

The German Schultuete

Dear Grade 1 Parents,

It is a German tradition to arrange a special ceremony on the first day of school for students entering grade 1. For this special day the children's parents and/or grandparents present them with a big cardboard cone – the Schultuete.



A Schultuete (or *School Cone*, even though the word "Tuete" translates more as "bag" from German), often also called Zuckertuete ("sugar bag") especially in Eastern Germany is a cone shaped paper bag. It is prettily decorated and filled with toys, chocolate, candies, school supplies, and various other goodies. It is given to children to make this anxiously awaited first day of school a little bit sweeter.

The Grade 1 Welcome Ceremony at ISF will take place on August 24. We will provide you with further details shortly before school starts. However, we kindly ask you to buy a Schultuete for your Grade 1 child to bring to school on this special day. Schultueten can be found online, for example, on Amazon or at major department stores like Galeria or Woolworth in July and August.

History

The tradition of the "Schultuete" leads back to approximately 1810, to Saxony and Thuringia in Germany. The first documented report of the cone-shaped *Schultuete* comes from the city of Jena in 1817, closely followed by reports from Dresden (1820) and Leipzig (1836). It started in the bigger cities but spread quickly to the small towns and villages, soon becoming an institution all over Germany.

At first the practice of the school cone, which did not spread to other parts of Germany at this time, was to not give the bag to the kids directly. Marked with the students' names, they were taken to the school by parents or godparents and in a ritual, reminiscent of the Mexican piñata, hung on a metal "Schultueten-Baum" (School cone tree) from which each child had to pick their cone, without breaking them. The story told to the children goes, that there is a Schultuetenbaum growing at the school, and if the fruits (the Schultueten) are ripe and big enough to pick, it's time to go to school for the first time.

20th Century

The only custom that has changed in the later-half of the 20th century is that fewer sweets seem to appear in the Schultuete, with more practical gifts such as crayons and pencils, small toys, CDs, books and even articles of clothing replacing the traditional chocolates and candies.