



## Community-Based Program

### Background Information

**Institution:** German Language School of West Michigan

**Program address:** 4748 Blue Grass Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546

**Web address:** [www.germanlanguageschool.us](http://www.germanlanguageschool.us)

### Contact person

**Name:** Ralf Scharnowski

**Title:** Director

**Email:** [scharnowski@comcast.net](mailto:scharnowski@comcast.net)

**Languages/dialects taught:** German

**Grades taught:** PreK-12

### Program Description

**Purposes and goals of the program:** The German Language School of West Michigan is a parent initiative promoting the German language and culture in the Grand Rapids area. The school offers children the opportunity to learn the German language in a formal classroom setting and provides a network for families to expand their knowledge of German culture and engage in cross-cultural exchanges.

**Type of program:** Immersion, partial immersion, bilingual program, foreign language program, Saturday academy (classes meet on Saturday afternoons during the school year).

**Program origin:** It was founded in the year 2004 by a parent initiative.

### Parents

**Parents' expectations for the program:** Provide children with a fun opportunity to learn and maintain German language skills in a group of similar aged children.

## Students

### Students:

- First-generation immigrants, 33%
- Second-generation immigrants, 33%
- Non-ethnic background, 34%

**Countries of origin:** Germany and the United States

**Total student enrollment:** 15 students

**How the program identifies heritage speakers:** Students are grouped into two groups; fluent speakers and non-fluent speakers. The fluent speaker group is split into further subgroups based on level of language skills and age. Teachers interact with the students to determine the students' skill level. The interaction includes an evaluation of both written and oral skills. The process is informal.

**Percentage of students who complete the program:** 75%

**Possible reasons for student withdrawal:** Time conflicts and insufficient parental interest in having child commit to program

**Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak:** Students show a combination of excitement and disinterest. They are generally excited about their second language; However, US cultural influences can result in a lack of desire to continue working on improving or maintaining second language skills. Also, spending part of Saturday in class can be difficult after spending the week at school.

## Instructors

**Number of instructors in the program:** 5

**Languages in which instructors are proficient:** German and English

**Proficiency level:** Native or professional German speakers

**Credentials:** Doctorate in German, Sociology; Chemistry credentials; BS in Biology

**Professional development opportunities instructors have:** Self improvement. There are not organized development opportunities.

**Professional development opportunities instructors need:** Curriculum planning and development; access to teaching resources

**Additional comments:** All teachers and parents of students volunteer.

## **Instruction**

**Total contact hours per week:** 1.5

**Times per week:** 1

**Student grouping:** Non fluent, fluent beginners, fluent intermediate and fluent advanced

**Hours devoted to language teaching:** 75% of the time

**Hours devoted to culture teaching:** 25% of the time

## **Language skills**

**Heritage language skills:** Listening, speaking, reading, and writing

**Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program:** The goal is fluency in German reading, writing, and speaking.

## **Culture**

**Aspects of culture taught:** Geography, history, festivals, customs, folktales, songs, rhymes, social and cultural norms, cultural appropriateness, and literature

## **Methodologies**

**Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program:** Language immersion when possible and focus on fun in the classroom

## **Materials**

**Textbooks:** Deutsch Mobil, Klett Verlag and Loewenzahn U. Pustebumen, Schroedel Verlag

**Other materials used for instruction:** German audio, video, games, and literature

**Technology used for instruction:** Audio and visual presentation

## **Assessment**

**Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:** Teachers' observations

## **Articulation**

**Connections with other institutions:** Colleges

**How the program develops home/school connections or promotes parent involvement:** We require parents to help teach or assist with class financial support.

**What the program has in place**

**Financial support the program receives:** Parents

**Other support the program receives:** Financial support for class materials

**Solicitation of funding:** The program director and school principal

**Assistance or funding the program would like to receive:** Additional access to learning materials

**Monitoring of overall achievement in school:** Teacher observations

**Special challenges**

**Challenges the program has experienced:** Integration of non-fluent students into classes for fluent students (difficult to achieve proficiency); difficulty to meet every student's needs with only 3-4 class levels and a limited number of teachers