

## Gaining Intellectual Humility

My teaching stint as an *Ortslehrkraft* at the DSW was relatively short, two years, from 2005 to 2007, and early in my teaching career. I took to the students' enthusiasm immediately: They were curious, investigative, friendly, honest, and funny. I saw students who thrived in this environment; for many, after all, the DSW was family and part-time home with carpeted classrooms. My own son, who only spent two days in elementary school on a visit from Upstate New York, said that he immediately felt at home there—a place where soccer was a thing for everyone, and everyone was fine speaking *Germish* or *Denglish*. I heard students disagree without resorting to the German *Sch*-word; in fact, I heard very little swearing (unless I was already rather deaf by then).

I camped out in the *Aula* in front of the stage one night with my then eighth-grade students. I read essays of depth and profound experiences, and answered questions of unabashed naivety and pure honesty. And, probably most importantly, the students in the DSW modeled for me that having more than one identity in my

biographical, cultural, and experiential backpack, is a wonderful thing, a source of strength and energy, a privilege I can and should put to use for others.

If it weren't for this teaching experience at the DSW and the German Language School, I wouldn't be the professor for *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* that I have become. Thus, to all the Davids, Pias, Sams, Markuses, Sophies, the many Julias, Mileses, Nathans, Marens and Kikis, Annes, Wilhelms, Beths, Andreases, Victorias, Julians, and Alenas and the rest out there: Thank you!

You have left a deep impression on me, on my teaching, and on my belief that students do want to learn, do want to ask, do want to become educated.

You turned me into a person with more intellectual humility and greater open-mindedness. *Dankeschön!*

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