

**Concept for the ECO-School Certification, aimed
at Developing Sustainable Environmental
Education of Students at GISSV:
(approved at the All-Teachers Conference on
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Project plan

Introduction:

“What our students don’t know will not mean anything to them. What doesn’t mean anything to them, they will not value. What they do not value they will not protect.”

Translated from : "Was unsere Schüler nicht kennen, wird ihnen auch nichts bedeuten. Und was ihnen nichts bedeutet, werden sie auch nicht schätzen. Und was sie nicht schätzen, werden sie auch nicht schützen." L. Blaum, W. Kratzer, M. Pappler - Umwelterziehung in der Grundschule, München, 1989, Seite 8

The school ‘as an important place for basic scientific education combines insights from science and the humanities towards a comprehensive education. The child’s questions about an object (“What is that?”) will broaden to its explanation (“Why is it like this?”), its evolution (“How did it come to be like this?”) and to its responsible sustainability (“What might it become, and what can we allow it to become?”).’

(Translated from the Thuringian curriculum for elementary schools 2010)

The natural world around us, with its landscapes, animals, and plants, forms the basis of our existence. In the face of continuing destruction of natural resources and growing natural disasters, calls for a change in environmental policy and actions are getting louder. The Californian drought, for example, was rarely mentioned in 2011, but in 2015 is ever present in the minds of both adults and children. Environmental education ranks among the topmost academic goals. We want students to get to know nature, learn to understand it, and come to understand that it is the very basis of human life. We want students to learn about the many ways their own actions and those of others affect the environment, with what consequences, and what mechanisms are available for managing and possibly mitigating these effects and consequences. Finally, we want students to recognize what they themselves can do.

1992 saw the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, during which the OECD Network “Environment and Social Initiatives” was developed, with the ECO-school designation as an international program of the Foundation for Environmental Education established in Denmark. Germany has been a participating member of this program since its

pilot phase in 1994. In the U.S., the program is hosted by the National Wildlife Federation. Our partner school in Portland is a designated ECO school, as is the Bullis Charter School in Los Altos.

GISSV already implements a host of relevant initiatives: These range from the biannual project week “GISSV Goes Green”, to a fully formulated environmental profile, as well as regular participation in the “Greenlight Festival”, among other initiatives. The first step towards becoming a designated ECO school is to structure and focus these efforts, to be eligible for an ECO school Bronze Award. The second step is the Silver Award and finally qualification for the Green Flag in recognition of GISSV’s sustainability goals.

Students and all participants receive information about sustainability, experience its implementation and learn about the need for sustainable development in today’s world. The ECO-Schools program assures cost-effective and efficient project implementation, provides access to resources, and promises GISSV long-term financial benefits, as well as a positive, proactive public image.

The global structure of the ECO-School program, with over 48,000 schools in 58 countries, strengthens the school’s global network, as well as its local partnerships in Silicon Valley. Partnerships and collaborations with environmental organizations and local communities open up further possibilities, underlining the school’s mission as a “global” and “connected” school. Similarly, the program’s goal of increasing awareness of cultural practices and cultural differences in sustainability issues supports the school’s vision of cultural openness.

The ECO-school program ensures student participation not just in learning, but also in spreading information. Schoolwide cooperation is one of the basic principles of the program, highlighting the school’s vision as a place that is “united”.

Goals:

The goals of environmental awareness, participation, and sustainability will be implemented through the in-school program, curricular requirements and school-internal interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary teaching goals from preschool through high school (adapted from the GISSV Environmental Education Proposal).

These goals are the basis for proactive, responsible decision-making and behavior. The proposal to seek designation as an ECO-School / Umweltschule provides a guiding standard, leading students towards recognizing the diverse mutual dependencies between human life and the environment and empowering them to evaluate their own decisions and actions in terms of their environmental impact. Within this framework, students are encouraged to question their own assumptions and to contribute their own knowledge and experience towards solutions in the spirit of appreciation for nature and environment. Students take on accountability and actively influence their environment. Ongoing assessment, outcome monitoring, and coordination among all GISSV campuses ensure long-term success and continuous improvement of the relevant projects and programs.

Action plan:

Action	Responsibility	Phase
Set up of a page/group on Finals site	Genz/Koch	preparation phase
Qualitative assessment of the current state of GISSV, which serves as the baseline to identify areas for action	Genz/Koch/Rahnema	preparation phase
Establish ECO-Committee (administrative and custodial staff, teacher, students and parents across all age-groups and campuses)	School Leadership	preparation phase
Plan for the initiation phase	ECO-Committee	preparation phase
Improve recycling	Genz/Koch/Rahnema	preparation phase
Apply for the ECO-School Bronze Award	Genz/Koch/Rahnema	preparation phase
Establish an ECO - After-School Activity (ECO-AG)	teacher/parent n.n.	initiation phase
Qualitative assessment of the current state of GISSV	Committee, ECO-AG	initiation phase
Develop an ECO-School mission with participation from the entire school community	Committee, Student Council, PA, Board, All-Teacher Conference	initiation phase
Develop an environmental project plan and environmental program	Committee, School Leadership, Board	initiation phase
Link the environmental program to the school's curriculum	Department Heads	initiation phase

Implementation:

The proposal is to implement the ECO-Schools concept in three phases:

Preparation Phase (2nd semester of 2015/2016 school year)

- Implement initial organizational structures (establish ECO committees, the project steering group)
- Rewrite the school's existing environmental concept school for the Bronze Award application
- Prepare for the initiation phase
- Evaluate existing structures and contents

Initiation Phase (2016/2017 school year)

- ECO-Committee works to link the program to the curriculum
- Implement the prerequisites for the Silver Award
- Evaluate existing structures and contents

Program Phase (2017/2018 school year)

- Submit application for the Silver Award
- Implement prerequisites for the Green Flag
- Establish sustainable processes
- Evaluate structures and contents.

Evaluation:

GISSV's Environmental Plan in combination with the proposed designation as an ECO-school is intended as a system for learning. All aspects of the school as an organization are part of that system. Ongoing evaluation and feedback are essential and should be an integral part of the proposed plan of action and of the resulting program and work as a designated ECO-school. Special emphasis will be given to the initiation phase in this regard. Once the school has attained the status of a designated ECO-school, another focus of evaluation will be the improvement in student performance and changing attitudes among all members of the school community.