

Division Council evaluation 2016-2017

Summary

During the academic year 2016-17, the Division Council of ISUtrecht had six meetings and a specialized training program. There were five meetings together with the Head of School Ms. Rynette de Villiers and one without her presence. The DC meetings focused on completing some major policies of the school apart from finalizing the year-plan and regulations. Other than that, discussions took place on school mission and vision, financial plan, holidays, teaching hours and other operational matters which need consent and sometimes approvals of the DC.

The specialized training program was conducted by CNV for the school's Division Council to provide adequate information on role, responsibility and conduct of the DC in order to make it very effective.

In addition, the parent representatives of the DC also had a meeting with the parents working in the PSG. At the end of year all the DC and PSG members had a thank you dinner with the head and the deputy head of the school.

The main subject we discussed and finalized in the DC meetings during the year 2016-17 are as below:

- DC Year Plan
- DC Regulations
- Social Wellness policy
- Assessment policy
- Review of the Staff policy
- Approval and Review of financial planning
- School Community Survey
- Teaching Hours
- Health of the Staff
- Holiday Schedule
- Progress Reports
- Specialist hours to increase in PYP like for arts & craft, music, drama & Dutch language
- Size of School and Infrastructure
- School Plan and Mission & vision
- School Directory
- Communication with Parents and Staff

DC Year Plan

Each year a year plan for the DC is made. After the specialized training a new one has been made for the DC with the help of the trainer of the CNV, Mr. Rein van Dijk. The year plan was accepted on 25/10/2016.

DC Regulations

By the end of 2016, the DC started with reviewing the regulations governing its functioning. ISUtrecht has a special status within the Dutch educational system. In the Netherlands it is not usual to have a single school which caters to students from the age of 4-18 years. As we are still developing the school, we have agreed to have only one DC instead of requirements of having 2 DCs (1 for primary and 1 for secondary schools). There are many teachers who also work for both departments. So it is preferred to have a single DC which can look at all policies and functions of

both primary and secondary schools together. The DC regulation will be finalised in 2017-18. The basic of the DC regulation is accepted on 25/10/2016.

Social Wellness Policy

In the beginning of 2016-17, Ms. de Villiers provided a document to the DC which was prepared by members of the team responsible for the social wellness. The DC provided comments on how it may work in school, where possible. The policy was then reviewed with the feedback and a final piece was presented and the DC accepted the policy for rollout on 08/02/2017.

Assessment Policy

The assessment policy was prepared, reviewed & evaluated by the staff and also by the staff members represented in the DC and was accepted on 20/02/2017.

Review of the Staff Policy

The staff policy was originally prepared and accepted in 2015-16. During 2016-17, it was time to review and evaluate the policy further for effectiveness and changes. The staff of school evaluated the policy and when they agreed, it was sent back to the DC for further review. The staff representatives agreed with the policy and it was accepted on 20/04/2017.

Approval and Review of Financial Planning

Every year, the financial planning for the next academic year is prepared and it needs to be finalised by December. The DC gives suggestions for the financial plan. This year the DC received a temporary plan in November 2016 but also had a chance to review the financial plan with the planners, and in December the DC completed the review and accepted the financial plan on 19/12/2016.

School Community Survey

It has been planned to conduct a survey for the entire school community once every two years. The survey is organized by the school management via the school app and in the classrooms or with the staff. The answers are anonymous, but the overall result is compiled and presented for a discussion in the DC meeting. The purpose of the survey is to understand the issues, challenges and also the strong points about the school from every point of view.

Teaching Hours

The DC needs to validate if the school is able to provide the number of hours of teaching that they are required to provide. When there is a significant difference between planned and actual hours, then the school should have a good reason and this will be discussed in the DC meeting. This year school managed to teach more hours than strictly demanded from the governance of the Netherlands school system. The DC is happy with effort the school has put in making all the planned hours. Accepted on 06/04/2017.

Health of the Staff (ziekte verzuim)

In general school monitors the data on sickness and absenteeism for staff and if there are any issues arising due to this. The municipal authorities also monitor this closely. This year the illness of teachers has been far below "average" of the other schools run by Nuovo & SPOU. That data is very nice and the DC hopes that despite big growth in staff numbers, it will stay healthy. The DC will monitor the pattern in the overall data over time.

Holiday Schedule

The academic year of 2017-18 is longer than usual years and there are many weeks to teach students. That allowed the school to be more flexible to plan the holiday weeks. The DC discussed and agreed on the holiday schedule for this year with 3-weeks off in December/January and 2-weeks in May 2018. The extra days and study days have been also planned on mixed days so not always the Friday, or Monday will be skipped. Accepted on 06/04/2017.

Progress Reports

The progress reports are undergoing changes and developments as required. A year back, the school has started with a new way of reporting performance for primary students. The DC in collaboration with the PSG provided feedback about the school reports. It is still in an evaluation process and will further develop based on experience and inputs.

Specialist hours to increase in PYP like for arts & craft, music, drama & Dutch language

In 2016-17 the teaching hours for drama, music and art were integrated in the units. The overall opinion of the children, parents and teachers was not completely satisfactory. The specialized hours were given integrated in the unit. During the finance meeting the recommendation was given by the DC to change it in more separated specialized hours instead of the hours integrated in the unit. The recommendation was followed up and in 2017-18 there are more specialized hours of teaching available which is a good step forward. The impact of this change will be evaluated through the year.

Dutch Language

The DC also gave feedback on Dutch language teaching at the school. The overall opinion of the school was that Dutch was not arranged optimally for all students as differentiation was not possible. The school has changed the way of teaching Dutch language in 2017-18. Two classes has Dutch lessons at the same time so that the 2 staff members can differentiate and teach advanced and beginners level within the two groups. The progress will be evaluated in June 2018.

Size of School and Infrastructure

Ms. de Villiers keeps the DC updated with the planned and actual growth in student numbers and necessary infrastructure for handling them. Also discussed is the progress during the year on finding a location of the new school building and interim school building while the long-term plan is executed. For planning the new school building the school made a building committee. In the building committee a member of the DC staff and a parent were included for overall monitoring.

School Plan and Mission & Vision

Once every 4-years, the school needs to prepare a new school plan. The year 2017-18 a new school plan is being finalized. A focus group started working on school Mission and Vision last year and it would be finalized together with the plan. A member of the DC took part in this group. In 2017-18 the school plan will be presented in the DC which has a right of consent.

School Directory

The school guide is a document which was prepared from the beginning and it is continuously improving as all documentation are completed and reviewed. The DC follows the Guide and provides feedback to the school management. The DC also will welcome parents to provide any input for further improvement. For school year 2017-2018 the school directory was accepted on 20/4/2017.

Communication with Parents and Staff

The DC intends to communicate more frequently and with better information to all the parents and the staff. During the year, in the newsletter the DC published 3-times a summary of the meeting. Moreover, the DC also had a meeting with the PSG members. The staff members in the DC regularly speak to other staff which is easier to do. During 2017-18, there will be more introductions made during the parent evenings.

The following are the current members of the DC for IS Utrecht

Roosmarijn de Boer (2nd term 2016-2019) parent student grade 5; Chairperson
Julia Reid (first term 2017-2020) teacher DP; Secretary
Kislay Kanth (first term 2015-2018) parent student grade 6 and grade 10; Finance

Raakhee Ramaiya (first term 2016-2019) teacher grade 1
Marloes Resink (2nd term 2017-2020) teacher secondary
Sylvia Nisius (first term 2016-2019) support staff
Student representative Chair of the student council (first term 2017-2020)
vacancy 2017-2020 parent preference KG-parent