

APPROVED



**GROW**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Grow Public Schools

# Minutes

## Grow Public Schools Board Meeting

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**Date and Time**

Monday March 27, 2023 at 4:00 PM

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

Grow Academy Arvin - Room 14  
901 Nectarine Ct.  
Arvin, CA 93203

**Location Available to Join Virtually:**

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

**Zoom Link:**

<https://zoom.us/j/98793297508>

Meeting ID: 987 9329 7508

or call (669) 444-9171

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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**

Kristen Watson, Manuel Pantoja, Matt Look, Tom Mestmaker

#### **Directors Absent**

Ernie Unruh

#### **Guests Present**

Afaf Aldhulay, Alan Blandon, Alfonso Valenzuela, Allison Fenton, Barbara Grimm Marshall, Doc Ervin, Don Passion, Dorothy Lee (remote), Elia Sagasta (remote), Elizabeth Ramos (remote), Elysa Vargas, Emma Pereida-Martinez (remote), Eric Mendez, Israel Ruiz, Jair Ventura, James Ramsey, Jennifer Marcus (remote), Jenny Bard, Jocelyn Scruggs, Kari Heilman, Maddison Contreras, Michelle Lumis (remote), Mike Romero (remote), Pedro Rodriguez, RJ Valentino, Raj Cheshire (remote), Ricardo Esquivel, Rick Phillips, Steve McClain (remote)

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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 Mar 27, 2023 at 4:02 PM.

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

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

Jesus Vargas-Jimenez, student at Grow Academy Arvin, lead the flag salute.

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

No public comments.

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

### **A. Board Executive Leadership Communication Report**

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

The regular June Board Meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday, June 26th but we would like to change the date due to our leadership team participating in a professional development program on that date. Also, we need to add an LCAP public hearing date.

Monday, June 19th is a holiday, so the recommendation is to have the board meeting Tuesday, June 20th and the LCAP public hearing on June 12th. Each of the board members in attendance checked their calendars and determined the new dates would be acceptable.

Additionally, Doc shared that the Grimm Family Education Foundation has approved two additional years for Tom Mestmaker, Grow Public Schools Board President and Manny Pantoja, Board Secretary.

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

While we are continuing with our spring milestone planning, there are specific focus areas. One of these areas includes ensuring the testing conditions and environment are optimal for scholars. This will guarantee everyone is ready by the first and second week of May.

We are happy to share that benchmarks have been completed for the school year. The results will be folded into our network-wide professional development for all instructional leads next Tuesday. This will give teachers the opportunity to take a closer look at where students are and help identify a four-week plan before testing in May.

As part of the 45/90 day entry plan, we have been focused on listening and understanding the “back to basics” model. We have also been revisiting some of the key features which make Grow special and aligning across schools. The master schedule that Elysa Vargas, Interim Chief Academic Officer, will speak to, reflects all of these elements.

Two important meetings are scheduled to take place this week. All families are invited to a spring open house taking place at GA-Arvin on Tuesday, March 28th then GA-Shafter’s will take place on Thursday, March 30th. Some of the topics will include testing, uniform transition, LCAP goals and family feedback.

Finally, we have our oversight visits scheduled with both of our authorizers taking place immediately after returning from Spring Break (Arvin 4/19 and Shafter 4/25). The teams have been working hard on gathering all key pieces of evidence aligned to the rubric.

#### **Elysa Vargas, COA**

To establish the master schedule, we conducted investigative work with our educational partners and visited several high-performing charter schools to get inspiration and think about how we can evolve the program. We visited Gilroy Prep (a navigator school), and two Rocketship schools in San Jose. We worked with leadership teams and got feedback from multiple groups on both campuses.

Some of the key features of the master schedule for the upcoming school year include: having a K-2 self-contained model so that students can focus on literacy and school readiness skills; we are returning to a TK through 6th grade elementary model which was originally written into our charter making a true junior high; looking into teacher teams because currently teachers are looking at an entire grade level of students (up to 180 students) so we are being more thoughtful on how we pair teachers so they can have a more intensive focus on a smaller groups of students.

Project based learning (PBL) is returning which is also a big part of our charter – infuses critical thinking and communication skills for our students.

We are maintaining the big lab which was one of the biggest takeaways from our school visits. Their labs have evolved over time and we received a lot of inspiration regarding how to set up that space.

Tom Mestmaker asked if the lab is still one of the big things they do at Rocketship and Elysa answered yes. He added that the lab was a crucial part of their curriculum when he was there. Elysa went on and said they witnessed a lot of developmental play for littles about how to share and solve conflict; there was intentional skill building going on beyond play time.

Additionally, the spring instructional summit is coming up next week. Most of the sessions are being facilitated by our experts within the network. We are ending the day with mini-intramurals to build community.

Finally, there is an item to approve the master calendar for the next school year. This includes the proposed start and end dates, the intersession opportunity dates, and as a reminder, part of the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP), we are required to offer 30 non-instructional days throughout the year, so we have planned those out. We are continuing to operate at 180 days and are exceeding all the required instructional minutes. There are no major changes from what we did for the current school year and both schools are the same.

Doc added that one of the most important key features is bringing alignment across the board. Ongoing conversations between Leadership Advisory Council (LAC), Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), and principals are allowing uniformity across schools. Ric added that currently we bridge and enhance collaboration. Teachers from both campuses are aligned to really deepen their professional development and cross-network collaboration.

Doc asked Elysa to describe what a Small Group Instructor (SGI) is compared to a teacher. Elysa responded that each classroom is full inclusion, and we have seen a lot of success with having one general education teacher and one special education teacher. This year, the SGI's are residents as the second person in the room and that has been great but research suggests middle school is the time when students need more support. We are excited to potentially be piloting this co-teaching method and having two credentialed teachers in the room at the middle school level.

### **III. Division Reports**

#### **A. Director Leadership Communication Report**

**Rick Phillips, Director of Operations**

Due to the increase in rain, there have been concerns with flooding, drainage, and garden growing challenges. The spring facilities beautification project has been initiated to overcome these obstacles. More updates to come.

We have recently completed setup for a student home hospital virtual classroom. This will allow students, who cannot attend classes in person, an opportunity to interact with their peers and still feel involved in classroom activities.

The Shafter temporary classroom project is nearing completion. The wiring and electrical have been finished. Columbo construction is preparing to install cement around the structure. We are still waiting for the inspections to go through but we should have the classrooms up and running by the time the students return from Spring Break.

At the Spring Open House events this week, we are planning to share the new uniform colors/ styles/vendor as well as the new voucher program for the 23-24 school year. We will also be in attendance to answer any questions. Jenny Bard, GA Arvin's Principal, added that there will be students modeling the new uniforms at the open houses. Elementary schools will have green polos and khaki bottoms. There are also jumpers and skirts available. Middle school students are shifting from purple shirts to black shirts. Doc added that the uniforms are a part of the alignment across the network so all of the students will be dressed the same regardless of which school they attend.

#### **Eric Mendez, Director of Human Resources**

The HR Department made a commitment this school year to meet with all staff to get renewals out before Spring Break. To complete this, Eric shared that he and his team spent all last week at GA Shafter and will be at GA Arvin this week to have 1:1 meetings with all certified staff. This is also has been a great opportunity to explain what the new compensation structure will look like with staff.

Tom Mestmaker asked if staff have been excited about the new compensation scale and Eric answered that staff have been very receptive and happy.

Recruitment events continue to take place both on site and off site. HR staff have even attended recruitment events at various universities throughout California. Several great candidates have come through and we have made a number of offers. Overall it has been a great recruitment season and we look forward to being fully staffed for next year.

Lastly, a new front office clerk started today at the home office, Yolanda Sanchez. This means the current office clerk, Sarah Bailey, has been able to transition to HR full time, expanding the HR team.

Tom Mestmaker commented that he recently saw Grow Public Schools' commercial aired on TV. Eric replied yes, that the commercial is meant to expand recruitment efforts.

#### **Alan Blandon, Director of Business Services & Compliance**

The 23-24 fiscal budget is currently being developed. The business team has already met with the school principals and CMO leadership. Meetings will be ongoing until the budget is finalized.

Dorothy Lee from EdTech gave a presentation on the second interim, which is up for approval in the board packet. The presented financials are through January 2023 and were submitted to the authorizer.

Due to recent weather, the tax filing date has been extended to the fall. This means that the May revise and whatever gets approved by the legislature will be based on incomplete data. There could be a need for an adjustment in the fall once all of the data is in.

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

##### **A. Grow Academy Arvin**

###### **Jenny Bard, GA Arvin Principal**

GA Arvin sent 22 scholars to Washington DC this week. One of the highlights while they are there is a photo opportunity with Kevin McCarthy.

Tomorrow evening is the spring open house where families will learn about attendance, uniforms and have time to engage with teachers.

The third quarter is ending with a student spring carnival with an inflatable obstacle course and carnival games.

In an effort to get excited about upcoming testing, there is a “try your best” challenge for students where they collect paper “likes” they can exchange for treats or superstar t-shirts.

Finally, we have had several field trips that have taken place or will be taking place; Our middle school students went to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo to view the campus; Our Kindergarteners are planning to take a walking field trip to the police station and fire station; Our 3rd graders went to the Fresno Zoo.

GA Arvin's spring open house is tomorrow from 4pm-6pm and GA Shafter's is Thursday from 5:30pm-7:30pm. Elysa Vargas added that the communications team created “passports” so if families go to each of the stations and get their passports stamped, they will be offered various raffle incentives.

##### **B. Grow Academy Shafter**

Lacie Harris, GA Shafter Principal was absent -in Washington D.C. for GA Shafter's 8th grade trip.

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

##### **A. GA-Arvin**

No update.

##### **B. GA-Shafter**

No update.

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

##### **A. Barbara Grimm Marshall**

###### **Barbara Grimm Marshall, President & Founder**

Barbara shared that she had the opportunity last week to tour both campuses along with Ric, Doc, and Elysa. She commented that the schools are clean, neat, and organized. She also added that it is apparent how much work has gone into the classrooms since July 2022. The level of instruction and engagement has

been elevated. She expressed her appreciation for the effort and everything that goes on behind the scenes.

## **VII. Consent Agenda**

### **A. Approval of 2022-2023 Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Plan For GA-Shafter**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the 2022-2023 Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Plan for GA-Shafter.

Kristen Watson seconded the motion.

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

#### **Roll Call**

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

### **B. Approval of 2022-2023 Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Plan For GA-Arvin**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the 2022-2023 Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Plan for GA-Shafter.

Kristen Watson seconded the motion.

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

#### **Roll Call**

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

### **C. Approval of Minutes from February 27, 2023 Board Meeting**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the minutes from February 27, 2023 Grow Public Schools Board Meeting on 02-27-23.

Kristen Watson seconded the motion.

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

#### **Roll Call**

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

### **D. Approval of Minutes from Special Board Meeting on March 20, 2023**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the minutes from Grow Public Schools Special Board Meeting on 03-20-23.

Kristen Watson seconded the motion.

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

#### **Roll Call**

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

**Roll Call**

Matt Look            Aye

**E. Approval of Purchase Orders, Warrants, and Credit Card Registers for February 2023**

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

Kristen Watson seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Kristen Watson    Aye

Matt Look            Aye

Ernie Unruh        Absent

Manuel Pantoja    Aye

Tom Mestmaker    Aye

**F. Approval of 2023-2024 School Calendar**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the 2023-2024 School Calendar.

Kristen Watson seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Manuel Pantoja    Aye

Matt Look            Aye

Kristen Watson    Aye

Tom Mestmaker    Aye

Ernie Unruh        Absent

**VIII. Action Items**

**A. Approval of FY23 Second Interim Financial Reports for GA-Shafter**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the FY23 Second Interim Financial Reports for GA- Shafter.

Manuel Pantoja seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Ernie Unruh        Absent

Kristen Watson    Aye

Manuel Pantoja    Aye

Tom Mestmaker    Aye

Matt Look            Aye

**B. Approval of FY23 Second Interim Financial Reports for GA-Arvin**

Matt Look made a motion to approve the FY23 Second Interim Financial Reports for GA-Arvin.

Kristen Watson seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Tom Mestmaker    Aye

Manuel Pantoja    Aye

Matt Look            Aye

Kristen Watson    Aye



**Roll Call**

Ernie Unruh      Absent

**C. Board Approval / Ratification of Compensation Comparability Study for Chief Executive Officer Position**

Manuel Pantoja made a motion to approve the Ratification of Compensation Comparability Study for Chief Executive Officer Position.

Matt Look seconded the motion.

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

**D. Board Ratification / Approval of Chief Executive Officer Contract**

Board President, Tom Mestmaker made the following statement, "I am required by law to indicate, prior to any vote on the employment agreement, that the agreement provides the following:

A term from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026; A work schedule of a minimum of 225 days annually; A base annual salary of \$300,000; Sick Leave in the amount of twelve (12) days annually; Paid Vacation time in the amount of one hundred twenty (120) hours annually; Car allowance in the amount of \$500 per month; Health benefits as are applicable for all employees and participation in STRS or PERS, as applicable, subject to program and eligibility requirements.

I would also note that the annual salary is in keeping with the compensation comparability study the Board has received."

Kristen Watson made a motion to approve the Board Ratification / Approval of Chief Executive Officer Contract .

Manuel Pantoja seconded the motion.

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

**IX. 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 4:36 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kari Heilman