



Meeting minutes
For the School Conference Meeting on
19 December 2023, at 15:30 in the Quiet Study Room

In attendance:

Administration: Ms. Martin-O'Connor, Mr. Fritzenschaft (guest)
Teacher Representatives: Hr. Witte, Fr. Diemer, Ms. Martin, Fr. Evers, Fr. Freytag (alternate)
Parent Representatives: Mr. Bespolka, Ms. Vogel, Hr. Erlbaum, Fr. Albanese
Alternates: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Ewert
Student Representatives: Ms. Patt, Mr. Simanowitz, Hr. Bordet, Fr. Ward
Alternate: Ms. Pantelidou
Hort Guest: Fr. Heyelmann
External guest: Ms. Bespolka

Voting members: 13 voting members present

1. Approval of Guest

There was a motion to allow Ms. Bespolka to attend the meeting as a guest. She is working toward a scouting badge and attending a school meeting is part of her requirements. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

2. Approval of minutes from 27 September 2023

The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Approval of agenda

Members requested that several topics be added to the agenda:

- The staffing situation in Entrance Class
- Security committee



- Parent Facebook page
- Code of conduct
- Trip price limit

The revised agenda was then approved by unanimous vote.

4. School Conference bylaws/Geschäftsordnung

Since no revised set of bylaws was distributed before the meeting, there was a motion to adopt the previous JFKS School Conference bylaws until new bylaws are approved. The motion was adopted by unanimous vote.

5. SK-ED competency paper review

Mr. Bespolka moved that the School Conference officially accept the document outlining the areas of responsibility for the school conference and the educational directorate.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the English version is an autotranslation and is sometimes unclear or incorrect. The membership agreed that the German version is the one to be voted on. The motion was approved unanimously.

6. High School trip policy

The high school faculty approved the trip policy, but [Berlin School Law](#) also requires that the School Conference approve the rules regarding student exchanges and trips: §76 (2) Die Schulkonferenz entscheidet ferner mit einfacher Mehrheit über ... 8. Grundsätze des Schüleraustausches, der internationalen Zusammenarbeit, der Schülerfahrten und Wandertage sowie über Vereinbarungen zu Schulpartnerschaften.

Students noted that the new policies seem to have taken effect, but that they shouldn't until approved by the SK.

Students object to the statement in the policy that students may participate in a maximum of two trips per school year and that 12th graders should not participate in trips. Students argued that the decision to participate in a trip or not should be up to the student and their family, not a blanket policy.

Hr. Witte, who was a member of the group that wrote the concept, said that Hr. Bartz told the group that the aim of the policy is not to limit student trips. However, the school needs a clear policy that sets a legal basis for decisions about trips.



Hr. Witte said that last year some parents complained that they weren't informed about the potential effects of trips on their child's grades.

Students agreed that having everyone clearly informed about the potential consequences of trips on school work and grades is important. Students are in favor of keeping the trip contract as part of the policy.

Mr. Bespolka said that parents understand the desire for a clear policy and also understand that trips cause scheduling issues and substitutions that are not ideal for students or teachers who are impacted. However, he noted that the policy does not clarify who makes the final decision about whether a student can go on a trip in case of disagreements between students, parents and administration.

Parents would like to be involved in drafting the trip policy. They see school trips are one of the very valuable things about JFKS.

There was a motion to approve the trip policy as approved by the high school faculty: 1 yay, 11 nays 1 abstention. The motion failed.

A motion to form a committee to revise the trip policy was unanimously approved (13 yays, 0 nays, 0 abstentions). This will be added to the action item list, and teachers will try to recruit a chairperson.

7. Trip cost limits

Teachers and students noted that the current cost limit of €650 per trip is no longer realistic. The Senate set guidelines in March: €650 for grades 7-10, €850 for grades 11 and 12, €1350 for exchanges outside Europe. It was moved and seconded that JFKS use the Senate recommendation as a guideline, with exceptions remaining possible. (12 yay, 0 nay, 2 abstentions)

8. Mittlerer Schulabschluss (MSA)

Mr. Fritzenschaft reported that if JFKS were to drop the MSA exams, it would need to devise a different set of evaluations that would be equivalent. Since that is not something that can be quickly developed, the decision was made to continue with the standard MSA exams this year.

Hr. Erlbaum suggested moving more detailed discussion of the topic to the next meeting. He noted that since JFKS offers the Abitur after just 12 years, academically the 10th grade is equivalent to that in a Gymnasium. Since passing 10th grade at a Gymnasium grants students the equivalent of the MSA, this should be possible at JFKS as well.

Ms. Ward noted that preparing the MSA oral presentation was valuable preparation for the Abitur "Fifth Prufungskomponent" (5. PK), which is also an oral presentation of a research project. Mr. Bordet noted



that the language tests are often inappropriate for students at JFKS. The English exam is generally far too easy, but the German test is nearly impossible for students who are in D3 or D4 German.

9. German proficiency letter

Mr. Fritzenschaft reported that all diploma students will receive a letter explaining the German levels at JFKS and stating that graduates who were at D2 or D1 level had been instructed at the C1 level of German, which is sufficient to study at a German university. Parents expressed their thanks to the administration for helping students and families clear this bureaucratic hurdle.

10. NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) Accreditation

Ms. Martin-O'Connor reported that JFKS has been accredited through 2027. Going forward, the school will focus on putting the panel's recommendations into action via a 4-year plan focused on bilingual education, JEDI issues, the climate of learning, and structural improvement.

The plan was presented at the ED retreat and to department chairs. It is assumed that it will be revised and updated over time. The ED requires the administration to report each year with a progress update.

Ms. Martin noted that teachers appreciate that there are specific years and positions assigned to action items so that there is clearer accountability.

Ms. Martin-O'Connor will distribute the strategic plan to all SK members.

11. Early release due to heat/Hitzefrei

Ms. Martin-O'Connor and Mr. Fritzenschaft said they were informed of the early release policies when they arrived and could not say who set them. In certain rooms known to get especially hot, the school takes the temperature at 10:30 am. If it is above 25 C, then the school announces early release.

Hr. Erlbaum noted that officially early release due to heat was eliminated in Berlin. However, Fr. Evers noted that this is true for schools whose normal school day ends at 13:20 or 13:30. Since JFKS goes longer, it is allowed to release students "early," at the standard release time of 13:30.

Parents asked if targeted measures might help keep the problematic rooms cooler. Ms. Martin-O'Connor said there are plans in place to add additional sun protection to many of the rooms.

The option of moving to cooler spaces or other rooms was also discussed, but that isn't feasible in all cases.



Fr. Evers emphasized that the situation in the 3rd floor, south-facing rooms is extreme, with the temperature above 28 C even early in the morning when windows have been left open all night. Mr. Erlbaum suggested that the Verein might be able to purchase air conditioners for the worst-affected rooms. Teachers should provide a list of those rooms and their dimensions and the Verein will explore various options.

Fr. Heyelmann noted that early dismissal also poses challenges for Hort, especially since it is at such short notice.

Mr. Fritzenschaft emphasized that early dismissal is a last resort and administrators also try to avoid it.

12. Committee Updates

Building committee: The school is awaiting a feasibility study on the Baupiloten project. New kitchen facilities should be completed during summer 2024. Mr. Bespolka noted that technically new building projects should be presented to the school conference before going forward.

Teachers asked about the large mess (dust) left behind by workers installing internet cables.

Mr. Fritzenschaft said that a new report found that asbestos in the school was limited to fire doors and the roof, so that overall the dust question is less critical than originally feared. Mr. Bartz will distribute the report when he returns from sick leave.

Hr. Witte noted that there are significant issues with the new cleaning company. Ms. Martin-O'Connor and Mr. Fritzenschaft agreed and said they have had a meeting with the company to let them know they are not meeting expectations and need to improve. The company is assigned by the Senate/BIM and the school has limited power to find an alternative.

Food committee: No official report. Several members commented that the new caterer seems to be working out OK. It was noted that there has not been an official food committee meeting in many years. Parents noted that student members of the food committee who tried to attend the caterer taste test over the summer were turned away by Senate officials because they were under age 18.

Finance committee: Mr. Bespolka noted that the School Conference should have a finance committee, especially since the ED/SK competence paper assigns financial issues to the SK. The committee would help improve transparency over the school's discretionary budget, for example when there are disagreements about allocations between departments.

It was moved to form a committee. The motion passed with 10 yay, 0 nay votes and 3 abstentions.



Mr. Simanowitz, Mr. Bespolka, Ms. Martin and Hr. Erlbaum volunteered to be on the committee. The members were approved by a vote of 12 yay, 0 nay and 1 abstention.

13. Action Items

Bus lane letter: Hr. Bartz should give an update at the next meeting

Code of Conduct: High school faculty have approved the code of conduct. Ms. Martin-O'Connor reported that she had been unclear on required next steps, so approval of the text was not included in the most recent elementary school faculty meeting. It will be on the agenda for the 31 January meeting. Mr. Fritzenschaft noted that the code of conduct was an important part of the NEASC special report that led to final accreditation and that it received strong support in the HS faculty meeting.

Mr. Bespolka noted that clarification is needed about whether the School Conference also needs to approve the code of conduct. He also noted that it is very important that the final document be widely publicized to students and parents and that clear steps are in place for everyone to follow when someone thinks there may have been a violation of the code.

Electronic media device policy: Ms. Patt reported that student council has been encouraging students to use devices responsibly and that they have encouraged students to sign a form outlining the rules and consequences of breaking them. They hope this will increase awareness and compliance with the rules.

Internet/IT situation: Mr. Fritzenschaft reported that work to lay internal school wiring has started and by the end of summer break all classrooms should have both wireless and hardline internet access. Unfortunately this week the school's servers have been down, so internet access is very limited. The school and its internet provider are working on solutions, some of which have been made much more difficult because of Senate policies (denying a request for a backup server, for example).

It is still unclear what funds for new equipment are available and how they are being allocated.

High school bathrooms: Students report that several bathrooms are still closed, and in others the water faucets don't work. Mr. Fritzenschaft will alert the hausmeister.

14. Entrance class staffing

This year the EC classes are larger than usual because of lawsuits that let additional students in. This means that the student-teacher ratio is much higher than would usually be allowed for this age group in Berlin. Teachers have put together a statement and had asked for it to be distributed to school conference members, but it was not distributed.



Members suggested that the topic be brought to the Educational Directorate, since ED members from the embassy and senate might be able to take more concrete steps to remedy the situation.

School conference members unanimously expressed the view that the entrance class is a key part of JFKS's bilingual and bicultural character.

15. Security committee

Hr. Erlbaum suggested reactivating the security committee. Some parents do not feel the school is a safe place any more, especially following the graffiti found on school grounds.

Mr. Simanowitz reported that he had met with a group of students who are concerned and that an event against antisemitism is planned on 22 December.

Several members suggested using Klassenrat time to discuss the issues.

Teachers said they would appreciate more guidance on how to discuss antisemitism and the Israel-Hamas conflict with students.

A motion to form the security committee was unanimously approved.

Hr. Erlbaum, Mr. Bespolka, Ms. Patt, Fr. Heyelmann, and Ms. Martin-O'Connor volunteered for the committee. They were unanimously approved as members.

16. Parent facebook page

Hr. Erlbaum expressed concerns about political statements on the parent facebook page. Mr. Sullivan noted that the moderators are doing their best to enforce the "no politics" rules of the page. This is difficult to do in real time. Other parents noted their support for the work of the moderators.

The meeting adjourned at 17:45.

Minutes submitted by Gretchen Vogel