

## Minutes of the Parent Council Meeting of 29 January 2019

### Greeting

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm

**Approval of agenda:** The agenda was approved with one change, moving the high school report before the elementary school report

**Approval of minutes from previous meeting:** The minutes from the 13 November, 2018 meeting were approved. One possible inaccuracy was noted: It is not clear that JFKS previously held the official designation "Schule ohne Rassismus" as a speaker at the previous meeting reported

### SCHOOL REPORTS

**Student council** - No student council representatives were present; no report

**High School** - Steffan Schulz, Acting High School German Principal

-*Security:* The transition to the Senate is still a bit bumpy, and the office that is now responsible for the school building (BIM - Berlin Immobilien Management) is still getting up to speed. For that reason, no new security measures have been implemented. Priority is having security officers on campus as soon as possible.

- *School without Racism/Schule ohne Rassismus:* The Student Council has started an initiative to have JFKS receive official status as a "School without Racism." They have written a mission statement and are collecting student signatures.

### IMPORTANT DATES

- **13. Feb.** HS Parent Teacher Conferences
- **14. Feb.** Teacher Workshop Day – no regular school, Hort is also closed
- **15. Feb.** B. Salamon (German rapper) will talk about respectful language with 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- **18. Feb.** President's Day – no school, Hort remains open
- **19. Feb.** VERA 8 test German (8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- **20. Feb.** School Conference meets
- **21. Feb.** NHS Benefit Concert
- **22. Feb.** Thank You Party Verein
- **25. Feb.** VERA 8 test Math (8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- **27. Feb.** Soirée française 18:00 - 20:30
- **28. Feb.** Transition Evening grade 6 to 7
- **5. March** Transition Evening grade 10 to 11 (Abitur students)
- **6. March** Transition Evening grade 10 to 11 (Diploma students)
- **7. March** HS/MS Concert
- **8. March** Frauentag – no school; 12<sup>th</sup> grade Drama Performance
- **9. March** 12<sup>th</sup> grade Drama Performance
- **10. – 22. March** Ski trip 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- **11. – 22. March** Betriebspraktikum - Internship (10<sup>th</sup> grade)
- **12. March** Transition Evening grade 9 to 10
- **14. March** Transition Evening grade 7 to 8
- **26. March** Transition Evening grade 8 to 9
- **28. March** Texas Exchange Parent Night
- March** Violence Prevention Grade 7

-*Parent teacher conferences:* There is only one evening available, so slots are limited.

Parents are asked to please sign up only if your child is having difficulties in a class.

*-Anti-bullying:* This will be the main focus of the Workshop Day on 14 February. In addition, the school is working with experts from the University of Potsdam to design a survey for students, teachers and parents to assess the current situation and identify the most effective ways to improve problem areas. The German rap artist B Salamon will speak with the 11th grade on 15 February about respectful language.

*-High School Faculty meeting:* The December meeting used a new format in which teachers break into discussion groups. The approach is working well. Most teachers agree that a new cell phone policy is needed. One option would be to forbid use of phones inside the school building, but final rules are still under discussion. The school will also seek input from students and welcomes parent input on the topic.

*-Transfer of school management to the Berlin Senate:* As of 1 January JFKS is now officially managed by the Berlin Senat (instead of the Steglitz-Zehlendorf district). The French Gymnasium made the same switch. We all have high hopes, but will need some patience to see if they will be fulfilled. January has been a bit difficult because the Senate staff is still getting up to speed. Parents have a new contact person (*Schulrätin*): Fr. Grit Orgis (grit.orgis@senbjf.berlin.de)

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** - Ashia Bell, Elementary School American Assistant Principal

*-Class conferences:* Administration, teachers, and counseling staff met in January to discuss every ES student. Colleagues share their observations and make decisions about further support or actions needed with individual students.

*-Recruitment:* Both American principals are on a two-week recruiting trip in the US.

*-New German teachers:* Three new German teachers will begin at JFKS after winter break, two full-time and one part-time. This means German language classes can be remixed into smaller class sizes, and a first grade class that has had a series of substitutes will have a homeroom teacher. A suggestion to introduce the new teachers in the next school bulletin was welcomed.

*-Teacher professional development workshop day in November:* Teachers and Hort staff took part in workshops that focused on developing a positive school climate, particularly preventing bullying and all kinds of discrimination. Twenty-five took part in Positive Discipline training, and another session will be offered at the 14. February workshop day for both ES and HS. Mindfulness training is also being offered. Counselor Tamara Faber is helping to organize further Positive Discipline training opportunities for parents.

*-Bullying prevention:* The Crisis Team meets monthly. They have had a special training workshop on bullying prevention and intervention, and the school has new resources for more consistent documentation and follow-up when bullying incidents are reported.

When bullying incidents are reported, the person taking the report first shares it with the administration. The students involved are then interviewed separately. (Students who report being bullied are never interviewed with the student accused of bullying). Sometimes the counselors are called in to help with interviewing/investigation. The first step is to carefully determine whether it is a case of bullying or a different situation or conflict that can be resolved, e.g. through peer mediation or other avenues. Then it can be decided what kind of intervention is necessary. If bullying is identified, parents are contacted and consequences are determined. The report is documented and students are followed up with accordingly.

*-Cooperation with Hort:* Teachers and Hort staff met in November to work on better communication. The meeting was positive, but some of the problems identified are still being worked out.

### **SPOTLIGHT SPEAKER: Community Service Activity, Clara Geschner, 11th grade**

This group is open to all HS students. The supervising teacher is Mr. Weiss. They meet every 2nd Tuesday during 20 minute break and organize helpers for service projects such as school cleanups, garden day, peer mentoring and tutoring. A group of students collected leftover food from the Grüne Woche for the Berliner Tafel; some volunteer weekly at Leib und Seele. In March they will start a new project called "plogging"--picking up litter while jogging.

Students collect "community service hours" that are noted on their report card. Those who collect more than 40 hours receive a "Freiwilligen Schulerpass" (See: <https://www.berlin.de/buergeraktiv/anerkennung/freiwilligenpass/informationen/>)

Students can combine doing good deeds, hanging out with friends and also getting credit!

A parent representative asked if there was a program to recycle bottles at the school. Ms. Geschner answered that this is being discussed.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Educational Directorate (ED) - Susan Brown**

Two positions on this committee will be open after the summer after members' children graduate. Please consider running for election.

The ED also has noted some difficulties in the transition to management by the Senat. These will be discussed on 26 February during a meeting with with State Secretary Hr. Rackles. The ED is proposing some small changes to the law governing JFKS to ensure, for example, that voting and veto privileges on key committees are still balanced.

The ED notes that the school is responsible for developing its own security plan, including decisions on which gates are open or closed. The Senate and the Embassy can advise, but the school is responsible for making final decisions.

All ED decisions from 1975 on are now available on the password-protected parent webpage. Meeting minutes will soon appear there as well.

**School Conference (SK)-** The School Conference submitted a written report which was included in meeting materials distributed before the meeting[ck]

#### **BEA -Alke Abbey and Pia Kaiser**

1. There is ongoing discussion about the property at Osteweg 53/63. The district would like to build a school, but the Senate would like to use it for housing for refugees. BEA supports use for school buildings. There is a citizens' initiative that supports this as well.

2. Fair trade in Zehlendorf schools: A teacher has started initiative with two schools that allows students to work with a fair trade company that makes school-themed clothing. Students can do internships with the company. The program covers everything from design

to production to marketing. Some students even visit the factory in India where everything is produced.

One parent representative noted that if sports clubs order Fair Trade-certified clothing items, the Landessportbund Berlin can help sponsor the purchase:

<https://lsb-berlin.net/aktuelles/news/news-archiv/details/meilenstein-in-der-berliner-sportfoerderung/>

3. Oberstufenzentren: In Berlin there are 35 schools called “Oberstufenzentren,” at which students who have completed 10th grade can work toward their Abitur or other vocational degrees. They are especially aimed at students who might otherwise have trouble completing a degree. All schools should be able to inform families about the many available opportunities for alternative degrees.

4. School quality: There is a list of 39 steps Berlin schools should be taking, including an extra hour of German instruction, math assessments, support for teachers, and flexible plans for special needs students so that they can easily join regular class whenever possible.

**Working Group on Anti-bullying** – Katrin Voelkner: As mentioned by Hr. Schulz, the school will work with experts at the University of Potsdam to develop a survey that will give the school solid information on the current baseline at the school. This will help inform what steps should be taken. The university is willing to work with “an ambitious time frame.” The group will meet again soon after winter break.

**Traffic committee-** Nelly Heidbrink: Another reminder to parents to drop their children off at the walking school bus locations. This eases traffic and allows the children to have a healthy walk to school.

**Food committee** - report by Lisa Spencer, read by Nancy Voke : Fr. Hoenicke is leading the food committee, which has seven parent members and representatives from Hort, teachers and students. The next meeting will discuss quality control, reducing waiting times (lines) and eliminating sales of soft drinks. New email address is: [food@jfsberlin.org](mailto:food@jfsberlin.org)

**Special needs-** Kristina Pedersen: In January Fr. Praetorius gave an information night about the *Leseladen*, the school’s program for German mother tongue students who need extra reading support.

In October Fr. Strahler-Praetorius introduced Math lab, the program for students who need extra help in math. Both teachers also gave advice on what parents can do at home to support their children’s learning. (Ms. Rising presented the Reading Lab for English mother tongue students last spring.) The group hopes to organize an annual information night with teachers from all three programs.

The next meeting will be in late February or early March. Any parents whose children might be struggling are encouraged to attend. The group is not only for those with a diagnosed learning disability.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**Upcoming Spotlight:** Please let Parent Council know if you have suggestions for speakers or topics you would like to hear about at upcoming meetings.

**Drug and Alcohol Prevention-** Nancy Voke: More than 100 people attended the information evening on drugs and alcohol. The Parent Council and the counseling staff are planning a follow-up evening with opportunities for more open discussion.

Drugs and alcohol and their influence on the human body are a regular part of the JFKS curriculum. In 6th grade it is part of the science curriculum. The 8th and 10th graders have a workshop with the police and in 9th grade a medical student presents to all students on the topic.

**E-Mail-Working Group-** Bethany Vaughn: Parent council and administration are still working on better ways to allow clear and easy communication between the school and parents. A PC committee is working on solutions, and will meet with the data protection official who is advising the school. Ideas are welcome! Please write to [parentcouncil@jfsberlin.org](mailto:parentcouncil@jfsberlin.org) if you can help.

**Bathroom beautifying project-** Bethany Vaughn: A parent initiative to paint inspiring messages on bathroom doors is underway. Parents with design skills are encouraged to help, and input from parents and students is needed to help determine which bathrooms would most benefit from renovation.

**Faculty meeting reports:** These will be posted on the parent section of the website.

**Garden day:** Our next Garden Day is on 6. April from 10 am - 2 pm.

**Tax workshop:** On 25 February several accountants will hold a tax workshop to explain US tax requirements for children who are turning 18.

**Girls Day/Boys Day:** A chance for students 5th grade and older to spend a day at a place of work that interests them. Places go fast! Sign up at <https://www.berlin.de/sen/frauen/bildung/girls-day/>

**Next meeting:** The next Parent Council meeting will be on 9 April.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 pm