

JFKS Parent Council Meeting Minutes for June 18, 2019

Meeting was called to order at 7:03

GREETING

Changes to Agenda

Point 5: Since no representative from the Elementary School administration could attend, Nancy Voke will read statement from the school's managing director

Point 6: Since no representative from the High School administration could attend, we will discuss the Entrance Class/Hort double room usage situation.

APPROVAL

Unanimous, with 2 abstentions

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING'S MINUTES

Unanimous, with 1 abstention

SCHOOL REPORTS

Student Council - Emma Nathanson and Amalia Anhalt

High school is winding down. 11th graders had their prom on Sunday June 16. Current seniors are graduating on Thursday June 20 and their Abi Ball is on Sunday June 23. Students wanted to call attention to the Ideas Group working to combat discrimination in school. They publish a journal and podcast (search for Ideas Podcast on Youtube) that comes out every quarter in which students write about different themes of diversity. The next issue will be about race. Teacher advisors are Mr. Lazar and Mr. Salzer.

Career Day is on Tuesday June 25. There will be a reception in the morning. Students can sign up in advance for seminars.

Visit the school shop to purchase student-designed merchandise.

Most students think there should be a restriction on cell phone usage in school, but only for 7-10th grades. The older grades believe they can handle their phone use. But these are just personal views of Ms. Nathanson and Ms. Anhalt, not an official stance of the Student Council.

A student committee is still gathering signatures for the Schule Ohne Rassismus initiative (at least 70% of the student body has to sign for it to qualify). Signing should represent an active commitment to making a change, not just a signature on a petition. The Committee is trying to improve communication with the Elementary School to facilitate the gathering of signatures from the younger grades. The parent-organized anti-bullying group is also involved.

High School

Statement from Brian Salzer, Managing Director (see attached)

Nancy Voke noted that the Berlin Senate has said we don't need a parent book fund (*Lernmittelfond*) for the upcoming school year because the Senate's budget will include it for next year in the high school.

The ED representatives note that Frau Orgis has advised to wait until the fall to see how things will move forward on the LMF. 100% assurance was not given that this issue has been settled. Pia Kaiser (BEA/BSB) gives context that a delay in budget is not unusual in other schools.

Buck Chisolm moved that the administration be formally requested to be present at the next parent council meeting to address questions in person regarding the statement from Mr. Salzer.

The motion passed unanimously with 3 abstentions.

Elementary School

In light of the controversial decision regarding the double usage rooms for 1st grade/Hort, the school will hold an open discussion evening on June 25th at 7:00 pm.

Entrance class/Hort:

Bethany Vaughn notes that students are no longer able to repeat Entrance Class.

Double room usage/Hort:

Kristen Winkler presented a short history of the issue: 2008 was the first time the double room usage for Entrance Class/Hort was tried. By the end of that school year, the School Conference asked for it to stop.

In 2014-2015, the issue arose again. It was solved by putting the 3/4th graders in various rooms and outdoor spaces in the elementary school building. (The students, who are 8th graders now, all liked it.)

In 2018, a task force was created to address the issue of too many children in the Hort space. Teachers, administration, Hort administration, parents, and Hort staff were supposed to come up with ideas. However, the administration decided without this committee's input to have Entrance Class children stay in their classrooms for Hort. Members of the School Conference have been adding this topic to their meeting agenda since December 2018, but it wasn't discussed until 22 May. At that meeting, the SK passed a motion stating that the EC double room usage is having a negative impact on children and teachers and saying that the current situation should not continue. Administration has stated that they alone are responsible for room assignments.

The School Conference has asked for an emergency meeting on Monday, 24 June.

Please write your thoughts and opinions as well as ideas for solutions to parentcouncil@ifksberlin.org. We will forward all emails on this subject to School Conference representatives to share with the administration at the SK's closed meeting on June 24.

Security Update

Kristen Winkler, School Conference: The campus access concept has been accepted by the Berlin Senate, now the school administration and Berliner Immobilien-Management and the US Embassy are working towards implementation.

The majority of entrances will be closed. Campus will primarily be accessed through the front gate. In the mornings, the back gate and bicycle gate will be left open. Gate between campus and sport facility will be open until 5:00 pm. All gates can still be used to exit campus at all times. There is currently security personnel on campus from 6:30 -10:30 am every weekday. This will eventually extend to the entire day.

Nancy Voke is hoping to organize a day for the police to register bicycles on campus in the new school year.

ED:

The lawsuit(s) regarding the German principal position at the elementary school have been dropped and the position is being advertised again.

There are 5 applications for the position of German high school principal. It is expected that the candidates will be introduced to the ED and SK sometime after fall break.

Language tests

Starting with the applications for the 2020/21 school year, entrance class applicants will no longer take a language test. Parents will simply state their child's mother tongue on the application. Children will continue to be admitted via a lottery system. Once the school year is underway, children will be evaluated by their teachers. Children who seem to be struggling will then undergo a language test, and those who do not speak either German or English on a mother tongue level will not pass the probationary period. They will have to find another school for first grade.

A finance committee is being set up that will include members of the ED, the SK and teacher representatives. It will not have decision-making power. The goal is to bring more transparency into the school finances.

The Staatssekretärin für Bildung, Frau Beate Stoffers, was present at the meeting and praised the school, especially for its work to address bullying and other kinds of discrimination.

There is a report from the Senate's anti-discrimination expert, Fr. Gomis, about the school. This report has been kept confidential, as it was only meant for Hr. Rackles. However, Fr. Stoffers said that as long as any personal information is removed, it could be shared with some representatives from JFKS.

Graduation is this week. The average grade of the Abitur students was 1,91. Seventy-eight students will receive their Abitur and 44 their high school diploma. Two students did not pass the Abitur despite a second round of testing.

Teachers are working on rewriting the Teacher Handbook. They hope to have it ready for the new teachers who arrive in August.

The issue of a Spanish Leistungskurs and AP-level class was discussed. Initially the administration said too few students had signed up to hold these classes for next year's 11th grade. Interested parties are still working toward a resolution.

SK

No additional updates

Cell phone policy

The SK rejected the proposed new rules at their most recent meeting. Nancy Voke will circulate faculty meeting notes on this issue.

BEA

Pia Kaiser noted that students receiving their MSA or Abitur will not have absences due to Fridays for Future protests noted on their final record. Other grade levels will have their absences noted.

Anti Bullying update:

Sarah Gross reported that this week students are completing the survey developed by the University of Potsdam in cooperation with the school. Parents and teachers will also have a chance to take a shorter version of the survey. The goal is to discover what kinds and what level of bullying and discrimination might be taking place, and about the general mood and atmosphere of the school. Parent representatives are urged to encourage all their class parents to participate. The survey is anonymous and should only take 5 minutes to complete. Over the summer, the University of Potsdam will evaluate the information and in the fall there will be a rollout of the findings.

A parent representative noted that the students should understand that participation is voluntary and they do not have to answer all questions on the survey.

Food Committee:

Lisa Spenser reported that the school is working to get more seating in place in preparation for the increase in students eating free lunches. The cafeteria will no longer sell soft drinks. A water fountain will be installed in the ES. Instead of pasta every day, whole grain alternatives will be offered some days. Hort lunch packs for trips will be improved. Please see attached report for details.

Verein:

Dues will be €75/family regardless of how many children attend the school.

Reminders come out in the school bulletin and automatic payments will be in place for the upcoming school year.

Miscellaneous:

After many years of service to the school, Susan Brown and Sonja Fietz are both leaving the ED because their children are graduating. They were thanked and applauded for their time and dedication.

Parent representatives are encouraged to consider running for the positions that will be open. (The election is planned for late November.) Remember that to be elected to the parent council board, the school conference or the educational directorate, one has to be elected as a main parent representative for a class, NOT an alternate.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57.

Minutes by Luisa Weiss and Gretchen Vogel