



Minutes

Grow Public Schools Board Meeting

DATE and TIME:

Monday, October 23, 2023, at 4:00pm

LOCATIONS:

Physical Location:

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

Location to Attend Virtually:

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

1. Opening Items

1.1 Call the Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:04pm by Board Chair, Tom Mestmaker.

1.2 Record Attendance

Dr. Ricardo Esquivel, Doc Ervin, Steve McClain, Dr. Elysa Vargas, Jenny Bard, Shyanne Ledford, Rick Phillips, Jocelyn Scruggs, Tom Mestmaker, Manuel Pantoja, Matt Look, Kari Heilman, Maddison Contreras, Katelyn Zenger, Alan Blandon, Eric Mendez, Alfonso Valenzuela, Dylan Wilson, Tanya Kelley, Jennifer Marcus (remote), RJ Valentino, Barbara Grimm Marshall, Jackie Garcia (remote), Marcela Ramirez

1.3 Flag Salute

The flag salute was led by Board Chair, Tom Mestmaker.

1.4 Public Comment

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

2. Announcements

Board Chair, Tom Mestmaker, shared that Matt Look has agreed to another one-year term serving as the parent representative from Star Parents of Grow Academy (SPGA) on the Grow Public Schools Board of Directors. Tom thanked Matt for all his years of dedication and service.

3. Action Items

3.1 Approval for County-wide Petition

Dr. Esquivel, Chief of Schools, shared that staff continues to work towards the Countywide Petition. We have engaged with the Board, Key Stakeholders, parents, faculty, and staff to clearly communicate what the Countywide Petition is and why we are pursuing it. GA Shafter's charter is up for renewal with the local authorizing group, Richland Union School District. GA Arvin's charter is under Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS). As we think about the renewal process which occurs every five years, we are recommending that our two schools merge with countywide benefit. This will streamline our process financially and operationally and align our academic supports across our schools. It will also deepen our relationship with our KCSOS partners and build sustainable school system practices.

Dr. Esquivel recognized Tanya Kelley, GPS's Administrator of Special Projects, as the lead on this petition and thanked her for her leadership and hard work.

Petition key changes include matching Board policies and other Board approved documents such as handbooks, updating changes in law or requirements by KCSOS, updating guidance from the California Charter School Association (CCSA), Young, Minney & Corr, LLP and EdTec, and blending Shafter and Arvin charter components.

As far as timeline, we have been working through various versions and collecting feedback from a variety of stakeholder groups. Right before fall break we presented a draft to our faculty and staff. This week, we are sharing the process with our Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

It is the staff's recommendation that the Board vote to approve the attached resolution which authorizes submission of a countywide benefit charter petition by November 1, 2023, to the Kern County Board of Education as provided for in Education Code Section 47605.6. It also authorizes Mr. Doc Ervin, CEO, to sign the charter petition and otherwise act on behalf of Grow Public Schools with respect to the charter petition process.

Matt Look made a motion to approve the Countywide Petition.

Moved by: Matt Look

Seconded by: Manuel Pantoja

Aye Tom Mestmaker, Manuel Pantoja, and Matt Look

Carried 3-0

4. CMO Executive Leadership Reports

Doc Ervin, CEO

Mr. Ervin shared that a focus for our schools and our CMO office has been reestablishing elements of the core model. We know that not everyone can visit our school sites, so we made a video montage to capture what they look like daily basis.

Our home office relocation is complete. We started this conversation back in May and we are excited to be in our new space. We will be having an open house in January 2024. We still have a few punch list items and are waiting on some furniture pieces but if you would like to stop by, please feel free.

Dr. Ric Esquivel, Chief of Schools

Dr. Esquivel started his presentation noting that today marks the first day of Quarter 2. Our schools have been on fall break for the last two weeks. We are excited to open our gates and have everyone back. Leadership, including Home Office, Site, and Instructional, are continuing to focus on student growth and achievement. Quarter 2 will be centering around focus and what it means for leaders to remove barriers and identify supports and opportunities.

Professional Development remains front and center with the yearlong instructional leadership residency, RELAY. Dr. Elysa Vargas and I attended the Intersession II section this week and have an upcoming one next week. The focus has been on accelerating instructional achievement. In addition to RELAY, we have been continuing to bring our school leaders together with collaboration and dialogue through our monthly leadership PLC's and with the regular Instruction Leadership Teams (ILT). This has helped us leverage each other's strengths across the organization.

Steve McClain, Chief Business Officer

Mr. McClain started his presentation by mentioning that we are excited to be in our new building. The home office now has ample space for professional development and future growth. We would like to thank the staff and a couple of our contractors who helped us get into the building, like our tech team, Signa-Terra and Jeremy Whitezell from Whitezell Construction.

There are a couple of facility updates that are on the consent agenda we would like to discuss. The first one is the Arvin Property License Agreement with the Kern Community College District (KCCD) for two acres on the west side of the Arvin campus. This additional space will enable us to have field space and a physical education building for our scholars. There are two items on the consent agenda that we will be pulling due to the need for further discussion and modifications: Item number 9.9 - Contract for Services - Solar Structure Removal and Installation of PV Modules for Grow Academy Arvin; and item 9.11 - Proposal for Architectural and Engineering Services - Grow Academy Arvin and Grow Academy Shafter. We will bring these two items back to the Board at the next meeting and will provide updates in the weekly Friday Board report.

Dr. Elysa Vargas, Chief of Academics

Dr. Vargas introduced Shyanne Ledford, Assistant Principal at Grow Academy Shafter. Today she is filling in for Lacie Harris, Principal. This is her first year with Grow and has been an asset to our team.

We had a phenomenal Fall Instructional Summit. One of our Seeds for Success initiatives was around differentiated professional learning for all our instructional staff. We are proud of the model that we have implemented where teachers get to experience a conference style professional development day. It was led by our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) who presented topics based on their observations and feedback on what they have seen happening on campuses and where our teachers might need additional support or inspiration. Overall, we had 76% of participants from Grow Academy Arvin and 71% from Shafter. It was a very successful event. We gave a survey at the end of the day and participants felt that the event was focused on network priorities, there was ample time for collaboration, and that their experiences for that day were relevant to their practice. The survey also asked how we can make the next event stronger, and the results were more time to collaborate and more differentiated support for the different types of roles we have on campus.

As a continuation of what Dr. Esquivel was saying on focusing on student achievement, we are highlighting individualized teacher support plans. After looking at the data from the first semester, we are customizing plans depending on the teacher and the grade levels' need. Fonzi Valenzuela, our Academic Data Coordinator, has developed an interactive dashboard so that we can see week after week how students are progressing.

5. CMO Division Reports

5.1 Eric Mendez, Director of Human Resources

Mr. Mendez shared that the HR Team is currently revisiting what was done last Spring to help us create a new recruitment plan for the next school year. We aim to have earlier engagement with candidates and highlight what makes Grow great.

Organizational goal setting is also a top priority for the HR Team as we have been meeting with Principals, departments, and looking at our Seeds for Success and determining what success looks like for GPS in 2023 - 2024.

5.2 Alan Blandon, Director of Business Services

Mr. Blandon began his report with a couple of updates on facilities. In Arvin, we have replaced the chain link fence around the kindergarten area. Also, we are in the process of building doors in the cafe to reduce noise interruptions. In Shafter, fencing has been replaced around the school and we have also replaced the shelving in the Learning Lab.

We continue to meet with our classified staff about our 403(b) plan and participation has increased.

Alan presented the September financial update with the FY23 unaudited actuals. Doc Ervin, CEO, mentioned that the Shafter balance is less due to the CMO reducing their management fee so more money can be put back into the school.

5.3 Rick Phillips, Director of Operations

Mr. Phillips started his update sharing that while the students have been out of school for fall break, the IT team has been fine tuning the school software to make sure all the programs are working. Students will start quarter 2 being able to utilize all their resources.

KiDS is a computer software created by Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) that allows us to look at student demographics, attendance and grades compared with the County. We will be discussing roles and responsibilities, how to add our accounts, and how to train teachers.

The new Learning Lab shelving has been added in Shafter and Arvin's shelving will be completed by our next Board meeting in December. Also, in Arvin we are installing a new PA system.

5.4 Jocelyn Scruggs, Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Coordinator

Mrs. Scruggs introduced Katelyn Zenger our new Parents of Grow Academy (POGA) President who will be giving the Grow Academy Shafter parent report at our Board meetings for this school year. Katelyn has been with Grow for two years and has two children at Grow Academy Shafter. She is a very engaged and involved parent and advocate for our families. We are excited to have her represent POGA this year.

The FACE team is looking forward to the launch of Loving Solutions this week. Using a behavioral model, Loving Solutions is based on cooperative learning norms with group learning activities in a workbook format to maximize learning and interest. The curriculum will focus on encouraging positive choices, redirecting negative choices, structuring for success, improving school performance & attendance, sleep, diet & behavior, designing effective time-outs, and so much more. Loving Solutions will be offered every Wednesday for the next 10 weeks in English and Spanish. Dinner for all families will be provided as well as childcare, and incentives to encourage participation throughout the 10-week period. We currently have 29 parents registered for Shafter, and 22 parents registered for Arvin.

We have also partnered up with Dignity Health who will be providing a series of sessions for our families beginning next month at Arvin and January in Shafter. In Arvin, we will be offering a series of Asthma classes that will help parents improve their understanding of asthma, its triggers, and how best to prevent attacks. We will also be offering a series on diabetes to help parents understand the risk factors, the role of nutrition, and exercise prevention. In Shafter, Dignity Health will be offering a 6-week session called Walking for Fitness, where participants will utilize the American Heart Association program, Walking 101, to start a physical activity plan of their own. Each session consists of education and group walks.

6. Grow Public Schools Leadership Report

6.1 Jenny Bard, Principal, Grow Academy Arvin

Ms. Bard shared that Grow Academy Arvin has been working diligently on increasing enrollment, which is currently just below 800. We have also been working with families to ensure that students come to school every day - no more than five absences for the year are what will keep a student on track at grade level. We have held to our recruitment strategy of only bringing students who are new to Grow in grades TK-4. Also, not going over our class size initiatives - no more than 90 per grade level.

An area that has been going well is Project Based Learning (PBL). Both school sites and have been collaborating and it's been fun to watch the students in action. We have a consultant from PBL Works coming tomorrow to plan with teachers for their next project.

Highlights from our first quarter include the 7th & 8th grade scholars learning about oral history and developing reports on an important

person in their life. Our 4th graders worked on persuasive essays to convince movie directors to come to Kern County to film their movie projects. Staff morale and attendance are also very strong. We had a staff retention rate of over 90% last year.

In terms of Academic Excellence, we continue to focus on small group instruction. Our instructional coaches led a session at the Fall Summit on small group instruction and how to differentiate teaching based on knowing every student by name, strength and need. We are also continuing to build a culture around academic achievement. One of our goals is that by December, every student will be able to tell you what level they are on and what level they need to work on next in reading and language arts.

6.2 Shyanne Ledford, Assistant Principal, Grow Academy Shafter

Mrs. Ledford shared that it was an honor to serve in Mrs. Harris' place today. Earlier the Board discussed Grow Academy Shafter's enrollment number which is currently at 806. We hosted our Academic Academy during the first week of fall break. From the 140 scholar participants, we noticed two measurable results: an increase in phonics and decoding; and second, students were able to provide rationale for their answers more fluently than they had before attending. Also, the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) camp had a variety of high interest specialized activities such as wilderness survival skills, e-sports, and karate.

Quarter 2's focus will be on rigor through ensuring that there are high quality appropriate assessments. Our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) is reevaluating how we do lesson planning, how we observe, and making sure we collaborate on our messaging. We also just finished Quarter 1 Project Based Learning (PBL) and our teams are doing fantastic. PBL has brought a huge impact to our scholars and campus.

Ms. Ledford introduced Grow Academy Shafter's Dean of Culture, Ms. Marcela Ramirez.

7. Grow Public Schools Parent Report

7.1 POGA, Katelyn Zenger

Mrs. Zenger thanked Jocelyn for her introduction. POGA elected new officers for this year. We filled nine positions with a few new faces and some returning ones. This Thursday we have our Trunk-or-Treat. Our vendors committed to giving 20% of their commission to POGA. We are also selling spots to parents for \$10 to host trunks. All parents were given a strong reminder of our Health & Wellness policy.

We will also be hosting a little shop called Penguin Patch for the holidays. This will be our holiday fundraiser which will be a little shop where scholars can purchase items for their family and friends. POGA gets commission off these sales as well.

POGA is also exploring other ideas like operating an online T-shirt store and a POGA newsletter.

7.2 SPGA, Matt Look

Mr. Look thanked everyone for having him on the Board of Directors for another year. He enjoys being active in the school and is grateful for the opportunity.

Grow Academy Arvin hosted a couple of family game nights. We were able to host dinner and both were highly attended. Also, everyone is looking forward to our first Trunk-or -Treat which is coming up next week.

Tom Mestmaker, Board Chair, asked how many attended the family game nights. Matt Look responded that they capped the number at 150 and they both sold out in a couple of days.

Dr. Vargas also added that Fonsi Valenzuela, created a dashboard to keep track of parent volunteer hours. The dashboard can then tell us which parents are excelling and which ones are disengaged.

8. Grimm Family Education Foundation Report

RJ Valentino, Grimm Family Education Foundation President

Mr. Valentino presented the Foundation's report on behalf of Dylan Wilson, ESY Executive Director. He congratulated everyone on the work that we have been doing and the data that we have been collecting.

The Grimm Family Education Foundation continues to partner with the schools. We hosted our Advisory Council meeting at Grow Academy Shafter last week. Principal Harris was the perfect host and gave a tour of the campus. Pricila Hernandez, Lead Kitchen Educator, made lunch for our guests. Doc Ervin and Dr. Ric Esquivel gave an update on the schools and the Countywide petition.

The Foundation will be working with the schools to apply for grants through the California Department of Food & Agriculture. They have multiple, well-funded grants that the schools qualify for that are geared towards edible school yards.

This week on Friday, October 27th we have our Toast & Taste event. We have invited a chef from outside of Bakersfield who will be bringing new, interesting concepts to the food, with wine selection which is being paired with the produce grown through the Edible School Yard program. All the proceeds from this event will go toward funding summer camps on the Arvin and Shafter campuses for community children so they can experience what we do every day.

We will also be hosting a Founder's Dinner this year in the spring with the proceeds funding scholarships for Grow Academy alumni who will be entering college.

9. 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.

Mannuel Pantoja made a motion to approve Consent Agenda items 9.1 – 9.8 and 9.10 – excluding item number 9.9 - Contract for Services - Solar Structure Removal and Installation of PV Modules for Grow Academy Arvin and item 9.11 - Proposal for Architectural and Engineering Services - Grow Academy Arvin and Grow Academy Shafter.

Moved by: Mannuel Pantoja

Seconded by: Matt Look

Aye Tom Mestmaker, Manuel Pantoja, and Matt Look

Carried 3-0

9.1 Approval of Minutes from August 21, 2023

9.2 Approval of Warrant and Credit Card Registers for August & September 2023

9.3 Approval of 2022-23 Unaudited Actuals for Grow Academy Arvin

9.4 Approval of 2022-23 Unaudited Actuals for Grow Academy Shafter

- 9.5 Amended Grow Public Schools Fiscal & Operational Policies and Procedures Handbook
- 9.6 Approval of Amended Independent Study Policy & Master Agreement
- 9.7 Approval of CMO Office Sub Lease Agreement
- 9.8 Approval of Property License Agreement for Grow Academy Arvin
- 9.10 Approval of Master Services Agreement for Design and Construction Consulting Services

10. Closing Items

10.1 Adjourn Meeting

Matt Look made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:08pm.

Moved by: Matt Look

Seconded by: Mannuel Pantoja

Aye Tom Mestmaker, Manuel Pantoja, and Matt Look

Carried 3-0

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 ten (10) pages, are the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of the Board of Directors held on October 23, 2023.



Secretary