



3

Minutes

Grow Public Schools Board Meeting

DATE and TIME:

Monday, December 11, 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

Tom Mestmaker, Dr. Kristen Watson, Manny Pantoja, Matt Look, Ernie Unruh, Doc Ervin, Dr. Ric Esquivel, Steve McClain, Dr. Elysa Vargas, Eric Mendez, Alan Blandon, Timeshia Mackey, Fonzi Valenzuela, Yolanda Sanchez, Maddison Contreras, Kari Heilman, Jocelyn Scruggs, Don Passion, Dylan Wilson, Lacie Harris, Tanya Kelley, RJ Valentino, Katelyn Zinger, Emma Perez, Cathy Card (remote), and Elia Sagasta (remote).

1.3 Flag Salute

The flag salute was led by Mya Jimenez and Susanna Tirana, students 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, Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Ervin highlighted a couple of the items that will be discussed during the board meeting. Cindy Frantz from EdTec and Alan Blandon, Director of Business Services will be sharing the First Interim report for GA-Arvin and GA-Shafter. The Board will also be reviewing several facility project contracts which are up for approval- A-C Electric, HMC Architects, Class Leasing and JTS Modular Design. The solar panels at GA-A will be removed during winter break and we also have the proposed 2024-2025 school calendar up for approval.

Dr. Ric Esquivel, Chief of Schools

Dr. Esquivel shared that the countywide petition has been completed and was submitted last Friday to the Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS). Next in the petition process is a public hearing at KCSOS's Board Meeting on January 9th with the final decision to be made on February 13th. We are on an accelerated timeline and will be working with the California Department of Education (CDE) to go from two Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to one. We will keep the Board apprised as we go through the petition process.

Our Strengths Weakness Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T.) assessments have been completed with the certificated and classified staff. We have collected valuable data that will help guide our month-to-month priorities as we launch the second semester.

Steve McClain, Chief Business Officer

Mr. McClain shared that the Arvin Property License Agreement with Kern Community College District (KCCD) for two acres on the west side of the Arvin campus has been approved. The agreement is for 20 years with a 20-year extension option.

We have a meeting with the City of Shafter and the City of Arvin in January to submit the facility improvement plans for both campuses. Currently, we are in the design phase and were able to go back to the architects and civil engineers to revisit the pricing. After review, they were able to reduce the price significantly. This updated contract is included in your packet. Some additional fees for the actual bidding and construction phase will be coming to the Board in February.

Last year, the Board approved four temporary buildings in Shafter with Class Leasing. Those are up for renewal for 2 additional years which will be needed until we go into the future phase of permanent buildings. Also, we are asking for approval for two additional buildings from Class Leasing. These are needed to reduce class sizes in the

primary grades starting with kindergarten, 1st and 2nd, as well as adding a second class for Transitional Kindergarten.

As Mr. Ervin mentioned previously, the solar panels will be removed at GA-A during the winter break. Once the solar is removed, this will free up field space so we can begin developing our project on the west side of campus.

Board member, Ernie Unruh asked who else bid on the modulars besides JTS? Mr. McClain replied that JTS is on a piggyback contract therefore, no other bids were requested. We have been working with JTS for a while, they are familiar with our campuses, and receiving other bids would have delayed the project.

Mr. McClain mentioned that the Arts, Music & Instructional Materials Block Grant requires a Board approved plan. The grant includes art and music but also allows spending in other areas like operations. We have met with both principals who helped identify the different areas this grant could cover.

Also, included in the Board packet is the School Accountability Report Card (SARC) for both schools showing the performance and the culture of the school. The report is based on last year's data. The State is very slow in getting the information populated in the report and some of the data point areas are blank. These will be populated later in the year. Once we have the updated version, it will be posted on our website.

The 2024-2025 school calendar is also being presented for approval today.

Dr. Elysa Vargas, Chief Academic Officer

Dr. Vargas started her presentation announcing that we had four students across the network who had perfect scores on their California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) test. One of those students is here with us today, the current 8th grader at GA-A's, Angel Madrigal. We have a signed certificate from KCSOS and two tickets to Holiday Lights at the California Living Museum (CALM). At the Board meeting in February, we will recognize the other three students from GA-S who could not be here today. Congratulations to all the students for a job well done.

We remain focused on continuing growth and achievement this school year. Quarter two's focal point has been measuring the progress of our students so that we can continue to respond to their needs and strengths. The Instructional Team has been sharing their learnings from RELAY with the instructional Coaches who are then meeting on a weekly basis with the teachers that they case manage.

Winter Summit, which is our second summit of the school year, will be on Monday, January 8th at GA-S. We are offering 12 different sessions where teachers get to register for the workshops they feel like most support their development and the day will be

finished with departmental planning time. Ernie Unruh, Board member, asked what the most popular topics were. Dr. Vargas responded that Small Group Instructors (SGIs) have a session called, "Been There Done That, Tips from a Former SGI". Another popular one was, "SGI Part II". At our Fall Summit, two of our coaches presented and now they are doing a follow-up about more in depth small group instruction strategies. We also have a consultant from Otis (our assessment platform) coming to provide support in using the platform better to measure student progress.

Dr. Vargas wrapped up her update by introducing our Senior Manager of Programs Improvement, Timeshia Mackey. Mrs. Mackey joined GPS three months ago and will be sharing some of the program improvements she has made thus far.

3. CMO Division Reports

3.1 Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP)

Timeshia Mackey, Senior Manager of Programs Improvement, started her presentation sharing that she is excited to be a part of Grow and the ELOP program. She and her team have been working together to create an infrastructure for the ELOP after school program and establish expectations for parents, scholars, and staff. She has also met with the Principals and Assistant Principals to ensure that we are aligned with the core components of the program and is diligently working to make sure that after school is an extension of the regular school day.

Ernie Unruh requested at the next Board meeting to have an overview of our English Language Development (ELD) program and, our reclassification and what supports we have for those students after they are reclassified. Dr. Vargas responded that yes, she would be happy to share a program overview and, she will be presenting data at the next Board meeting.

3.2 Human Resources

Eric Mendez, Director of Human Resources, shared that organizational and departmental goals, based off our Seeds for Success, are in the process of being finalized. The HR Team is monitoring the progress which is helping drive what success looks like for GPS for the remainder of this school year but also, provides a framework for next year.

HR has also been busy hosting professional development sessions for classified supervisors with topics like building leadership skills and have been pleased with the progress.

Recruitment is a big focus right now as the HR Team has been analyzing the data from last year. This will help with the recruitment plan for this season. We are currently in the process of creating a new recruitment

video which we hope to air during winter break. The goal will then be to start conducting teacher interviews in January for the 24-25 school year.

Lastly, health & wellness has been front and center. In November we facilitated a step challenge. Our winner across both campuses had 945,000 steps and our organization walked a total of 3,500 miles. Also, we are collecting healthy recipes from our staff and combining them into a recipe book.

Dr. Kristen Watson asked how many students we anticipate recruiting from the residency program. Mr. Mendez responded with approximately 10. Dr. Vargas added that with the expansion of our TK-2 we will have at least 8 vacancies that we would like to prioritize with our current residents.

3.3 Business Services & Operations

Alan Blandon, Director of Business Services, introduced Cindy Frantz from EdTec who gave a presentation on the FY24 First Interim Financial Report, the 22-23 Audit Recap, and the State Budget process.

Ernie Unruh commented on the Governor's projection of the \$21 billion deficit, which the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) is saying it's more like \$60 billion, any of these monies that we have that are one time funds that are still there we really need to be looking at backfilling something we have already done so that money comes back into the system rather than looking at ways to expand right now. Just because of the potential, in my opinion, of a lessening of revenue. My other question is in the financial report depreciation was listed as \$154,000. How much of that \$154,000 do you really think we will spend this year? Cindy Frantz responded saying that the depreciation that is forecasted is capital expenses that have already been incurred and now we are recognizing that over a period of time. Ernie replied if it's possible our ability to keep a little money in the bank account if we didn't have to fund all the depreciation. That would help our ending cash balance, which ultimately would help us in a lot of ways. Cindy Frantz replied that it's a great question and your earlier point about next year's budget both schools are working through the process to make sure we are diligent the whole way through.

Board member, Ernie Unruh also asked about our reserves. Cindy Frantz replied that 56% is what the fund balance is, as a percent of total expenses, meaning we could get halfway through the school year.

Ernie also commented that since the State budget is showing as a deficit, he will be scrutinizing expenses as we need to stay vigilant and make sure we stay ahead of the budget crisis.

Alan Blandon, continued with an update on the facilities projects. At GA-A, the solar panels have been removed to make room for additional classrooms. We are upgrading the PA system for student safety, upgrading the cafeteria door (like the one we have at GA-S), and completing a campus wide clean up. On the GA-S side, we are using the NSLP funds to add a pizza oven, a new green house, and using ELOP funds to purchase additional storage units behind the cafe for ELOP. We are adding a key fob to the back of the cafe for additional security in Shafter and, a campus wide clean up.

Steve McClain, Chief Business Officer commented that we try to use our restricted funds first whenever we can. That's why we are using the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) funds to help with most of these improvements.

3.4 Family & Community Engagement (FACE)

Jocelyn Scruggs, FACE Coordinator, shared that her FACE Team partnered with Toys for Tots, the Kern County Network for Children, and the California Highway Patrol's, "Chips for Kids" to provide GPS' less fortunate children gifts this holiday season.

We are nearing the end of our 10-week Loving Solutions program. During this time, parents have been given the tools to manage their children's behavior through consistency and structure. After Winter Break, we will be graduating 23 parents from GA-S and 18 from GA-A.

We are also excited to announce that Tom Veale and the TRISTAR team have made an initial commitment of \$10,000 over the next five years for a TRISTAR Scholarship (\$1,000 per school per year). Together, we are working on developing a scholarship program and will bring an update to the next Board meeting.

4. Grow Public Schools Leadership Report

4.1 Grow Academy Shafter

Principal, Lacie Harris reported that GA-S is focused on our teachers' foundational skills as we work hard and diligently to build the capacity of our Instructional Leadership Team comprised of coordinators, coaches on site, and our administration team to dive into content standards and learning targets. This is so teachers are clear on what

they are to be teaching. This month our campus has been working on academic planning days where we provide substitutes for a half day so teachers can spend time together planning and they have successfully started planning out the second semester.

We have also been partnering with one of our instructional partners, a consultant agency, focused specifically on early literacy. Our site has developed an early literacy task force and has been working on our vision for literacy that all scholars will be reading by second grade. Last week we had two consultants on campus (as well as GA-A) that came and looked at some of our classrooms, our planning documents, did a needs analysis, met with teachers from K-2, and were able to give us an action plan.

4.2 Grow Academy Arvin

Dr. Elysa Vargas filled in for Principal, Jenny Bard who was unable to join the meeting. Dr. Vargas began her update sharing the progress made on the online learning platforms. These online learning platforms are a core feature of our academic programs and provide a way for students to have more practice with the content they are receiving from their teachers. Some highlights from the last couple of months is one of our second graders completed 173 lessons on LEXIA in one month. One of our first-grade homerooms completed 24% of the ST math curriculum, the goal was to only have 10% completed by November. Also, one of our sixth graders has averaged 72 puzzles a week on ST math. Our students have been engaged and motivated by these programs to continue practicing.

One other feature that has been put into place this quarter is Morning Launch via Zoom. Every morning everyone jumps onto a Zoom link and shares their academic achievement to promote school community.

As Ms. Harris mentioned, GA-A is also working with the early literacy consultants who are currently assessing the state of our literacy program and will then create an action plan that can be fulfilled throughout this year and the next couple of years. We have also partnered with CORE Math who is working with GA-S as well. This partnership has yielded some strong practices. Our second to eighth grade math teachers are looking at ways to increase student discourse in math classrooms which will help them in support of their perseverance through challenging math problems as well as their problem-solving skills.

5. Grow Public Schools Parent Report

5.1 SPGA, Matt Look

Mr. Look started his update sharing that the last time we met we were gearing up for the Halloween festival. GA-A did their first ever Trunk or Treat. It went well, and we had a great turn out. We had our family movie night last week which also went great. We have very good participation with our SPGA members right now.

5.2 POGA, Katelyn Zenger

Ms. Zenger began her update sharing that when she was here last time, GA-S was also gearing up for Trunk or Treat. The number of participating trunks was down this year due to a scheduling conflict with another community event. Despite the lower number of trunks, we exceeded our fundraising from 2022. We have a strategic shift in our fundraising effort. Last year we had vendors pay us a flat fee to participate. This year, we asked them to donate 20% of their proceeds.

Starting today is the Penguin Patch holiday shop. This is a weeklong event allowing scholars to shop for holiday gifts on campus. The items on sale range from .25 cents to \$12.00 and we are set to receive 20% of all the proceeds which will go directly to the yearbook club. This initiative was started by GA-S parent, Stephen Irish who is a first-year parent and has been a tremendous asset to POGA. If the shop does well, we will plan on doing it every year.

Looking ahead we have exciting events planned for the next calendar year. We are going to have our 2nd annual Father Daughter Dance in February and are finalizing plans for a mother son event and a family event. Some of the ideas have been Bingo and a garden gala event in the spring.

6. Grimm Family Education Foundation Report

Dylan Wilson, Executive Director of the BVESY shared that at the last Board meeting GFEF was getting ready for their Toast & Taste the Season event. The 200 attendees had a marvelous time with celebrity chef, Jean-Paul Bourgeois creating the menu. All the proceeds from the fundraiser will be coming back to the schools this year to fund scholarships for ESY summer camps. This will be an opportunity to bring outside students into our campuses to experience our ESY programs.

Our seven-year study with California State University, Bakersfield's (CSUB) doctoral program of educational leadership. We are on track, and we have all our data points from Grow. We are working on receiving data points from Bakersfield City as well as

Panama Buena Vista. Our team was approved to publish an official manuscript which will go towards a published book that will be titled, "Who's Going to Water my Tomatoes?" This book will be looking at how food literacy is engaging students in contrast to standardized education and really showcasing the research work that we have done, but also, describe the footprint that Grow and the ESY programs have made throughout our history.

This Wednesday we will be holding a new style of convening. Not only will we be engaging with GPS and our BVESY Team, but we will also be bringing in all our network partners including CSUB, Bakersfield College, Whitley Elementary School, McKinley Elementary and all their edible school yard teams, into one convening to go over training topics and to network as a community. This will be the first time we will have been able to have everyone come together.

Plant sales are coming up. The school sites haven't chosen a date yet but the BVESY's sale will be on Saturday, April 6th. Be sure to mark your calendars. That day will consist of having thousands of transplants for you to purchase to take home to your own garden and educational opportunities through workshops in our garden space led by our garden educators.

Ernie Unruh commented that he would like to see a grade level participation in a book or a publication contest. This could go hand in hand with the book, "Who's Going to Water my Tomatoes", and the research you have done with CSUB. Writing is such an important component for scholars, it might be too late for this project but maybe consider it for the future.

7. Action Items

7.1 Approval of FY 22-23 Grow Public Schools Audit Report

Dr. Kristen Watson made a motion to approve the FY 22-23 Grow Public Schools Audit Report.

Moved by: Kristen Watson

Seconded by: Matt Look

Aye Tom Mestmaker, Kristen Watson, Manuel Pantoja,
Matt Look, and Ernie Unruh

Carried 5-0

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 Agenda Items 8.1 - 8.16.

Moved by: Ernie Unruh

Seconded by: Manuel Pantoja

Aye Tom Mestmaker, Kristen Watson, Manuel Pantoja,
Matt Look, and Ernie Unruh

Carried 5-0

- 8.1 Approval of Minutes from October 23, 2023
- 8.2 Approval of FY 23-24 First Interim Financial Report for GA-Arvin
- 8.3 Approval of FY 23-24 First Interim Financial Report for GA-Shafter
- 8.4 Approval of Art, Music, and Instructional Material Block Grant Plans for GA-Arvin and GA-Shafter
- 8.5 Approval of Warrant and Credit Card Registers for October 2023.
- 8.6 Ratify Contract for Services - Solar Structure Removal
- 8.7 Approve Proposal for Architectural, Mechanical and Engineering Design Services - GA-Arvin and GA-Shafter
- 8.8 Approval of Amended 23-24 Employee Handbooks - Grow Public Schools CMO, Certificated & Classified
- 8.9 Approval of Contract for Two Additional Temporary Classrooms at GA-Shafter from Class Leasing
- 8.10 Approval of Contract Renewal of Four Existing Temporary Classrooms at GA-Shafter from Class Leasing
- 8.11 Approval of Proposals From JTS Modular, Inc. for Design Services for the Modular Buildings at GA-Arvin and GA-Shafter

- 8.12 Ratification & Approval of Kindergarten Early Admission Request for GA-Shafter
- 8.13 Approval of 2023-2024 Grow Public Schools Updated Salary Schedules, Effective January 1, 2024
- 8.14 Approval of School Accountability Report Card (SARC) 2022-2023 for GA-Arvin
- 8.15 Approval of School Accountability Report Card (SARC) 2022-2023 for GA-Shafter
- 8.16 Approval of 2024-2025 School Calendar

9. Closing Items

- 9.1 Adjourn Meeting
Dr. Kristen Watson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:08pm.

Moved by: Kristen Watson

Seconded by: Manuel Pantoja

Aye Tom Mestmaker, Kristen Watson, Manuel Pantoja,
Matt Look, and Ernie Unruh

Carried 5-0

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 eleven (11) pages, are the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of the Board of Directors held on December 11, 2023.



Secretary