



Taipei European School - German Section
German School Taipei



Communication Guidelines of the German School Taipei

Compiled by the Steering Group¹
Implemented by the Section Council on 7 April 2014



Detlef Gürth: In order to communicate on an equal footing, every protagonist should know the other's perspective.

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Preamble

The German Section of the *Taipei European School* offers a unique environment to learn the three major universal languages German, English and Chinese. This has led to an increasingly heterogeneous group of students who choose to study in this environment. Apart from students from Germany, who continue their school studies within a German framework, students from neighbouring countries such as the Netherlands and Scandinavia also attend the German School. In the meantime, an increasing number of Taiwanese students also attend the German School Taipei. A large number of students grow up in a mixed cultural environment. Even if the students quickly acquire a reasonable command of the German language, we cannot expect all parents to be able to communicate with the school in German. For this reason, multilingual communication in the school community is becoming more and more important.

During the first school years, instruction is predominantly carried out in German. In the advanced forms, beginning with Klasse 5, instruction is increasingly carried out in English. In the course of time, the students become accustomed to instruction in English and use of the English language at *Taipei European School*. However, parents need to be able to communicate with the school in English right from the start, as early as the kindergarten stage.

Areas of communication

The following areas are essential for communication between parents and the school:

- Getting to know each other and establishing a basis of trust.
- Maintaining and strengthening contacts.
- Keeping each other informed.
- Helping parents to support their children in the learning process.
- Clarifying expectations and making agreements.
- Inviting parents to participate and providing them with the necessary support.

Getting to know each other and establishing a basis of trust

When cooperating with the parents, it is important to be aware of the ambivalence between ambitions, expectations, doubts and anxieties and to discuss these so that together we can adopt a positive attitude and develop realistic expectations.

Maintaining and strengthening contacts

Parents and teaching staff usually meet at parents' meetings and parent-teacher meetings. The school aims to offer events that make it possible to develop lasting

relationships and strengthen contact between parents and the school. These are events that take the parents' backgrounds into consideration and meet their communication requirements.

Keeping each other informed

In order to promote communication on equal terms and to balance interests, all people involved in the process must have the same essential information. The aim is to work towards consensus-based results and act together effectively to achieve the educational goal.

Helping parents to support their children in the learning process

Many Taiwanese parents do not know how to support their children appropriately. They tend to bring their children to school with the understanding that the teaching staff is responsible for the further development of the children and that they do not need to worry about school matters and the learning development of their children. Many parents are not aware of the importance of a culture of giving children impulses for the learning development of children, this needs to be counteracted.

Clarifying expectations and making agreements

What connects parents and teaching staff is that together they strive to open up the best possible opportunities for the development of the children.

We want to initiate and shape a process of cooperation in which all parties concerned share their experience, interests and expectations on an equal footing. This means that the school does not prescribe the concept of this kind of cooperation unilaterally but rather encourages parents and teaching staff to jointly develop and negotiate such a concept on an equal footing. Parents often view themselves as "objects" of school measures rather than as protagonists. In negotiation processes they experience that their participation and support are also important. Acting on an equal footing, engaging in relationships based on trust and cooperation, contributing different demands to a joint process and negotiating arrangements - all these aspects play a significant role in maintaining the quality and promoting democratic school development. Due to the language barrier, this is a difficult process for Taiwanese parents to handle, but it is just as necessary.

Inviting parents to participate and providing them with the necessary support

When we deliberate on ways of cooperation between Taiwanese parents and the school, this also requires reflection on the role of the teachers in their capacity as representatives of the German School and as facilitators of fundamental Western values. As long as cooperation with parents is limited to formal occasions (parents' meetings, parent-teacher meetings, participation in school bodies) and parents do not receive further qualification for such tasks (e.g. through communication training, parents' workshops), a communication gap will continue to persist and thus reinforce the dominant role of the teaching staff. Teachers,

who see themselves as learners and partners and engage in exchange with parents in interactive, communicative processes, require meeting formats and ways of interaction that go beyond traditional methods.

Information and counselling services

Parents and the school want to assume joint responsibility for the education of students. To this end, we make practical arrangements and share information. The parents are members of the School Association and in this capacity they also take part in the work of the German School Taipei. The Parents' Council cooperates closely with the school.

In order to be able to communicate more effectively at all levels and in all matters, the German School Taipei involves parents in the work and development of the school by providing them with information and advice.

The school offers the following services to ensure successful ways of communication and to provide suitable support.

<p>Information services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' Information Evening Parents' Evenings for each Klasse School Start Parents' Evening Parents' Evening at School Stage Transitions School Enrolment Ceremonies Welcoming new parents individually with a tour of the school Information folder with the school brochure and school programme in German and English. School website Monthly newsletter Annual general meeting of the members of the School Association Parent-teachers meetings and consultation hours of the teaching staff Yearbook 	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p>School careers advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings to discuss a child's development School career's advice Academic and careers advice </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p>Consulting service offered by the Parents' Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' council meeting <i>Parents' Support Council</i> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>School careers advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings to discuss a child's development School career's advice Academic and careers advice 	<p>Consulting service offered by the Parents' Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' council meeting <i>Parents' Support Council</i>
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Communication between parents and school

A personal one-on-one session is the main focus of communication between parents and the school. In this respect, it is important to follow certain basic rules so that conflicts can be resolved objectively and in a positive way. This includes confidentiality, active listening, objective messages, mutual understanding and clear procedures regarding arrangements made during talks and the manner in which talks are conducted.

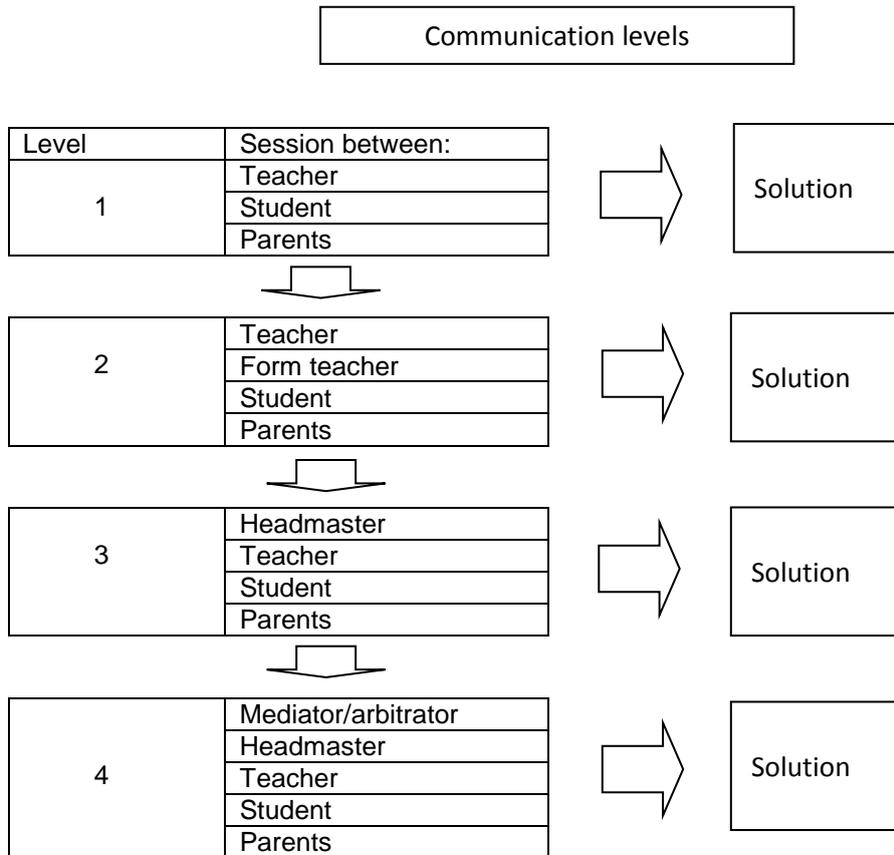
Communication can only be successful if we take into account the following basic rules:

- **Basis for communication**
Students, teachers and parents are taken seriously and their work appreciated. The counterpart is accepted and respected in his or her nature, personality and competence. Every party makes an effort to understand the other person and to argue objectively.
- **Direct contact**
Uncertainties and conflicts are resolved directly with the persons concerned. Only if the parties concerned cannot find a joint solution at this level, then the discussion group is extended to find a solution in personal meetings at the next higher level of communication.
- **Personal meeting**
Personal meetings should always be the preferred means of communication.
- **E-mail**
Because written communication always comes with a certain delay and because there is no immediate feedback, in cases of conflict this method of communication should only be used to a limited extent: e.g. to make appointments or to describe objective circumstances. It should, however, not be used to elaborate on reproaches, expectations or demands. Otherwise e-mails can be used as a quick and reliable means of communication for daily routine purposes.
- **Course of the conversation**
To ensure that a meeting contributes successfully to the resolution of a conflict, it is important for all parties concerned to prepare themselves for such a session, document the course of the conversation and put down in writing the objectives that the parties have agreed upon.

Communication levels

According to our model of communication levels, we always try to answer questions and resolve conflicts directly with the persons involved. If a solution cannot be found at one level, relevant third parties will become involved at the next level of communication. Only if a joint solution cannot be found at such a level, a mediator or arbitrator will take part in the process. In such cases, the conflict parties must accept the arbitration settlement.

The participation of students and other trusted persons is possible and can be agreed upon by the parties concerned.



Consultation guide

It is not always easy to find the right contact. This list is intended to provide guidance.

Matter of concern	Contact
Issues regarding a student's development	Nursery school teacher/form teacher or special educational needs (SEN) teacher
Questions about language support in the	German teacher or specialised DaZ
Educational issues	Form teacher or SEN teacher
Information on school performance	Subject teacher/form teacher
Conflict: Student - teacher	Please refer to communication levels
Conflict: Student - student	Form captain/form teacher
School careers advice	Form teacher
Careers advice	Careers and academic advisors

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