

Deutsch spoken here

German School starts 2nd year at Rippowam

By Sigrid Brandstatter

Special Correspondent

STAMFORD — "Pay attention!"

If nothing else works, Marianne Dickmann uses an English phrase that every one of her 9- to 11-year-old pupils knows all too well.

The children at the German School of Connecticut are studying a fairytale about a pirate who lived several hundred years ago. They read the tale in German.

Dickmann, a warmhearted and experienced teacher, asks questions after each short passage to see whether her pupils understand what they have read.

The German School, serving Connecticut communities on Saturdays for nearly 30 years, moved from Weston to Stamford last year.

With 350 students divided between the Stamford and Hartford branches, GSC started its second year at Rippowam Middle School on High Ridge Road two weeks ago.

The smallest toddlers go to the school with their parents. Some of them are too young to go on their own. After they first start



Kerry Sherck/For The Advocate

Fourth-grader Timon Dauser, 9, follows the lesson in his book at the German School last week at Rippowam Middle School. The German classes are given on Saturdays.

to speak, they learn their first German words.

They learn that red is

rot, yellow is gelb and green is gruen. They hold their daddy's or mommy's

hand and learn what different streetlight colors mean. See **GERMAN**, Page A11

German

Continued from Page A9

and — of course — how to pronounce the words in German.

Carsten Holm has his 2-year-old twins, Lauren and Nathalie, in GSC's "flumigroup," its youngest students.

"Their nanny and their mom speak English with them; I try to speak German with them, but too little," Holm said. "It is important that the girls learn to communicate with their German grandparents."

Holm, originally from Berlin, works for the Manhattan-based office of SAP, the German software company.

Eric Christel, a 36-year-old American whose mother is a German tax counselor, feels the same way.

"Communication with the family in Germany should be possible," he said.

His two girls, Emily, 6, and Molly, 4, have attended the school since 2005.

Jennifer Bont, a 14-year-old, has a 45-minute car ride to attend her GSC lessons, which start at 9:30 a.m.

Jennifer's parents bring her and her 10-year-old brother, Andrew, to school each Saturday.

"On the one hand, it ruins my weekend," Jennifer said. "On the other hand, I only need four more years, then I can complete a degree in German that will allow me to at-



Kerry Sherck/For The Advocate

Erika Richards, left, talks with her kindergarten students last week at the German school before they break for lunch.

tend university in Germany.

"I won't capitulate before."

The GSC was the first German-language school in the United States selected by Germany's State Department to administer the official "Sprachdiplom I and II" examinations. These exams test German language study and are a stepping stone to the German university system.

GSC offers a two-track system — for native and non-native German speakers. In Stamford, there are about 20 classes for students ranging from the youngest to the adults.

In the four adult classes, with about 35 students, the oldest participants are more than 70 years old.

Because annual school

fee is a maximum of \$645, the school also depends on donations and volunteer work.

"The parents help serve sandwiches and bread during the breaks. The teachers are also very dedicated to their students. Although experienced, they teach at competitive salaries to deliver a high quality education. Many of these teachers also teach at area high schools and universities," said GSC director Annette Flogaus-Bareiss.

All three of her children attended the German School; two, Henry and Isabel, are still there. Charlotte, her oldest, successfully completed her "Sprachdiplom II" and is now at Georgetown University studying German.