support

- **Job Placement:** Connections to horse farms, breeding operations, equine facilities
- **Continued Mentorship:** Optional advanced training or apprenticeships
- **Portfolio:** Written evidence of learning and recommendations for employers
- **Alumni Network:** Support for ongoing employment and career development

Curriculum Materials & Reproducibles

The following materials should be developed and laminated for easy reference:

1. **Estrus Detection Observation Sheet**
2. **Daily Mare Care Checklist**
3. **Foaling Preparation Checklist**
4. **Neonatal Care Steps**
5. **Foal Imprinting Protocol**
6. **Yearling Grooming Standards**
7. **Conformation Evaluation Guide**
8. **Employment Readiness Self-Assessment**
9. **Trainer Observation & Progress Notes**
10. **Participant Reflection Journal Prompts**

References & Resources

Montessori Education:

- Lillard, P. P. (2007). *Montessori Today: A Comprehensive Approach to Education from Birth to Adulthood*.
- American Montessori Society standards and teacher training guidelines

Whole-Brain Learning:

- Sprenger, M. (2010). *Brain-Based Teaching: Using Neuroscience to Inform Classroom Strategies*.
- Guided Practice framework: "I Do, We Do, You Do" progression

Equine Vocational Training:

- American Association of Equine Practitioners guidelines for safe equine handling
- Thoroughbred breeding and yearling preparation standards (Ocala Breeders Sales guidelines)

Justice System Diversion:

- U.S. Department of Education Young Adult Diversion Toolkit
- Peer-reviewed research on workforce diversion effectiveness

Appendix: Weekly Planning Template

Week [#]: [Unit Focus]

Weekly Focus: [Learning theme for the week]

Key Skills: [3-4 main competencies]

Animals Used: [Which mares/foals in focus this week]

Monday

- I DO: [Skill demonstration]
- WE DO: [Guided practice focus]
- YOU DO: [Independent task]

Tuesday

- I DO: [Skill demonstration]
- WE DO: [Guided practice focus]
- YOU DO: [Independent task]

Wednesday

- I DO: [Skill demonstration]
- WE DO: [Guided practice focus]
- YOU DO: [Independent task]

Thursday

- I DO: [Skill demonstration]
- WE DO: [Guided practice focus]
- YOU DO: [Independent task]

Friday

- Reflection & Integration Day
- Portfolio documentation
- Peer feedback
- Preview next week

Assessment This Week: [What will demonstrate mastery?]

Trainer Notes: [Observations, progress, adjustments needed]

Conclusion: Built for Survival. Built for Legacy.

This curriculum transforms letters into voices and incarcerated individuals into employed professionals.

The 12-week intensive provides:

- **Technical Skills:** Employment-ready competencies valued at \$15-\$25/hour
- **Psychological Safety:** Dignity, respect, and freedom from shame

- **Professional Identity:** Transition from "formerly incarcerated" to "equine professional"
- **Economic Viability:** Sustainable income and career pathway
- **Community Legacy:** Skills that build a thriving horse industry while reintegrating justice-involved individuals

The Equine Groom School operates according to **Amor y Control**—love grounded in discipline, hope grounded in demonstrated competency, and transformation grounded in hard work and consistent presence.

Participants arrive as individuals with complex histories. They leave as skilled professionals ready to contribute, earn, and build lives of dignity.

That is the work. That is the witness.

LETTERS TO RON, INC.

Where Letters Become Voices

Built for Survival. Built for Legacy.