



Deutsche Internationale Schule Washington D.C.

Comprehensive German Language Approach – from Preschool to Graduation

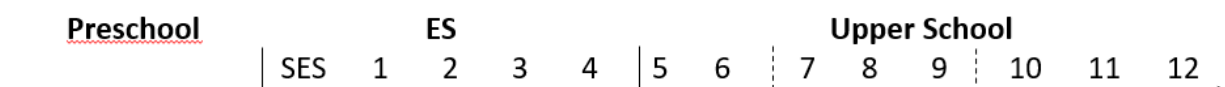
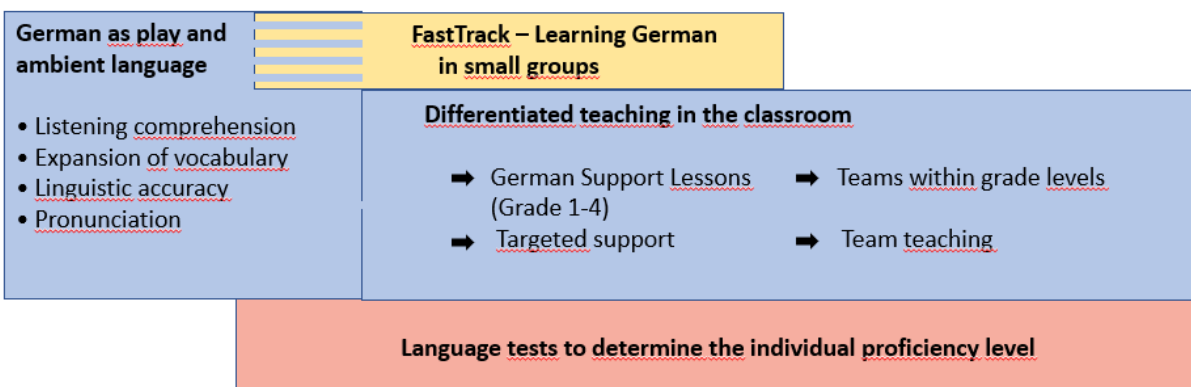
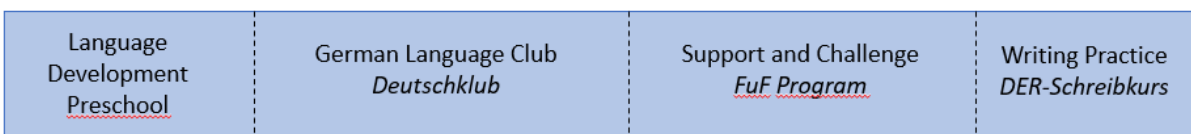


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1. Preamble

Being competent and flexible in the use of a language is essential for finding one's identity and taking part in social and cultural life. Hence, developing and promoting the students' command of the German language is an integral part of education and the responsibility of all stakeholders at GISW.

The subject of German is given high priority at a German School Abroad and plays a big part when it comes to measuring academic success. To enable students of different German language proficiency levels to follow class in the individual subjects with their subject-specific terminology successfully, it is important to offer differentiated and individualized academic support.

For students with German as a foreign language (DaF) who don't have much exposure to German outside of school, this poses a challenge. However, multilingualism is a solid basis for developing and supporting further linguistic competencies.

The following differentiated comprehensive language approach has been designed to ensure that all students are given the same conditions when learning the German language and when pursuing the German school leaving certificate at the German International School Washington D.C. (GISW).

2. Initial situation and reasoning for a comprehensive language approach

In the past years, the student population at GISW has changed considerably, which was reflected in the changing of the school's name. This opening to a more international student body has proven to be an enrichment for the school in all areas, linguistically as well as culturally. More and more students with diverse linguistic backgrounds attend GISW with German not being the native language to many of them. This poses a new challenge to our established German and subject instruction as well as our existing linguistic support programs.

School development values these challenges and meets them head-on by continuously monitoring and evaluating the status quo of instruction. One result of the Peer-Review, which was conducted by teachers at the German International School of Silicon Valley in September of 2021 was that parents and students of GISW are aware of the importance of German language proficiency but at the same time would like to see improvement in the area of differentiation.

The complex and diverse language backgrounds of our students make differentiation and personalized teaching of the language necessary. Differentiation in this case refers to German native speakers (**deutsch-muttersprachlich, DaM**) as well as learners of German as a foreign language (**Deutsch als Fremdsprache, DaF**).

3. Goal and description of the comprehensive German language approach

Language training must be skills oriented, differentiated, and individualized for **all** children with different language levels. A comprehensive learning approach for German supports this goal.

4. Language development in preschool

4.1. General Description

Early childhood teaching of German language skills is very important for the personal development and successful learning in preschool. After all, speaking the language and communicating in German in class are the prerequisites for a successful school career.

Teaching our preschoolers German language skills is at the center of preschool education. The children learn German naturally, since their teachers speak to them in German throughout the day. Any actions and activities are used to teach and learn German.

4.2. Competencies

The language approach prepares the students for moving on to the school entry level and elementary school while acknowledging different language skills. That's why it focuses on the individual needs of the children and teaches the following competencies:

Competency	Content The children know how to...
Listening comprehension	- listen and understand what is said.
Expanding vocabulary	- repeat new words and phrases. - expand their vocabulary and use words correctly.

Language accuracy and fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enjoy speaking. - let the teachers know their needs. - speak in front of other children and in a group. - understand instructions and follow them - understand dialogue and participate. - learn the basics of German grammar and apply them.
Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - differentiate sounds. - pronounce clearly and can easily be understood.

4.3. Guidelines

The following guidelines are followed in the German language program:

- A) German is the children’s play language and ambient language**
- B) Individualized language training and analysis in small groups**
- C) Cooperation of teachers and parents**

A) German is the children’s play language and ambient language

In preschool, German is the only language spoken. Teaching the German language is an essential part of everyday class, and this is reflected in all activities. Learning and using German in play and various activities means the children are full immersed in the language due to daily rituals and play activities in which they actively use and practice their German language skills.

Methods	How they reflect competencies and content
Daily good morning and good-bye in circle time; circle time by topics and interest	Develop listening comprehension, practice speaking freely and in an enunciated way, work on expanding vocabulary
Play with hand and finger puppets	Present new words and topics, discuss group-related topics, practice conversation skills

Offer dance, sing and circle games	Through daily repetitions in chair circle, during morning welcome and afternoon good-bye; expand vocabulary
Books and story time	Show pictures, explain, listen, teach terms and phrases Regular visits to library Project: Students of the Upper School come for visits to read to the preschoolers

B) Individualized language training and analysis in small groups

Children who don't have a knowledge of the German language receive individualized language training. Children with diverse language skills receive special instructions alone or in small groups depending on the students' age and progression.

Additionally, the language development programs „Hocus & Lotus and Finki, ich & wir“ are taught by specially trained teachers. As part of these programs, the teachers use situations of daily preschool life for conversations in German. The children are encouraged to speak to each other with intention in small groups, talk about experiences, repeat phrases, practice pronunciation, expand their vocabulary, ask each other questions and practice dialogues. They use their imagination and speak about their own experiences and interests as well. Materials and media like DVDs with educational cartoons as well as sing-along CDs and picture books support these speaking scenarios.

The individual language development of the children is documented by way of observation forms and portfolios. The results are analyzed and discussed on a regular basis in team meetings.

C) Cooperation of teachers and parents

Close cooperation between the preschool and the parents is very important and is fostered by offering parent information sessions as well as diagnosis meetings. We encourage parental involvement in the following areas:

- Parents actively support their children's language development by offering German tutoring if their child does not have much exposure to the German language outside of school.
- Separation of language use: Each parent speaks to the child in their first/native language.
- Parents participate in our activities (e. g. lantern walk, summer fest).

5. Language Development in Elementary School and Upper School

5.1. Support for DaF learners who can't yet follow classes held in German/FastTrack

5.1.1. General Description of the FastTrack Program

Students with few German language skills who have a non-German background and/or who may be relatively new to GISW and who have difficulties following class, should be taught separately in small groups for targeted development of the German language. The goal is to help the students achieve German language proficiency quickly so that they may participate actively and under the same circumstances as their classmates in regular class. This program is called FastTrack.

This flexible program follows the curriculum of regular German class, but it offers a focus on proficient use of the German language. It is closely connected with DFU (e.g., by working with symbols, gestures, and flash cards). To implement this program efficiently, small class sizes and teachers with a proven background in teaching German as a foreign language are essential.

5.1.2. Support Lesson Volume during the morning and afternoon

Elementary School:

This program consists of 2-7 periods, depending on the grade level, as follows:

SEL: 2 periods per week during elementary instruction

Grade 1: 6 periods per week during regular German class

Grades 2-4: 7 periods per week during regular German class

As part of the language-centered afternoon programs of the Elementary School, students that attend the FastTrack program will have language development courses in the afternoon as well including student paper, choir, Lesemäuse, drama, cooking etc. These courses serve to provide the FastTrack students with scenarios and opportunities to actively use the German language in the context of playful activities.

Students who attend the FastTrack program are encouraged to participate in German speaking afternoon programs on three to four afternoons per week. This ensures that they have exposure to the German language and get extra practice in.

All afternoon courses are taught across grade and subject levels and can be selected freely.

Upper School

The FastTrack program is made up of 7 periods per week which are comprised of the regular German lessons plus two FuF classes per week.

5.1.3. Program qualification and duration

Students who are new to GISW take an assessment test to test their language proficiency and can then be assigned to the FastTrack program at any time. This program is designed to be a temporary development program. After a maximum of two years the students should be able to participate in regular German class with their classmates. The students transition to regular German class after the first school semester or after the summer, at their teacher's discretion.

5.1.4. Analysis of progress and individualized training

The improvement of language proficiency is continuously monitored and tracked in a competency roster/portfolio. Based on these findings, the teachers create differentiated and individualized support plans.

5.1.5. Performance evaluation and grading

The students' report card will contain an orientation grade and the following note:

„The subject grade for German is for orientation purposes only since the German language is in a stage of development.“

The final FastTrack grade is based on the same number of exams as regular German class and additionally the oral participation grade. In FastTrack instruction the exams are adapted to the students' proficiency level.

Students enrolled in the FastTrack program must also get language support and accommodations in the exams of other subjects that are taught in German, which will be reflected in the grading of exams as well. This will result in a grading bonus of up to one grade level which is given at the discretion of the teacher.

5.1.6. Cooperation between school and parents/guardians

To give the students the best possible outcome from individualized language training and set them up for successful participation in regular class, close cooperation between the school and

the students' family is essential. Language learning has to continue outside of school. The school offers two to four consultations to parents per school year. During these consultations the teacher advises the parents on the student's individualized language support plan and gives recommendations. The students receive personalized support materials as well as recommendations for TV shows, podcasts, audiobooks, or educational games.

5.2. Support for DaF/DaM learners who can follow classes held in German

5.2.1. General Description and Goals

Elementary School

Students who can follow regular class but who have noticeable difficulties in the use of the German language will receive academic support during support lessons during the regular German lessons (elementary instruction in SEL) by a second teacher. These support lessons are based on the curriculum (content and competencies) and on the learning group's progress.

As part of the language-focused afternoon programs of the Elementary School, students that attend the Deutsch-Fit program will have language development courses in the afternoon as well including student paper, choir, Lesemäuse, drama, cooking etc. These courses serve to provide the students with scenarios and opportunities to actively use the German language in the context of playful activities.

The main pillar of DaF support, „Deutsch Intensiv“, which has proven to be very effective will remain but its name will be changed to „Deutschklub“ starting with the 2022/2023 school year. This course is specifically designed for students who still have difficulties with the use of the German language. The course contents are expansion of vocabulary, syntax, and expansion of the use of grammatical structures.

All afternoon courses are taught across grade and subject levels and can be selected freely.

Upper School

Support in regular German class

As part of the school's efforts of internal differentiation the teachers will meet the needs of DaF students in their class by closely monitoring second language acquisition, providing teaching aids

and class materials as well as specific language and vocabulary exercises.

Support as part of the FuF Program

Students participate in two separate extracurricular German support lessons per week. These lessons are based on the curriculum (content and competencies) and on the learning group's progress.

By cycling through various units, the students are offered an opportunity to improve on their reading and writing competencies with a focus on text production as well as presentations and debates. The following areas are at the center of the training sessions:

1. Vocabulary/Mean of verbal expression
2. Grammar
3. Spelling/punctuation
4. Analyzing various types of texts
5. Working techniques

These modules are integrated in the regular class schedule.

Writing Practice

This course is specifically designed for high school students who may have difficulties writing German essays. In this course, the students get to practice writing according to the requirements of high school writing in exams.

You will find further information in the FuF program guidelines which list the goals and competencies of the individual modules.

5.2.2. Support Lesson Volume (hourly)

Elementary School

These additional support lessons are offered as follows, depending on grade level:

SEL:	2 hours per week
Grade 1:	5 of 6 German lessons per week
Grade 2:	4 of 7 German lessons per week
Grade 3:	3 of 7 German lessons per week
Grade 4:	3 of 7 German lessons per week

Upper School

These additional support lessons are offered as part of the FuF program in two periods in the mornings (and in the case of the writing practice in the afternoon).

5.2.3. Analysis of progress and individualized training

Die Verbesserung der Sprachkompetenz soll durch Diagnoseinstrumente (z.B. Kompetenzraster, individuelle Lernausgangslagen) regelmäßig überprüft werden und festgehalten werden. Aus den Ergebnissen soll eine differenzierte und individuelle Förderung der Schüler*innen ermöglicht werden.

5.3. Challenging classes for top-performing students in DaF/DaM

5.3.1. General Description and Goals

Teachers challenge students who have strong language skills in class by offering differentiated, additional materials that meet their learning needs.

5.3.2. Support Lesson Volume

Elementary School

Top-performing students may choose an afternoon course that challenges them and gives them a chance to use their strong language skills, e.g., student paper, theatre etc. We recommend additional afternoon courses that challenge strong students, like the writing workshop or literature detectives.

All afternoon courses are taught across grade and subject levels and can be selected freely.

Upper School

Classes that are meant to challenge top-performing students are taught across grade and subject levels. All students that don't need academic support in German may choose their FuF and AG courses freely. In the future, the school will offer courses that will focus even more on language development and German language training, e. g. student paper and theatre AG.

Additionally, we offer many competitions that help the students expand their knowledge of the German language, e.g. the story competition by the Federal President of Germany, “Jugend debattiert” (debate club) etc.

This German language approach has been developed by the department heads and DaF coordinators: Monique Illig (ES), Annette Putscher (ES), Klara Senkel (UpperS), Mojdeh Khojasteh (PreS), Martina Voss (PreS)