APPROVED

Griffin School District #324

Minutes

Griffin School Board Study Session

Joint Meeting with the Olympia School District

Date and Time
Wednesday January 14, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location
Olympia School District
111 Bethel Street NE
Olympia, WA 98506

Board Meeting Zoom Link

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

Directors Absent
None

Guests Present
Allison Adair, Capital High School Employees, Gilbert Lamont, Hilary Seidel, Jess Tourtellotte-Palumbo, Kirsten Rue, Maria Flores, Members of the Superintendent's Office Staff, OSD Student Board Representatives, Patrick Murphy, Renee Fullerton

I. Opening Items

A.

Call the Meeting to Order

6:02pm: Olympia School Board President Jess Tourtellotte-Palumbo opened the meeting and asked for introductions.

Superintendent Patrick Murphy welcomed everyone.
Trish Hefton called a meeting of the board of directors of Griffin School District #324 to order on Wednesday Jan 14, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

B. Record Attendance

II. Transition Between Griffin School & Capital High School

A. Griffin to CHS Transition

Capital High School Counselor Nicole Sande presented the comprehensive transition plan for incoming students from Griffin Middle School. Ms. Sande's outreach involves three distinct visits to Griffin throughout the winter and spring terms to establish rapport with the 8th-grade class. Building on the success of the previous year, she will again include "Griffin Grad" seniors in her presentations to provide peer-to-peer mentorship.

In collaboration with Griffin Counselor Anne Zimmerman, Ms. Sande facilitates the technical registration process through the Qmlativ platform. This process includes personalized one-on-one sessions to review course selections and address specific student inquiries. Furthermore, the transition concludes with a campus-wide event in May, where 8th graders from all feeder schools receive guided tours and introductory orientations at CHS.

Superintendent Rue (Griffin) commended the CHS counseling team for their support, noting that the partnership has been instrumental in easing student anxiety during the move to high school. She highlighted a critical communication point for families: because Griffin and Capital reside in different districts, student data does not automatically "roll up" in the system. Superintendent Rue expressed appreciation for CHS's efforts in informing parents that they must actively register their students within the Olympia School District (OSD) to ensure a seamless transfer of records.

Director Hefton requested clarification on the transition protocols for students with specialized needs, specifically those with IEPs or 504 plans. Ms. Sande acknowledged that while differing data platforms between districts present a minor technical challenge, the human element remains the priority. She and Keegan Wood conduct direct meetings with these families to ensure service continuity. Adding to this, Ja'Waan Brown confirmed that the school offers individualized tours tailored to the needs of these specific families.

Superintendent Rue informed the Board that Griffin is currently transitioning to the IEP Online platform, following the lead of the ESD Special Education Co-op, which is

expected to improve data alignment. Superintendent Murphy concluded the discussion by emphasizing the importance of individualized support and directed the Board to the dedicated "Transitions" page on the OSD website, which serves as a central resource for diverse student needs.

III. Griffin School Students' Data

A. Griffin School Cohort 2025 & High School Credit in 8th Grade

Griffin School Graduation Cohort 2025

Superintendent Murphy presented data regarding the 2025 cohort, noting that this class was the first to graduate without the availability of COVID-19 waivers. Consequently, the district anticipates a slight decrease in graduation rates compared to previous years. Demographic slides were shared detailing the gender and race breakdown of the Griffin cohort. The data revealed that Griffin seniors achieved a cumulative GPA of 3.22. Additionally, the cohort earned 15 Associate Degrees and 3 IB Diplomas; it was noted that earning an IB Diploma is a significant achievement, with only 20 students reaching this milestone across the entire CHS graduating class. The majority of Griffin students continue to matriculate to CHS.

Superintendent Rue highlighted the significant growth in advanced academics, noting that Associate Degrees earned jumped from 4 in the class of 2024 to 15 in 2025. While acknowledging that the ninth-grade year often presents challenges, she expressed confidence that Griffin students are performing well. Superintendent Murphy underscored the critical importance of students remaining on track with credit acquisition early in their high school careers.
The discussion transitioned to the ongoing evaluation of Physical Science credits, a topic previously raised by Director Rose and Director Seidel. Director Seidel noted that this remains an equity concern, as Marshall Middle School does not currently offer the course. Superintendent Rue reported that, following a consultation with Principal Condee Wood to ensure student readiness for Biology, it was determined that Griffin students are well-prepared to continue receiving Physical Science instruction.

Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Inger Owen explained that while OSD aims for collective preparation across all subjects, teacher certification requirements remain a primary factor in course offerings. Principal Hagen clarified that Physical Science is available to all Griffin students through an "opt-in" model for high school credit. The school modifies the scope and sequence for these students without utilizing "tracking," ensuring the course is accessible to the entire 8th-grade student body.

Assistant Superintendent James Whitehead noted that an overwhelming number of Griffin students opted into the credit-bearing version of the course and performed well, specifically excelling in subsequent Biology courses. He reiterated that teacher

certification for 8th-grade Physical Science is the main barrier to expanding this offering across all OSD middle schools.

Superintendent Murphy confirmed that Griffin also offers Algebra and Geometry for high school credit. In response to his inquiry regarding class structure, Principal Hagen clarified that all 8th graders take the Physical Science course together, but students choose whether to transcribe the final grade as a high school credit. Superintendent Murphy characterized this model as "fascinating" and suggested OSD explore similar options for its 8th-grade students. Principal Hagen concluded by offering to have Griffin's Physical Science staff collaborate with OSD to share best practices.

IV. Capital Projects

A. OSD: Exec. Director of Business & Finance: Kate Davis, Exec. Director of Operations: Frank Wilson

OSD slides presented on Capital Projects & Panorama

The Directors presented an overview of the upcoming Technology and Facility Improvement levies, which are scheduled for the February ballot. A primary focus of these funds is the modernization of instructional technology, including the replacement of laptops and Chromebooks and the updating of classroom display systems. The proposal also encompasses software and staffing support, alongside critical operational technology such as network infrastructure and phone system upgrades. Planned construction projects prioritize facility safety, improvements to the Olympia High School Performing Arts Center, and district-wide HVAC modernization.

It was noted that the Griffin School District will share in these costs, which are subject to inflationary increases similar to those seen in salaries and software licensing. These totals are prorated based on student enrollment. Currently, the projected cost for shared network services is estimated to range between $53,000 and $73,000.

In addition to technology and safety, the Olympia School District (OSD) is planning to replace the artificial turf and lighting at Ingersoll Stadium. Further operational improvements include a centralized management strategy for district key systems and significant HVAC projects at both Olympia High School and Washington Middle School.

V. Curriculum Alignment

A. Superintendent Patrick Murphy & Teaching and Learning Executive Director Inger Owen

Superintendent Murphy noted that the data consistently demonstrates that Griffin students are performing exceptionally well. He emphasized the importance of ongoing

communication between the two districts to ensure alignment regarding student preparation and long-term academic trajectories.

Director Owen presented findings from the Panorama survey, a universal social-emotional learning screener that OSD has administered biannually since 2020. The data, which tracks Griffin students currently enrolled in OSD, shows that these students rank in the 99th percentile nationally for "sense of belonging." Across nearly all survey categories, OSD scores remain in the 90th percentile.

Superintendent Murphy highlighted specific results for Griffin students in grades 9–12. When asked how frequently they felt excited, happy, loved, or hopeful during the previous week, the majority responded "frequently" or "almost always." He noted that the data for "sense of belonging" peaked at the highest levels of the scale. Director Owen attributed these results to the transition efforts led by Assistant Principal Brown and Nicole Sande, suggesting that their work with 8th graders effectively sets the stage for a positive high school experience.

In response to an inquiry from Griffin Board Director Rose regarding practical ways to foster a sense of belonging at the middle school level, Director Owen pointed to the use of the Danielson Framework. OSD has updated its teacher evaluation rubrics to prioritize culturally responsive teaching and restorative practices. By providing educators with a robust toolbox focused on high-quality instruction and relationship-building, the district aims to strengthen the connection between students and their school community.

VI. Student Representatives

A. Capital High School, Avanti & Orla

Director Tourtellotte-Polumbo reflected on her two years working with Student Representatives, noting significant personal and professional growth. She emphasized that the experience has deepened her understanding of how to effectively bring student voices to the table and how those representatives continually challenge the Board to better engage with the school community.

Student representatives shared their perspectives on the school environment:
- Malachi Cardona (CHS): Emphasized that a sense of belonging is fostered by the wide variety of programs available, allowing students the freedom to explore different interests.
- Juniper Hummel-Church (Avanti): Highlighted the importance of the small-school environment and the unique opportunities it provides.
- Emma McDonald (ORLA): Noted that a culture of respect and kindness makes her school a welcoming place for students of all backgrounds.

The Griffin School Board, currently planning to add student representatives to their own Board, conducted a Q&A session with the representatives:

Selection and Recruitment Representatives reported discovering the role through school announcements, newsletters, and the OSD "Spotlight on Success." In several cases, outgoing representatives personally reached out to potential candidates. The standard process involves an online application followed by a formal interview.

Training and Orientation Initial training included correspondence and meetings with Board Directors, as well as peer-to-peer mentoring with existing student representatives. The "slow process" of learning board governance was supported by attending meetings as observers and participating in the Student Led Advisory Council (SLAC).

Program Evaluation The representatives generally felt welcomed and supported. Suggestions for improvement included providing more detailed schedules for board retreats and including a more comprehensive "job description" in the initial application to clarify the scope of the role.

Support Systems Peer support from fellow student representatives and the guidance of the Board Director liaison were cited as the most helpful resources for navigating their responsibilities.

Student Engagement and Communication Representatives utilize various methods to gather and share information, including:
Regular meetings with school principals and leadership groups.
Holding dual roles in ASB (Vice President or Treasurer) to facilitate information flow.
Using physical suggestion boxes and direct peer-to-peer outreach.

Advice for Middle School Programs The representatives advised the Griffin Board to ensure that student reps have a designated adult mentor for regular check-ins. They emphasized the importance of creating a friendly, low-pressure environment where students feel comfortable asking simple questions or stepping out during long sessions, such as public comment.

Artificial Intelligence Policy Superintendent Murphy addressed the board's approach to Artificial Intelligence, noting that OSD currently manages AI through the student handbook rather than a fixed policy, given the rapidly evolving nature of the technology. The district provides teachers with language and guidelines on how to integrate AI to enhance learning. Superintendent Murphy concluded by praising the current student representatives for their contributions and how well they complement the Board's work.

VII. Legislative Priorities

A. OSD Legislative Priorities

Olympia shared their 2026 Legislative Priorities.

B.

GSD Legislative Priorities

Griffin shared their 2026 Legislative Priorities.

VIII. Other Business

A. Griffin's AI Perspective

Director Renee Fullerton (OSD) inquired regarding Griffin School District's current stance and progress on Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration.

Superintendent Rue reported that the district is actively establishing parameters for student use. Assistant Principal Hagen is currently leading a working group—comprised of students and the district Technology Coordinator—to develop a formal proposal regarding Griffin's next steps, which will be presented to the Board upon completion.

Assistant Principal Hagen identified data security as the primary challenge, noting that the rapid evolution of AI platforms requires an ongoing, long-term commitment to oversight. Superintendent Rue expressed optimism regarding the potential for AI to support staff efficiency, though she reiterated that her immediate priority remains the protection of student and staff data, particularly as "closed systems" are not yet widely available.

Director Rose concluded the discussion by emphasizing the district's obligation to its students, staff, and the broader community. Acknowledging that AI can be a polarizing topic, she stressed the importance of a thoughtful and transparent communication strategy as the district moves forward with its implementation plans.

IX. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

7:40pm: Meeting adjourned by Superintendent Murphy.
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Trish Hefton

Documents used during the meeting

None

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