



The HOWL

*Grass Valley Charter
An EL Education Mentor
School*



1/9/23

“We are Crew, Not Passengers.”



Student Led Conferences

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Welcome back GVCS & Happy New Year! For those that missed it, this article on GVCS was featured in The Union over the holidays. It is timely in advance of Student Led Conferences at the end of the month, and in particular, wonderful to hear from students about the value of SLCs. Enjoy!

In schools throughout Nevada County the first semester of the school year is drawing to a close and staff have been organizing student work to prepare for parent/teacher conferences. However at Grass Valley Charter School, it's the students who are actively preparing to share their growth, celebrate success, and set goals for the coming semester with their parents via Student Led Conferences. Student Led Conferences (SLCs) empower students to be leaders of their own learning and to instill a sense of agency. They are a culmination of classroom practices known as Student Engaged Assessment which span back to the start of the year and manifest in the classroom daily.

Teachers craft academic and character-based Learning Targets that explicitly guide their daily lessons. These Learning Targets lay a foundation for students to actively engage in checks for understanding and to analyze their own data to reflect on their learning. Additionally, students consider exemplars of past student-work and participate in the development of rubrics that will be used to refine their work through multiple drafts. This work and dedication of best practices comes to fruition during SLCs, empowering students, offering insight to parents and serving as an affirmation to teachers. “Student Led Conferences is another invaluable layer of learning that is part of GVCS. Watching my kids starting at 5 years old communicate what they’ve learned in an organized way was priceless to watch, and fulfilling for them at the same time.” Shared GVCS parent, Cameron Herzog. GVCS alumni parent, Olivia Pritchett also added, “It encourages students to take greater ownership in their learning. It also promotes greater collaboration and working relationships with teacher, student and parent. I’ve enjoyed seeing my kids' educational experiences through their lens.”

But what do students say about Student Led Conferences? 8th grader, Sydney Tesene shared, “When a teacher is showing student work, maybe they do not share what you want - when you get to do it, you get a chance to show them everything that you want to show them - you get a chance to show them something you need to work on...It gives you the chance to show your parents something you are very proud of. Maybe it is something you worked on for a couple days, or maybe it was for a month that you worked on this one project and you can show them. And if you need help they can help you with your struggles. I feel like when a teacher shows your work, it is not as meaningful as when your kid shows their work.”

In the words of Simone Bender, current GVCS 8th grader: “When you are doing an SLC it is slightly like an interview - with your parents though - you show them basically a resume, which is your past work and they ask you questions about how you are doing or if you need any help or just tell you ‘wow you are doing great. It prepares us for future projects, for interviews and just life.” While teachers step back and allow students to lead during SLCs, teachers play a critical role in preparing students as articulated by Ms. Bender. “It is necessary to show things you are struggling in, you can't just show everything you are doing well in - or else you would never get the help you need to do better in your work, and that is what teachers do teach us about SLCs. They do guide us through the making of our portfolios. Often they will say share something you are super duper proud of and then show something you are a bit less proud of, but talk about how you can improve it. As you get older it gets easier to present and talk about our failures and achievements even though they are probably harder and more significant later on in life.”

What is the perspective from teachers? As a Kindergarten / First Grade Teacher, Suzanne Mitchell, (2014 GVSD Teacher of the Year), has a unique and critical role in preparing some of our youngest learners, and their parents, for Student Led Conferences. “Children at SLCs take ownership of their own learning. The pride that they take in the work they have done is invaluable.” Cynthia Grapel, (2023 GVSD Teacher of the Year), who teaches Fourth and Fifth grade shared her reflections on the value of Student Led Conferences. “SLCs allow time for students to look closely at their work - even high quality work - and respond

to it through the lenses of content and character. Students take ownership of their learning and character development through this self-evaluative process. Students lead their conferences and report to parents with teachers present during SLCs. For each child, SLC's are a place of celebration, reflection, and goal setting."

At GVCS we have an expanded vision of student achievement. We believe that when a student graduates from our school, that they should be well on their way to becoming an effective and productive citizen, who not only envisions a better world, but possess the tools to help create that world. As students culminate their education, be it after college or vocational school, we know that their success is not solely dependent upon their test scores, but on the quality of their work and the quality of their character. Grass Valley Charter School is part of a national network of EL Education schools. The model, formerly Expeditionary Learning, was born out of Harvard and Outward Bound more than 30 years ago. GVCS has been a part of the EL Education network for nearly 30 years, and is honored to be both a Mentor and Credentialed School.

Speech! Speech! Speech – Contest!

The Nevada County Speech Tournament is right around the corner! We're looking for folks from grades 4-8 who enjoy writing, public speaking, and getting to know kids from around Nevada County. GV Charter has done very well in this tournament in the past, so let's keep it going!

This year's preliminary competition will be held on **Friday, March 10**. The topic is "What human qualities do we need more of and why?" There will be an **informational meeting on Wednesday, January 11** after school for any students who are interested. If you have any questions, please reach out to **Sarah** srushing@gvcsd.us

Middle School Semi Formal Dance Friday!

Middle School students in good standing are invited to attend the semi-formal **Winter Wonderland Themed Dance this Friday, January 13th, from 6-8pm** in the Multi Purpose Room at GVCCS.

Permission Slips are required, will be available at the doors, and will go home from homeroom classes this week. The cost is \$5. Parents or designated adult must pick up their student from the dance (via an all parent conga line if at all possible?), via the main entrance to the school.

Sports!

Boys Basketball: Open to 6th – 8th graders, the season runs from 1/2 - 2/24

Contact Coach Ben Murphy with questions: b-bmurphy@att.net

Girls Volleyball: Open to 6th – 8th graders, the season runs from 2/20 – 4/21

Track: Open to 4th – 8th graders, the season runs from 3/27 – 5/26

Spring Mountain Bike Season: Open to 4th – 8th graders (younger with coach permission) the season runs from 3/27 – 5/26 (NCAL).

Questions about Sports at GVCS can be directed to Mr. E at [aezell@gvcsd.us](mailto:aezzell@gvcsd.us)

Parenting is Hard!

Parenting! It is not for the faint of heart! We are all about learning at GVCS – and not just for kiddos! The morning series is hosted at the FRC, right next door to GVCS. Drop your kiddos at school, get a cup of coffee, and attend class!



Nurturing Parenting

Winter 2023 Class Series





Parents say...
"I am calmer in the chaos."
"Love the practical tools!"
"I am feeling more secure as a parent."

Take the stress out of parenting with Nurturing Parenting's evidence-based, interactive approach. For 35 years, this program has helped parents to deepen and strengthen their family relationships in all types of situations. Topics include:

- Communicating with Respect
- Loving Discipline and Logical Consequences
- Setting and Keeping Limits that Work
- Building Self-Worth
- Brain Development
- Dealing with Stress
- And much more!



8 Week Evening Series:
Thursdays 5:30-7:30pm
Jan 26-Mar 16
Ready Springs Elementary School
10862 Spenceville Road, Penn Valley
Pizza & childcare provided for evening class!



8 Week Morning Series:
Thursdays 10am-12:00pm
Feb 2-March 23
Family Resource Center Grass Valley
235 S. Auburn Street

Cost per series: \$35 Scholarships available!

[Scan QR Code to Register Online:](#)



Or: For questions or registration:
Jinnae: 530-238-5608
janderson@nevco.org



Nurturing Parenting®
Established 1983

Be In The Know

1/12 - Community Meetings This Thursday

1/13 – Middle School Dance, 6pm, Multi-Purpose Room

1/16 - MLK Day, No School

1/30 – 2/3 - Student Led Conferences, Half Days All Week

An Expanded View of Student Achievement

At GVCS we have an expanded vision of student achievement. We believe that when a student graduates from our school, that they should be well on their way to becoming an effective and productive citizen, who not only envisions a better world, but possesses the tools to help create that world.

As students culminate their education, be it after college or vocational school, we know that their success is not solely dependent upon their test scores, but on the quality of their work and the quality of their character.

As such, at GVCS we consider student achievement to have three dimensions: Mastery of Academic Skills and Content, High – Quality Work, and Character.

We hope that you have found evidence of our commitment to these dimensions of student achievement in the previous pages.



Grass Valley Charter School

225 South Auburn Street
Grass Valley , Ca95945

www.grassvalleycharter.org



Our Design Principles

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