

Minutes of the School Conference Meeting
on Thursday November 7, 2019,
at 15:15 in room W 215

In attendance:

Administration: Brian Salzer, Jenny Hoenicke

Teacher Representatives: Liz Geary-Müller, Timm Jones, Elisabeth Hoedt, Christian Neumann, Malte Schroeder

Parent Representatives: Lars Bespolka, Kristen Winkler, Anja Hollmann, Nelly Heidbrink, Kristina Pedersen, Kathrin Völkner

Student Representatives: Isabel Whiteley Tscherniak, Daniel Delfs, Lena Marzona, Johannes von Kleist

Hort Guest: Betina Jahreiß-Heyelmann

Voting members: 13

1. Approval of Agenda

1 action item added: New task force for double room usage (see under #6). Agenda was approved.

2. Approval of minutes from September 26, 2019.

“11 voting members” changed to “13 voting members.” Minutes were approved.

3. Presentation about the SK

Kristen Winkler showed a Powerpoint presentation about the “5 W’s of the SK: Who, what, when, why, and how”, especially to inform the new members about the functions of the SK (see attached document)

The information included in the PPT is based on the Berlin school law, the JFKS law, the so-called Schmidt-Paper (Rahmenvorgaben der JFKS), the Leitfaden für Elternvertreter from the Senat, and the paper “Gremienkompetenzen ED/SK.

During the presentation, the following points have been addressed by the attendees:

- The status of the Hort-Erzieher in the SK needs to be clarified. They are not part of the school, but the Kooperationsvertrag says in § 3, Abs. 4: Die pädagogischen Mitarbeiter des Trägers der freien Jugendhilfe “können von der Gesamtkonferenz als stimmberechtigte Mitglieder in die Schulkonferenz gewählt werden“ (according to §77, Abs. 1 and § 79, Abs. 2 of the SchulG).

The SchulG is binding for JFKS, the JFKS law is just a specification of the school law, and the Schmidt-Paper a specification of the JFKS law.

- Important decisions need two thirds of the whole amount of voting members, even if some of them are absent. Less important decisions only need a simple majority, and abstentions do not count.
- Concerning the right to be heard, it has been stressed that the decision makers at least should give a feed-back if they take a decision that differs from the recommendation of the SK.
- Decisions of the SK based on its right to make decisions (Entscheidungsrechte) can be overruled by the superintendent or the ED.

4. Geschäftsordnung /By-Laws Yearly Approval

- The invitation to the next SK meetings must be sent out at least 1 week before the meeting.
- The minutes are to be distributed 8 working days after the meeting via Brian Salzer.
- The action item list shall be sent out together with the minutes.
- The formulation in the general part of the by-laws, point 3 and 4, that defines the parent and student representatives in terms of “two of American and two of German nationality” shall be changed to “including two American and two German representatives” in order to avoid the impression that third-nationals are excluded.
- With this addition, the by-laws were unanimously approved.

5. ES special needs teacher

- There is one special needs teacher at the ES, but when she is sick, nobody can replace her. Therefore, parents want a second special needs teacher to be hired, but Mrs. Hoenicke said that it is unlikely to find someone and that the situation in JFKS is even better than in other schools in Berlin. On the other hand, the American parents expect this support. Since the embassy does not financially support teacher positions, SK members suggested that the ED should discuss the issue and ask the Senatsverwaltung for support because the current situation does not meet American requirements and standards.
- The following resolution was unanimously approved:
In a unanimous decision, the SK recognizes the need for Special Needs support equal to that of an American school, including IEPs and recommends that the ED discuss some solutions.

6. Committee reports

- Food Committee: So far, the Food Committee consists of only parents, students, and teachers from the ES. The next meeting is scheduled for November 11, at 15:15. ES parents want to develop a survey to know what is important for the students and for the parents concerning the food situation: a better quality or rather a larger spectrum of offerings. The names of the people interested to join the committee have been read, because they must be approved by the SK. Mrs. Hoenicke asked that people from the HS also join the committee. Somebody said

- that Chris Weiss is willing to represent the HS teachers, and Johannes von Kleist came forward as a HS student representative. The list of members was unanimously approved.
- Other committees: The SK Finance Committee and the SK Bau Committee are not meeting anymore. However, an ED Finance Committee exists, without student representatives. The next meeting of this committee will be on December 2nd. Mr. Salzer will make the recommendation to the ED that interested SK members (including students) can join this committee. On the student side, Isabel Tscherniak and Lena Marzona volunteered.
 - The Double Usage Task Force: Members of the SK expressed their incomprehension about the fact that a double usage task force has been implemented by the ES administration and that they started the discussion at zero, while the topic has been discussed for almost two years in the SK, and a decision has been made that has not been followed by the administration. Several SK members said that this is frustrating and not democratic. It has also been criticized that only parents who have children in the entrance class and the Hort have been admitted to the task force.
 - Since, unfortunately, Mrs. Cortinas could not be present at this meeting to discuss the issue directly with him, the following motion has been made and approved with 10 votes in favor and 1 abstention (2 student representatives had left at 17:15):
The SK expresses their dissatisfaction with the representation on the Double-Room Usage Task Force and the decision-making process. We request a report from the task force as soon as possible and insist on Mr. Cortinas presence for the discussion. Furthermore, we request that the composition of the members of the task force should be approved by the SK with equal representation for each constituency.

7. Lunch situation for EC and 1st graders:

- EC and 1st graders eat in the Aula (about 150 children). The Aula is too small to accommodate all of them at the same time. Moreover, the noise is unbearable.
- ES teachers said that the from three potential options ~~on the table~~, only one is feasible: 1st graders eat during 4th period and EC at 1:20.
- To improve the space and noise problem, it was suggested to also use the film room for lunch. Also, new furniture has been ordered, but we still must wait several weeks until the delivery.
- HS student representatives complained about the stress that HS students suffer from, coming from their activities during the 20-minute-break (13:05 to 13:25). They do not find free tables in the Aula, and they do not have enough time to eat. Everybody agreed that a solution must urgently be found.

8. Set SK meeting dates for remainder of school year

- Tentative regular meetings were scheduled for December 11 (if Mr. Cortinas or Frau Hoenicke are available) or December 17, February 12, April 1 and June 3.
- The interviews with the new American principal candidates will be on January 14 and 22.

9. Miscellaneous

- Mr. Salzer announced that our former student and famous American baseball player Max Kepler (Minnesota Twins) will coach kids and meet his former teachers on November 18 from 9:30 to 11:00.
- The ES American teacher reps complained about the situation that the credentials of American ES teachers (as well as those of hundreds of Non-German teachers in the Europaschulen) have not been validated for the upgrading of the salary levels of German teachers. The Senatsverwaltung only includes Non-German nationals for the upgrading if they exclusively teach in their mother tongue. This is not possible for those American ES teachers who teach in both languages; according to our curriculum, ES teachers must also teach in the other language. The SK feels that it is totally unacceptable and in drastic contradiction to our school philosophy—American teachers should not be penalized for doing the job they are expected to do. This regulation would jeopardize our whole mission. In addition, at this point there seemingly is not enough time to officially dispute. The ES teachers affected by this exclusion, have been informed on short notice by the Senatsverwaltung, whereas the ES administration was already informed for a much longer time without forwarding this information to the teachers. The SK will ask the ED to do everything to support the American teachers.

Mr. Salzer closed the meeting at 18:10

Minutes submitted by Christian Neumann, November 10, 2019

