

## Minutes of the School Conference Meeting on Wednesday, February 17th, 2021 at 15:30, virtual via Zoom

### In attendance:

Administration:	Herr Schulz, Ms. Rolle (part of the time), Frau Kub (as guest)
Teacher Representatives:	Herr Schroeder, Herr Dr. Neumann, Mr. Blessman, Ms. Geary-Müller, Frau Evers, Frau Hoedt, Ms. Wiltzius
Parent Representatives:	Mr. Bespolka, Ms. Winkler, Frau Dr. Albanese, Herr Dr. Berger, Alternates: Ms. Vogel, Frau Salewski, Frau Tabachnikoff, Ms. Pedersen
Student Representatives:	Herr Delfs, Herr von Kleist, Herr Kraft, Ms. Winger
Guest speaker:	Malka Beere (Student Council President)
Hort :	Frau Heyelmann (as guest)

### Agenda Point #1: Approval of Agenda

Discussion point added is "Report Cards under Covid", and we will talk about the ES EC-3 return to school plan under Agenda Item 3a. Unanimously approved.

### Agenda Point #2: Approval of Minutes

Unanimously approved.

### Agenda Point #3: COVID-19 Topics

#### Agenda #3a: Outlook for the rest of the school year

**Herr Schulz:** Outlook for the rest of the year is not possible at this point. We can only talk about the next couple of weeks until the Ministerpräsidententreffen on March 3. *@High School:* We will bring back 12a next week, 2 weeks later 11d and 12d will start. Superintendent Frau Orgis has agreed to this. In response to questions from parents, it was explained that the Abi students will return first because they will start taking their Abi tests several weeks earlier than the Diploma students' AP tests. According to the current plan, both groups will have roughly the same number of weeks of in-person instruction.

**Students:** Will students have the option of staying home?

**Herr Schulz:** *Präsenzpflicht* is suspended, so yes. But it is not possible to have on campus instruction and online instruction at the level we had it up to now in parallel. We should try to have students in school as much as possible.

**Parents:** Because of the current state of the pandemic, the school should strive to make it as easy as possible to keep students in distance learning, if desired by the parents. The school should not discourage any parents from keeping their children at home with distance learning. It is not okay to say that distance learning will be reduced in quality and/or quantity because on campus learning starts.

**Student:** It is a logical next step to now start to open the school again slowly. Last time around, students who had to quarantine were supplied with all the necessary materials. Question: Why are 11a students the last to return of the upper classes?

**Herr Schulz:** Because 11a is not an Abschlussklasse. For the 11d students I had to make a special petition to treat them as an Abschlussklasse.

**Student:** The situation has changed because of the mutant virus variants. Diploma teachers and many diploma students would like to continue with distance learning.

**Herr Schulz:** If the majority of diploma students would like to stay home, we will find a solution for this.

**Frau Kub:** After being introduced, Frau Kub noted that she is excited to be at JFKS.

**Ms. Rolle:** Elementary School Parents were asked to fill out an online survey whether they would like their kids to return to school or to stay home. A significant majority, over 70%, wanted to return to school, although this varied by grade. Roughly half of 6<sup>th</sup> grade families said they would prefer to remain in distance learning. For the next two weeks, only grades 1-3 will return on campus. We requested that EC-4 may return, but were only allowed to bring back 1-3 by the superintendent.

Grades 1-3 will return in two groups, each group will have 3 school hours/day, 5 days a week. The groups are divided by mother tongue. One group will have instruction from 8-10:30, the other from 11:15-1:30. Mother Tongue, Partner Tongue and Math will be taught. There will be no recess or lunch. All students and staff have to wear masks. Medical masks are encouraged, but not required.

Parents can choose to have their kids remain in distance learning. A distance learning teacher is assigned for every grade level. These teachers coordinate with the other teachers. Parents commit for two weeks with their decision for on-campus or distance learning. Siblings will be assigned to the same time slots. This is a 2-week plan only.

**Parents:** Will this affect distance learning for the other students?

**Ms Rolle:** There will be no staff changes for the grades remaining in distance learning, but times might change.

**Frau Kub/Ms Rolle:** Students on campus will not change rooms. Busses will hopefully run. Info will go out tonight.

**Parents:** Will there be any option for kids to eat snacks? For some of the younger kids it is difficult to go without snacks for three school hours. **Ms Rolle:** We will take this into consideration.

**Parents:** Who are the targeted students?

**Ms Rolle:** They are already on campus. About 40 ES students are on campus. Homeroom teachers suggested which students should be brought back to campus.

**Parents:** Parents requested that the homework load be minimized for returning students. Parents noted that many students are lagging in partner tongue, so they would prefer mixed MT-PT groups.

**Ms. Rolle:** We are aware of the partner tongue issue and also would have preferred to mix the groups. However, this was impossible to do with the available number of teachers. Teachers are putting together resources for families to help children who are not regularly exposed to their partner tongue at home. Second graders will receive some in class instruction, first graders will receive materials over SeeSaw.

### **Agenda #3b: Student Feedback on Distance Learning**

American Student Council President **Ms. Beere** presented student feedback on distance learning. (*The presentation is attached in the e-mail with which these minutes were sent.*)

#### **Some important points from the presentation:**

- Overall, distance learning is going rather well
- Clear communication about what students have to do (weekly plans that are available on Monday, for example) are very helpful to students
- Video conferences are an effective teaching tool. They should not be too long, however. Thirty minutes is ideal. They are important for social reasons, too, especially in the lower grades.
- Over 75% of students in the upper HS grades are reporting that they are doing worse emotionally and in terms of mental health during lockdown
- Leniency with deadlines is very important to students in distance learning
- It is requested that teachers provide a structure to give students the opportunity to give feedback easily

**Teacher:** How do students feel about Google Classroom in terms of data protection?

**Student:** All students are eager to get feedback and grades. There are not too many students worried about data protection. Google doesn't tell you an overall grade. Nobody is hypervigilant or paranoid about data protection. I do not believe that many students are worried about this. Data protection is an important issue, but at the moment we do not have a viable alternative.

**Ms Beere:** We should keep data protection in our minds. I am concerned about our data.

**Herr Schulz:** We purchased the pay version of Google Classroom. The server is located in Europe and the Senate has permitted us to use this platform. It is my current understanding that the learning platform „It's Learning“ has only been purchased by Berlin for a subset of students (50.000 licenses for approx. 300.000 students), and not in its full version. If at some point things have progressed with „It's Learning“, our school could consider switching, but it is too early for this at the moment.

**Herr Schulz:** We have established a video conference plan for all middle school classes. This way, teachers can see which days students already have enough or too many video conferences scheduled and can look for an alternative time slot.

### **Agenda #3c: “Anti-COVID” equipment (purifiers, CO2 meters, etc)**

**Herr Schulz:** We have 3 CO2 meters, we will continue measuring CO2 levels in different rooms. So far, the results have shown that we are ventilating sufficiently.

At some point, we should get air purifiers from the Senate for the rooms that cannot be ventilated properly. At the moment, the school has none. It is unclear when they might arrive. There are about 4-5 rooms at the High School that cannot be ventilated properly.

**Parents and Teachers:** What about parents collecting money and wanting to install air purifiers on their own initiative in classrooms? There is a letter from the Bezirksstadtrat Steglitz-Zehlendorf outlining that parents can install air filters in classrooms under certain conditions.

**Herr Schulz:** I will not allow parent-bought air filters. I am not aware of any Senate list with allowed air filters. We cannot allow one class to do this, and the other not. Either all classes get filters, or none.

**Teachers:** Can parents donate money for air filters that will then be distributed equitably by the school?

**Herr Schulz:** Appropriate air filters that meet the standards cost about 2,500 Euro. There is no official list of appropriate air filters. The most important thing is to open the windows. Hr. Schulz worries that allowing parents to buy air filters for their own children’s classrooms will result in advantages for the classes with wealthier parents.

**Teacher:** So the issues are technically appropriate devices and equity.

### **Agenda #3d: Implementation of Senate Guidelines**

#### **(considering and adapting for Abi/Diploma Students and Entrance Class)**

**Parents:** Parents emphasized that it is important for the school to adapt Senate guidelines to accommodate the special structure of our school, particularly entrance class and diploma students. While it is understandable that the Senate guidelines in Covid times are oriented on the standard German school system, it is very important that our school adjusts those guidelines so that entrance class students and diploma students get fair and equal treatment.

**Herr Schulz:** We have to write special petitions for entrance class and 11<sup>th</sup> grade diploma students who are not covered under the general Senate guidelines. This is often complicated and a significant amount of work. As AP diploma classes include both 11d and 12d students, it does not make sense to bring back only half the class. Permission has been requested that both classes can return together for in-school instruction.

### **Agenda #3e: Testing**

**Herr Schulz:** 8 packages with rapid tests for coronavirus will arrive tomorrow. It is still unclear when teachers will receive training in how to use them. In phase 1, only teachers will be tested. In phase 2,

which is expected to start mid-March, students will test themselves, too. All testing is voluntary. Students will test at home.

**Parents:** It is very important to communicate that a negative test result should not lead to any changes in behavior or hygiene protocol (like masks, distancing, etc.). SK parents would like to hear at the next meeting how many teachers and students actually have used tests and what the results were.

**Herr Schulz:** Of course the current hygiene plans will remain in effect unchanged, even when testing is implemented.

### **Agenda #3f: Planning for Special celebrations (6th and 12th grade graduations, Einschulung, etc)**

Herr Schulz: We are planning celebration of important events but we do not know what will be possible. The graduation ceremony is currently scheduled to take place on Fri, June 26 in the Audi Max of the FU. The number of participants is limited to 190. If the pandemic situation will not allow this, we will have to think about an alternative graduation ceremony at the school.

**Parents:** Please make sure that the initial reaction is not to just cancel important school events. This happened last year (bridge ceremony, HS graduation), when parents were initially told these events were simply cancelled. Only later, after substantive parent initiative, alternative ways to celebrate were considered and implemented. The delay of the EC Einschulung ceremony this year was also noted - hoping for better times did not work out. This time around, the school should not cancel or delay events, but think about pandemic compatible ways to mark these important milestones.

**Frau Kub:** We have not yet planned anything for 6th grade graduation, but we want to do this if it will be possible.

**Teacher:** Parent Reps of 6th graders are in contact with one another. They are planning a yearbook and T-Shirts. We are planning on using last year's bridge ceremony as a model. Whether a 6th grade dance will be possible is not yet determined.

### **Agenda #3g: Distance learning guidelines for Special Needs students**

**Herr Schulz:** Targeted students are currently receiving on campus instructions. We are giving students all the support we can.

**Parents:** Not all the special needs students, or students with accommodation plans, receive the support they need. These kids need to be contacted more often from teachers. ADHD kids, for example, have lots of extra stressors at home. They need more teacher contacts. These kids are not okay.

**Teachers:** The kids in reading lab are met one-on-one. The kids who went to reading lab in my class, are definitely attended to. The reading lab teacher accommodated all students who have accommodation plans and signed up for individual intervention meetings. We have no one who can help in math at the moment.

**Parents:** Not all special needs students go to reading lab or math lab. There are other accommodations for social or emotional issues. The counselor alone cannot contact all of them. Please tell teachers to contact those kids. Online meetings are frustrating for some of these kids. They need some one-on-one check-in.

### **Agenda #3h: Focus on the wellbeing of the students**

**Parents:** It is important for teachers to focus on the emotional and mental wellbeing of their students during this time. Kindness and leniency are very effective, are often much needed and will lead to better outcome academically, too. For example, late assignments should not be graded harshly. Check-ins with the student, asking why they missed something and granting them an extension are very successful and make home schooling more effective.

**Students:** Deadlines that require students to finish assignments during the allotted class hours are very difficult and sometimes impossible to do. Please don't give these short assignments which only allow students to do the work during the class time.

**Herr Schulz:** Teachers should grant students more time. Please also raise the issue with the teachers directly when the work you are being assigned is too much for the time you are given.

### **Agenda #3i: Lessons learned and next steps for the future**

**Herr Schulz:** We will need an evaluation once the pandemic is over of what worked well and what can be continued post-pandemic. Everything should be up for debate where we can change things for the better. What can we learn? When are video conferences useful, how should digital teaching platforms be used, etc.

### **Additional agenda point: How will parents receive report cards in Elementary School?**

**Parents:** There is confusion. It was first announced that parents could ask for a copy to be sent to them via e-mail. This was then retracted and it was announced there would be a plan for parents to pick up report cards in person (with some getting emails that not even this would be possible). Picking up report cards in person is asking too much of parents. Many families live far away from the school and cannot spare the time given home schooling and their own work schedule.

**Frau Kub:** We had expected students to return to school and to receive their report cards then. We will come up with a solution.

### **Agenda # 4: IT Update (hardware, software, connectivity, wifi, etc)**

Herr Schulz: Electricity and infrastructure for IT connectivity is being worked on. The time frame is unclear. I am pursuing this. The fiberglass cable is supposed to be connected in connection with replacing the LAN outlets.

Switches in the elementary school were changed during fall vacation. This should have happened in high school during winter break but didn't. It is now supposed to take place during Easter vacation. Once the switches have been replaced, the fiberglass cable can be connected. Then the internet should be more stable at school and a test phase can begin to find out how powerful the connection at the school will be.

The blackout curtains should have been installed by now, but they are not. This should happen soon.

Work on the security guard house should hopefully start soon.

Security cameras are installed, there are still some questions about data protection laws, but the project is 90% finished.

Solar panels have been installed on the roof of the gym.

The caterer has a new grease trap (Fettabschneider).

There will be work done on House Reil. House Reil is under protection for being a historical building (Denkmalschutz). There will be a meeting next week to grant the cost for the work planned.

**Teacher:** We have to switch back and forth between learning platforms at elementary school. Seesaw is not really that great. It would be great to have a better platform for elementary school. Teachers would like admin to consider teacher feedback and input before deciding on a platform, so that any decision for a new platform will have maximum support.

**Herr Schulz:** I have written and asked for our school to receive the „It's Learning“ license from the Senate.

### **Agenda # 5: School Financial Budget Update and Committee**

**Herr Schulz:** Teachers are submitting their book requests for the next school year. The HS summary should be done this week, the ES needs a bit more time. The departments have been requested to save money where possible. I am making sure we are using all extra budgetary financial resources that are available. The school is still waiting for the budgetary information from the Senate. We are on a good way.

### **Agenda # 6: Transition Evenings (scheduling, format, questions, process, etc)**

**Herr Schulz:** Presentations for transition evenings will go online soon. This is something that could be continued even after the pandemic is over.

**Parents:** It is important that the transition evening 10th to 11th grade has some live option for students and parents to ask questions, that the Abi system is explained in detail to students and parents, and that diploma teachers can present their courses.

**Teacher:** We will upload power point presentations and videos about our courses. We think it is important that we teachers can communicate about our AP classes and present them. We are available to do this.

**Parents:** Teresa Gebhardt and Frau Aust would be available for questions. That would be a good time for AP teachers to present their courses.

### **Agenda #7: Curriculum Online**

**Herr Schulz:** We want to have the curriculum online in some form. However, the current form is too long. Maren Althoff, the HS Qualitätsbeauftragter, has been given the task of working with the faculty to condense the curriculum for an online version.

**Teacher:** We have 10-15 pages for each grade level. It is not helpful to put this online. Our goal is to try to find a way to publish smaller, concise curricula for each subject.

**Teacher:** We have a short version for HS French, that is shared with the parents in the beginning of the school year.

**Parents:** We would like to have the longer version available too. Ideal would be to have the long version, plus a smaller, more easily accessible summary.

**Frau Kub:** We will see what we can do for the Elementary School.

**Teacher:** We started in August to do a flow chart for each grade level of what has to be taught when. We are trying to consolidate it now. It is confusing for parents in its current state. On the first parent evening of the year, parents should have received the curriculum and expectations for the upcoming school year from their homeroom teacher.

### **Agenda #8: Principal Hiring Processes Update**

**Herr Schulz:** The position of American HS principal is advertised. A decision should be made this year so that the new principal can start at the beginning of the next school year. Frau Hinrichsen has left to take a position as principal at a different school. Acting German vice principal is currently Frau Gillert.

The situation at the elementary school is difficult. Because Frau Hoenicke is on sick leave, the position cannot be advertised. It is possible to do a „Interessenbekundungsverfahren“ or to divide up chores.

### **Agenda #9: HS Counselor Update**

**Herr Schulz:** Ms. Gebhardt continues to help with college applications. Until the end of the school year, Ms. Caravaca works as a high school counselor. She also works as a teacher in the elementary school. Starting in the upcoming school year, a new high school counselor has been found who can work with the diploma students. Kara Krull, the middle school councilor will also be leaving at the end of the school year. This position has also been filled as of the new school year.

### **Agenda #10: Committee Reports:**

#### **a. Food Committee:**

**Herr Schulz:** The time frame for replacing the current caterer would be quite tight now. I am open to extending the current contract for one more year, to amend the current contract or to get a new caterer, if the food committee would want to.



**Frau Kub:** I have checked what kitchen equipment belongs to the school and what to the caterer. If we change caterers, a lot of equipment would leave with the caterer.

**Parents:** The food committee noted that there are delays in the process because it is so difficult to reach the appropriate contact person in the Senate to get the bidding process started. It would be beneficial if we could at least re-negotiate the contract.

**Hort representative:** It would be good to have a Hort representative on the food committee. **Parents:** It should be no problem to have a Hort representative added. Good idea.

#### **b. Security**

**Herr Schulz:** Also see above. Nothing new. Electronic locks still have to be installed. I will pursue this next week.

#### **c. Bauausschuss/Building Committee**

**Herr Schulz:** I had asked to form a building committee. Its first task would be to deal with the water fountains. As soon as the committee is formed it could commence work. The water fountains require building work. It is a difficult problem that requires coordination with many different parties.

**Parents:** We need teacher, student, and parent volunteers to form the committee (maybe 1 or 2 from each group). Each representative group should bring their suggestions for proposed members of the committee to the next SK meeting.

#### **Agenda #11: Miscellaneous**

**Herr Schulz:** We are using a learning program called „Better Marks“ for 7-10th grade math. This could conceivably be continued to be used after the pandemic.

There will be a new elective, „Astronomy“ for 9th graders, and „Soziale Bildung“ for 8th graders.

**Teacher:** We have to be careful not to weaken the program of the 3rd foreign languages (French, Spanish, Latin) with additional electives.

**Teacher:** We should teach more social media competence - what is tracking, what happens when I go online, etc.

**Herr Schulz:** Social Media competence and media competence has to be part of regular instruction. It is an important topic.

*Meeting adjourned at 6:40 pm.*