

Grass Valley Charter School Charter Document

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Part of the
Grass Valley School District
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CHARTER

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I. Educational Program and Philosophy

Grass Valley Charter School at Bell Hill (GVCS) is a pre-kindergarten through 8th grade public charter school **chartered** in 1993. We are the 22nd charter school in the state of California and one of a growing number in the country formally affiliated with the nationally recognized Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound organization.

The Grass Valley Charter School shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices and all other operations. The charter shall not discriminate against any student on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender or disability, nor shall it charge tuition.

The student population reflects the community with 22 percent being socio-economically disadvantaged, 9 percent of our students are categorized as special education, and roughly 20 percent are of an ethnicity other than white.

Since opening our doors in 1993 our enrollment has steadily increased to 260 students even as many other local schools have seen student population declines. We attribute this to our exceptional staff, committed parents and the educational philosophy behind Expeditionary Learning.

The GVCS and the Grass Valley School District enjoy a close relationship. There is a partnership and a cooperation that exists that can't be spelled out in a document. This spirit of cooperation is part of all decisions about how GVCS shall run and is what, in many ways, makes GVCS a truly unique educational opportunity for students.

Expeditionary Learning

Expeditionary Learning is a proven model for comprehensive school reform for elementary, middle and high schools. It emphasizes learning by doing, with particular focus on character growth, teamwork, reflection and literacy. Teachers connect high quality academic learning to adventure, service and character development through a variety of student experiences including interdisciplinary, project based learning expeditions.

Fieldwork complements each classroom's curriculum by providing physical experiences that enhance more traditional classroom learning. Simply put, Fieldwork takes students out of the classroom and into the world, connecting classroom learning with real-world issues, restoring rivers, rehabilitating wildlife, educating and serving the community.

Expeditionary Learning Design Principles

- The Primacy of Self-Discovery
- The Having of Wonderful Ideas
- Responsibility for Learning
- Empathy and Caring
- Success and Failure
- Collaboration and Competition
- Diversity and Inclusion
- The Natural World
- Solitude and Reflection
- Service and Compassion

Adventures most commonly take the form of stand alone experiences. Instead of being grounded in classroom Expeditions, Adventures are designed and scaffolded by grade level to create optimal situations for experiencing and fostering the character traits and developing the hard skills associated with each adventure.

Service takes many forms at Grass Valley Charter School. Often it is imbedded within an Expedition in a way that heightens and lends authenticity, urgency and an application for their newly gained skills. This authenticity is the cure for the age-old question asked of teachers by their students: “Why do I need to know this?” Students immersed in authentic Service Learning always know “why.”

The 6 Character Traits of Expeditionary Learning

- Compassion
- Courage
- Responsibility
- Integrity
- Respect
- Discipline

Taken together, Fieldwork, Service and Adventure are the tools through which we build the character evident in our students and incorporate both the six character traits as well as the ten guiding principles of Expeditionary Learning.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Grass Valley Charter School is to inspire students to achieve high standards, create quality work and embrace lifelong learning and service through Expeditionary Learning.

OUR VALUES

At Grass Valley Charter School, we...

- **understand** that individuals learn best through purposeful experiences that provide opportunities to become active learners -- taking responsibility for their own learning
- **value** the use of the world existing beyond the classroom walls in order to teach compassion, service, discipline and respect
- **develop** a sense of civic and social activism in students
- **believe** that we have a responsibility to provide stewardship of the Earth
- **focus** on development of individual character steeped in our “design principles” and “character traits” including Respect, Responsibility, Discipline, Courage, Compassion, Integrity, Courtesy, and Service

- **foster** a culture of reflection, critique and revision
- **incorporate** project-based learning, fieldwork and the arts into purposeful and rigorous Expeditions
- **blend** a strong sense of community, supportive environments, and parent involvement

II. MEASUREABLE STUDENT OUTCOMES

A student, parent and a Charter School staff member will develop measurable learning results for the student; these will be written and included in the student's file. Progress toward student learning results will be assessed a minimum of two times a year by the GVCS teacher.

The students will demonstrate growth in the following areas:

- Growth Area Goal #1: Student reads, writes and computes effectively.
- Growth Area Goal #2: Student applies reading, writing, computation and communication skills to solve problems.
- Growth Area Goal #3: Student appreciates and respects the history of cultures.
- Growth Area Goal #4: Student has a sense of civic responsibility and comprehends the political process.
- Growth Area Goal #5: Student applies scientific concepts, and uses technology to explain his world, finding solutions to its problems.
- Growth Area Goal #6: Student sufficiently functions in the world by adapting to change, valuing relationships, and working cooperatively with others.
- Growth Area Goal #7: Student uses his own special interests, talents, and abilities to think, reason and produce creatively.

III. METHODS OF ASSESSMENTS OF STUDENT PROGRESS

All students are working toward the goals, state standards, and specific learning results. Progress may vary in rate by student. Assessment methods are consistent with the Grass Valley School District's assessment plan. Student assessment is multifaceted over time and does not rely on one type or process. Methods by which student progress may be assessed are through at least two or more of the following:

- Collection of student work
- Demonstration of student skills
- Summaries of completed work
- Observations by the teacher
- Criterion reference assessments
- Presentations
- Teacher-Student-Parent conferences
- Standardized tests
- Norm referenced tests
- Portfolios
- Collaborative Projects

IV. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance structure will be inclusive of individuals and entities within the Grass Valley Charter School involved in the Charter (students, parents, staff, and the Grass Valley School District Office). The Charter School will provide input and communication among and between its varied entities. The elements of our governance structure include:

A. Charter Council

The Charter Council will consist of six members: The charter school administrator, two core teachers (one K-4 teacher and one 5-8 teacher), one discovery studies teacher, the parent representative group president, and one member of the Grass Valley School District Board of Trustees. The Charter Council shall have the responsibility for making program recommendations to the Grass Valley Board of Trustees. **The Charter Council will also make recommendations to the Board of Trustees for** changes to the Charter Document. The Charter Council will meet a minimum of two times a year. The Charter Council meetings will be conducted in accordance with applicable public meeting laws.

B. Parent Representative Group

In order to foster and coordinate parent involvement, a Parent Representative Group (consisting of one parent from each teacher's classroom) will meet regularly. This meeting will be open to all parents in addition to the classroom representatives. This group will support teachers and GVCS by compiling parent survey results, forming subcommittees of parent volunteers, and by being the "place to go" for any parent wanting to volunteer at GVCS. Their activities will be directed by the school administrator and overseen by the Charter Council. The goal of this group will be to maximize and increase parent involvement at GVCS.

C. All Parent Meetings

All parent meetings will be held at least three times a year to communicate and gain input from all parents at GVCS. The purpose of these meetings will

be to discuss and recommend modifications to the strategic plan goals and objectives of the school. Input from parents will be gathered at these meetings. This information will be shared with either the Charter Principal, Strategic Plan Group, or the Charter Council as appropriate.

Parent involvement is an integral part of GVCS. Parent involvement will be demonstrated in the following ways.

- Parents will fulfill expectations set forth in the Program Agreement which is signed upon the student's registration into GVCS.
- Parents will adhere to the volunteer guidelines set forth in the Charter School Parent/Student Handbook.
- Parents **will be** active members of the school community.

D. Charter School Staff Meetings

The GVCS staff consisting of an administrator, certificated teachers, contracted personnel, and classified personnel will meet periodically to monitor the daily operations of the programs and options offered in the Charter School.

E. Charter School Administrator and Superintendent

The GVCS administrator will coordinate and facilitate the general operations of the Charter School and meet regularly with Grass Valley School District administration.

F. The Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District

The Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District is the governing body of the Grass Valley Charter School. One member of the Grass Valley School District Board of Trustees will be a representative on the Grass Valley Charter School Council. This member shall be selected by majority vote of the Board. The Grass Valley School District Board of Trustees must ratify by majority vote all amendments to the charter. The results of both the annual parent evaluation and student assessments results will be shared with the Board at the end of each school year.

V. EMPLOYEE QUALIFICATIONS

Individuals employed by our school should be models of those characteristics we wish to nurture in our students. They **will** display a continuing passion for learning and strive for excellence in their chosen field. They will be intelligent, flexible, open to the process of personal growth, and skilled in communication. Their accomplishments and competence may be demonstrated by experience working with children under the guidance of recognized experts, or by reputation, and high regard in the community. In addition, all Core Teachers and Discovery Studies Teachers will possess a valid California Teaching Credential and be NCLB highly qualified.

VI. HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

The GVCS will comply with Education Code 44237 by having each employee complete a Department of Justice and FBI criminal background prior to working in the Charter School to insure the safety of all employees and students. All required health and immunizations standards and records will be maintained for all students and employees. All laws relating to the protection of children will be adhered to.

VII. RACIAL AND ETHNIC BALANCE

The GVCS will continue to be a part of the Grass Valley School District and maintain a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdictions of the school district. The GVCS will not encourage or discourage any particular racial or ethnic group from gravitating to the Charter School.

VIII. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Students will be considered for admission without regard to ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. The student's or parent(s)' residence must be within Nevada County or a contiguous county. The priority procedures for admission and the filling of open seats in the classroom will follow the procedures outlined in the Charter School Parent/Student Handbook. Preference will be given to students residing in the Grass Valley School District.

Prior to being admitted into the GVCS, students and parents will be required to:

- Understand the charter school's philosophies and growth areas.
- Select the student's educational program or option.
- Sign and agree to abide by the Charter School Agreement
- Agree to abide by the guidelines set forth in the Charter School Parent/Student Handbook.
- New families will participate in an intake conference.

Within the first year of being admitted to the GVCS students and parents will be required to:

- Maintain the academic proficiency standards set for each grade level to remain in the GVCS.
- Demonstrate adherence to the Charter School Agreement to remain in GVCS.
- Participate and be involved in the educational program to remain in the GVCS.

IX. PROGRAMMATIC OPERATION AND ANNUAL AUDIT

The GVCS will continue to conduct its programmatic and financial operations through the established procedures required by the Grass Valley School District. The

district business office will be responsible for purchasing, payroll, insurance, contracts, audits and other fiscal matters. The Grass Valley School District auditor will conduct audits of the GVCS.

X. SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS

GVCS will comply with Ed Code 48900 et.seq. regarding suspensions and expulsion of students. Procedures for suspension and/or expulsion will be those of the Grass Valley School District.

XI. DISMISSAL FROM CHARTER SCHOOL

Charter student and parent members may be exited for non-compliance with the terms of the Charter School Parent/Student Handbook and/or the Grass Valley Charter Program Agreement signed by the student, parent and teacher.

XII. EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

Qualities in a Charter Teacher and Charter Principal will be sought after as delineated in the GVCS Strategic Plan. Teachers, parents, and other stakeholders will be actively involved in the selection of these candidates. The Charter Principal will solicit feedback from teachers and other key stakeholders annually.

Employees of this Charter School will participate in STRS, PERS, or Social Security depending upon each individual's eligibility. No district employee will be required to work at the Charter School (Ed. Code 47605 (3)(e)). All employees of the GVCS are included in one of the following categories.

a. Charter School Classified Employees

Charter School Classified Employees will be covered by the Grass Valley School District Classified Handbook with exception of the seniority list. The Charter School shall maintain its own classified seniority list, which is separate and distinct from the Grass Valley School District Classified Seniority List. Each classified employee will complete duties as per their job description.

b. Charter School Certificated Employees

1. Teachers that were tenured teachers in the Grass Valley School District before they chose to teach at GVCS will retain their seniority and tenure status with the Grass Valley School District. Their seniority and tenure will continue to accrue with the Grass Valley School District while employed by the GVCS. Tenured teachers shall retain the right to return to other sites in the school district (Ed. Code 47605). Such teachers, while working in the GVCS, shall be considered "on leave" from GVSD. Except that, for the

purposes of returning to the GVSD, they shall advance year per year on the GVSD salary schedule for every year they have worked in the GVCS.

2. Other Teachers in the Core program that do not meet the definition described in b.1 above will maintain their own seniority list, salary schedule and employee rights as described in this document and in their individual contracts.

3. Employee rights and terms of employment for Discovery studies teachers are governed by their specific contracts.

The GVCS seniority list shall be maintained at the school district office. This document will be used in the event of staff reduction as a guide to layoffs. Program needs and overall needs of the school will be the overriding factor when deciding layoffs at GVCS.

c. Charter School Contracted Employee

Charter School Contracted Employees are governed by their specific contracts. Such employees are those that are hired, usually for a short term, to perform a specific function or service after which their position ceases. Examples may be dance lessons, art lessons, etc.

d. Meet and Confer Procedure

The Salary Committee shall annually meet and confer concerning certificated salaries, health and welfare benefits, retirement, and seniority. The salary committee may choose to offer an ad hoc/one time retirement incentive if it is in the best interest of GVCS. This “meet and confer” process shall be governed by the following procedures:

1. No later than one month after the Grass Valley Teachers Association and the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District reach **an** agreement the Salary Committee (consisting of the Charter Council and one additional Core Teacher) spokesperson shall schedule the first “meet and confer” session. Within thirty (30) calendar days following this initial meeting the initial proposal shall be drafted by the salary committee. The Salary Committee reserves the right to meet earlier if deemed necessary by the Charter Council.
2. Decisions of the Salary Committee shall be made utilizing the consensus process.
3. The “meet and confer” sessions shall take place during non-duty time and without compensation. The GVCS Principal shall schedule as many subsequent sessions as deemed necessary by the parties. However, in no event shall more than five (5) sessions be scheduled during each school year, unless otherwise agreed to by the Salary Committee.

4. The Salary Committee shall maintain its own minutes. Any tentative agreements reached during the meet and confer sessions shall be reduced to writing and signed by the salary committee. The Superintendent of the Grass Valley School District or designee shall present to the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District any tentative agreements reached through the “meet and confer” sessions to be considered for approval by the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District. Any tentative agreements approved by the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District shall be effective and binding for a period of no more that one school year, unless otherwise expressly specified in the tentative agreement.
5. In the event that the parties do not reach tentative agreements on one or more of the issues discussed during the “meet and confer” sessions, the Superintendent of the Grass Valley School District or designee will make recommendations to the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District concerning the terms and conditions of employment for the current school year. The Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District’s decision in regards to any outstanding salary committee issues will be final.

e. Procedure for request of a leave of absence

Any site based half-time or more Charter School Certificated Employee may enter into an agreement with the GVCS according to the following specifications: This agreement specifies the dates for break in service and reinstatement with a future contract. Written notification requesting such an agreement must be received by GVCS administrator prior to March 15th of the previous school year. The agreement would state when a break in service would occur and when a new contract would be issued if enrollment so warrants. Willingness to enter into this agreement is at the discretion of Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District based upon the recommendation of the GVCS Principal.

XIII. PUBLIC SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES

All students who reside in the Grass Valley School District who do not wish to attend the GVCS may choose to attend the school district’s other schools within the Grass Valley School District.

XIV. DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

The purpose of the GVCS dispute resolution process is to have school community members resolve issues in-house in an amicable and fair manner whenever possible. “School community members” include: students, teachers, parents, administration, applicant families, volunteers, advisors, community members, partners, and collaborators.

The following is the process for dispute resolution between school community members:

- a. An attempt should be made to discuss and resolve the conflict with the people directly involved before proceeding further. Parents need to attempt to resolve issues with a teacher first before proceeding on.
- b. If this is not effective, then the disputing parties should contact the Charter School Principal or a mutually agreed upon teacher to assist in informal resolution of the issue.
- c. If informal resolution is not effective, then the disputing parties should contact the Charter School Principal and put their concerns and/or complaints in writing. This document is to contain the following:
 1. What the specific issue or complaint is.
 2. What in particular they were not satisfied about in the initial and subsequent resolution attempts (steps a. and b.).
 3. What they believe to be a reasonable solution to the issue or problem.
- d. If this is not effective, then the disputing parties should contact the Grass Valley School District office to gain assistance from the Superintendent or his/her designee. The disputing party is required to submit this complaint in writing with the same contents as listed in step c. The disputing parties agree to inform the Charter School Principal in advance of this action.
- e. If this is not effective, then the disputing parties should contact the President of the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District via the District Office. The complaining party agrees to inform the Charter School Principal in advance of this action. The disputing party is required to submit this complaint in writing with the same contents as listed in step c. The Board of Trustees decision shall be final.
- f. The Grass Valley School District Superintendent and the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District agree to inform the GVCS Principal if they are contacted regarding a conflict at GVCS and to refer the involved parties to this Dispute Resolution Process before further action.

VX. METHOD FOR CHANGE TO THE CHARTER

The process for change to the Charter Document **is as follows**:

- a. Ideas for change may originate anywhere.
- b. Recommendations come to the Charter Council through one of its members for consideration.
- c. The Charter Council will consider and reach a decision through consensus for the proposed recommendation for additions, deletions, and modifications to the Charter Document.
- d. Recommendation for additions, deletions, and modifications to the Charter Document from the Charter Council will be brought to the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District for a majority vote prior to enactment.

The intent of this specific outlined process is to increase communications regarding changes and allow the GVCS to operate in a responsive timely manner.

XVI. DAILY OPERATIONS

The programs and/or options offered by the Charter School will have handbooks. These handbooks will include all needed information regarding daily operations. The procedures and processes will be updated as needed by GVCS staff. Program evaluation will be done regularly by GVCS staff, parents and students. A Grass Valley Charter School Staff Handbook will incorporate staff bulletins, minutes, agreements, and curriculum guides.

XVII. EMPLOYER OF RECORD

The Grass Valley Charter School will be the employer of record responsible only for collective bargaining according to the terms and conditions stated below.

- a. GVCS will employ classified employees and they will follow the resolution process listed in section XIV. They will follow recommendations made by the salary committee for compensation.
- b. Certificated employees who were probationary/permanent employees of the Grass Valley School District and part of the Grass Valley Teacher Association bargaining unit prior to employment in the GVCS, will be considered “on leave” from the district. (see Employee Rights XIIb.), with the exception of **advancement on the salary schedule**. They will be represented by the GVCS Salary Committee for compensation.
- c. Grass Valley Charter School will employ the Grass Valley Charter School Certificated (not covered by Section XIIb) and Contracted Employees. These employees have established the Grass Valley Charter School Salary Committee through Grass Valley Charter School Charter Council as its exclusive organization for representation. (See Employee Rights Section XII). Certificated employees may be provided the health and benefits package offered by the Grass Valley School District.

XVIII. SCHOOL CLOSURE PROCEDURES

Listed are the procedures that will be used in the event that GVCS closes. This closure could be due to the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School or The State Board of

Education's revocation of the charter, the decision of the Board of Trustees of the Grass Valley School District not to renew the charter, or GVCS's decision to voluntarily close.

- a. Notification will be given to the GVCS community in regards to the pending closure. This will be done in written form and at least one community meeting for each of the following constituents will be held: Students, Parents/Community, and Staff. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss the particulars of the school closure.
- b. Every effort will be made to forward student records to the appropriate new schools, all other records will be forwarded to the Grass Valley School District Office.
- c. After a reasonable attempt has been made to pay all outstanding debts a final audit will be conducted by the Grass Valley School District's auditor.
- d. The remaining funds and all other goods and materials will fall under the jurisdiction of the Grass Valley School District.
- e. GVSD will make every effort to hire teachers from GVCS for open positions in the district and make every effort to give credit for years of services at GVCS. GVCS teachers would retain rehire rights for 39 months. It would be the intent of the district to offer positions to GVCS teachers based upon the GVCS Seniority List. However, the district will also consider credentialing and "No Child Left Behind" requirements in addition to seniority when making staffing decisions.

CHARTER REVISION REQUEST

In accordance with the California Charter School Law,

We, the undersigned, of the Grass Valley Charter School Charter Council agree to the recommended additions, deletions and modification of the charter presented to the Grass Valley Board of Trustees on 12/11/2007 for ratification.

We represent 100 percent of the Grass Valley Charter School Charter Council.

Brian Martinez
Principal

Lori Davis
Core Teacher

Bonnie Taylor
Board Member of Grass Valley School District

Mary Lehmborg
Discovery Studies Teacher