



## Meeting minutes for the School Conference Meeting

28 February 2024, at 15:30 in the Quiet Study Room

In attendance:

Administration:	Hr. Bartz, Ms. Martin-O'Connor
Teacher Representatives:	Hr. Witte, Ms. Moser, Fr. Evers, Ms. Martin Alternates: Fr. Freytag, Fr. Diemer
Parent Representatives:	Ms. Vogel, Mr. Sullivan, Fr. Albanese, Hr. Erlbaum Alternates: Fr. Ferrary, Fr. Hasselmeyer
Student Representatives:	Mr. Simanowitz, Hr. Bordet, Fr. Zoll, Ms. von zur Gatten
Hort Guest:	Ms. Heyelmann

*Voting members: 14 voting members present*

### 1. Approval of Agenda

Hr. Erlbaum noted that the issue of whether JFKS 10<sup>th</sup> graders need to take the official Mittlererschulabschluss (MSA) exams is missing from the agenda. It had been briefly discussed at the December meeting and a request was made then to discuss it in February. Hr. Bartz will add the item to next meeting's agenda and will invite Fr. Orgis to attend.

Mr. Simanowitz reported that the student council is interested in forming a group to keep track of the school's CO2 emissions and asked whether the School Conference would like to make it an official committee. There was discussion about whether the committee would focus on sustainability in general or specifically on carbon emissions. Mr. Simanowitz said students wanted to focus on carbon emissions. Hr. Bartz noted that he has also spoken with geography teacher Hr. Martens about the topic.

The agenda was unanimously approved without changes.

### 2. Approval of minutes from 19 December 2023

Unanimously approved with one abstention

### 3. Child protection plan

Hr. Bartz has forwarded the parents' suggestions for changes to Fr. Gillert, who heads the child protection team. Parents are concerned that the German and English versions are inconsistent and include significant



translation mistakes. There are also several things on the list of “prohibited behaviors” that parents consider important to allow in certain circumstances. For example, group chats can be an important tool for keeping students safe on trips. Parents also appreciate being able to see photographs of trips, and it isn’t clear that teachers will be provided access to school-owned devices for this. There are worries that inconsistent enforcement of the “prohibited” list could lead to a weakening of the overall plan.

Hr. Bartz notes that the current version can’t ever be considered a final document. The plan will always be a living document and will be updated and changed. Approving the document now won’t prevent making changes, but will enable us to have an officially approved document. This is important for both the Berlin authorities and NEASC.

There are chances to allow exceptions for certain cases, but many of the prohibited behaviors are simply illegal in Germany and cannot be allowed.

Ms. Martin emphasized that the school needs an approved child protection plan. She noted that teachers have approved it with large majorities at their faculty meetings. She doesn’t feel safe as a teacher if these kinds of guidelines are not in place. She agrees some changes are needed, but they should be made outside the SK meeting.

Ms. Martin-O’Connor also emphasized that the document will be regularly reviewed and amended. It’s a working document that helps staff understand the boundaries of their work.

Students expressed concern that if the plan is approved now, the urgency to correct it will disappear.

Teachers noted that rules about taking photographs had not been clear, especially on trips or excursions. There had been discussion of providing school-owned devices to teachers on trips, but that is not yet standard practice.

It is not clear whether faculty approved just the German version or the bilingual version.

Students noted that communicating with teachers via WhatsApp can be very useful and important. They questioned whether a chat group with 20 people should count as a “private network.”

An informal poll was taken to see if there was enough support to pass the current draft. There was not.

Ms. Moser asked whether parents or students had played any role in drafting the child protection plan. Since they were not included in the process, it was proposed that parents and students schedule a meeting with Fr. Gillert to discuss concerns and possible changes.



A new draft should be distributed to school conference members at least two weeks before the next meeting to allow time for feedback and revisions. That should reduce the need for discussion at the next meeting and enable the SK to easily approve the document.

#### **4. Buddy system**

Fr. Diemer explained that the German department has developed a new “buddy system” for incoming 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Students who are still learning German (in D3 or D4) will be paired with a student with fluent German (in D1 or D2). The project takes its name from the buddy bear in front of our school.

The goal is to find fun ways to motivate the students to speak in German. Each set of buddies will receive a “bucket list” (in both languages) and information for their parents. The list will include 10 “challenges,” such as seeing a German movie together, cooking a traditional German dish, or going to watch a soccer game. Each pair will be expected to do at least 5 of the activities together and document them. There will be “buddy assemblies” where the students can share their experiences. Homeroom teachers will also help keep track of whether the buddies are working out. Participation will be noted on report cards as an activity.

Mr. Simanowitz praised the idea and said it should help make the school both more bilingual and more welcoming. He asked what students and the student council can do to help.

Fr. Diemer said students talking up the project and helping to motivate each other will be important to encourage participation.

*The proposal received unanimous approval.*

#### **5. Budget basics**

Hr. Bartz explained that the JFKS budget is divided into elementary and high school parts. Budgets are for a calendar year, not a school year.

The finance committee discussed the budget reports in detail at their recent meeting and recommended following the current procedures for allocating discretionary funding, in which teachers submit requests and department chairs come together to decide which requests can be funded.

Hr. Erlbaum noted that the committee’s questions were all answered to members’ satisfaction.

Teachers noted that the procedure in the elementary school is not as clear as it could be. Fr. Martin-O’Connor is working on creating a more transparent process. A possible alternative to the current approach would be to give a pre-set sum to each department to spend each year.



The school receives roughly 250,000 euros per year for ES, HS and administrative needs (paper, copy machines)

The school also received 240,000 euro from the Digitalpakt to buy interactive panels, projectors, computers for classrooms. Hr. Bartz also noted that according to a recent Senate decision, he expects that all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will receive a device from the Senate (laptop, tablet, etc.) starting in the fall.

The school has also requested WiFi routers in many places. The hope is that every classroom will be connected to a single server by the end of 2024.

Ms. Moser asked about the timeline for smart board purchases. Hr. Bartz said the school has already ordered between 35 and 40 smart boards. There is a priority list for rooms, managed by the tech department.

*The budget report was unanimously approved.*

The administration plans to present a similar report next year at the February or March meeting.

Hr. Erlbaum also noted that the finance committee discussed two other non-budget topics. First, the question of whether requiring 5<sup>th</sup> graders to rent music instruments is allowed under Senate rules. And second, the committee discussed starting a [Schulerfirma AG](#) for students to learn more about starting and running a company. Hr. Bordet noted that Hr. Frnkranz already sponsors an activity about founding companies and perhaps the groups could work together.

## **6. EMD elementary school policy**

Fr. Martin-O'Connor reported that while the elementary school has a clear prohibition on the use of cell phones, some students are using smart watches that can also create distraction and social issues. This is also a problem at Hort.

She asked the School Conference to consider whether such watches fall under the same rules as phones.

Members noted that the high school electronic media device policy explicitly mentions internet-connected watches as "electronic media devices" that fall under the same rules as cell phones.

*Motion: The elementary school definition of electronic media devices should match the one in the high school policy: An EMD is defined as any device that has access to the internet, including but not limited to smartphones, laptops, tablets, watches, and desktops.*

*The motion received unanimous approval.*



Hr. Bartz asked whether student council has encouraged high school students to respect the EMD rules.

Hr. Bordet reported that the student council plans to distribute the rules and ask everyone and their parents to sign the statement.

Teachers and administrators emphasized that 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, who are allowed to use their phones in the hallways, are abusing that privilege. There is strong support among teachers for tightening the rules again to limit cell phone use to the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> student lounge. Ms. Moser noted that she had been in favor of the more permissive rules, but said the freedoms have been abused by all grade levels. Students are walking around with headphones and facetimeing with their friends.

Hr. Erlbaum also noted that group chats, for example among classmates, continue to be a problem. They range from mildly annoying (too many messages coming through) to more problematic (bullying).

## 7. Research project – *Le clip* with FU Berlin

Fr. Diemer informed the School Conference about the French department's participation in a research project at the Free University aimed at improving teaching techniques. Called *Le clip*, it will involve filming some classes. All students and their parents have agreed in writing about the terms of participation.

## 8. Committee reports

1. **Food committee** – Hr. Bartz reported that the kitchen construction has stopped temporarily. The provisional solution is working OK for now. He has asked BIM about when things can proceed. The architect says that the plans for construction during summer vacation are expected to proceed as planned.  
General feedback from students and teachers: There is concern that portions are small and people aren't allowed to ask for seconds. Bartz will pass this on to the caterer.
2. **Security committee** – Will meet on 7 March at 15:00. Ms. Martin-O'Connor says she expects the committee's to address two equally important things: the physical security of the campus and the culture and climate at the school. Next week's meeting is to discuss the physical security of the campus. Students who wish to attend are welcome.
3. **Special needs committee** – Fr. Albanese reported that their recent meeting was the first time in four years that no administrator was present. Mr. Getschow reported from the high school on accommodation plans. Students and parents report that many teachers are not implementing accommodation plans, which is a recurring issue. The committee urges the administration to develop improved ways to make sure plans are being followed by all teachers without constant reminders from families. Hr. Bartz apologized for the fact that no one could make it to the meeting.



The committee plans to hold a parent information evening at the beginning of each school year explaining the supports available for special needs students at JFKS.

The next meeting is on 25 April. Student council is requested to forward the information so that some students can attend the next meeting.

Teachers noted that some students decline to take advantage of accommodations such as extra time even when it is specifically offered. They also noted that medical special needs, such as severe allergies, are not communicated anywhere. They suggested it would be good to have a more standardized system for alerting teachers about students who have specific medical needs, not just learning needs.

## 9. Action Items

Ms. Moser noted that the boy's bathroom is being worked on.

## 10. Miscellaneous

**Hiring update:** Hr. Bartz reported that there are three applicants for the two open positions at the elementary school: one applicant for principal and two for assistant principal. Fr. Orgis expects to hold interview meetings in May.

Hr. Bartz also reported that the American HS position has not yet been posted.

School conference members were extremely disappointed to hear that hiring is moving so slowly. Time is getting very short to hire someone who would need to relocate to Berlin.

The school conference urged the administration to request that Fr. Orgis to move forward without further delay to hire badly needed administrators for the school.

Hr. Bartz noted that all applicants have to submit their full background files before the hiring process can move forward. He noted that the Senate offices are also understaffed at the moment.

**Klassenrat:** Fr. Albanese asked for an update on some of the issues being addressed in the Klassenrat periods in 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade. She requested that teachers and administrators use the Klassenrat time to help reemphasize the basic behavior standards, including discouraging crude language and wide use of swear words both by students and some staff members.

Meeting adjourned at 18:20

Minutes submitted by Gretchen Vogel