



Parent Communication

Lower Campus COVID-19 Response

Updated August 13, 2021



Boston, August 13, 2021

Dear Parents of Lower Campus students,

As summer slowly slips away, it appears that, for all intents and purposes, we will once again be starting another “exceptional” school year. And yet, in looking back to August 2020, we realize how far we have come in our understanding of this unique situation.

First and foremost is the clear knowledge that education **MUST** be in classrooms with direct connections, hands-on learning experiences and face-to-face interactions, regardless of age, but most importantly for young children. Basically all other “options” fall alarmingly short.

Secondly, we have learned that measures put in place last school year on advice of the CDC, the Massachusetts educational authorities and our internal task force, while challenging at times, proved highly effective in our ability to offer full-day, in-person instruction in a safe and comfortable setting.

Thirdly, we recognize that schools play a crucial role in getting parents back to work in brick and mortar buildings or in home offices. The supervision needs, lack of independence of young children, their need for social interactions and the importance of consistent language input all make anything short of full-time school next to impossible for many families.

Fourthly, we have experienced the gratitude and appreciation from GISB families. Staff was able to implement a plan that utilized many existing factors such as low teacher-student ratios and large classrooms with real windows, the new HVAC system with high grade filters and our easy access to outside spaces along the Charles River to ensure everyone’s safety. A strict social distancing protocol, mask mandates for all staff and students as well as a rigorous cleaning and sanitizing regime completed our safety measures. Parents understood this priority and supported us in it. For this we are extremely grateful.

Although Massachusetts has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country, it may be some time until vaccinations for the youngest students receive full approval. Evidence continues to reinforce that safety measures as put in place by GISB last year, especially in combination with the Covid-19 vaccine, are highly effective, particularly against severe disease. Given our past experiences and current concerns about various variants, GISB’s Lower Campus will continue many policies from last year, practices that most of the children will recognize. These you will find outlined in this document based on the guidelines and recommendations listed on page 4.



GISB is constantly monitoring the situation, regularly connecting to multiple resources of information and is able to adjust in either direction if the situation changes and merits accommodations. 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 for our Lower Campus in our present situation. Further school-wide information and protocols will be forthcoming.

By implementing safety protocols and working together as a community, we can help keep everyone in school, playing, learning and growing. Safety is our priority, our responsibility! Please rest assured that all staff at our Lower Campus are dedicated, committed and resolved to provide the very best and safest experience possible to each and every child and family. This remarkable community of families, students and staff ensures that GISB 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 three 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 families and staff

Guiding Principle 3

Regular, in-person learning opportunities to support and stimulate children's cognitive development.

In weighing these aspects and deciding once again on a full time, class- and cohort-based program, we hope to continue what was successful during the past school year--an emotionally, socially and academically healthy and positive experience for everyone.

I am looking forward to interacting with you and the children, our greatest asset, as we move into what will once again be a most unusual year.

Humbly yours,

Lauren Sallis



Content

Official Guidelines	4
Groups and Teachers	4
Daily Health Screenings at Home	5
Drop-off and Pick-up	5
Schedule	7
Recess	9
Additional Educational Programs	10
Guidelines in the Building	11
Communication	13
Overview Calendar for Lower Campus	14
Changes of Guidelines / Closure of School Building	15
Additional Information	16

abbreviations and explanations

GISB - German International School Boston

LC - Lower Campus

The GISB building for Preschool and Kindergarten at 387 Western Avenue

ASP - After school Program

Participation by sign-up at time of enrollment, from 2:00-4:00, extended after school until 6:00, fixed for entire school year

Cohort

Closed group of children and teachers from two classes with no interaction with other students or staff so as to limit transmission and avoid complete campus closure in case of positive case

Preschool - German: Kindergarten, children year 2.9 - 5

Kindergarten - German: Vorschule, children year 4 - 6

This English-language document will use the English nomenclature in referring to these levels.

Official Guidelines

For the school's safe reopening we are working with the following guidelines:

Covid-19: Guidance for Safe Schools released by the American Academy of Pediatrics
<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

Suggested Strategies for the Prevention and Response to COVID-19 in Early Education and Care Programs released by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/eecs-health-and-safety-guidance-during-covid-19-recovery-for-child-care-providers>

DESE/DPH Covid-19 Guidance for Districts and Schools: Fall 2021 released by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2021-0730fall-2021-covid19-guidance.pdf>

Guidance for Covid-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools from the CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

Groups and Teachers

We start this school year with four Preschool classes (Eulen, Bären, Löwen, Affen) and two Kindergarten classes (Waldwichtel, Waldfüchse). Each group has its own classroom and will be partnered with a second classroom in a cohort to enable more varied social interactions and academic interchange. Eulen and Bären will be in one cohort, Löwen and Affen in a second and the two Kindergarten classes in the third cohort. To continue to minimize the risk of infection between classes, specific morning and afternoon teachers are assigned to each specific group. These teachers will stay with the same group of children. Physical contact will therefore only be within one class or between the two classes in a cohort. Any staff that moves between cohorts will be fully vaccinated, masked and engage in frequent hand-washing.

Ratio - Preschool

In Preschool there will always be two teachers and 12-13 children present in each class, with two morning teachers and one or two ASP teachers (depending on ASP participants) to each Preschool class.

Ratio - Kindergarten

In Kindergarten there will be one teacher and up to 13 children present in each class, with one morning teacher and one ASP teacher to each Kindergarten class.

Health and Safety Mitigation

It is crucial that you keep your child home when they show symptoms! If your child comes to school with symptoms, learning in the whole cohort will be compromised. This is the responsibility of all the teachers, parents and staff of the school. We are all responsible for everyone's safety in the GISB community.

As outlined in the detailed report on Health and Safety Mitigation sent out by the administration, many of the effective measures that we used last year (masking, frequent hand-washing, sanitizing, cleaning, social distancing, testing, etc.) will still be with us as we start the 2021-2022 school year. All community members will submit a community pledge guaranteeing adherence to school Covid guidelines. As a school we are poised to react and adapt quickly to information and changes as the pandemic unfolds.

Drop-off and Pick-up

Times and Locations

To ensure social distancing at all times and in response to feedback from parent representatives in June 2021, we will continue our minimal contact entrance and exit times at the beginning and the end of the school day.

In order to ensure this social distancing, we must insist that you please be on time for drop-off and pick-up. This helps to make sure that all children and their parents can maintain social distancing, that the children stay in their cohort and that the drop-off and pick-up is smooth for everybody.

If you are not able to arrive within the assigned time, you will need to park on the street and wait with your child until there is a lull in the arrivals/dismissals. Only then will your child be led into the building. We realize that this is difficult with the traffic etc. Nevertheless this kind of drop-off and pick-up procedure has proven supportive of families with multiple children who need a timely routine. It enables classes to begin the day punctually and together. It also eases initial transition difficulties by clearly defining home and school.



Drop-off Procedure

By Car

When arriving at the school by car please make sure to follow the one-way loop into the parking lot. The drop-off by car will only be possible via drive-through. If the line is full, please drive an additional round around the block and then join the line. You and your child should be masked. Please wait in line (in your car) for one of the on-duty teachers to help your child out of the car, process the child's attendance and accompany your child into the school building. Please proceed directly to the exit so that other families can move forward. Unfortunately, parents are currently not permitted into the building.

By Foot

There will be NO parking for parents in the LC parking lot. This small lot is reserved for staff.

If you would like to park nearby, you may wait with your child on the markings in the parking lot (6 feet apart) until your child can be received by one of the attending teachers and then guided into the building. Once again, no parents are permitted into the building.

Pick-up Procedure

By Car

Please arrive within your assigned time frame (generally 15 minutes before the specific hour and the full hour) and line up for the drive-through pick-up. If the line is full, please drive an additional round around the block and then join the line. Your child will be brought to the car and buckled in. Please proceed directly to the exit.

By Foot

There will be NO parking for parents in the LC parking lot.

If you would like to park nearby, you may wait on the markings in the parking lot (6 feet apart) until your name is called and your child is brought to you. Please respect social distancing during pick-up.

Schedule

To ensure a good start for everybody and to give the children time to get used to the school again, we will start the school year in three phases.

You will receive the following information on **Wednesday, August 25** from your child's teacher:

- General schedule for your child's class
- Class list
- Parking lot plan
- Sign-up sheet for the Meet and Greet on August 30 and 31

Phase 1 - Meet and Greet

August 30 - 31

Every child and their family are invited to meet their teachers individually and to see the class room for the new school year. All extra clothes, supplies, boots etc. **MUST** be clearly labeled and brought at this time. There is a 30 minute time frame for each child and family with 15 minutes of sanitation in between. Please make sure to sign-up for these meetings. The sign-up will be online and made available to you by your child's teachers. This is the only time during which parents will be permitted into the building. Please observe social distancing guidelines and wear masks. Waiting areas will be clearly marked outside of the building and teachers will come out to escort you in at the appointed time.

Phase 2 - Introduction

September 1 - 8

During this phase our main goal is to give all the children time to adjust to the new situation, procedures, teachers and children. To know what a day at GISB will be like for your child, please have a look below. Detailed schedules and more information will follow with the specific class information. Teachers and the Director are available for individual clarification as needed. Please reach out. We know there are many moving parts!

September 1, 2021

Preschool students new to GISB will **not** be in attendance on this day. All returning preschool students and all Kindergarten students will have a shortened introductory day at school. The school day ends before lunch and nap time. These children will need a filled water bottle and a morning snack.



Returner Eulen and Bären: Drop-off 8:00 - 8:30 / Pick-up 12:00 - 12:15

Returner Löwen and Affen: Drop-off 8:00 - 8:30 / Pick-up 12:15 - 12:30

All Waldwichtel and Waldfuechse (Kindergarten): Drop-off 8:00 - 8:30 / Pick-up 11:45 - 12:00

September 2-8

New Preschool Students

Your child will participate in the morning program with a regular 8:00-8:30 drop-off but with an early departure time of 12:00. Their school day ends therefore before lunch and nap time. These children will need a filled water bottle and a morning snack.

Returning Preschool Students

After a regular drop-off between 8:00-8:30, your child will participate in the regular morning program with which you are familiar from last year. This will include lunch and nap time. After nap time your child will either be picked up at 2:00 or participate in ASP in their cohort until their scheduled departure time (4:00-5:00 or 6:00).

Kindergarten Students

Your child will attend a regular program in the Kindergarten beginning with a 8:00-8:30 drop-off. If your child is enrolled in the ASP they will stay in the same cohort until their regular scheduled departure time of 4:00, 5:00 or 6:00. Children not registered for the ASP will be picked up at 2:00.

Please note that Monday, September 6, 2021 is a national holiday (Labor Day) and GISB is closed. There are no classes that day.

Phase 3 - Regular Schedule

September 9 and following weeks

All children have a regular morning program and, for those enrolled, participate in the full ASP. Drop-off will continue from 8:00-8:30 and pick-up options are 2:00, 4:00, 5:00 and 6:00 as per original enrollment agreement.

Recess

Preschool

Every cohort will spend at least 45 minutes each morning and 45 minutes during ASP on the playground in front of the building. After each visit the playground will be sanitized for the next



group. Children will be permitted to remove their masks after leaving the building. They will put on a clean mask before re-entering. Children will wash their hands upon returning to the building.

Kindergarten

The Kindergarten cohort will go to a local open space or playground in the vicinity for recess time every day in the morning and again during ASP. Children will be permitted to remove their masks after leaving the building. If the children visit a public playground, they will be required to wear a mask despite being outside. In either case all students will put on a clean mask before re-entering. Children will wash their hands upon returning to the building.

We encourage all groups to spend more time outdoors by visiting other local outdoor spaces as much as possible. Field trips will be part of our program again but always with local regulations and restrictions in mind. Public transportation will not be used at this time.

Additional Educational Programs

To protect against cross-contamination only fully-vaccinated staff members will move between cohorts.

ASP

Structures will follow the regular morning routines. By creating cohorts out of two classes, we are confident that students will be offered additional playmates and program offerings while still being provided with consistent routines and rules, familiar settings and staff. There will be no external organizations or teachers providing lessons.

German as a Second Language

Classroom teachers provide a complete German immersion experience, offering student-individualized assistance throughout the day. Additionally, all children in need of extra support in German will work in small groups and individually with our German Plus teacher. This will include screenings and evaluations as well.

English in Kindergarten

Three English lessons are planned for each Kindergarten class. These are taught by a native speaker on site.

Special Education

GISB has hired an experienced special education professional specifically for our Lower Campus. She will be working very closely with the classroom teachers, the Head of the Lower Campus and



colleagues in the Upper School to offer a variety of services and support programs to our children. These may be one-on-one or in small group settings. More information will be provided at our first virtual parent night on September 8.

Music

Guidelines last year prevented us from offering any music. Since these have been rescinded, we will begin phasing in our music program again, starting with the kindergarten students. They will have two lessons of music each week. We hope to have the capacity to add music instruction in the preschool over the course of the year. Nevertheless, dancing and rhythmic activities will continue to be a part of the daily program in this age group.

Guidelines in the Building

Masks

Everyone who enters the LC building must wear a mask. As was the case last year, we require all children ages 2-6 to wear a mask in the building, as has been recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. All faculty and staff will wear masks at all times within the building regardless of vaccination status unless they can maintain social distancing (while eating, for example) or are alone in a well-ventilated room/office. The modeling by you as parents and by the classroom teachers, mask "games" and thematizing masks will all help your child become comfortable with masks again, even if they have not been wearing them during part of the summer. After a year of masking, children have become very accustomed to them.

We are aware of the difficulties of wearing masks for young children and will include frequent mask breaks during the day. During outside recess time, snack and lunch time and during nap time the children will not wear masks. The teachers will also organize and encourage mask breaks whenever it is possible for social distancing in the classroom. To provide additional mask-free time all groups are encouraged to spend extra time outside including learning phases whenever possible.

Please provide your child with 3 masks each day in a bag marked "clean." Additionally, provide a bag marked "dirty" for used masks that must be washed each evening at home.



Items from Home

Your child is allowed to bring one stuffed animal to school for comfort. This is especially important during the first few weeks of school. It is important, however, that these stuffed animals are not shared with other children. No other toys from home are allowed in the building. Nap supplies will be sent home weekly for washing.

Promoting Handwashing and Good Hygiene

Good and frequent handwashing will be promoted and discussed with the children. Additionally we installed contact-less paper towel dispensers and handwashing timers. Cleaning protocols for highly touched areas are in place and will be followed.

The classroom will be frequently cleaned and sanitized with a natural cleaning product that is certified by EPA.

<https://www.forceofnatureclean.com/natural-cleaner-and-disinfectant/?seg=consumer>

Physical Distancing in the Classroom

One important goal in student's returning to the building is their social development. Measures will be put in place to encourage physical distancing. Nevertheless in creating the classes and cohorts we are enabling the children to continue their social development.

Measures put in place include:

- Assigned seating and spaces for each child, particularly during non-masked times (eating, napping, etc.) with at least three feet of distance between students
- Markings on the floor (line-up, walking directions,..)
- Child-friendly signage
- Games and activities that encourage smaller groups

Health Guidelines

Protocols and guidelines as to how to handle students or staff with signs of sickness will be released by the school nurse shortly. An isolation room has been assigned in the building to ensure that people with symptoms can immediately be separated from other members of the cohort.

There is also a protocol in place on how the school proceeds if there is a positive test result of students, parents and staff of GISB and what the consequences will be in such a case.

Communication

To minimize personal contacts, no face-to-face communication between parents and teachers will take place for the time being. Please contact the teachers of your child by email to arrange an online meeting or phone call if needed.

If your child is sick or can not attend school for other reasons, please inform the school as soon as possible by either sending an email to lcoffice@gisbos.org or call +1 (617) 779-7393 and leave a message on our voicemail. Please be sure to contact ALL of your child's teachers as well.

+1 (617) 779-7393 (Front Desk) Please leave a message.	lcoffice@gisbos.org
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Additional Contact Details:

Lauren Sallis	Director of Lower Campus	lauren.sallis@gisbos.org +1 (617) 779-7393
Mary Snow	Teacher & Administration	mary.snow@gisbos.org +1 (617) 779-7393
Hannah Rafferty	ASP Coordinator LC	hannah.rafferty@gisbos.org +1 (617) 352-9349 (2 - 6pm)
Katrin Petzold	School Nurse	katrin.petzold@gisbos.org +1 (617) 783-2600 x 15

Overview Calendar

Date	Event	Notes
August 25	Information email from classroom teachers	
August 28	Informal school picnic	Invitation from Parent Association
August 30/31	Meet and Greet	Sign up required
Sept. 1	Short first day for all kindergarteners and for preschool returners, staggered pick-ups	No school for new preschool students
Sept. 2-8	Regular program with ASP for preschool returners and all kindergarten, new preschool students until 12:00	No ASP for new preschool children
Sept. 8	Parent Night, virtual	Information from class teachers
Sept. 9	Regular program with ASP as registered for all	

Changes of Guidelines / Closure of School Building

Should the current health situation in Massachusetts change and additional guidelines or 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 Education and Care, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the State of Massachusetts and the CDC closely. We will inform and keep you updated about any changes in our schedule and procedures. We greatly appreciate your continued support and cooperation.

Reopening Models

	Regular School	All children every day on campus, no clusters, ASP in mixed groups, no online activities, no physical distancing or masks
	Adapted Regular School Start August 30	All children are on campus every day, cohorts and classes (morning and ASP), no remote teaching, physical distancing, masks
	Hybrid Modell	Smaller cohorts, fewer people in the building, time on and off campus, online teaching and classroom teaching combined, physical distancing
	Remote Learning	No one in the building, off campus learning, online live teaching and offline material provided



Additional Information

Department of Early Education and Care	https://www.mass.gov/orgs/departement-of-early-education-and-care
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	http://www.doe.mass.edu/
American Academy of Pediatrics	http://www.aap.org