

Notes: Secondary Class Representatives Meeting December 12th 2016

A First meeting for the school year 2016/2017, has been held on Dec 12th 2016, with the Secondary Class Representatives, the School Management (M. Frithiofson & M Wedel) and the Parents' Association (Mme Ballaguy, Mme O'Sullivan, Mme Ferlin).

You will find enclosed informal notes taken during this meeting.

If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact your Class delegate or the parents' association (office@apeeel2.lu).

Part 1: Open discussion with APEEEL2 and Class Representatives

APEEEL2: Delphine Ballaguy (APEEEL2 President) & Anne O'Sullivan (APEEEL2 Secondary VP)

1/ Teacher replacement policy

The School has implemented this year, a new teacher replacement policy concerning sections: S1 to S5. It does not concern the first and the last period of the school day. Policy: as soon as a teacher is absent (unplanned absences), a colleague is replacing him. All teachers have prepared some pedagogical works at the beginning of the year which can be easily used by colleagues who are doing the replacement. If no replacement is possible, it is mentioned on the Information Screen at the School. If this experience is positive, it will be extended to S6 and S7. APEEEL2 would like to get some feedback from Class Representatives on this new policy.

Questions – Remarks from Class Reps:

- Have the students been informed?
Answer: Normally the School has informed them.
- If the teacher does not speak the language of the students, it is not relevant?
Answer: There are folders in the class, containing work assignments prepared by their own teacher. The children are given these by the replacement teacher in case of the teacher's absence therefore it may not be necessary for the replacement teacher to speak the language of the class. The work in the folders may be different to that which they are doing in class but it is relevant to the course.
- It seems that it is not working for all lessons
 - Example in German Section: no replacement during a long period (5 periods without a teacher, lunch time included).

Comment from Delphine Ballaguy: as it is a pilot project, it is important to get parents' feedback on this new policy. Please do not hesitate to send us your comments & suggestions.

2/ Art and music in L2 of School in S1/S2/S3

Last year as there were issues with timetables, in S1/S2/S3, pupils weren't mixed in Art and Music. These lessons were not always taught in one of the L2. Parents and the APEEEL2 made the observation that the situation remains the same this year. The School explained that they did not want to put too many constraints on the team in charge of timetable to avoid students having gaps in their timetables and less/no half days.

APEEEL2 is asking Class Representatives what are their thoughts on the following question: do they think it is ok to continue to have Art and Music in L1 or would it be better in one of the School L2?

Feedback from Class Representatives:

- Italian Section: Art and Music are taught in the teacher's language (French) and not in the L1, L2 or L3 of the student. This is not normal.
- These specific subjects are already not seen as essential. It is great to want to increase the student's knowledge in languages, but that is not the purpose of these courses. One of the objectives of these subjects is to open their mind to something else. If they don't understand the teacher, they will not understand the concept of these subjects and therefore will not be able to work at them.

Suggestion from a parent:

- When a teacher wants to know if students understand the language he/she will teach the lesson in, can he/she ask "who does not understand French (English, German, etc)" instead of asking "does everybody understand French (English, German, etc)"

Following the feedback from class reps, some classes are mixed, some are not. For some classes, art and music are taught in L1, for some it's in one of the school L2 (FR, DE, EN) and for some others classes, this is in another language like Italian. APEEEL2 will ask the school about some clarification on these classes are organised.

Part 2: Questions for the School Management

From 7pm, we welcomed the School Management: Mr Frithiofson (School Director) and Mr Wedel (Secondary Deputy Director)

I. Questions d'ordre pédagogique / Pedagogical issues

1/ Effectifs des classes

Question (Q): Les effectifs variant d'une section linguistique à l'autre, tous les élèves ne bénéficient pas des mêmes conditions d'apprentissage. Example: it seems that they are more students in French or Italian sections (in some section it can be almost 30 students) versus other sections where they are less students (around 15). Could it be possible to have a similar number of students in each class? In the German section, for a course of Integrated Sciences the number of students reaches 26. Can the class be split into 2 classes?

Answer from the School Management (SM): The number of students per class is very strictly regulated. If it reaches 31 students, the School has to create a new class. The School tries to manage the classes with a fair number of students, especially when they are several classes in the same section and level; 18-20 students are indeed ideal but the School cannot guarantee it and doesn't have the budget to be able to open new classes if the number of 31 pupils is not reached. For Integrated

Sciences, the rules are a bit different: the School has the possibility to split the class if the number of pupils reaches 26 but it is not obliged to do this. For L2 the maximum number of pupils in a class is 29.

2/ Redoublement / Repeat Rate

Q : Il semblerait que **le taux de redoublement** (repeat rate) soit plus fort en section francophone. Quelles sont les explications données par l'Ecole, est-ce lié aux effectifs plus élevés dans ces classes ? On sait que la qualité de l'enseignement ne peut pas être la même dans une classe à 28 par rapport à une classe à 22 ?

Answer from the SM: Yes, there is a difference between the French sections and the other sections not only at our school. But we cannot draw the conclusion that it is linked to the number of students per class, which is higher in general in the French sections. We need to consider other reasons and factors. At the moment we didn't investigate more on this question but we can confirm that the average repeat rate in secondary (all sections) is below 3%.

Q. : Peut-on connaître les **critères qui déterminent le redoublement d'un élève** ? Dans quelles mesures est prise en compte l'attitude de travail de l'élève ?

Answer from the SM: 2 main criteria are used: the number of failed marks and the average of the student. Normally to pass from one class to another, the overall average needs to be over 6.0 and the student should not have more than 4 failed marks. At the Class Council teachers discuss the main issue which is: will the student be able to pass the following year? The teachers and School Management discuss and vote on this at the "conseil de classe".

3/ Evaluation

Q: For short and long tests done in L2 French in S2/S3/S4: pupils do not have enough time to do their test. Sometimes tests are done over 2 periods. What can be done about this?

Answer from the SM: Normally Long tests last 45min (1 period) and Mini tests last 20 minutes. If there are some issues with the teachers, we suggest first that class delegates contact the teacher concerned to find a solution, if no solution is found then class reps can contact Mr Wedel.

Q: It seems that teachers are giving a lot of mini tests in some classes. Are there rules about the number of mini-tests that can be given, what can be done about this, as it puts a lot of pressure on the pupils?

Answer from the SM: There is a plan for long tests with a recommendation to teachers that students cannot have more than 3 long tests a week. They are no rules concerning mini tests. The School recommends that parents contact the teacher to see if he/she could reduce the number of mini-tests that are given to the class.

Q: What about the opposite: is it allowed not to have any test, even in mathematics?

Answer from the SM: there is no obligation for the teacher to give mini-tests. They are free to decide how to evaluate students.

Q. Pre-bac in S7: are they harmonized across the sections?

Answer from the SM: Yes pre-bac are harmonized but there are 2 types of harmonisation:

- Tests are identical for all the language sections (but in different languages). Example: in sciences (it needs to be identical)

- Same requirements and level of competences, same type of questions etc. required for the exam but questions asked are different in the different language sections. Example: Geography 2 and History2

This year, it is the first time we have bio2, geo2, history2 with harmonized rules and considered as a PreBac. In past years, there were only long tests for these subjects in S7.

The parent who asked the question felt that this year's 2 hour prebac Biology exam did not seem to be harmonised in all sections. Should it be identical as it is a science subject?

3/ Others questions

Q : Lorsque des **sujets politiques ou d'actualité sont abordés en classe**, quelles sont les règles en vigueur ? Est-ce que les enseignants peuvent parler de leurs opinions politiques personnelles et ainsi influencer les opinions des élèves (exemple : élection aux USA) ?

Answer from the SM: It is a good idea to discuss subjects like this in class. The school management would encourage the teachers to talk and discuss about topical issues with pupils. Teachers can express their personal opinion, but they absolutely need to say that it is their personal opinion. They cannot say that other people's opinions are wrong.

Q: Sport lesson: there has been during a specific exercise (human pyramid), an accident (broken arm). Can the program of sport be modified to avoid this type of accident? What is done if a student is injured, to assess what happened?

Answer from the SM:

- We don't want to put students in danger of course and at the same time we need to have some flexibility but there may be safer ways to teach the objectives of a lesson. For ex, we have a climbing wall, and the sport teachers are restricted in the use of it whereas the students are asking to use it more.
- M Wedel (Deputy Director of the Secondary) is aware of all incidents for Secondary. In some accident examples, the school psychologist can be asked to help.

II. Languages

Q: What are the possibilities to get support in L2, especially in S3 or S4, when history and geography are taught in L2?

Answer from the SM: If support is needed in L2 it is possible to receive it in any year, if there are sufficient teachers and free periods available in the teachers' and students' timetables. In general, the teacher determines the need for support but if parents consider it is needed, they can ask for support directly to the L2 teacher.

Q: Would it be possible to have more information about differentiation in L2? Which languages are concerned? Which classes/levels?

Answer from the SM: The School has no specific policy of differentiation. It is done according to the needs of the students, for L2 French, English. Examples of what has been done:

- S1 L2 French: 2 groups are very homogenous and the school has created two classes of two different levels.
- S2 L2 French: all students are together for L2, except for one period a week: then the group is split and the kids who need it will get more specific and sometimes individual support for this lesson.

- S1 L2 English: instead of 5 groups, the School has created a 6th group for beginners (new comers / beginners). It has reduced the total number of students per class.
- S2 L2 English: the School has started a pilot project and created a group with a higher level of English (native language or SWALS). They have been assessed and put in this group together.

Q: What happens in S3?

Answer from the SM: we focus on S1 and S2 as after that students also have History and Geography in L2. They have anyway to follow the same syllabus and will all have the same bac exam at the end. But we are open to explore other alternatives.

Q: Why does it not apply for L2 German?

Answer from the SM: Teachers think that we do not have the same problems in German section. But if it is the case, we can look at them. It is important to keep in mind that the School has more flexibility in L2 French / English, as there are more students, so more groups.

Q: Will the School start to teach L3 in P4 / P5?

Answer from the SM: It is under discussion in the framework of the new language policy in the European Schools.

Q: Issues within specific sections

- In the Italian section, there is a mathematics teacher that is half French & half Italian. Parents are saying, this teacher does not speak Italian fluently. Can he be replaced?
- In S1 FRB, ICT lessons are given in Italian to French children, and it is not possible for the students to follow the lesson. Italian is not an L2 language of the School.

Answer from SM:

- The case in the Italian section (mathematics) is already under discussion.
- The case of the ICT teacher needs to be discussed directly with M Wedel.

III. Timetable issues

Q : Il est arrivé qu'en S1 en première période, il n'y ait pas de professeur ni de conseiller présent pour dire aux enfants ou aller. Il n'y avait pas de possibilité d'aller dans la salle de détente ou la salle d'études. Les enfants se sont retrouvés dehors. Est-ce normal ?

Answer from the SM: Non, ce n'est pas normal ; il y a toujours une permanence dans la salle des conseillers. Les élèves doivent patienter jusqu'au retour du Conseiller qui a pu s'absenter quelques minutes.

Q. What is done when a teacher is leaving in maternity leave?

Answer from SM: normally this is the kind of leave which is planned so the School looks for somebody to replace the teacher.

Q. Reduced number of hours in L1 in the Greek section.

Parents are aware of the school's rule that classes with fewer than 7 pupils may have reduced timetable. However, the situation has improved from last year and our class now has 5 pupils that is the upper limit for a full timetable.

Also, last year the professor responsible for L1 had already asked for additional hours because it was not possible to teach the required curriculum within the reduced timetable. The same is expected for

this year. Two new Cat. 3 families had not been warned of this situation when they inscribed their kids in the school at the beginning of the year. An email sent to Mr. Pelikan on 15/9 by one of these families was never replied to. We ask the administration to look into the situation with the aim of having a full timetable after the Christmas school holidays.

Answer SM: This is a rule when a L1 group has less than 7 pupils, the number of periods can be reduced (teacher has easier conditions to teach).

Q: Greek Parents of children who selected **Latin as an option** realized after the school had started that this option did not feature in their kids' timetable. Once again, there was no written communication from the school to that effect. One parent had to send an email to the Deputy Director to get an answer on this issue. We strongly believe that because Latin is an option and since it is already taught in the L2 language of the kids who requested this option, the school is obliged to provide it to the pupils in their L2 in conformity with its rules. The main issue concerning these problems is the lack of communication from the School.

Answer SM: Latin is normally given in L1. For the Greek section, as there are not enough students, it cannot be done. The School proposed to these students to do it in L2 last year but the school was not in a position to guarantee it for this year. Indeed, unfortunately this year, there was a clash in timetables and the School cannot manage to continue this arrangement. Regarding the lack of communication, M Wedel already answered personally to the class reps at the beginning of the year.

Q : Calendrier des compos pour les sections S6 : comment est-ce possible que cette année certains cours aient lieu pendant les compos obligeant les élèves à manquer les cours. Exemple : compo du lundi 12/12 en L1 approfondie ou L2 approfondie alors qu'il s'agit d'une journée de cours normal. Pourquoi ne pas annuler les cours ce jour-là ?

Answer from the SM: Il y a eu d'autres cas de compos effectuées pendant des journées de cours les années précédentes. Il est difficile de bloquer trop de journées sans cours pour les compos, l'école fait le maximum mais c'est parfois inévitable. Pour ce cas précis, l'école indique avoir informé les professeurs qui donnaient cours ce matin-là (alors que certains de leurs élèves sont en compos) de ne pas donner d'informations critiques pour les examens suivants.

Questions asked after 8:30 pm.

Q : Because of the absence of their Chemistry teacher, Danish students in S4 have a Chemistry lesson once a week that only allows them have a 15 minute lunch break, this is not a good situation for the children.

Answer from the SM : The teacher is being replaced internally, therefore there are less options to schedule the lesson, this is the only period available. This situation is exceptional and has happened before.

Q : Difficulty replacing German teachers : The salary offered by the School is not attracting German teachers to the school. Other Luxembourg schools and the accredited school offer more attractive salaries to teachers.

Answer from the SM : This is happening in all European Schools and not only for German teachers. Starting this year, though, locally recruited teachers received a settlement allowance. Over 50% of the 250 teachers working at the school are locally recruited, this is working well at the moment. The locally recruited teachers are now assessed by the inspectors of the different sections.

Answer from APEEEL2 : APEEEL2 also raised this issue at the last school Administration Board and asked Mr Marcheggiano (Secretary General for European Schools) to have a kind of bonus based on the high standard of living in Luxembourg for locally recruited teachers. No positive answer has been provided.

Q : Is there a rule against teachers in the school giving private tuition.

Answer from School Management: There is no rule stating teachers cannot give private lessons as long as they do not give them to their own students.

Q : S6 Greek section did not receive information regarding UCAS, or the UK university application process. They had no meetings for parents and students.

Answer from School Management: Mrs Thomas is the contact person and she will organise an information meeting for S6 parents next spring.

Q : Can S7s have a farewell party before they leave school for all S7 pupils and their teachers ?

Answer from School Management: In theory yes, but the plans have to be discussed with the School Management.

Q : Will the bac ceremony be again in the salle des Fetes this year ? In that case, could the stage be raised (be higher) to allow all parents to see. For the photographer, could we ask him to not be in corner and could the pupils face the audience when they are being photographed and when they leave the stage.

Answer from the SM: We have a big salle des Fêtes here in Lux2 which can receive all the guests. That's the difference with Lux1 who has to make the ceremony outside the school. Lux2 can use the same budget to offer a cocktail after the ceremony. For the other requests, we are taking notes of them and will see what can be done.

Q : Students do not respect the line in the Canteen.

Answer from the SM: The school management will investigate with the conseillers in charge of the surveillance in the canteen.

Q : There is **bullying taking place among S1 students** and also the use of a lot of bad language. What needs to be done?

Answer from the SM: The form teacher or a pedagogical advisor should be informed in order to intervene, a psychologist could also be notified. In S1, students follow a programme called KIVA, during religion/moral class in which they discuss topics like bullying.

End of the meeting : 9:15pm

Questions received by written but no time left to raise them

Q : Why SMS is not mandatory for all teachers ? It's really helpful for parents to have homework's, long tests dates, results on line...

Answer from the SM: Last year, there were some reluctance and hesitations from many teachers to use SMS. A new working group has started this year to work on this issue to evaluate the needs and the possibilities.

Q: New marking system, when will it be implemented?

Answer from the SM: It will be implemented in next September (2017) for S1 to S5 classes. All teachers will be trained to this new system in February and communication to parents will follow after this. Requirements would remain the same but the major change will be about the pass mark which will be 5 instead of 6.

Q: Souci de l'arrivée tardive des bus le matin, les professeurs ne sont pas toujours conciliants. Que se passe-t-il en cas de retard pour une compo ?

Answer from the SM: Les conseillers sont toujours informés des retards des bus. Il y a cependant certains abus de la part des élèves qui arrivent en retard en cours alors que leur bus est arrivé à 8h35. Pour les compos, les conseillers en général attendent l'arrivée de tous les bus pour commencer.

Q: Do the **Luxembourgish PISA results** which were published 2 weeks ago include also the performance of European School students? Are there any separate results for European Schools available? Are there any conclusions to be drawn from these results?

Answer from the SM: The results include also the performance of European School students but we have no detailed results about the performance of our students.

Q: Schools in Luxembourg (both national and the ISL) take part in the Young Entrepreneurs Luxembourg group but not the European schools. Why is this and are there any plans for the European Schools to participate?

Answer from the SM: Information has been forwarded to the Economics coordinator and we will see more in details how pupils can participate.