



GERMAN
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL
WASHINGTON D.C.

Independent. Bilingual. *Weltoffen.*

Preschool Reopening Information

August 22, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians of Preschool students,

The German International School Washington D.C. (GISW) is prioritizing the full reopening of the Preschool with our primary concern being the safety of children, families and staff.

Things will obviously look and feel different: Staggered drop-off and pick-up times, masks and mask breaks, frequent handwashing routines, outside learning times, the school door as a protective barrier to an area for children and staff only, to name but a few.

In order to ensure that the environment is as safe as possible, we must all work together and strictly follow the guidelines and protocols for cleaning, safety and health. It is only by doing this that we will be able to help keeping each other in school, playing, learning and growing. The well-being and safety of your children and the entire school community is our priority! We are of course aware that under these circumstances, health and safety are indivisible - if one member is not healthy and safe, then nobody is. The Health Pledge form you have received reinforces the idea that all of us are responsible for keeping our Pre-School healthy and safe.

In a world of uncertainties, we want you to know that one thing is certain: The teachers and staff of our Preschool are rising to the challenge of this unprecedented time with dedication, commitment and a resolve to deliver the best experience possible to your child and our Preschool families. This remarkable community of families, students and staff ensures that GISW remains a powerful and transformative experience.

Thank you for being part of that. Thank you for entrusting your children to us. Please know that we are here for you, to listen, to learn, and to care.

In summary our decisions have been based on two guiding principles:

Guiding Principle 1

Social and emotional development of the children

Guiding Principle 2

Safety and health measures to ensure the well-being of children and their families and staff

In weighing these aspects and deciding on a full-time, safe re-opening, we hope to have found a middle ground that will provide an emotionally, socially and academically healthy and positive experience for everyone.

We all know that there are many possible scenarios in the weeks and months ahead. These will certainly be addressed in a timely manner if and when they transpire. This document, however, serves as a roadmap to reopening our Preschool in our present situation. Further school-wide information and protocols will be forthcoming.

I look forward to meeting you and your children as we move into what will undoubtedly be a most unusual year.

Humbly yours,

Mojdeh Khojasteh

Preschool Principal

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Official Guidelines

For the school's safe reopening we are following the guidelines issued by the State of Maryland.

Guidelines that Child Care Programs Follow; valid as of August 21, 2020:

https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/covid_guidance_full_080420.pdf

Groups and Teachers

We start this school year with four Preschool classes (Seahorses, Ladybugs, Frogs, Pandas). Each group has its own classroom. To maintain clusters and minimize the risk of infection between groups, specific teachers are assigned to each group. These teachers will always stay with the same group of children, thus minimizing physical contact opportunities outside of occasional bathroom encounters which we will also attempt to organize as best as possible.

Ratio - Preschool

Depending on class sizes and room capacity, we will have two staff members with up to 12 students in each classroom.

Daily Health Screenings at Home

Daily health checks are key to mitigating the risk of transmission. The Office of Child Care requires that a Daily COVID-19 Screening Form be submitted every day on each child. You will be emailed a link to the form in an email titled "COVID-19 Daily Health Tracker". This will be a Google document which has to be submitted electronically daily. In the first few days of the new school year, we will have these forms available for you to complete upon drop-off. The school nurse will track this information on a day-to-day basis. The link will also be found on the school website under the QUICKLINKS > COVID-19 Daily Health Tracker.

In addition, there will be a temperature screening tent set up in front of the gate leading to the preschool playground (to the right of the lower parking lot). Everyone who comes into the school must be temperature screened and sign a Contract Tracing Log Sheet. In order to limit contact and maintain social distancing, we request that only one parent pass through the screening tent and escort the child(ren) to their room(s). (Please see Drop-off/Pick-up for detailed protocols).

It is crucial that you keep your child home when sick! If your child comes to school with symptoms in

accordance with CDC-guidelines, they will be sent to the Nurse's Office for assessment and possible quarantine. We may ask for a doctor's note or a negative COVID-19 test before returning to school - please consider that one sick child may compromise the whole Preschool. It is therefore everyone's responsibility to help keep the school a healthy and safe place to work and learn. We count on, and deeply appreciate, your support!

Drop-off and Pick-up

In line with the state guidelines and to ensure social distancing at all times, we have set up staggered entrance and exit times. Drop-off will begin at 8am and end at 9am. Due to the limited time frame, it is important that you abide by your arranged drop-off and pick-up times. This helps ensure a safe, timely and smooth transition for both teachers and children.

General Gate Schedules:

8:00 am to 9:00 a.m.
12:50 pm to 1:30 p.m.
2:30 pm to 3 p.m.
4:45 pm to 4:55 p.m.

Staggered Gate Schedules:

8:00 – 8:30 am	Arrival Seahorses, Frogs - Lower parking lot
8:30 – 9:00 am	Arrival Pandas, Ladybugs - Lower parking lot
9:00 am or later	Arrival Nurse’s office - Lower parking lot
Earlier Pick-up	Inform the teachers ahead of time, ring the bell at the lower parking lot
1:00 – 1:15 pm	Departure Seahorses, Frogs - Lower parking lot
1:15 – 1:30 pm	Departure Pandas, Ladybugs - Lower parking lot
Later Pick up	Inform the teachers ahead of time, ring the bell at the lower parking lot
2:30 – 3:00 pm	Departure all groups
Late Pick up	Inform the teachers ahead of time, ring the bell at the lower parking lot
4:45 – 4:55 pm	Departure all groups

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

DROP-OFF

When arriving at the school, proceed to the lower parking lot and follow the one-way loop into the lower parking lot. Parents should escort their child(ren) to the screening tent located in front of the gate that leads to the preschool playground and follow social distancing guidelines while waiting to be temperature screened. THIS WILL BE THE ONLY ENTRANCE INTO THE Preschool unless specified differently. Families will for now not enter the preschool from the front door (upper parking lot). Bus children will be met on the upper parking lot and escorted to their appropriate classroom in the preschool.

Only one parent may accompany his or her child to the outside of the classroom door. Personal items are to be placed on the designated tables in the recess area. On the first day, the Preschool Director will assist you. Your designated homeroom teachers will welcome you and your child and assist your child into the classroom. We respectfully ask that you keep conversations with teachers to a minimum as there will be other families waiting to escort their child(ren) to the classroom.

POST DROP-OFF WAITING AREA

Every child reacts differently to changes, especially to new environments and during this unprecedented time. You may choose to (or we may request that you) stay on campus for a period of time after drop-off in case your child has difficulty adjusting to being at school. There will be a “waiting area” with access to bathrooms near the SEL classrooms. The entrance door to the SEL is the back door located off the lower soccer fields. Parents can also use the outside space outside the cafeteria. If staying on campus, wearing masks and social distancing will need to be maintained.

Late Arrival Procedure

We understand that there are extenuating circumstances that may cause you to be late or not be able to arrive within the assigned time. If this occurs, please notify your teacher who will inform the Nurse. Untimely and late arrivals will need to ring the bell to the Nurse’s office located at the left side of the preschool gate. The nurse will open the gate, conduct a temperature screening and either the parent or the Nurse will escort the child to their classroom. Please do not forget to call ahead 301-767-3837.

Late Pick-up Procedure

If you are going to be late picking up your child(ren), please call to inform the teachers at 301-767-3837. After parking in the lower parking lot, proceed to the preschool gate and ring the preschool bell to be buzzed in.

IMPORTANT: In accordance with a general rule of the German International School Washington D.C. (Late Fee Policy), a fee will be charged for picking up children late (after 1:30 pm, 3:00 pm or 5:00 pm, respectively).

Schedule

To ensure a good start for everyone and to give students time to get settled into the school environment (again), we will start the school year in three phases.

Phase 1 - Meet and Greet

August 24 – 28, 2020

Every child reacts to transition differently. Unfortunately, parents cannot enter the Preschool building at this time.

Should your child need to see you or speak with you, we will reach out to you by phone or video chat if possible. Please make sure that we have your completed emergency form for your child ahead of time.

Please talk to your child and explain why you cannot accompany her/him. We encourage families to just have your child(ren) with us a couple of hours during the first days if possible.

Our entire weekly theme will involve Meet and Greet projects.

Phase 2 - Introduction Weeks

August 31 - September 11

During these two weeks, our main goal is to give all students time to adjust to the new situation, procedures, teachers and their peers. We will go for longer walks - weather permitting - so that the children become familiarized with our school.

To find out what a day at GISW may look like for your child, please take a look at the schedule below. Please feel free to write to your teachers for individual clarification as needed.

Phase 3 - Regular Schedule

Starting September 14

All students have a regular program. We will begin with our usual curriculum, which include working on projects, celebrating birthdays, special holidays etc.

Sample of a daily schedule

Below is a sample of what we are doing around the day. Each group will have their own time schedule, staggered times for using the playground and bathroom breaks.

Time	Activity
8:00 – 9:00 am	Staggered Arrival, Practicing good hygiene, Free play
9:00 – 9:30 am	Greetings, songs, and sharing during our morning circle
9:30 – 10:00 am	Snack, practicing good hygiene Your child eats a snack brought from home, No Masks
10:05 – 10:35 am	Playground, No Masks
10:40 – 11:40 am	Time to put on our gear and go to the <i>Wiese</i> (weather permitting). In the daily learning circle, the class studies a specific book, learns a new finger play, explores nature, sings some favorite songs, plays a number or letter game, etc. No Masks
11:45 – noon	Practicing good hygiene
Noon – 12:30 pm	Lunch, getting our lunch from cafeteria or lunchboxes and sit down to eat and enjoy our lunch together with friends. No Masks
12:40 – 1:00 pm	Practicing good hygiene, Reading circle with a favorite story in German
1:00 – 1:30 pm	Departure of non-Afternoon students
2:15- 2:25 pm	Practicing good hygiene
2:30 - 3.00 pm	Departure of Afternoon students Snack time for Extended care students with friends. No Masks
3:00 – 3:30 pm	Let's go to the playground! Free play, sing a song, games, read a favorite book in German No Masks
4:35 – 4:45 pm	Practicing good hygiene
4:45 – 4:55 pm	Departure of all students, Auf Wiedersehen

Recess

Every group will spend a minimum of 30 minutes outside, weather permitting. Every class will be assigned playground times. The GISW is exceeding CDC guidelines by cleaning play equipment after each class use. Use of the lower gym and other play areas will be utilized to maximize outside time as well as social distancing. Areas will be cleaned and sanitized according to CDC guidelines.

Ventilation

The air condition units have been inspected and can circulate fresh air from outside. Additional air purifiers have been installed throughout the Preschool. Our Facilities Department will allow ventilation to the greatest extent possible. During inclement, very hot or very cold weather, it may be necessary to turn the air conditioning/heating on. Please be aware of this ventilation issue when dressing your child. Classrooms may be warmer or colder than usual when allowing outside air to ventilate classrooms.

Additional Educational Programs

German and English program - Hocus & Lotus

To protect the clusters from cross-contamination there will be no subject teachers in the classrooms. Homeroom teachers provide a complete German immersion experience, offering student-individualized assistance throughout the day.

Nevertheless, we will offer some aspects through remote learning. Additionally, Hocus & Lotus will be offered in German or English through remote sessions in small groups or individually.

Music

Music will be implemented only outside the classroom in the lobby or outside in fresh air (weather permitting) because of the higher risk of air transmission during loud singing. Dancing and rhythmic activities will continue to be part of our daily program.

Guidelines in the Building

Masks

As mask wearing remains a regulation in Montgomery County, all children should be sent to school with four (4) masks in a paper bag marked “Clean” along with a plastic bag marked “Dirty” for soiled masks. Please also label all cloth masks with the child’s name so they can be properly returned. If a mask is discovered on the ground with no name, it will have to be properly disposed.

All teachers will wear a mask within the classroom. We are aware of the difficulties of wearing masks for young children and will include frequent mask breaks during the day. During outdoor recess time, snack and lunch time, and during nap time the children will not wear masks.

We would encourage our parents to model mask-wearing, while classroom teachers will play “mask” games and engage in other creative endeavors to get children used to wearing the masks. Obtaining child-friendly and fun masks will all help your child become more comfortable with wearing masks.

The link below shows an example of clear masks for children. These types of masks can be useful for communication and emotional support. Please feel free to use whatever mask you believe best to keep your child safe and comfortable.

<https://rafinova.com/products/kids-smile-mask?variant=32224478691376>

Promoting Handwashing and Good Hygiene

Good and frequent handwashing will be discussed with the children and promoted. Cleaning protocols for highly touched areas are in place and will be followed; we have arranged for a dedicated cleaning staff member to be all day in the Preschool. The classroom will be frequently cleaned and sanitized with a natural cleaning EPA certified product. We will avoid mixing of groups when sharing bathrooms to the greatest extent possible.

Physical Distancing in the Classroom

One important goal in having students return to the building is their continued social development. Measures will be put in place to encourage physical distancing. Nevertheless, as teachers, we will most certainly continue our efforts to help children grow in their social development.

Measures to be put in place include:

- Assigned seating and spaces for each child
- Markings on the floor (line-up, walking directions,)

- Child-friendly signage
- Limiting item sharing

Health Guidelines

Protocols and guidelines as to how to handle students or staff with signs of sickness will be handled by our School Nurse. An isolation room has been assigned in the nurse's office to ensure that anyone with symptoms can immediately be separated from other members of the cluster.

There will also be a protocol in place on how the school proceeds if there is a positive test result of students, parents and staff of GISW and what the consequences will be in such a case. Additionally, the school will immediately contact the local health department and follow all guidelines. While we at GISW will initiate tracing protocols and associated communications, the local health department's professional tracing resources will also be initiated.

Please remember to submit health forms and vaccination records to the School Nurse. It is very important, especially during these exceptional times, that staff are kept up-to-date on any medical issues so we can care for your child(ren) accordingly. All school health forms can be found on the school website under "Health Room". If your child needs medication during the school day, a Medication Authorization Form must be completed and signed by a physician and the medication must be brought to the Nurse's office in the original container. This includes over the counter medications such as Benadryl, Tylenol and cough medications.

Items from Home

Please familiarize yourself with our handbook found in our GISW website.

https://giswashington.org/files/dswashington/Dateien/2018-19/Kindergarten/18_08_06_Preschool_handbook_E.pdf

- Your child is not allowed to bring any toys from home. Everything should be clearly labeled with your child's name and be in a sealed plastic bag.
- Diapers and wipes can come in their original packaging or in a sealed plastic bag.
- Bedding should be dropped off at the start of the week and will be returned at the end of the week.

Communication

To minimize personal contacts, face-to-face communication between parents and teachers will be very limited. Please contact the teachers of your child by email to arrange an online meeting.

If your child is sick and cannot attend school, please inform the school as soon as possible by either sending an email to rhorning@giswashington.org or contact her at +1.301.767.3814.

If your child is not attending the Preschool for any other reason, please call us directly at:

+1 (301) 767-3837	Main Preschool Number
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Additional Contact Details:

Mojdeh Khojasteh	Preschool Principal	mkhojasteh@giswashington.org +1 (301) 767-3838
Martina Voss	Deputy	mvoss@giswashington.org +1 (301) 767-3837
Rebecca Horning	School Nurse	rhorning@giswashington.org +1 (301) 767-3814

For additional information we refer you to our Preschool handbook and concept on our GISW website about our program not related to reopening.

Changes of Guidelines / Closure of School Building

Should the current health situation change in Montgomery County and additional guidelines or new orders are released, we are prepared to adapt our protocols and procedures accordingly. The health of our community is our top priority. We monitor the information released by the Department of Early Childhood Education, Maryland State Department of Education and, the State of Maryland closely. We will inform and keep you updated about any changes in our schedule and procedures. We greatly appreciate your support and cooperation during these unusual times.

	Regular School	All students are on campus every day, no clusters, Afternoon and Extended care program in mixed groups, no online activities, no physical distancing or masks
	Adapted Regular School Start August 24	All students are on campus every day, clusters (morning, Afternoon and Extended care), some remote teaching (German and English) to keep clusters isolated, physical distancing as much as possible, masks
	Remote Learning	No one in the building, off campus learning, online live teaching and offline material provided

We thank you for your patience, understanding with the many changes, delayed correspondences and with your commitment to your child’s education and safety. We look forward to a safe and healthy school year in the preschool!