APPROVED

Griffin School District #324

Minutes

Griffin School Board Study Session

Date and Time
Wednesday May 13, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location
Griffin Library

Attend via Zoom

Zoom Link

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

Directors Absent
None

Directors who arrived after the meeting opened
Emma Rose

Guests Present
Allison Adair, Amy Morgan (remote), Anneka Brown (remote), Kim Ferra, Kirsten Rue, Rebekah Keiser, Traci Johnson (remote)

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 May 13, 2026 at 6:02 PM.

C. Pledge of Allegiance & Land Acknowledgement

D. Approval of Agenda

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

II. New Business

A. ASB Constitution

ASB Constitution Proposal

Superintendent Kirsten Rue introduced a first reading of the revised Student Leadership Club (ASB) Constitution. She highlighted a key update in Article 3, Section 4 regarding the addition of student representatives to the School Board, pending final policy approval in two weeks.

ASB Advisor Anneka Brown explained that the revisions aimed to increase student accountability and momentum. She noted that while 27 students initially joined the club, consistent attendance dropped to 10–15 members. To address this, Mrs. Brown moved meetings to Friday Advisory periods to ensure accessibility while reducing absences caused by students choosing social "flex" time over club obligations.

The Board spoke in favor of the official name change to "Student Leadership Club" and commended the new accountability standards. The revised constitution was slated for formal approval at the next board meeting.

B. District Communication Update

District Communication Update

Executive Assistant Allison Adair provided an update on the district's communication goals, which focused on clarity, consistency, and connection. Key achievements from the past year included:
-Operational Consistency: Establishing rigorous processes for message double-checking and optimal channel use.
-Volume Control: Actively managing the frequency of communications to prevent "information overload" and ensure families remained engaged.

-The Grizzly Gazette: Successfully launching a monthly district-wide newsletter sent on the first school day of each month.
-Community Responsiveness: Prioritizing professional and timely responses to parent and community inquiries, typically within the same business day.

A mid-year survey of district families revealed that email and Facebook remained the most consistent platforms for receiving information. Notably, 70% of respondents felt the current volume of communication was appropriate.

Based on survey feedback and student requests, Ms. Adair announced several upcoming digital initiatives:
-Instagram Launch: A new account was planned for summer 2026 to better reach the student population.
-Video Messaging: The district began exploring the feasibility of video updates.
-Platform Streamlining: In response to parent frustration regarding the variety of apps used by individual teachers, the district planned to work with staff to streamline classroom-level communication.

Ms. Adair detailed three major initiatives for the 2026-2027 school year:
-Parent Communication Team: A new advisory group was being formed to act as the "eyes and ears" of the community. A Google interest form was being distributed to ensure representation from elementary, middle, tribal, and SPED families.
-100th Anniversary Celebration: The "1927 Crew" planning committee—comprising staff, board members, and community representatives—had begun organizing centennial festivities.
-Griffin PAWS Program: Standing for *Partners Aligning With Students*, this new sponsorship model allowed local businesses to support specific clubs or classes (e.g., a $500 sponsorship for the cooking club) in exchange for digital branding and district recognition.

Superintendent Rue commended Ms. Adair for her work in elevating the district's professional image and improving communication systems. The Board noted the impressive volume of work and expressed support for the upcoming engagement projects.

III. New Policy

A. 1250 Students on Governing Boards

Emma Rose arrived at 6:30 PM.
Superintendent Kirsten Rue presented a second reading of Policy 1250, which established the framework for student representatives to serve on the School Board. She emphasized that because Board members would interact with these students regularly, it was essential to understand the underlying procedures.

Key points regarding the selection process included:
-Joint Selection: A designated Board member would collaborate with the Superintendent to review applications and conduct interviews.
-Selection Criteria: The Board discussed whether the role should be tied to a specific office (such as Board Chair or Legislative Representative) or remain open to any member with the capacity and availability to mentor the students. The consensus leaned toward a flexible appointment based on individual member bandwidth.

The Board engaged in a robust discussion regarding whether student representatives should be granted an advisory vote. Superintendent Rue noted that this practice was encouraged by the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) to ensure student voices were formally recognized.

The Board reached several conclusions regarding this privilege:
-Purpose of the Vote: While student votes would not be legally binding, they would serve as a formal "temperature check" of the student body's perspective. If student representatives voted in opposition to a proposal, it would signal the Board to engage in more robust discussion or provide further clarification.
-Language Adjustments: The Board suggested amending the policy language from "will" to "may" regarding the advisory vote. This change aimed to provide students with the opportunity to weigh in without the pressure of being required to vote on every issue, especially those where they might feel uninformed or intimidated.
-Voting Procedure: To minimize individual intimidation, the Board proposed that student representatives vote as a group—similar to the standard Board procedure—by calling for all in favor and then those opposed.

The Board expressed significant enthusiasm for the initiative, viewing it as a respectful way to integrate student opinions into district policy-making. Superintendent Rue committed to working with the students to help them review complex policies ahead of time so they could provide informed feedback during meetings.

This policy was scheduled for final approval at the next board meeting.

B. 2140 Comprehensive School Counseling Program

Superintendent Kirsten Rue introduced Policy 2140, a new policy concerning the district’s school counseling "footprint". She noted that while the district did not previously have this specific policy in place, it was recently identified as a high-priority item in the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) policy and legal updates.

Key points of the discussion included:
-Professional Value: Superintendent Rue expressed her strong support for the district's counselors and the essential work they perform.
-Staffing Challenges: She acknowledged the ongoing challenge of staffing.

-Program Scope: The Board reviewed the policy language.

The policy was presented to be added to ensure the district remains aligned with current legal recommendations regarding student support services.

IV. Policy Updates

A. 5011 Sexual Harassment of District Staff Prohibited

Superintendent Kirsten Rue presented an update to Policy 5011, which addresses the prohibition of sexual harassment of district staff. She noted that this revision was prompted by updates from the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) in March.

The primary driver for the update was recent changes in Title IX law. Superintendent Rue explained that the revision was not a major shift in policy but rather the addition of specific language regarding sexual harassment to ensure the district remains in full legal compliance.

B. 6100 Revenues from Local, State & Federal Sources

Superintendent Kirsten Rue introduced an update to Policy 6100, which governs the intake and management of district revenues from local, state, and federal sources. She noted that the existing policy dated back to 1999 and required significant revisions to reflect modern standards.

The primary objectives of the update included:
-Modernization: Bringing the policy's language and procedures into the 21st century as part of a broader effort to update the district's 6000-series financial policies.
-Regulatory Alignment: Addressing the significant shifts in how school revenues have been structured and managed since the policy's original adoption.
-Management Oversight: Outlining the specific processes the district follows to manage and track various revenue streams effectively.

C. 6112 Rental or Lease of District Real Property

Superintendent Kirsten Rue presented updates to Policy 6112, which were part of an ongoing series to modernize district financial policies. The revisions included significant changes to the setup and the addition of specific language highlighted in the draft. The Board reviewed optional sample language regarding an exception for property rented or leased as a personal domicile. Although the district's 41st property is occasionally rented for day use, the Board determined that the domicile exception was not applicable to current operations. The Board reached a consensus to exclude the domicile language to ensure it was clear that district property is not intended for residential use.

D. 6500 Risk Management

Superintendent Kirsten Rue introduced updates to Policy 6500, noting the outlined additional language included in the draft. During the review, it was clarified that because the district is categorized as a second-class district, the language specific to first-class districts would be removed to shorten and simplify the policy. In response to Board inquiries, the Superintendent explained that the distinction between first and second-class districts is based on student population, with first-class districts serving 2,000 or more students. The Board discussed how these classifications affect various administrative deadlines and agreed to proceed with the more concise version of the policy tailored to the district's size.

V. Policy Review

A. 6120 Investment Funds

Superintendent Kirsten Rue transitioned the session to a formal review of Policy 6120, concerning investment funds. This review was part of a larger administrative effort to update and maintain clean copies of district policies, specifically focusing on those that had not been formally revisited by the Board in the last 25 years. The Superintendent clarified that Policy 6120, along with the subsequent two policies on the agenda, were presented for review to ensure the Board remained current on all financial and administrative procedures. The process was described as a standard measure to maintain institutional accuracy and ensure that every governing document has been recently vetted by the active Board.

B. 6216 Reimbursement for Goods & Services: Warrants

C. 6513 Workplace Violence Prevention

VI. Superintendent Updates

A. Superintendent Kirsten Rue

I. Understanding the Five District Funds
Superintendent Kirsten Rue grounded the Board in the reality of school finance, noting that the district operates five distinct budgets with very limited ability to transfer money between them:
-General Fund: The primary area of concern, used for staff salaries, curriculum, and daily operating costs.
-ASB Fund: Student-managed funds for extracurriculars.
-Transportation Vehicle Fund: Restricted for the purchase of school buses.
-Capital Projects Fund: Funds designated by voters for building maintenance and repairs (currently healthy).
-Debt Service Fund: Used for principal and interest payments.

II. Staffing Reductions and Enrollment Realities

Due to a projected decrease of 36 students for the 2026-27 school year, primarily in Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten (TK), the Superintendent announced necessary staffing reductions to stabilize the General Fund:
-Certificated & Administrative: Reduction of 2.0 Teacher FTE and 0.2 Assistant Principal.
-Classified Staff: Reduction of 2.0 Paraeducator positions, 1.0 Office Professional, 1.0 Food Service Assistant, and 1.0 Custodial position.
-Operational Changes: All Paraeducators will move from 7-hour to 6.5-hour shifts.
-District Office: The Fiscal Director role will transition to a Business Manager model, resulting in a 27% salary reduction through reallocated duties.

The Superintendent noted that while keeping staff "close to the kids" is the priority, enrollment is currently at a post-COVID low across Washington State, largely due to declining birth rates.

III. The Structural Deficit
The Superintendent highlighted a "structural deficit," where expenditures—driven by state-mandated costs—grow faster than state revenue.
-Salary Gaps: The state provides a flat $80,000 per teacher, but the average Griffin teacher salary is approximately $97,000. The district must use local levy dollars to cover the $17,000 difference per teacher.
-The Levy Lid: While the community is generous, state "levy lids" cap how much the district can collect ($2.50 per student). As enrollment drops, the total levy revenue also drops.
-Unfunded Mandates: Costs for health benefits (SEBB), utilities, insurance, and substitutes (state funding for subs is typically exhausted by mid-October) continue to outpace state funding.

IV. Financial Outlook and Fund Balance
The district's ending fund balance has seen a "precipitous drop," falling from $2.8 million to $1.4 million over the last few years.
-Cash Flow Challenges: The district faces its lowest cash reserves in January, February, and March when state apportionment is at its minimum.
-Binding Conditions: The Superintendent warned that without these current cuts, the district would risk "binding conditions"—a state of financial insolvency where the state takes over district decision-making or forces a merger with a neighboring district.

V. Advocacy and Next Steps
The Board discussed making "levy lid" reform a legislative priority. Superintendent Rue emphasized that the current system prevents taxpayers from paying the full amount they have already voted to approve for their schools. A fiscal update with graphics showing the gap between voter-approved amounts and actual collections is planned for the next meeting to further illustrate this point to the public.

VII. Closing Items

A. For the Good of the Order

I. WSSDA Regional Meeting Takeaways
Board members Osterberg and Frevert shared insights from the recent WSSDA (Washington State School Directors' Association) Director Area 5 regional meeting held in Tenino. Key discussion points included:
-WSSDA Strategic Plan: The association is actively seeking feedback on how they can make the greatest impact. Board members were encouraged to submit feedback on legislative priorities and district needs through the Legislative Representative.
-Legislative Advocacy: A key takeaway was the importance of engaging legislators outside of the active session. The Board discussed inviting legislators to low-pressure events such as promotion ceremonies, celebrations, or monthly study sessions to build relationships and showcase district programs.
-Community Outreach: The meeting sparked a discussion on increasing Board presence at community events. Potential opportunities identified included:
-Neighborhood Association Picnic: This was identified as a major event for direct community engagement.
-Local Groups: Increasing participation or presentations at the Griffin Neighborhood Association, the Grange, and the Lions Club.
-Digital/Market Events: Exploring presence at the "monthly market" sales or Grange events.

II. Collaboration and Regional Networking
The Board discussed the benefits of networking with neighboring districts to share strategies and address common challenges:
-District Networking: There was a noted interest in joining regular meetings held by superintendents and legislative representatives from Olympia, North Thurston, and Tumwater.
-Student Engagement: A member shared an idea from another small district regarding a "tech-free weekend" challenge between neighboring middle schools to foster student relationships across district lines.

III. Celebrations and Upcoming Events
The Board highlighted several upcoming milestones and community recognitions:
-Senior Luncheon: The Griffin School Foundation is hosting a luncheon for seniors (55+) on Tuesday, May 19th at 12:00 PM. Board members were encouraged to attend to connect with community members.
Student Achievement: The Board will recognize a local Girl Scout for her impressive work on a battery recycling project.
-Promotion and Graduation: Griffin 8th Grade Promotion June 11, CHS Graduation June 12

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Trish Hefton

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