APPROVED

Griffin School District #324

Minutes

Griffin School Board Study Session

Date and Time
Wednesday March 11, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location
Griffin School Library

Attend via Zoom

Zoom Link

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

Directors Absent
None

Guests Present
Allison Adair, Dale McDaniel (remote), Erin Hagen, Kim Ferra, Kirsten Rue, Rebekah Keiser

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Trish Hefton called a meeting of the board of directors of Griffin School District #324 to order on Wednesday Mar 11, 2026 at 6:00 PM.
Board Chair Trish Hefton called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. She expressed appreciation for the guest on zoom in attendance and noted their previous introduction at a recent conference.

Dr. Dale McDaniel introduced himself to the Board. Dr. McDaniel noted his current service on the Board of Directors for the Educational Service District, stating that he attended the meeting to listen and learn about the Board's current initiatives. He clarified that he had no formal agenda or prepared statement. He concluded his remarks by complimenting the Board on their recent work and performance.

C. Pledge of Allegiance & Land Acknowledgement

D. Approval of Agenda

Julie Osterberg made a motion to Approve the Agenda.
Blair Baker seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. New Business

A. District Calendar: 2026-2027

Superintendent Kirsten Rue presented the proposed academic calendar for the upcoming school year as part of the annual budgeting and planning process. The following key highlights and strategic shifts were noted:

- Start Date: The administration proposed a start date prior to Labor Day weekend (September 2). Superintendent Rue noted that because Labor Day falls late in the year, starting afterward would push the school year past the Juneteenth holiday. Feedback from the GEA indicated a preference for the earlier start to allow for an earlier summer release.
-Conference Scheduling: Based on staff feedback and discussions with the GEA, the spring conferences are proposed to move earlier in the year (the week of the 22nd), shortly after the start of the second semester. The Superintendent supported this "student-centered" shift, noting it fosters better communication immediately following the release of report cards.
-Weather Contingency Days: The calendar embeds two potential snow makeup days to increase the likelihood of maintaining the scheduled final day of school on June 15:
  -February 16: A potential extension of the mid-winter break.
  -May 28: A potential extension of the Memorial Day weekend.

The Board was invited to review the draft and submit any further questions. Formal adoption of the school year calendar will be requested at the next scheduled Board meeting.

Board Director Julie Osterberg initiated a discussion regarding the proposed Board meeting dates for the autumn and winter months. She observed that the schedule appeared to deviate from the standard second and fourth week rotation, specifically for October, November, and December.

Director Osterberg noted that the proposed calendar shifted meetings to the first and third weeks of those months.

Superintendent Rue and the Board discussed the strategic benefits of these adjustments, noting that the traditional schedule would result in meetings falling on November 25 (Thanksgiving week) and December 23 (Christmas week).

It was noted that while the Board traditionally maintains the second and fourth week schedule and modifies individual dates as needed, proactively scheduling meetings for the first and third weeks of these months would better accommodate holidays and the Veterans Day observance. There was discussion on shifting some meetings to Tuesdays if needed. Board Director Tesa Frevert stated she prefers to maintain the consistency of meetings on Wednesdays, as opposed to shifting conflicts to Tuesdays.

Superintendent Kirsten Rue expressed concerns regarding a December 16 meeting date, noting that such an early meeting would create significant challenges for payroll processing and the timely payment of district bills. Superintendent Rue observed that a mid-December meeting followed by a mid-January meeting would result in a month-and-a-half gap between Board decisions and financial approvals.

Director Kim Ferra further clarified that while an early December meeting would be "tight" for generating financial reports and processing accounts payable, the finance department could accommodate the schedule by implementing an earlier cutoff for the month. She concluded that the department would be able to adjust to the December 16 date if the Board moved forward with that option.

Superintendent Kirsten Rue suggested that the August board meeting dates be adjusted to the second and fourth weeks of the month to maintain consistency with the standard schedule. While noting that the week of August 23 is designated as a Professional Development week, she clarified that this would not preclude holding a board meeting. Consequently, the proposed dates for August were shifted to the 11th and 25th.

The Board noted that the Olympia School District (OSD) had not yet finalized its academic calendar. Members discussed the importance of aligning winter and spring

breaks with OSD to maintain consistency for families and staff across districts. To facilitate this coordination, Allison will contact OSD to determine their proposed dates.

Director Frevert initiated a discussion regarding the efficacy of the current half-day conference model. She questioned whether the district's instructional time might be better utilized by shifting to a schedule of two or three full days of instruction followed by two or three full days dedicated entirely to conferences, rather than the existing series of partial days.

Superintendent Kirsten Rue responded that current legislation prevents the district from counting full days dedicated to conferences as instructional school days. She noted that earlier in her career, the OSD utilized a model of three full days of instruction followed by two full days of conferences, which she found more beneficial for student consistency and learning.

Board Osterberg initiated a discussion regarding the impact of the WSSDA (Washington State School Directors' Association) conference on the proposed November meeting schedule. Board Chair Hefton noted that the Board had previously discussed the possibility of attending the WSSDA conference on an every-other-year basis. She suggested that, as the Board had attended the current year, a return in the immediate following year would potentially be unnecessary, though no formal decision was reached during the discussion.
Superintendent Kirsten Rue presented the proposed academic calendar for the upcoming school year as part of the annual budgeting and planning process. The following key highlights and strategic shifts were noted:

- Start Date: The administration proposed a start date prior to Labor Day weekend (September 2). Superintendent Rue noted that because Labor Day falls late in the year, starting afterward would push the school year past the Juneteenth holiday. Feedback from the GEA indicated a preference for the earlier start to allow for an earlier summer release.
-Conference Scheduling: Based on staff feedback and discussions with the GEA, the spring conferences are proposed to move earlier in the year (the week of the 22nd), shortly after the start of the second semester. The Superintendent supported this "student-centered" shift, noting it fosters better communication immediately following the release of report cards.
-Weather Contingency Days: The calendar embeds two potential snow makeup days to increase the likelihood of maintaining the scheduled final day of school on June 15:
  -February 16: A potential extension of the mid-winter break.
  -May 28: A potential extension of the Memorial Day weekend.

The Board was invited to review the draft and submit any further questions. Formal adoption of the school year calendar will be requested at the next scheduled Board meeting.

Board Director Julie Osterberg initiated a discussion regarding the proposed Board meeting dates for the autumn and winter months. She observed that the schedule appeared to deviate from the standard second and fourth week rotation, specifically for October, November, and December.

Director Osterberg noted that the proposed calendar shifted meetings to the first and third weeks of those months.

Superintendent Rue and the Board discussed the strategic benefits of these adjustments, noting that the traditional schedule would result in meetings falling on November 25 (Thanksgiving week) and December 23 (Christmas week).

It was noted that while the Board traditionally maintains the second and fourth week schedule and modifies individual dates as needed, proactively scheduling meetings for the first and third weeks of these months would better accommodate holidays and the Veterans Day observance. There was discussion on shifting some meetings to Tuesdays if needed. Board Director Tesa Frevert stated she prefers to maintain the consistency of meetings on Wednesdays, as opposed to shifting conflicts to Tuesdays.

Superintendent Kirsten Rue expressed concerns regarding a December 16 meeting date, noting that such an early meeting would create significant challenges for payroll processing and the timely payment of district bills. Superintendent Rue observed that a mid-December meeting followed by a mid-January meeting would result in a month-and-a-half gap between Board decisions and financial approvals.

Director Kim Ferra further clarified that while an early December meeting would be "tight" for generating financial reports and processing accounts payable, the finance department could accommodate the schedule by implementing an earlier cutoff for the month. She concluded that the department would be able to adjust to the December 16 date if the Board moved forward with that option.

Superintendent Kirsten Rue suggested that the August board meeting dates be adjusted to the second and fourth weeks of the month to maintain consistency with the standard schedule. While noting that the week of August 23 is designated as a Professional Development week, she clarified that this would not preclude holding a board meeting. Consequently, the proposed dates for August were shifted to the 11th and 25th.

The Board noted that the Olympia School District (OSD) had not yet finalized its academic calendar. Members discussed the importance of aligning winter and spring breaks with OSD to maintain consistency for families and staff across districts. To facilitate this coordination, Allison will contact OSD to determine their proposed dates.

Director Frevert initiated a discussion regarding the efficacy of the current half-day conference model. She questioned whether the district's instructional time might be better utilized by shifting to a schedule of two or three full days of instruction followed by two or three full days dedicated entirely to conferences, rather than the existing series of partial days.

Superintendent Kirsten Rue responded that current legislation prevents the district from counting full days dedicated to conferences as instructional school days. She noted that earlier in her career, the OSD utilized a model of three full days of instruction followed by two full days of conferences, which she found more beneficial for student consistency and learning.

Board Osterberg initiated a discussion regarding the impact of the WSSDA (Washington State School Directors' Association) conference on the proposed November meeting schedule. Board Chair Hefton noted that the Board had previously discussed the possibility of attending the WSSDA conference on an every-other-year basis. She suggested that, as the Board had attended the current year, a return in the immediate following year would potentially be unnecessary, though no formal decision was reached during the discussion.

B. Health Curriculum Adoption

Principal Rebekah Keiser presented a recommendation to adopt the *Essential Health Skills* curriculum for seventh and eighth-grade health classes. Principal Keiser noted that the district has been in need of a formal, comprehensive curriculum, as previous instruction relied on fragmented materials.

The selection process, which began the previous spring, included the following key developments:

-Pilot Program and Training: The district has been piloting the curriculum since the fall, utilizing free access to online teacher resources. Mr. Sagerser, the current health teacher, and Principal Keiser attended professional training at the start of the school year.

-Instructional Materials Committee (IMC) Review: An IMC was formed to formally evaluate the curriculum. To address concerns regarding potential bias raised the previous spring, the committee used official screening tools from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Five committee members screened individual modules, and the committee reached a unanimous recommendation to move forward with the curriculum.

-Implementation and Cost: While the digital resources are currently integrated into Google Classroom, student feedback indicated that navigating the full curriculum on iPads was difficult. Consequently, the administration recommended purchasing a classroom set of 30 hard-copy textbooks. The publisher offered a 25% discount on the

texts and included all online resources at no additional cost, bringing the total quote to approximately $2,400.

-Comparative Research: In response to board inquiries regarding other options, it was noted that while this was the primary curriculum piloted, Superintendent Rue had previously researched various materials used by surrounding districts. The current recommendation is based on the successful pilot and its alignment with district needs.

Principal Keiser emphasized the importance of transparency regarding the health curriculum, stating her commitment to ensuring the material is clearly defined and easily reviewable by parents. She further noted the value of parental involvement throughout the selection and review process to maintain trust and clarity within the community.

Board Director Emma Rose noted that there are limited options for high-quality, comprehensive health curricula available. She expressed appreciation for the decision to purchase hard-copy textbooks, highlighting the benefit of providing students with physical materials rather than increasing their reliance on screen-based learning.

Director Tesa Frevert concurred with the benefit of adopting a comprehensive curriculum package rather than utilizing fragmented materials. She noted that providing both physical textbooks and digital iPad access offers valuable flexibility for students completing assignments.

In response to Director Frevert’s inquiry regarding student feedback, Principal Keiser stated that she had primarily consulted with the instructor, Mr. Segerser. However, she offered to gather student input via surveys over the following two weeks and present those findings before the Board moved toward a formal adoption of the curriculum at the next meeting.

C. Sports: Pay to Play

Assistant Principal Erin Hagen presented a proposal to implement a "Pay to Play" fee structure for middle school athletics, effective September 1. She provided a comparative analysis of surrounding districts, noting that while the district has historically avoided such fees, rising costs for transportation, officiating, and general athletics operations—coupled with new budgetary restrictions—necessitated the change. Key details of the proposed fee structure include:

-Participation Fee: A $40 fee per student, per sport.
-Family Cap: An annual cap of $150 per family to alleviate the financial burden on households with multiple student-athletes.
-ASB Card Fee: An increase in the ASB card fee to $25, which directly supports athletic programs.

-Equity and Compliance: In accordance with House Bill 1660, all fees will be automatically waived for students eligible for free and reduced-price meals to ensure continued access to extracurricular activities.

The Board reviewed a chart comparing local district fees, which currently range from $25 to $100 per sport. Assistant Principal Hagen noted that the proposed $40 fee serves as a middle-ground approach that remains affordable for families while providing necessary relief to the ASB budget.

The Board held a comprehensive discussion regarding the proposed athletic fee structure, focusing on the balance between fiscal responsibility and student participation.

Director Emma Rose expressed appreciation for the district's long history of avoiding fees but raised concerns regarding the proposed $150 family cap. She noted that while a per-sport fee is understandable, the cap might be too high to provide a meaningful discount for families with multiple children or students participating in multiple seasons. Director Rose suggested that a lower cap or a "one-time fee" model might better incentivize students to remain active across all four sports seasons (Fall, Early Winter, Late Winter, and Spring). Assistant Principal Hagen and the Board discussed how the proposed $40 fee compares to North Thurston’s $60 annual flat fee, noting that the district's model should aim to be both competitive and supportive of multi-sport athletes.

Director Tesa Frevert questioned whether the $40 fee was intended to be a sustainable long-term rate or if families should expect annual increases. Superintendent Rue responded that while budgetary variables—such as upcoming bargaining and general cost fluctuations—make definitive answers difficult, the Board has the authority to direct the administration to maintain the fee at a fixed rate for a set duration (e.g., two years) to provide predictability for district families.

The Board reached a general consensus that implementing a fee is a fiscally responsible step given the rising costs of officials and transportation. The administration agreed to further review the math behind the family cap and the potential for a "multi-sport" discount to ensure the structure encourages rather than discourages participation.

D. Griffin School District Surplus Inventory

Superintendent Rue explained that the provided list had been compiled over several years. She noted that many of the items had been stored in containers and set aside. As the district was upgrading furniture within the building and modernizing specific rooms to increase efficiency, these efforts resulted in the current surplus.

Finance Director Kim Ferra outlined the formal process, noting that the School Board was required to approve the surplus list before it could be published to other local school districts. She explained that neighboring districts were granted the first opportunity to

purchase items. If no contact was made within 30 days, the district maintained the discretion to distribute the items as they saw fit.

Ms. Ferra shared her previous experience in the Yelm School District, where they had hosted staff sales and half-day garage sales. She noted that such events allowed the community, private schools, and other entities to acquire books, desks, and chairs at nominal prices. This approach ensured the items remained in use rather than being sent to a landfill.

Furthermore, she highlighted the fiscal benefits: while the district might only recoup a few hundred dollars, this was preferable to paying disposal fees. She emphasized that this process demonstrated fiscal responsibility to the community. Ms. Ferra suggested that Allison could assist with publicizing the event and noted that staff could volunteer for a limited time on a Saturday to facilitate the sale. She recalled that in Yelm, staff and community members appreciated the opportunity to purchase items such as older iPads, computers, and furniture.

III. Policy Updates

A. 2108 Remediation Programs / Learning Assistance Program

Ms. Rue presented Policy 2108, comparing the current version with the proposed update. She observed that the existing policy was significantly outdated, specifically noting its focus on "remediation" and "educationally disadvantaged students." She stated that such terminology no longer aligned with the district's current educational philosophy.

Ms. Rue expressed a strong preference for the new policy, titled Learning Assistance Program (LAP). She noted that the language had been adjusted to reflect the district’s K-8 structure and focused on supporting students who were not meeting academic standards through supplemental instruction and services. She concluded by emphasizing that updating this policy was considered a critical priority for the district.

Chair Hefton inquired whether the Learning Assistance Program applied to the Transitional Kindergarten (TK) portion of the district's offerings. He questioned whether the policy's scope should remain limited to grades K–8 or if it should be expanded to include the TK program.

Ms. Rue clarified that Transitional Kindergarten (TK) currently operates outside the definition of "basic education." She explained that the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) is specifically designed as a basic education support program. Consequently, she maintained that the policy's language correctly identifies the scope as kindergarten through eighth grade.

B. 6220 Bid or Request for Proposal Requirements

Superintendent Rue introduced Policy 6220, regarding bid or request for proposal (RFP) requirements, as part of the ongoing effort to update the 6,000-series policies. She noted that while the changes were not extensive, they were essential for fiscal compliance. She explained that the policy is divided into two primary sections to ensure the district adheres to specific legal standards:

Part 1: Outlines the bidding processes for non-federal funds, including construction-related services and applicable exemptions.

Part 2: Details procurement procedures when utilizing federal funds.

Ms. Rue emphasized that the district must remain diligent in following the distinct processes required for each funding source to maintain regulatory alignment. She concluded by introducing Kim Ferra to address any highly specific or technical fiscal questions regarding the policy details.

Ms. Ferra detailed the complexities of managing federal funds, noting that these awards carry strict reporting requirements and expenditure thresholds. She explained that the district currently qualifies as a "low-risk auditee" because it receives relatively few federal funds. This status allows the district to undergo audits every two or three years, which significantly reduces costs compared to the expensive annual audits required for higher-risk or high-expenditure entities.

Ms. Ferra emphasized that these thresholds necessitate a clear policy distinction between federal procurement and standard state bidding processes. Beyond mere compliance, she noted that obtaining three solid bids to ensure the lowest price is simply "good business" and demonstrates due diligence to vendors. She concluded by stating that both the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and federal policy establish the specific thresholds the district must follow.

C. 6511 Staff Safety

Superintendent Rue introduced Policy 6511, concerning staff safety, noting that the proposed updates involved only minor language adjustments. She highlighted a specific requirement in the second paragraph mandating that at least one staff member at each school and work site hold a valid first aid certificate.

Ms. Rue confirmed that the district was meeting this standard through the district nurse, most custodial staff, and various coaches who had completed first aid and CPR training. She also addressed the requirement for readily accessible first aid supplies, noting they were well-stocked in the health room. Regarding after-school accessibility, she clarified that while the health room might be closed to the general public, it remained accessible to authorized personnel, such as those overseeing sports activities, who possess the necessary keys.

Director Rose requested clarification regarding the reference to "Department of Labor requirements" in the policy. She inquired whether the language should specifically cite the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) to ensure it refers to state-level mandates rather than federal requirements.

The discussion concluded with an agreement to adjust the policy language to reference both OSHA (federal) and WISHA (state) standards, or to explicitly list the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries to ensure full compliance and clarity. Ms. Rue confirmed that these technical adjustments would be made to the final draft.

IV. Policy Review

A. 6250 Cellular Phones

Superintendent Rue explained that this review was part of a broader effort to modernize the 6,000-series policies, which the Board previously identified as the most outdated in the district's records. While the substantive requirements of the policy remained relatively functional, Ms. Rue emphasized that the new version offered a more accessible format. She concluded by suggesting the update was a straightforward administrative improvement that confirmed the district had reviewed and modernized its fiscal policies.

V. Superintendent Updates

A. Superintendent Kirsten Rue

Superintendent Rue provided an update on several district highlights and administrative changes:

-Billy Frank Jr. Assembly: Ms. Rue reported on the success of the inaugural Billy Frank Jr. assembly. She expressed gratitude to the Squaxin Island Tribe for their participation through drumming, dancing, and singing. She specifically commended staff members Jen Jirsa, Eric Fleming, Anneka Brown, and Sherrie Hickam for their planning efforts, noting that despite minor technical issues with videos, the event was a significant success.

-Kindergarten Enrollment and Child Find: Ms. Rue shared concerns regarding low registration numbers for the upcoming Child Find and Kindergarten registration events. She noted that the term "Child Find" might be confusing to parents and indicated that the district had conducted extensive outreach to local daycares. To improve engagement, she met with kindergarten teachers to discuss hosting a separate evening event in late April to better project enrollment numbers before the start of the school year.

-Personnel Changes: Ms. Rue formally announced the retirement of Kim Ferra at the conclusion of the school year. She noted that she was working with the Educational Service District (ESD) to finalize a job description for a Business Manager position, which

would be posted shortly. The new structure would involve shifting payroll responsibilities to Noel.

-Fiscal Recognition: Ms. Rue concluded by publicly thanking Ms. Ferra for her service to the Griffin School District. She credited Ms. Ferra with maintaining the district's fiscal health and keeping the budget "in the black" during challenging times, while also providing essential mentorship to Ms. Rue during her first two years as Superintendent.

Ms. Rue shared her excitement regarding a recent award from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Drawing a parallel to the "Blue Ribbon" awards of the past, she noted that Superintendent Chris Reykdal has introduced a new recognition system focused on student achievement and growth. Ms. Rue explained that the district has been recognized among the top 25 schools for high achievement and growth—a distinction shared by only a select group of districts in the state.

VI. Closing Items

A. For the Good of the Order

Chair Hefton announced that she has officially joined the Board of the South Sound Reading Foundation. She reported attending her first board meeting the previous Monday, noting the inspiring collaboration between local school board directors and community members dedicated to promoting literacy.

Chair Hefton extended an invitation to the rest of the Board for the foundation's upcoming "Readers are Leaders" fundraiser, scheduled for April 15th at 7:00 a.m. She noted that the event, which coincides with the foundation's 25th anniversary, will serve as both a celebration of their legacy of getting books into the hands of children and a vital fundraising effort. She confirmed that Kirsten Rue and Kim Ferra had already registered and encouraged others to join her table for the breakfast event.

Dr. McDaniel offered his congratulations to the district for receiving the Excellence Award. He noted that he had learned of the achievement a few days prior, remarking that the recognition is reserved for only the "best of the best" and that the timing was wonderful.

Dr. McDaniel concluded his remarks by extending his personal congratulations to Ms. Ferra. He thanked the Board and staff for allowing him to attend the study session, commended the group on a productive and well-conducted meeting, and expressed his intention to meet with them again in the future.

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:11 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Trish Hefton

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