



## Minutes

### Grow Public Schools Board Meeting

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#### **DATE and TIME:**

Monday, February 24, 2025, at 4:00 pm

#### **LOCATIONS:**

##### **Physical Location**

Grow Public Schools, Home Office – Professional Development Center  
4800 Corporate Court, Bakersfield, CA 93311

##### **Locations to Attend Virtually**

Grow Academy Arvin – Conference Room (Middle School Office)  
901 Nectarine Court, Arvin, CA 93203

Grow Academy Shafter – Conference Room  
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 4:00 pm by Board Chair, Tom Mestmaker.

##### **1.2 Record Attendance**

Tom Mestmaker, Manuel Pantoja, Ernie Unruh, Doc Ervin, Dr. Ric Esquivel, RJ Valentino Jenny Bard, Shyanne Ledford, Sarah Vasquez, Tatiana Mirzaian, Nancy Olcott, Eric Mendez, Katie Barton, Timeshia Mackey, Kevin McGowan, Stephanie Sanchez, Dylan Wilson, Kari Heilman, Crystal Ramos, Don Pasion, Jessica Raya (remote for GA Shafter), Jennifer Marcus (remote), Victoria Potter (remote), Elia Sagasta (remote), Marcus Boriago-Hackler (remote for GA Arvin), Valerie Campbell (remote), Jill O'Brien (remote), Barbara Grimm Marshall (remote), Steve McClain (remote)

##### **1.3 Flag Salute**

Tom Mestmaker, Board Chair, led the flag salute.

##### **1.4 Public Comment**

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

#### **2. Grow Public Schools Executive Team Leadership Report**

##### **Doc Ervin, Executive Liaison to the Board of Directors**

Mr. Ervin started his report sharing the progress on the strategic plan. We have an updated Vision and Mission statement, and four identified Areas of Focus which are Academic Excellence, College

& Career Empowerment, Health & Wellness, and Growth & Expansion. Mr. Ervin then introduced RJ Valentino, who has been collaborating with GPS on the strategic plan, to provide an update.

Mr. Valentino shared that the plan continues to move forward, with priorities and objectives being developed under each Area of Focus, supported by task force work to help define and shape these priorities. Additionally, Mr. Ervin has been actively meeting with key community and educational partners to further advance this initiative. In January, at the Winter Summit, the GPS network provided valuable feedback on the Areas of Focus, reinforcing alignment with our mission and vision.

One of the key Areas of Focus, College & Career Empowerment, will be a major priority over the next few years as we expand the program. Kevin McGowan, Coordinator of Data Analytics and Chair of the College & Career Empowerment Committee, outlined the development framework, which includes TK-8 Awareness, 9-12 Case Management, and an Alumni Database.

Mr. McGowan shared that by July 1, 2025, our goal is to establish contact with 100% of our alumni. To support this effort, we have hired an Alumni Outreach Associate, whose primary responsibility is reaching out to approximately 750 alumni to strengthen engagement and track long-term outcomes.

Mr. Ervin also announced that GPS recently applied for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant. If awarded, the grant will be used to build our alumni database and further develop the alumni support program. We expect to learn whether we have received the grant sometime in June.

During the discussion, Board Member Ernie Unruh inquired about TK-8 awareness and noted that Kern High School District is effective in sharing student data. He expressed interest in tracking current 9th-grade students' GPA performance to assess two key aspects: their success levels, as measured by grades, and the potential presence of grade inflation at GPS.

He emphasized that having access to such data would provide valuable insight for the board when evaluating the effectiveness of various programs. In response, Mr. Ervin stated that GPS is actively working on a data-sharing agreement with the Kern High School District to assist in retrieving this kind of data.

Another Area of Focus is Health & Wellness, a component that is at the core of what GPS does. To lead this initiative, Timeshia Mackey, Senior Manager of Program Improvement, is chairing the Health & Wellness Committee.

Mrs. Mackey provided the Board with an update on the organization's past efforts in Health & Wellness sharing that there had been no formal committee cadence, inconsistent Wellness Policy compliance, and limited collaboration with both the Café and Edible Schoolyard (ESY) programs. To address these challenges, she has re-established the Health & Wellness Committee, created a taskforce, scheduled monthly committee meetings, and added the book, "Good Energy", to the committee agendas. Additionally, she is working to re-establish Health & Wellness expectations across the GPS network, engaging both students and parents in the process.

Lastly, Mr. Ervin informed the Board that Janelle Ruley, Partner at Young, Minney & Corr, will be attending our next scheduled board meeting on Monday, March 17th, at 2:00 PM to conduct the

mandatory Ethics Training (AB 2158). At the end of the training, each board member will receive a certificate of completion, which will be valid for two years.

**Dr. Ric Esquivel, Superintendent**

Dr. Esquivel began his update by stating that a mid-year achievement report will be presented, along with updates on the ongoing efforts to support students. The team has been working diligently to improve student achievement, ensuring that every student is recognized by name, knowledge, and need. This commitment is reflected daily through focused training, development, and intentional support from the Home Office to the schools.

The California Dashboard, which tracks academic progress year over year, serves as a key tool in aligning internal benchmarks and providing valuable insights. Today, Directors will share updates, connecting data to the mid-year LCAP progress report. It is essential to assess progress and ensure alignment with the LCAP approved by the Board in June 2024.

Additionally, as part of the achievement update, staff will present a recommendation for an updated teacher salary schedule for the upcoming school year. This recommendation is based on market research and its correlation to student achievement.

Since the Board's last meeting in December, the State has released its updated California Dashboard, offering a transparent, data-driven view of public-school performance across the state. The Dashboard provides insights into academic progress in Mathematics, English Language Arts (ELA), and English Learner Progress (ELP), as well as engagement metrics such as Suspension Rates and Chronic Absenteeism. Additional self-reported measures are included, with the expectation that all LEAs meet the state standard that Grow Public Schools continues to fulfill.

Grow Academy Arvin's dashboard results can be viewed here:

<https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/15101570124040/2024>

Grow Academy Shafter's dashboard results can be found here:

<https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/15635780135186/2024>.

After the California Dashboard presentation, Ernie Unruh expressed his excitement about the progress at GPS, highlighting Grow Academy Arvin's 20.6% increase in English Learner Progress—a remarkable achievement. He noted that, despite serving on four other charter boards, he has not seen comparable results. Doc Ervin acknowledged the significant progress made while emphasizing that there is still more work to be done.

Additional data shared included the 2023-2024 SBAC ELA results, showing that Grow Public Schools, as a network, outperformed Kern County's standards in ELA (met or exceeded), with math performance not far behind. The goal is to further expand this achievement in both areas in the coming year.

For the 2024-2025 Network-Wide TK Cohort, NWEA Math & ELA progress data (current K & 1st graders) indicates that students who completed Grow's TK program perform stronger on NWEA math and ELA assessments compared to their peers who did not participate.

Board member Ernie Unruh expressed his appreciation for the focus on individual student growth rather than solely on reaching specific performance levels. He emphasized that progress is meaningful, even if a student does not meet the overall group's growth, if they are improving their personal scores.

Lacie Harris, Principal at Grow Academy Shafter, added that Data Day took place earlier that day. Both campuses held a special half-day where students analyzed their own performance on recent assessments and created individualized plans. They set goals, reflected on different ELA and math domains, and identified areas for improvement. This personalized approach is driving student growth.

Dr. Esquivel continued presenting data from the 2024-2025 NWEA results, highlighting improvements at Grow Academy Arvin in both ELA and math from Fall to Winter. While Grow Academy Shafter saw a slight decline in ELA but achieved gains in math during the same period.

Board member Ernie Unruh inquired about the impact of recent immigration enforcement activity on attendance, expressing concern that families might keep their children home out of fear of Border Patrol intervention. He emphasized the importance of ensuring families understand their rights and available resources to prevent absenteeism from rising.

Dr. Esquivel responded that the schools have been proactive in addressing these concerns. Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Coordinators, social workers, and Deans of Students have actively engaged with families, ensuring that those experiencing absences have access to support and resources. As a result, average daily attendance (ADA) has remained strong, exceeding 95% in the past two weeks. While there was a dip in January, attendance has since stabilized.

Mrs. Harris agreed, noting that a recent two-week decline in attendance was primarily due to illness. Office Managers and Deans continue to monitor and manage chronic absences through case management efforts.

Jenny Bard, Principal at Grow Academy Arvin, added that they have implemented attendance challenges to encourage consistency. For example, last week, students participated in a no tardy challenge to promote punctuality.

Dr. Esquivel's final update to the Board included a recommendation to approve an updated teacher salary schedule tied to student achievement. He emphasized that teachers who remain with GPS year after year contribute significantly to student outcomes, a trend reflected in the data. Eric Mendez, Director of Human Resources, has previously shared updates on teacher retention, which continues to be strong. In the 2022-23 school year, approximately 78% of teachers across the network returned, while the 2023-24 school year began with an 89% retention rate. Recognizing and retaining teachers who embody GPS's Core Values is a priority. Additionally, recruiting experienced educators for vacancies is a key focus, as data shows that experienced teachers accelerate student achievement more quickly. The average teacher experience at GPS increased from 4 years in 2022-23 to 5.3 years in 2024-25, demonstrating progress in both retention and overall experience.

To further support student achievement, compensation must also be considered. GPS has actively listened to teacher feedback, and the Human Resources team along with Mr. McGowan, conducted market research to assess how GPS salaries compare to those in Kern County. Based on this research, the administration recommends a 13% teacher salary increase for the 2025-26 school year, which includes the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) already factored into the salary schedule. This results in an actual 10% year-over-year salary increase.

With this adjustment and Board approval, GPS would be positioned among the highest-paying TK-8 school networks in Kern County by years 5-6, further strengthening its ability to attract and retain high-quality educators.

Tom Mestmaker, Board Chair, acknowledged that GPS asks more from its teachers compared to other schools.

Mr. Unruh emphasized that stability and longevity are key factors in making a lasting impact, not just for teachers but also for administration. He noted that the school's financial reserves are sufficient to support this increase and expressed his support for the proposal.

Mr. Ervin added that while budget adjustments will be necessary, this salary increase is essential for accelerating growth, establishing GPS as the school of choice in Kern County, and setting a standard of excellence. He highlighted that teachers across Kern County have expressed interest in joining GPS, but salary limitations have previously prevented the network from attracting some of these highly qualified educators.

Mr. Mendez added that while compensation studies have always been conducted, this time the team took a deeper look at the discrepancies between what teachers were reporting and what the market data showed. The key finding was that previous analyses primarily focused on beginning teacher salaries, rather than long-term salary progression. Historical trends indicated that many GPS teachers remained for approximately three years before moving on. This insight highlighted the need for a more competitive salary structure that not only attracts teachers but also encourages long-term retention.

Mr. Unruh asked if there were any proposed adjustments related to master stipends. Mr. Mendez responded affirmatively, stating that the salary schedule included in the Board packet incorporates all stipend adjustments. The schedule lists various stipends that teachers can qualify for or additional duties they can take on, as well as outlining the longevity bonus structure.

Stephanie Sanchez, Assistant Director of Human Resources, added that upon comparison, GPS's stipend and special education stipend structures were found to be among the highest when compared to other districts.

Mr. Unruh requested a copy of the salary schedule as presented to teachers. Mr. Ervin confirmed that the salary schedule was included in the Board packet but would be resent in the Friday update.

Mr. Unruh also shared that he has previously worked with Dr. Esquivel in other school districts and appreciates the comprehensive approach being implemented. He acknowledged that while there

is always room for improvement, he commended the administration for developing a well-rounded program that supports teachers and ensures classroom benchmarks align with state testing. He concluded by expressing his gratitude, stating that the school appears to be making great strides overall.

Mr. Mestmaker asked who our biggest competitors are in terms of salaries. Mr. Mendez responded that they are typically Bakersfield City School District (BCSD), Panama-Buena Vista Union School District (PBVUSD), and Rosedale Union School District (RUSD). Mr. Mestmaker then inquired whether the updated salary schedule would make us competitive with these districts. Mr. Mendez confirmed that it would, stating, "Yes, absolutely."

**Steve McClain, Chief Business Officer**

Mr. Ervin shared that Steve McClain, Chief Business Officer, was not able to attend the board meeting and that the financial slides regarding the Governor's Proposed 2025-2026 State Budget would be included in the Friday Update.

**2.1 Mid-Year Update to the 2024-2025 LCAP**

Tatiana Mirzaian, Director of Learning & Innovation, presented the Mid-Year LCAP update. She explained that the LCAP is an annual planning framework submitted to the State, outlining the organization's goals, priorities, plans, and funding strategies. The update provided a review of progress toward the submitted goals, key highlights, and an overview of resource allocation.

She also reminded the Board that this year is a transitional year for GPS, requiring the submission of three separate LCAPs: one for Grow Public Schools (TK-7), one for Grow Academy Arvin (8th grade), and one for Grow Academy Shafter (8th grade). Beginning next year, GPS will consolidate into a single LCAP.

*Goal 1 – Conditions for Learning*

Ensure equitable access to facilities, qualified teachers, instructional materials, grade level content standards, programs, and services fostering the optimal conditions for effective and comprehensive learning.

*Goal 2 – Student Achievement*

Provide a personalized and inclusive learning experience that inspires all students to achieve at high levels.

*Goal 3 – Parent & Student Engagement*

Provide an environment that fosters parent input and participation while supporting high levels of student engagement.

**Dr. Esquivel provided an update on the mid-year LCAP review, emphasizing alignment with the three primary goals.** He noted that LCFF funds have been allocated across all three LEAs, and the report includes a breakdown of both state and federal funding. Additionally, goals 1-3 are presented alongside budgeted expenditures and estimated actuals. Since this is a mid-year update, it is expected that expenditures would not yet be at 100%; however, spending remains on track.

Mr. Unruh inquired whether the goals are listed in order of importance, clarifying that Goal 1 is not necessarily the most important. Dr. Esquivel confirmed this. Mr. Unruh also asked about the percentage of the total budget allocated to each of the three goals, as this would illustrate the Board's focus on these priorities.

Mr. Ervin suggested including that information in the Friday Board Update. Dr. Esquivel added that Goals 1 and 2 have a larger allocation of personnel, particularly Goal 2. This includes Small Group Instructors (SGIs), efforts to reduce class sizes, and additional classroom aides, reflecting a strategic investment in those areas.

Lastly, the team will continue following the established timeline, which includes reviewing data and planning goals for the 2025-26 school year, completing the annual update, holding a public hearing and Board adoption on June 23, 2025, and submitting the final LCAP in July 2025.

### **3. Division Reports**

#### **3.1 Human Resources**

Eric Mendez, Director of Human Resources, provided an update on the Leadership Exploration and Development (LEAD) Series. LEAD is designed for managers, supervisors, and directors to develop key leadership skills, including providing open feedback, conducting check-ins with team members, and setting goals. The next session is scheduled for Friday, February 28.

At the end of January, all supervisors guided their teams through goal setting. As a result, every employee across the network established goals and recorded them in the HR system for tracking. This Friday's session will focus on monitoring progress, delivering real-time feedback, and conducting coaching sessions to support employees in successfully achieving their goals. The LEAD series will continue through the end of the year, with planning already underway for next year's program.

Recruitment & Retention Update: The intent-to-return surveys sent out in January received positive feedback. Only 1.8% of teachers indicated they would not be returning, while 7% were unsure. Among those who were unsure, 75% cited compensation as a factor, aligning with ongoing discussions about proposed salary schedules.

#### **3.2 Marketing & Communications**

Katie Barton, Director of Marketing & Communications, provided an update on enrollment and outreach efforts. The open enrollment window is just a few weeks away, and the team has seen strong community engagement, a high number of applicants, and a successful campaign to connect with families. Efforts continue to raise awareness about Grow's schools and the value of its educational model.

Lotteries will be held at the end of March, and enrollment will continue for any available openings. However, many grade levels are expected to have waitlists. This has been a successful open enrollment season, aided by the new enrollment system implemented this year.

The Marketing & Communications team is also collaborating with the HR department on recruitment efforts. While, as Mr. Mendez noted, there are limited hiring needs, the focus will be on filling specialized positions.

At the end of January, the team led efforts around National School Choice Week, a key initiative in the communications roadmap. These efforts highlighted the importance of school choice, what it means for Grow, and the role of charter schools. The campaign included student photos, parent engagement events, and increased social media interaction with families.

### 3.3 **Family & Community Engagement (FACE)**

In Jocelyn Scruggs' absence, Katie Barton provided an update on FACE (Family and Community Engagement). The FACE team has been actively hosting ELA and Math workshops, which have been incredibly well received by families. These workshops provide parents with hands-on activities to support their children's learning. During the Parent Advisory Council, parents shared feedback expressing a strong interest in more workshops, particularly those that offer take-home learning opportunities. This feedback will help guide planning for next year's calendar.

Last week, FACE also hosted an Alumni Night, with over 50% of senior alumni in attendance. The event, held in partnership with the Kern Community Foundation, provided alumni with resources and guidance on completing scholarship applications. It was a successful evening, strengthening connections with alumni and offering meaningful support.

Looking ahead, FACE will be hosting health & wellness events and a plant sale on campus, both of which are great opportunities for family engagement.

#### 3.3.1 **Parent Reports**

**In Matt Look's absence, Jenny Bard, Principal of Grow Academy Arvin, provided an update on the Star Parents of Grow Academy (SPGA).** Parent involvement has reached an all-time high this year, with many new families actively participating in events and activities. Last Friday, SPGA hosted a Father-Daughter Dance, welcoming over 200 attendees. A special thank you was extended to Chef Lisa and the kitchen staff for preparing a wonderful dinner, dessert, and drinks. Their support, along with the extra staff who assisted with check-in, setup, and cleanup, contributed to the event's success.

Looking ahead, the annual gift card raffle basket fundraiser kicks off this week, with strong participation expected. SPGA board members continue to go above and beyond, and the team is excited for the remainder of this year's events.

**Jill O'Brien, Parents of Grow Academy (POGA) Shafter Representative, provided an update on recent and upcoming events at Grow Academy Shafter.** Last Friday, the school hosted a Father-Daughter Dance, which was a huge success with 240 attendees. The event received tremendous support from campus staff and the front office team, who assisted with ticket sales and event preparations



in the weeks leading up to it. A special thank you was extended to Jessica Raya, Office Manager, for going above and beyond to ensure everything ran smoothly. Looking ahead, POGA is excited to host a free Family Bingo Night next month, followed by a Mother-Son event in May. Fundraising efforts are also underway, with a key goal of installing a water bottle filling station for scholars—a request frequently brought up by parents during meetings. These fundraising events not only help achieve this goal but also allow POGA to continue offering free family events for the school community.

#### **4. Grow Public Schools Leadership Report**

##### **Grow Academy Arvin**

Jenny Bard, Principal of Grow Academy Arvin (GA-A), provided an update on recent events and initiatives. GA-A has been hosting teacher-led events to foster student engagement, recognizing that one of the most exciting experiences for students is spending time with their teachers in a fun, learning environment. Recently, teachers hosted a “Pizza My Heart” event, where students who had earned enough Kickboard dollars made heart-shaped pizzas. Additionally, students participated in Bestie Bouquets on Valentine’s Day.

The school also had a special opportunity to participate in the grand opening of Bakersfield College’s Arvin Campus. GA-A’s Student Council was invited to lead the flag salute at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, and students were gifted BC t-shirts to commemorate the event.

To promote positive attendance, the leadership, culture, and office teams have been conducting home visits for students at risk of chronic absenteeism. These visits provide families with resources and include signing an attendance contract to encourage improvement.

GA-A has also introduced monthly attendance challenges, including a successful No Tardy Challenge last week. The team is placing special focus on TK-2 students, who currently have the highest absenteeism rates in the school. To address this, young scholars receive individual sticker charts to track attendance, with the opportunity to earn their way into a special party with the principal.

Lastly, GA-A is proud to announce that three scholars will be competing in the Kern County Science Fair on March 11.

##### **Grow Academy Shafter**

Lacie Harris, Principal, shared that the focus has primarily been on K-2 students, particularly in internalizing the curriculum. Instruction Partners, an external consultancy, has been working with leadership, coaches, and teachers. They have had several interactions with these groups throughout the year, and the results are shown in the classrooms.

Photos were shared, including one showcasing a teacher resident using a supplemental program called the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum. This systematic program is based on the science of reading and supports students' pre-reading skills. Another photo depicted students on the carpet practicing dictation, which is a daily activity in all K-2 classrooms. Dictation helps with sound processing, which is a skill students use daily and will benefit them in later years.

The school also launched Kindness Week right after Valentine’s Day. This week, they are kicking off an Anti-Bullying Campaign for the older grades. As part of the Kindness Week activities, a Kindness table was set up during lunch, where students could write notes to others. This initiative helped to build the campus culture and promote kindness.

Mr. Unruh expressed appreciation for the principals, acknowledging their vital role in handling campus issues and contributing to the growth of the instructional program. He inquired whether the principals would receive the same percentage raise as teachers, as he was concerned about any discrepancy. He emphasized that principals are just as important as anyone else in the school system.

Mr. Mendez responded that HR is conducting a comprehensive study of all positions, starting with teachers due to significant salary discrepancies. Dr. Esquivel added that non-certificated staff, such as teacher assistants, have also expressed concerns, and the team is considering each case individually. The renewal process for salary adjustments will begin soon, with teachers being the first group to go through the process, followed by others through June.

Mr. Unruh stated that salary adjustments should be consistent across all positions, emphasizing that every role on campus is equally important. He requested a specific report on the principal's salary adjustments. Mr. Ervin thanked Mr. Unruh for the feedback and confirmed that it would be on the radar. He also instructed the HR team, including Mr. Mendez and Ms. Sanchez, to make note of this request.

#### **5. Grimm Family Education Foundation**

Dylan Wilson, Executive Director of the Buena Vista Edible Schoolyard, shared that the Grimm Family Education Foundation and the Buena Vista ESY have been collaborating with GPS's HR team to develop professional development strategies across the edible schoolyard network. They have also been working with Timeshia Mackey on the Wellness Policy and have successfully filled some mid-year staffing gaps with the help of GPS's HR department.

A special shout-out was given to the kitchen team at Grow Academy Arvin, who have been hosting a cookbook club. This initiative has been gaining traction and reflects a broader trend within the network of increasing family engagement. Adult-focused lessons, teachings, and workshops are becoming more popular, offering opportunities for parents to reinforce healthy choices at home and create a stronger connection between the students' learning and their families.

Lastly, the annual plant sales are coming up, with Buena Vista's sale scheduled for Saturday, April 5th.

Mr. Mestmaker asked Mr. Wilson to share the plant sale dates with the board. Mr. Ervin noted that the dates will be included in the Friday Board Update.

#### **6. Action Items**

##### **6.1 Approval of Donation Agreement with Arvin Little League.**

Grow Academy Arvin has two flagpoles located on its campus, but one flagpole is sufficient. Under this donation agreement, Grow will donate the flagpole located on the junior high side of campus to the Arvin Little League at no cost. In exchange, the Arvin Little League will remove the flagpole and restore the hardscape to its original condition when school is not in session, at no cost and with no liability to Grow.

Board Chair Tom Mestmaker asked if there were any comments from the Board. With no comments made, Tom Mestmaker called for a motion to approve.

A motion was made by Manuel Pantoja, seconded by Ernie Unruh, and passed, via roll call to approve the Donation Agreement with Arvin Little League.

Board Member	Yay	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Dr. Kristen Watson			X	
Matt Look			X	
Ernie Unruh	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			

**Carried 3-0**

- 6.2 Approval of the 2025-2026 Classified and Certificated Salary Schedules, effective July 1, 2025.

Board Chair Tom Mestmaker asked if there were any comments from the Board. With no comments made, Tom Mestmaker called for a motion to approve.

A motion was made by Ernie Unruh, seconded by Manuel Pantoja, and passed, via roll call to approve the 2025-2026 Classified and Certificated Salary Schedules, effective July 1, 2025.

Board Member	Yay	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Dr. Kristen Watson			X	
Matt Look			X	
Ernie Unruh	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			

**Carried 3-0**

- 6.3 Approval of 2024-2025 Comprehensive Safety Plan for Grow Academy Arvin.

The California Education Code requires schools to develop and maintain a Comprehensive School Safety Plan designed to address campus risks, prepare for emergencies, and create a safe, secure learning environment for students and school personnel.

Board Chair Tom Mestmaker asked if there were any comments from the Board. With no comments made, Tom Mestmaker called for a motion to approve.

A motion was made by Ernie Unruh, seconded by Manuel Pantoja, and passed, via roll call to approve 2024-2025 Comprehensive Safety Plan for Grow Academy Arvin.

Board Member	Yay	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Dr. Kristen Watson			X	
Matt Look			X	
Ernie Unruh	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			

**Carried 3-0**

6.4 Approval of 2024-2025 Comprehensive School Safety Plan for Grow Academy Shafter.

Board Chair Tom Mestmaker asked if there were any comments from the Board. With no comments made, Tom Mestmaker called for a motion to approve.

A motion was made by Manuel Pantoja, seconded by Ernie Unruh, and passed, via roll call to approve 2024-2025 Comprehensive Safety Plan for Grow Academy Shafter.

Board Member	Yay	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Tom Mestmaker	X			
Dr. Kristen Watson			X	
Matt Look			X	
Ernie Unruh	X			
Manuel Pantoja	X			

**Carried 3-0**

**7. 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.

Mr. Unruh commented that he was not present at the December 9 board meeting and would like to pull item 7.1 - *Approval of Minutes from December 9, 2024*, from the Consent Agenda and move to be approved at the next scheduled board meeting on March 17.

Tom Mestmaker, Board Chair, asked for a motion to approve consent agenda items 7.2 – 7.11.

Ernie Unruh made a motion, except for item number 7.1, to approve consent agenda items 7.2 – 7.11.

*Moved by:* Ernie Unruh  
*Seconded by:* Manuel Pantoja

**Aye** Tom Mestmaker, Ernie Unruh, Manuel Pantoja

**Carried 3-0**

- 7.2 Approval of Warrants and Credit Card Registers for November 2024, December 2024, and January 2025
- 7.3 Approval of Audit Engagement for 2024-2025
- 7.4 Approval of Resolution for Reimbursement
- 7.5 Approval of 2024-2025 Parent/Student Handbook Update for Grow Public Schools, Grow Academy Arvin, and Grow Academy Shafter
- 7.6 Ratification of Cal Lutheran University Unpaid School Counseling Internship Agreement
- 7.7 Approval of School Accountability Report Card (SARC) 2023-2024 for Grow Public Schools
- 7.8 Approval of School Accountability Report Card (SARC) 2023-2024 for Grow Academy Arvin
- 7.9 Approval of School Accountability Report Card (SARC) 2023-2024 for Grow Academy Shafter
- 7.10 Approval of Agreement with Swanson Engineering Inc. for Civil Engineering Services for Grow Academy #3
- 7.11 Ratification of College and Career Empowerment Program Partnership Agreement

## **8. Closing Items**

### **8.1 Adjourn Meeting**

Tom Mestmaker thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Manuel Pantoja made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:28 pm.

*Moved by:* Manuel Pantoja  
*Seconded by:* Ernie Unruh

**Aye** Tom Mestmaker, Manuel Pantoja, Ernie Unruh

**Carried 3-0**

### **Certificate of Secretary**

I certify that I am the duly elected Secretary of Grow Public Schools, a California non-profit public benefit corporation; that these minutes consisting of thirteen (13) pages, are the minutes of the regular Board Meeting of the Board of Directors held on February 24, 2025.



Secretary

