Welcome and thank you for your commitment of time, knowledge, and leadership as a member of the board of directors of a charter school authorized by Grand Valley State University.

You are one of the dedicated pioneers of educational innovation who is helping Grand Valley and the Charter Schools Office provide Michigan students with greater opportunity for success by giving their parents quality choices concerning their child’s education.

Your service as a board member will be a tremendous undertaking full of unique challenges not usually faced by boards in traditional school systems. Because many of our schools are so young, your board may be simultaneously overseeing the performance of the school, while still learning its duties — in some cases, while the school and staff members are also in the startup phase. The upside is that you have an opportunity to help create the optimal structure for your board and your school’s operation and significantly impact the lives of its students.

Grand Valley’s Charter Schools Office believes that by authorizing charter schools in Michigan, we can positively affect the performance of all students and schools in the state. We hope you share that vision and know that you will demonstrate your commitment to quality education for all children through your selfless service.

Sincerely,

THOMAS J. HAAS, PH.D.
PRESIDENT
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

TIMOTHY WOOD, PH.D.
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT
FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
1. **Focus on “we” not me**
   See the board as a team.

2. **Treat board, staff, and faculty members with respect**
   Respect everyone’s expertise in his or her field.

3. **Do your homework**
   Informed discussion is preferred over getting board members up to speed in a meeting held in public.

4. **Listen**
   Effective board members understand there is rarely only one side to an issue.

5. **Be courageous**
   Strong boards have the courage to stick with existing board policies and apply the rules equally.

6. **Support the school system and the board decisions**
   Effective boards speak with one voice.

7. **Know your role**
   The board’s role is to govern, not manage.

8. **Be knowledgeable about the school’s performance**
   Strong boards understand how to interpret results and metrics regarding performance testing.

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**AREAS OF SPECIALIZED ASSISTANCE**

As an ambassador for Grand Valley State University charter schools, you need to acquaint yourself with some of the special opportunities we provide for the schools we serve. The GVSU Charter Schools Office employs experienced educators to attend all school board meetings held by the academies in its portfolio. These school consultants provide a direct connection between the board and the authorizer. Additionally, the school consultants offer specialized educational assistance to the schools and school boards in its portfolio, as follows.

1. **Principal Leadership**
   Randy Remenap, a long-time principal and faculty member of the GVSU College of Education, works with school administrators to assess their leadership tactics and provide advice for leadership growth.

2. **Recruitment**
   Cheryl Edwards-Cannon, who previously held leadership positions with National Heritage Academies and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, collaborates with school leaders to develop positive marketing plans and find strategic ways to increase student enrollment.

3. **Classroom Management**
   Dan Matthews, a certified trainer in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, observes classrooms and works with teachers to build a better, and often safer, learning environment.

4. **Board Finance**
   J.D. Smith, a former IBM employee who focused his work on K–12 education, conducts financial training seminars for new and experienced school boards.

5. **Start-up Training**
   Dan Warren has experience serving on state committees associated with school improvement, accreditation, and recognition. He works closely with new school boards to ensure they are well-trained in organizational compliance and effective governance practices.

6. **M.Ed. Program Guidance**
   Larry Spencer, a former faculty member in the GVSU College of Education, assists teachers and administrators who pursue a Master of Education degree at Grand Valley.

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**QUESTIONS EVERY BOARD SHOULD ASK**

1. **Why does this school exist?**
2. **What are our student achievement goals?**
3. **Are we meeting our student achievement goals?**
4. **Are we meeting our financial goals?**
5. **What are our organizational goals?**
6. **Are we meeting our organizational goals?**
7. **Where does our school stand in meeting federal and state requirements?**
8. **Are we in compliance with**
   - our bylaws and policies;
   - our charter contract;
   - state law; and,
   - federal law?
9. **What do students think about coming to school here?**
10. **What do parents/guardians think of our school?**
11. **Where do we stand financially, and are we — as the governing board — satisfied with the cost for the benefit and value added that the school receives?**
12. **Do we approve of the current school improvement plan?**
13. **Based on what we now know, what should we do next?**