

Prevention Guidelines (Schutzkonzept) for the German International School Washington D.C.

As of March 3, 2025

Preamble

A) Goals

The mission statement of The German International School Washington D.C. is to combine the highest standards of German academic excellence with a multicultural environment, inspiring its students to develop into creative, critically thinking, empathetic leaders and engaged global citizens. We are a Pre-K through Grade 12 college preparatory institution which confers both the German International Abitur and the US High School Diploma on its graduates. Challenging German curricula are the foundation of our school's academic instruction, while a commitment to building a safe, respectful, and culturally aware community is at the heart of our mission.

Our practice is fundamentally shaped by a series of guiding principles. We see ourselves as a community that encourages open-mindedness, tolerance and global awareness. As a school, we strive to foster and develop fluency in multiple languages and to promote multiculturalism, while being 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 cultivate a spirit of independence through self-reliance, accountability, and innovation.

At German International School of Washington DC (henceforth, GISW), we believe that in order to thrive within these principles, all members of our community must feel safe and respected. Our goal is to create an environment that encourages open dialogue, where all community members are empowered to question, learn, and contribute. We believe all students deserve an education that affirms and validates their differences, fosters resilience, and promotes positive academic outcomes and emotional well-being, and all staff, teachers, and parents, feel included and empowered. We commit ourselves to being "Weltoffen" - it is with that spirit that we attempt to move through the world, encouraging a sense of open-mindedness and possibility. In practicing inclusion, we strive to become citizens of a broader community, expanding our ability to engage and value different ideas, peoples, and perspectives.

We see ourselves as a community that recognizes individuals and their unique attributes. We aim to instill confidence and motivation, while supporting independent and critical thinking. We strive to build a community where trust, respect and democracy are embedded in our work, and where we can support one another in the achievement of our goals. We, as students, teachers, parents, and staff, work collaboratively and accept mutual accountability for what we do.

It is with the goal of the more complete realization of our mission and guiding principles that we have developed this Schutzkonzept. The present Schutzkonzept is intended to ensure the right to a nondiscriminatory and safe environment in the school, as well as care for the wellbeing and equitable treatment of all community members.

GISW recognizes its duty to protect its community members from discrimination, harassment, and violence. The Schutzkonzept supports our efforts to create a workplace that is free of discrimination and violence, where all staff feel supported, safe, and prepared, and where pupils have the freedom to develop according to their own needs in an age-appropriate manner. GISW acknowledges and encourages individuality and will support community members according to their unique needs. All members of the school community are expected to contribute to this culture of appreciation and respect.

The aim of the Schutzkonzept is prevention, not only as a guide, but as an active attitude that characterizes the school. With the transparent inclusion and cooperation of all members of the community, we strive to promote a culture of mindfulness in which discrimination is taken seriously and dealt with proactively. Additionally, the Schutzkonzept should contribute to a culture of critical self-reflection, that the school may continue to analyze its own practice with a mind to identify areas for growth and address them accordingly.

If there is a presumption or suspicion of discrimination or endangerment of a child's welfare, as mandated reporters, the teachers and school staff are required to act. Therefore, in addition to preventive measures, the Schutzkonzept, along with the Crisis Management Plan, outline procedures for recognizing and reporting abuse, neglect, bullying, discrimination, and other behaviors that violate boundaries.

B) Validity and Obligation

All school employees will be informed about the Schutzkonzept, the rights and obligations associated with it, as well as their responsibility for the protection of children and young people, when they begin their employment with GISW. All pupils will be familiarized with the rights and obligations contained within the Schutzkonzept. Pupils will receive instruction on the parts of the Code of Conduct relevant to them and will be expected to practice appropriate behavior in and outside the classroom. Parents/Guardians will be informed of the Schutzkonzept when they sign the enrollment contract and will have access to the information and complaints procedures contained therein at any time. Parents/Guardians also have an obligation to support the education of the children in their care and behave in ways that contribute to a positive and welcoming school community.

In short, the Schutzkonzept applies to all members of the school community, and extends certain rights, responsibilities, and obligations to all.

C) Risk Analysis: Discrimination

The German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency defines the concept of discrimination as follows:

“Discrimination in the legal sense is unequal treatment of a person on the basis of one (or more) legally protected categories of discrimination without an objective reason justifying the unequal treatment. Discrimination can be expressed, for example, through a person's behavior, a regulation or a measure.”

To conduct a comprehensive risk analysis within the context of discrimination, it is crucial to consider various characteristics, forms, and levels of discrimination. According to the definition

provided by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency and the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG)⁴, certain characteristics are particularly deserving of protection and may lead to discrimination:

1. **Ethnic Origin:** This includes categories such as skin color, outward appearance, language, or migration background. Discrimination based on these characteristics can occur in various areas of life, including education, employment, and public life.
2. **Gender:** The AGG protects women, men, as well as trans, non-binary, and intersex individuals from discrimination based on their gender. This pertains to areas such as hiring, promotion, compensation, and access to education.
3. **Religion or Belief:** Discrimination based on affiliation or non-affiliation with a religion or belief, as well as its practice, is prohibited.
4. **Disability and Chronic Illness:** People with permanent limitations in physical function, mental ability, or mental health are protected from discrimination. Barriers to access to education, employment, and public life must be eliminated.
5. **Age:** Discrimination based on age, whether too young or too old, is prohibited. This particularly affects the job market as well as access to education and healthcare.
6. **Sexual Identity:** Lesbian, gay, heterosexuals, bisexual, trans, asexual and queer communities (LGBTQ+) individuals are protected from discrimination. This especially concerns areas such as employment, healthcare, and access to education.

At GISW, we recognize that individuals in our school community may be discriminated against based on any one or combination of these attributes. We also acknowledge the potential for further categories to emerge and thus reserve the right to recognize discrimination resulting from factors not included on the above list. GISW is committed to providing its community members a space which is free of discrimination, assault, and sexualized violence. GISW also understands that creating a space where all community members feel safe to freely develop in their own individuality requires an ongoing process of critical self-reflection.

Forms of Discrimination:

- 1) **Indirect Discrimination:** This occurs when seemingly neutral criteria or procedures disproportionately disadvantage certain groups. For example, hiring criteria that do not directly target a protected characteristic may still exclude certain groups.
- 2) **Direct Discrimination:** Here, there is direct unequal treatment based on one of the protected characteristics. For example, certain individuals may be discriminated against based on their gender or ethnic origin.
- 3) **Harassment:** Harassment includes unwanted actions that intimidate, insult, or degrade a person based on one of the protected characteristics. This can create a hostile environment and lead to

bullying.

Levels of Discrimination:

1) Individual Discrimination

Individual discrimination largely takes place among peers. In a school environment, we may recognize individual discrimination as occurring between those who are on equal footing with one another: student-to-student, faculty-to-faculty, administrator-to-administrator, etc. Individual discrimination refers to acts of prejudice, bias, or unequal treatment directed towards an individual or group based on their personal characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or age.

2) Institutional Discrimination

Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (*Social Psychology*, 2010) define institutional discrimination as “discriminatory treatment of an individual or group of individuals by society or institutions, through unequal consideration of members of subordinate groups.”

Institutional discrimination, also known as systemic discrimination or structural discrimination, refers to the ways in which policies, practices, and norms within institutions or organizations result in differential treatment or disadvantage for certain groups of people based on their characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status.

3) Social Discrimination

According to the American Psychological Association, social discrimination is the unjust and differential treatment of individuals based on characteristics such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, ability identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other groups. At the societal level, discrimination patterns are embedded in perceptions, designations, and stereotypes. These are often reproduced through media, educational materials, and everyday interactions, leading to biases and discrimination.

D) Structural Make-Up of the School

1) Stakeholders

GISW’s community is rich and multifaceted, with the overall school community stakeholders being divided into three primary groups: students, student caregivers such as parents/guardians, and staff. The staff, in turn, consists of several groups, including teaching staff, administrators, support staff, and school leadership. Additionally, the school’s board operates at the highest level of the administration.

2) Structures for the Deployment of the Schutzkonzept

The Schutzkonzept will be made available to all stakeholders of the school community, including students, student caregivers, and staff. School staff will be informed of the Schutzkonzept during the conference days immediately preceding the first day of school. Students will receive instruction on the Schutzkonzept from their Klassenlehrer together with other school policies. The

Schutzkonzept will be available to the GISW school community online in the password-protected area of the website. The SEL/Prevention Team, along with the Steering Committee and the School Administration, will be responsible for periodically reviewing and auditing the present document. The Schutzkonzept, and any revisions to it, must be approved by the Gesamtkonferenz.

E) Additional Provisions

1. Prevention

GISW boasts a number of pedagogical and institutional structures which help to preclude discrimination against particular groups of individuals before it even occurs. The following subheadings will delineate these preventative measures, while also explaining how they help to sensitize school employees, students, and parents to themes of discrimination, harassment, antisemitism, bullying etc. Additionally, the following will also describe to what extent these measures encourage a culture of critical self-reflection within this framework.

1a) GISW Policies

GISW's Policies are composed of several documents: the *School Rules and Regulations (Hausordnung)*, the *Disciplinary Policy*, *Acceptable Technology Use and Internet Safety Policy*, *Code of Ethics*, the *Dress Code*, and the *Anti-Bullying Policy*. These documents can be located on the school website under the *Organizational* and *GISW Policies* heading in the password-protected area of the website. Students are informed of these policies by their Klassenlehrer at the beginning of each school year. Parents can access them on the password-protected section of the website

1b) CBA

Upon being hired, new employees are provided access to the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement.) Currently there is no Employee Handbook at GISW. The creation and standardization of an Employee Handbook available to all staff is an area GISW acknowledges it needs to improve upon and implement.

1c) Klassenrat & SEL

Class community meetings (*Klassenräte*) are available between students and classroom teachers at all levels of our school. The meetings take place as needed and may take a lesson from the homeroom teacher, FuF, or another subject when available. These are meetings when students gather to express their feelings, give one another feedback, discuss class projects, and generally talk about the community atmosphere within the class. The Klassenrat is a time for structured conversation to celebrate one another's achievements, as well as to address latent conflicts among the students. Importantly, it is an opportunity for all participants to express themselves freely and equally, and to facilitate the healthy development of positive student-student and student-teacher relationships.

Beginning in the 2023/24 school year, GISW has sought to leverage these class community meetings to blend in more Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into our students' school experience.

Our philosophy, which underlies this project, is that successful academic learning can only be achieved when students feel safe, supported, understood, and heard within their community. GISW has developed a Prevention Program and hired a Prevention Coordinator to further our commitment to fostering a healthy school community. Our commitment to SEL helps our teachers and students develop a deeper sense of trust in and compassion for one another, which are important preconditions for better communication and the prevention of discrimination and violence.

There are several relevant school policies and guidelines for the prevention of discrimination, and protocols for addressing any concerns. These documents can be found on the password protected member's section of GISW's website under MY GISW --> Organizational --> GISW Policies, and are listed below:

- 1d) House Rules
- 1e) Disciplinary Policy
- 1f) Media Use Policy
- 1g) Code of Conduct
- 1h) Anti-Bullying Policy
- 1i) Dress Code

2. Faculty Resources

There are several staff members at GISW to whom students, teachers, and caregivers can turn when they need extra support. This may be in times when an individual feels unsafe, or perceives another to be in an unsafe situation, or even to communicate their concerns or frustrations about goings-on in school. The professional functions of these personnel make them integral components of the school's initiative to prevent discrimination and violence.

2a) Vertrauenslehrer

Each year, the students in the Upper School elect two Teachers of Trust (*Vertrauenslehrer*). These are teachers with whom the students feel they can easily identify and communicate. Generally, one male and one female teacher are elected to provide students choice and approachability. If a student or students feel that something is not going well with a particular teacher; they can go to either or both *Vertrauenslehrer* to communicate their concerns. This also goes for conflicts between students. In turn, the *Vertrauenslehrer* will listen to the student and help brainstorm a solution. All communications with *Vertrauenslehrer* are kept strictly confidential. If students feel there is an issue with discrimination, violence, or harassment occurring between students or between teachers and students, the *Vertrauenslehrer* represents an important first line of defense to prevent the continuation of the problem and initiate possible measures of intervention.

2b) Guidance Counselor

At GISW, the guidance counselors serve as important persons of trust whom students can turn to in times of need. Primary functions of the guidance counselors include supporting students in a variety of ways, providing emotional support, helping students stay on track academically and, for students in the upper grades, offering guidance in the college

application/testing process. Importantly, the guidance counselor is also trained in conflict resolution strategies, and, as such, can be consulted by students when they are experiencing difficulties in their relationships with parents, teachers, or peers. Students can trust that they can speak candidly with the guidance counselor when they need help, and that confidentiality will be respected. The guidance counselor can, in turn, provide direct advice or support, or consult other resources in the school or greater community to help bring resolution to the issues at hand.

2c) Prevention Coordinator

GISW employs a Prevention Coordinator, who works closely with the Guidance Counselor to support students in different challenging areas. The work of the Prevention Coordinator consists of direct interaction with students and teachers to provide training on topics relevant to fostering a healthy school community and deepening social-emotional learning. Subjects covered by the Prevention Coordinator include but are not limited to - building healthy relationships, bullying and cyberbullying, drug and alcohol awareness/abuse, vaping, sexual harassment, and inclusion - specifically as it relates to diversity, ability, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

2d) Health Care Manager

The school's health care manager has a broad variety of responsibilities - chief among them being a school professional whom students can consult when they are in need. The health care manager is unique in that they are in contact with the entire student body. Because of this, the health care manager may be one of the first in the school to notice physical abuse or an ailment or change in behavior resulting from the psychic trauma of noncorporeal harassment or non-physical bullying. Furthermore, the health care manager's high familiarity may encourage some students to approach them before others. Like other professionals described in this section, the school's health care manager is bound by confidentiality. For these reasons, the health care manager functions as a key part of GISW's preventative program.

3. Community Resources

3.1) Trainings and Professional Development for School Safety

GISW offers CPR/First Aid Trainings for all staff and mandates this training for KiGA staff and PE teachers. The School Leadership and HR Department are tasked with training staff on the Crisis Management Plans for the school, as well as providing annual training on sexual harassment, and identifying and reporting child abuse.

3.2) Community Building

The intentional and continual development of a strong sense of community is an invaluable preventative measure against violence, harassment, and discrimination. School events and programs provide opportunities for members to meet and communicate with one another and develop bonds of trust and a sense of belonging.

GISW prides itself on the strong sense of community cultivated among its members, and the school is always on the lookout for ways to strengthen its community bonds. Described here are some of the events and programs the school has developed to bolster our sense of school community: SE-Day, Sports Day, Sporting Events, the Annual Art Show, SMV Community Outreach

Program, School Dances, Talent Show, Oktoberfest and 5k Run, Sommerfest, Christmas Bazaar, Theater and Musical Performances, Movie Nights, and Alumni Events.

3.3) DEIB Committee

GISW is committed to combatting discrimination and harassment in all parts of the school community, as well promoting a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment where all community members feel that they belong. The DEIB (Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging) Committee was formed in 2023 to help students and staff understand and commit to these themes and establish goals for the school community as a whole. The committee meets regularly to discuss these topics as they relate to the school, and has taken measures such as conducting staff surveys, creating a Diversity Statement for GISW, planning training events, helping to coordinate a project week on diversity, and contributing to the Schutzkonzept. The DEIB Committee is part of the GISW-Schulentwicklung and is overseen by the Steering Committee.

3.4 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee advises and supports the Head of School in managing the AQM (Auslandsqualitätsmanagement) process. The AQM process is considered a shared responsibility of all stakeholders in the school community. The Steering Committee prepares and coordinates the mandatory stages that the school passes through as part of the AQM process (BLI, Bilanzbesuch, Peer Review); in close cooperation with the Head of School. The Steering Committee also performs evaluations within the framework of school development, sets development goals, and oversees the work of the project groups as it relates to achieving these goals.

The Steering Committee supports the implementation of key developmental goals that have been devised in cooperation with the ZfA. These goals are then shaped into concrete tasks and projects and assigned to project groups. The Steering Committee is updated on the progress of the project work on a regular basis and offers support.

The Steering Committee works in a transparent manner and informs the school community of the progress of its work through the Gesamtkonferenz. Committee members agree to contribute to the work of the Steering Committee and to exchange information with the departments they represent. Members of the Steering Committee consist of at least one and no more than two representatives from all school community stakeholders (Head of School, Upper School, Head of Elementary School, Elementary School, Kindergarten, Board, Parents/SEBR, Students/SMV, and Administration.)

3.5 SEBR – Schulleiternbeirat / Parent Council

GISW is supported by the members of the SEBR (Schulleiternbeirat). Parent Representatives and their deputies are elected for each class/group during a parent evening at the beginning of the

school year for a term that lasts for the remainder of that school year. As a collective, the parent representatives and their deputies comprise the Parent Council (Schulelternbeirat - SEBR), which represents the interests of all parents toward the School Board, the Head of School and the Faculty and Staff.

Further details on their duties and contributions are explained on the password protected members section of the website under MY GISW --> Parents Council.

3.6) School Surveys

Surveys and evaluations are carried out at our school with the support of PQM, such as the school-wide 360-degree survey. Teachers, students, parents and staff are invited to take part in a comprehensive survey to assess how well the school is meeting the needs and wishes of the school community. This survey also allows us to determine how the previous measures in the area of DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) are working in practice and what further preventative and responsible measures are needed.

F. Related Policies

1.) Inclusion Concept:

Our goal is to foster a culture at GISW that promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging - where all students, parents, and staff, inclusive of a person's cultural background, language, race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), national origin, socio-economic situation, age, or ability feels welcomed, accepted, and supported with equitable opportunities to flourish.

Regarding our students, GISW's goal is to address their needs and provide barrier-free access to education as much as possible. The school will make every effort to provide reasonable accommodations to members of our community needing additional support. In cooperation with parents/caregivers and outside specialists, students can be offered assistance on an individual basis when didactic and pedagogical reasons deem it necessary, and as long as it can be implemented with the existing resources of GISW and does not unduly interfere with the basic structures of the school program.

Accommodations may be based on, but not limited to:

- Physical differences
- Learning differences, Neurodiversity and/or
- Social/behavioral differences.

GISW understands inclusion as creating a community where we strive to support all members according to their individual needs and where their unique potential can be developed to its fullest expression. The physical layout of the school, the school's operating license, as well as the number of specialized educators may, however, limit its capacity to make certain accommodations. Individualized teaching will be based on the differentiated instruction concept at GISW and the

“Recommendations for the Support of Students with Dyslexia and Dyscalculia at German Schools Abroad.”

GISW policies related to inclusion can be found on the password protected member's section of the website, listed under MY GISW --> Organizational --> GISW Policies

- 1a) Policy and Procedure for Identifying and Supporting Students with Learning or Behavior Issues
- 1b) Guidelines on Students' Gender Identity

You may also find the recommendations from Germany here:

- 1c) Recommendations for German Schools Abroad
[2014_12_11-Inklusion-an-Auslandsschulen.pdf \(kmk.org\)](#)

2.) Language Sensitive Communication:

“You can't not communicate,” Paul Watzlawick, an Austrian communication scientist, philosopher and psychoanalyst, once said. Even if we don't speak, we still express how we feel and what we think about other people through body language.

Communication is extremely important to us at GISW. We recognize that some language can be offensive and derogatory towards people or groups (consciously or unconsciously). Certain terms are and have been explicitly used to characterize certain groups as inferior. It is our responsibility at GISW to educate ourselves on language that may be used in the context of discrimination. We therefore acknowledge the need for active engagement and awareness of changing language, and understand that in order to move forward, a willingness to be sensitive and mindful with language is required. Language sensitive communication can play an important role in combating discrimination.

At GISW, we advocate open, fair, appreciative and respectful interaction and want to create a culture of mindfulness and respect for every student, every teacher and every employee, in which discrimination is taken seriously and responded to actively and self-critically. It is therefore important to us that we not only teach specialist knowledge and technical language in the classroom, but also pay attention to, point out, use and reflect on language-sensitive communication. In doing so, we pay particular attention to the different language backgrounds and cultures of our students, as it is important to us to choose language that is inclusive and includes all people, groups and cultures, both written and spoken.

As a bilingual educational institution which promotes the German language through direct instruction, GISW has the potential to be uniquely vulnerable to discrimination against other language groups. GISW goes to great lengths to promote its linguistic diversity and level the linguistic (and thereby academic) playing field for speakers of all its languages. All students receive differentiated instruction in English and German in order to meet their individual learning needs. In this way, GISW, as an institution, is actively seeking to break down barriers to students realizing their true

academic potential as a result of language differences.

E. Intervention

While all the above-mentioned norms, routines, and structures strive to prevent discrimination, violence, and assault before they happen, it is not possible in every instance. In recognition of this, GISW has developed procedures to address situations when the policies in this document have been violated. The following section describes some of the means of intervention developed by GISW.

1. Reporting

When any member of the school community (including students, teachers, staff, and parents,) suspect, witness, or are subject to an act which violates GISW's policies and guidelines, they should follow the school's standardized reporting procedure.

The overview of communications procedures for individual grades can be found in the password protected member's section of the website under
MY GISW --> Parent Council --> Communications Flow

This does not preclude the option of approaching any trusted individual at the school, especially those mentioned above under **Faculty Resources**

These procedures should be followed for any instances in which discrimination, harassment, assault, or sexualized violence occurs, or is suspected to have occurred, between members of the student body; between students and parents; between students and staff members or other adults in the school community; between staff members of equal or hierarchically unequal standing; or between any participants in school-related events or activities.

2. Crisis Management Plan

GISW has developed and regularly maintains a crisis management plan that provides information in the event of an emergency or crisis at the school. A crisis is any event that has a traumatic impact on the school, from bereavement or a natural disaster to a threat to the physical safety of the students, faculty, staff and others.

The purpose of this CMP is to communicate:

- The type of threats GISW could be faced with.
- The actions that should be taken when exposed to them.
- The necessary initial steps that will be taken to reduce the consequence of an emergency once it has occurred.

The CMP provides information, such as emergency contacts, as well as guidelines and necessary tools to mitigate extreme situations in which the physical or emotional well-being of its community members is threatened. These include, but are not limited to, procedures for critical incidents, psychological crises, bomb threats, extreme weather procedures, and medical emergencies.

The updated version of GISW's Crisis Management Plan will be made accessible once the School Leadership team has finished their current revision.

3. Local Resources

GISW does not receive funding from the federal government of the United States. Nevertheless, GISW's policies and procedures regarding discrimination, harassment, and violence are developed from and strive to comply with local, state, and federal laws.

Child Protective Services (CPS)

In accordance with the Child Protective Services Act of 1973, CPS is responsible for "investigating allegations of abuse or maltreatment of children that are directly caused by the actions of the child's parent or caretaker, or are allowed to happen to the child by the parent or caretaker." CPS recognizes that abuse and maltreatment can occur in many forms, including physical, emotional, or sexual. All members of the school community, including staff, students, and parents can report suspected abuse by contacting:

For Maryland: The Department of Health and Human Services in Maryland
[Child Protective Services - Maryland Department of Human Services](#) or

For Virginia: Virginia Department of Social Services
[Child Protective Services \(CPS\) - Virginia Department of Social Services](#)

For the District of Columbia: DC CPS
[Report Child Abuse and Neglect | cfsa \(dc.gov\)](#)

F. Institutionalization

The SEL/Prevention Team in conjunction with the DEIB Committee developed the Schutzkonzept. It was submitted to the Steering Committee for review and was approved by the Gesamtkonferenz. The SEL/Prevention Team will review and update the Schutzkonzept as needed, with a mandatory review every two years. It will incorporate input from the Steering Committee – any changes or additions to the Schutzkonzept must be approved by the Gesamtkonferenz. School Leadership will ensure that the Schutzkonzept is known to all members of the school community and that its provisions are being implemented comprehensively and consistently throughout the school. School Leadership will provide yearly trainings reviewing the policies contained in the Schutzkonzept, and assign Klassenlehrer the responsibility of sharing relevant policies with the students. School Leadership **will** assess the success of the implementation of the Schutzkonzept's key provisions throughout the school, and propose changes as needed.