APPROVED

Griffin School District #324

Minutes

Griffin School Board Study Session

Date and Time
Wednesday June 10, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location
Griffin Library

Attend via Zoom

Zoom Link

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

Directors Absent
Tesa Frevert

Guests Present
Allison Adair, Kim Ferra, Kirsten Rue, Kyler Mower, Traci Johnson

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 Jun 10, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

C. Pledge of Allegiance & Land Acknowledgement

D. Approval of Agenda

Emma Rose made a motion to approve the agenda.
Blair Baker seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. New Business

A. Food Services Price Increase

Superintendent Kirsten Rue presented a formal recommendation regarding a mandatory student lunch price increase for the upcoming school year.

Key Discussion Points:
-Regulatory Compliance: Superintendent Rue noted that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) requires the district to utilize a Paid Lunch Equity tool annually. This tool evaluates whether current food service pricing aligns with actual program expenditures and dictates necessary adjustments.
-Pricing Mandate and Caps: Calculations run by staff indicated that a price increase is legally required for the upcoming school year. The tool establishes a maximum increase cap of 10 cents per meal. Consequently, student lunch prices will increase by 10 cents, moving from the current rate of $4.00 to $4.10. It was noted that milk prices will remain unchanged. Adult meal pricing is not governed by this specific policy and will be evaluated separately.
-Historical Context and Regional Comparison: The Board reviewed that a previous price adjustment was implemented last year under the same regulatory framework. Trustees noted that despite the consecutive increases, the district’s lunch prices remain lower than neighboring districts, such as the Olympia School District.

Board Discussion: Board members acknowledged the rising operational and food delivery costs impacting the program. While trustees expressed empathy for local families regarding the broader economic climate and rising cost of living, they recognized that the price adjustment is a non-discretionary federal/state compliance requirement to ensure the food service program does not operate at a deficit.

III. Policy Updates

A. 3110 Qualification of Attendance and Placement

The Board conducted a first reading of the updates to Policy 3110, which aims to align district operations with current legal frameworks while introducing strategic flexibility for

early childhood programming, specifically Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and mixed TK/Kindergarten split placements.

Correction of Grade Placement Language: Under Section B (Entrance Qualifications), the Board identified a clerical error in the standard Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) model language regarding entry requirements. The text mistakenly referenced entry into the "first grade program" rather than the "kindergarten program." Staff will correct this language prior to the second reading to ensure it accurately aligns with the district's early learning integration plans.
Removal of Irrelevant K-12 Model Language: Because Griffin School District operates strictly as a K-8 district, the Board reviewed statutory references regarding student eligibility up to age 21. It was determined that the section detailing compulsory attendance exemptions for individuals between the ages of 16 and 21 does not apply to the district's operational scope. To streamline the policy, this section will be struck, while the standard baseline legal definitions in the upper portion will be retained for community clarity.

Holistic Readiness Criteria for Early Entry: The Board discussed the current language regarding exemptions for younger students who appear "sufficiently advanced to succeed" in the educational program. To prevent parent misconceptions that early entry is determined solely by academic benchmarks (e.g., literacy or numeracy), the Board directed that the policy language be amended to explicitly include social-emotional competence as a core criterion alongside academic readiness. Corresponding district assessment procedures will reinforce these dual standards.

Clarification on Compulsory Attendance Exemptions: In response to trustee inquiries regarding statutory exceptions to compulsory attendance under Section A(4), Superintendent Rue provided historical and procedural context. The most common exemptions granted locally involve documented medical issues that preclude school attendance. In complex cases, the district utilizes a formal Attendance Community Board —frequently involving a representative from the Thurston County Family Court—to establish collaborative, alternative attendance structures in compliance with state truancy laws.

Administrative Authority and Placement Jurisdiction: The Board debated Section C regarding whether the final authority for student placement decisions should rest with the "principal" (per the WSSDA model) or be modified to the "superintendent or designee" to accommodate the district's small operational scale. After evaluating administrative delegation and ensuring that day-to-day admissions management remains properly situated with the building principal, the Board consensus was to leave the language as originally drafted, maintaining the decision-making authority at the principal level.

Scope of Policy Regarding Transitional Kindergarten (TK): The Board clarified that because TK is not legally classified as part of the state's "Basic Education" allocation

framework, it is not governed by the same statutory age-of-admission rules. Consequently, specific language regarding TK or TK-to-TK transfers does not need to be integrated into this specific K-8 policy framework.

B. 3421 Child Abuse and Neglect

Superintendent Rue presented an updated draft of Policy 3421, noting that many sections of the district's active policy manual have not been significantly revised since 1999 or 2000. The proposed update incorporates necessary statutory changes enacted over the last 25 years regarding the reporting of child abuse and neglect. Following a high-profile non-compliance case in Longview, WA, the Board emphasized the urgency of finalizing this policy to ensure comprehensive staff training prior to the start of the upcoming school year.

Removal of Discretionary Community Education Provisions: The Board reviewed a standard model clause stating that "when feasible, the district will provide community education programs for prospective parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents." Trustees raised concerns regarding operational capacity and the legal vulnerability introduced by the ambiguous phrase "when feasible." By consensus, the Board directed that this entire paragraph be struck from the policy to protect the district from unintended liability while keeping the focus on core educational operations.

Training Frequency Alignment: The Board verified that while state law requires mandatory reporting training "upon initial employment and at least every three years thereafter," Griffin School District currently exceeds this minimum threshold by conducting training annually. To ensure legal compliance, the baseline legal requirement (every three years) will be preserved in the policy text, while current annual implementation procedures will remain in practice. Superintendent Rue noted that this participation is an absolute mandatory condition of insurance and law, not an optional activity. She also clarified that all employees complete mandatory Safe Schools training videos prior to the start of each year, supplemented by periodic presentations from school counselors covering the McKinney-Vento Act and reporting mandates.

Mandated Reporter Liability and Jurisdictional Authority: A critical governance discussion occurred regarding local prosecutorial scrutiny. The Board reviewed feedback from the Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney's Office highlighting a frequent systemic failure in school district procedures: policies that permit or instruct a staff member to report abuse *solely* to an administrator (such as a principal or superintendent) who then determines whether to contact Child Protective Services (CPS). The Board noted that this internal vetting process fails to satisfy the statutory obligation placed on individual mandated reporters.

Direct Modification to Reporting Language: To ensure absolute alignment with state law and shield individual employees from strict statutory liability, the Board explicitly directed

that the phrase "and/or the appropriate school administrator" be struck from the reporting directive. The policy will be amended to read:

> "...shall report all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities."

Procedural Threshold Clarification: The Board emphasized that corresponding administrative procedures and upcoming fall staff trainings must clearly reinforce that employees are required to report *suspected* abuse or neglect based on safety concerns alone. Staff are explicitly prohibited from conducting investigations or attempting to substantiate claims prior to making a report, as investigation falls strictly under the purview of law enforcement and CPS.

IV. Superintendent Updates

A. Superintendent Kirsten Rue

Overview: Binding Conditions
Superintendent Rue led a presentation and board discussion detailing the state's regulatory framework for school districts experiencing severe fiscal distress, legally referred to as entering "binding conditions."

Superintendent Rue shared an active diagnostic graphic from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website detailing the timeline toward state-intervention thresholds. Historically, Griffin School District has operated with complete financial autonomy due to healthy reserves. However, due to structural changes in state funding, increased baseline operational costs, and declining student enrollment, the district's cash flow has officially shifted out of long-term stability.

The district experienced definitive cash flow shortfalls during three distinct months of the current school year, dropping below the board's mandatory 8.3% ending fund balance policy. Projections indicate an additional policy deficit may occur in June. The ESD has placed the district on monitored status, initiating continuous baseline fiscal tracking.

The Board examined the practical ramifications of descending into "Enhanced Financial Oversight." If a district fails to proactively stabilize its budget, the state-appointed Financial Oversight Committee assumes absolute veto power over spending. In practice, this allows state administrators to summarily eliminate popular, locally valued initiatives that lack explicit statutory basic-education funding formulas—such as local band programs or supplementary counseling staff—regardless of local community or board dissent.

Griffin's recently hired Business Manager, Kyler Mower, provided first-hand testimony regarding recent employment within the Shelton School District while it operated under binding conditions. The process required intense monthly projection metrics and

ultimately triggered significant staff layoffs, leading to increased class sizes and a substantial reduction in paraeducator support. The Board noted that Marysville School District recently escalated rapidly from basic oversight to the appointment of a state-level Special Administrator, experiencing a total loss of local fiscal control.

The Board emphasized that the district's structural deficit is explicitly caused by macro-economic factors impacting school districts across Washington State, rather than localized fiscal mismanagement. Numerous small, rural school districts are currently attempting to stave off binding conditions by borrowing from their capital budgets—a temporary and unsustainable measure.

Superintendent Rue asserted that the district must continue making difficult, proactive budget adjustments locally rather than allowing the district to default into state control. By voluntarily maintaining fiscal stabilization measures now, the district demonstrates responsible management to OSPI and the ESD. This positions the district to maintain local control and keep its governance autonomy intact until the State Legislature addresses its paramount duty to restructure public education funding.

Acknowledging that recent budget cuts have hurt staff morale, the Board directed leadership to prepare a comprehensive, highly illustrative public presentation for the next general board meeting. This presentation will visually map out the "binding conditions" chart, clarify the three systemic state-wide cost drivers, and clearly communicate to families and staff why protecting local district autonomy is vital to preventing arbitrary, state-mandated classroom cuts.

End of year updates:
Superintendent Rue noted that the final day of school is this Friday, capping off a week of milestones including Kindergarten graduation, tomorrow's 8th-grade promotion, and Friday's Transitional Kindergarten ceremony.

CHS Graduation: Following a brief discussion, the Board finalized that Trustee Blair will represent the district at the Capital High School graduation this Friday. Administration will notify CHS to finalize seating and introductions.

District & Community Engagement
Expanding on a concept from the recent newsletter, Superintendent Rue and Allison announced the launch of a general Parent Advisory Group. The group is designed to deepen parent involvement and build community advocacy for public education funding.

Land Acknowledgement Protocol Revision
The Board reviewed feedback from Chris Peters of the Squaxin Island Tribe, who recommended reserving the Land Acknowledgement for select occasions to maintain its meaningful impact rather than repeating it routinely. The Board reached a consensus to transition from reading the acknowledgement at every meeting to a quarterly cadence

(four meetings per year) and at specific, high-significance school events to preserve its intentional weight.

V. Closing Items

A. For the Good of the Order

Board Directors Julie Osterberg and Blair Baker extended their formal appreciation to staff member Tanya for her leadership in organizing the recent year-end school barbecue. The directors highlighted the strong attendance and collaborative spirit of the event, commending the significant volunteer support from local fire department personnel and district parents. Directors Osterberg and Baker, who both volunteered on the food service lines during the event, praised Tanya’s dedication and noted the immense pride and positive morale the community gathering brought to the district.

B. Adjourn Meeting

Chair Hefton announced that the Board would immediately convene into a short, closed exempt session. In accordance with state public disclosure and open public meetings statutes, this session is restricted to Board members only to receive an administrative briefing and strategic update regarding active labor negotiations and collective bargaining.
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Trish Hefton

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