



Meeting minutes for the School Conference Meeting
9 October 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. Gothe, Ms. Martin
Alternate: Mr. Kelly
Parent Representatives: Ms. Vogel, Mr. Sullivan, Hr. Kölling-Orb
Student Representatives: Mr. Simanowitz, Hr. Bordet, Ms. Zoll, Fr. von zur Gathen
Alternate: Hr. Strigel
Hort Guest: Fr. Heyelmann

Voting members: 13 voting members present

1. Approval of Agenda

Students asked for a proposed ethics code for school conference members to be added to the agenda. Since the proposal had not been distributed before the meeting, the topic will be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

Parents requested that election of an SK liaison to the ED and an update on administration hiring be added. Hr. Bartz will invite Fr. Orgis to the next meeting and will also ask her for a written explanation for why the hiring process for the American high school principal has not been completed.

The amended agenda was unanimously approved.

2. Approval of minutes from 22 May, 2024

The minutes were not sent with the meeting invitation. They will be voted on at the next meeting.

3. School conference meeting dates

Proposed dates are:

11 December, 29 January, 11 March (joint meeting with ED, so on a Tuesday at 3:00 pm), 7 May, 18 June (*if needed)

The dates were unanimously approved.



4. Early release due to heat (shortened schedule)

Hr. Bartz asked for feedback on how the new system worked in the early weeks of this school year. Instead of deciding at 10:30 am whether afternoon classes will be cancelled, the administration now decides a day in advance to activate a shortened schedule. This allows all class periods to meet and gives parents more advance warning of early dismissal.

The system was implemented several times in the early weeks of school, and in the administration's view it worked well. The administration would like to continue the system and asks for the school conference's endorsement.

Students said feedback was largely positive. Allowing all classes to meet on the shortened days is valuable, and in general students support the new system. Some improvements were suggested, including shortening or eliminating the morning break and making sure there is sufficient passing time between 7th and 8th periods.

Fr. Heyelmann said that, from the Hort perspective, the new schedule caused significant problems. The lunch period for 3rd-6th graders is too short and too early, so that children arrive in Hort very hungry. Elementary school teachers agreed that the lunch schedule on the shortened days does not work.

Fr. Gothe reported that for ES-2nd grades the new schedule does not work well at all. These grades are usually dismissed at 1:30, so they do not need a shortened schedule. However, if they stay on a normal schedule while the rest of the school has shorter periods, then sport, religion and music teachers can't teach at the scheduled times.

Teachers asked whether it is still possible to declare early release under the old system if classrooms are especially hot. Hr. Bartz and Ms. Martin-O'Connor said that was still possible under certain circumstances, but the goal would be to whenever possible give advance notice and use the shortened schedule.

Ms. Moser said the lack of passing time between 7th and 8th period was a significant problem and meant that 8th period classes had very short instruction time.

Parents acknowledged the areas that need improvement, but they generally are strongly in favor of having advance notice of shortened days and allowing all classes to meet despite periods of hot weather.

Hr. Bartz said that administration and teachers can use the cooler months to iron out some of the scheduling difficulties. Fr. Ecke may have ideas about how to solve some of the issues in the elementary school.



Ms. Martin noted that there are four main problems: the lower elementary schedule, lunch for grades 3-6, the passing period between 7th and 8th period and the lack of supervision at the high school during breaks. All of these seem solvable with a bit more input. She said music teachers are happy to help find creative solutions. The administration should work together with teachers from lower elementary, sport, music and religion to find solutions for the issues even if the schedules don't exactly line up.

Fr. Gothe noted that some lower elementary school teachers have also expressed frustration that on shortened days all other teachers get extra time off, while they still work their normal day. (This issue is independent of whether a shortened schedule is used, however.) Hr. Bartz says there may be ways for teachers who receive time off to offer extra help to those who don't.

Motion: The school conference resolves that JFKS should continue to use a shortened schedule on predicted hot days, with the requirement that the schedule is edited and revised with the input of lower elementary teachers, the caterer, Hort, and the music, sport and religion departments. A new schedule should be approved on or before the 7 May school conference meeting.

The motion passed with 12 yays, no nays and one abstention.

Hr. Bartz will ask Dr. Kennedy-Salchow to begin working with these groups to find ways to address the problems.

5. Hate speech policy

Hr. Bartz reported that the high school has had four cases in which the new hate speech policy has been implemented. Teachers and administration followed the procedure and had discussions with students and parents. The sense is that it is working well so far.

Ms. Martin-O'Connor reported that the elementary school has also had to address several situations using the policy. Having it is helpful when teachers and administrators have those conversations with children and parents.

Mr. Sullivan asked why the hate speech policy is separate from the code of conduct.

Hr. Bartz and Ms. Martin-O'Connor answered that code of conduct is primarily for teachers, but the hate speech policy applies to everyone.

Hr. Kölling-Orb noted that the policy was devised by J.E.D.I. committee members and has not been formally adopted. He asked whether the SK needs to formally approve the policy.



Hr. Bartz said he would prefer to test the policy a bit longer before formal adoption. At the moment the focus is on helping teachers to be more sensitive to problematic situations. The new policy is also a lot of work for the administration, since it involves holding extra meetings with parents and students.

Ms. Moser said that there is some confusion among staff and students about whether the policy is currently official. It would therefore be good for the SK to give its formal approval. She said that feedback from the English department, which addressed the policy in many classes, is positive.

Mr. Simanowitz said that the student council has not been included in the process of rolling out the new policy, even though they have an anti-discrimination subcommittee that is perfect for engaging in these issues. He is not in favor of implementing such an important policy on an “administrative” basis and only later asking the school conference for approval.

Some students said they were not aware of the new policy. Teachers and administration reminded them of the assemblies that were held at the start of the school year. Students did then recall the assemblies.

Students reported that the phrase, “We don’t do that here” has become a joke, with people saying it in response to lots of situations (unrelated to hate speech). They noted that it is not really the way students talk, nor is it what they would usually say to address the problem of hate speech if confronted with it.

Parents said they welcome the policy. The communication needs to continue, since some people hear such things right away, but others need more reminders. Parents favor formally approving the policy now, keeping the option open to revise it if needed.

Hr. Bordet suggested sending the policy to all students via email so everyone has a written copy.

Motion: The school conference resolves that the current hate speech policy is adopted as official school policy.

The motion was approved in a unanimous vote.

6. Action items

Bus lane: Parents will ask Hr. Erlbaum for an update.

Trip policy: At the moment there is no official trip policy approved by the SK. The topic will be on the agenda at the 15. January faculty meeting. New suggestions should be discussed in the student council and at the December school conference meeting so that a revised policy can be presented to faculty in January.



NEASC/strategic action plan: Ms. Martin-O'Connor will make sure it is forwarded to all SK members.

MSA: Parents will check whether Hr. Erlbaum still wants join the ED subcommittee and report back to the school conference.

Hitzefrei: The Verein's fans are working quite well. They are considering hiring someone to take over turning the fans on in the morning to circulate cooler air from outside. The white building will also be getting more sun protection.

Hazardous materials report: Hr. Bartz asked for the report. He was told he could see it, but that he could not receive a copy or distribute it to the community. There is asbestos present inside doors and in the roof, but it is contained, and officials say it is not of concern. Anyone who drills in the building is warned about where it is. There are some acoustic panels that include materials that are no longer allowed. They don't have to be removed, but they can't be reinstalled or replaced. That's why some things are constructed under the panels, so that they don't need to be removed.

Teachers noted that the fact that the report can't be distributed is unsettling.

Girls toilets: Hr. Bartz has been reminding the cleaning company and the Hausmeister that all bathrooms should have ample supplies of toilet paper. Cleaning staff have been taught how to restock the dispensers, which was a problem before. Students say it's gotten better, but there continue to be cases where there is no toilet paper and no soap. Students report that the boys restrooms have similar problems. Bartz will continue to give this feedback.

There are books in Fr. Decker's office where one can note bathroom problems, so that maintenance and cleaning staff knows the issues that need to be addressed. Student council will inform students about this.

Students asked if it's possible to install more mirrors in bathrooms. Hr. Bartz said that mirrors are no longer a standard part of school bathrooms, and the cleaning firm contract does not include mirror cleaning. One could ask the Verein to install them, but then they would still not be regularly cleaned or maintained.

7. Miscellaneous

Principal and assistant principal hiring:

ES German assistant principal: Hr. Bartz reported that the Schulaufsicht has decided that there are not enough applicants for the position, so another reminder about applying will be issued this week or next.

Hr. Bartz has asked the Schulaufsicht to move this process forward as soon as possible. When he asked if it would happen this calendar year, the answer was "maybe."



HS American principal: Ms. Hale is the acting HS American principal. It is not clear when or how the hiring process, currently stalled, will move forward.

HS German assistant principal: The process has been running for 5 years. There were two applicants, but the process has not moved forward. Hr. Bartz is hoping that the previous process will be officially ended so that a new process can begin. Fr. Gillert, who is currently the acting German HS assistant principal, will return from her maternity leave part time starting on 14 October.

HS American assistant principal duties: The school in theory should be able to hire current staff members to help with the American assistant principal duties while Ms. Hale is serving as acting principal. Hr. Bartz has been asking weekly for information, but bureaucratic rules currently are blocking this process from going forward.

The Senate has two new positions, so that Fr. Orgis now has more help with her duties. This may (hopefully) help move some of the hiring processes forward.

Teachers noted that frequently there has been no one at all in the administration wing available, for example to help students who are ill and give them permission to go home. Hr. Bartz acknowledged the problem and noted that secretaries have also been out sick. Teachers suggested posting a sign directing students where they can go to find someone who might help (perhaps, if necessary, in the elementary school).

ED liaison:

Lars Bespolka was unanimously approved to be the SK liaison to the ED.

Baupiloten:

Ms. Martin asked if there was an update from the Baupiloten process. The building committee has not met for a long time. Hr. Bartz replied that funds are lacking, so all plans are on hold. He has read in the newspaper that the neighboring swimming pool now has a contract until the end of 2025. Hr. Bartz regards this as bad news, since it means significant delays in starting any building process. The first step has to be construction of a new building to house students during the different renovation and construction phases of the main buildings. If the pool will remain until the end of 2025, that means construction of a replacement building can't start until 2026. That will take 1 to 1.5 years, so the earliest time the main renovation/reconstruction work could start would be 2027.

Hr. Bartz said he had hoped that construction could start at the beginning of 2025.



Hr. Bartz cautioned that, as far as he knows, the Baupiloten process that has already happened is the only input our community will have in the planning or construction process. However, parents and teachers who participated in the process had understood that the school community would continue to receive updated plans and be able to give feedback.

Ms. Martin will contact the architects for an update.

Special needs subcommittee:

Student representatives are asked to please appoint two student members of this committee. Students will recruit from among the student council members.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:53 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gretchen Vogel