APPROVED

Griffin School District #324

Minutes

Griffin School Board Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday March 25, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location
Griffin School Cafeteria

Attend via Zoom

Board Meeting Zoom Link

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

Directors Absent
None

Guests Present
4th Grade Students, Allison Adair, Band Students, Band Students, Erin Hagen, Family members of students, Jennifer Jirsa, Jennifer Palmer, Karen Lett, Kim Ferra, Kirsten Rue, Kyle Nixon, Rebekah Keiser, Sarina Schreck, Tanisha Smith

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 25, 2026 at 6:00 PM.
Tesa Frevert made a motion to Approve the agenda.
Blair Baker seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

C. School Board Recognition

Superintendent Kirsten Rue introduced Sophie Skillman for formal recognition by the Board. Superintendent Rue highlighted Ms. Skillman’s long-standing commitment to the "No Valentine Left Behind" program, an initiative she founded as a fifth-grade student.

The Superintendent noted that Ms. Skillman, now a high school senior, has continued to serve the Griffin K-8 community for several years, ensuring that every student receives a Valentine’s Day acknowledgment. The Board expressed its appreciation for her sustained leadership and dedication to fostering inclusivity within the district.

Ms. Skillman shared an update regarding her recent community service achievements, noting that she was in the process of finalizing her Girl Scout Gold Award. She highlighted her history of service within the district, which included completing her Silver Award project—a world map mural on the Griffin playground—during her eighth-grade year.

For her Gold Award project, Ms. Skillman partnered with the Panorama Living Facility to address senior isolation. She organized caroling and bingo events, successfully bridging the generational gap by involving local Girl Scouts and other area youth in these activities.

Superintendent Rue commended Ms. Skillman for her exceptional commitment to community service, specifically noting her ability to support both younger students at Griffin and elderly residents within the broader community. The Superintendent praised Ms. Skillman as a "shining example" of the leadership developed through long-term dedication to the Girl Scouts. She concluded by stating that Ms. Skillman’s leadership and compassion embodied the ideal spirit of a Griffin graduate.

D. Band Performance

Jennifer Palmer, Music Specialist and Band Director, introduced a series of student performances, noting the high caliber and dedication of the current music ensemble. She emphasized that students had independently selected their pieces to perform in small groups and solo arrangements.

The following students performed:

Ella (6th Grade, French Horn): Performed a selection from *"Whistle While You Work."* She expressed her appreciation for the process of translating heard music into her own performance.

Rosa (7th Grade, Alto Saxophone) & Ben (7th Grade, French Horn): Performed the *"Irish Washerwoman"* duet. Mrs. Palmer highlighted the unique technical challenges of the French horn and its versatile role in both woodwind and brass arrangements.

Zoe (8th Grade, Trumpet): Performed a solo excerpt from the concert piece *"Convergence."* She noted that the "tight-knit community" and social bonds of the band were her favorite aspects of the program.

Khaleesi (7th Grade, Clarinet) & Lailee (7th Grade, Trumpet): Performed *"Can Stars."* The students highlighted the unique tonal qualities and range of their respective instruments.

Mrs. Palmer concluded the presentation by advocating for the vital role of arts education in schools, noting both the cognitive benefits and the ability of music to unify students from diverse backgrounds.

The final performance featured a duet arrangement by Leland and Nicky, of "Flight of the Bumblebee." Mrs. Palmer noted that while typically a solo piece, the students had dedicated approximately 40 to 60 hours of rehearsal to master the complex technical requirements of the work.

The Board expressed its collective gratitude to the student performers and Mrs. Palmer. Members remarked that student presentations and performances represented the most rewarding aspect of their roles as school board directors.

The Board formally thanked Mrs. Palmer for her years of dedicated service to the music department, attributing the continued excellence and "stellar" reputation of the Griffin music program to her leadership.

E. 4th Graders: Essay Readings

Fourth-grade teachers Jen Jirsa, Sarina Schreck, and Tanisha Smith presented an overview of a recent writing unit. Ms. Schreck explained that students utilized a trial of the Mystery Writing curriculum to develop informative essays focused on Seoul, South Korea.

Several fourth-grade students shared excerpts from their research-based essays, highlighting key cultural and geographical landmarks, including:

-Lotte World and Lotte World Tower: Students described the features of the tallest building in South Korea, as well as the amenities at the theme park, such as the ice skating rink and various food stalls.
-Gocheok Sky Dome: Presentations included details on the interactive elements of attending events at the dome, specifically the use of synchronized light sticks and mobile applications for seating.
-The Lantern Festival: Students highlighted the cultural significance of the festival, describing traditional street foods—such as animal-shaped candy and fish-shaped pastries—and the process of releasing LED lanterns.
-Local Attractions: Additional reports focused on regional activities, including interactions with local wildlife and the various recreational parks available in Seoul.

The teachers noted that the project allowed students to practice descriptive writing and organizational skills while exploring international geography.

Ms. Jirsa provided additional context regarding the writing project, noting that student representatives Ethan, Lexa, Jordan, Milo, and Braylon shared excerpts from their individual five-paragraph essays.

She emphasized the high level of student engagement and the success of the Mystery Writing curriculum in supporting diverse learners. Ms. Jirsa reported that 100% of fourth-grade students, including those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and students in the Life Skills program, successfully completed full five-paragraph essays. She noted that in her extensive tenure at Griffin, she had not previously seen such consistent success across all student demographics in a writing unit.

II. Public Comment

A. Comments from the Public

No comments from the public were made.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes - February 25, 2026

Julie Osterberg made a motion to approve the minutes from Griffin School Board Meeting on 02-25-26.
Blair Baker seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. Approval of Study Session Minutes - March 11, 2026

Julie Osterberg made a motion to approve the minutes from Griffin School Board Study Session on 03-11-26.
Blair Baker seconded the motion.

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

C. Approval of Warrants & Payroll

D. Approval of the Enrollment Report

E. Approval of the Personnel Report

F. Approval of Griffin School District Surplus Inventory

G. Review of Public Records Requests

H. Approval of All Consent Agenda Items

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

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Approval of District Calendar 2026-2027

Superintendent Rue presented the proposed academic calendar, noting that the draft provided in the Board packets aligned with prior study session discussions. She confirmed that the district's Spring and Winter break schedules were coordinated with the Olympia School District's tentative calendar to ensure regional consistency.

Key highlights of the proposed calendar included:
-School Start Date: Classes were scheduled to begin on September 3, following the Labor Day holiday.
-Early Learning: The first day for Preschool and Kindergarten students was set for September 8.
-Board Meeting Schedule: Adjustments were made to the September Board meeting dates as previously discussed by the members.

Superintendent Rue noted that while the Olympia School District had not yet officially adopted its final calendar, preliminary communications indicated the two districts remained in alignment.
Julie Osterberg made a motion to Approve the District Calendar 2026-2027.
Emma Rose seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. Health Curriculum Adoption

Principal Rebekah Keiser provided an update following the initial health curriculum proposal presented two weeks prior. To ensure the inclusion of student perspectives,

Principal Keiser conducted a formal survey of 35 current health students regarding the proposed materials.

Student Survey Results Principal Keiser presented the following data from the student feedback:
-Representation: 94% of students reported seeing themselves or their community represented in the lessons (17% "definitely," 77% "somewhat").
-Clarity: 91.4% of respondents found the essential ideas of the lessons "easy" or "very easy" to understand.
-Confidence in Healthy Choices: 71% of students reported feeling more confident in making healthy choices after reviewing the materials, while 28.6% reported feeling "a little bit" more confident.
-Tone and Relatability: 71% of students felt the tone of the curriculum was appropriate, while 62.9% noted that the stories and examples sometimes reflected issues relevant to their age group.
-Engagement: On a scale of 1 to 5 (boring to exciting), the majority of students rated the materials at a 3, indicating a neutral to positive level of interest.

Principal Keiser shared an infographic summarizing qualitative feedback. Students identified the nutrition and mental health units as highlights of the curriculum. However, they expressed a desire for fewer text-heavy assignments, recommending a shift from reading and answering questions to more hands-on activities, particularly within the nutrition unit.

The Board reviewed the infographic as part of the ongoing evaluation for curriculum adoption.
Julie Osterberg made a motion to Approve the Essential Health Skills Curriculum for Middle School.
Tesa Frevert seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

C. Sports: Pay to Play

Assistant Principal and Athletic Director Erin Hagen presented a revised proposal for student athletic fees, incorporating Board feedback to prioritize equity and accessibility. Ms. Hagen noted that last year, 120 out of 200 eligible students participated in at least one sport.

Revised Fee Recommendations The updated proposal transitioned from a per-sport fee to a simplified annual structure:
-Annual Sports Participation Fee: A one-time $75 fee allowing a student to participate in unlimited sports for the academic year.
-ASB Card Fee: An increase to $25 annually.

-Equity Provisions: Fees would be waived for students qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch, with the district covering those costs.
-Family Cap: The previously discussed family cap was removed, as the $75 annual flat fee per student was deemed sufficiently cost-effective for families.

Ms. Hagen and Superintendent Rue clarified the intended use of the revenue:
-General Fund ($75 fee): Allocated toward coaching stipends and transportation. Superintendent Rue clarified that this revenue would only offset approximately 10% of total coaching stipend costs.
-ASB Fund ($25 fee): Allocated to the general ASB fund to help cover officials, uniforms, and equipment.

The Board discussed the long-term plan for these fees. Ms. Hagen recommended the structure remain in place for the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 school years, with a formal re-evaluation scheduled after two years to assess the impact on participation and budget offsets.
Emma Rose made a motion to Approve the Pay to Play Proposal.
Julie Osterberg seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

V. POLICY - UPDATES

A. 2108 Learning Assistance Program

Julie Osterberg made a motion to Approve the update of 2108 Learning Assistance Program.
Tesa Frevert seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. 6220 Bid or Request for Proposal Requirements

Emma Rose made a motion to Approve the update of 6220 Bid or Request for Proposal Requirements.
Julie Osterberg seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

C. 6511 Staff Safety

Emma Rose made a motion to Approve the update of 6511 Staff Safety.
Julie Osterberg seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VI. POLICY - REVIEW

A. 6250 Cellular Phones

Emma Rose made a motion to Approve the Review of 6250 Cellular Phones.

Tesa Frevert seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VII. DISTRICT REPORTS

A. Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Kim Ferra presented the budget status reports through February 2026. She noted a current trend in the General Fund where the district is not meeting its minimum fund balance requirements.

Ms. Ferra explained that February and March are historically low months for the district's cash flow, with recovery typically beginning in the following months. She informed the Board that the finance office is working diligently to develop tools and processes during the upcoming budget cycle to restore the fund balance to required levels. Superintendent Rue and Ms. Ferra will continue to collaborate on this recovery plan.

Surplus Property: Ms. Ferra thanked the Board for the recent approval of surplus equipment. The items will be sent to the Educational Service District (ESD) for a 30-day period to allow other districts the opportunity to acquire the property. She noted that several items are already of interest to neighboring districts.

Healthy Schools Grant: Although the district’s initial application for the Healthy Schools grant was denied, OSPI later notified the district of available supplemental funding. The district was awarded $7,500, which will be used to purchase a new oven for the kitchen. Ms. Ferra noted this upgrade would significantly improve meal preparation efficiency for the kitchen staff.

B. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Rue provided updates on departmental achievements, new instructional technology, and the district’s fiscal outlook.

Transportation Department Recognition
The Superintendent commended Karen Lett and the transportation department for achieving a perfect score on their recent Washington State Patrol inspection. She noted that this high level of professionalism and safety has been a consistent trend for the department.

Instructional Technology: School AI
Superintendent Rue announced that the district entered into agreements with Homeroom and School AI. She expressed excitement regarding the specific "guardrails" and teacher supports provided by School AI, which are designed to streamline lesson planning and allow educators to focus more on direct student intervention. Early adopter training was scheduled for April 15, with full staff training to follow in August.

Fiscal Update and Enrollment Projections
Superintendent Rue presented a comprehensive fiscal summary, highlighting several areas of concern:
-Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Funding: Statewide funding for TK programs is facing reductions. The Superintendent noted that OSPI has not yet provided clarity on how these cuts will be distributed, creating challenges for staffing and budgetary decisions for the upcoming year.
-Declining Enrollment: Birth rate trends from the pandemic era are beginning to impact kindergarten enrollment. Currently, the district has confirmed 31 kindergarten students for next year, compared to the 56 students in the current cohort. A "Kindergarten Kickoff" event is scheduled for April 30 to bolster registration.
-Cash Flow and Fund Balance: The Superintendent reviewed the district's cash balance as a percentage of expenditures. In January and February 2026, the balance reached 5.7%, which she described as "uncomfortably low." While a spike is expected in April following levy collections, she emphasized the need for a fiscal correction.
-Budgeting Trends: Upon reviewing historical F-195 budget reports dating back to 2013-2014, Superintendent Rue identified a recurring pattern of budgeted expenditures exceeding projected revenue. She stated that the district must transition to a balanced budget where expenditures equal revenue, as the district no longer has sufficient reserves to offset deficits.

Director Tesa Frevert inquired about the district's strategies for advertising kindergarten enrollment to the community, noting that she had primarily seen information on the district app.

Superintendent Rue outlined several ongoing and planned recruitment efforts:
-Regional Networking: Outreach has been expanded beyond traditional local daycares to include facilities throughout the Olympia and Tumwater areas.
-Direct Communication: Emails were sent to current Griffin families.
-Physical Signage: The district planned to place high-visibility signage (similar to election yard signs) at key traffic points, including Steamboat Island Road and the Highway 101 off-ramps.
-Event Rebranding: Superintendent Rue noted that the "Child Find" event yielded lower-than-expected registration (only two families), suggesting that the terminology may not resonate with all parents. Consequently, the district scheduled a "Kindergarten Kickoff" for April 30 to provide a more targeted entry point for families.

Superintendent Rue reiterated that while outreach is a priority, the district must prepare for a likely reduction in class sections due to historically low birth rates and the lack of new residential zoning in the area.

Director Frevert also questioned the current enrollment status for the TK program given the funding uncertainty. Superintendent Rue clarified that the district is currently

maintaining a **waitlist** for TK. Families are being informed that the program's availability is contingent upon pending funding guidance from OSPI. The Superintendent noted that districts statewide are awaiting these same answers to finalize their 2026-2027 planning.

VIII. Closing Items

A. For the Good of the Order

Director Tesa Frevert shared an update regarding the Griffin Archery Program. She announced that 59 students were scheduled to compete in the upcoming state archery tournament.

Director Frevert highlighted the success of the newly established program, noting that the Archery Booster Club—which launched over the summer—successfully raised sufficient funds to cover all tournament entrance fees and provide team shirts for every participating student. Additionally, the Booster Club provided several scholarships to assist families with travel-related expenses, ensuring the tournament remained accessible to all qualified archers.

Director Emma Rose provided an update regarding the upcoming WSSDA (Washington State School Directors' Association) Director Area 5 regional meeting.

Event Details:
Date: April 30, 2026.
Location: Tenino High School, Tenino, WA.
Focus: The meeting will emphasize legislative advocacy and interim work following a challenging legislative session for public education.

Director Rose characterized the recent legislative session as disappointing for public education, specifically noting the lack of support for programs such as Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and various other unfunded mandates. She stressed that WSSDA is shifting its focus toward robust legislative action during the interim period.

Director Rose encouraged other Board members to attend the Tenino meeting, noting that it serves as a vital networking opportunity and a "mini-conference" for directors to collaborate on common regional issues. She informed the Board that she is personally unavailable that evening due to a prior commitment and will send a follow-up email with registration details to ensure Griffin is represented.

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trish Hefton

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