



Sister Cities of Jasper, Inc.

Jasper, Indiana · Pfaffenweiler, Baden-Württemberg

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Meet the New German Language Teacher



My name is Daniel Otto. My friends, siblings, and close cousins call me Dan; colleagues call me Dan or Daniel; older family members call me Daniel; Mom calls me DANIEL TODD when I am in trouble. ;)

The students call me Herr Otto, or some have begun calling me “Master/Magister Otto” because of my M.A.

I graduated from USI in 2011 with two Bachelor of Arts degrees in German Studies and Business Administration. I graduated from Bowling Green State University (in Bowling Green, OH) in 2015 with my Master of Arts degree in German Studies. My time at BGSU included one academic year abroad at the University of Salzburg (Paris-Lodron-Universität Salzburg), which was one of the best times in my entire life so far. Austria is beautiful and critically underrated - I would absolutely recommend an extended visit there for anyone who likes mountains, cleanliness, and great food and drinks.

I was the German teacher for all levels of German at Signature School in Evansville, IN, for three school years. I also taught two semesters of Elementary German Language & Culture at BGSU as a graduate teaching assistant. I was a probation officer for the Dubois County Probation Office for two years and a treatment program facilitator for Dubois County Community Corrections for 1.5 years. It was a vastly different form of teaching, but I do feel as though one of the primary “hats” I was wearing in those roles was that of an educator. I’m very glad to be returning to Jasper and Dubois County.

My most-loved hobby is playing traditional Irish music with my friends, which I do about 3 times per month. I love to sing, whether that be in our Irish jam sessions or as a baritone in the Evansville Philharmonic Choir. This upcoming year will be my second season in the EPC. I like to read, go on walks/hikes, and play euchre. I have an orange tabby cat named Dennis. He is almost 9 years old. I found him outside, and he has been my buddy for about 7 years now.

I think that German heritage is a good reason to learn German, but I consider it the fourth-best out of four reasons I tell kids why I think German is a great language to learn. In my view, the greater reasons are traveling in Europe, getting a well-paying job, and experiencing culture.

Most Europeans can speak English or German. More than 1 in 7 Europeans speak German! A lot of European countries have German-speaking communities that live there, and German is a very popular second language in central and eastern Europe.

There are hundreds of American companies that do business in German-speaking countries and vice versa. Knowing German could put you at an advantage for a job that pays well in the fields of engineering, architecture, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, publishing, communications, etc.

German culture is so rich and varied. Everyone knows the classics. Lists of German poets, philosophers, authors, composers, musicians, architects and so on, go into the thousands. However, German culture has, over the past 75 years or so, absorbed so much music, art, food, and many other contributions from long-established immigrant groups such as the Turkish Germans and Afro-Germans and also from more recent arrivals like Syrians and other Arabic-speaking people from the Middle East and North Africa. I think it is very fun to explore those new aspects of German culture alongside what we already know.

I currently have 20 kids in German 1 at Jasper Middle School. They are very fun and they seem enthusiastic about learning German. I want to get them to use a lot of vocabulary, develop their literacy skills, teach them lots of songs, and get them excited about the exchange program.

I currently have 45 kids in German at Jasper High School between all levels of German. The vast majority of the kids are in German 2 and German 3. I've enjoyed getting to know the students who have been in German for some time and seeing what they know. I want to challenge these students while having a lot of fun, and my great hope is that we will vastly increase the number of students taking German at JHS.

Anyone named Bochart, Gutzweiler, Roelle, or Krodel probably has a connection with me. My mom is Beth Ballenger (yes, Mike and Todd are my uncles and Kathy and Karen are my aunts!); my grandparents were Hugh and Shirley (Bochart) Ballenger; my great-uncle was Terry Krodel (TK the DJ); my great-grandparents were Urban Bochart and Dolores (Gutzweiler) Bochart Krodel; my great-great-uncles were Charlie and Butch Gutzweiler who founded the Fiesta which is now the Mill House; my great-great-grandparents were Carl and Cyrilla (Roelle) Gutzweiler. People named Otto, I might know who you are, but my Ottos are Amish and Mennonites from Daviess County, originally from Illinois.

I'm so grateful to the DeutscherVerein, the Sister Cities of Jasper, and the wider community for the support and words of encouragement that have already been given to me. I'm very excited to work with you all and see what we can accomplish together for our students' education in German language & culture.

Daniel Otto

JHS/JMS German Teacher