

German School of Connecticut



Handbook for Parents and Students Stamford Location

rev.: May 2018

Parent involvement leads to student success

“Parent engagement matters. Study after study has shown us that student achievement improves when parents play an active role in their children’s education, and that good schools become even better schools when parents are involved. It is recognized that parent engagement is a key factor in the enhancement of student achievement and well-being.

Students are more likely to be motivated, to earn higher grades, to have better behavior and social skills, and to continue their education to a higher level when their parents are actively engaged in supporting their success at school.”

Ontario Ministry of Education on Parent Engagement
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/

Dear Parents, Students and Friends,

This handbook provides answers to many of the questions people ask about the German School of Connecticut (GSC).

Please read it carefully for an overall understanding of our policies and practices, and keep it on hand for future reference.

Additional information is available via:

Phone: (203) 792-2795 (Stamford Campus)
(860) 644-8867 (West Hartford Campus)

Email: stamfordinfo@germanschoolct.org
hartfordinfo@germanschoolct.org

Web: www.germanschoolct.org

Thank you for your interest in the German School of Connecticut!

Dr. Renate Ludanyi
Principal (Stamford)

Bärbel Röder
Assistant Principal (West Hartford)

About the School

Who May Attend?

Age

- ◆ Children preschool to high school age.
- ◆ Adults of any age, nationality, race, or religion.
- ◆ Special “Flummi” class for toddlers under 3 years of age

Language Proficiency

- ◆ Novices
- ◆ People who speak some German and want to learn more.
- ◆ Near native speakers who want to maintain and improve their ability in the language.

Where Do We Offer Courses?

Stamford: Rippowam Middle School
381 High Ridge Road
Stamford CT 06905

West Hartford: First Baptist Church
90 North Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107

When Do We Offer Courses?

Generally, most Saturday mornings from September to May.

9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. (9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. for “Flummi” class)

Adult classes may start earlier and end later

School Year

The September-to-May school year is divided into two fifteen-week semesters, as required by the Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen (German School Authorities) in Cologne, Germany, which provides some financial support to the German School of Connecticut.

The GSC has 30 teaching sessions per year.

Academic Calendar

A schedule of classes and events is available on the GSC website (www.germanschoolct.org) and from the administrative staff at both campus locations.

Holidays

Generally, classes are not scheduled for the Saturdays closest to Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Day, Presidents’ Day, Easter, and Labor Day.

School Structure

Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors is a group of parents and friends of the German School of Connecticut. It decides on long-term goals and launches fundraising drives.

Administrators

Parents and friends of the school, most of them volunteers, also serve as our officers and administrators. By conducting the day-to-day operations of the school, they help keep our tuition cost low.

Membership and Annual Meeting

The GSC is a non-profit organization. All adult students and parents/guardians of the non-adult students are *members* of the German School of Connecticut. Members are invited to the Annual Membership Meeting which typically takes place in February or March.

For more information or to obtain our by-laws, please ask.

Volunteers

Parent volunteers are an important pillar of the GSC Community. There are many ways to volunteer.

Volunteer positions are divided into Saturday morning positions, which require you to be at the school on the committed dates, and “year round” positions, which often don’t require physical presence at the school.

Families participating in our volunteer program are exempt from our service fee, which is currently \$120 per family per semester.

With our “Volunteer of the Month” program we recognize volunteers, who go above and beyond in their volunteering support of the school.

Registration and Fees

Registration information including important dates is available on the website or from the Registrar at the front desk.

Registration is handled online through our web site. In special cases, you may also register in person at the front desk. During the registration process, we ask for emergency contact and medical information for each student.

Tuition and Fees

In addition to tuition for each student, we charge a service fee per family. The service fee is waived for families signing up to volunteer at the GSC. Discounts are provided for multiple registered students per family.

Students in Adult Classes buy all books and materials needed for their course. All other students pay an annual material fee and are provided with all required materials.

Full tuition is due by the third week of each semester. For full year registrations, tuition for the spring semester is due by November 1. Late payments will result in a late-payment fee. Late fees do not apply to new students enrolling in the school after the payment deadline. In some cases, late registration may be arranged with the registrar ahead of time.

The current fee schedule is available on our website. Registration is not complete until all fees have been paid.

In special circumstances, tuition can be refunded with a written request to the registrar.

School Policies

Inclement Weather

We communicate school delays or closings in a timely manner. Communication occurs via email/SMS, Facebook, Twitter and on our web site.

In addition, closings are posted on the following news stations:

Stamford location:

- ◆ News12 CT (<http://connecticut.news12.com/Opens in a new window>)
- ◆ NBC CT (<http://nbcconnecticut.comOpens in a new window>)

West Hartford location:

- ◆ NBC Connecticut WVIT – Channel 30 (<http://www.nbcconnecticut.comOpens in a new window>)

Make-up dates for cancelled classes are planned in advance and part of the academic calendar published at the beginning of the school year.

Sick Child Policy

We are committed to ensuring the health of our students, parents, and teachers.

Parents are responsible for keeping children home that are sick or have a condition that may be contagious. This is common courtesy to the community so that others are not infected. Please use your best judgment and common sense in determining if your children should remain home.

Do not bring your child if:

- ◆ Your child has had a fever in the past 24 hours
- ◆ Your child has lice
- ◆ Your child has any other potentially contagious condition
- ◆ Your child has had diarrhea/vomiting in the past 24 hours

If the teachers have a child in class that they feel has any of the above conditions, the child will be brought to the front desk and parents will be contacted for immediate pick-up.

Advance Notice of Absence

If a student cannot come to class, please notify the teacher in advance. Attendance is monitored by the teacher throughout the school year.

Notice of Early Dismissal

If your child has to leave class before the end of the school day, please notify the teacher in advance. Also, get a signed permission slip from an authorized GSC official at the front desk. You, or a designated person, need to pick up your child at his/her class with the signed permission slip.

Picking up After School

Children have to be picked up by their parents or the assigned caregiver. If someone other than the parents or assigned caregivers are supposed to pick up your child, the school requires a written note from you ahead of time. Pickup needs to be on time .

Respect for School Property

All students are guests at the school we rent for Saturday mornings. They have to respect the property, student displays and other equipment of the host school. If one of our students damages anything at the host school, we will have to pay for it—and pass the cost on to the parents.

Change of Address

Please notify the school of any change of address, email, or phone number.

Teaching and Classroom Policies

Student Diversity

Our students vary widely in age and come with different language backgrounds, abilities, and motivations. Our curriculum is designed to accommodate these differences as much as possible, and we take great care to assign students to the classes that will give them the best opportunity for learning. For detailed information of our curriculum, please contact the Principal in Stamford or the Assistant Principal in West Hartford.

The age span in our children's classes seldom exceeds two or three years, but different groups of children in the same class sometimes progress at different rates. In some cases, a group may be advised to repeat the course for maximum benefit.

Class Size

The average teacher-student ratio is 1:10. With more than 15 students signing up for a class, the teacher would either be assisted by a teacher's aide or an additional class would be opened.

Flexibility

Occasionally a teacher recognizes that a student could progress faster by changing classes or needs more help during the semester. Such changes can be made in consultation with the teacher, principal, and the student's parents.

A change of class may also be requested by a student's parents. If the change is made without the full approval of the principal and teachers, the school cannot take full responsibility for the student's progress. The results of such a change may affect the student's achievement and may be reflected on the report card.

Adult students may change classes at any time with the permission of the teachers.

Visitors

Visitors to the school are always welcome. We recommend all parents come and meet their child's teacher. For a longer conversation with the teacher, or a visit to the classroom, please contact the teacher in advance.

Homework

Homework is obligatory. Weekly assignments, on average, (which may include listening to audio cassettes) take anywhere from a half-hour to two hours to complete, depending on grade level and other factors. Students are advised to spread this time out over the week.

Parent involvement leads to student success. Making sure that students do homework and assisting with explanations might be necessary and is appreciated. It is of no advantage to the student if the homework is the product of the parent. If the student cannot do the homework and assistance by the parent cannot be given or is of no help, please contact the teacher or the principal.

Report Cards

For children, we issue one report card at the end of the year. We also issue an interim report in January which parents should sign and return.

Adult students who need certification of attendance should discuss this need with the teacher.

Recommendations

For recommendations or other documents requested by a day school or college, please contact the classroom teacher.

Text Books and Course Materials

All the books needed for our courses are available from us. Many of them are published in Germany and cannot be found in local bookstores.

Classroom Parents

Every non-adult class has an assigned *classroom parent*. The classroom parent provides the conduit between teacher, parents and administration as needed. He/she distributes important information such as weather-related school closures and assists with other class-related tasks. In the younger classes, classroom parents sometimes participate in classroom activities. *Classroom parent* is a volunteer position.

Schülerzeitung / Student Newspaper

At the end of the school year a student newspaper (*Schülerzeitung*) is published. All classes contribute. All students are given a copy free of charge. For additional copies a minimal amount is charged to cover the cost.

Cultural Events

The school celebrates a number of events throughout the school year, including St. Martin, Nikolaus, Weihnachten and Karneval. These events are organized by parents as part of our GSC volunteer program.

Testing, Honors and Contests

Students at GSC can take the following tests:

Deutsches Spachdiplom (DSD) 1 and 2

The German School of Connecticut was the first German School in the United States to be chosen by the Kultusministerkonferenz (Conference of Ministers of Education) to give the *Sprachdiplom* tests. Students who pass the *Sprachdiplom 2* (DSD II) fulfill the basic German language requirements for matriculated entrance to a German university.

Students must be at least fifteen years old to take the *Sprachdiplom 1* (DSD I) and seventeen or older to take the *Sprachdiplom 2* (DSD II). Only advanced students with a very good command of German (B2/C1; A2/B1) are eligible for these exams. GSC reserves the right to decide whether a student may be registered to take these examinations.

Vergleichsarbeit A1 and A2

The *Vergleichsarbeit* tests for younger students. Similar to the *Sprachdiplom*, they assess oral and written communication, listening and reading comprehension. These tests are designed to prepare students for the more rigorous and high stakes *Deutsches Sprachdiplom*. The *Vergleichsarbeit* tests give teachers, students and parents a good sense of what language skills need to be further developed, and they are excellent practice for the DSD.

The designations A 1 through C1 refer to the common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

National German Exam for High School Students

The National German Exam for High School Students (NGE) is offered by the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG). It is offered at Levels 1 (trial test) through 4. The levels are intended to roughly reflect years of German instruction at high school level.

Students who are younger than high school age can also take these tests at GSC. By doing so, students can measure their achievement vis-à-vis the best students in regular schools. Parents receive the results of these tests. If they are good, they are asked to report them to the students' day schools for inclusion in their permanent records.

There is a small testing fee which is absorbed by GSC.

Advanced Placement (AP) German Language and Culture Exam / German Subject Test (SAT)

GSC does not give these tests. However, it offers training for them so that students can take them at the regular high school. These tests complement or enhance the admission portfolio. They may also give a head start in college by allowing to fulfill basic language competency requirements or test out of introductory levels of German courses.

Delta Epsilon Phi

Delta Epsilon Phi is an honor society for high school students of German. To be eligible for induction, students must have completed three semesters of German with a 3.6 grade point average in German and have an overall grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. They must be at least 14 years old, score above 90 on level 2 or 3 of the AATG tests, or above 85 on level 4.

COLT Poetry Recitation Contest

The annual Connecticut Language Teachers (COLT) Poetry Recitation Contest is open to all middle and high school students in the state. Many of our students have won honors in this contest. Participation is voluntary. It is noted in the student's permanent school records.

Each spring students of the German School of Connecticut participate and represent their class and language level.

Library

A German-language library with books, audiobooks, DVDs and other media is available to all students.

Location and Hours

The library is located past the front desk down the hallway, the last room on the left, just before the second hallway. The Kinderecke (children's corner) is next to the library. It is open on Saturday mornings, including during Pause, on GSC school days.

Library Patrons

Enrolled students of all ages and their parents/guardians, GSC teachers and teaching assistants, and private students receiving instruction by GSC teachers can borrow materials from the library.

Patrons receive a library card with a matching key tag. These cards are valid for the duration of the patron's affiliation with GSC. While library cards are issued for free, there is a \$5 lost card replacement fee.

In addition to class visits to the library, students are also encouraged to visit the library individually to check out materials.

Kinderecke

The *Kinderecke* is located next to the library and is open during school hours. Children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian. No drop-offs.

Spaß in der Kinderecke! is a regular program with interactive story telling, crafts and other activities. Activities are announced in the weekly newsletter.

Library Policy

For a full copy of the library policy, please visit the website or stop by the library.

GSC Community

Pause/Recess

Pause is a very special part of the Saturday morning experience, in big part due to the Pausentisch. Pausentisch provides a wide variety of snacks, sandwiches and baked goods, often home-made, contributed by parents. Pausentisch "duty" rotates through the classes, with each class having responsibility once per semester. For that week, the students and their parents provide the Pausentisch contributions as well as the time needed to setup up the table, hand out the food and clean up afterwards. This shared responsibility reinforces the sense of community. The Pausentisch calendar is published on the website in the first weeks of each semester.

Overall year-round administration of the Pausentisch lies in the hand of a dedicated team of Pausentisch Coordinators.

Parent Meetings and Parent Open House

Throughout the year, we hold parent meetings to share important information, comments, suggestions, and ideas. These meetings foster the cooperative spirit that the school thrives on and give you the chance to share your ideas with other parents.

Once a year we have an open house for parents, friends and other interested individuals, so that they can visit classes and get to know the teachers, the school and the staff.

Car Pooling

If you are interested in car pooling, please leave your information at the front desk at the beginning of the semester.

What we expect of you

Punctuality

Students must come to class on time. Coming late is extremely disturbing to the other students and can be reflected in the student's report card.

Children must also be picked up promptly after school ends.

News Emails

We publish regular news emails for students and parents. These emails feature information about the school and its staff, updates on events and celebrations and general information that students of German might be interested in.

Please read these new emails, as they contain important information.

We also include school-related and community-related news items provided by students and parents. Just send them to newseditor@germanschoolct.org.

Contributions

The tuition you pay covers the everyday costs of the school. In order to help the school grow and offer our students a growing library, language software and other enrichments, we rely on your help and generosity through fundraisers, volunteering time or donations of raffle items (just to mention a few possibilities).

Spread the word

We depend mainly on you, in addition to advertising or promotion, to let people know about our school.

Please tell your friends, family and associates. It would also be very helpful if you dropped off some GSC brochures at your local library, your child's pediatrician, your child's school, etc. Brochures can be obtained at the front desk.

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