

APPROVED



**GROW**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Grow Public Schools

# Minutes

## Grow Public Schools Board Meeting

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**Date and Time**

Monday February 27, 2023 at 4:00 PM

**Location****Physical Location:**

Grow Academy Shafter, 471 W. Los Angeles Ave., Shafter, CA 93263 - Room #21

**Available Location to Join Virtually:**

Grow Academy Arvin

901 Nectarine Court, Arvin, CA 93203 - Learning Lab

**Zoom Link:**

<https://zoom.us/j/91438897029>

or call (669) 900-9128

Meeting ID: 914 3889 7029

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### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTATIONS TO THE BOARD BY PARENTS AND CITIZENS**

Grow Public Schools welcomes your participation at the School's Board meetings. The purpose of a public meeting of the Board of Directors ("Board") is to conduct the affairs of the school in public. Your participation assures us of continuing community interest in our School. To assist you in the ease of speaking/participating in our meetings, the following guidelines are provided:

1. Agendas are available to all audience members.

Email [kheilman@growpublicschools.org](mailto:kheilman@growpublicschools.org) for an agenda.

2. Individuals wishing to provide public comment at this Board meeting may send their comments in writing to [kheilman@growpublicschools.org](mailto:kheilman@growpublicschools.org) or provide comments during the Oral Communications of the meeting, or prior to the discussion of the Agenda item during the meeting –comments received after that point in the meeting will not become part of the record. In your email, please include whether you are commenting on non-agenda items or a specific agenda item (reference the agenda item number). Comments

submitted by email will be read aloud during the Board meeting for up to three (3) minutes. If comments are in Spanish or another language, they will be translated to English and such comments will be limited to six (6) minutes. The Board of Directors may limit the total time for public comment to a reasonable time.

3. With regard to specific agenda items, you may specify that agenda item in your email and you will be given an opportunity to speak for up to five (5) minutes when the Board discusses that item. When addressing the Board, speakers are requested to state their name and adhere to the time limits set forth. Any public records relating to an agenda item for an open session of the Board which are distributed to all, or a majority of all, of the Board members shall be available for public inspection at 5080 California Ave. Suite 100, Bakersfield, California 93309.

***In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and upon request, Grow Public Schools may furnish reasonable auxiliary aids and services to qualified individuals with disabilities. Individuals who require appropriate alternative modification of the agenda in order participate in Board meetings are invited to contact the School's office.***

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#### **Directors Present**

Ernie Unruh, Matt Look, Tom Mestmaker

#### **Directors Absent**

Kristen Watson, Manuel Pantoja

#### **Guests Present**

Afaf Aldhulay, Alan Blandon (remote), Alfonso Valenzuela, Allison Fenton, Bridgett Rubio, Doc Ervin, Don Passion, Dylan Wilson, Elizabeth Ramos (remote), Elysa Vargas, Eric Mendez, Jennifer Marcus (remote), Jenny Bard, Jocelyn Scruggs, Kari Heilman, Lacie Harris, Maddison Contreras, Melody Castillo, Melody Meyers, Mike Romero, RJ Valentino, Raj Cheshire (remote), Ricardo Esquivel, Rick Phillips, Sylvia Gonzales, Tanya Kelley

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### **I. Opening Items**

#### **A. Call the Meeting to Order**

Tom Mestmaker called a meeting of the board of directors of Grow Public Schools to order on Monday Feb 27, 2023 at 4:02 PM.

#### **B. Record Attendance**

#### **C. Flag Salute**

Grow Academy Shafter students, Harman Singh and Lilian Rios lead the flag salute.

#### **D. Public Comment**

No public comments.

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

#### **A.**

### **CEO Report, Doc Ervin**

Doc Ervin shared his CEO updates announcing that our multi-year strategic plan, "Seeds for Success" is complete. He thanked Afaf Aldulay, Communications and Branding Manager, for all her hard work on the document and also thanked all our stakeholder groups, including GPS's Board, for all their valuable feedback. "Seeds for Success" highlights 5 overarching goals - Academic Excellence, Health & Wellness, Operational Excellence, Family & Community Engagement, and Talent Management. The next steps will be to put the document on our website, send it to all parents via parent square, and email it to all staff. Leadership will then be launching a "Seeds for Success" engagement tour to meet with key educational partners to share the vision for the next 3 to 5 years.

Doc shared that goal setting across the entire network will be a focus from now until the end of the year. A goal setting process will be created with a draft deadline of July 1st.

Doc recommended that a Special Board meeting be held on Monday, March 20th to approve the total compensation and benefit study. We would like to get all contracts to staff out before spring break.

### **B. COS Report, Dr. Ric Esquivel**

Dr. Ric Esquivel, Chief of Schools, presented his updates stating that Family & Community Engagement (FACE) is one of our 5 overarching goals in our "Seeds for Success" document. We are happy to share that we have hired a FACE Coordinator, Jocelyn Scruggs who started in November. Ric invited Jocelyn to share a few words about her onboarding and transition to Grow Public Schools.

Jocelyn thanked the Board for the opportunity and shared that she is happy to be a part of the team. She is looking forward to applying her knowledge and expertise gained from the Bakersfield City School District. She has spent the last 3 months learning, observing and understanding the needs and priorities at each school site and is excited to work with our scholars, parents and communities.

One of our *Seeds for Success* is Academic Excellence. We will continue to make this a priority as we head into student testing in May. We have also been working on our 23-24 school year master schedule and making sure that it aligns with academic excellence.

### **C. COO Report, Mike Romero**

Mike Romero, COO, presented his updates starting with acknowledging Jocelyn Scruggs, our new Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Coordinator saying that she has been a great resource and has jumped right in working with Elysa Vargas, Interim Chief Academic Officer and both principals to host a Spring Parent Open House. This informational meeting will cover items such as LCAP, the importance of attendance, and student uniform updates. This meeting will be held the last week of March. Dates to be confirmed within the next couple of weeks.

Mike continued his update sharing that we have started our charter school oversight preparations. GA Arvin's oversight visit is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19th and GA Shafter's is scheduled for Tuesday, April 25th. We have connected with both oversight entities to ensure we are on schedule and to confirm any changes in oversight preparations or requested information. We are on track for both and have established an oversight team on each campus. We

have set an internal hard deadline of Friday, March 31st to have all requested items collected and completed.

Lastly, we have a GA Shafter facilities update. The first portable classroom has been installed. We have had delays in getting the other classrooms due to all the heavy rain. Colombo Construction is working on a schedule to get them completed. Once they all have been installed, we will need electrical and internet before we can officially use them. We hope to have this project completed in April. We will keep the Board apprised of any updates.

#### **D. Interim CAO Report, Elysa Vargas**

Elysa Vargas, Interim Chief of Academic Officer, presented her updates. She shared that the Teacher Curriculum Team (TCT) will be launched on March 3rd. Teachers who have been with Grow for a while were chosen for this team. The purpose of this team will be to continue the cohesive units of study, pre-plan, and review our instructional materials to make sure they remain rigorous and high quality.

Elysa continued with an update on the Grow Alder Residency program stating that we currently have 10 residents still meeting milestones and all on track to complete their residency by years end. We recently hosted a group hiring event with these residents and were very impressed and are excited to offer employment to all 10. The Alder program was originally under Jenny Bard, who is now GA Arvin's Principal, and is now under Pedro Rodriguez who is doing a fantastic job. It's rewarding to see quality candidates have an entry point and talent pipeline starting as a small group instructor, moving to residency program, to a full-time teacher.

Lastly, Elysa updated the Board about our ongoing professional learning. She shared that GPS hired two high-quality math consultants- one through Kern County Superintendent of Schools and with Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education (CORE). With the consultants mentoring, our teachers have been carefully tracking their scholars weekly progress.

Alfonzo Valenzuela, Scholar Data Coordinator, created a dashboard in the beginning of the semester to make tracking the progress of each scholar easier. This allows principals to have conversations with teachers to concentrate and focus on certain areas for scholar improvement.

Board member, Ernie Unruh asked if there was a Teacher Curriculum Team sample of a pacing guide available for viewing to ensure continuity. Elysa responded, yes and the goal is to bring the completed samples to the Board at the end of the school year.

### **III. Division Reports**

#### **A. Operations, Rick Phillips**

Rick Phillips, Director of Operations, presented his updates. As Mike mentioned previously, one temporary classroom has been installed and the rest will be installed once the weather improves. All furniture has been delivered and placed in a storage unit. After each of the classrooms are installed, Signa-Terra, GPS's IT company, will complete the tech and Columbo Construction will complete the electricity.

The student information system, Aeries, is on track and implementation will continue through spring. Finally, we are in the process of moving all connected printers and shared servers to the CMO for more reliability.

#### **B. Human Resources, Eric Mendez**

Eric Mendez, Director of Human Resources, presented his updates. We have completed the Total Compensation Study and will have a closer look in the upcoming closed session. We have received a lot of valuable feedback from key stakeholders and are working on a communication plan on how to get this information out to staff. We have a meeting scheduled next week with another charter leader to discuss challenges and solutions.

We are deep into "recruitment season" and will be for the next few weeks. There are multiple college career fairs this week including one in Fresno and Cal State University Bakersfield.

There are teacher group interviews scheduled in the near future but as Elysa mentioned, the Alder residency participants set a high bar. We are confident we want them in our organization.

Eric finished his update sharing that an accounting/payroll clerk was hired for the CMO Office, Vanessa Francisco. We are still looking for a Director of Learning and Innovation and an Office Clerk. The HR Team is working closely with Jocelyn to determine the final candidates of the FACE Liaisons.

#### **C. Business Services/Fiscal Report, Alan Blandon**

Melody Castillo, Accounting Manager, gave an update on behalf of Alan Blandon, Director of Business. We have entered into our busiest season and are working on our first interims with EdTec. We are developing a plan with the academics team for the Art Block Grant. There are a lot subjects to choose including music and science. The grant is between 450k and 475k.

23-24 budget planning has started. Once it has been completed, the recommendations will be brought to the Board for approval in June.

We are excited to have the new accounting clerk taking over several duties and she will be in attendance at the next board meeting.

Mike Romero, COO, gave an update on the benefits study. TriStar/Montage will deliver the final numbers to evaluate how we are performing and continue with quarterly check-ins. Overall, there is a surplus for the third year in a row. We are planning to reinvest the surplus back into the plan to help lower the copays.

Board member, Ernie Unruh, shared that the Assistant Superintendent of Finance at KCSOS, Priscila Quinn, is retiring and Jonathan Medina is taking her place. Melody responded that Ms. Quinn will be missed.

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

#### **A. Grow Academy Arvin, Jenny Bard**

Jenny Bard, Principal of GA-Arvin, presented her updates. There is a complete list of students with names and current test scores. The goal is that each student will increase their scores by 10% or more by the end of the school year. Some

students will require multiple years just to be on grade level. The PLC data breaks down the focus areas and accelerators.

On the culture side, despite the weather, the father-daughter dance was well attended. On Literacy Night, 100's of books were distributed to families by American Readers. 2nd - 5th grade Principal's List students have been invited to Flight & Fun, a trampoline event park.

As Eric mentioned earlier, the FACE liaison interviews are completed and we are excited to have these positions on our campuses in the near future.

#### **B. Grow Academy Shafter, Lacie Harris**

Lacie Harris, Principal of GA-Shafter, presented her updates announcing that the 8th Grade Washington DC trip will be March 27-30th for both campuses. Each school's itinerary varies slightly but they will be touring the Capital building together. This tour was scheduled through Kevin McCarthy's staff.

We continue to focus on early literacy and diagnostical skills. For example, first grade is working on sounds and ensuring students can sound out words.

Lastly, Lacie mentioned that one of the duties of the FACE Liaison will be to keep track of the alumni and make sure they are still able to be successful.

### **V. Grow Public Schools Parent Report**

#### **A. SPGA, Matt Look**

Overall the father-daughter dance was a huge success and over 300 people attended.

#### **B. POGA, Bridgett Rubio**

Similar to Arvin, the father-daughter dance was a success. We will be looking for a larger location next year because we had to put a limit on tickets and we want everyone to get to attend. A mother-son event is being planned - more details to come.

One idea from POGA is to have a nice garden dinner for adults in late spring. This would be an elevated dinner, more exclusive event, and a great way to feature the ESY garden.

### **VI. Grimm Family Education Foundation Report**

#### **A. Dylan Wilson, Executive Director of ESY**

Dylan Wilson reported that the gardens have been wet and muddy due to all the rain we have recently gotten but full blown planting mode has begun.

Dylan gave a shout out the Shafter garden team. They had a leadership change recently and have stayed on top of their work and are doing a great job.

There are several plant sales coming up: Arvin's will be on March 15th, Shafter's is taking place over a 4-day period (March 27 - March 31), and the Buena Vista School Yard Plant Sale is on Saturday, April 1st.

Dylan finished his update sharing that the brand new greenhouse at the Buena Vista Edible School Yard is complete and there will be a ribbon cutting on Thursday, March 2nd. This greenhouse will enable the ESY to provide more education and seasonal transplants.

## VII. Action Items

### A. Approval of 22-23 Parent/Student Handbook - GA Shafter

Matt Look made a motion to approve the 22-23 Parent/Student Handbook for GA Shafter.

Ernie Unruh seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

Ernie Unruh     Aye  
Manuel Pantoja   Absent  
Tom Mestmaker   Aye  
Kristen Watson   Absent  
Matt Look        Aye

### B. Approval of 22-23 Parent/Student Handbook - GA Arvin

Ernie Unruh made a motion to approve the 22-23 Parent/Student Handbook for GA Arvin.

Matt Look seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

Matt Look        Aye  
Tom Mestmaker   Aye  
Ernie Unruh     Aye  
Manuel Pantoja   Absent  
Kristen Watson   Absent

### C. Approval of 22-23 Comprehensive School Safety Plan - GA Shafter

Matt Look made a motion to approve the 22-23 Comprehensive School Safety Plan for GA Shafter.

Ernie Unruh seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

Ernie Unruh     Aye  
Matt Look        Aye  
Tom Mestmaker   Aye  
Kristen Watson   Absent  
Manuel Pantoja   Absent

### D. Approval of 22-23 Comprehensive School Safety Plan - GA Arvin

Matt Look made a motion to approve the 22-23 Comprehensive School Safety Plan for GA Arvin.

Ernie Unruh seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

Manuel Pantoja   Absent  
Matt Look        Aye

**Roll Call**

Kristen Watson Absent  
Ernie Unruh Aye  
Tom Mestmaker Aye

**VIII. Consent Agenda**

**A. Approve Minutes from January 30, 2023 Board Meeting**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the minutes from January 30, 2023 Grow Public Schools Board Meeting on 01-30-23.

Ernie Unruh seconded the motion.

Ernie Unruh voted to approve the minutes but wanted it noted that he was not in attendance for the January 30th Board Meeting.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

Tom Mestmaker Aye  
Kristen Watson Absent  
Manuel Pantoja Absent  
Ernie Unruh Aye  
Matt Look Aye

**B. Approve Minutes from January 30, 2023 Special Board Meeting**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Meeting on 01-30-23.

Ernie Unruh seconded the motion.

Ernie Unruh voted to approve the minutes but wanted it noted that he was not in attendance for the January 30th Special Board Meeting.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

Ernie Unruh Aye  
Manuel Pantoja Absent  
Matt Look Aye  
Tom Mestmaker Aye  
Kristen Watson Absent

**C. Purchase Orders, Warrants, and Credit Card Registers for January 2023**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the Purchase Orders, Warrants, and Credit Card Registers for January 2023.

Ernie Unruh seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

Manuel Pantoja Absent  
Matt Look Aye  
Kristen Watson Absent  
Tom Mestmaker Aye  
Ernie Unruh Aye

**IX. Closed Session**

**A. The Board Meeting went into closed session at 4:56pm to discuss the following items:**

**B.**



## **Performance Evaluation**

Title: CEO

### **C. Conference with Labor Negotiators**

Agency Designated Representative: Board Chair

Unrepresented Employee: CEO

### **D. Conference with Labor Negotiators**

Agency Designated Representative: CEO

Unrepresented Employees: **Classified** (Accounting Clerk, ASES Aide, ASES/ELOP Site Lead, Assistant ELOP Site Lead, Assistant Librarian, Attendance Clerk, Behavior Specialist, Café Aide, Campus Supervisor, Coordinator of Family & Community Engagement, Custodian, ELOP Aide, ESY Instructor, Executive Chef, Expanded Learning Opportunity Program Site Lead, Facilities Manager, Health Aide, Kindergarten Aide, Lead Café Aide, Lead ESY Educator, Licensed Vocational Nurse, Office Clerk, Office Manager, Small Group Instructor, Sous Chef, Special Education Aide, Special Education Clerk, Special Education Coordinator, Supervision Aide, Talent Acquisition Specialist, Teacher Resident, Universal Pre-Kindergarten Aide)

Unrepresented Employees: **Certificated** ( Assistant Principal (K-4), Behavior Specialist Counselor, Dean of Culture, Instructional Coach, Intervention Coordinator, Literacy Specialist, Principal, School Psychologist, Special Education Coordinator, Special Education Teacher, Speech Pathologist, Teacher)

## **X. Open Session - Information/Items**

### **A. The closed session ended at 5:15pm.**

Tom Mestmaker, Board President reported that there was no action taken during the closed session.

## **XI. Closing Items**

### **A. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Tom Mestmaker