

When we moved to Canada in 2008, our 11-year-old triplet girls had been attending an excellent American public school in the Bay Area. While they were brought up speaking German quite fluently at home and had always attended German Saturday schools, switching them to a German full-time school was still an experiment. Being German and a language professional myself I have always valued languages and firmly believe that being bi- or trilingual is a definite benefit – not only academically but also on a personal level.

Our daughters adjusted surprisingly well to a completely different approach to teaching. It was not so much the fact that all subject matter classes are taught in German – including History and Biology and Geography - and the fact that they had to study complicated facts in a language that they were not as fluent in as the rest of the class. What took them a little bit longer to internalize was the fact that students are expected to work more independently, that they have to show more maturity in preparing for fewer tests than they were used to, handle more open-ended test questions as opposed to multiple-choice tests and learn to do Math the German way – very neat and structured. They also had to start from scratch in French since they had had Spanish in California. Especially the French they learned at the German International School Toronto is something that they still benefit from two years after they left. I value their time at the GIST, because it has given my children an additional perspective on life and education.

When my daughters switched to a Canadian Catholic Public School with a strong PACE program, they did not have any catching up to do and all three made the honor role in their first year. Now they attend German Saturday school again and are sure to collect those extra High School credits, but they are also contemplating studying in Germany in three years. At that time they will feel at home not only in the US and Canada, but also in Germany and Europe as a whole. They will have the whole world at their fingertips – what an invaluable gift!

I see a great future for the GIST here in the most multicultural city in the world and wish them well in their move to the magnificent new home the school truly deserves.

Susanne Birker-Guillen