

# MINUTES

## Of the Board of Directors of Grow Public Schools

(A California Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation)

### I. PRELIMINARY

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Directors of this corporation, held their meeting at the time, on the day, and at the place set forth as follows:

Time: 4:05 p.m.

Date: October 25, 2021

Meeting held via teleconference

#### 2. DIRECTORS PRESENT

The following directors, constituting a quorum of the Board, were present at the meeting held via teleconference:

Present: Tom Mestmaker, President; Ernie Unruh, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Representative; Dr. Jean Fuller, Grimm Family Education Foundation Representative; and Matt Look, Star Parents of Grow Academy (SPGA) and Parent Representative; and Manuel Pantoja, Secretary and Arvin Community Representative

Absent: NA

Grow Public Schools Staff Present via teleconference: Casey Yeazel, Chief Executive Officer; Michelle Lumis, Executive Assistant; Mike Romero, Chief Operating Officer; Adam Alvidrez, Director of School Operations; Melody Castillo, Accounting Manager; Daisy Rodriguez, Branding and Communications Manager; Elizabeth Ramos, Operations Specialist (interpreter); Rick Phillips, Operations Specialist; Dr. Wendy Creek, Chief Academic Officer

Grow Academy Staff Present via teleconference: Hurshel Williams, Principal, Grow Academy Arvin; Brook Webb, Principal, Grow Academy Shafter; Zulema Ela, Vice Principal of Academics, Grow Academy Arvin; Tatia Hunter-Jennings, Vice Principal of Student Services; Carlos Flores, Teacher, Grow Academy Arvin

Others Present via teleconference: Cindy Franz, EdTec, Back Office Provider; and Elia Sagasta, Assistant Superintendent, Richland School District; Toni Franz, Peter Franz, and David Mack, parents

3. FLAG SALUTE
4. APPROVAL OF AB 361 BOARD FINDING – MUST BE READ AND VOTED AT EACH TELECONFERENCE BOARD MEETING OR EVERY 30 DAYS

On a motion duly made by Jean Fuller, seconded by Ernie Unruh, and carried, the Board approved via roll call the approval of AB 361 board finding.

Board Member	Yay	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			
Ernie Unruh	X			
Matt Look	X			
Jean Fuller	X			

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Jean Fuller, seconded by, Jean Matt Look, and passed, to approve via roll call the minutes of the Public Hearing dated August 30, 2021.

Board Member	Yay	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Manuel Pantoja				X
Ernie Unruh	X			
Matt Look	X			
Jean Fuller	X			

Resolved further, that the Secretary of the Corporation is authorized and directed to insert a copy of these certified minutes into the book of minutes of this Corporation and to see that a certified copy of these minutes is kept at the Home Office for the transaction of business of this Corporation.

A motion was made by Jean Fuller, seconded by, Jean Matt Look, and passed, to approve via roll call the minutes of the board meeting dated August 30, 2021.

Board Member	Yay	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Manuel Pantoja				X
Ernie Unruh	X			
Matt Look	X			
Jean Fuller	X			

Resolved further, that the Secretary of the Corporation is authorized and directed to insert a copy of these certified minutes into the book of minutes of this Corporation and to see that a certified copy of these minutes is kept at the Home Office for the transaction of business of this Corporation.

A motion was made by Ernie Unruh, seconded by, Jean Matt Look, and passed, to approve via roll call the minutes of the board meeting dated September 9, 2021.

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Yay</b>	<b>Nay</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			
Ernie Unruh	X			
Matt Look	X			
Jean Fuller	X			

Resolved further, that the Secretary of the Corporation is authorized and directed to insert a copy of these certified minutes into the book of minutes of this Corporation and to see that a certified copy of these minutes is kept at the Home Office for the transaction of business of this Corporation.

## II. COMMUNICATIONS

### ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

David Mack, GA Shafter parent, provided public comment regarding the board agenda and the documents pertaining the items being presented. Mr. Mack asked that documents be hyperlinked in the board agenda for review and transparency. In regard to the ESSER III Plan being presented, David shared the ESSER III funds could be used towards long term independent study for students, to give parents an option if they choose not to vaccinate their students, if a vaccine mandate is implemented in the future. Board President, Tom Mestmaker, thanked Mr. Mack for sharing his comments and the board of directors will take Mr. Mack’s comments under advisement.

Toni Franz, GA Shafter parent, provided public comment regarding two areas of concern stemming from a meeting with Principal, Brook Webb; CEO, Casey Yeazel, and Chief Academic Officer, Wendy Creek. Mrs. Franz shared her concerns for the vaccine mandate for children. Mrs. Franz asked the board of directors to consider options for Grow Academy families who do not want to have their children vaccinated and to communicate the options. Specifically, long term independent study for families who need to make medical decisions for the students. This will provide families the opportunity to have more time for vaccine data and extended results of the vaccine. Mrs. Franz shared her support for Grow Academy. Another area of concern Mrs. Franz discussed, was the GA Shafter campus being fully staffed. During her Academic Parent and Team meeting visit to campus, Mrs. Franz shared that she saw a classroom with thirty plus students and no teacher’s aide. Mrs. Franz is concerned about the 30 to 1 ratio. Mrs. Franz is asking the board of directors and school leadership to take a look at how schools are staffed and how resources are allocated. Board President, Tom Mestmaker, thanked Mrs. Franz for sharing her comments and the board of directors will take Mrs. Franz’s comments under advisement.

## LEADERSHIP REPORT

Casey Yeazel, Chief Executive Officer, shared that he appreciated the comments made by both parents and will continue to collaborate with families. Casey provided the COVID-19 dashboard update from the Kern County Department of Public Health and Grow Public Schools. The 14 day look back was also shared with board, which showed a decrease in the number of COVID cases and the need for certified substitutes. Casey complimented Principals, Mr. Williams and Mrs. Webb for their hard work on their school sites.

Casey also shared the vaccination status of school sites compared to the cities of Arvin and Shafter. Overall, Grow Public Schools has been verifying the vaccinated status of all employees as we work to meet full compliance by October 15<sup>th</sup>. Testing procedures are in place and sites will begin twice weekly testing of all employees not vaccinated beginning on October 11<sup>th</sup>.

Casey shared state mandate for students, as a result of Governor Newsom's order for the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of required vaccines for K-12 students in California. There have been some concerns voiced in our school communities regarding this requirement and what it means for scholars at Grow Academies. Casey referenced a letter he sent to families on October 15<sup>th</sup>, to provide some clarity on what is known at this point about the impact of this of this new requirement on Grow Public Schools.

In regard to vaccine verification and testing requirements for our local board members, the California Department of Public Health ("CDPH") has mandated that all employees, contractors, and volunteers who provide services on a school site must be vaccinated against COVID-19 or submit to COVID-19 testing on a weekly basis for each week they will be present on campus, effective October 15, 2021. Per the mandate, school administrators are required to collect proof of vaccination or testing and report the results to CDPH upon request. Per recent legal guidance from Young Minney & Corr, LLC, this mandate also applies to the members of governing boards of charter schools, who are considered volunteers under the mandate. In order to participate in person for the November Board meeting, board members will need to submit a verification of vaccination or be tested within a week of the scheduled meeting. There will be a follow up email sent to Board members containing further details, including how to submit your vaccine verification, as well as COVID-19 testing in advance of the next Board meeting. Dr. Jean Fuller commented that it would be helpful to have a timeline for parents to provide lead time if the vaccine mandate for students were to be implemented January 1<sup>st</sup> or July 1, 2022.

Both Kern County Superintendent of Schools (GA Arvin) and Richland Union School District (GA Shafter) have officially completed their 2020-2021 oversight annual visits and reports. Casey was pleased to report that neither school had a finding of non-compliance in their respective oversight reports. Congratulations to the leadership teams at both GA sites, as well as the CMO home office team for their efforts and dedication to ensuring a quality educational program and a successful annual oversight visit.

Casey also extended his appreciation for the professionalism and collaborative

approach to annual oversight displayed by both of our authorizers – specifically, Cathie Morris and her team at KCSOS, and Elia Sagasta and her team at Richland USD. Casey said that Grow Public Schools must continuously strive to “get better” each and every day. There were areas of concern shared by our respective authorizers. Continued efforts and collaboration with our respective authorizers to ensure that we are addressing their concerns. In Shafter, there were two areas of concerns: Special education student enrollment is an area of concern. Richland has almost twice the percentage of students with disabilities as compared to Grow Academy. Second, Grow Academy will ensure that marketing and outreach to families make it clear that all students, including those who may require special education services are eligible to enroll. In Arvin, DataQuest Data indicates there is a disparity between the demographics of enrollment for Grow Academy-Arvin, as compared to Arvin Union School District in regard to the percentages of students who are Migrant, English Learner, and Low Socio-economic status. However, there is no evidence that this disparity is a result of either the charter’s policies or practices. In regard to Students with Disabilities, the percentages of enrollment for the charter and the district are similar. The question of disability severity level of the students enrolled in the charter as compared to Arvin Union School District’s students with disabilities.

Casey provided the Strategic Plan Growth update and shared the five organizational wide priorities. An update was provided on the high school and the potential location which will be near or on the California State University Bakersfield Campus.

Board member, Ernie Unruh asked if Casey could provide a ballpark dollar amount of Grow Public Schools CSP Expansion grant. Casey said the grant is approximately four million dollars. Ernie asked about the location of the K-8 school, which will be opened after the high school. Casey mentioned the east side of Bakersfield is the area Grow Public Schools is currently exploring as a location.

Mike Romero, Chief Operating Officer, provided the Operations and Human Resources updates. Grow Public Schools began weekly testing for all unvaccinated staff via the CDPH “Color Labs” testing platform. Both Nurse Carmen and Nurse Bonnie have been a tremendous resource on both sites to ensure all of our staff, students, and school communities are safe and informed of all COVID testing protocols. Human Resources Manager, Eric Mendez has also contributed a tremendous amount of work to this project over the past several weeks to ensure this testing platform is maintained and is as quick and efficient as possible for all users.

Over the course of the first eleven weeks of school, Grow Public Schools continues to average 4-5 certificated substitutes per day. On average, substitute costs are approximately \$3,750 per week or approximately \$24,000 per site.

As reported last month, Grow Public Schools partnered with an automated substitute call service called Frontline. Early reports from both sites are positive even though we are still learning how to best utilize this automated system. We actively adding more substitutes into this platform so the automated calling process can become more efficient.

The GA Arvin Learning Commons Remodel is now completed and approved for occupancy. The project added more permanent walls to divide up the space in the previous Learning Commons, providing four additional sound-proof and self-contained classrooms designed for the junior high. As a result of the renovation, the library was returned to its original home in the LearningLab.

Dr. Wendy Creek, Chief Academic Officer, shared a PowerPoint presentation on COVID Impact of Learning. The presentation included Fall 2021 NWEA test data and answered questions from last month regarding cohorts. Comparisons were also made to Fall 2019 to Fall 2021 for NWEA Reading and Math cohorts. Dr. Creek shared there are some target areas of focus based on the NWEA test data.

Last month the leadership teams at both sites met with the trainers from the California Reading and Literacy Project to learn about the reading assessments teachers were being trained on so that they can observe them in action. A follow up meeting will takeplace with Dr. Kreide from Discovery Learning Partners to learn about the assessments being given by the STEM teachers. The goal for leadership will then be to look at all the data and help the teachers use it to best support students with maximum growth, regardless of where they have started this year.

Earlier this month GPS hired an Independent Study (IS) Coordinator, Jessica Martinez. Jessica joins GPS from Bakersfield College. Jessica is responsible for coordinating families and teachers to ensure thatscholars who cannot attend in person do not fall behind in their learning. As of the board meeting, there are five students from GA Arvin enrolled in IS. Ms. Martinez will also be assisting with various student and community facing support tasks throughout the school year.

#### *PRINCIPAL'S REPORT-Grow Academy Arvin*

Hurshel Williams, Principal, shared Grow Academy Arvin's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), goal 1 - Provide a dynamic learning experience that inspires students and teachers to reach for higher academic achievement. Mr. Williams shared that back in March 2020, GA Arvin's leadership team immediately brainstorming how we might be able to develop and maintain a virtual learningexperience that would mirror our on-site program. Our goal was to establish a virtual model that would allow us to continue to provide direct instruction, while offering the complement of authentic learning opportunities. Board member, Ernie Unruh, shared that he appreciated reviewing the data and looking at that cohorts moving from one year to the next.

#### *PRINCIPAL'S REPORT-Grow Academy Shafter*

Wendy Creek shared GA Shafter's report. Shafter's LCAP goal 2 is to create collaborative partnerships with parents to improve student achievement. GA Shafter continues to look for creative ways to get parents back onto campus safely. Academic Parent Teacher Team

(APTT )meetings were held last week, in a variety of ways. Each teacher hosted an in person APTT at limited capacity, 15 parents per classroom. In addition, Zoom and Spanish sessions were offered. Parents were provided time to get to know each other, chat about their children (one such Icebreaker involved discussing how each parent chose their scholar's name) and partnering strategically to ensure scholar growth and success.

Onsite feedback supports parents' desire to get back on campus to have lunch, work in the garden, and volunteer. A survey will go out in the Sunday Community Comet Newsletter to gain additional feedback regarding APTTs. A Trunk or Treat event on October 29th is scheduled to occur in person and Parents of Grow Academy (PoGA) is working diligently to ensure community and parent partnerships.

#### *GROW PUBLIC SCHOOLS STAFF REPORT*

Carlos Flores, history teacher at GA Arvin, provided the parent report. Carlos shared students love their new classrooms, and being able to decorate and see all the student work posted on the walls. Mr. Flores gave a quick virtual tour of his classroom and the student posted on the walls.

#### *FISCAL REPORT*

Cindy Franz from EdTec (back-office provider) shared the September 2021 financial update.

The audit process will continue through the Fall of 2021, with the 20-21 unaudited actuals being shared with the board.

For GA Arvin, Cindy shared the forecasted net income is approximately \$850,000, a \$81,000 increase from the previous forecast.

For GA Shafter, the forecasted net income is approximately \$980,000, a \$71,000 decrease from the previous forecast.

For the home office, the forecasted net income is approximately \$333,000, a \$22,000 decrease from the previous forecast.

Notable changes from the prior forecast are due to additional substitute costs, which are partially offset by ESSER III funds for GA Arvin.

An intercompany loan repayment of \$200,000 is scheduled for December.

Cindy discussed each site's enrollment and attendance and the areas to watch in regards to restricted revenue, attendance and payroll.

### **III. ACTION ITEMS**

1. The Directors were presented with the approval of the Purchase Orders and Warrants and Credit Card Register for September 2021 that were considered and discussed. On a motion duly made by Ernie Unruh, seconded by Matt Look, and carried,

the Board approved via roll call the Purchase Orders and Warrants and Credit Card Register for September 2021.

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Yay</b>	<b>Nay</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			
Ernie Unruh	X			
Matt Look	X			
Jean Fuller	X			

2. The Directors were presented with the approval of ESSER III Expenditure Plan for GA Arvin that were considered and discussed. On a motion duly made by Jean Fuller, seconded by Matt Look, and carried, the Board approved via roll call ESSER III Expenditure Plan for GA Arvin.

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Yay</b>	<b>Nay</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			
Ernie Unruh	X			
Matt Look	X			
Jean Fuller	X			

3. The Directors were presented with the approval of the ESSER III Expenditure Plan for GA Shafter that were considered and discussed. On a motion duly made by Matt Look, seconded by Jean Fuller, and carried, the Board approved via roll call the ESSER III Expenditure Plan for GA Shafter. Parent, David Mack, commented via chat in Zoom, requesting to go over the GA Shafter ESSER III Plan. Ernie Unruh commented that the ESSER III Plan can be changed or modified by the board. Casey said that modifications of the ESSER III plan can be made moving forward. Mike Romero, COO also shared potential expenses may come up for each school that will require the revision of the ESSER III that will need to be approved by the board. Ernie Unruh commented into looking administratively into concerns from parents, which include the potential for extended long-term independent study and high student enrollment in certain grade levels. Casey shared reports will be presented in regards to both those issues at the November board meeting.

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Yay</b>	<b>Nay</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			
Ernie Unruh	X			
Matt Look	X			
Jean Fuller	X			

4. The Directors were presented with the approval of the 2021-22 KCSOS Transportation Services Agreement that were considered and discussed. On a motion duly made by Ernie Unruh, seconded by Jean Fuller, and carried, the Board approved via roll call the 2021-22 KCSOS Transportation Services Agreement.




<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Yay</b>	<b>Nay</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			
Ernie Unruh	X			
Matt Look	X			
Jean Fuller	X			

**IV. ADJORNMENT**

On a motion the board adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

**CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY**

I certify that I am the duly elected Secretary of the Grow Public Schools, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation; that these minutes, consisting of nine (9) pages are the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors held on October 25, 2021.

  
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 Secretary

