

# GRASS VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

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**THREE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN  
FOR THE 2007/08, 2008/09 AND 2009/10 SCHOOL YEARS**

**"We are crew, not passengers."**

Charter Council Approval: 11-27-07

GVSD Board Approval: 1-15-08

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## 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

# **I. Introduction**

The Grass Valley Charter School Strategic Plan is a three year Strategic Plan that provides a framework for education at our school from 2007 through 2010. There are six Performance Areas:

- Academics & Expeditionary Learning Curriculum
- Recruitment, Staffing and Human Resources
- Campus and Infrastructure
- Community
- School Culture
- Organizational Success and Financial Security

This Strategic Plan is meant to be incorporated into the day-to-day management and operations of the Grass Valley Charter School. All elements of this plan are to be reviewed and approved by the Charter Council. It will be reviewed by the Strategic Plan Committee on an annual basis, and a Benchmarks Report will be presented to the first ALL PARENT meeting of the school year in September. A Final Report on this Strategic Plan will be presented to an ALL PARENT meeting in June 2010.

The following Volunteer Committees oversee the implementation and oversight of this Strategic Plan. All parents are encouraged to participate in at least one of the Volunteer Committee below that support implementation of this Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Plan Committee manages and updates this plan.
- Fundraising Committee coordinates school fund campaigns.
- New Playground Committee supports construction of new playground
- "Creating Our Campus" Committee implements campus murals, "greening" projects, and school artwork, playground, and courtyard improvements
- Parent Classroom Representative Committee to facilitate committees and school-wide volunteers.
- Landscaping Committee to organize grounds maintenance and improvement.
- "Going Green" Committee will work to create an eco-friendly campus
- Community Partnership Committee will form mutually beneficial partnerships with organizations to support EL and fundraising goals.

## **II. History and Description**

Grass Valley Charter School is a public charter school incorporated in 1993. We are the 22<sup>nd</sup> charter school in the state of California and are formally affiliated with the nationally recognized Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound organization.

Utilizing this unique educational model, the school now earns among the top academic scores in the state of California.

Our student population reflects our 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 we opened our doors in 1993 our enrollment has steadily increased to 250 students even as many other schools have seen student population declines. We attribute this to our exceptional staff, committed parents and the educational philosophy behind Expeditionary Learning.

### III. Expeditionary Learning

Expeditionary Learning is a for comprehensive school elementary, middle and high emphasizes learning by particular focus on growth, teamwork, and literacy. Teachers quality academic learning adventure, service and development through a student experiences interdisciplinary, project learning expeditions.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Expeditionary Learning Design Principles</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Primacy of Self-Discovery</li><li>• The Having of Wonderful Ideas</li><li>• Responsibility for Learning</li><li>• Empathy and Caring</li><li>• Success and Failure</li><li>• Collaboration and Competition</li><li>• Diversity and Inclusion</li><li>• The Natural World</li><li>• Solitude and Reflection</li><li>• Service and Compassion</li></ul>
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proven model reform for schools. It doing, with character reflection connect high to character variety of including based

**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.

**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 Charter School. Often it is within an Expedition in a way that and lends authenticity, urgency application for their newly gained This authenticity is the cure for old question asked of teachers by students: "Why do I need to know Students immersed in authentic Learning always know "why."

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>The 6 Character Traits at GVCS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compassion</li><li>• Courage</li><li>• Responsibility</li><li>• Integrity</li><li>• Respect</li><li>• Discipline</li></ul>
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Taken together, Fieldwork, Service and Adventure are the tools through which we build the foundation of character evident in our students and incorporate both the six character traits as well as the ten guiding principles of Expeditionary Learning.

## **IV. Fieldwork, Adventure and Service Accomplishments**

In the past year, our 216 students – from pre-Kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade – have:

- Studied geology on hikes in Yosemite National Park;
- Evaluated on-site restoration of Hetch Hetchy;
- Studied salmon restoration by rafting the Lower Yuba River;
- Investigated watershed dynamics by snowshoeing Castle Peak;
- Studied world explorers on tall ships in the San Francisco Bay;
- Researched the effect of urbanization on the environment;
- Practiced orienteering in the High Sierra backcountry;
- Established a deeper rapport with injured coyotes, wolves and bears by camping and assisting in the care of animals at the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary;
- Conducted water quality monitoring on the South Fork of Wolf Creek, collaborating with the Nevada County Resource Conservation District and City of Grass Valley;
- Removed non-native invasive plants in Glen Jones Park, collaborating with the Shilling Seed company, City of Grass Valley and Wolf Creek Community Alliance;
- Educated Grass Valley residents about contaminated run-off by participating in a successful effort to label every storm drain in Grass Valley;
- Presented at the South Yuba River Citizens League Monitoring Conference (largest in the western US) on the topic of "School-age Children and Water Quality Testing;"
- Raised over \$3,000 for tsunami relief efforts and \$1,300 for a local family in need.
- Embarked upon a collaborative effort with the City of Grass Valley, Wolf Creek Community Alliance and several private parties to restore an impacted urban wetland on Peabody Creek.

## **V. Grass Valley Charter School Strategic Plan Performance Areas**

### **Performance Area 1: Academics & Expeditionary Learning Curriculum**

#### ***Current Assessment***

Grass Valley Charter School integrates academics into the Expeditionary Learning structure. Expeditionary Learning harnesses the natural passion for learning while developing the curiosity, skills, knowledge and courage needed to imagine a better world and to work toward this goal.

We believe individuals learn best through purposeful experiences that provide opportunities for students to become active learners, taking responsibility for their own learning. We provide safe, challenging, and creative learning opportunities for everyone while valuing individual opinions, aspirations, and dreams. The Grass Valley Charter School values the use of the world existing beyond the classroom walls.

Our students spend their time engaged in purposeful, rigorous learning expeditions. They explore a topic in depth by working on short and long-term projects that call for intellectual inquiry, research, physical investigation, art, fieldwork, presentations, and community service. A culture of reflection, critique, and revision is achieved as students strive toward excellence and the creation of quality work.

For the 2006-2007 academic year, GVCS had an abbreviated contract with Expeditionary Learning, which gave us five days of on-site service with an EL school designer. This was not adequate for either establishing a relationship with a school designer, or for providing for our continued education in the evolution of Expeditionary Learning. In addition, six staff members were funded to attend the EL National Conference in Portland, ME. Teachers receive a tremendous amount of support, validation, and access to best practices through attendance at National Conferences and other institutes.

#### ***Standards and Assessments***

California State standards are embedded in rich curriculum, and our strong standardized assessment scores reflect the success of this academic approach. EL supports a rigorous approach to standards through the rich framework of expeditions and investigations.

The Academic Performance Indicator (API) is a single score given to each school in the State of California based on the California Standards Test (STAR) and a national standardized test (CAT 6). This score is based on student performance in mathematics, reading, language, spelling, science,

and social studies. The scale is from 1 to 1000 with 800 being the goal. Grass Valley Charter School's API in 2002 was 737, going up each year consecutively, reaching 860 in 2006. This is excellent growth over time. We are the highest performing school in our district, and among the highest in Nevada County and the State of California. Approximately 75 % of our students are Proficient or Advanced in Language Arts and Mathematics. This far exceeds the state average of 40%.

For mathematics, students are placed in multiage classrooms where they work at their appropriate level of achievement, from level K through geometry. A part time math specialist works with our advanced algebra and geometry students.

**Goal 1. The School will develop strong and consistent academic protocols, principles, and practices that build seamlessly from pre-kindergarten through the 8th grade.**

Objective 1. By June 2009, GVCS staff will agree to *California State Standards-based* grade level expectations, aligned with implementation, strategies (e.g. reflections, quality work, rubrics), techniques, instructional materials, and designated programs. These grade-level documents will be placed in a curriculum binder.

Objective 2. By June 2008, GVCS staff will update and agree upon the contents of the *GVCS 2007-08 Staff Handbook*, and the purpose and intent for the weekly staff meetings and Friday staff development days.

Objective 3. In continued pursuit of best practices, during the 2007-08 school year we will implement our three-step *reflection* (KWL) process within five days of returning from any training. A time to share with staff will be calendared with the principal upon return from training.

**Goal 2. Grass Valley Charter School will meet the individual academic needs of students.**

Objective 1. By June 2008, GVCS will identify the tools and strategies to provide training and support for teachers to identify student needs and increase skills in individualizing instruction, including fluency assessments and Response to Intervention (RtI).

Objective 2. By July 2008, GVCS will formally explore a variety of schedules that would better serve project-based learning, such as a longer academic day, a four-day week for students, or other options.

Objective 3. By June 2008 GVCS will construct a middle school block that allows students mobility, homogeneous groupings, hands-on science and electives. This structure may incorporate a push in, pull out, and, or additional staff according to student needs.

Objective 4. By June 2008 GVCS will develop a plan to integrate, support and enhance our Learning Crew, English Language Learner (ELL) services, speech therapist and psychologist in order to maximize student growth.

**Goal 3. The School will establish high standards for Math and Literacy competencies, with a goal of proficiency for all students.**

### **Math**

Objective 1. For the 2007-08 school year, grade-level math essential skills will be posted in each classroom and calendared into the curriculum.

Objective 2. By September 2008, GVCS will develop a new scope and sequence for Science and Social Studies in response to the changes in crew configuration. This will be tied to state standards.

Objective 3. By June 2008, GVCS will develop an agreement for new students and their parents that will communicate the specific home and school expectations for the learning and mastery of essential math skills.

Specifically, this agreement will state that:

- Parents take special responsibility in helping their children master basic facts.
- By the end of third grade, all students will have mastered addition and subtraction math facts;
- By the end of fourth grade, all students will have mastered multiplication facts.
- By the end of fifth grade, all students will have mastered division facts.
- Ongoing mastery and practice through middle school

### **English Language Arts**

Objective 5. In our pursuit of teaching children to read we employ balanced literacy strategies, direct instruction, homogeneous groupings, and specific programs, including Open Court Phonics and Strategies that Work. During the 2007-08 school year, each teacher will be able to articulate and share with fellow staff members especially-effective lessons and strategies based on assessed student performance.

Objective 6. By June 2008 GVCS will update and revise the core literature list, to ensure that each year students experience valued literature.

Objective 7. By June 2008 GVCS will implement the staff library purchase plan of June 06, by purchasing designated books. In August, November, and

March the staff will update the list of books to be purchased. The focus for the next two years will be on purchasing 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade materials.

Objective 8. By June 2008 all primary staff will be trained in and implement *Step Up to Writing*. Students, staff, and parents will be exposed to exemplar writing pieces at each grade level. Standard writing rubrics, as well as student and project-developed rubrics, will be used in each class.

**Goal 4. The School will strengthen and improve the instruction in Expeditionary Learning, planning of learning expeditions and Adventure.**

### **Expeditionary Learning (EL)**

Objective 1. During the 07-08 school year, GVCS will share, document, and reflect on the common curricular structures, instructional practices, cultural expectations, rituals and routines that make school a predictable and reliable place for students. This kind of school-wide implementation is the goal for all Expeditionary Learning schools.

Objective 2. For the 2007-08 school year, staff will utilize the relationship with EL to plan and critique Learning Expeditions, assist with expedition follow-through, receive help with establishing "compelling topics", Learning Targets, high quality products, service projects, and fieldwork for each teacher's expedition.

Objective 3. For the 2007-08 school year, each teacher will utilize LEO, EL's tool for planning, assessing, and documenting expeditions.

Objective 4. For the 2008-09 school year, expeditions will be aligned with California State Standards in literacy, science, history/social studies and/or visual and performing arts.

### **Adventure & Service**

Objective 5. By June 2008 staff will create grade level Adventures that will be designed to develop specific character qualities in students.

Objective 6. By June 2008 the staff will establish grade level Adventure skills to support grade level Adventures. These will be the experiences and content for each Grass Valley Charter student.

Objective 7. By June 2009 staff will establish a Service Curriculum and grade level benchmarks for Service. These will be the experiences and content for each Grass Valley Charter student.

## **Technology**

Objective 8: By June 2009 GVCS will develop a technology plan with the goals of 1) supporting and documenting Expeditionary Learning, 2) improving communication, 3) facilitating professional development and training, and 4) driving technology decisions and purchases.

Objective 9: By June 2009 GVCS will develop a technology plan that will address state-of-the-art hardware to be purchased during the 2008-09 school year to achieve our curricular and communication goals.

## Performance Area 2: Recruitment, Staffing and Human Resources

### *Current Assessment*

Thirteen certificated teachers, fifteen classified employees, and one administrator (principal) currently comprise the staff of Grass Valley Charter School. Of the teachers, 10 are full-time with their own classrooms. Three of our teachers serve the Discovery Studies children (home study) on a part-time basis; a reading specialist and resource specialist (Learning Crew) are half time and serve students requiring extra support. The district provides support staff services including a part time speech therapist, psychologist, nurse, and English Language Learning aide.

Our full time Service and Adventure Coordinator is paid to work with teachers in fieldwork planning, science lab, and other instructional support duties that relate to the adventure-learning component. Some of this fieldwork is related to the classroom expedition (in depth study), while other Adventure experiences are focused on character development, community building, and personal success.

In the past, there was no structure in place for the quantity and type of fieldwork for each classroom, or the process for collaborating with the Adventure and Service Coordinator. As a part-time employee, the Coordinator has limited time to spend with each teacher in collaborating and planning. There is a lack of allocated time for teachers to collaborate with the Adventure and Service Coordinator in planning and implementation. In addition, continuing education is needed for this position in the areas of risk assessment and emergency medical training.

Six aides work approximately 1.5 hours/day in each of the 10 classrooms, perform lunchtime and recess duties, and help with the release of students at the end of the day (along with a myriad of other tasks). One classified aide supports intervention programs, one runs the lunch program when not in the classroom, and one runs the computer lab and assists with science instruction. We have 11.5 hours of custodial service per day shared between a full time and a part time custodian.

The school secretary and our computer technician (both full-time) round out the classified staff.

A Staff Handbook/Binder is revised each summer, with updates on protocols, principles, and practices. Staff members receive updates each August upon returning to school. Weekly staff meetings are utilized for school planning. Meetings are organized to include one meeting for calendar and business each month, and one for discussion of expeditions.

GVCS is currently working to develop funding to support professional development over the next five years, with the intent of taking GVCS to the next level of expertise as an EL School.

**Goal 1: GVCS will recruit, attract, and employ a quality candidate to fill any upcoming vacancies.**

Objective 1. Whenever there is a teacher opening at GVCS the following qualities will be looked to as a guide to hiring.

- Strong Balanced Literacy & Mathematics skills with knowledge of direct instruction
- Passionate interest in Expeditionary Learning
- Willingness/desire to meet the substantial time demands to do this job well
- Ability to work in a multiage classroom and experience in more than one grade level.
- Ability to work well with the current staff and our parent community
- A life-long learner
- A demonstrated interest in environmental stewardship and the adventure component of Expeditionary Learning

Objective 2. Whenever there is an administrative opening the following qualities will be looked at as a guide to hiring.

- Deep knowledge of a Pre-K - 8 curriculum, special education, and environment
- Passionate interest in Expeditionary Learning
- Willingness/desire to meet the substantial time demands to do this job well.
- Ability to work well with the current staff, parents, and community in a collaborative leadership process
- A life-long learner
- A demonstrated interest in environmental stewardship and the adventure component of expeditionary learning
- Understanding developmental needs of a PreK-8 campus.
- Proven abilities in administrative fiscal management
- Be a visionary

**Goal 2. Grass Valley Charter School will have a full time and fully trained Adventure & Service Coordinator.**

Objective 1. By September 2007, Grass Valley Charter School will hire a full-time Adventure and Service Coordinator with appropriate compensation based on the coordinator's experience.

Objective 2. By June 2008, certification (wilderness first aide, emt, etc.) for the Adventure & Service Coordinator will be discussed and determined. Necessary professional development to maximize EL effectiveness and safety will be pursued.

Objective 3. By June 2008, the Adventure & Service Coordinator will create a set of benchmarks for Adventure and Service experiences that address risk management, insurance, classroom scheduling, and collaboration with teachers.

Objective 4. By December 2008, the Principal and Adventure and Service Coordinator will develop a grant and community outreach program to support the school's share of the Expeditionary Learning program costs, approximately \$30,000.

Objective 5. By June 2008, and every year thereafter. The Adventure and Service Coordinator will meet with each teacher during June Expedition planning days to ensure that Fieldwork, Service and Adventure are integrated into each classroom expedition.

**Goal 3. GVCS will implement a professional development plan to support continuous improvement in the school community.**

Objective 1. On an ongoing basis, Staff will reach consensus regarding selected best practices as a foundation for our school culture, with the intent of increasing student achievement.

Objective 2. Each year, the professional development plan, as created by staff and EL designers, will support Performance Area 1. Teachers will have increased access to EL Institutes, and increasing support from an onsite school designer to help teachers implement best practices in their classrooms.

Objective 3. Existing certificated staff, the EL school designer, and a designated staff mentor will continue to support our new teacher in the culture and practices at GVCS on a regular and ongoing basis in 2007-2008.

## **Performance Area 3: Campus and Infrastructure**

### ***Current Assessment***

Originally founded in 1993, Grass Valley Charter School moved to the Bell Hill School campus in September 2005. The site is one steeped in history, with two small schoolhouses offering the city's first public education during the first years of the Gold Rush in 1853. Those schoolhouses served as school buildings until the "new" Bell Hill School was built in 1906. This two story four room building served until 1957, when the current main building was constructed.

The bell for which the school was named was installed in 1877 when school trustees saw the need for a school bell that would provide a uniform time for all of the several schools in town. The bell is now installed permanently in a monument at the school entry.

The campus is the oldest operating school site in California.

There are 8 building structures that house 9 classrooms, administrative offices, restrooms, a library, a Discovery studies room and a staff kitchen. In addition, there is a Library/Computer Lab, two sets of girls and boys restrooms, and 8 small support and storage rooms. There is a need for 3 to 4 additional classrooms to accommodate student growth as well as specialized student needs. There is no dedicated space for science materials or holding science lessons.

The Principal's 6 x 8 foot office is too small to allow more than one parent to meet at a time, and the small staff room does not permit all teachers to sit at a meeting or at lunchtime. There is no place for ill students to rest in the office. There are two parking areas with a combined 15 spaces.

There are three outdoor lunch areas with picnic tables that cannot be used in cold or wet weather. Without a multi-purpose room, children currently eat inside classrooms or outside weather permitting. Dances, graduations, recitals and other public meetings must be held off campus.

Recently, a greenhouse was constructed near the Dalton Street entrance. There are also 9 small garden boxes, 10 terraced garden boxes and Hetty's Garden, a small heart-shaped plot built in memory of a former employee.

There is a large, unshaded paved courtyard area outside the administrative offices. There is a larger multi-purpose playground with a slide, monkey bars, two sets of swings, a basketball court, and two tetherball stations. These amenities are very outdated and were likely installed in 1957. There is a very small sandbox. The playground has a capacity of 2 classes but currently serves 4 to 5 classrooms at a time.

The buildings are painted dark gray and navy blue. Many cement walls are painted grey or dark red. There are a series of growing large cracks in the retaining wall at the corner of South School Street. There is no bulletin board or posting area for school wide notices, carpooling or administrative information.

The school recently obtained a vacant and now empty lot immediately behind the administrative offices.

Grass Valley Charter School has wireless communication between computers and printers throughout campus, with 4 base stations on campus. Teachers all have iBook laptops and digital cameras. Most teachers have at least two computers in the classroom, all of which need to be updated with state of the art software and hardware.

Due to the age of the buildings, their design is generally not environmentally friendly or energy conscious. There is a limited recycling program in place but not a composting program. There are no best management practices specific to the school and parents have expressed concern about the possible use of chemical pesticides and herbicides.

It is a shared sentiment that Grass Valley Charter School had outgrown the campus even prior to the move to our present campus. There is an ultimate need for a larger site with space for 12 classrooms, a multipurpose room, a library, an adequate playground that meets the needs of Pre-K through middle school, and room for growth.

### ***Goals and Objectives***

**Goal 1. Grass Valley Charter School shall expand the campus infrastructure to accommodate the size of the school population and the needs of teachers, staff and students.**

Objective 1. By June 2008, GVCS will construct a new classroom building to house Science, Discovery Studies, and Middle School Block groupings.

Objective 2 . By June 2009 A "Creating our Campus Committee", composed of parents and school staff, will meet to design and build a state of the art Playground for students. In addition, the committee will look into redesigning the courtyard with trees, vegetation, pathways and shaded cover to create a space that reflects our school's culture and values.

Objective 3. An agreement with St. Joseph's Hall in the neighboring facility will be sought by October 2007 to house class performances, dances, recitals, fundraisers and graduations.

Objective 4. During the 07-08 school year, GVCS will continue to look for ways to expand the school boundary for additional classrooms, meeting spaces and play areas.

Objective 5. During the 07-08 school GVCS will meet to examine other options to the space issues the school faces. This could include examining other sites or renting other facilities.

**Goal 2. Grass Valley Charter School will create a school campus environment that is in alignment with Expeditionary Learning and our School Culture.**

Objective 1. By September 2007, a large Notice Board will be installed outside the Administrative offices for administrative messages, general news, fundraising alerts, and carpooling opportunities.

Objective 2. Beginning in Spring of 2009, the Creating our Campus Committee will begin implementation of public displays of art and creativity throughout the campus with a common theme that supports our mission and values. These may include:

- an earth mural with children on the large wall above the courtyard
- the design principals artistically rendered on the large cement wall in the courtyard
- a community adventure mural along the front wall of the school that tracks the history of the school and the community
- art that corresponds to each design principal associated with each structure
- painting of the trim on all classroom buildings to "own" the campus with color
- signage at all entrances to the school that provides a meaningful way-finding system and a deeper sense of school culture (classes would be encouraged to help in this process to create ownership).

Objective 3. By June 2008, the GVCS community will ensure that all flowerbeds, gardens and the greenhouse are utilized fully on campus.

Objective 4. By September 2009, GVCS will develop a plan to install solar panels on school rooftops as both a learning project and an energy reduction effort.

**Goal 3. Grass Valley Charter School will at all times endeavor to create an eco-friendly campus and develop and utilize cutting edge environmental practices and energy reduction methods.**

Objective 1. By December 2009, GVCS will review the existing Energy Audit and distribute the results of the audit to all classrooms and parents, and implement an energy reduction campaign.

Objective 2. By June 2009, GVCS will seek to achieve 100 percent recycling of all recyclable materials generated in classrooms and during lunch periods.

Objective 3. By June 2009, GVCS will create a plan to compost 100 percent of compostable waste.

Objective 4. By June 2009, GVCS will conduct and distribute the results of a Water Audit documenting uses of water and strategies to reduce water usage.

Objective 5. By June 2008, GVCS will develop Best Management Practices to eliminate the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides.

Objective 6. By June 2009, GVCS will investigate environmentally responsible landscape techniques, including the construction of an "edible garden," xeriscaping and native plants.

## **Performance Area 4. Community**

### ***Current Situation***

Enrollment in GVCS involves the commitment of every parent to provide a minimum of 10 hours or more of service to the school annually. In the beginning of the school year families complete the *GVCS Parent Involvement Survey*, which collects information to match parent interests, skills and connections with the needs of our school. There is no system at present to monitor the 10 hours commitment, or to match survey results with school needs. There is currently a lack of awareness by the parent community that signing the Parent Agreement constitutes a formal commitment (pledge) of volunteer hours.

Teachers continually seek and appreciate the support of our parent volunteers. However, the 10-hour commitment from parents does not allow us to meet our needs as an Expeditionary Learning School. We need considerably more volunteer hours from our parent community to support weekly classroom curriculum, participate in designated committees, and work towards specific objectives.

In January 2007, the Parent Representative Group began meeting once a month. The purpose of the group is to provide a core group of GVCS parents who can facilitate communication, organize work projects and provide cohesiveness among the classrooms at GVC. The group is working to clarify its roll within the school.

Core Family meetings are held intermittently throughout the school year. These meetings are open to all family, community and staff members interested in supporting GVCS. Currently there is no formal schedule for these meetings.

While we are in collaboration with many community organizations on an on-going basis, including the City of Grass Valley , Wolf Creek Community Alliance, the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) and many others, there is no formal program to provide outreach to the community organizations that could support and enhance the school in achieving goals of community service, lifelong learning, and service.

*The Coyote Chronicle*, a monthly newsletter, is mailed to each family. The newsletter includes a message from the Principal, articles about school events and classroom updates, and a calendar of important dates. Classroom teachers send their own newsletters home on a regular basis. The school also utilizes a calling system to alert parents to upcoming events or other notices. Some individual teachers also use the calling system for classroom announcements. Email is utilized at times to communicate with specific parents.

## ***Goals and Objectives***

### **Goal 1. Grass Valley Charter School will develop and maintain an active Parent Commitment/Involvement strategy.**

Objective 1. By October 2007, a committee will refine existing GVCS Parent Involvement Survey, develop a family statement of commitment to increase family support and required volunteer hours for our school.

Objective 2. By October 2007, a parent committee will develop a strategy to maintain and monitor Parent Volunteer hours. Once this strategy is in place, the Parent Representative Group will manage and monitor volunteer involvement.

Objective 3. By June 2008, the Parent Representative Group will develop a strategy to increase parent participation in and help establish the agenda of All Parent (formerly called Core Parent) meetings.

Objective 4. By September 2007, The Student/Parent Handbook will be reviewed by the Parent Representative Group and Staff to incorporate school culture and volunteer commitment.

### **Goal 2. Grass Valley Charter School will develop and maintain a strategy for Community Partnership.**

Objective 1. Beginning in January 2008, a Community Partnerships Committee will be formed to further support GVCS's core values and beliefs through mutually beneficial projects. Partnerships will be developed to support Expeditionary Learning and fundraising goals. Possible partners are SYRCL, Wolf Creek Community, Sierra Club, Riverhill Farm, Carville Sierra Community, Coldwell Banker Grass Roots Realty, Washington Mutual Bank, Walton's Grizzly Lodge, McDonald's, Bank of America, REI, Grass Valley Masonic Lodge, PG&E, and others, including local service organizations.

Objective 2. By June 2008 the Community Partnership Committee will develop a directory of businesses that support GVCS will be developed and distributed.

Objective 3. During the 2008-09 school year, the Community Partnership Committee, staff, and parents will seek a major community project to better integrate the school with the local community.

## Performance Area 5. School Culture

### *Current Situation*

Grass Valley Charter at Bell Hill has a unique school culture based on the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles. These ten principles provide the foundation for experiences in and out of the classroom. The six character traits were designed by GVCS to support a positive school culture.

#### **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

#### **The 6 Character Traits at GVCS**

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

Currently each classroom teacher addresses the design principles in depth and on a regular

basis. School-wide community meetings provide the opportunity for students to be recognized with a Coyote Compliment for demonstrating their use and understanding of a Design Principle. In the classroom, students quickly discover that each of us is both a learner and a teacher and we can serve one another by sharing our knowledge and skills. The community built in the classroom spills over into school wide culture, and students in different grades cheerfully support their friends through shared lessons, demonstrations, and cross age tutoring. The word "crew" is understood school-wide to mean we are all responsible for contributing and working cooperatively.

Learning expeditions often evolve into community service projects. Students in seventh and eighth grade have a service requirement tied to graduation. However, the service requirement is fragmented and not systemic K-8.

Fifth through eighth graders are eligible to participate on the Student Council, and Student Council leaders have input in school decision making.

Site-based decision-making processes are in place for staff members. Each individual's voice is valued and considered as decisions, processes, and procedures are implemented.

## ***Goals and Objectives***

**Goal 1. Grass Valley Charter School will maintain and extend current strategies to incorporate the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles and character development into the daily experiences of all students.**

Objective 1. Beginning in September 2007, teachers will share current and best practices, as well as new EL strategies during regularly scheduled EL meetings.

**Goal 2. Grass Valley Charter School will develop and maintain strategies for improved school-wide communication.**

Objective 1. By June 2008, GVCS will create an electronic address book of the parent community to communicate on a regular basis via email.

Objective 2. By June 2008, the Service and Adventure coordinator begin a web-based newsletter called "Notes from the Field" that will summarize the school-wide events under his direction.

Objective 3. By June 2008, GVCS will establish consistent communications processes and techniques: classroom and school wide e-mail lists, exterior bulletin boards, phone trees for all classrooms, protocols for "all call", etc.

## **Performance Area 6. Organizational Success and Financial Security**

### ***Current Situation***

The Grass Valley Charter School operating budget for Fiscal Year 2007 is \$1.5 million. An additional \$100,000 is available from other one-time and specific funding sources. Each classroom is allocated \$1,500 for classroom supplies. Donations and fundraisers have been a varied source of income in the range of \$30,000.

Currently, there is no active fundraising strategy and no fundraising committee. There is no Annual Campaign, and there is no non-profit supporting organization dedicated to raising funds for the Grass Valley Charter School. There is an annual \$50 fee per student fee due upon enrollment that partially funds classroom fieldwork and extended curriculum needs. There are a number of parent inspired fundraising efforts including the fall Wrapping Paper fundraiser, a Spring Rummage Sale, SCRIP, and a spring book sale.

Prioritization of financial needs for staff, infrastructure and special programs has not been conducted or agreed upon, however it is readily acknowledged that major infrastructure expenditures for a multi-purpose room, a playground, principal's office and the Service and Adventure Program will be required in the short to medium term.

### ***Goals and Objectives***

**Goal 1. Grass Valley Charter School will develop and maintain an active fundraising strategy.**

Objective 1. By October 30, 2007 a Fundraising Committee will be formed composed of parent, teacher and administrative representatives, Adventure & Service Teacher, the GV Foundation for Arts and Science, grant-writers and others to develop budgets, goals, objectives and fundraising tactics for fiscal year 07/08 and create a structure for a permanent school Fundraising Committee.

Objective 2. By December, 2008 GVCS will designate individuals to seek out grants and initiate proposals for public and private monies.

Objective 3. For 2007-08 the school principal will investigate the possibility of increasing the \$50 fieldwork deposit.

Objective 4. By December 2008, the fundraising committee will investigate establishing a foundation or other 501(c)3 entity to support GVCS fundraising and development activities.

**Goal 2. The Annual Fundraising Plan will be consistent with and supportive of the goals and objectives of other elements of the Grass Valley Charter School Strategic Plan.**

Objective 1. For 2007-2008, and every year thereafter, the priority of fundraising will be to fully fund the staff development contract with Expeditionary Learning, and to fully fund the Service and Adventure Coordinator's Program.

Objective 2. A priority of fundraising for 2008-09 will be to support the playground committee in the design, development and construction of the new playground.

Objective 3. By June 2008, the fundraising committee will develop a system for monthly online fundraising donations from parent and community contributors.

Objective 4. All school fundraising will be respectful of the needs and capabilities of students, parents and teachers. Fundraising will be targeted towards specific objectives that are supported by the Strategic Plan and clearly understood by parents and teachers.

**Goal 3. Grass Valley Charter School's budget process will reflect the vision of the school. The budget process will consider school and community needs and interests and find creative ways to develop resources for the school.**

Objective 1. The Principal will provide regular reports to teachers and parents regarding budget proposals and revenues and expenses.

Objective 2. Certificated staff and the Principal will revise and monitor the budget on an ongoing basis.