



GERMAN
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL
WASHINGTON D.C.

Strengthening the School Identity



INDEPENDENT. BILINGUAL. WELTOFFEN.

Established Measures for Strengthening the School Identity

May 2019

Introduction

What unites a school and makes it strong? A clear identity that is supported and lived by all members and every group within the school community.

This goal of a clear identity is as challenging as it is important. Since the BLI II inspection, it is not only a strong desire, but the GISW was officially tasked with achieving it. The official project order of the Steering Committee established that there are different levels of understanding of the Guiding Principles among teachers, staff, parents and students. The stated goal for this project was to create a concept that establishes a consistent state of knowledge and a functioning information exchange among all areas of the school.

Since September 2015, the project group „Strengthening the School Identity“ has worked on the various components that constitute a strong school identity and has revised existing procedures, further developed successful elements of our school life, and established new measures as well as set a few new important signals.

Over the years the members of this project group were different representatives of the Students' Council (SMV), The Parents' Council (SEBR), the Board of Directors, the Preschool, the Elementary School, the Upper School and the Administrative Offices.

This document is a summary of the results of this project group.

1. School Name, School Logo, School Mascot

a. New School Name/New School Logo

The addition of the word “International” to the school name was decided upon and approved by German entities in the school year 2016/17. The revised school name is: German International School Washington D.C.

This change reflects the existing international character of the school community. The logo maintains the same illustration of the U.S. Capitol as a symbol for Washington D.C. as was used in the previous DSW logo to maintain continuity. It is important that our alumni as well as our current families recognize elements of the old logo within the new logo to avoid alienation. Communications Director Beate Mahious created several Logo Designs out of which this project group picked the top 3. These were then presented to each group at the school for an election and the following logo was elected unanimously:



b. School Mascot

The illustration of our school mascot, the Griffin, was modernized. Ms. Mahious tasked an illustrator with the creation of the illustration and after the project group had selected their top three choices out of a total of five, these were presented to each group at the school for an election and the following illustration was elected. Since then it's use has been amplified on sports uniforms, agenda books, and on a series of marketing items:



The Griffin costume for events:



The school mascot greets students, parents and other visitors at large events. The costume was donated by a GISW family and was first used at the 2017 sports day. In the school year 2018/19, the same family donated a second smaller version of the griffin costume.

2. Mission Statement

In a series of meetings three proposals for the new mission statement were drafted. These were presented to each group at the school and the following mission statement was selected. It was then broadcasted everywhere: website, banner in the Assembly Hall, in the email signature, on business cards, letter head, shop window of the bookstore, etc.

INDEPENDENT. BILINGUAL. WELTOFFEN.

The Mission Statement in combination with the new logo:



3. Guiding Principles

Based on the Mission Statement „Independent. Bilingual. *Weltoffen*.“ The project group that consisted of representatives from each group at the school has created and translated the following Guiding Principles:

 LEITBILD
INDEPENDENT.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wir sind für unsere Handlungen und unsere Leistungen selbst verantwortlich.• Unsere pädagogischen Grundsätze basieren auf Eigenverantwortung und Selbständigkeit.• Wir fördern Individualität durch kritisches Denken.
BILINGUAL.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wir legen Wert auf den Erwerb mehrerer Sprachen.• Unsere Schülerinnen und Schüler können das Deutsche Internationale Abitur und den US-High-School-Abschluss erwerben.• Unser pädagogisches Programm basiert auf anspruchsvollen deutschen Lehrplänen.
WELTOFFEN.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schülerinnen und Schüler jeder Herkunft und Nationalität sind willkommen und durch das gemeinsame Interesse an der deutschen Sprache und Kultur verbunden.• Unsere Schülerinnen und Schüler lernen gemeinsam, Situationen aus verschiedenen Perspektiven zu betrachten und einen positiven Beitrag zur Gesellschaft und zur Umwelt zu leisten.• Wir schaffen eine zugewandte und ermutigende Lernumgebung, die neue Ideen und innovative Gedankenprozesse fördert.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

INDEPENDENT.

- We take responsibility for our actions and achievements.
- Our pedagogical principles emphasize self-reliance and accountability.
- We encourage the development of individuality through critical thinking.

BILINGUAL.

- We value fluency in multiple languages.
- Our students are prepared to graduate with two diplomas: the German International Abitur and a US High School Diploma.
- Challenging German curricula are at the center of our school's educational program.

WELTOFFEN.

- We welcome all nationalities and ethnicities united by a common interest in German language and culture.
- We value the development of a community of diverse thinkers who act considerately towards society and the environment.
- We are committed to a nurturing and empowering environment that encourages new ideas and innovative thinking.

4. Events

a. Welcome Night

This event takes place one day before the first day of school and is for all school members.

- New GISW families and their children receive a special welcome and are introduced to their teachers, returning families enjoy getting together with their friends after the long summer break. All GISW employees wear black tops with a name tag and an “Ask Me” button.
- Babysitting is offered in the Extended Care room.
- A buffet with drinks is available in the cafeteria.
- All GISW employees are prepared to hold conversations in German and English and if necessary to switch from one language to the other during a conversation in order to ensure that all members of a given group of people feel included.

b. Guiding Principles Day (in September)

In order to celebrate the „birthday“ of the school there will be a Guiding Principles Day every year starting in the school year 2019/20. The exact format is to be determined. Some ideas are:

- On this day, all members of the school community are invited to demonstrate their support of the school by wearing school colors (red, yellow, blue).
- The school mascot will be part of the celebrations.
- Some period of time during the day is dedicated to a review of the Guiding Principles with corresponding focused activities.

c. Parent Nights

Parent nights are scheduled in the first weeks after the school year begins.

- All parents are informed in advance of the planned organization of the event.
- In each grade level there are information segments presented in German and English simultaneously in two classrooms. Parents can choose the room according to their personal language preference.
- The presentation slides are published on the GISW website after the event.

d. Parent Cafe

Every Thursday morning, all parents are invited to a cup of coffee at the cafeteria. Whenever possible, staff and faculty members are also welcome to join. This is designed to be an opportunity for exchange of thoughts and information.

e. Newbees Breakfast (from parents for parents)

Once a month, the Newbees organize a breakfast for new GISW families. These meetings take place at the school or at someone's home on an alternating schedule. This program is designed to ease the transition of new GISW families into our school community.

f. 5k Oktoberfest Run

Every year, a 5k run for all and „fun run“ for kids are organized in collaboration with the GLC (German Language Courses). It is followed by food and drink in beer garden atmosphere.

g. St.-Martin's Lantern Walk

Every year, the Elementary School organizes a large St. Martin's celebration for the entire school community.

h. Christmas Market

The traditional German Christmas Market at the GISW is organized by the *FRIENDS of the German International School* and is supported by parents, staff and teachers of the GISW.

i. Informational events for specific grade levels

All grade specific informational events are always held in German and English.

j. In-House Open House

The goal of this event is to familiarize our current GISW families with the upcoming grade levels for their children and to demonstrate how valuable an education at the GISW is in regards to a well-rounded education and how it prepares the student for a wide variety of career options. Each presentation is offered in English and German.

k. Summer Festival

Every year, the night before the last day of school, the school holds a large Summer Festival. This fulfills several purposes in relation to our school identity: The ritual of jointly celebrating the end of a school year in itself strengthens the sense of community and the identification with the school. It is part of our identity that due to the somewhat transient profile of our community, the school's attrition rate is 25%. The Summer festival provides students and families the opportunity to say their farewells in a relaxed atmosphere. In addition, this is a great opportunity to appreciate the variety of nationalities at our school by getting a taste of different countries foods that are being offered at the festival.

5. External image of the school

a. Consistency in the design of our written exchanges

New business cards



Unified email signature with new logo

Beate Mahious

Kommunikationsdirektorin
Communications Director



Independent. Bilingual. Weltoffen.

German International School Washington D.C.

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www.giswashington.org



New letterhead:



Design for forms:

	<p>GERMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL WASHINGTON D.C.</p>	<p>Independent. Bilingual. Weltoffen.</p> <p>8617 Chateau Drive Potomac, MD 20854 301.767.3800 www.GISWashington.org</p>
<p>Potomac, September 13, 2017</p>		
<p>Dear Parents,</p>		
<p>The Elementary School staff welcomes all students and is looking forward to a successful school year 2017/2018 with your children and a cooperative partnership with you. For consultations or questions you can meet with us in person</p>		

Template for PowerPoint Presentations:

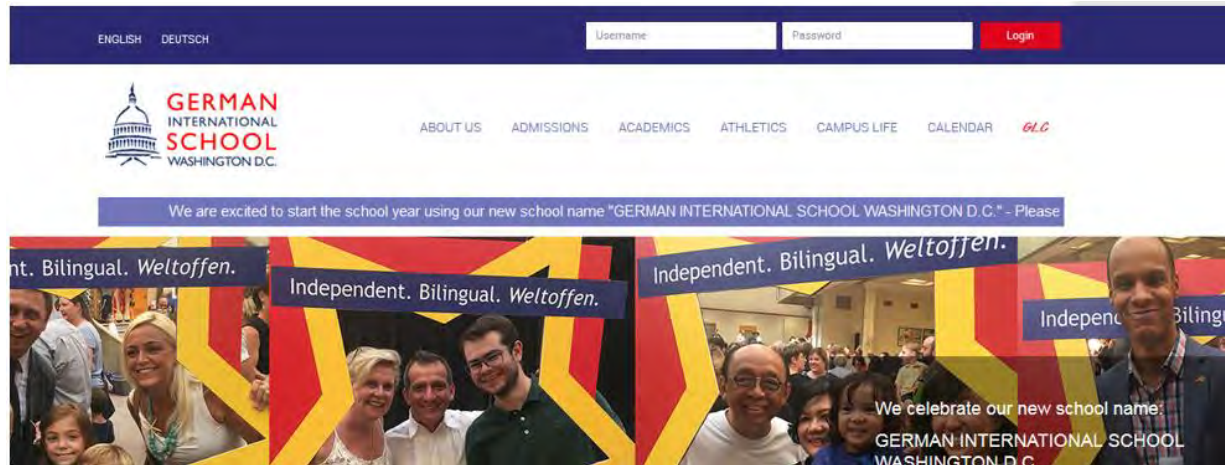


New school name and logo on a variety of printed information materials:



b. Online school Image

New logo on the GISW website



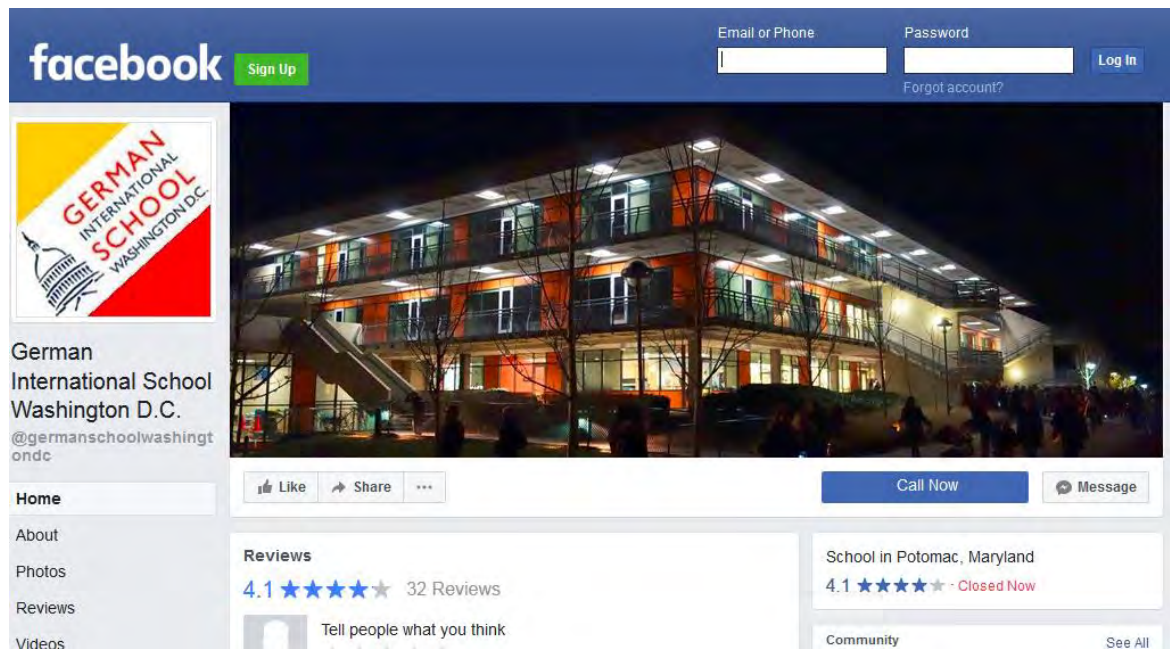
Revision and content expansion of the marketing video on the website (expansion included preschool & cafeteria)

Welcome to the German International School
Washington D.C.

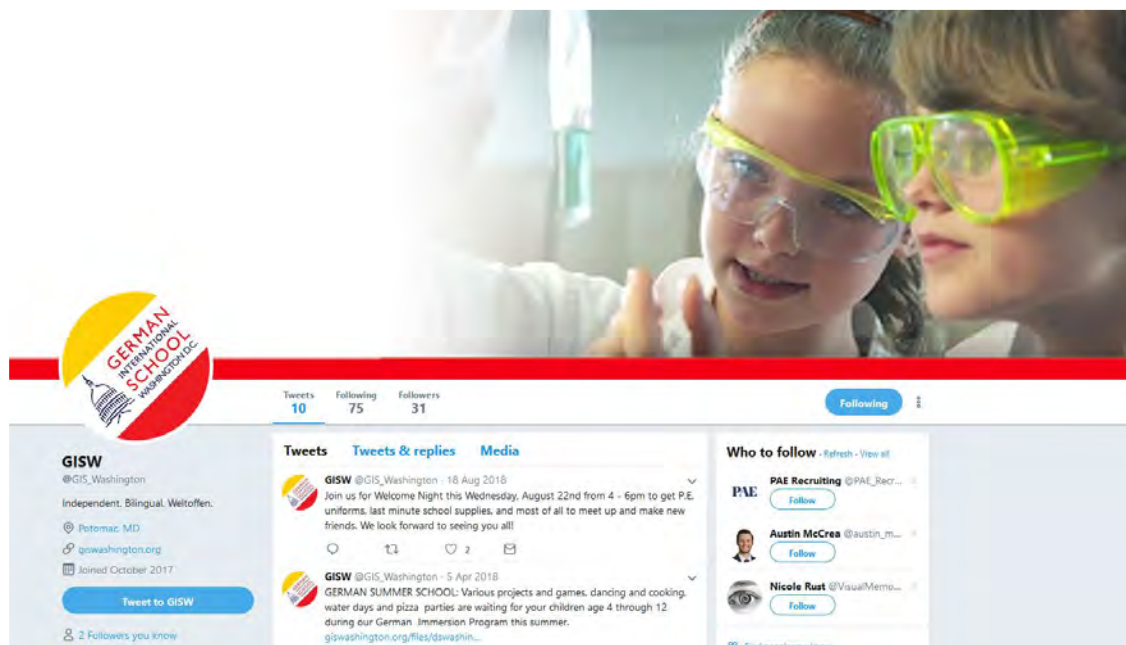


Located in Potomac, MD, the German International School has been teaching children from preschool through twelfth grade for almost 60 years.

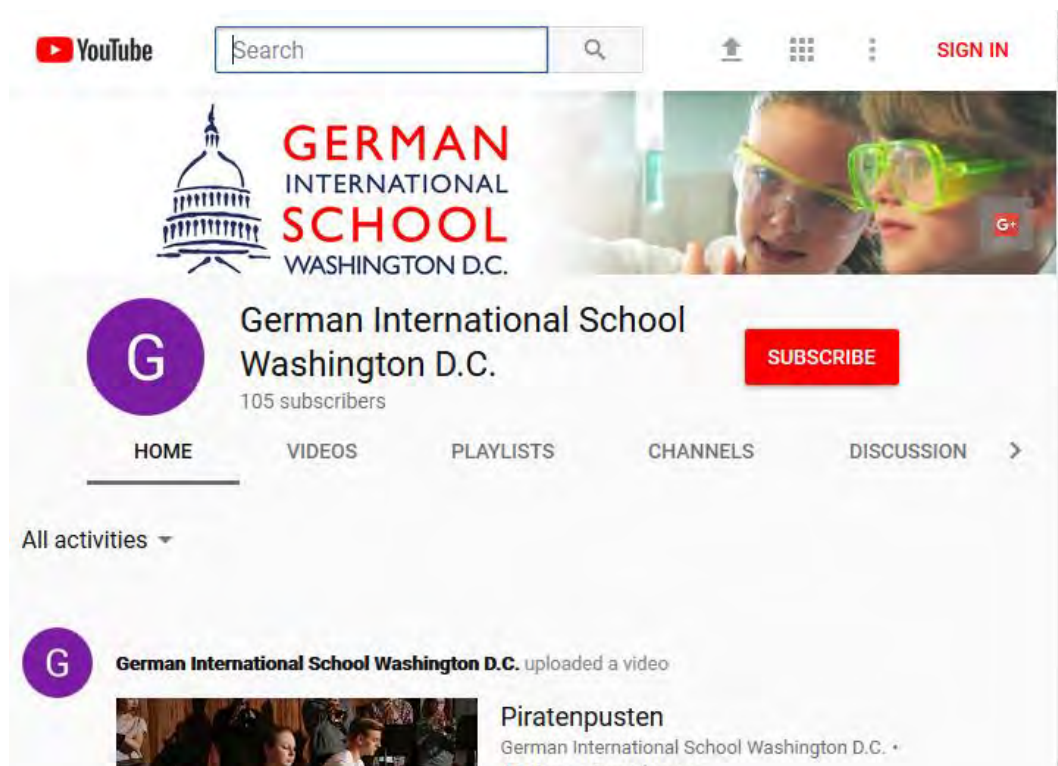
New logo and new school name on Facebook



New logo and new school name on Twitter



New logo and new school name on YouTubeChannel



c. New school name on school buses



d. Signage on Buildings

Exterior: Consistent signage with school logo

Main building and upper parking lot:



Elementary School and Preschool:



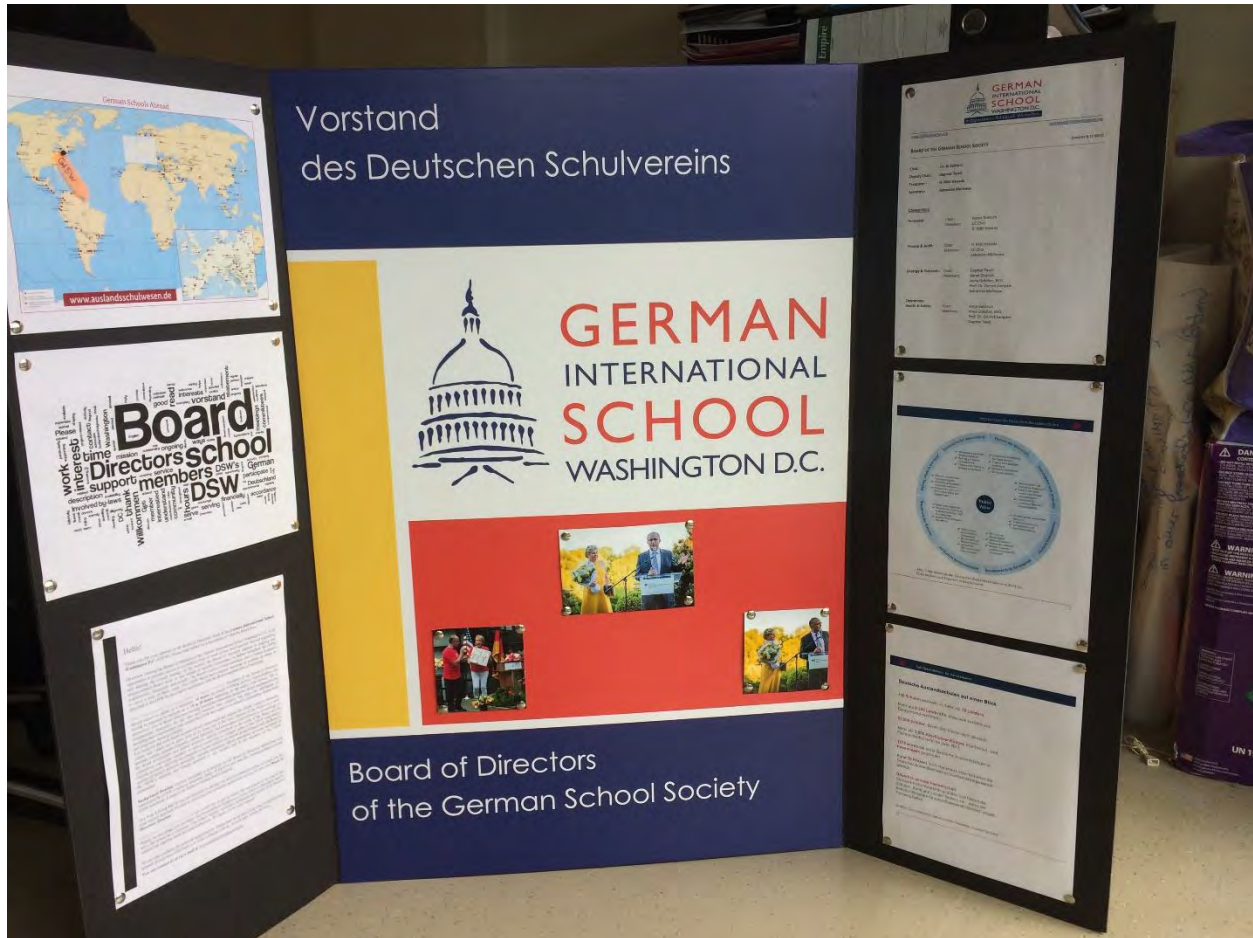
e. Interior signage (podium, doors, etc...)



f. Replacement of several office supplies (volunteer/visitor stickers, official stamp for report cards,...)



g. New trifold boards with new logo for Welcome Night



h. Update further logos within the school community due to new school name



before/after

i. GISW Field Trip T-Shirts

All preschoolers and Elementary School students wear red GISW shirts when going on field trips. Their high visibility factor has two purposes: safety and getting the school name out into the public.



j. Agenda Books (homework booklets)



Front Cover



Back Cover

k. Griffin Reward Cards



During the school year 2018/19, the Elementary School switched from the 'FROG'-value system to the 'GREIF' value system, in order to integrate the school mascot in everyday school life.

The griffin mascot represents our entire school, and at the same time it helps students remember values that are important to our Elementary School. Much like the FROG did, the letters of the GREIF stand for **g**roup-oriented, **r**espectful, **e**mpathic, **i**nterested, and **f**riendly.

l. Sports Department

The regular P.E. uniforms as well as our athletic team uniforms display the new logo and the modernized version of the Griffin illustration.



m. Outreach Give-Aways:



n. New Design of Car Magnets with Logo and Mission Statement:



o. Bookstore

The offering of items with our school logo at the bookstore has been expanded considerably.



Cups, thermos and blankets,...



t-Shirts , and lots more...

p. Cafeteria

More international dishes have been added to the cafeteria menu.

In regular intervals there are food tastings where parents are invited to bring and share a dish of their choice that they would like to propose to be added to the school's menu.

Final Remarks

The project group „Strengthening the School Identity“ has pursued and reached its goal two-fold: Not only the results and decisions, but also the procedure of reaching them have strengthened the school identity considerable. On one hand this was achieved by including a representative of each of the groups at the school in the project group: parents, students, teachers, principals, administrative staff and Board of Directors. In addition, these groups were always kept up to date at their meetings on the group's current tasks and were asked for input by their representatives. This approach ensured broad acceptance and support in the decision process and maximum support during implementation.

Potomac, May 31, 2019

Project Group Lead: Monika Rodrigues (Elementary School Principal)

Jennifer Barnes Eliot (Advancement Manager)

Cordi Everett (Chair of the Parents' Council /SEBR)

Anne-Lee Gilder (Admissions Coordinator)

Yasmin Haddad (Students' Council/SMV)

Mojdeh Khojasteh (Preschool Principal)

Beate Mahious (Communications Director)

Gabriele Monnett (English Coordinator, Elementary School)

Kim O'Neill (Member of the Parents' Council /SEBR)

Petra Palenzatis (Head of School)

Dagmar C. Tawil (Deputy Chair/Board of Directors)