

Parents' minutes of the educational council of 25-01-2018

Second part

Minute writer: Koen Leuridan

Mr. Hrovath opened the meeting by welcoming all present. He thanked Mr. Metz for the minutes of the last meeting.

Observing the agenda, Mr. Hrovath stated strict timekeeping will be needed and maybe some topics could be dealt with in writing.

Mr. Leuridan observed that this would be desirable for all EC meetings, and if this were done before the meeting, topics could be closed quickly during the meeting. This proposal was adopted.

Mr. Hrovath observed that the educational council is a discussion forum between all parties and therefore proposed to forward the agenda points proposed by anyone to all participants, which was supported.

The first point discussed were the different actions agreed in the last EC:

1. Annual and multiannual school plan. The multiannual school plan has been approved last week in the administrative board.
2. Information about inspectors' visits. Mr. Hrovath agreed to inform the parents' representatives of these visits. However, in case an inspector comes more than once a year, he stated that the school would only inform of the first visit. Parents expressed a desire to be informed of all visits. When asked by the parents about the motivation behind informing only once, Mr Hrovath stated that some inspectors come very frequently because of projects. After discussion, it was agreed that for these cases the parents' representatives would only be informed of inspection visits.
3. Excursions. Mr. Hrovath reports about the praxis in Brussels 1, which has a system of Project weeks as well. Although the Brussels school has a strict policy, exceptions are allowed if the need dictates this. The parents reported the result of the surveys held. The majority preferred keeping flexibility, so that excursions are possible in line with the program. However, in the survey, parents also expressed unhappiness with replacements.

Mr. Hrovath then presented some changes to the current excursion policy :

- strict application of deadlines to announce the excursions (at least 3 weeks beforehand).
- the proposals are collected and discussed with middle management and the replacement coordinator
- verification whether the excursion could be held during the project weeks
- check compatibility with the test calendar
- the school is still pondering multi-day excursions, especially since these imply a bigger financial burden for parents

Mr. Hrovath explained that these measures are meant to limit disruptions without being unduly restrictive if there is a clear pedagogical benefit. The parents' representatives approved of the changes.

4. Communication plan new marking system. Firstly, Mr. Hrovath explained the timeline until the introduction. In April, there will be a second training session for teachers, dedicated to the assessment in S5 (which will be the first students getting a Bac with the new marking system). A few teachers will be trained and then a half day session will be organised for all teachers in the school. Towards the end of April, the rules will be finalised and communicated to the schools. A discussion followed on the appropriate timing for info evenings for the parents taking into account the balance between early communication and the risk of misinforming because of last-minute changes. It was decided to organise an info evening for parents of S1-S3 still in April and for S4 and S5 in May when the school has been informed of the final rules.

The discussion also touched on how the new Bac will be treated by universities and member states. Mr. Hrovath stressed that all member states have committed to recognising the European Baccalaureat. The parents' representatives stated this alone is not enough. For instance British universities have acquainted themselves with different systems and use different criteria for different end school diplomas. For instance some universities require a mark of 85% with the European Bac, compared with 14/20 on the French Bac. There is a risk that unfamiliarity with the changes may lead those universities to set grade expectations too high. No conversion tables for national systems, for example Germany, are available yet.

Mr. Hrovath stated that the UCAS coordinators will communicate with the universities when the issue arises.

5. The action concerning exchanges in L2 has not been addressed

Next, the students asked why there is a semestertest (pre-BAC) for Philosophy, whereas for other subjects of 2 hours, there are instead 4 tests during the year. Mr. Hrovath replied that this is specified in the curriculum. He further stated that there have been changes, which allow the same for Geo2 from next year on. The students also wanted to know why replacement teachers were foreseen only up to S4; this point was however not discussed due to the time constraints and because it was not on the agenda. Mr Hrovath asked the students to bring their points for future meetings beforehand, so that they can be included in the agenda.

On the teaching for the school year 2018/2019, Mr. Hrovath reported that the subject selection has been concluded. The school is now planning which courses will be organised. To this, the school got the instruction of the administrative board to strictly apply the rules in place concerning minimum numbers and reduction of teaching hours (min 5 to create a subject, resp. 7 for teaching the full number of hours foreseen).

For teaching L1 to SWALS, students of consecutive years will have to be fully grouped if the minimum number (7) is not achieved. Grouping is possible only for consecutive years. If no grouping is possible, a reduction in teaching hours is applied (3 instead of 4 hours). These measures do not apply to S6 and S7 where neither grouping nor reduction in hours may be applied.

Chapter XIX of the decisions of the BOG lays down that if the minimum number of students 5 (S6/7) and 7 (S1-S5) is not reached; a grouping of consecutive classes/groups is foreseen. If a grouping is not possible the number of hours has to be reduced by 1 hour except for the 2 period courses (no reduction).

Only for L1 no reduction or regrouping in S6/7 is foreseen.

The SWALS representative asked about the report the school promised about the situation with the SWALS class in S1 in the German section. Mr. Hrovath replied that he organises a feedback session for the parents concerned in February. He further underlined that in his view, this class can not really be called a class, since the students concerned were together for only 7 hours per week (4 maths and 3 SCH). The number of Spanish SWALS was such that it in order to distribute them over the different DE classes, they needed to be in all classes. This again had a strong impact on the teaching tables and the organisation of the courses became a logistical nightmare. He further commented that there were complaints from DE parents as well, since the number of SWALS hampered the teaching, because many of them struggled with the technical terms of the subjects, especially at the beginning. He said that given the number of SWALS students expected for the coming school year, and the difficulties connected to distributing them equally over all DE classes as mentioned before, the school was planning to adopt a similar solution for the next school year, i. e. to group all Spanish SWALS students in one class. Teachers with a qualification for German as a second language would be used.

The SWALS representative disapproved of such a solution and stated that according to the parents concerned, the current SWALS class was not working well, both from a pedagogical and human point of view. She disagreed with the approach of the school. Mr Hrovath stated that the Spanish population is the 3rd biggest in the school and the numbers fully warranted a Spanish section. This was however opposed by the Spanish parents. The SWALS representative replied that since there was, at present, no Spanish section in the secondary school, the best possible solution had to be adopted for the students, and the solution adopted for the present S1 and proposed for the next S1 was not acceptable. Further discussion ensued.

Mr Hrovath concluded the subject by stating that he would welcome positive suggestions from the parents instead of merely disagreeing with the options chosen by the school.

The meeting wrapped up with some practical issues, considering that a large number of topics on the agenda were not addressed :

- Concerning the topic “Medientage S1” it was proposed that Mr. Salvat will make a written summary and distribute this instead
- The topic “LGBT” was moved to the next meeting, since the initiator was not present. She will also be asked to prepare some information in writing for distribution beforehand.
- There is a need to identify issues that can be addressed in writing. This way, during the meeting only a simple confirmation that the issue is settled would be enough

- Setting a time for each agenda point. Mr. Hrovath also suggested that only a limited number of topics should be put on the agenda, so that they can still be discussed in depth.
- The parents stated that they can identify which of the topics that they propose can be dealt with in writing and try to suggest a time needed for discussing their topics.

The next meeting is planned for 28 February.

List of actions :

- (from October meeting) Prüfung durch die Schule der Möglichkeiten, Austausche in die L2 zu machen. Besprechung des Ergebnisses in der nächsten Erziehungsratsitzung
- Mr Salvet to distribute a summary about the "Medientage S1"
- Ms Ghidini to prepare written information on the topic "LGBT" in preparation of the next EC meeting
- All : propose topics before the meeting, supported with relevant information to allow preparation
- School management to organise information sessions on the new marking system as discussed (April/May)
- Parents' representative to forward the results of their Survey to the school management