

Forest Grove Community School Charter Proposal

Submitted By Applicants:

Terry O'Day 2417 15th Avenue; Forest Grove, OR 97116; 503-359-0672

Vanessa Gray 2040 15th Avenue; Forest Grove, OR 97116; 503-357-5870

Robin Lindsley 5499 NW Thatcher Road; Forest Grove, OR 97116; 503-313-6104

Proof of Nonprofit: Registry Number 378113-95

Filed on 8/15/06

Type: Domestic Nonprofit Incorporation

FGCS Contact Information: P.O. Box 294; Forest Grove, OR 97116; 503-913-0368

COVER LETTER

To: Forest Grove School Board

From: Forest Grove Community School Applicants

What you are about to read represents the work of a group of dedicated parents and community members who have come together to create a school that connects academic experience to community life. Our intention in this proposal is to give you an overview of the school as we envision it as well as confidence in our ability to fully develop the school we propose. After nearly two years of hard work, we are excited to begin this next phase, in which we enter a formal working relationship with the Forest Grove School District. We look forward to this collaboration and hope that, with the acceptance of this document, we will enter into a productive partnership that will benefit our children and our community.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction:

A Charter School for Forest Grove: Forest Grove Community School	
Demographics.....	4
Characteristics	5

Proposal:

Forest Grove Community School Mission	6
---	---

Stewardship:

School as Steward: Caring for Children	6
School as Steward: Caring for Community.....	7
Students as Stewards: Place-Based Education & Sustainability	7 - 8

Scholarship:

Constructivism & Experiential Learning	8 - 9
Relevant Context: Place-Based Learning.....	9 - 10
Personalized Learning.....	11 - 12
High Standards: Assessment	13

Citizenship:

Small School Environment.....	14
Service-Learning Projects	14
Democratic School Governance Structure	15

Conclusion:

Charter Schools: Choice in Public Education.....	16
--	----

Appendix Index

Index of ODE Proposal Guidelines	18 - 19
Appendix A: Assurance of School Improvement Plan (ODE item 6).....	20
Appendix B: Textbooks and Instructional Materials (ODE item 7).....	21 - 28
Appendix C: Admissions Policy (ODE item 13).....	29 - 30
Appendix D: Statutes and Rules (ODE item 14).....	31
Appendix E: 5-Year Budget (ODE item 15).....	32 - 39
Appendix F: Standards for Behavior (ODE item 16)	40 - 41
Appendix G: Calendar (ODE item 17, 20).....	42
Appendix H: Description of Staff Members (ODE item 18)	43
Appendix I: Personnel and Salary Schedules (ODE item 19).....	44
Appendix J: Special Education (ODE item 21).....	45
Appendix K: Community Involvement (ODE item 22).....	46
Appendix L: Performance Bonding (ODE item 24).....	47
Appendix M: Fiscal Audit (ODE item 25).....	48

Appendix N: Accounting and Record Keeping (ODE item 26).....	49
Appendix O: Non-Discrimination Policy (ODE item 27).....	50
Appendix P: Safety Plan (ODE item 28)	51
Appendix Q: Child Abuse Reporting Policy (ODE item 29).....	52
Appendix R: Public Records and Meeting Laws (ODE item 30).....	53
Appendix S: Transportation (ODE item 31)	54
Appendix T: Additional Information on Place-Based Education.....	55 - 59
Appendix U: Sample Curriculum Map and Materials	60 - 85

INTRODUCTION

A CHARTER SCHOOL FOR FOREST GROVE: FOREST GROVE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Residents of Forest Grove are blessed with a host of strong schools with innovative programs and award-winning curriculum, but there are families here who have not found the education options they feel would be appropriate for them and their children. For these families, Forest Grove Community School may be the educational opportunity they seek.

Demographics: Who will these students be and where will they come from?

As indicated in the name, Forest Grove Community School is designed to be a school that serves the community’s children. It is critical to the success of the school that all segments of the Forest Grove population be represented in the school’s enrollment. Families of every socio-economic strata and cultural background will be welcome and encouraged to attend. Given that roughly 40% of students in the Forest Grove School District are Latino, it is imperative that we make every effort to address the concerns and interests of Spanish-speaking families and children.

Although it’s impossible to know the exact demographics of students who may choose to enroll in FGCS, we can use data from other charter schools to make estimates and we can draw upon our own collected data.

Data from Other Charter Schools

The Oregon Department of Education’s most recent data on charter schools indicate that before attending a charter school, roughly 60% had attended traditional public schools, 11% came from private schools, 9% had attended preschool, and 7% had been home-schooled (13% unknown). Applied to the FGCS enrollment, this would mean that roughly 144 students would come from the local public schools, 26 from private schools, 22 from preschool, and 17 from the home-school population.

In the event that the ODE data are not representative for FGCS and that all students come from the school district’s existing student population, these 250 students will amount to roughly 2% of the district’s approximately 6000 students. With 12 classes of about 23 students each, we anticipate the drawdown from other schools within the district will be negligible. In addition, enrollment trends indicate that schools in the district will continue to experience growth. FGCS, though small, will absorb some of this projected growth.

Our Data

Without an intensive marketing effort, we have already accumulated a database of 70 families who have expressed an interest in the school. This does not include the many casual conversations we have had in the past year with families looking for an educational alternative, nor the 6000 plus visits to our website since May. We have community support represented by the large number of volunteers currently working on the project. The steering committee consists of a former college admissions officer who is currently enrolled in the College of Education at Pacific University and is a parent of preschool-age children, a parent of three pre-teenagers who is also a university professor, and a retired early childhood education specialist and child advocate who has two grown children and a grandchild. All are citizens of Forest Grove. Volunteers in our work groups number 25 and are made up of professionals in education, law, career development, graphic arts, environmental leadership, administration, culinary arts, community development, technology, architecture, fundraising, Latino outreach, language training, and education. In addition, members of the Latino community are represented in our work groups and have participated in our development training and planning efforts. As we move forward in organizational development and community outreach, we will leverage these resources to insure that this important section of the community is included and informed.

These people will be joined by others as we complete the developmental phases required prior to opening the school doors in September, 2007.

Characteristics: What will the FGCS students and their families be like?

The Forest Grove Community School has been designed to be suitable and beneficial for all students aged 5-18. All of the elements that make up this school have been chosen to foster academic excellence in all students. However, this school will be different than most schools and will appeal to students and families who believe these differences to be desirable. The students who will attend FGCS can best be characterized as those who believe in the importance of the following:

- Learning in context

Rather than using textbook-driven curriculum, place-based learning uses the local community as an integrating context for learning at all levels. For many students, experiencing subject matter such as math, history, and language in an authentic situation is more engaging because it is more relevant and meaningful to them.

- A small school community

Many families and students find a small school appealing because they know that in small schools, every student is known by many adults. This will be especially true at FGCS where, in addition to staff, students will be involved with other community members who will be working closely with students in a variety of ways, as local experts providing supplemental instruction, as volunteers tutoring students, or as mentors for students on internships.

- Comprehensive schooling

Recognizing that students' abilities to succeed in school are significantly affected by the conditions and circumstances of their lives outside of school, FGCS will offer itself as a location where family support services can be found. Through formal partnerships with community organizations, FGCS will offer a host of activities that promote student achievement and youth development by supporting the needs of students' families. GED and parenting classes, after-school care, health and immigration services.

- Education focusing on sustainability studies

For those members of the community concerned with issues pertaining to our environment and how we live in this world, the curricular content will be quite appealing. By focusing on sustainability, FGCS will strive to produce informed and involved

community members who have the skills, knowledge, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and collective actions for the betterment of our environment and society.

- Personalized learning

Families who are looking for an education that satisfies needs unmet by traditional schooling may be interested in FGCS because of the personalized learning plans to be developed for each student. Students who fall outside of the norm such as academically low achieving students and talented-and-gifted students are just two examples of students who may be attracted to this form of individualized education, although all students could benefit from it.

PROPOSAL

FOREST GROVE COMMUNITY SCHOOL: MISSION

As founding members of the Forest Grove Community School, we believe that each person has the ability and the responsibility to use our unique gifts and talents to contribute to our communities. To foster the development of these attributes, FGCS will provide a learning environment based on the development of mutually beneficial connections between school, family, and environment so that, upon graduation, students can take their places as engaged citizens in a changing world. This dynamic learning environment will challenge students to achieve their highest academic potential through hands-on learning rooted in their community.

By immersing our students in a learning environment that promotes the development of healthy relationships to self, others, community, and environment, our students will become outstanding, intrinsically motivated, scholars; perceptive, intelligent stewards of communities and ecosystems; and active, engaged citizens.

Students at FGCS will experience:

- A rich curriculum that integrates reading, math, writing, science, social studies, arts and music into hands-on activities and projects.
- Outdoor learning, including school gardens and projects that promote sustainable living.
- Community involvement that encourages a sense of mutual respect and responsibility between students and the wider community.
- Mixed-age classrooms that respond to different learning styles.
- Opportunities to apply academic skills to real-world problems through projects that make a difference in their world.
- A small school environment with 250 students ages 5 through 18.

FGCS has three core developmental goals for its students; Stewardship, Scholarship, Citizenship. In the document that follows, we will discuss the importance and relevance of each of these and show how we propose to instill these values in each of our students.

STEWARDSHIP

There are many ways to define stewardship, but all generally refer to taking care of something of value such as land, natural resources, or children. Stewardship at FGCS will be enacted in two main ways. The school will be a steward of students and of the community. The students will become stewards of their community and the ecosystem that supports it.

School as Steward: Caring for Children in a Small School with Multiage Classrooms

As a school, a place where children spend so much of their lives, FGCS takes seriously the role of caring for children. Families must feel that their children are not only being attended to academically; they must also feel confident that their children are being cared about and cared for. Elementary schools are generally good at providing a caring environment by virtue of their structure in which one teacher has responsibility for most instruction of a single group of students. When students advance to middle and high schools where the schedule asks them to move from class to class throughout the day, they often end up feeling lost and unconnected. Middle and high school teachers try to connect with all students, but a significant portion of teaching minutes are spent in behavior issues and applying discipline.

Many features of FGCS are designed to foster a school community in which all children are known and feel cared for. The small size of the school, 250 students at full enrollment, is chief among these. In a school this size, each student will be known by most, if not all, of the other students and by all of the adults. The importance of having many adults available to a child has been well documented. FGCS will be able to put this theory into practice. Students will also have the opportunity at FGCS to develop deep relationships with adults, in particular their primary teachers with whom they will study for 2-3 years in multiage classrooms.

We propose to enhance academic performance and strengthen school relationships through using multiage looping classroom structures. Both of these structures have been shown to “promot(e) strong, extended, meaningful, positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students that foster increased student motivation and, in turn, stimulate improved learning outcomes for students” (Daniel Burke, Phi Delta Kappan, v77 n5 p360-61 Jan 1996). Parent-teacher relationships are strengthened as well, with parents reporting that they have more confidence in teachers and administrators in looping schools and are more likely to seek the school’s assistance with their children (Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1997).

It is common knowledge that the best way to learn something is to teach it; the multiage classroom allows children of different levels to teach and learn from each other on an ongoing basis. These research-based strategies are shown to improve academic performance and the relationships between students, teachers, parents, and the school community. To guide us as we develop this classroom structure, we rely on the expertise of a steering group member who is a highly qualified designer of successful multiage classrooms and was recognized as a Milken Family Foundation Outstanding Educator for her efforts in this area.

School as Steward: Caring for the Community as a Comprehensive School

We intend for FGCS to be a community school in name and spirit. We want this to be a school that is for, but also *by* the people, where the vast resources of our community are used to promote educational achievement and positive youth development. We will achieve this through partnerships with organizations that can bring resources, expertise, and opportunity to FGCS’s students. Pacific University’s College of Education and the Career Development Center have committed themselves to providing interns who will enhance the curriculum. The Center for Gender Equity has begun working with us on an exciting program to promote leadership in young women. The B Street Permaculture Project has offered its site as a location for student research and training. Adelante Mujeres will assist with developing programs to ensure that all families feel welcomed and well served.

In addition to partnerships with organizations that can enrich the curriculum of our students, we plan to develop intentional connections with community organizations that can positively impact children’s lives. Understanding that academic achievement is significantly affected by the circumstances of a child’s life, FGCS will work to advance the improvement of our students’ community by making our facility available for services and organizations that support the health, education, and general well-being of our families. During off-hours, summers and weekends, it is our intention that Forest Grove Community School will be a locus of community activity - a place where community members can come for classes on GED preparation, parenting skills, conflict resolution or where a local clinic can give free eye exams. By offering such opportunities, FGCS will act as a community center dedicated to supporting our youth and their families.

Students as Stewards: Place-Based Learning and Sustainability

It is often said that the irreducible goal of public education is to produce educated citizens. We too believe that citizenship is of primary importance and believe that it can only be fostered in students - or community members - by first engendering a sense of ownership and stewardship for their community. As such, stewardship is the foundation of citizenship.

For students to truly understand the place they live, they must engage it directly. Place-based education does just this. (See Appendix T) Place-based education is a teaching strategy that has grown out of the environmental education movement in this country. This approach, which is found in many schools throughout the US, uses the local community as an integrating context for learning. By grounding education in what is local - the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place - place-based learning has the power to engage students academically; pairing real-world relevance with intellectual rigor while promoting genuine stewardship and citizenship and preparing people to respect and live well in any community and environment they choose.

Central to place-based education and acting as stewards is a commitment to sustainability. To truly care for the place where we live - to be stewards of it - we must consider the long range impact of our decisions on the people and environment. We must endeavor to make decisions that do not negatively impact the ability of future generations to make the same decisions. Simply put, we must embrace sustainability.

A sustainable culture is uniquely informed by the local climate, geography, and ecosystems that are connected to that culture. In order to learn to live in such a way that these intricate natural systems are not compromised for future generations, students must develop a deep awareness and understanding of these systems and how human activities affect them. Rather than taking each system, whether it be human or natural, and studying it in isolation from the others, we will connect these systems in an interdisciplinary manner through hands-on, project-based learning activities.

SCHOLARSHIP

By definition, schools are educational institutions. This simple statement seems uncontroversial and straightforward, but in fact it belies the complexity of what is meant by education. Everyone seems to have a different definition. Thus, it is necessary to clearly define the educational goals of FGCS. Here we offer two simple criteria of effective education: education that yields deep understanding in students and that fosters a love of learning. The founders of FGCS believe that this education can best be accomplished if...

- The content is relevant to students' lives.
- Students construct their own understanding.
- Learning is personalized to the individual student.
- The standards for performance are high.

Constructivism & Experiential Learning

"Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand."

This quote by Confucius illustrates the concept that the best learning takes place when students are actively involved in their education and forms the basis for any experiential learning curriculum. Because of the proven effectiveness of active learning systems, the

curriculum at FGCS is based on this model. By connecting a sustainability theme to Place-Based Experiential Learning (PBEL) educational practices, we will develop an approach that draws out the vital connections between students, their community and the natural environment. PBEL is inherently multidisciplinary and promotes team teaching among educators and community partners. Students engage in sustained academic work that draws upon and contributes to the place in which they live. They practice skills and responsibilities while serving as scholars, workers, and citizens. The PBEL learning model links the humanities, arts, and sciences, helps students to develop a holistic and integrated understanding of these subject areas, and gives meaning to these studies by placing them in the context of a student's immediate surroundings. PBEL has been shown to increase student motivation to learn, improve academic performance and foster the development of self-motivated, independent learners. (Appendix T: Additional information on Place-Based Education)

Experiential learning for students will be focused on the local community; the people and the place. Different age levels will participate in a variety of projects, but there will be some common ground, literally, in the garden and local environment. The learning garden may be the classroom for younger students studying life cycles or for older students studying soil chemistry. The Tualatin Watershed may be a learning laboratory for younger students exploring river structures and for older students trying to understand resource use in highly populated areas. Fernhill Wetlands may be a site where students could conduct a migratory bird survey. Our older population may serve as a resource for first-hand narrative oral history and provide documentary opportunities.

The community also provides opportunities for students to create their knowledge through direct experience. The city council election may serve as an opportunity for students to understand participatory democracy. Speaking with a local author or writing an editorial for the local paper may be the way students learn the power of the written word. Older students will also be given the opportunity to work in internships where they will have occasions to put their skills and knowledge to work. While surveying property, an intern-student will use trigonometry; while teaching English to non-native speakers, an intern-student will apply grammar skills in two languages.

Students will also participate in Service-Learning Projects that fulfill a real community need and improve student knowledge and understanding of the importance of service in their communities. Community action service learning is built around action projects, which partner educators, students, and the community in an effort to understand, respect, and improve the world. Projects might include: caring for a garden, visiting and helping senior citizens, working in a child care center or senior center, monitoring local air or water quality, and other service projects which might be defined by the students and/or staff.

These examples of experiential education suggest ways that students can use the people and the place of their community to learn content by being directly engaged with it. Through this active participation, students develop an understanding that is much richer than that which is acquired from a textbook-driven curriculum because they are allowed to create their own knowledge and then test it by applying it in authentic and original situations.

Relevant Content: Place-Based Learning

Research shows that embedding learning in a meaningful context produces deeper understanding, more interest, and greater willingness to challenge oneself. Students in one representative study were taught a probability lesson in either an abstract context or one that applied to their area of interest. Not surprisingly, students who were taught the lesson in the context of their interests

performed much better on probability problems than those who were taught using an abstract context. (see Angeline Lillard, “The Science Behind the Genius”, 2005) This is not revolutionary information but is representative of a body of research indicating the importance of centering learning around students’ previous understanding and interests.

Naturally, people are more interested in content that is meaningful to them and would therefore construct a better understanding using this approach. With this in mind, curriculum developers now make an effort to create coursework that is interesting to students. Textbooks designed around themes or with applied examples are quite standard. But this doesn’t necessarily result in interested or engaged students for the simple reason that the content is often remote to students. While the lessons may be focused on application, the cases used for study are not of immediate concern to the students.

Place-based education immerses students in the world around them: their local heritage, cultures and landscapes, and the rich diversity of local opportunities and experiences. These issues of immediate concern then serve as a springboard for study of regional, national, and global issues of increasing complexity. Grounded in the resources, values, and issues of the local community, this form of education is tailored to the students and thereby makes the education relevant to them and their families.

Place-based learning will take a variety of forms in the FGCS classrooms. One example of what place-based learning is can be found on the Oregon coast. The Oregon Department of Forestry recently built a new office building in Tillamook. The local junior high school class there, in a typical place-based activity, created an interpretive walkway for the new building. This project involved students studying Oregon’s animals and their tracks. Using plotting and graphing skills to measure the pace of each animal, the students modeled the tracks on notebook-sized graph paper and then to scale. When this was completed, the students calculated the volume of cement needed to make the cement “stamps,” determined all costs, and then applied the stamps to create the walkway. Elementary students studied local aquatic invertebrates at this facility through the use of leaf packs. They gathered leaves from the local trees to create packs that were suspended in the stream much as occurs in nature. One month later they returned to remove the packs and used the educational facility to count the fauna that had assembled. This information was then shared through computers to compare with data gathered across the country.

Like students in Oregon’s other public schools, these junior high students were meeting state math standards for direct and indirect measurement, mathematical problem-solving, and mathematical modeling and the elementary students were meeting state science standards. But through this place-based development and application of these skills, students were actively engaged in creating their knowledge and therefore learned the content in a more meaningful way.

What Place-Based Learning Might Look Like at Forest Grove Charter School:

High school students might:

- Conduct oral history projects with older community members in an attempt to gain insight into our multiethnic population.
- Perform on-going water-quality assessments of Gales Creek to track the effects of upstream pollution.
- Work as an intern in a local non-profit organization that seeks to inform citizens about voter rights.

Middle school students might:

- Read contemporary Mexican poetry (in translation).

- Create an accounting system for sales of produce grown in the school garden.
- Use the Internet and interactive software to track migration flyways of local songbirds.

Elementary students might:

- Write and illustrate garden journals throughout the growing and harvest season.
- Use the upper-level students' water-quality measurements to discuss trends in Gales Creek.
- Correspond with a class in a part of Mexico where "our" songbirds over-winter.

Note the thematic consistence throughout the levels. In the examples above, high school, middle school, and elementary students have common reference points with respect to the school garden and a hypothetical Gales Creek project. As they progress through the levels, their knowledge builds on what was taught in preceding levels. This approach also allows for students to build a deep understanding of content. Content consistency leads to the development of a community of learners who share common concerns and knowledge, and provides a continuity of community stewardship and scholarship as students progress through their academic career.

For more detailed information regarding FGCS place-based curriculum, see Appendix T.

Personalized Learning

Everyone acknowledges that each child is unique and has his/her own set of strengths and weaknesses, learning styles, and interests. Teachers are exhorted to attend to all learning styles and differences, but the reality is that, given the traditional structure of schools, this is an impossible task. To attend to each child's academic situation, to implement personalized instruction, a number of practices must be adopted. FGCS will embody these.

Personalized Learning Plans. Our proposed educational plan is based, in part, on the research conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Dennis Littky (see Dennis Littky "The Big Picture", 2004) who have written widely on the benefits of a rigorous, high expectation program that is coupled with a highly personalized approach to meeting students' needs. To implement this philosophy, FGCS will use Personalized Learning Plans (PLP). All students will work towards the same academic goals, in part defined by the Oregon State Standards, but how they advance will be articulated in their own PLP. Students and their advisors will develop the PLP together, with approval and input from family members. The PLP is based on assessments of the student's strengths and weaknesses and will be used to reach the student's academic, personal, and social goals.

The foundation for this PLP will be the advisor and student working together to develop an understanding of the student's general learning characteristics and requirements. Older students may be administered the Learning Style Profile or similar survey. The results of this instrument will be used to help the student and advisor to understand the student's general learning preferences. The advisor and student will use information about past student achievement, data from the LSP, and developmental information to create a personalized plan for each advisee. Students will be tested quarterly in order to monitor their progress and update their PLPs. A minimum of twice a year, the student, parent, and advisor will meet to review the PLP and assess student progress toward the student's short- and long-term goals, which must be expressed in terms of quantitative and qualitative measurement. The plans will be modified if needed based on the student's progress, interests, and needs.

Advisors to Provide Guidance. In order for a student to develop to his/her personal potential, there must be someone who works with the student to craft a plan for that student's education. This person will be the advisor. While all adults in the school will know each

student, the advisor will be the one person who will have close, personal knowledge of all facets of a student's academic life and, most likely, some facets of his or her personal life.

Multiage groups of 20-25 students will meet with their advisors (teachers and administrators) throughout the week in two longer sessions (perhaps Mondays and Thursdays), with shorter advisory meetings on the other days. The longer meetings will allow teacher-advisors to work with advisees to set goals for the week, arrange their schedules accordingly, and to check weekly academic progress. The shorter meetings will serve as check-ins, provide staff and students the opportunity to focus on the day at hand, outline daily goals, identify potential roadblocks to successful learning, and lay out plans for success. As students advance at their own rates through a continuous-progress program of curriculum and instruction, advisors will help keep them on track and intervene when appropriate. They will also keep the appropriate family members informed.

Multiage Classrooms. Multiage groupings will be by chronological age, but will be flexible in terms of individual children's needs and skills. The youngest children will be in groups of ages 5 through 8, followed by ages 8 through 12, then ages 12 through 15, and ages 15 through 18. Those age boundaries will be porous as needed such as when groups are convened based on similar study-interests or skill-development requirements. Every effort will be made to assist children and youth to see themselves as members of a smaller school family within the larger school setting, with responsibilities to share their talents and skills as needed and desired.

As the students move along in the school from year to year, they will grow in their ability to see their personal role in helping their school family to function effectively and fairly. (See school governance section.) Experience has shown that multiage groupings work well, as every person has the opportunity to be an expert in some way. Individual talents can be used in every group setting and knowledgeable staff will emphasize each person's gifts, at no matter what age. As the "youngsters" become the "elders," each one has an opportunity to teach and care for others, and yet every person can develop their own strengths as they progress in school. Since each student will have the opportunity to not only be a learner, but a teacher, ideas and materials become a shared chance to contribute to the group effort.

Curriculum in a multiage setting becomes more realistic as the full group is making an effort to help each other learn and progress. Rather than discrete subject matter areas being the norm, literacy in multiple areas becomes meaningful as it is seen to be necessary to the completion of a group effort. In other words, information is easily seen to be relevant to other areas of knowledge and usage.

Attention to Individual Differences: English Language Learners. Personalized Learning Plans lend themselves well to addressing the needs of ELL students who, like all students, have unique needs. We will contract directly with Forest Grove School District to use their system for determining levels of proficiency (classifying learners for instructional purposes). We will use the gathered information, such as knowing the home language, and input from family members, to meet the learning requirements for each child. This data will be entered into the Personal Learning Plans (PLP). The ELL student, family, School District and FGCS will work together to determine how to best address the needs of that student. FGCS will provide any special services that are required for ELL pursuant to District policy and state and federal law.

Attention to Individual Differences: Talented and Gifted Students, Students in Need of Remediation and Everyone in Between. Because of the size and structure of multiaged classes, FGCS will be able to offer students flexibility in how they progress with their

work. Students will be able to spend as much or as little time working in specific areas as needed. If a student wishes to devote extended time to working on a project to fully understand it, he or she will be able to check with the advisor and teacher who will work with the student to accommodate this need. Students will take tests when they are ready and not in accordance with a teacher-developed schedule. In this kind of setting, student comprehension takes precedence over simply accumulating grades for the report card. Teachers review test results and meet with students on a one-to-one basis to give feedback. Students redo any unsatisfactory work until all errors are corrected. Thus, students are only in competition with themselves.

This situation works well for students at all points on the spectrum, but it is particularly helpful for Talented and Gifted students who are often frustrated in traditional same-age grouped classrooms. At FGCS, these students will be able to develop a PLP that is tailored to their abilities and interests, and within the multiage classroom structure, they will be able to establish peer relationships based on shared interest and skill. So, too, with students in need of remediation. These students will have PLPs unique to their needs that outline a path to help the student meet benchmarks - state and student-determined.

High Standards: Assessment

All schools want high standards for their students. They want nothing less than 100% of students performing at or above grade level. Federal standards are expecting the same. FGCS too will have high standards for its students as will be evidenced in our high state test scores, but we aspire to much more. As mentioned above, the education we plan to provide is one that produces deep understanding in students. This is much harder to assess than simply whether or not a student is working at the same or higher level as the average student in the same grade level which is the standard for state tests. Short-answer tests, essay questions, and multiple-choice exams can provide clues to students' understanding, but it is generally necessary to look more deeply if one hopes for clear evidence of deep, significant understanding. To accomplish this, students must be asked to exercise their knowledge in a variety of ways and in relation to new and unfamiliar problems; then, they can demonstrate complete mastery of content.

To this end, assessment tools used at FGCS will be varied and will include portfolio and performance assessments, rubrics and checklists (that students help develop), presentations, critiques, and progress reports. Criterion-referenced tests and quizzes will also be used to assess learning, but these and other work will not be graded using letter grades or ranking evaluations. In fact, students won't receive any grades at FGCS. Instead, their work will be evaluated using written descriptions. Through these tools, we will insure that our students meet or exceed state benchmarks for each grade, develop the ability to set goals for themselves, learn to identify and use the resources needed to achieve those goals, and are able assess their work and that of their peers within the context of a given learning objective. While these authentic assessment methods are more complex and time-consuming than the normal grading system, we believe that grades do not ensure quality work and, in fact, can work against our other criterion for effective education and instilling a life-long love of learning.

There is abundant research showing that when working for rewards such as letter grades, people tend to choose easier tasks, be less creative, and be answer-oriented. They may work hard but the work is of a lower quality, contains more errors, and is less creative. Rewards teach people to comply and they do this very well. But if our goal is to develop students who are capable of careful thought, self-directed learning, and developing strong values, rewards are of little use in evaluating these skills (see Alfie Kohn, "Punished by Rewards", 1999). As a PBEL school, our emphasis will be to engage students in the process involved in learning the content rather

than focusing on their abilities, how their progress will be perceived by others, or issues of success, failure, reward, or punishment. Student work at FGCS will not be considered complete until it represents high-quality work for that student.

Transcripts of student work will indeed be non-traditional. But they are not unique within the educational landscape. Many schools provide narrative assessment and all colleges and universities are by now familiar with non-standard transcripts. Our staff will provide college counseling and admissions services, including working with colleges and universities, to make sure they understand the student's transcript. To ensure that our transcripts meet the criteria for university admissions, we rely on the expertise of one of our steering group who has over 10 years of experience in admissions at a private university. During her tenure in this position, she attended many conferences and workshops that addressed non-traditional transcripts.

Forest Grove Community School is committed to all statewide and Forest Grove School District mandated assessments. Each academic year, students at the required grade levels will participate in state administered assessments as per ORS 329.485 and the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Students who do not meet standards on state tests will be offered additional assistance as needed. The small class sizes and flexible schedule of FGCS will allow students to focus their learning to help them meet the standards.

CITIZENSHIP

The natural extension of students who care about their community (stewardship) and who have a significant understanding of it (scholarship) is citizenship, our last goal for students. We believe that by steeping students in Place-Based, Experiential Learning they will have the skills and motivation necessary to participate in the civic life of our local and global community. To prepare them for this life, we have created three ways to develop their skills as citizens: a small school environment, service learning projects, and a democratic school governance structure

Small School Environment

Small schools have several advantages that have been much celebrated of late. One aspect that is often overlooked is the opportunity they provide to develop an "apprentice community" - a community that mirrors the larger community and serves as a training ground for membership in the larger community. At FGCS students will be together from the time they are 5 until they are 18 or 19 and will be grouped in multiage classrooms. These elements will foster an environment quite unlike most schools. By keeping classmates and teachers together for longer periods of time, and by providing a stable school environment throughout the formative years, we hope to develop in our students a sense of belonging to a place and community that can be hard to achieve with the usual yearly changes of classmates, teachers, and even school locations. This stability will provide the framework for the development of adults who have strong attachments to the people they live with and the place where they live, and who can take those skills to any community and environment in which they might live.

Service Learning Projects

In our view, it is not enough to simply learn about a particular place and environment. In order to be useful, knowledge must be transformed into productive action by engaging in activities that benefit present and future communities and ecosystems. FGCS's emphasis on project-based learning within the context of our place and community is an ideal way to achieve this. As we describe below, many of our curricular and academic goals can be met through projects that connect students to community partners who help them to assess and address community needs in a variety of ways.

Community action service learning is built around action projects that partner educators, students, and the community in an effort to understand, respect, and improve the community. Community projects blend service activities with the academic curriculum and address real community needs as students learn through active engagement.

An example of a service-learning project here in Forest Grove might be an exploration of the impact on Gales Creek by the development currently proposed next to this wetland site. Elementary students would catalog the flora and fauna on the site and examine what might change with the development. With the goal of creating an informational brochure or making a presentation to the City Planning meeting, older students involved in this project would engage in an in-depth study of wetland ecology, community planning, and economic impact. This year-long study would serve not only to help students meet State benchmarks and other academic goals, but also to meet the needs of the community.

Other projects might include students starting a business of growing food for sale at the local farmers' market in partnership with local government agencies, B Street Permaculture Project, Adelante Mujeres and other local farms. Any funds generated by the business would go back to the school. Students would take part in all aspects of the business including developing and implementing business plans, sales and marketing, farm/garden operations and ongoing maintenance.

Inherent to the service-learning model is the importance of community partners. Mentor relationships will be encouraged with partner agencies in order to promote healthy and caring connections with adults in the community. Students will have opportunities to grow academically, socially, and civically and develop into resource providers for our community. Some potential and logical partners include Clean Water Services, Metro, SOLV, B Street Permaculture Project, and Adelante Mujeres. Of significant importance will be our relationship with Pacific University with whom we have already established several partnerships.

Democratic School Governance Structure

In the past two presidential elections, only 60% of eligible voters participated, and voter turnout was especially low amongst those aged 18-35. There are many other indicators of our flagging democracy and many more possible explanations. But the fact is that a huge segment of our population does not take part in our participatory democracy. Schools have always tried to create active citizens by mandating civic education. However, learning the actual mechanics of a governance system is best accomplished by participating in it. Toward this end, the FGCS will be a participatory democracy governed by its own laws, policies, and rules all of which will be articulated in the School Constitution and Law Book. Understanding that authority can only be legitimate if derived from the consent of the governed, the Constitution and Law Book will be created and upheld by the school community in which each student and staff member will be given a voice and a vote.

The primary governing instrument of the school will be the All School Meeting at which decisions will be made that impact the entire school. In addition to All School Meeting, class and age group meetings will be held to address issues that impact those groups. The school principal will have final authority and will be charged with ensuring that all decisions are fair, consistent, legal, and aligned with Forest Grove School District policies.

Allowing students to govern themselves is, for some, a scary idea. What if they vote not to have homework? What if they want to allow behavior that is unfair or unproductive? What if the elementary students out-vote the rest of the community and institute all-day recess and snack time? These questions all ask the same thing: is participatory democracy possible in a school for five through 18 year old people? The answer is manifest in the hundreds of schools that successfully use this form of government.

These schools find is that the success of the school democracy rests on the creation of a constitution that clearly articulates the goals of an academic environment. As in our US democracy, all laws and rules of the school must be consistent with the constitution. Therefore, it is not possible to supplant the goals of the community. Students suggesting a rule that bans homework would have to argue that this would be consistent with the constitution. Given that the constitution will certainly articulate the academic primacy of the school, it's hard to imagine that the students would prevail.

But students can and will make changes to the school. Imagine a group of students wanting to increase teacher awareness of different learning styles within the school. They may work with the Parent and Family Committee (PFC) council or other groups to develop solutions that would then be taken to the All School Meeting for approval. If they succeeded in convincing the school community of the need for their proposed changes, they may effect a change that would be of lasting importance and improvement to the school. Through the course of this, students would have learned how to define a need, make arguments clearly and convincingly, and gather support for their cause. Perhaps more importantly, they would have learned what it means to be citizens of a community.

CONCLUSION: CHARTER SCHOOLS: CHOICE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

It takes a village to raise a child. Since introduced to the public conversation, this African aphorism has resonated deeply with our society. Perhaps we have embraced it because of its obvious truth. Anyone who has spent any time with children can see the necessity for a complex and integrated support structure for children. But also embodied in this phrase is one of the core values of our society, namely the concept of public responsibility for education of the young.

Because of this understanding, support for public education is always strong among all sectors of the population. We all want to care for, nurture, and foster growth for our young and believe that education is a right of all children. Most people, embrace the public education available in local schools because it provides a strong foundation for their school-aged children. There are those, however, for whom the public education available to them does not work or does not reflect their educational values. For these people there are three options: Some leave, some wish they could but can't, and some simply won't.

Those who can exit a school system when dissatisfied are generally those who have the resources necessary to fulfill their desires for their child's education. These people send their children to private school or home school them. In Forest Grove, the number of homeschoolers has increased 18% since 2000. While enrollment in public schools has grown 8% since 1992, the number of students in private schools is up 23%. Some of these families are looking for religious instruction that is not available within the public schools. Some are looking for a kind of elite education that imparts advantages, real or imagined. People in these two groups will never feel well served by the public schools and will choose to leave. The majority of this group, however, are not people who are looking for a religious or privileged education; they simply want a standard public school but find that those available are not meeting their needs. Faced with feelings of powerlessness, these people have decided to exit the school system; in so doing, they are also exiting our shared public commitment to education.

Equally disenfranchised are those who stay but wish they could leave their local public schools. Without the means to pursue the education they believe would be more appropriate for their children, these families are locked into a school system within which they feel largely powerless.

Finally, there are those who will stick with public schools even at the expense of their children's benefit. Staunch defenders of this public right, they remind us that there is also a concomitant responsibility to support and to participate in the school system. But these families are compromising the good of their children for their ideals. Should they have to make this choice?

If we believe that public education should be a shared right and responsibility for all citizens, and if we believe that it takes a village to raise a child and that means all children and all of the village, then we have to find a way for those families who are dissatisfied with their local public options to be meet their needs within the public school system. Charter schools are one way to do this. They give these families a choice by offering them a public education that is different from what is currently available. This choice will serve to reintegrate some families back into the public school system. For those who have stayed but are dissatisfied, the choice offered by the charter school may be the educational opportunity they have sought. And even for those who do not choose to send their children to the charter school, the very existence of choice within the school system will remind them of the importance of educating all children; those who fit well in the traditional schools and those who don't. In the end, charter schools can invigorate our shared public life.

APPENDIX INDEX

We have attempted in this document to give an overview of the school we hope to open in the fall of 2007. We feel our envisioned school will enhance and augment the offerings currently available. To provide you with detailed information about the mechanics of the school and the curriculum, we have included the following:

1. Index for ODE proposal guidelines
2. Appendix A: Assurance of School Improvement Plan (ODE item 6)
3. Appendix B: Textbooks and Instructional Materials (ODE item 7)
4. Appendix C: Admissions Policy (ODE item 13)
5. Appendix D: Statutes and Rules (ODE item 14)
6. Appendix E: 5-Year Budget (ODE item 15)
7. Appendix F: Standards for Behavior (ODE item 16)
8. Appendix G: Calendar (ODE item 17, 20)
9. Appendix H: Description of Staff Members (ODE item 18)
10. Appendix I: Personnel and Salary Schedules (ODE item 19)
11. Appendix J: Special Education (ODE item 21)
12. Appendix K: Community Involvement (ODE item 22)
13. Appendix L: Performance Bonding (ODE item 24)
14. Appendix M: Fiscal Audit (ODE item 25)
15. Appendix N: Accounting and Record Keeping (ODE item 26)
16. Appendix O: Non-Discrimination Policy (ODE item 27)
17. Appendix P: Safety Plan (ODE item 28)
18. Appendix Q: Child Abuse Reporting Policy (ODE item 29)
19. Appendix R: Public Records and Meeting Laws (ODE item 30)
20. Appendix S: Transportation (ODE item 31)
21. Additional information on Place-Based Education
22. Sample Place-based Education Curriculum Map