



Dear Parents, Students, Colleagues,

I know only a few people who love meetings. Most of my friends and colleagues do not. I do not love them, for sure, but I can certainly find them enjoyable and useful. And they are, small or large, still one of the best ways of sharing and planning. Many of our meeting types have changed in these pandemic months, and digital meeting spaces have come to rule our days, and nights. Face-to-face meeting fashions come and go, and there are any number of guidebooks on how to run and participate in effective meetings.

Over time, I have developed a few strategies that work for me and, I think, for the meeting:

- Be present;
- Superfluous phones and electronic devices are frequently distractions from being present, in my old-fashioned opinion;
- Arrive before the meeting is due to start, relaxed yet focused. But, we all come late to meetings at times. If I come into a meeting late, I try not to draw attention to myself. I sit down quietly and locate myself in the meeting before saying anything. I apologize to the meeting chair or coordinator after the meeting.
- I try to look at the person speaking, without staring, and make space for her or him to feel listened to and respected;
- I try to think out the points that I want to make before I speak;
- I love to inject humor into meetings – laughter lubricates many different types of meeting;
- I try to make meetings into polyvocal conversations;
- I listen earnestly, knowing that an attentive audience helps whoever is speaking and also aids comprehension, and retention, of information and knowledge.

We have many meetings in our school, and we take them seriously and try to make them both effective and enjoyable. In many of our Keystone meeting minutes, a formulation such as this below reminds us of how we wish to conduct meetings:

Shared Agreements:

- Start on time and end on time
- Agendas are shared at least one day ahead of time
- Questions are general to the group or specific to the topic- stay on track
- Allow time for translations if needed
- Rotate the role of recording minutes and keeping time



- Meeting minutes are shared on the server within at least 2 days after the meeting
- Model the virtues of Keystone through the IB Learner Profile Attributes
- Encourage the participation and contribution of all members.

We also try to connect our meeting etiquette to our five shared values, as in this list below:

As a Committee, or Meeting Group, we strive to achieve....

Compassion, by being responsive to needs of others, with a strong desire to help;

Justice, by being fair within and beyond our jurisdiction;

Respect, by listening to each other and appreciating individual contributions;

Wisdom, by practicing good judgment that comes with experience, understanding, and sensible thinking;

Honesty, by staying true to our values and moral obligations.

Last week on Thursday and Friday many of you came here for our Parent Teacher meetings. I hope that these were enjoyable and useful for you. It was lovely for us who work and live here to have you back on the campus in numbers. It would have been even better to have allowed more of you to visit, but we are still being cautious about the viral situation. Everyone that I spoke to was happy to have these important meetings face-to-face. Teachers really enjoy getting to know parents and understanding more of the family backgrounds of their students. For you, the parents, it is so important to have your primary contacts with Keystone be the teachers of your children. Nourish and nurture that, please, and remember that if there are any problems, you should go first to these teachers, before anyone else.

In writing to all Keystone employees the day before the meetings, I said this:

I do hope that your two days of conferences with parents and students go well, starting tomorrow. These are very important meetings for all of us, not only teachers. They require care and attention, and they most certainly will be tiring, but they should also be engaging, informative, and productive. I thank you in advance for your efforts.

And afterwards, I wrote this:

The conferences went very well indeed, thanks to all of you. You did Keystone proud. Our parents loved being back on campus, seeing it look so good, and meeting the teachers of their children. They are more and more supportive of what we are trying to do here, as they understand better our approach of blending the best of different traditions. They also understand more deeply just how strong this faculty is, and how dedicated we are to their children, our students.



Thank you, all – that's parents, students, teachers, and all who work here. What we do is truly a combined effort, and we are getting better and better at it, together, through meeting each other.

With warm regards,

Malcolm McKenzie
Head of School