Meeting minutes

for the School Conference Meeting

on 10 December at 15:30 in W125

In attendance:

Administration:	Herr Bartz, Dr. Kennedy
Teacher Representatives:	Ms. Moser, Frau Diemer, Ms. Broll, Frau Rigney
Parent Representatives:	Mr. Bespolka, Ms. Vogel, Herr Kölling-Orb, Frau Albanese Alternates: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Ewert
Student Representatives:	Frau Lauterbach, Herr Striegel, Mr. Simanowitz, Mr. Johnson Alternates: Frau von zur Gathen, Mr. Meyer
Hort Guest:	Ms. Truss
Voting members:	*14 voting members present*

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved by unanimous vote.

2. Approval of Minutes from 8 October 2025

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

3. Construction work at JFKS

Herr Bartz reported that all money for significant renovations of the centrally administered schools is frozen until 2029, so there will be no major building projects until then. The projected budget for the JFKS renovation is unclear, but one estimate is at least 180 million euros.

In the meantime, there will still be money for ongoing repairs and smaller renovations, including the roof and rain drainage systems. The school will also receive a new building and room numbering system that conforms with the Berlin standard so that emergency workers can more easily find specific rooms if needed.

Dr. Kennedy proposed that the school establish a “beautification committee” that would work with BIM to coordinate the smaller but important steps to update facilities, especially renovating bathrooms. Many things on campus have not been updated in recent years, because it was thought that major renovations were imminent. The committee would include the Hausmeister, staff, students and parents. It would help set priorities and coordinate funding from BIM, the Verein and the Trust Fund.

Ms. Moser noted that involving students is especially important so that they understand that they have a stake in the campus and hopefully will treat it with more respect. There was wide agreement from

administration and students that actively involving students in renovation projects helps to impart a sense of ownership and increases overall community pride in and respect for campus facilities.

A motion to form a school beautification committee was unanimously approved.

Members will include Dr. Kennedy as chair, Ms. Moser, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Meyer, Frau Diemer, Herr Kölling-Orb, Mr. Simanowitz, Frau von zur Gathen und Ms. Lauterbach

Dr. Kennedy will schedule an initial meeting with a BIM representative and the Hausmeister to which the whole community will be invited. Herr Bartz has asked the Hausmeister to compile a list of issues that could be addressed by the committee (Bestandsaufnahme).

SK will include an item in the December parent bulletin announcing the formation of the committee and the date of the first meeting.

SK members also discussed the possibility of exerting more political pressure to make sure that the major renovation remains a priority and to see if the timeline could be moved forward. The administration cannot participate directly in such a committee, but other community members are welcome to do so.

The formation of a "Political action" committee was unanimously approved. Members will include Ms. Broll, Herr Kölling-Orb, Herr Striegel and Mr. Johnson.

4. Overview of Known Committees

Herr Bartz gave an overview of previously established school conference committees:

--Beautification (formerly building) and food committees are being formed.

--Security: Herr Bartz suggested not forming a separate committee and instead discussing security issues with the whole school conference. There was unanimous agreement for this proposal. Parents urged the administration to be proactive about communicating relevant security information to the parent community.

--Finance: This is a joint ED/SK committee that last met in 2024. It can discuss the details of the budget situation and then report back to each body. *SK committee members were unanimously approved: Herr Bartz, Dr. Kennedy, Mr. Bespolka, Ms. Broll and Frau Rigney*.

Herr Bartz will call a meeting when the 2026 budget is available. He has been informed that the current budget of roughly 200,000 euros will not be cut further this year. (The previous budget had been 250,000 euros.)

Elementary school teachers noted that these cuts are impacting the school's efforts to implement the new bilingual program. Herr Bartz noted that Frau Borschel is starting the budgetary planning for 2026. The administration will discuss whether and how Trust Fund money might be used to purchase more English-language materials so that there is more Senate money left for needed German materials.

5. Food committee

Dr. Kennedy reported that Frau Senkel attended a 4-hour training session on how to lead a food committee. Those who volunteered for the committee have been invited to an initial meeting on 17 December, pending SK approval. Frau Senkel has also given potential members information about the committee's official guidelines and asked members to contribute suggestions for committee goals.

Names of members submitted with the meeting invitation (attached as appendix) were unanimously approved, with the additions of Mr. Simanowitz and Erwin L. (6th grade).

6. Potential Special Needs Department

Dr. Kennedy held a meeting with stakeholders, and all are in favor of exploring the idea of starting a special needs faculty department. This should include both ES and HS teachers and staff. The potential department chair will need understand both the US and German systems, since parents tend to have very different expectations depending on their background. It may be possible to appoint department co-chairs.

The next step is to write a job description and list of responsibilities for the chair position. The administration also still needs to decide exactly how to staff the position.

Several teachers and Hort staff visited the Nelson Mandela school recently to learn more about how they integrate their Hort in supporting students with special needs.

In general, the school is working to put supports in place for all students who need help, whether or not they have an officially diagnosed "special need." Many practices that help support students with special needs can benefit all students.

Teachers and administrators note that data protection and personal privacy issues will need to be carefully managed when information is shared in any special needs faculty department meetings.

7. Teacher wellbeing survey

Herr Bartz informed the SK that a researcher from the Free University would like to offer continuing education workshops for teachers on wellbeing and resilience, including strategies for how to manage increasing workloads and prevent burnout. The researcher would also would like to conduct a related survey and interview with a handful of teachers about the workshops. The study has been approved by the FU Berlin. A description of the project is attached as an appendix.

8. Miscellaneous

Vaping:

Parents noted that the topic of vaping has been raised at the Bezirkselternausschuss (BEA). It is a major issue at many Berlin schools, and some are installing detectors in bathrooms even at the elementary school level. Parents asked if that something JFKS would want to consider.

Ms. Moser said that teachers are very aware that some students are vaping. She noted that the vape shop that recently opened nearby is not helpful in limiting students' vaping. She suggested that the newly formed political action or beautification committees might take this up as a topic.

Students said they perceive that JFKS has less vaping than other schools, but they acknowledged that there several kinds of drug use are a problem at the school.

Vaping detectors could be discussed by the new beautification committee as part of bathroom renovations.

Emergency communication:

Parents reported that they had received questions about why the initial message about the (ultimately fake) terror threat came from the parent council and not directly from the administration.

Administration explained that the Zehlendorf police were slower than other districts to give them the all clear. They therefore asked the parent council to send an initial message indicating that the school was aware of the issue and was actively working with the police toward a resolution.

Sport hall:

A recent article in the *Tagesspiegel* noted broken equipment and heating in the sport hall. The administration noted that the heating issue is known and will be addressed over the holiday break. (A broken pipe is inside a concrete wall in a staircase, so repairs are best made while school is not in session.)

Teachers noted that there are heating problems throughout the school.

Mittelhof room:

The very popular tea kettle has disappeared. It's not clear whether this is a technical issue or something else is going on. Herr Bartz will check on the situation.

Makeup test dates:

There has been some confusion among students and parents about the rules surrounding makeup tests, including whether students in 7th-10th grades (Mittelstufe) can be required to make up tests on Saturday.

Herr Bartz reported that the school conference would need to approve a policy of requiring Mittelstufe to write makeup tests on Saturdays.

Teachers were strongly in favor of the idea. So many students miss exams that it can be extremely difficult to reschedule them during regular school hours.

Parents also supported the idea, to allow the chance for students who have missed multiple days to spread out the makeup exams.

Students suggested starting the Saturday exams somewhat later in the morning.

The topic of makeup exams will be added to the next meeting's agenda.

Action Items report:

Cell phones in the library: Mr. Striegel said the topic was addressed during the recent 11th and 12th grade Klassenrat meetings. He said the student council could also address it further.

Teachers and administration noted that the problem has definitely not resolved and encouraged students to talk with Ms. Hale about possible next steps.

School-wide survey: Ms. Hale is coordinating the development of a survey for the whole community about the overall school climate. Teachers noted that the tone of parent emails is often quite unkind and they observe that in general levels of respect have been dropping. They hope the survey might help.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Ms. Vogel, translation by Herr Kölling-Orb

Appendix 1: Members of the food committee

Appendix 2: Description of teacher wellbeing research project (EN and DE)