

JFKS French Department Meeting on 18. December 2023:

--Much of the meeting focused on planning the Soirée française on 22.1.24 from 17-19:00. Generally students are required to participate. Families and other interested community members are warmly invited—especially 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders who might be deciding which language to take in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

--9<sup>th</sup> / 10<sup>th</sup> grade exchange plans:

One of the two schools with which JFKS has cooperated for nearly two decades had to pull out because of delays by the administration approving the exchange. The delay was at least in part because of the administration's development of new trip policies.

This year 22 students will be able to participate in the exchange. Several who wanted to go did not receive places.

No one from the French department was on the teacher committee that drafted the new trip policy. There was a document that was available for comments, but those comments were not discussed fully when the policy was presented for a vote. The teachers felt that the committee should have at least contacted someone from all the affected departments for their input.

French teachers see several disadvantages to moving the exchange from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade and having it take place parallel with the ski trip, Spanish exchange, and other exchanges (as the new policy would require): Coordinating with MSA exams is a challenge, and several teachers who are potential chaperones will have to choose between the ski trip, the Spanish exchange and the French exchange. More importantly, the exchange in the spring of 10<sup>th</sup> grade would take place after students have chosen their 11<sup>th</sup> grade classes. Those for whom the exchange is a positive inspiration to continue with the language would have to revise their schedules. It also means that students who are taking four languages would have to choose between trips.

--Teachers discussed ways to increase student motivation to continue French in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades: Possibly taking an hour a week to do a bit of extra preparation with students who are interested, to help the kids understand how good they are. Many students underestimate themselves and so drop French out of fear of "bad" grades.

Students can learn effective strategies in which they can end up doing well in the upper grades.

--Teachers also discussed putting more emphasis on encouraging students to read books in French and then give a simple book report. (The books can be fairly simple, based on the student's own level.)

Extra money from Fun Day can be used for buying books and other supplies.

--Teachers were encouraged to take part in a continuing education opportunity focused on how to support special needs students (especially those with dyslexia) in French and other foreign languages. Fr. Schlicht noted that the strategies discussed can be helpful for all students, not just those diagnosed with learning differences.

Notes by Gretchen Vogel, JFKS Parent Council Representative