



Sister Cities of Jasper, Inc.

Jasper, Indiana · Pfaffenweiler, Baden-Württemberg

November 2023

GJCS German Enrollment Increases

A message from Daniel Otto

Liebe Freunde,

As you will probably know, the nature of world language classes means that enrollment numbers will change from year to year. If I want my program to maintain numbers or grow, then I need to make the case for why students should pick my class over Spanish, French, or one of the other amazing electives we offer in our schools. I cannot sit back and count on all the young Buechlein's and Hochgesang's and Sermersheim's to want to learn German because of their heritage, although I do get some.

No, the best route is to get active. I have to teach the kids about economic opportunities that are available to German learners. I need to help them develop a love for the culture and the desire to travel to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, or any of the other countries in Europe or elsewhere in the world where there is a German-speaking presence. I must create an environment where the kids feel confident speaking German and where they can have fun with it, even when they are learning grammar.

To that end, I have been introducing the kids in class on Wednesdays (Musik Mittwoch) to both traditional and new music. On Fridays (Film Freitag) we watch and discuss film trailers, and I also like to show movies. I frequently incorporate simple games with the goal of getting the kids talking to each other and using German. I show the kids lots of photo and video examples of sights and daily life in German-speaking areas so that they can all see that German-speakers look like them - that Germany is a diverse country as well - and so they can hear all the different dialects. I also have made promotional materials for my class in both English and Spanish with the goal of increasing engagement with the Hispanic community in our area.

I am happy to report that this approach has borne some fruit. My student numbers for the '22-'23 school year were as follows:

JMS

German I: 20

JHS

German I: 3 (incl. 1 from Germany)

German II: 17

German III: 13

German IV: 2

Total: 55, including 1 exchange student.

And here are the numbers for '23-'24:

JMS

German I: 21

JHS

German I: 13

German II: 21

German III: 13

German IV: 4 (incl. 2 from Germany)

Total: 72, including 2 exchange students.

Not counting the students from Germany who attend my class to experience what learning German as a Foreign Language is like, I have 16 more GJCS students in my German classes now than I did at the close of the previous school year. I am positively over the moon that these 16 are taking this brave step to not only learn a new language and way to communicate, but they are also learning how to view the world from the perspectives of German speakers from across the globe, and that's a wonderful and powerful thing.

I want to end by saying that this is not The Dan Otto Show. No German teacher is an island. From the bottom of my heart - a huge thanks to the Deutscher Verein, Sister Cities, Partnership Commission, the City of Jasper and Gemeinde Pfaffenweiler, our GAPP Coordinator Sandy Wehr and everyone on both sides of the ocean who makes our student exchange possible, and the Greater Jasper school community. None of this is possible without a thousand moving parts which create the environment we have that promotes cultural exchange and creates a myriad of opportunities to engage my students. Vielen Dank allerseits!

Liebe Grüße

Daniel Otto

GJCS German Teacher

This information is from the November 2023 Jasper DeutscherVerein newsletter