APPROVED

Griffin School District #324

Minutes

Griffin School Board Study Session

Date and Time
Wednesday December 3, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Location
Griffin School Library
6530 33rd Way NW
Olympia, WA 98502

Zoom Link

Directors Present
Blair Baker, Emma Rose, Julie Osterberg, Tesa Frevert, Trish Hefton

Directors Absent
None

Guests Present
Allison Adair, Katie Kent, Kirsten Rue

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Julie Osterberg called a meeting of the board of directors of Griffin School District #324 to order on Wednesday Dec 3, 2025 at 6:02 PM.

C. Pledge of Allegiance & Land Acknowledgement

D. Approval of Agenda

Julie Osterberg made a motion to Approve the Study Session Agenda for Dec. 3, 2025.
Trish Hefton seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Board Member WSSDA Conference Debrief

A. Each Board Director gave a recap of their experience at the WSSDA Conference in November.

Director Osterberg initiated the debrief, requesting comments from each Board member regarding their thoughts on the conference they all attended the previous month.

Director Osterberg felt inspired by student voice. She stated that she would like to move forward with having student advocates as a formal part of the School Board meetings. She also appreciated the ice-breaker ideas presented for meetings. Finance was another focus of her break-out sessions, where she reported learning the importance of planning ahead and understanding the application of levy dollars.

Director Hefton attended a session focused on structuring board agendas based on strategic plans. She learned about utilizing a department template (for areas like transportation or facilities) for reporting to the Board to create consistency. Director Hefton was also inspired by the student presentations and how professionally they conducted themselves in front of numerous adults. She recalled a student saying: "just do it - don't let the worry about getting something wrong, stop you from doing it." In another session, she felt motivated by the discussion surrounding legislation and expressed anticipation for the Board to become more involved in legislative advocacy. Following a budget session, Director Hefton felt inspired to continue to learn more about the district's financial health. She valued the open conversations, intentional communication, and the dedicated time the Board spent together.

Director Rose felt energized, inspired, and ready to become deeply involved in making the district even better. She organized her takeaways into three topics:
Advocacy: She gathered ideas and strategies for being more active advocates for the district. She emphasized the need to highlight positive successes within the district and the importance of working with other districts, specifically mentioning Shelton. Director Rose stressed the advocacy for Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and wanted to investigate further ways to engage the community in supporting this important program.

Data: She attended a session where researchers presented on factors contributing to successful school boards. Director Rose was inspired by data-driven information and learned that successful boards spent 50% of their meetings reviewing data. She introduced the term "data connoisseurs."

Director Baker attended various sessions related to the financial aspects of districts and maintaining a healthy budget. She was impacted by the reality that financial situations can decline quickly. Director Baker thoroughly enjoyed hearing the students speak and their performances. She also appreciated the small school forums and the opportunity to connect with others from similar districts. She found the debriefing session powerful and energizing.

Director Frevert attended a Small District Turnaround session, which highlighted a small, financially struggling district that implemented changes over four years and successfully rallied its community through hard decisions, openness, and transparency. Another session she attended focused on converting community voice into action by engaging the Board with the community and staff. She felt it was important for the Board to be visible. Director Frevert gathered informative templates for timelines, emails, and action plans, noting these resources were also available on the WSSDA website. She also found the time spent with the Board valuable.

Director Osterberg subsequently asked Director Rose to bring a proposal for the Legislative priorities for Griffin to the meeting on December 17th.

Superintendent Rue noted that she had a few students joining her at a Superintendent meeting the following week at the ESD 113, where Legislators would also be in attendance. She believed this would be a good opportunity for students to interact and emphasized that having the Board's legislative priorities ahead of time would be beneficial.

Director Hefton felt that providing a direct, impactful story, potentially using an example from the students, would be important.

Superintendent Rue appreciated the opportunity to process with the Board at the conference. She reported attending presentations on fiscal matters, as this remained a strong focus for her. She also attended a session related to the role of the Executive Assistant and gained valuable takeaways for systems to improve upon.

III. New Business

A. Special Education Co-op

Katie Kent, Senior Director of the ESD 113 Special Education Cooperative (SEC), addressed the Board. She explained that the SEC serves 14 small, rural school districts, working diligently to recruit and retain staff. The Co-op values being available and

committed to supporting their districts, believing that all students deserve quality, in-person services.

Katie shared the SEC Goals and Priorities, detailing the importance of inclusionary practices and integrating students into every facet of the school. She outlined the guiding principles the SEC follows when working with families and schools, and detailed the responsibilities the Co-op maintained.

She explained the SEC's funding structure, which includes Section 611 of IDEA Funds. Through Program 21, there is a student rate of approximately $4,000 per student, a 10% Safety Net Reimbursement, and Medicaid is billed by cooperative staff for services rendered.

The SEC serves approximately 1,026 students on IEPs across 14 districts, and Katie provided an overview of the various specialist staff that work within the Co-op. Specifically, Griffin has 94 students on IEPs. She noted that five direct service specialists from the SEC work at Griffin, with service levels ranging from full-time to partial in-person as needed. Additionally, SEC Director Nels Langbauer spends time at Griffin each week meeting with SEC and Griffin staff. Griffin's total cost for participation in the SEC was stated as $478,083.

Director Rose inquired about the year-to-year variation in cost. Katie explained that Griffin had an increase in students' needs, resulting in a higher cost this year. She noted an increase in SLP (Speech-Language Pathologist) and OT (Occupational Therapist) services over the years, suggesting those needs could be related to COVID-19. This increase had reportedly doubled over the last 10 years.

Katie then presented a District Salary and Benefits Comparison analysis. This table illustrated the cost difference between hiring services outside the Co-op. She highlighted additional services included with Co-op membership, such as access to the Autism Assessment Team and Multilingual Assessment Team at no extra cost, with team members coming to Griffin when needed.

Director Rose sought to clarify that the cost of Co-op membership was slightly higher than the district hiring its own staff, but that the SEC included services that Griffin would otherwise have to pay for additionally.

Director Hefton also acknowledged the value of the SEC's high hiring and retention rate, noting its invaluable benefit to the district by avoiding the need to hire specialists individually.
Director Osterberg inquired whether the SEC staff felt supported at Griffin.

Superintendent Rue and Katie confirmed they had discussed how to support the SEC employees and the importance of knowing the staff. Superintendent Rue stated that

Griffin was learning how to be a good member of the Co-op, and Katie noted the SEC was similarly learning how to best support Griffin and maintain connections.

2025-2026 Griffin SPed Presentation
Griffin SPed Salary Comparison

B. Committee/Liaison Assignments for Upcoming Year

Director Osterberg initiated a discussion regarding Committee and Liaison assignments for the upcoming year. She had been evaluating the effectiveness of the Board's current committees and wanted to reopen the discussion on committee interest and structure. She proposed the idea of the Board Chair taking on the Policy and Facilities committees, the Vice Chair heading the Financial and Personnel committees, and designating a Legislative representative. She also mentioned the possibilities of creating a Community Liaison and a Tribal Outreach Liaison role. Decisions would need to be finalized at the December 17th meeting.

Director Frevert asked if others served on the Policy, Facilities, Financial, and Personnel committees.

Director Osterberg suggested they could designate another person, depending on interest.
Director Hefton suggested having a primary person plus another person interested in leading the following year.

Director Baker agreed, stating there were times when another person was needed and extra input was appreciated.

Director Rose expressed concern that the Chair and Vice Chair having two committees each might be excessive and supported the idea of having a "back up" for each role. She felt having a partner was important so that the responsibility did not fall entirely on one person, and being able to reach out to a secondary person was essential. She liked the ideas for new roles but emphasized the importance of having a clear point person.

Director Osterberg stated that the Chair being in charge of the Policy committee naturally lent itself to this role, as the Chair worked closely with the Superintendent on a regular basis to set meeting agendas.

Director Hefton commented that the Facilities point person would need another person involved due to the scope of work it entailed.

Director Osterberg noted that the structure could also be left as it was.

Director Rose shared she was a strong proponent of trying the new structure but liked the idea of having a "thought partner" depending on what issues arose.

Director Hefton stated that collaboration was important, and they could each reach out to whoever they needed to depending on the topic.

Director Frevert stated that they each had their own strengths and could reach out as needed.
The Superintendent suggested the Board would need to be intentional regarding the Policy to allow for flexibility.

Director Osterberg stated that she heard support for making a change to the new structure. She asked the Board if the Community Liaison, Tribal Liaison, and Legislative Representative roles made sense, or if there were other topics they were overlooking.

Director Rose suggested they could conduct further brainstorming for the Community and Tribal positions, defining what those roles would look like.

Director Frevert noted they had been discussing the Student Advocate piece and where that role would fit into the structure.

Superintendent Rue explained there was still time to determine the Student Advocate piece.
Director Hefton asked if it would be helpful to have a Board liaison conduct research on how to determine who the representatives might be and what the best practices were.

Superintendent Rue stated she had collected a few different district approaches to this matter. She would conduct additional research and felt it would be great to work alongside a Board member. She anticipated this might involve a Personnel relation and hoped to engage the entire Board in the process.

Superintendent Rue noted that the next meeting would include the swearing-in of the re-elected directors and the vote for the new Board Chair, which would occur at the beginning of the meeting. She confirmed she would work with Director Osterberg on a draft of the agenda.

Director Hefton stated that the new Chair makes the committee assignments, and that process would need to happen after the Policy had been approved.

Director Hefton clarified that although the Chair assigns the positions, they would ask for input prior to making the assignments, and having a proposal of committee interests would be helpful.
Director Osterberg questioned the timing of all the policy changes. Director Rose stated that the Policy already dictated that the assignments needed to be made at the upcoming

meeting. Director Hefton commented that this was fairly consistent with Policies across School Boards.

Superintendent Rue will come with recommendations of what might work and what she has heard from members, but not attach names.

IV. New Policy

A. 1821 Standards for Individual School Directors

Superintendent Rue reported that many policy updates had occurred over the past few months, making it important for the Board to get up to date. She stated that she and Director Osterberg had decided to proceed with reviewing the numerous policies on the agenda. Superintendent Rue then provided highlights for the policies scheduled for discussion.

Superintendent Rue explained that **Policy 1821** was new, noting that the WSSDA had adopted new standards for school directors. She stated these standards represented **best practices** for Board members and were important to incorporate into the district's policy manual.

Director Hefton commented that the new standards were logical, but emphasized that the Board already had existing operating protocols. She stressed the need to ensure the new policy was **aligned and consistent** with the existing protocols.

Superintendent Rue acknowledged this point, agreeing that she needed to update the existing **Board/Superintendent Operating Agreement**. She noted that some adjustments might be necessary to incorporate WSSDA recommendations. She further suggested that this operating agreement should be updated by the Superintendent every year in January.

B. 4001 Public Information Program

Superintendent Rue reminded the Board that this Policy had been paused at the previous Board meeting. She explained that **Policy 4001** replaced the former Policy 4000 and included updates, specifically incorporating the concept of a **school improvement plan**.

Director Osterberg inquired whether "school improvement plan" was a formal **"title."**

Superintendent Rue explained that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) utilized a consolidated school improvement plan, which incorporated requirements provided by the Legislature. She clarified that the language used in the policy was **general, not a specific title.**

C. 4060 Distribution of Information

Superintendent Rue explained that this policy had become relevant due to a recent incident involving a vendor who entered the building unannounced and was found in the staff room without the District Office's knowledge. She emphasized the need for clear policies and expectations to ensure this was handled appropriately. She stated it was wise to have the policy in place and noted that she had consulted other districts regarding their policies.

Director Frevert pointed out that **Policy 4060** cross-referenced Policies 3220 and 2340, which had not been updated recently.

Superintendent Rue acknowledged the need to review the WSSDA updates for those cross-referenced policies, and confirmed that Policies 3220 and 2340 would be placed on the **January agenda** for review.

D. 5254 Staff Expression

Superintendent Rue shared the importance of clearly defining where staff's **First Amendment rights** begin and end. She noted that a strong procedure would be added if this policy was approved.

Director Frevert noted that the two policies cross-referenced in the document were currently not held in the Griffin policy manual.

Director Hefton questioned whether they should strike the cross-reference at the time of approval. She suggested that the cross-referenced policies could be added back once they were officially incorporated into Griffin's manual.

Superintendent Rue felt she could **strike-through** the cross-referenced policies that the district did not currently hold, and re-add them once they became part of Griffin's manual.

V. Policy Updates

A. 1005 Key Functions of the Board

Superintendent Rue stated that **Policy 1005** aligns with the standards established for individual Board members (Policy 1821). She explained that the significant difference from the existing policy was that it formally incorporated **self-assessment and engagement in board development** into the Board's policy.

Director Rose acknowledged that this was a valuable addition to the policy.

Director Hefton stated that this policy supported the Board’s commitment to attend WSSDA conferences.

B. 1210 ANNUAL ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Superintendent Rue explained there were a couple of proposed changes. She proposed adopting the verbiage of **"odd-numbered" years** and electing the legislative representative to serve a **two-year term**. She also noted two additional points (G and H) added to the normal order of business for the annual organizational meeting.

The Board discussed and suggested an additional point should be added:
I. (if applicable) The Chair will ask for volunteers to serve on additional leadership roles.

Director Rose pointed out that the term **"officer"** needed to be clearly defined, and asked if the Chair and Vice Chair were the only officers. She also questioned if a newly elected Board member was eligible to be appointed as a Legislative Representative.

Director Hefton suggested adding to the second paragraph: "In the absence of **officers, including both the chair and the vice chair**..."

Superintendent Rue inquired if they were suggesting any role should be titled an officer. Director Rose clarified that no, but the term "officer" needed to be more clearly articulated. Her specific question remained whether someone who was just newly elected to the School Board could serve as the Legislative Representative. Superintendent Rue stated she did not believe there was a restriction on that.

Director Rose noted that "officer" was stated in the first paragraph, but "chair or vice chair" was not mentioned until the second paragraph. She felt it needed to be defined in the first paragraph. Director Hefton agreed. Director Osterberg suggested adding "chair or vice chair" in the first paragraph, after the word "officer."

Director Frevert noted the Board also needed to review the cross-referenced **Policy 1225**.

C. 1220 Board Officers and Duties of Board Members

Superintendent Rue explained that the word **"committee" had been removed** from the heading related to the Legislative Representative.

Director Rose suggested removing "Officers of the Board" prior to the heading of Vice Chair.
Director Hefton suggested adding clarification that the Chair and Vice Chair are the officers.

Superintendent Rue agreed to add the statement: **"The officers of the board are the Chair and Vice Chair."**

Director Rose also suggested that under the duties of the Vice Chair, it would be important to add that they take on duties **as delegated**. Superintendent Rue commented that all Board members took on delegated duties, but here, the policy explicitly called out the Vice Chair's duty to lead a meeting if the Chair was absent.

D. 1630 Evaluation of the Superintendent

Superintendent Rue explained that WSSDA's changes to this policy were based on changes in law. The policy mandated that the evaluation should be grounded in **system improvement goals**, which she already implemented in her own goals. She asked the Board if they wanted to proceed with adopting this policy now or defer it until spring if they felt they were covering too many policies at once.

Director Rose expressed that they should proceed, especially since Griffin now had a strategic plan in place.

Superintendent Rue stated she was comfortable either way.

E. 4200 Parent Access and Safe and Orderly Learning Environment

Superintendent Rue explained that a portion of this policy relates to Policy 4060. This policy provides **parameters around visitors to the building** and addresses contact with staff. She noted that sometimes there is a need to ask a person to leave the building, and it was important to have guidelines in place.

Director Rose asked if this policy also applied to Board meetings.

Superintendent Rue acknowledged that it would apply to Board meetings as the policy explicitly stated **"meetings."**

F. 6030 Financial Reports

Superintendent Rue noted the key change was determining whether the Board would like **public records transparency reports**. She felt this was an important piece for the Board to be made aware of on a quarterly basis. Allison maintains an index of the public records, and it was important for the Board to be aware of the requests being made. She asked the Board if they preferred monthly or quarterly updates.

Director Hefton suggested that it be made a part of the **consent agenda**.

Director Frevert asked whether it needed to be specified in the policy how frequently the reports were given.

Director Hefton stated it could always be on the consent agenda even if there were no items on it that month. She also questioned why this section was placed within a **"Financial Report" policy** since public records requests are not always fiscal in nature.

Superintendent Rue acknowledged that moving this item to a different policy might be appropriate. She confirmed that even if it were moved, it would still be reviewed.

VI. Policy Review

A. 2106 Program Compliance

Superintendent Rue stated there were **no updates** to this policy. She acknowledged that the policy states the Superintendent will determine if the district is in compliance, and she reports on the listed items through the annual report (the school improvement plan). She noted this was a good time for the Board to review the policy.

Director Osterberg inquired about item I, asking if there was a reason why the **Boy Scouts of America** was specifically called out.

Superintendent Rue stated there had been a **legal issue** in relation to the Boy Scouts of America, and it was therefore specifically noted in various laws and policies.

B. 6040 Expenditures in Excess of Budget

Superintendent Rue announced that she would deliver a fiscal review to the Board at her **"State of the District" presentation in January**. She noted that expenditures had been in excess of the budget, making this a timely policy for the Board to review and be up to date on.

C. 6213 Reimbursement for Travel Expenses

Superintendent Rue noted this policy had **not been reviewed since 2016**. She explained that the district had recently put procedures in place for credit card usage, and this review was part of working through the 6000 series of policies.

VII. Policy Removal

A. 4000 Public Information Program

Superintendent Rue explained that this policy number had been **retired by WSSDA** and was replaced with Policy 4001, which the Board had just reviewed.

B. 6023 Post Issuance Compliance

Superintendent Rue checked with Finance Director Kim Ferra, and stated that it had been **recommended that this policy was no longer needed.**

VIII. Superintendent Updates

A.

Superintendent Kirsten Rue

Superintendent Rue asked the Board members to please **send their WSSDA headshots to Allison**.

She confirmed that she would deliver the **"State of the District"** at the **January Board meeting**. On **February 3rd**, she would share the same presentation with the community and invited all Board Directors to attend. She advised that if a quorum was reached, the event would be posted as a meeting. She expressed hope that community members would discuss and share in small groups and be able to ask questions after the presentation.

She reminded the Board that the **joint school board meeting with the Olympia School District** would be held on **January 14, 2026, at OSD**. She asked the Directors to let her know if they had any agenda items.

Director Frevert commented that this joint meeting would eliminate one study session dedicated to reviewing policies.

Superintendent Rue stated that she would send updates for policy review in her **Friday Focus email**.

Finally, she mentioned that the following week, she would be bringing **Griffin 8th graders** to a Superintendent meeting and expressed pride that the 8th graders would attend, as the other districts would be bringing high school students.

IX. Closing Items

A. For the Good of the Order

Director Frevert shared that there was another **Griffin winter concert** on **December 18th**. She encouraged other Board members to attend, stating that the **5th-8th grade bands** performing were amazing.

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Julie Osterberg

"Where students thrive, feel valued, and shape a better world."