



Minutes

Grow Public Schools Board Meeting

DATE and TIME:

Monday, August 21, 2023, at 4:00pm

LOCATIONS:

Physical Location:

Grow Academy Arvin - Learning Lab
901 Nectarine Ct., Arvin, CA 93203

Location to Attend Virtually:

Grow Academy Shafter - Learning Lab
471 W Los Angeles Ave., Shafter, CA 93263

1. Opening Items

1.1 Call the Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:00pm by Board Chair, Tom Mestmaker.

1.2 Record Attendance

Doc Ervin, Dr. Ric Esquivel, Steve McClain, Dr. Elysa Vargas, Tom Mestmaker, Manny Pantoja, Ernie Unruh, Dr. Kristen Watson, Matt Look, RJ Valentino, Dylan Wilson, Kari Heilman, Maddison Contreras, Jenny Bard, Lacie Harris, Rick Phillips, Alan Blandon, Eric Mendez, Jocelyn Scruggs, Elizabeth Ramos, Alfonzo Valenzuela, Tanya Kelley, Don Pasion, Jennifer Marcus (remote), Elia Sagasta (remote), Maira Portillo (remote), Bridgett Rubio (remote) and Barbara Grimm Marshall (remote)

1.3 Flag Salute

The flag salute was led by Matthew Moreno, 2nd grader at Grow Academy Arvin.

1.4 **Public Comment**

Kari Heilman, Executive Assistant, shared that there were no public comments.

2. **CMO Executive Leadership Reports**

Doc Ervin, CEO

Doc Ervin, CEO announced that staff would like to remove item number 8.14 - Approval of Property License Agreement from the Consent Agenda. Tom Mestmaker, Board Chair, removed item number 8.14.

Mr. Ervin shared that school officially started on August 1st and was a seamless transition. He thanked the teachers and staff for all their hard work over the summer, ensuring a smooth start. He also outlined upcoming updates from department leads including Home Office Relocation, County-wide Benefit, Academic Update with Preliminary Test Results and Talent Management.

Dr. Ric Esquivel, Chief of Schools

Dr. Esquivel shared that the beginning of the year focus will be on instructional progress with tangible deliverables. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) will be heading back to RELAY in September. This is a year-long instructional leadership residency which started in July. It has created a constructive way to build common language and support around our programs. A few key models from RELAY have already been implemented on each campus. Examples include real time feedback for teachers and instructional coaches, weekly data meetings, reviewing beginning of the year assessment data, weekly planning meetings and practice glance, and quick bite size instructional moves where teachers with a range of experience work with leadership and practice their craft ahead of their next day.

GPS's Core Model highlights include individual learning plans, learning labs, restored grade spans TK-6 & 7-8, and deepening small group instruction.

The GPS team believes that by pursuing a countywide charter petition, it will help sustain our programs and help us become more efficient with day-to-day operations - both fiscally and with general compliance. The GPS team had a productive meeting with the Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) on Friday to talk about process, timeline, and structure. GPS staff will outline the scope and bring it back to stakeholders for further feedback.

Board Member, Ernie Unruh, expressed his gratitude to the Grimm Family Education Foundation for being instrumental in the growth of GPS so the team can focus on curriculum and academics.

Steve McClain, Chief Business Officer

In June, the Board approved the administration to negotiate the lease for the new home office, and the lease was finalized in July. We are currently working through some improvement modifications to the building including a modified front entrance, new paint, and flooring. The estimated move in date is September 30th. The new building has a large classroom which will be utilized for professional development, as this building will become an educational hub for our network. Once the renovations are complete, we will host an open house for the Board and our community partners.

Tom Mestmaker, Board Chair, commented that this new office will accommodate organizational needs for a long time. Steve replied yes, as we grow and expand through a county-wide network of schools, we will be able to fully utilize this space. Manny Pantoja, Board Member, asked what the square footage is. Steve answered the space is approximately 15,000 square feet. Ernie Unruh, Board Member, asked what the length term of the lease is. Steve replied that it is a 10-year lease with two 5-year extension options that Grow may exercise.

Dr. Elysa Vargas, Chief Academic Officer

Dr. Vargas shared that we are still waiting for the verified test results from the State but, we have identified two areas for continuous improvement based on the preliminary findings. The first area is math performance and the second one is having consistent lead teachers. Both areas have action plans already in place and we look forward to reporting out the beginning successes at the next Board meeting.

As Dr. Esquivel mentioned, we are partnering with the RELAY Graduate School of Education to assist our Instructional Leadership Team in creating a unified classroom vision that includes classroom vision and student curriculum.

One final area of focus is the transition from 5th to 6th grade. To aid this difficult transition period, we have restructured our elementary to be TK-6 and we now have two credentialed teachers in every middle school classroom. Dr. Kristen Watson, Board Member, asked what is the class size in the 7th and 8th grade classrooms. Dr. Vargas replied that it ranges between 28 to 31. We are hopeful that it will prepare our students for their high school transition.

3. CMO Division Reports

3.1 Human Resources

Eric Mendez, Director of Human Resources

Human Resources has been busy with recruitment, ensuring that all open positions are filled with quality candidates. To accomplish this, the HR department will be hosting quarterly recruitment events and monthly onsite open houses. Another recruitment piece is onboarding - making sure each new staff member is set up for success. Finally, once candidates are hired and

onboarded, we are focusing on retention. We work with all of our managers and supervisors monthly with support and professional development.

Ernie Unruh, Board Member, asked what is the percentage of new teachers? Eric replied 12%.

3.2 **Business Services**

Alan Blandon, Director of Business Services

The 403(b) and the 457 plans will be available for employee enrollment with OneAmerica in the upcoming weeks. Our goal is to have all participants (who want to enroll) enrolled by September 8th.

We have \$13.5 million dollars in our money market investment account. Our projected revenue for this account is estimated at \$705,000.

Dr. Kristen Watson, Board Member, asked what the revenue will be used for. Steve McClain, CBO replied that it's discretionary money, but it will help fund our new office lease, opening of future schools, and other items as GPS expands.

3.3 **Operations**

Rick Phillips, Director of Operations

This summer, there was a software transition to a new student information system, Aeries. Classlink software was implemented to ensure additional apps for students were integrated. This week we are administering student Chromebooks.

Ernie Unruh asked if we had any kind of insurance program on the Chromebooks? Rick replied that they are under an extended warranty (3 years) and end of life is around 4 years. Ernie clarified that he was referring to students misplacing them. Rick shared that while students sign an Acceptable Use Policy, accidents happen. In the event of a lost Chromebook, there are spares on each campus. Dr. Vargas added that Chromebooks stay on campus and students typically do not take them home. Ernie asked about the Williams Visit and what instructional programs the students are learning, and can students access them from home. Rick replied that depending on circumstances, Chromebooks have been checked out for home use, but now all instructional materials are now linked through Classlink, which is web based and able to be accessed remotely. Ernie mentioned that SISC (Self-Insured Schools of California) has an insurance program for Chromebooks and laptops that parents can opt into. Rick replied that he would investigate further.

3.4 **Family & Community Engagement (FACE)**

Jocelyn Scruggs, FACE Coordinator

Our FACE team, in collaboration with our business team, has undertaken supporting families with uniform orders and compliance. We have been working diligently to track students out of uniform and identify needs or support for our parents. Our uniform vendor has made it more accessible for families to return orders by waiving return fees on non-logo items, and we set up an internal system for returns at each school site. Currently, less than 5% of scholars are out of uniform. Our goal is 100% uniform compliance by September 1st.

Our FACE team is excited to launch Loving Solutions this Fall. Loving Solutions is a 10-week parent training program to help combat the growing elementary truancy crisis while improving school behavior and grades. A strong emphasis is placed on the parental control issues of sleep, diet, structure, supervision, positive home/school communication, home learning activities, and developing homework and reading behavior. We are excited to begin promoting the information and recruit parents during the month of September, and we're looking forward to a good turnout!

4. Grow Public Schools Leadership Report

4.1 Grow Academy Arvin Jenny Bard, Principal

At GA-A we have been working on our beginning of the year team building. This has allowed students to spend more time with their CREW classes. They began the school year with class compacts and team building. Also, each class chose their own college and has brought school spirit through with a college cheer and classroom banner matching their college's colors. Parent engagement has also been going well. Participation rates were very high at the Mutual Promise night (100%) and home visits (75%).

Fall NWEA testing was completed this week. We have a 95% participation rate and look forward to sharing our results. A couple of new initiatives this year include grades TK-2 schedules with self-contained classrooms, which shows positive connections between scholars and teachers. Grades 3-6 have been engaging in hands-on learning through Project Based Learning (PBL) classes and grades 7-8 have two certificated adults in each classroom to support differentiation, extension, and access to grade-level content.

4.2 Grow Academy Shafter Lacie Harris, Principal

The fall NWEA assessment period has ended, and GA-S is forming an instructional grouping for Literacy Block, Learning Lab, and Math Leadership.

Our Back to School Night was a success. We had approximately 250 families in attendance and had various informational booths. Administration shared school-wide expectations and all families reviewed our Mutual Promise.

5. Grow Public Schools Parent Report

5.1 Parents of Grow Academy (POGA) Shafter Bridgett Rubio, POGA

We are excited to get the school year started. We have been working over the summer with FACE Liaison, Maira Portillo and FACE Coordinator, Jocelyn Scruggs, updating our POGA guidelines and bylaws and shaping them for this school year. We had our first POGA meeting last Tuesday and were pleased to see so many new faces. We are looking forward to getting our Board nominee list out this week so our new board can form for this year. Our first official meeting will be in early September. Some of the goals POGA will be focusing on this year will be fundraising, events and partnering with parents.

5.2 Star Parents of Grow Academy (SPGA) Arvin Matt Look, SPGA

We had our first SPGA meeting in July and around 20 new parents attended. Having our FACE Liaison, Blanca Hernandez, has been extremely helpful in getting the word out. SPGA had a booth at GA-A's back to school night and had 45 people sign up to be involved.

6. Grimm Family Education Foundation Report

Dylan Wilson, Executive Director ESY

Shafer & Arvin's ESY (Edible School Yard) classes are all starting on the same day this year. Shafer's green house has been removed and a new one will be installed in the fall.

Toast & Taste the Season, the Grimm Family Education Foundation and Buena Vista Edible School Yard's fundraiser, will take place this year on Friday, October 27th. All the funds raised will go to sponsoring Arvin & Shafer students for ESY's summer camps. Tickets go on sale September 5th and if you would like to volunteer, please let Dylan Wilson know.

7. Action Items

- 7.1 Public Hearing for Sufficiency of Instructional Materials Under the provisions of the Pupil Textbook and Instructional Materials Incentive Program Act, Ed. Code 60119, a public hearing shall be held to make a determination through resolution as to whether each pupil, including English Learners, in the district has or will have sufficient textbooks and/or instructional materials to use in class and to take home in each core subject

that are aligned to the academic content standards and consistent with the cycles and content of the curriculum framework adopted by the State Board of Education.

At 4:43pm Board Chair, Tom Mestmaker opened the Public Hearing for Sufficiency of Instructional Materials Under the provisions of the Pupil Textbook and Instructional Materials Incentive Program Act, ED. Code 60119.

Tom Mestmaker, Board Chair, asked if there were any public comments. Kari Heilman, Executive Assistant, replied that there were none.

Being that there were no public comments, Tom Mestmaker closed the Public Hearing at 4:44pm.

7.2 Approval of Board Resolution of Sufficiency of Instructional Materials

Following the Public Hearing, Dr. Kristen Watson made a motion to approve the Board Resolution of Sufficiency of Instructional Materials.

Moved by: Dr. Kristen Watson

Seconded by: Matt Look

The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

8. Consent Agenda

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS/OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

The Consent Agenda consists of items that are considered routine and non-controversial by Grow Public Schools staff. Consent items will be considered first and may be approved by one motion. If a member of the public wishes to comment regarding an item or items on the Consent Agenda, they may do so prior to a vote being taken on the Consent Agenda. A member of the board may remove any item from the Consent Agenda, and it will be considered in listed sequence with an opportunity for any member of the public to address the board concerning the item before action is taken.

Ernie Unruh made a motion to approve Consent Action Items 8.1 – 8.13 and 8.15-8.17 - excluding item number 8.14 – Approval of Property License Agreement.

Moved by: Ernie Unruh

Seconded by: Manuel Pantoja

The Board voted unanimously to approve the Motion.

8.1 Approval of Minutes from June 20, 2023

- 8.2 Approval of Warrants, and Credit Card Registers for June & July 2023
- 8.3 Approval of 2023-2024 Family/School Mutual Promise for Grow Academy Arvin
- 8.4 Approval of 2023-2024 Family/School Mutual Promise for Grow Academy Shafter
- 8.5 Approval of 2023-2024 Kern County Consortium Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Memorandum of Understanding Transfer of ERMHS Funds from Member Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to SELPA for Grow Academy Arvin & Grow Academy Shafter. Agt. #24-73231
- 8.6 Approval of Kindergarten Early Admission Request for Grow Academy Shafter
- 8.7 Approval of Agreement Between Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) Division of Special Education and Kern County Consortium SELPA Participating Districts - Grow Academy Arvin. Agt. #24-80338
- 8.8 Approval of Agreement Between Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) Division of Special Education and Kern County Consortium SELPA Participating Districts for Grow Academy Shafter. Agt. #24-80340
- 8.9 Approval of Application for 2023-2024 Title Funding for Grow Academy Arvin and Grow Academy Shafter
- 8.10 Approval of 2023-2024 Grow Public Schools Revised Employee Handbooks - CMO, Certificated and Classified
- 8.11 Approval of 2023-2024 Grow Public Schools Revised Parent/Student Handbook - Grow Academy Arvin & Grow Academy Shafter
- 8.12 Approval of Grow Public Schools Agreement for Professional Services (School Psychology Services)
- 8.13 Approval of Ratification of Office Lease at 4800 Corporate Court
- 8.15 Approval of Grow Public Schools Cell Phone Policy
- 8.16 Approval of Resolution to Adopt Grow Public Schools 457 Deferred Compensation Plan Documents and Amendment to Implement In-Service Distribution
- 8.17 Approval of Resolution Authorizing Chief Business Officer to determine Discretionary Employer Matching Contribution for Grow Public Schools 403(b) Plan

9. Closing Items

9.1 Adjourn Meeting

Matt Look made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:45pm.

Moved by: Matt Look

Seconded by: Ernie Unruh

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

I certify that I am the duly elected Secretary of Grow Public Schools, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation; that these minutes, consisting of nine (9) pages, are the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of the Board of Directors held on August 21, 2023.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke, positioned above a solid black horizontal line.

Secretary