

COLORADO TRAILBLAZER SCHOOL TO WATCH

Grand Valley Middle School



2015-16 School Statistics

Community: Rural Mountain
Enrollment: 253
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Traditional, 4-Day Week

Student Demographics

33%	Hispanic
64%	White
0%	Asian
1%	African American
2%	American Indian (Native American)

62%	Free/Reduced Lunch
19%	English Learners
31%	Mobility Rate

Designated in 2016;

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School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Rubrics and Exemplars are common. Some exemplars are student work and others are teacher created – as the teacher demonstrates skills.
- Professional Development is on the three dimensions of High Quality Work: Complexity, Authenticity, and Craftsmanship.
- Three dimensions of high quality work are common language at GVMS, taught through CREW, Morning Meeting, and classroom instruction.
- Grading and Report Cards are standards-based. Students receive a content grade and Habits grade for each course. Content grade is a true reflection of the students' content knowledge toward the standards. Habits grades are reflective of the students' level of responsibility and collaboration eg. Student turning in work to meet a deadline.

- Student-led conferences are alive at GVMS. Students present their learning and learning evidence to parents and talk about next steps.
- Curriculum maps based upon content standards have been developed and are in use. We use a tool called an STA (Standards – Target – Assessment) to help use and develop curriculum from the maps.
- All core classes have common assessments based upon the content standards. These are rigorous and cross-checked against standards and other quality assessments. Our common assessments are created and analyzed, guided by the Driven by Data process.
- Learning Targets provide clarity for students and parents around important concepts. Targets exist for daily content, long-term units, and Expeditions.
- Curriculum is regularly a topic at evening events, Breakfast of Champions, school website, and newsletters.
- GVMS is a Dual-Core school. Math/Science and Social Studies/ELA pairs provide for fewer transitions, fewer student-teachers/class, and huge inter-disciplinary connections in content.
- Learning Expeditions are designed by staff to integrate content standards, local experts, real-world local issues, high quality student products, and problem solving/inquiry.
- All students are involved in Expedition(s) throughout the year. Current expeditions require students to: 1) Analyze local economy and design a business to survive the historical Boom and Bust trend of our local economy, 2) Research geological evidence to make predictions about environments that created the different rock layers, 3) Analyze local imports/exports of produce and gas/oil industries- tracking raw products/goods from their origin(s) around the world to Parachute.
- Learning Targets help drive the purpose and focus student work around the Expeditions.
- GVMS uses a variety of proven strategies to deepen student understanding including: Annotation skills and the use of Common/Expert Text and Anchor Text.
- Expedition field work – different than traditional field work because students are pre-loaded with background knowledge. During field work, students are in the role of a researcher as they gather evidence to answer/shape their expedition product.
- Learning Protocols are very common at GVMS – creating student driven and highly engaged classrooms.
- Cooperative learning and collaboration is a common habit and point of emphasis at GVMS.
- Learning Target trackers are maintained, updated, and reflected upon by students in all core classes. Students assess and reflect on their learning progress from the beginning of the unit and continue to assess their performance as they progress.
- 3 year Portfolio/Passage process is underway with Working Folders and 8th grade speeches (all 8th graders give a culminating speech to their CREW) already in place.
- **Digging Up/Digging In** is a school-wide student and teacher reflection Protocol. This protocol is used for students to reflect on their assessments and plan for next steps. Teachers use this protocol collaboratively to analyze their student data and make specific decisions regarding their re-teach and individual student needs.
- Students are in each dual-core class for 2.5 hours each day. The teacher has the flexibility to split up this time to best meet the needs of their students.
- We offer a flexible intervention elective period to students. This is a month long intervention where students attend academic support, rather than attending one of their electives. Teachers can invite students to intervention or the student/family can request this added support.
- English Language Learners have a support elective class to help with core classes and academic vocabulary.

- GVMS offers a 1 hour after school Homework Help every Tuesday/Thursday for any student who would like to attend. Teachers check in on their students and require some to attend. Bus transportation is provided.
- Classroom discipline and disruptions have decreased significantly in the past 5 years. Communication in classes is content/concept related much more than process/management.
- Homework help supervision is schedule by teachers using a collaborative Google Document. Teachers also train local Kiwanians to come during this time to help with tutoring.
- Feedback of student progress is regularly updated using Infinite Campus. All students have a 2 week window, during which they can re-submit work or re-assess on skills. Our goal is to give students a chance to prove what they know – therefore due dates have a 2 week window. If a student is late with turning in work, this is reflected in their Habits Grade and not their Content Grade.
- Intervention Class is flexible and students move in and out regularly. Furthermore, the support is focused toward the skills that that student needs to improve upon.
- Students are empowered to be self-directed and leaders of their learning. More so than just the teacher knowing what the students' next steps are, we want our students to help lead this charge. This is the reason we've chosen to make reflection, target trackers, Working Folders, and student-led conferences such a priority.
- Expeditions are a great example of co-teaching. Multiple classes are working within the same expedition. Teachers collaborate to teach and facilitate learning together.
- GVMS Core Teachers have team planning and individual planning each day.
- Our district is on a 4 day school week. This allows full-day PD to occur twice each month. The focus of our Professional Development is guided by our yearly Work Plan and we have a lot of autonomy as to how we feel we need to use this time.
- GVMS teachers engage in Instructional Rounds at least once each semester.
- New teachers are involved in our district Mentor Program as well as a Novice Teacher training through our EL Education network.

Developmental Responsiveness

- CREW, which occurs twice/week and includes a small group of 6th-8th grade students with a teacher, provides all students with the opportunity to form relationships, build teamwork, and discuss and solve real world problems.
- Teachers teach dual contents allowing them to build relationships and address individual student needs.
- Learning Support Teachers support students in the classroom or in small groups based on academic needs.
- Morning Meeting provides the entire school with the opportunity to meet twice per week and engage in uplifting activities.
- Students select which lunch/recess they would like to be with their friends from various grades.
- Counseling is available to all students.
- District provides a medical clinic for families at the Center for Family Learning.
- Professional Development provides staff the opportunity to get trained to meet students' diverse medical and physical needs.
- Many staff members are First Aid, CPI, and CPR trained.
- Nurses and health clerks are employed by the district to help with student health issues.

- GVMS has a diverse range of student supports including psychological, occupational therapy, speech, and mental health.
- Protocols are used in all classrooms to provide structure and support learning.
- All students are involved in an Expedition throughout the year to gain hands on experience with problem solving.
- All students have Data Folders or Notebooks to collect their work and reflect on their progress towards proficiency.
- Google Classroom is used by many teachers in the building to engage students and provide them with a way to organize their assignments.
- CREW time provides students with the opportunity to teach strategies, protocols, and social skills in a small group.
- CREW is a time for students to work with other students who are outside of their social circle and learn to appreciate their CREW for their unique contributions.
- Students celebrate their lives and discuss issues with their CREW and CREW leader during their CREW time.
- Students are grouped for counseling for social and emotional needs.
- Expeditions are connected to Parachute and provide students with opportunity to solve real life problems.
- Master schedule is designed to give teachers more instructional time, with fewer students in class. The purpose of this is to allow healthy and quality relationships will be cultivated.
- Expeditions provide students with the opportunity to bridge contents to explore a guiding question through different lenses.
- Field Work allows other Content Teachers to support each other outside the classroom.
- Dual-Core system allows for teachers to bring different contents into the same lesson.
- All 6th - 8th grade students are enrolled and use College in Colorado to establish post-secondary plans for our students.
- Transition assessments are given to students who are on an IEP.
- CREWS and Classroom teachers have students develop and monitor SMART goals.
- Students use Learning Target trackers to monitor their progress towards proficiency.
- All students have the opportunity to give a speech to be selected as a member of Student Council.
- Students lead student-led Conferences twice per year with their parent and teacher present. Students guide the conference with examples of their own high quality work, demonstrating their proficiency toward the standard.
- During student-led Conferences, students reflect on their progress with our Habits of a Learner. Ultimately, they select one Habit as a personal focus.
- Teachers are available before school, during lunch, and after school to meet with students.
- Surveys are given to students to improve CREW and Morning Meeting.
- Parents attend IEP meetings to support their child's education and give feedback regarding how we can best meet their child's educational and emotional needs at home and at school.
- Almost all parents attend student led Conferences, our goal is 100% attendance – we are very close to this most sessions.
- Parents and community members attend band and choir concerts, drama performances, Expedition culminating events, student celebrations, and Breakfast of Champions.
- Parents act as experts in the classroom when they fit the Expedition focus.
- Parents attend Field Work with their child.
- GVMS has community partnerships with Department of Human Services, Youth Zone, Mind Springs, and the Coalition for Families.

- CREWs have service projects monthly to provide Service at the school and community.
- Several community service organizations exist at GVMS including: Student Council, Builders Club, GVMS Ambassadors, and National Junior Honor Society.
- Expeditions are focused on Parachute/Battlement Mesa and produce a product to add to or improve the community.
- Experts for the Expeditions are from the surrounding community and students help solve these problems/questions.
- After school clubs (cooking, craft, puzzles/logic, yoga, ice fishing, make-up/hair, book), drama, sports, and Destination Imagination are offered for students after school.
- Students involved in school clubs that provide service to the community (National Junior Honor Society, Ambassadors, Builders Club and Student Council).
- CREWs monthly participate in keeping the school clean through a 30 minute service time.
- Students provide service to the school wiping tables and stacking chairs after lunch. Students take ownership in cleaning up after breakfast and in our hallways.
- We promote the middle school philosophy of becoming involved in many things outside of the classroom. Middle school is the time for self-exploration.

Social Equity

- Students are placed in Intervention class based on academic needs based on common assessments and progress monitoring.
- All students are encouraged to revise work to meet High Quality expectations. We have a school policy that allows students to revise and resubmit their learning evidence for 2 weeks after the original due date.
- Students conduct Field Work during Expeditions to gain real life experience investigating problems and seeking solutions.
- ELL students are provided support in a small class setting to support classroom assignments and build English fluency.
- Homework Help is supported by classroom teachers two times per week for students who are struggling, need to make up assignments, or want to revise their work.
- Teachers use small groups to accelerate and/or provide additional support to struggling students.
- Google Read and Write is used by struggling students to support them in the classroom and at home.
- Google Classroom is used in the classroom for instruction and as a tool for students to access classroom resources and assignments from home.
- Students use target trackers in the classroom to record their performance and reflect on next steps towards meeting proficiency.
- Protocols are used to engage students and provide structure for understanding the curriculum.
- Anchor text in ELA class are available to students in various modes – in order to meet each student's learning need and allowing them to access the information.
- Art class supports the expedition through the creation of business logos.
- Students are given choice in their final product for their expedition.
- Content teachers have a common plan time everyday to collaborate on planning instruction.
- Master schedule provides a weekly time for Inter-disciplinary Teams to meet to discuss students using the RTI process.

- Common Assessments and bi-weekly formative assessment data talks are created and assessed as a team to provide consistency and reflect on student progress towards meeting standards.
- Leadership Team meets twice per month to discuss school and student needs and assess progress towards goals on Work Plan.
- Intervention Class and ELL pullout is provided to support struggling students' individual needs.
- The school has three computer labs and two chrome book carts for students to use throughout the day to research and analyze data.
- GVMS is currently piloting a 1:1 classroom where students are learning at their own pace using a variety of technological resources.
- All ELL and SPED kids are integrated into the regular classroom.
- Google Classroom is used for students to access and store their assignments in school and from home.
- Students select two elective classes per semester based on interest.
- Students share their High Quality Work during Morning Meeting.
- School Library has variety of books that represent various cultures.
- CREW time supports students' individuality and encourages student to share their celebrations with others.
- Parents/family from diverse backgrounds have acted as our local experts on a variety of topics. These volunteers have shared their culture and background.
- Every student is a member of the same CREW of 12-14 students throughout their entire middle school experience.
- Students are recognized for living the Habits of a Learner during Morning Meeting using Panther Paws.
- Teachers recognize students monthly for demonstrating all the Habits of a Learner by nominating a student from their class as Student of the Month.
- Core teachers teach dual contents allowing students to have fewer classes and allow the teacher to build better relationships with their students.
- Panther Points are given to students in their planners for meeting classroom expectations and modeling the Habits of a Learner. Students can choose to "spend" their points on goods at our Panther Store.
- GVMS staff considers each student's individual need and responds appropriately. For example, a student who is struggling with mental health will not have the same expectations as a student who is doing well, but chooses to not attend mandatory homework help. We develop logical next steps for our struggling students to allow him/her to feel success and move toward being a healthy and successful student.
- Surveys are emailed and provided at various school events to gather input from parents.
- School and/or District Accountability meets quarterly to provide parents with school information and receive feedback from parents.
- Infinite Campus is used to call, email, and text parents about upcoming events.
- Translators are provided at Student Led Conferences and parent meetings.
- Infinite Campus portal is used by students and parents to access their grades and missing assignments. GVMS also sends a weekly email of missing assignments to parents. Infinite Campus also provides us with a messenger service that we often use to communicate with all our families.
- GVMS provides weekend backpack food for identified struggling families.
- GVMS has an in-house charity, Grand Valley Givers, which can purchase clothing, school supplies, or pay for life essential items such as eye glasses.

- GVMS is part of Coalition for Families – this organization supports families that are in great need of support.
- Students are recognized monthly for living the Habits of a Learner by receiving a Student of the Month award presented at Morning Meeting.
- All Eighth grade students have the opportunity to attend the Incentive Trip by maintaining a 3.5 GPA and completing 15 hours of community service.
- Students are recognized at Breakfast of Champions quarterly for earning a 3.0 or higher GPA.
- Panther Pride Awards are given by teachers to recognize students for their outstanding achievement at the end of the year. These are a combination of academic achievement and Habits award.
- Panther Paw recipients are recognized at Morning Meeting for demonstrating Habits of a Learner.
- Many teachers have traveled outside the United States bringing with them a variety of outside experiences.
- Several teachers can read, write and speak two languages.
- The staff has equal amount of male and female teachers, somewhat rare for a middle school.
- Many staff members are coaches or club leaders at the school.
- Staff members attend community events and sporting events throughout the district.
- Parents, students and staff read and sign the Student Handbook.
- Teachers receive a copy of the Student Reflection Sheet whenever a student is sent to the office.
- School expectations are revisited and adjusted (if needed) periodically throughout the school year.
- Parents are notified every time a student is sent to the office for discipline.
- Habits of a Learner are posted in classrooms and explicitly taught in Morning Meeting and CREW.
- Students who meet with an administrator and do not receive an office referral, are still tracked through a Google Form. This allows us to analyze the demographic of which students are being sent to the office.

Organizational Support

- Our shared vision is communicated and shared through our Work Plan.
- Our work plan is fleshed out through gathering feedback from staff of the prior year's Work Plan. The plan is fundamentally based upon our school vision, UIP, and affiliation with EL education.
- The work plan includes Goals, Faculty Targets, Leadership Support Action, EL Network Support, and Data Points.
- The work plan is monitored through our walk-through process. Walk-through indicators are taken from the faculty targets of the Work Plan.
- Staff reflects on their individual progress of the Work Plan through our GVMS Systems Tracker. This is completed monthly and reflected upon individually and used during our Teacher Effectiveness meetings.
- GVMS School Leadership develops (using a Tuning Protocol) and monitors the Work Plan.
- GVMS Leadership team is a team of action and fulfillment of initiatives rather than an advisory team to the principal.

- The Principal communicates frequently and consistently through a weekly bulletin to staff and faculty. This information includes building management, thought-provoking readings/quotes, celebrations, and general information to keep the school moving forward.
- The curriculum for CREW and Morning Meeting is written very thoughtfully and with purpose by members of the leadership team.
- Google Drive is used extensively to share common resources and as team templates for completing work.
- Our teacher teams meet often during PD Mondays or daily plan and hold each other accountable. We strive to model our Habit of Collaboration.
- School practices are often refined or initiated quickly. We respond to district initiatives efficiently and with practicality.
- For the past 3 years we have had our Habits of a Learner in place. These habits are: Collaboration, Responsibility, Inquiry, Service, and Perseverance. Staff strives to model these habits for students, promote them during class, and celebrate those students who are demonstrating the habits.
- The use of Protocols in the classroom is common at GVMS, reinforcing our philosophy of life-long learning and continuous improvement.
- Teachers regularly reflect on their practice during team planning, whole staff professional development, and by completing the monthly **GVMS Systems Tracker** survey.
- We devote 30 minutes every day to either Morning Meeting or CREW. This time is spent celebrating students, attacking negative social behaviors, creating SMART goals, having fun, and building community.
- Our affiliation with EL Education provides a great amount of support and structures from a National Network of schools and education professionals. New teachers to GVMS are purposely sent to mentor EL schools to gain deep understanding of the EL practices.
- Whole staff professional Development occurs every other week, for a full day. Core Teachers also gain some Professional Development during their team time. We have built a schedule that provides a lot of time for learning and improvement of our practice. We feel this time is valuable and it has paid off!
- Teachers engage in 2 Instructional Rounds/year as an observer. This process has been valuable in getting staff to see highly effective instructional practices. The observer has choice in what they want to observe. Rounds also develop culture because it is a celebration for those staff who are being observed. Teacher select one practice they observe from the rounds, to improve their own teaching/learning.
- Teachers gain specific feedback around their practice during our walk-through. The walk-throughs are based upon our Work Plan faculty targets.
- All our students K-8 are in schools that have the EL Network focus. We also have the same Habits of a Learner and share many of the same structures.
- As a middle school, we teach an elective to our 8th graders called Pre-AP. Our high school is an AP for All school. Every student will be taught through the AP curriculum for some of their courses. The Pre-AP course is a great way for us to prepare our 8th graders for what lies ahead at our high school.
- We have invested in NMSI summer professional development, through the Legacy foundation (for many of our core teachers). The result of this has been the use of the NMSI instructional tools in many core classes. Our students will experience the same NMSI curriculum in high school.
- We have met with both elementary and high school staff to complete vertical articulation through our system.

- Our elective teachers are completing their Instructional Rounds, K-12, content specific.
- Core teachers complete data dialogues with the results from their Common Assessment. They question their own teaching practices and search for trends in the data as compared to their peers. Teachers adjust their instruction and re-teach certain concepts, based upon the discussion and results.
- As individuals, our teachers complete a monthly survey of their own actions as they pertain to our school goals and work plan. This is called the **GVMS System Tracker**. Results and feedback collected from this survey are discussed during teacher effectiveness meetings.
- Staff, Parents, and students are surveyed 1-2 times/year to gather feedback about the state of our school. These results are reflected upon by staff and leadership team – agreed upon action follows.
- During CREW, growth mindset is discussed with examples and strategies provided.
- We consider all our staff to be leaders within the school, where we problem solve and collaborate to be the best school for our students and community. The transition from a school with 1 leader to a school with many leaders was an integral change moment for GVMS. This was a conscious decision by the staff.
- How we work together as students and staff is something that we talk about openly; this process includes the developing and commitment to collaborative norms.
- We have a strong mentor program and a general mentoring culture at GVMS.
- We recruit staff early, posting jobs prior to many districts. The Principal attends a diverse schedule of recruiting fairs – based upon building needs. Cultural and linguistic diversity is a factor.
- We ask teacher candidates to teach a lesson for our hiring committee, so that we may see how they interact with the class and individual students.
- GVMS has a regular school accountability team that provides input and suggestions for the direction of our school.
- Each quarter we host a Breakfast of Champions to celebrate academic achievement. We take advantage of the captive audience of 200 – 500 people, to share celebrations, curriculum highlights, and general school information.
- We host various community nights throughout the school year to allow our students a venue for sharing their Expedition products.