

# School teaches German culture, language

By Elizabeth Schilling  
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*"Brot und Wecken,  
Lasst euch schmecken,  
Guten Appetit."*

Potomac — Each school day at the Deutsche Schule, 13 preschoolers dressed in aprons, with plates of food set before them, join their freshly scrubbed hands around a tiny table and together chant this German rhyme which salutes the bread and unleashes their appetite.

German is the language spoken during work and play among the 576 youngsters who attend the full-time kindergarten through secondary school established in Maryland 22 years ago.

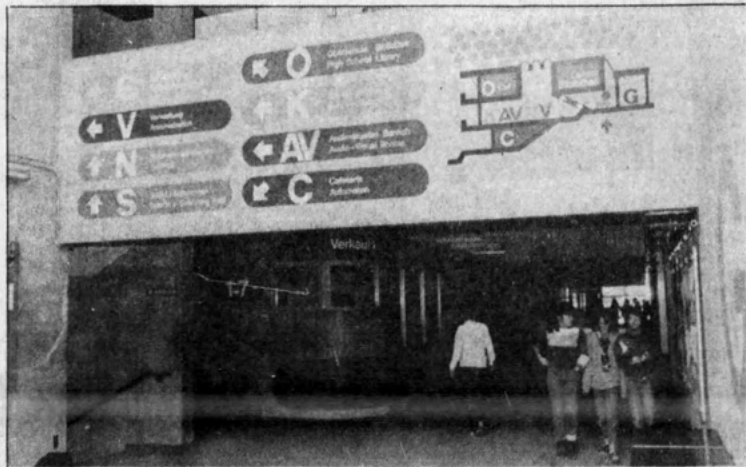
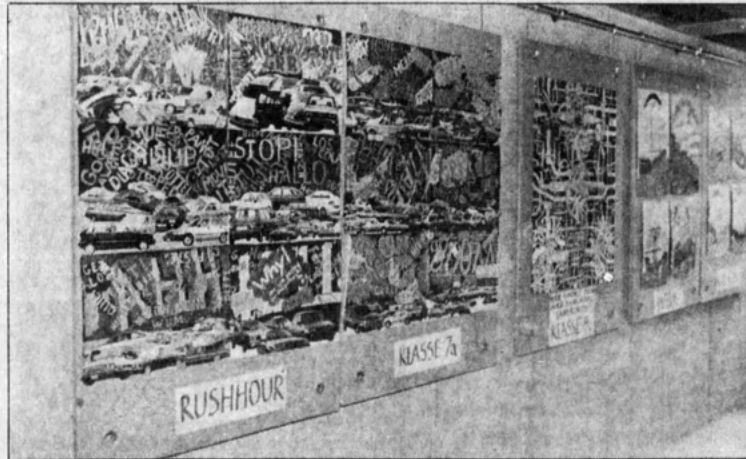
But it is more than just the language that gives the feeling of Germany at the Deutsche Schule. The culture of the old country pervades the silent, pristine hallways like the steamy smell of red cabbage and sauerbraten.

The school does more than imitate the German system. It is actually part of that country's public schools, funded primarily by the West German government for German citizens whose work takes them abroad for temporary assignments.

About half the children at the school are German citizens. The rest have some other foreign citizenship or are American-born and placed in the school to develop an appreciation of German culture. Some speak German better than they speak English; some speak English better.

Nils Nagele, 12, has mastered both languages. He is typical of students at the Deutsche Schule. His father, a native of Germany, works for the World Bank and his family has moved often.

Born in Washington, Nils spent kindergarten through third grade at the Deutsche Schule. Grades four through six were spent at a more Americanized German school in the Ivory Coast in Africa.



Artwork and directional signs adorn walls of the Deutsche Schule in Potomac. The Deutsche Schule is part of West Germany's public school system.

Recently, a new assignment from the World Bank caused the family to transfer to Washington, and recently, Nils was tested to determine where he should be placed when he returns to the Deutsche Schule. His mother says she is grateful for the continuity the system has provided her children.

"We are Germans," said Beate Nagele. "Since our children have never lived there, it is important they identify with our culture. We appreciate our guest culture, but we can't be Americans."

"Since we travel a lot, we have to pick a culture and stick to it. We have to keep our roots."

While his mother spoke, young Nils sat politely beside her. When asked if he preferred the Ivory Coast school, more Americanized than the American German school, his dark brown eyes lit up and he blurted: "It was nice!"

Nils said American schools were easier because he did not have to be fluent in German, French and English in order to keep up with his studies.

The secondary curriculum that Nils will face in another year requires 15 subjects to be covered during the five-day school week. There are seven 45-minute class periods and 20 minutes for lunch each day.

Required subjects, besides the three languages, include arts, mathematics, biology, physics and chemistry.

The school is open to all students and charges from \$950 to \$1,800, depending on grade, in annual tuition. Most students commute to the campus, some spending more than two hours a day on buses.

The commitments of time and money add up to an intensely dedicated student body that is easier to teach, according to many teachers at the Deutsche Schule.

Rudolf Schuetz has been teaching secondary-level German and French classes at the Deutsche Schule for three years and said he has no problems with discipline in his classroom.

"Our system is so different. The students have so much work. The parents are different, too. They have a high interest in their children's education. The parents are more strongly behind their children."

Mr. Schuetz also runs the Samstagsschule, a Saturday language school, with students from ages 5 to 81.

In all his classes, his students speak to him in a formal fashion, using the personal pronoun "Sie" rather than the informal "du." The structure of the German language perpetuates a culture more aware of status distinctions between students and teachers.

Formality and discipline are considered by teachers and parents to be among the best attributes of the Deutsche Schule. But these same forces also draw criticism from teachers and parents — in some cases, the same ones who praise the formality — for not promoting a child's personal development.

As a rule, students and teachers do not know each other in any image

See GERMAN, B5, Col. 1

Matt Seiden is on vacation.

# German culture taught to expatriates

## GERMAN, from B1

other than what the classroom allows.

There are few extra-curricular activities. There is no drama or ski club, and there are no cheerleaders. A rare swim meet or soccer game will allow a chance for socializing.

With contact limited to formal classroom situations, teachers are uncomfortable when asked to provide personal information about students for recommendation to American colleges. (About 20 percent of the graduates go to college in America, while most of the rest enroll in German universities.)

The school's guidance counselor, Dorit Bandumann, said the applications to American universities are much more personal than the German ones.

"The teacher feels that some questions on the American applications are an invasion of privacy on the personality of students. We don't evaluate students on their personality but on their performance."

The atmosphere in the classroom at the Deutsche Schule is striking in obvious and subtle ways. It may be the way the students relate to their work and the tools they use.

It may be the Hefte — the imported German notebooks of high-quality paper bound in glossy, vibrant covers that the children take notes in. It may be the way the children take notes — attentively and in neat cursive penmanship. Or it may be what they take notes with — Fuellfeder — refillable fountain pens, required because they promote graceful calligraphy.

The walls of most classrooms are bare and newly painted in a variety of colors. Only small bulletin-board displays give a hint of culture. Photos of the Eighteenth Century German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe compete for space with pictures of Orioles catcher Rick Dempsey.

What the children are taught also differs from the American schools. Saline Hricak, 16, said she thinks her history classes give an international perspective, since most of the students have lived all over the world and contribute from what they have experienced.

"I think we are more objective about how we see history," Saline said. "Our classes always have at



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Heidi Unkle teaches a kindergarten class at the Deutsche Schule.

least two points of view. And often we don't agree with what we read in the German textbook."

As examples, she said her history-class discussions have criticized a textbook bias toward Britain during the Revolutionary War, and the way another book presented racial segregation in America.

"We knew the book was wrong when it showed separate drinking fountains for blacks and whites in America" currently, said Saline.

The Deutsche Schule is one of 102 schools maintained here and in Africa, Europe, South America and the Middle East by the West German government. In this country, other German schools are in El Paso, Texas, and White Plains, N.Y.

Similarly, the Japanese, French and Soviet governments also have schools in the Washington area, all taught in the language of the sponsoring country. The U.S. State Department contributes to the maintenance of 160 American schools around the world.

The teachers at the Deutsche Schule are adventurous spirits, for when they sign up to teach abroad they cannot pick where they will be assigned. After instructing in German public schools, they may apply to get on a waiting list to teach abroad. Some wait several years, and many are never chosen.

Teacher education in Germany is more extensive than the American certification process, requiring six years of higher education and rigorous testing. Teachers in the German schools are civil servants and are

paid roughly twice as much as American teachers.

German teachers sojourn at the Deutsche Schule in America for many reasons. All have come to learn and enjoy the ways of another culture.

Once here, many find new ways to appreciate their old country. For although there are many strong links at the Deutsche Schule, a view of German life appears different from the banks of the Potomac than from the Rhine.

## Metro entry closed because of demolition

Mass Transit Administration officials closed the eastern entrance to the Charles Center metro station late Friday morning because dust and debris from the demolition of the old Union Trust building next door was getting into the station.

Jane Howard, MTA spokeswoman, said yesterday that the entrance would be reopened today in time for the rush hour, but may be closed again while work is going on.

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