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EBGIS | EAST BAY
GERMAN
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL
EDUCATING GLOBAL CITIZENS | WWW.EBGIS.ORG

Early Childhood Program

What We Offer

A play-based and project-oriented approach to learning enriched by focused small-group activities.

Bilingual teachers following the principles of early immersion to communicate with children and teach subject matter.

Close collaboration with families to provide individualized developmental and educational support to each child.

No prior knowledge of German necessary

Who We Serve

Our Preschool and Kindergarten programs serve children between 24 months and six years of age.

No prior knowledge of German is needed to join. Many of our families do not speak German at home but share a love of German language and culture. These families give their children the gift of multilingualism by enrolling at EBGIS.

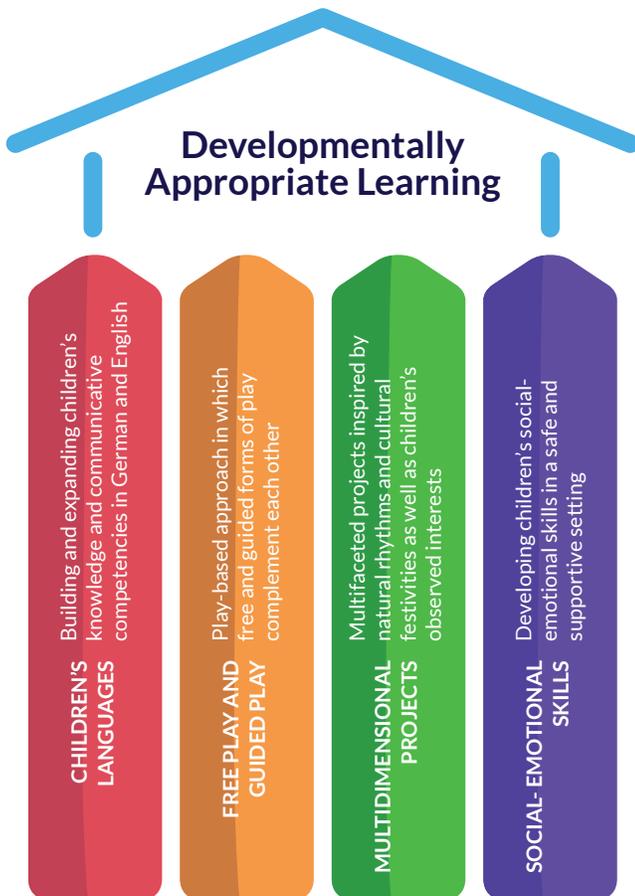
Program Hours

Regular program hours are 8:45am to 2pm, with a flexible beginning of the day starting at 8am.

An after-school care option including diverse enrichment classes is available daily until 6pm.

A camp option is offered during summer break.

The Four Pillars of EBGIS's Early Childhood Program



What is Early Immersion?

Immersion - meaning "to become completely involved in something" - is a widely used and scientifically proven method for teaching language. Early immersion does not rely on a direct instructional approach. Rather, children acquire language in a playful manner, simply by being exposed to it during engaging daily activities in preschool and kindergarten. We support children's language learning through daily rhythms such as the morning circle with its songs and nursery rhymes, and through intentional conversations and the shared reading of picture books in German and English.

The learning path of children without prior knowledge of German follows a sequence similar to their acquisition of their native language: They learn the prosodic (structure and intonation) patterns of German, identify separate words within the continuous speech stream, and link them with meaning. By building a comprehensive receptive vocabulary in German, children fulfill a key prerequisite for later learning rules of German grammar. Mistakes made when children express themselves in their new language are perfectly normal and resolve over time, just as when children acquire their first language.

Our teachers support children's language learning through the use of head and hand gestures as well as visual material, thus helping children map words to meanings and facilitating their overall comprehension in a particular context. In general, we follow the principle of one person one language, in which one classroom teacher responds to children in that teacher's assigned target language, whether it is German or English, even when addressed in the other language. Depending on the situation and individual developmental stage of the child, teachers sometimes deviate from this rule.

When noticing mistakes in children's attempts to communicate in German, teachers provide corrective feedback in an encouraging and supportive manner by modeling the correct form. Beginning learners of German will sometimes use select words from other languages within their German phrases:

"Ich baue jetzt ein street."

"I'm building a street."

Teachers will replace the target word and expand the child's utterance in the following way:

"Aha, du baust eine Straße. Das wird aber eine lange Straße! Wohin führt denn deine Straße?"

"Aha, you're building a street. That will be a long street! Where does the street lead?"

Hearing the same word several times and within varied contexts helps the child establish a clear understanding of the word in his or her inner lexicon. It also helps the child to incorporate the word into his or her active (spoken) vocabulary.

Especially in the beginning, our bilingual teachers will actively build connections between English and German for children with English as one of their home languages. This principle is based on a key insight from the Science of Learning: We learn best when we are able to connect new material to our existing knowledge. For example, while the class is gathered around the lunch table, the children engage in a conversation in German about mice (Mäuse) and mousetraps (Mausefallen). A girl who is new to the group exclaims:

"My father also once caught a lot of mouses!"

The teacher recasts:

"That's great! Your father also once caught a lot of mice! Er hat auch ganz viele Mäuse gefangen."

Parents can actively support their children's immersion education by participating in activities in our early childhood programs. We recommend that parents speak and read to their children in the language(s) in which the parents themselves are fluent. Using books, games, and other materials in German can additionally support children's language acquisition. Children may be encouraged to speak German, but should not be urged to demonstrate their skills to relatives or friends. Keeping communication fun and relevant - no matter what language one is speaking - is the key to supporting children's motivation to learn!