



GWYNNE VALLEY RURAL ACADEMY

CHARTER

For a Public Charter School Established in the
Community of Gwynne, Alberta

Governed by The
GWYNNE VALLEY RURAL
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Initial Release
February 28, 2023



Vocational preparation begins in Kindergarten.



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1) The Charter

Gwynne Valley Rural Academy's Charter is to implement the concept of **Early Vocational Exposure** in a Public Charter School that serves students in Kindergarten through High School.

One definition of vocation is "a strong feeling of suitability for a particular career or occupation," while another definition would be "a skill or trade with specialized training that is pursued as a career." Herein, a vocation is more broadly defined as a person's profession, trade, employment, or main occupation.

Early Vocational Exposure is a Grades K–12 curriculum expansion that prioritizes the development of practical skills and vocational understanding throughout students' primary and secondary education. GVRA is governed by the Gwynne Valley Rural Education Association (GVREA) and its Charter Board of Directors whose membership is comprised of:

- parents of currently enrolled students
- community members, both private and corporate
- staff members (permanent employees of the school)

Early Vocational Exposure (EVE) is further defined as:

Early – From the beginning of a student's education, starting in Kindergarten or Pre-School.

Vocational – Having to do with the nature, working conditions, requirements, and job-specific skills of a variety of vocations (as well as the corresponding passion and suitability of such.)

Exposure – The combination of presentation, curriculum, awareness, and robust interaction.

The Core Components of Early Vocational Exposure are:

- 1. The Balancing of Predominant Learning Styles and Diversification of Learning Techniques** that:
 - a. have students more regularly interact with a variety of environments, and
 - b. facilitates additional tangible experiences with extensive hands-on and visual-spatial learning tools, and further promotes kinaesthetic development in all students,**thereby increasing students' proclivity for engaging with new tasks and experiences that they might otherwise have hesitation towards;**
- 2. Conventional Life Skills** that:
 - a. strongly instill the value of self-sufficiency, and
 - b. train students to take ownership of the many obstacles in everyday living circumstances;**therein preparing graduates to master practical skills that might be advantageous or even required in their future vocation(s) of choice; and**
- 3. Vocational Engagement** throughout a student's school years in the form of:
 - a. **Post-Secondary Engagement** that develops strong awareness of a wide variety of vocations and related post-secondary educational offerings; and
 - b. **Community Career Engagement**, where community members, local and abroad, present information about their vocations, and students visit community workplaces to understand the nature and the principles of those vocational environments.



2) Vision and Mission

VISION: To develop hard-working, critical-thinking citizens with a versatile education and practical skills that equip them to:

1. pursue their choice of vocation(s) after exploring a wide array of career paths in school, and to
2. proficiently navigate a rapidly changing world.

MISSION: To incorporate Early Vocational Exposure into GVRA's curriculum as a fundamental expansion of all students' education, and to proactively adapt the finer aspects of Early Vocational Exposure to the projected needs of future graduates.

Furthermore, GVRA notes that in July 2022, the Government of Alberta established a Career Education Task Force (CETF) to "review career education and provide strategic advice and recommendations to government on the development of a provincial framework that meets the needs of all students and effectively prepares them to meet the diverse labour market needs of the future." If EVE proves to be a genuine benefit for students, GVRA seeks to aid in redefining the education system's approach to vocations (in the career sense). Benefiting the system in this way would result from clearly demonstrating that an in-school focus on practical skills methodology and early vocational understanding *from Kindergarten through Grade 12* will better prepare graduates for their choice of vocation and for adult life – without compromising academic performance.

3) EVE is for Everyone

Who is Gwynne Valley Rural Academy for?

Early Vocational Exposure is designed to benefit virtually any student that might attend GVRA.

EVE is vocation-*focused* in a broad sense – offering a versatile, more wholistic education that advances both scholastic achievement and practical learning in the lives of all students.

Even though the Registered Apprenticeship Program and select trades training are part of the (intended) offerings at the school, **GVRA's Early Vocational Exposure Charter *does not* mean that GVRA is a Vocational-Based School** as defined in federal and provincial regulations.

GVRA is open to Grades K–9 students in its inaugural year and seeks to expand one grade per year to offer Kindergarten through Grade 12 in its fourth year of operation.

Students at Gwynne Valley Rural Academy will benefit from core curricular concepts and measurable goals being reinforced by Experiential Learning and an additional focus on Kinaesthetic and Visual-Spatial learning styles.

By expanding a student's knowledge of diverse vocational skills, community preservation, and stewardship; students will develop deeper understanding of concepts, the ability to transfer learnings within different contextual situations, and have improved confidence in making informed decisions.



4) Purpose: Why EVE?

Summary Statement:

Vocational preparation begins in Kindergarten.

Early Vocational Exposure is designed to address the following assertions:

1) Students Learn Differently.

- a. GVRA believes that a rebalancing of Predominant Learning Styles with emphasis on Kinaesthetic (hands-on) learning and Visual-Spatial learning will create more equitable learning opportunities for students and lead to better student outcomes.
- b. Regardless of their preferences and predisposition for certain learning styles, students will also become more well-rounded in applying academic knowledge to real-world situations with GVRA's emphases on Kinaesthetic, Visual-Spatial and Experiential Learning.

2) Students Achieve Differently, But Versatility Matters.

Adding versatility to a student's skillset in the form of Conventional Life Skills means that graduates can adapt quickly to:

- a. The practical requirements that are common in a variety of vocations and trades, but not necessarily taught in secondary or post-secondary education;
- b. The challenges of everyday life as well as more substantial hurdles; and
- c. A change in vocational employment or specialization, if required.

3) Tenacity is a Learned Trait.

- a. While Conventional Life Skills are a significant focus within EVE, there are many obstacles that might prevent students from engaging in *the unknown*.
- b. Students must learn to recognize their own hesitation and avoidance tendencies in order to acclimate with new tasks, skills, and environments.
- c. Students need effective strategies for *breakthrough*, both the big wins and the little ones.
- d. Intentional breakthrough creates tenacity in students over time.

4) Accelerated Outcomes can mean Improved Incomes.

Committing to a vocation and applicable education earlier in school can lead to more financial stability for young adults, and this can alter long-term trajectories all the way to retirement.

5) Vocational Preparation Begins in Kindergarten.

The comprehensive skillsets for success in all aspects of vocational or trades work and life must start to develop in the early years for students to naturally move into potential vocational callings.

A detailed exploration of the Purpose for Early Vocational Exposure can be found on GVRA's website in a document entitled:

Why EVE? The In-Depth Look



5) Guiding Principles

At Gwynne Valley Rural Academy, we believe:

1. that to address the unique ways students learn, at least 4 Predominant Learning Styles must **all** be substantially incorporated in the classroom throughout Grades K–12 using a variety of teaching methods and experiences with increased emphasis on hands-on and visual-spatial learning;
2. that teaching Conventional Life Skills prepares students for limitless opportunities and real-life situations, and that normalizing interaction with various aspects of their physical environments is critical to breaking through tendencies of hesitation and avoidance;
3. in the advantages of educating children within their community (place-based learning) while teaching them to also thrive in unfamiliar situations;
4. in the positive mental health benefits derived through:
 - meaningful interaction within the community,
 - learning to build and grow using one's own hands; and
5. in the necessity of parents and guardians to actively participate in their children's education and the teaching process; and
6. that in-person learning must *always* be a priority for the whole development of the child, and that remote learning only be implemented when it is absolutely necessary.

CHALLENGE: *if you have read the Charter document to this point, considering going back to the beginning of Page 4 and replace **each** reference to "vocation" with "passion" and/or "suitability."*

6) Teaching Philosophy

Academic curricula should generally be paired with practical application; and conversely, practical application should be paired with academic study, whenever and/or wherever appropriate. Teachers at GVRA are not only required to teach Alberta Programs of Study but encouraged to regularly demonstrate application to real life situations and prioritize the inclusion of practical skills whenever feasible.

GVRA will provide students with an educational environment that:

1. will expand learning through **Experiential Learning strategies**, integrating students in the culture, environment, and values of their community;
2. will facilitate **discovery of career opportunities** in various vocations and trades at an earlier age;
3. actively encourages students to **overcome hesitation and avoidance** resulting from:
 - unfamiliarity – “I haven’t seen that before | what is that | what does that do?”
 - lack of confidence – “I don’t know how to do that | I’m going to fail!”
 - sensory discomfort – “it feels cramped | I don’t like the heat | what’s that smell?”
 - digital proliferation – “I think I’ll just stick to my phone,”while identifying actual risks and taking appropriate precautions;
4. **promotes versatility and adaptability** through learning scenarios including:
 - one skill | many applications
 - one problem | many solutions
 - one solution | many approaches
5. sets **high expectations** for students while recognizing that a child’s predominant learning style(s), uniqueness and life experiences will affect individual disposition and outcomes; and
6. gives priority to preserving the traditional human skills of reading, writing, reasoning and personal interaction¹; while being selective and intentional when utilizing technology and digital learning platforms as an extension of those skills.

¹ While preserving traditional human skills might seem to be an undisputed value in the education system (at the time of writing at least), GVRA asserts that further integration of digital learning platforms in the classroom will directly work against such preservation. As emerging technologies erode the separation between machine intelligence and the human brain, the challenge of maintaining traditional human skills and values will only grow.

GVRA is committed to making a significant portion of classroom time device-free (including mobile phones, tablets, smartwatches, and portable computers). Whether or not a classroom is device-free may be based on the subject (such as English Language Arts and Mathematics), time of day, school calendar, or other factors that the GVRA administration periodically assesses. Teachers may still use key technologies for demonstration or presentation purposes. As communication and information technologies evolve, GVRA will make careful determinations as to how to both protect and enhance the learning environment.

7) Charter Goals and Outcomes

EVE Charter Goal #1 – Conventional Life Skills

As a core component of Early Vocational Exposure, students will gain aptitude and proficiency in Conventional Life Skills that better prepare them for adult life and a variety of vocations.

Outcome #1:

Students demonstrate proficiency in Conventional Life Skills requirements.

| Performance Measures |
|---|
| Percentage of Students who achieved Proficiency with Excellence |
| Percentage of Students who achieved Proficiency |
| Percentage of Students showing Significant Improvement in Hands-On Engagement |
| Percentage of Parents who indicated that CLS is beneficial to their children |
| Percentage of Students who feel that their practical skillset has improved |
| Percentage of Alumni who feel that CLS has been helpful after graduation |

Strategies:

The GVRA Administration and Staff shall implement:

- additional hands-on and visual-spatial learning mechanisms to balance use of (at least) 4 Predominant Learning Styles in the classroom and to prioritize Kinaesthetic development;
- an evolving list of at least 30 EVE Conventional Life Skills (CLS) that all GVRA high school students need to demonstrate proficiency in as part of their graduation requirements; and
- grade-appropriate Conventional Life Skills that naturally acclimate students to the full criteria during their 13-year education so that students can demonstrate graduated, increasing proficiency in EVE CLS at the primary, elementary, and junior-high levels.

EVE Charter Goal #2 – Vocational Engagement

- Post-Secondary Engagement:** Students will recognize a range of vocations from an early age through familiarization with specific post-secondary schools and structured learning.
- Community Career Engagement:** Students will recognize and evaluate a range of careers through familiarization with careers represented in the local community and nearby areas.

Outcome #1:

Students identify and describe many vocations as well as applicable post-secondary requirements.

| Performance Measures |
|---|
| Percentage of Grade 9 and 11 Students who can list 30 vocations with a basic description of each; orally or in written form (with additional options offered to students with sensory impairment) |
| Percentage of Grade 7, 9, and 11 Students who can list 15 vocations with a basic description of each; orally or in written form (with additional options offered to students with sensory impairment) |
| Percentage of Students who can identify applicable post-secondary requirements and/or schools for at least 90% of their recognized vocations list |
| Percentage of Students who can identify applicable post-secondary requirements and/or schools for at least 50% of their recognized vocations list |

Outcome #2:

Students make informed vocational, post-secondary and/or apprenticeship choices earlier in the secondary grades and commit to such decisions well in advance of graduating.

| Performance Measures |
|--|
| Percentage of Students enrolled in Registered Apprenticeship Program, Dual Credit, or similar |
| Percentage of Grade 12 Students who have been accepted in a post-secondary school or program |
| Percentage of Grade 11 Students who have been accepted in a post-secondary school or program |
| Percentage of Grade 10 and 11 Students who have selected a post-secondary school or program |
| Percentage of Grade 9 Students who narrow their vocational and post-secondary preferences to 3 or less |

Strategies:

1. A GVRA Vocational Advisory Panel consisting of several retired public educators will work in consultation with the GVRA Development and Research Officer, Charter Board, and Administration to implement vocational content, both in the classroom and in adjunct learning environments.
2. GVRA may systematically implement existing resources such as, but not limited to, portions of *The Curriculum for Excellence*², *The World of Work* and the *RIASEC Model*³, or approved alternatives.
3. The GVRA Administration and Staff shall develop working relationships with one or more post-secondary schools such as NAIT to provide the following grade-appropriate instruction annually:
 - In-school Presentations on the wide offerings in post-secondary instruction and the associated career opportunities (not limited to specific vocations and trades); and/or
 - Field Trips to one or more post-secondary institutions for on-site presentation of post-secondary offerings and career opportunities.
4. The GVRA Administration and Staff shall partner with qualified community members actively engaged in diverse vocations and trades to provide:
 - In-School Presentations on the principles, merits, benefits, and challenges of their careers; and
 - On-Site/In-The-Field Demonstration of the skills and equipment used to complete qualified work.

In response to EVE Post-Secondary Engagement (presentations and field trips) and EVE Community Career Engagement (in-school presentations and on-site experiences), **students will demonstrate their understanding of vocations and concepts** presented as:

- a. EVE Career Summary Reports, and/or
- b. Written statements on their interest or lack-of-interest in such potential career tracks,
- c. If applicable – further on-site/in-the-field exposure, informal participation, and apprenticeship.

REFERENCES:

² The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is a comprehensive educational framework that was introduced in Scotland in 2010. <https://education.gov.scot/documents/All-experiencesoutcomes18.pdf>. | ³ "The World of Work is a comprehensive K-12 curriculum solution aimed at early exposure for children to both self and career exploration in the ever-changing landscape of the global economy." "The RIASEC model is the number one predictor for happiness in a career and breaks down career options into 6 personality traits, Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional." worldofwork.net/the-world-of-work

Charter Goal #3 – Academic Performance

GVRA will create a learning environment that:

- A) pursues standardized academic excellence, and
- B) prioritizes Traditional Literacy skills (reading and writing without technological assistance).

Outcome #1:

Students demonstrate standardized academic excellence.

| Performance Measures |
|--|
| Percentage of High School Students participating in Provincial Diploma Exams (DIP) |
| Percentage of Students participating in Provincial Achievement Exams (PAT), <i>only if required</i> |
| Percentage of Students achieving at grade level on Writing HLAT (Highest Levels of Achievement Test) |
| Percentage of Students achieving at grade level on Reading HLAT, <i>only if required</i> |
| Percentage of Students achieving above grade level on Reading HLAT, <i>only if required</i> |

Outcome #2:

Students demonstrate Traditional Literacy without word processing or digital technological assistance.

| Performance Measures |
|---|
| Percentage of Students writing at grade level by hand (printing) with acceptable spelling and grammar |
| Percentage of Students writing above grade level by hand (printing) with excellent spelling and grammar |
| Percentage of Students writing at or above grade level in cursive |

Strategies:

1. Recognizing the differences in requirements, content, approaches, and practicalities for individual subjects and courses, particularly as structured for latter grades in the Alberta Programs of Study, teachers will appropriately incorporate resources that further accommodate Kinaesthetic and Visual-Spatial learning styles.
2. Students will learn the SMART Framework for goal setting through self reflection and teacher observations/guidance to help set achievable and challenging goals at the appropriate level, with focus on both academic and experiential learning.

Specific | Measurable | Achievable | Relevant | Time-Bound

This method helps ensure that objectives are attainable within a determined timeframe. Teachers will progressively incorporate SMART Framework into learning exercises and assignments throughout Grades K–9 with full utilization of the SMART Framework ⁴ in high school grades, wherever applicable.

3. Teachers will (continue to) teach Traditional Literacy skills (without digital technological assistance), and students will have those skills reinforced throughout secondary school. Other traditional or classical education components will be considered over the first charter term and beyond. Furthermore, Gwynne Valley Rural Academy will prepare students to be able to successfully navigate the world of emerging technologies without becoming utterly reliant on them.

REFERENCES:

⁴ An explanation of the SMART Framework can be found at <https://simplestudying.com/smart-framework/> or at <https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/SMART-SMART-goals>

Strategies Continued

- Significant portions of in-class curriculum will be intentionally completed device-free *without* computer and IT assistance. Instead, traditional education resources such as textbooks and printed handouts will be used for students to complete assignments with physical writing instruments and paper. *An example of this would be to complete an entire handwritten draft of a short story for English Language Arts during in-class time, and that refined draft counting for more than 50% of the assignment mark.*
- Teachers will educate students on healthy usage patterns of technology for news, entertainment, social media, communication, learning, and work; as well as the philosophical and practical implications of emerging technologies for humankind.
- In the form of proactive implementation over time, teachers will work to ensure that students can *think* without artificial intelligence and cognition. *Student tendencies to use AI-assistance (explicitly or subtly) for written assignments, even exams, will require teachers to develop unique ways of having students demonstrate comprehension of subject matter.* Over time, GVRA will also continue to promote and/or enforce any technological safeguards that allow students to be able to think for themselves.

8) Student Selection Criteria and Capacity

In the event that enrollment exceeds GVRA's student capacity, the following Student Selection Criteria shall be the order of preference:

1. Named in Parental Declaration of Intent to Enroll, submitted the inaugural year of the Charter
2. Attending former Gwynne School at the time of closure
3. Children of GVRA Teachers, Administration, and Charter Board Members
4. Residents of the Hamlet of Gwynne and surrounding area where GVRA is the closest public school to a child's household
5. Children of Gwynne School Alumni and GVRA Alumni
6. Public at large through a lottery

If necessary, the GVREA Charter Board will set date deadlines for each Criteria or threshold on a year-to-year basis. For all criteria, priority shall be given to siblings of children who have already been enrolled in GVRA (within deadlines set by the GVREA Charter Board). Lotteries *may* be used for any Criteria or threshold.

9) Communication and Reporting Processes

It is the responsibility of the GVREA Charter Board and Administration to ensure that the school's effective practices and innovative approaches are communicated to stakeholders in order that Alberta's entire education system can benefit from its experience. Stakeholders include the Minister of Education, parents, staff, the post-secondary and professional community, sponsors, and the general public.

GVRA's Commitments to Stakeholders

Alberta Education and all Stakeholders:

- GVRA's Annual Education Plan and Annual Education Results Report will be posted on the school's website. Details of Communication and Reporting Processes will be adjusted and provided annually in the Annual Education Plan provided to Alberta Education.

Post-Secondary and Professional Community:

- GVRA will collaborate on research projects with post secondary institutions and other school authorities. GVRA will thoughtfully and enthusiastically engage research and inquiry about GVRA as a charter school.
- GVRA will develop collaborative professional relationships with neighboring school trustees.
- GVRA will participate in events with other educational organizations such as The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools, the Alberta School Councils' Association, and other schools.
- GVRA will attend and promote "Committee of the Whole", where other community partners (including local school boards) report on and collaborate regarding school and community initiatives.
- Being that Public Charter Schools are still somewhat misunderstood as an integral part of Alberta's Public Education strategies, GVRA will take part in activities and events along with other (public) schools. This will enable students and staff from other schools to have direct contact and to further understand how public charter schools integrate into the broader education system.
- GVRA School staff will communicate successful educational practices to any teacher organizations that they are part of.

Parents/Guardians and Community:

- GVRA will communicate regularly through its website and social media.
- GVRA will produce monthly newsletters on the website that informs the public of school news and activities including updates from the principal, student activities, and upcoming events.
- GVRA's Vision, Mission, and Purpose will be prominently displayed in the school. All visitors will be able to immediately see the core values of the school.
- GVRA hosts several evening information sessions that are either parent/guardian-specific such as Kindergarten Orientation, or broadly-suited such as the basics of Early Vocational Exposure and the school's focus on a practical skillset to supplement Alberta Programs of Study.
- GVRA School will foster relationships with local community stakeholders and encourage participation in school activities, frequent use of the school facility, and cooperation in areas of joint interest.

10) Procedure for Amending the Charter

Basis and Process for Amendment

1. Any member of the Charter Board or the Society may request that the Charter Board review a term or condition of the Charter.
2. The Charter Board shall meet within four to eight (4 to 8) weeks to consider the amendment request. The Charter Board's decision shall be communicated, in writing, within 48 hours to the requesting member. If the amendment proposal is rejected, it may be discussed again after one year.
3. If the amendment proposal is accepted, the Charter Board shall have between four and eight (4 and 8) weeks to provide Society members with a copy of the proposed amendment and call a General Meeting of the Society. At this meeting, the proposed amendment will be either approved or rejected by the Society members. Minor rewording of the amendment, which does not affect either the substance or intent of the amendment may also be considered at this meeting.
4. The decision of the Society is final, and the result of the vote will be conveyed in writing to the requesting member within 48 hours. If the amendment proposal is rejected, it may be discussed again after one year.
5. In the event the proposed amendment(s) are approved by the Society, the Charter Board shall seek to obtain the necessary approval from the Minister in accordance with the regulations.

Minor Amendments

- The Charter Board may, on its own authority, initiate and approve minor amendments which do not affect the substance or intent of the Charter. Following Charter Board approval, any such amendments shall be forwarded to the Minister for final approval.



11) Procedure for Dissolution of the Charter School

Basis and Process for Dissolution

1. If, at any time prior to the expiration of the Charter:
 - a) a decision is made not to apply for renewal of the Charter;
 - b) the student enrolment falls below the minimum limit prescribed by the regulations;
 - c) the basic terms of the Charter cannot be fulfilled nor satisfactorily amended; or
 - d) the Charter has been repealed pursuant to the regulations, thenthe Charter Board will call a Special Meeting (the "Dissolution Meeting") of the Charter Board to determine the effective date of dissolution and to begin planning the dissolution process.
2. Ideally, the effective date of dissolution will coincide with the end of a school year.
3. The Board will ensure that the Minister of Education is notified in writing by January 31 of the proposed year of termination of the school, seeking Ministerial approval.
4. The dissolution process shall begin immediately following the dissolution meeting and shall be carried out by the Charter Board with the assistance and guidance of the School Council, if necessary. The Charter Board shall use its best efforts to meet financial and other obligations of the school throughout the dissolution process.

Advice to Stakeholders

5. Within two (2) weeks of its decision, the Charter Board shall, in accordance with relevant legislation, give written notice to all stakeholders of the decision to dissolve the Charter. Stakeholders include the Minister, the Society members, the teachers and all other employees of the Charter Board, and the parents and students. Notice of dissolution shall provide the reasons for, the effective date of, and the proposed plan for dissolution.

Disposition of Property and Finances

6. After providing notice to stakeholders as provided above, the Charter Board shall proceed to:
 - a) provide notice pursuant to any rental agreements for buildings, land, property or facilities;
 - b) determine a value for any owned buildings, land, property, facilities or other assets;
 - c) liquidate any owned assets either by public auction or private sale;
 - d) discharge the liabilities of the school;
 - e) provide the Society and the Minister with a full accounting of the finances of the school;
 - f) return any surplus attributable to provincial funding to the Provincial Treasurer; and
 - g) turn over to the Society any residual funds at which point the Society shall be dissolved in accordance with the Society Bylaws.

Transfer of Students

1. The Charter Board shall provide each registered student with a transfer of records form to be completed with information regarding the school to which records are to be transferred. Upon receipt of a written request from the new school, the student's original record will be forwarded as per the request.
2. The Charter Board shall remain responsible for the transfer of a student's records for a period of three (3) months from the date it provided the transfer form. Thereafter, any remaining student records shall be forwarded to the Minister with a request that they be held on record until claimed by the student.



12) Additional Values and Considerations

Place-Based Learning

Place-Based Learning or Place-Based Education promotes learning that is rooted in what is local—the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place—that is, in students' own "place" or immediate schoolyard, neighborhood, town or community. It is a method of practice that uses places and the resources found there to learn across disciplines.

Early Vocational Exposure Place-Based Learning has the profound ability to shape the education and outcomes of students. These effects can be positive or negative. In the case of this specific charter school, GVRA believes that tying EVE into the unique Experiential Learning opportunities students can have in the Gwynne area will lead to deeply enriched learning outcomes. GVRA also asserts that Early Vocational Exposure as a concept can bring a broader benefit to students, regardless of place-based implications.

Sustainable Community

Sustainable Community is essential for the health of a School, and a School is essential for sustaining community. Gwynne Valley Rural Academy believes this to be true just about anywhere. In the case of GVRA and its location, Sustainable Rural Community is a core value and pursuit. The former Gwynne School had a rich heritage of equipping students and serving the community, and GVRA believes in a mandate to continue serving local students, however it can within it's EVE Charter.

Rural schools often struggle to remain open, often due to population fluctuation and unstable funding. **GVRA has developed a relationship with the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (ACSRC) to collaborate in understanding how Early Vocational Exposure and Place-Based Learning affect a), student outcomes, and eventually b), community health (vibrancy) and development over time.**

GVRA desires that Early Vocational Exposure combined with the unique experiences of learning and living in the Gwynne area will lead more graduates to plant roots locally, pursue a vocation or trade, and grow the community together.

Sustainable Living

Why add Sustainable Living to EVE Conventional Life Skills and the GVRA Curriculum of study?

Food security has become an urgent concern worldwide. The skills our parents and grandparents used from birth to death to feed their families and communities have been lost in our rapid-paced, technology-driven world.

How many of us buy fresh greens (such as lettuce, kale, and spinach) and fresh vegetables (tomatoes, onions, peppers, cabbage, potatoes, peas, beans, beets, and so forth)? They are all easily grown in garden beds, large or small, and are more nutritious than vegetables available commercially.

Not only will students be empowered to provide nutritious foods for their families, but they will be confident to teach these skills worldwide, wherever life should take them. Sustainable living is a practical, hands-on lifestyle, kind to our environment and future generations.

GVRA has already established an affiliation with **Thrive Institute – a Global Initiative** based in Ontario that equips individuals to teach sustainable living to their families and their communities. **Food Safe Preparation** ensures that students form healthy practices for personal and commercial purposes.

Indigenous Influences

GVRA recognizes that its facility is located in Treaty Six territory, and that we share this beautiful land we call home with Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous students attended the former Gwynne School over the years of its operation, and they continue to distinctly contribute to and shape the heritage and culture of the Gwynne community.

Continued efforts have been and will be made to form cultural partnerships and enrichment programs with Indigenous representatives – particularly those who are Gwynne-school and GVRA Alumni originating from Maskwacis, Wetaskiwin, and the surrounding nations: the Ermineskin Cree Nation, Samson Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, and the Montana First Nation.

Vocation-based Schools

Gwynne Valley Rural Academy's Charter is **not** a Vocational-based School or Vocational School as defined by provincial and federal regulations.

This does not exclude GVRA from pursuing a potential future expansion of offerings at GVRA to meet provincial and federal criteria for skilled vocational and trades training programs. A separate Charter could be formed in that specific case to establish "a school within a school," or to host a separate facility on existing GVRA/GVREA property.

GVRA firmly believes the promotion and facilitation of many trades and vocational opportunities, and it will endeavour to further serve Gwynne and the surrounding areas accordingly.