

Honors Thesis

HOPR 4890

**The German and American Educational Systems Compared
(1985-2004)**

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Bemidji State University

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This thesis is dedicated to all the people that have helped and supported me in my pursuit to come to the United States for college and to the people that have supported me in my 4 years at Bemidji State University and made my college career such a success.

Thank you all!

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1. Introduction

My name is Christian Becker, and I am an international student at Bemidji State University. I am a native of Germany, born on April 17, 1979, in the small town of Frankenthal. Frankenthal, in the state of Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatine), is located only a few miles away from the Rhine River and the border with the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg in Middle Western Germany.

Until I was eighteen years old, I went through only one educational system, the German Educational System. During my time in the German Educational System, I did not take the route a regular student in Germany would take. After kindergarten, unlike most children, I went to the German Grundschule at the age of seven. Most of the other children I attended school with were only six years old. Thereafter, I attended Gymnasium until the end of 7th grade when I failed my second foreign language, French, and had to attend Realschule in the summer of 1993.

In 1996, after I finished the 10th grade and graduated from the Realschule with the Mittlere Reife, I attended a technical Gymnasium for one year until I came to the United States in the summer of 1997. For the 1997-1998 academic year, I was fortunate enough to attend school for a year as an exchange student at Cary Grove High School in Cary, Illinois, located about 45 minutes north of Chicago by car. The year in Cary was an unforgettable experience that changed my life. After a year in the United States, I returned to Germany to complete my secondary education so that I might attend a university. For two years, I attended 12th and 13th grades at the technical Gymnasium and graduated in the summer of 2000 with the secondary diploma, known in Germany as the *Abitur*.

After experiencing both the German and American educational systems, I realized their major influence on me, so I decided to write as my Honors Thesis a comparison between the German and American Educational Systems to introduce American secondary and university students in northern Minnesota to the education system of Germany by way of comparison with their own more familiar system. Because it represents my own experience, I will focus exclusively on the system in my home state of Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatine) that was in place between 1985 and 2004. The capital of Rheinland-Pfalz is Mainz, and the state is located in Middle Western Germany. It has a population of about 4,030,000 inhabitants living within 19,846.5 square kilometers.

A Map of Rheinland-Pfalz



I will discuss my year as an exchange student in Cary, Illinois. Cary is in the northeast corner of Illinois, next to Elgin (see map on page 6). Illinois is located in the

midwestern United States with its capital at Springfield. It has a population of 12,419,293 living within 150,007 square kilometers.

Map of Illinois



In the third major part of this paper, I will focus on particular differences between the two systems, including grading, course choices, and after-school activities.

2. The German Public Educational System: General Overview

The Federal Republic of Germany, one of the leading industrial nations in the world and a member of the European Union, has a reputation for being one of the world leaders in technological progress. Germany has played a significant role in the economic development of the Western hemisphere. It is said that Germany is a nation of thinkers, musicians, cars, and beer. As a country that is short of raw materials, Germany is largely dependent on a skilled and hardworking labor force, and it therefore invests a great amount of money in the educational system.

In Germany, "the Grundgesetz" (Basic Law or Constitution) guarantees everyone the right to self-fulfillment and the right to freely choose his or her occupation or profession" (Facts about Germany 1996, p. 450). The objective of the German educational policy is to afford every individual the best possible chance to obtain an education equivalent to his or her abilities and interests. "According to Article 7 of the Grundgesetz (Basic Law), the entire school system is under the supervision of the state" (Facts about Germany 1996, p. 450). Even though each state supervises its own education, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of each state have adopted additional agreements providing for larger harmony of the school systems of each state as well as acknowledgment of certificates awarded by general education schools and Berufsschulen (vocational schools) in all of the 16 states (Facts about Germany 1996). These agreements, which concern the reorganization of the upper stage of secondary education, standardized examination requirements for the Abitur examination, and common recognition of school-leaving certificates awarded by

comprehensive schools, guarantee the necessary level of standardization and comparability of the school systems in the states that make up the country of Germany.

Attendance at all public schools in Germany is free because the government funds the entire German Education System by taxes, and no extra payments have to be made to the schools during the academic career. The only costs parents incur come from books and other school supplies, such as calculators, pencils and pens, and events such as school trips offered by the individual school, which are usually not mandatory. Sometimes parents are given loans by the government to cover the cost of books, depending on income.

School attendance in the Federal Republic of Germany is compulsory from ages six to eighteen, in other words, for twelve years. Students must attend a full-time school for nine years and afterwards either continue full-time schooling at a different secondary school or attend a part-time vocational school in order to satisfy the compulsory schooling requirement.

The Grundgesetz (Basic Law) in the Federal Republic of Germany requires that religious instruction be included in the school's curriculum. According to the Grundgesetz, parents and/or guardian have the right to decide whether or not their child receives religious education. Upon reaching the age of fourteen, teenaged students are permitted to make this decision on their own "unless the state law provides otherwise" (Facts about Germany 1996, p. 452).

The German Education System starts for children at the age of three years when parents put their children into Kindergarten, and it continues with Grundschule (primary

school), which children enter at the age six. The Grundschule, which includes grades 1-4, is the first level of schooling in Germany and is known as the primary education.

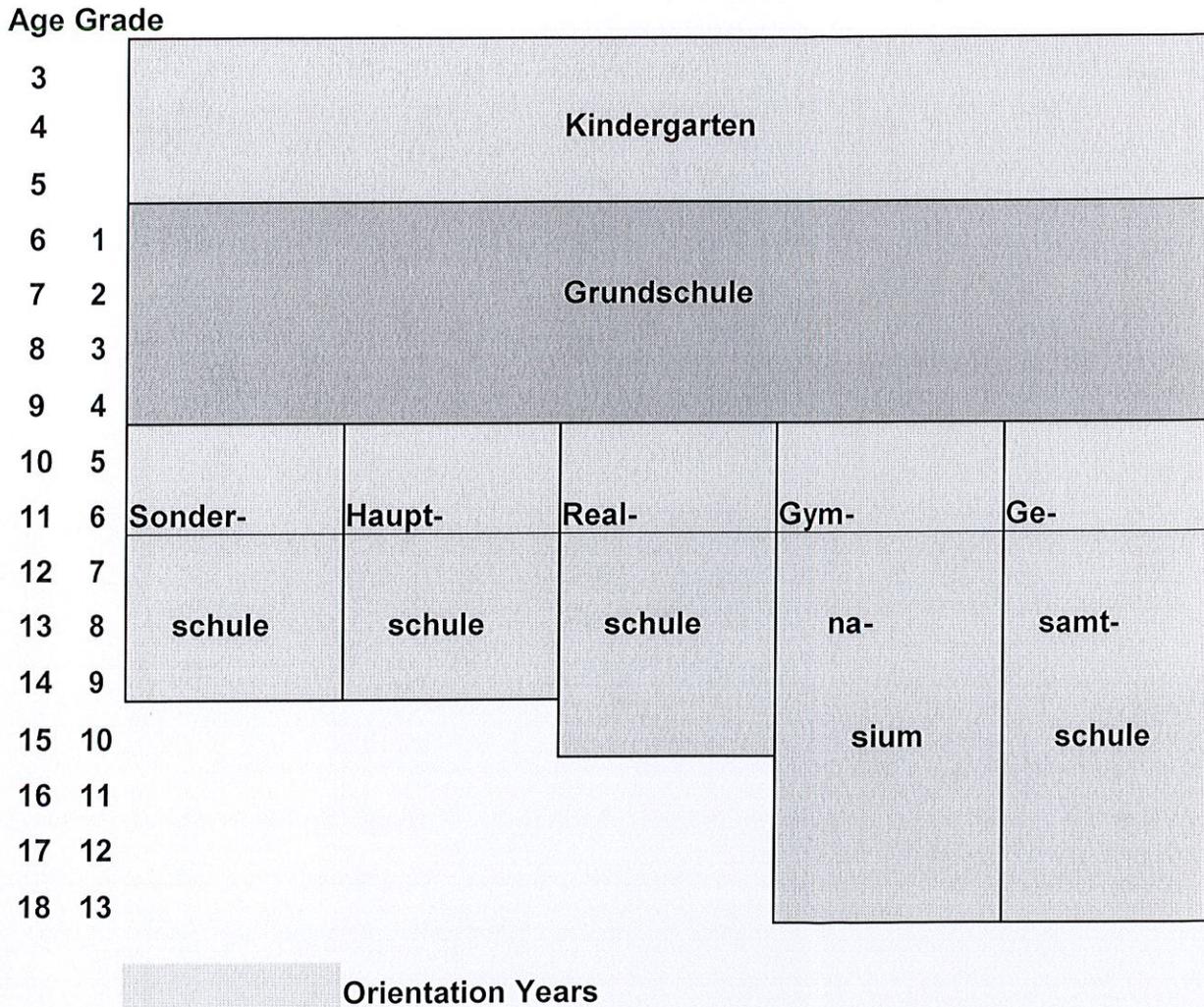
The secondary education begins following the Grundschule. At this level, the German Educational System divides children among five different schools: Sonderschule, Hauptschule, Realschule, Gesamtschule, and Gymnasium. Which school a child will attend depends on the skill-level of each individual child and as well as her/his overall academic performance.

The length of education also differs from one school to another. A student graduates from Sonderschule or Hauptschule after finishing grade 9, whereas a student graduates from Realschule after finishing the 10th grade and Gymnasium after finishing grade 13 and passing a final examination. Gesamtschule is a combination of Hauptschule, Realschule and Gymnasium. Students can graduate depending on the degree they are aiming for, as in the other schools after grades 9, 10, and 13. Generally, to be permitted to attend a university in Germany, a student has to finish grade 13 in a Gymnasium or a Gesamtschule. Admissions depend on GPA and the field of study or career the student wants to enter.

Beginning in the 3rd grade, students in the Federal Republic of Germany are evaluated by numerical grades reaching from 1 to 6, with 1 being the highest score possible. At the end of the first semester of the academic year, the student receives a report card with her/his scores in every subject. The student then has the entire second semester to raise or lower the grades he or she received after the first semester. The scores in the last report card at the end of an academic year are final. A failing score in a subject may sometimes mean that the student has to retake the entire academic year.

After finishing the Sonderschule, Hauptschule, or Realschule, most students go on to a Berufsschule, which is a school that works hand-in-hand with employers and companies to train students for certain jobs or positions. The following graph presents an overview of the German Educational System.

German Educational System



2.1 Kindergarten

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the educational system begins with kindergarten. These kindergartens are not part of the state school system but fall instead under the child and youth services of the state. Since 1996, children in Germany have a legal right to attend a kindergarten. There are different kinds of kindergartens in Germany which are funded by different kinds of institutions; some kindergartens are run by churches, charitable organizations and municipalities, some by firms and associations, and some are privately funded by the parents of kindergarten-aged children. Parents decide whether their child or children should attend a particular institution and for how long until it is time to attend Grundschule (similar to an American elementary school) at age six. Kindergarten staff focus their efforts on creating a learning environment in a social setting that will advance the development of children into responsive and approachable members of society. The intention of kindergarten is to support and increase childhood education and upbringing. Children are educated to mature socially rather than academically. Children largely learn through play.

Six months prior to the scheduled entrance into the Grundschule, each kindergartner with her/his kindergarten class has to attend two sessions with a school psychologist to be evaluated. These sessions are usually held in the Grundschule and the purpose of those sessions is to find out whether a child is ready to go to school or if it would be better for the child to stay an extra year in Kindergarten.

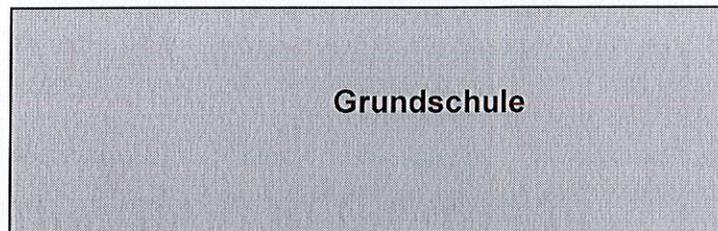
2.2 German Primary Education in Germany

The first part of state education in the Federal Republic of Germany is the primary education. As I mentioned earlier, I will exclusively talk about the education system in Rhineland-Palatine between 1985 and 2004. Please note that the basic education systems in the other 15 states are similar but not identical. After Kindergarten, children at the age of six enter the German Grundschule (primary school). The German Grundschule lasts four years. Students in the first two grades do not receive grades but are evaluated with a report, which gives a detailed description of the individual student's progress and weaknesses in specific areas of learning. In grades 3 and 4, the student is evaluated with numerical grades. The grading system in Germany will be explained in chapter 2.4.

Primary Education in Germany

Age Grade

6	1
7	2
8	3
9	4



2.2.1 Grundschule

German children at the age of six are usually enrolled in the Grundschule (primary school), which is similar to an American elementary school. The Grundschule consists of four years and includes grades 1-4. This is the first level of the state education system in Germany. At this level, children are taught with other children in a classroom. These children usually stay with each other for every class during the four years of Grundschule. This is considered to be a cohort system. Thus, the children usually have two cohort teachers who educate them in all subjects except physical education, religious education, music, and art. One classroom teacher stays with the class for the first two years of Grundschule. For the last two years, children get a new classroom teacher who stays with the class until the end of the 4th grade.

As mentioned earlier, students are not graded in the first two years of Grundschule. Instead, they are evaluated in the form of a report by the cohort teacher. This report gives a detailed description of the individual student's progress as well as her/his weaknesses in specific areas of studies (report card on page 14). After completing the four years of Grundschule, children usually get a recommendation from their class teacher to attend a particular form of school after Grundschule (see page 16). The sort of school recommended for a particular child depends on her/his overall academic performance in the Grundschule. The types of school available for secondary education in Germany include Sonderschule, Hauptschule, Realschule, Gesamtschule, and Gymnasium.

The following is an example of a report card issued in grades 1 and 2:

Grundschule Mörsch Frankenthal (Pfalz)

- HALBJAHRESZEUGNIS
 JAHRESZEUGNIS DER GRUNDSCHULE

Vor- und Zuname: Christian B e c k e r
 geboren am: 17.04.79 in: Frankenthal
 Klasse: 2 a Schuljahr: 1987/88

Gesamtbeurteilung:

Christian beteiligt sich lebhaft am Unterricht, selbständige Arbeiten erledigte er schnell, zuverlässig und gewissenhaft; ließ sich auch durch Fehler nicht entmutigen. Er kann beim Erlesen altersgemäßer Texte den Inhalt erfassen, sein Lesefluß sollte aber durch viel lautes Lesen noch verbessert werden. Christian bemühte sich um eine formklare Schrift, hatte aber noch Schwierigkeiten beim Einhalten der Linien. Kurze Sätze mit bekannten Wörtern kann er auch fehlerlos aufschreiben, bei geübten Diktaten schreibt er wenige Fehler. Christian kennt sich im Zahlenraum 100 gut aus, kann die eingeführten Rechenarten ohne Hilfsmittel fehlerlos ausführen. Bei schriftlichen Arbeiten benötigt er in der Regel weit weniger Zeit als vorgesehen.

Bemerkungen:

keine

Versäumt wurden entschuldigt 1 Tage, unentschuldigt 0 Tage.

Frankenthal-Mörsch, , den 29.01.88

L. Lauer
Schulleiter

H. Hübner
Klassenleiter

Kennntnis genommen: *M. Becker*
Ein Erziehungsberechtigter

This report card is one typical for the 3rd and 4th grade:



Grundschule Frankenthal-Mörsch

ABSCHLUSSZEUGNIS DER GRUNDSCHULE

Vor- und Familienname Christian Becker
 geboren am 17. 4. 79 in Frankenthal
 hat das Ziel der Grundschule erreicht.

Mitarbeit und Verhalten

Christian beteiligt sich interessiert und mitgestaltend am Unterricht. Er erfasst Zusammenhänge und erkennt Fragestellungen. Er arbeitet selbständig, zielstrebig, rasch, in Deutsch aber etwas flüchtig. Im Umgang mit den Klassenkameraden ist er verträglicher und hilfsbereiter geworden.

Religion/Ethik	<u>sehr gut</u>	Mathematik	<u>sehr gut</u>
Deutsch	<u>befriedigend</u>	Musik	<u>gut</u>
Einzelnoten für		Sport	<u>sehr gut</u>
a) mündl. Sprachgestaltung	<u>gut</u>	Bildende Kunst/ Text. Gestalten/Werken	<u>gut</u>
b) schriftl. Sprachgestaltung	<u>befriedigend</u>	Schrift	<u>gut</u>
c) Rechtschreiben	<u>befriedigend</u>		
d) Lesen	<u>befriedigend</u>		
Sachunterricht	<u>befriedigend</u>		

Versäumt wurden entschuldigt 5 Tage, unentschuldigt Tage

Bemerkungen _____



Frankenthal-Mörsch, den 27.6.90

M. Stockert
 Klassenleiter(in)

Kennnis genommen _____
Ein(e) Erziehungsberechtigte(r)

Notenstufen: sehr gut, gut, befriedigend, ausreichend, mangelhaft, ungenügend

This is an example of a recommendation issued in the last year of Grundschule:

<p>Name und Anschrift der Grundschule</p> <p>Grundschule Mörsch Hauptstraße 14 6710 Frankenthal 5 Tel.: 06233/61439</p>
<p>Name und Anschrift der Eltern</p> <p>Familie Alfred Becker Am Kirschebaum 7 6710 Frankenthal 5</p>

Empfehlung

der Grundschule für den
weiteren Schulbesuch in der
Orientierungsstufe

Betrifft: Empfehlung der Grundschule für den weiteren Schulbesuch Ihres Kindes

Christian Becker

Sehr geehrte Eltern,

jeder Schüler, der voraussichtlich das Ziel der Grundschule erreicht, erhält nach Beginn des zweiten Schulhalbjahres der Klassenstufe 4 eine Empfehlung für den weiteren Schulbesuch. Die Empfehlung berücksichtigt die Entwicklung des Kindes während der Grundschulzeit. Entscheidend für die Schullaufbahnempfehlung sind:

1. das Lernverhalten und
2. die Leistungen.

Nach § 16 der Grundschulordnung vom 21. Juli 1988 kann eine Empfehlung für den Besuch der Hauptschule ausgesprochen werden, wenn voraussichtlich das Ziel der Grundschule erreicht wird. Der Besuch der Realschule oder des Gymnasiums kann nur empfohlen werden, wenn das allgemeine Lernverhalten die Empfehlung rechtfertigt und die Leistungen in den Fächern Deutsch (gemeinsame Zeugnisnote), Mathematik und Sachunterricht mindestens „befriedigend“, in den übrigen Fächern überwiegend „befriedigend“ sind.

Die Klassenkonferenz hat am 29.1.1990 über den weiteren Schulbesuch Ihres Kindes beraten und empfiehlt für Ihr Kind den Besuch in der Orientierungsstufe

der Hauptschule der Realschule des Gymnasiums.

Mit einer Empfehlung für die Realschule kann Ihr Kind auch eine Hauptschule oder ein Gymnasium besuchen, mit einer Empfehlung für das Gymnasium auch eine Hauptschule oder eine Realschule.

Wenn Sie entgegen einer Empfehlung für die Hauptschule Ihr Kind an einer Realschule oder an einem Gymnasium anmelden, muß es sich einer Überprüfung unterziehen. Ort und Zeitpunkt dieser Überprüfung werden Ihnen von der Schule mitgeteilt, an der Sie Ihr Kind angemeldet haben. Die Überprüfung soll feststellen, ob Ihr Kind an der gewählten Schulart erfolgreich mitarbeiten kann. Wird die Prüfung nicht bestanden, ist die Hauptschule zu besuchen.

Wenn Sie Ihr Kind an einer Schule mit einer schulartübergreifenden Orientierungsstufe oder an einer Integrierten Gesamtschule anmelden wollen, informieren wir Sie gerne über die dafür geltenden Regelungen.

Falls Sie sich für die Hauptschule entscheiden, ist das Kind an der Robert-Schuman-Schule Frankenthal

anzumelden. Falls Sie sich für die Realschule oder das Gymnasium entscheiden, können Sie die Schule, die Ihr Kind besuchen soll, frei wählen. Bitte beachten Sie jedoch, daß Beschränkungen bei der Fahrtkostenerstattung möglich sind, wenn Sie Ihr Kind nicht bei der nächstgelegenen Realschule oder dem nächstgelegenen Gymnasium anmelden. Auskunft über Fahrtkostenerstattung erteilt Ihnen die zuständige Kreisverwaltung oder die Verwaltung der kreisfreien Stadt.

Wir bitten Sie, in Kenntnis dieser Empfehlung zu entscheiden, welche Schulart Ihr Kind besuchen soll, und es bis spätestens 26. - 28.3.1990

mit dem beigefügten gelben Anmeldeformular anzumelden. Senden Sie bitte die rosa Durchschrift der Anmeldung an uns zurück, damit wir die Unterlagen und Papiere Ihres Kindes an die neue Schule weiterleiten können. Eine weitere, grüne Durchschrift ist für Ihre eigenen Unterlagen bestimmt.

Sehr geehrte Eltern, Sie wissen, welche Bedeutung der Entscheidung über die Schullaufbahn Ihres Kindes zukommt. Wenn Sie Fragen zu unserer Empfehlung, zu den für diese Empfehlung maßgeblichen Überlegungen, zu den unterschiedlichen Lernanforderungen und Lernschwerpunkten im Hauptschule, Realschule und Gymnasium oder zu anderen Problemen haben, steht Ihnen der Klassenlehrer für eine Beratung gerne zur Verfügung. Setzen Sie sich dann bitte wegen der Abstimmung des Termins mit ihm in Verbindung.

Wir möchten Sie eindringlich bitten, jedenfalls dann von dem Beratungsangebot Gebrauch zu machen, wenn Sie sich entgegen unserer Empfehlung für die Anmeldung an einer anderen Schulart entscheiden.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

19. 2. 1990

[Handwritten signature] (Name)

2.3 Secondary Education in Germany

After Grundschule (primary school), the German Education System differs greatly from the American educational system. This third level of the German Education System makes it more complicated than most educational systems in other countries throughout the world. In Rhineland-Palatine, parents have the opportunity of choosing among five different schools: the Sonderschule (special school), the Hauptschule (general school), the Realschule (intermediate school), the Gesamtschule (comprehensive school), and the Gymnasium (grammar school), depending on the academic ability of the child. The parents usually take the recommendation given by the classroom teacher in the Grundschule when choosing a school. This decision is crucial, for it will determine the further academic and social career of the child and perhaps even his or her future life. A child is usually ten years old when she/he attends this level of the German Education System.

Throughout the secondary education, a student will stay in a cohort setting for each year in any of the five different schools. The first two years in the secondary education, no matter which of the five schools the child attends, are referred to as the "Orientierungsstufe" (Orientation Years) (gray area on the graph page 18). During grades 5 and 6, the child cannot be forced to repeat an entire school year. Instead, if she/he fails a class (the consequences of failing a class will be explained in more detail later in this paper), parents can rethink their decision concerning their child's enrollment in the new school following Grundschule. During this period, adjustments can be made without hurting the child's chances for academic success, and parents can again decide whether to enter their child in a lower or a higher level of academic schooling.

Secondary Education in Germany

Age Grade

10	5					
11	6	Sonder-	Haupt-	Real-	Gym-	Ge-
12	7					
13	8	schule	schule	schule	na-	samt-
14	9					
15	10				sium	schule
16	11					
17	12					
18	13					

 Orientation Years

2.3.1 Sonderschule

The German Sonderschule (special school) is a school created to help mentally and physically disabled children. The children who attend these schools usually do not show sufficient progress in Grundschule (primary school). In these schools, children get special attention from specially trained teachers, and they are put into a school which will take care of the special need each student requires. The education these children receive at such schools is specially designed for the disability the child has.

2.3.2 Hauptschule

Students who attend the Hauptschule (general school) in Rhineland-Palatine are children with average academic abilities. The Hauptschule is the secondary school for children who have already experienced difficulties with the curriculum during Grundschule (primary school). Students who attend Hauptschule learn the same subjects as students enrolled in other schools, namely, Realschule (intermediate school), Gesamtschule (comprehensive school), or Gymnasium (high school), but at a lower level of instruction.

The 5th grade, when students first enroll the Hauptschule, maintains 28 hours of instruction per week. Students are taught two credits hours of religious education, five credit hours of their native language of German, four credit hours in their first foreign language of English, five credit hours of mathematics, two credit hours of geography, one credit hour of a combined physics and chemistry course, two credit hours of biology, two credit hours of art, two credit hours of musical education, and two credit hours of physical education. Starting in the 7th grade, the credit hours are raised by two, from 28 credit hours to 30 credit hours. In addition, several subjects are added to the curriculum, including history, social studies, and work-studies. The subject “work-studies” is an important part of the Hauptschule education. The main purpose of work-studies is to prepare students to enter the work force in three areas: housekeeping, technology, and the economy. In the 8th grade, students hold an internship in a local company for one or two weeks.

After successfully completing the 9th grade, students receive the “Hauptschulabschluss”, which enables them to progress either to an apprenticeship,

usually accomplished in a company in connection with a Berufsschule (Section 2.3.6) or, if the student is good enough and has a high enough GPA, to continue his education at a higher academic level – the Realschule.

A typical class schedule of weekly instructions might look like the following:

Hauptschule Mont-Royal

Weekly Class-schedule - 5th grade

Period	Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	8:00 - 8:45	German	Religious Ed.	Art	English	German
2	8:45- 9:30	German	Music	Art	English	Physics/Chemistry
15-minute break						
3	9:45 - 10:30	Mathematics	Geography	German	Mathematics	Religious Ed.
4	10:35 - 11:20	Mathematics	Geography	German	Mathematics	Physical Ed.
15-minute break						
5	11:35 - 12:20	Physical Ed.	English	Biology	Music	Physical Ed.
6	12:25 - 13:10	Physical Ed.	English	Biology	Physical Ed.	

2.3.3 Realschule

German students who attend a German Realschule (intermediate school) receive a higher level of education than the students who attend a Hauptschule (general school). Realschule is a form of secondary school created for children who do not experience difficulties with the curriculum during the Grundschule (primary school) but have also not shown outstanding performance in the curriculum. Students who attend a Realschule learn the same topics that students at a Hauptschule learn, but on a higher academic level, and the same things students learn at a Gesamtschule (comprehensive school) or at a Gymnasium (grammar school), but at a lower academic level of achievement.

A typical class schedule in 5th grade might look like the following:

Realschule Oberwesel

Weekly Class-schedule - 5th grade

Period	Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	7:40 - 8:25	German	Religious Ed.	Mathematics	Music	German
2	8:30 - 9:15	Geography	German	Religious Ed.	English	Music
15-minute break						
3	9:30 - 10:15	Biology	Physics/Chemistry	Geography	Mathematics	Class teacher
4	10:20 - 11:05	Mathematics	Mathematics	English	Biology	English
20-minute break						
5	11:25 - 12:10	Physical Ed.	Physical Ed.	German	Art	
6	12:15 - 13:00	Physical Ed.	English	German	Art	

In the 5th grade, when students first enroll in a Realschule, students take 28 hours of instruction per week, as do students in a Hauptschule. In a Realschule, students are taught two hours of religious education each week, five hours of their native language of German, four hours in their first foreign language of English, four

hours of mathematics, two hours of geography, one hour of a combined physics and chemistry course, two hours of biology, two hours of art, two hours of musical education, and three hours of physical education. One hour each week is reserved for the cohort-teacher, a teacher who is the contact person for the students and functions as a guidance teacher. Starting with the 7th grade, the credit hours are raised by two, from 28 hours to 30 hours of instruction per week.

After successful completion of the 10th grade, a student receives the “Mittlere Reife” or “Fachhochschulreife,” a certificate essential to advance to a technical Gymnasium, a Wirtschaft Gymnasium, an apprenticeship, or a regular Gymnasium. If the student proceeds to a regular Gymnasium, she/he needs a very high GPA and must pass a special exam given by the Gymnasium. A Realschule-diploma would resemble the following example:

SCHILLER-REALSCHULE FRANKENTHAL (PFALZ)



RHEINLAND-PFALZ

ABSCHLUSSZEUGNIS



SCHILLER-REALSCHULE FRANKENTHAL (PFALZ)

ABSCHLUSSZEUGNIS DER REALSCHULE

Vor- und Zuname: Christian Becker

geboren am: 17. 04. 1979 in Frankenthal

HAT DAS ZIEL DER REALSCHULE ERREICHT und damit einen qualifizierten Sekundarabschluß I erworben.

Pflichtfächer:

Religion befriedigend
 Deutsch ausreichend
 Englisch ausreichend
 Mathematik befriedigend
 Geschichte befriedigend
 Sozialkunde gut
 Erdkunde gut
 Physik gut
 Chemie befriedigend
 Biologie befriedigend
 Musik sehr gut
 Bildende Kunst/
 Werken/Textiles Gestalten } befriedigend
 Sport sehr gut

Wahlpflichtfächer:

Französisch -----
 Mathematik/
 Naturwissenschaften gut
 Wirtschafts- und-
 Sozialkunde -----
 Sozialpädagogik -----

Wahlfächer:

Teilnahme an freiwilligen Unterrichtsveranstaltungen:

Basketball-AG -----

Bemerkungen:



Frankenthal, den 28. Juni 1996

B. Maichel
 Die Schulleiterin

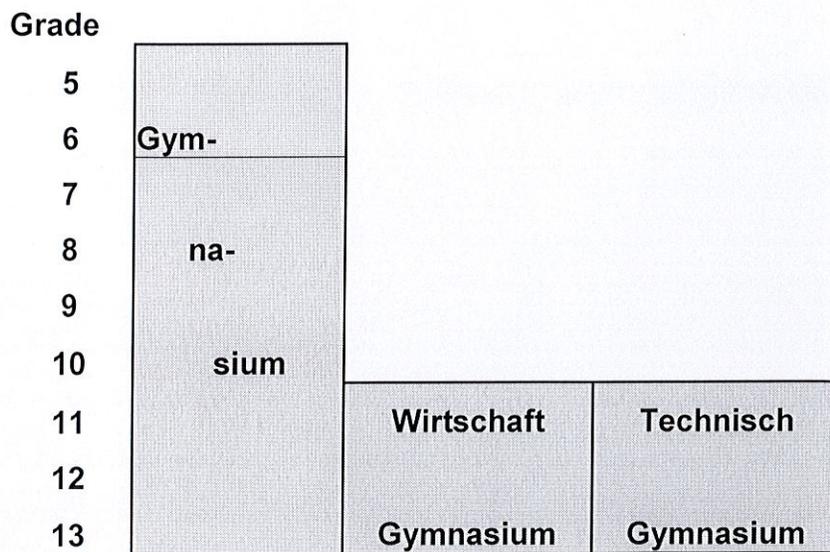
M. Herold
 Die Klassenleiter(in)

Notenstufen: sehr gut, gut, befriedigend, ausreichend, mangelhaft, ungenügend

2.3.4 Gymnasium

Students who attend the German Gymnasium receive the highest level of academic education the German Education system has to offer at the secondary level. The German Educational System offers three different kinds of Gymnasia: Gymnasium, technical Gymnasium, and business-oriented Gymnasium. A major difference between the Gymnasium and the technical and business-oriented Gymnasia is the grades that are offered. The Gymnasium offers an education from grade 5 through grade 13, whereas the other two schools offer only an education from grades 11-13 only (see the graph below).

German Gymnasia



2.3.4.1 Gymnasium

Children in Germany who do not have difficulties with the curriculum during Grundschule and who have performed well with the Grundschule curriculum attend Gymnasium by age ten. Students in Gymnasium learn the same things as students in Hauptschule and Realschule do, but at the highest academic level the German Educational System has to offer. Students who attend Gymnasium usually choose to study later at a university. Gymnasium students are required to learn a minimum of two foreign languages. The most common combinations are English and French and English and Latin. The first foreign language, usually English, begins in grade 5. The second foreign language begins in grade 7.

During grades 12 and 13, German students pick three intensified courses: a science class, such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, or biology; a humanities/language-related class; for instance, German, English, history, or geography; and an optional class, depending on which courses a Gymnasium may offer toward the German "Abitur" exam. The "Abitur" is a written final in each of the three intensified classes as well as an oral final in one of the basic classes that students take as part of their liberal education. The written test, usually lasting four hours, covers all the course work taken in grades 11-13. The oral final (usually thirty minutes) covers a specific topic from the liberal education curriculum, such as "revolutions around the world in history."

2.3.4.2 Technical Gymnasium

The technical Gymnasium is the second type of German Gymnasium. Unlike the regular Gymnasium, the technical Gymnasium, which starts at grade 11, is a three-year secondary school. The technical Gymnasium can be compared to a technical institute or technical college in the United States, but at a lower academic level. Students who have finished the Realschule, or students that have finished their apprenticeship at a company, usually attend these schools along with Gymnasium students who want to specialize in technology. Thus, the student body in a technical Gymnasium is usually older than the student body at a regular Gymnasium.

Most students who attend a technical Gymnasium do not speak two foreign languages. Because one of the requirements of the Abitur is to speak two foreign languages, a student has to take at least three years of a second foreign language, which he/she begins in grade 11. Students learn their second foreign language (next to English) for all three years until they graduate with the "Abitur".

Just as they do at a regular Gymnasium, students pick three intensified courses in grades 12-13: a science class (mathematics, physics, chemistry, or biology) and a humanities/language-related class (German, English, history, or geography); but in a technical school, the third class must be in industrial technology or electronics, subjects which then form a part of the German "Abitur" examination.

A class schedule in grade 13 might look like the following:

Technisches Gymnasium Technik 1 - Ludwigshafen

Weekly Class-schedule - grade 13

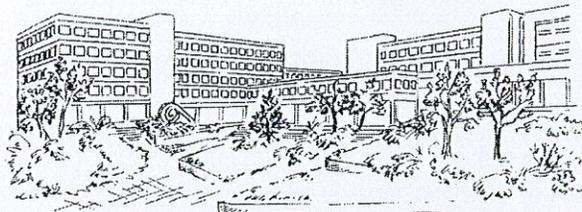
Period	Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	7:30 - 8:15	Electronics	English	French	English	Electronics
2	8:15 - 9:00	Electronics	English	Mathematics	English	Electronics
15-minute break						
3	9:15 - 10:00	German	Chemistry	Mathematics	Mathematics	Geography
4	10:00 - 10:45	German	Chemistry	Mathematics	Mathematics	History
15-minute break						
5	11:00 - 11:45	French	Art	Religious Ed.	Physical Ed.	Social Ed.
6	11:45 - 12:30	French	Art	Religious Ed.	Physical Ed.	German
60-minute break						
7	13:30 - 14:15	Chemistry	Computers	Electronics		
8	14:15 - 15:00	Chemistry	Computers	Electronics		

A Gymnasium-diploma would resemble the following:

BERUFSBILDENDE SCHULE TECHNIK I

IM GEORG-KERSCHENSTEINER-BERUFSBILDUNGSZENTRUM IN LUDWIGSHAFEN AM RHEIN

ABSCHLUSSZEUGNIS

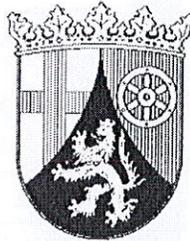


BERUFSBILDENDE SCHULE TECHNIK I

IM GEORG-KERSCHENSTEINER-BERUFSBILDUNGSZENTRUM IN LUDWIGSHAFEN AM RHEIN

Berufliches Gymnasium - Bildungsgang Technik

Rheinland-Pfalz



ZEUGNIS

DER ALLGEMEINEN HOCHSCHULREIFE

Herr **Christian Becker**,

geboren am 17. April 1979 in Frankenthal,

wohnhaft in Frankenthal

hat das berufliche Gymnasium besucht, die Abiturprüfung bestanden und damit die Befähigung zum Studium an einer Hochschule in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland erworben.

Dem Zeugnis liegen folgende Vereinbarungen und Verordnungen zugrunde:

1. Die "Vereinbarung zur Neugestaltung der gymnasialen Oberstufe in der Sekundarstufe II" (Beschluß der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 7. Juli 1972 in der jeweils gültigen Fassung)
2. Die "Vereinbarung über die Abiturprüfung der neugestalteten gymnasialen Oberstufe in der Sekundarstufe II" (Beschluß der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 13. Dezember 1973 in der jeweils gültigen Fassung)
3. Die Beschlüsse zur "Einheitlichen Durchführung der Vereinbarung zur Neugestaltung der gymnasialen Oberstufe" (Beschluß der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 2. Juni 1977 in der jeweils gültigen Fassung)
4. Die Abiturprüfungsordnung des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz vom 28. Juli 1983 (GVBl. S. 197) in der jeweils gültigen Fassung

(GYTE 97 b, WB)

ZEUGNIS DER ALLGEMEINEN HOCHSCHULREIFE

für Herrn Christian Becker

I. Grundkurse der Hauptphase und Qualifikation im Grundfachbereich					
Grundfach ¹⁾²⁾³⁾	Punktzahlen d. Halbjahre				Summe
	12/1	12/2	13/1	13/2	
Mathematik	08	(11)	(11)	3-Prüfungsfach	08
Gemeinschaftskunde	07	12	10	4-Prüfungsfach	29
Kath. Religion	(07)	11	(09)	09	20
Deutsch	10	11	12	12	45
Französisch	(07)	(08)	(05)	08	08
Chemie	11	13	11	11	46
Sport	(13)	13	14	14	41
Informationsverarbeitung	(06)	(08)	13	15	28
Bildende Kunst	08	10	--	--	18
---	--	--	--	--	--
---	--	--	--	--	--
Punktsomme aus 22 Grundkursen (mindestens 110, höchstens 330 Punkte)					I. = 243

II. Qualifikation im Leistungsfachbereich					
Leistungsfach ³⁾	Punktzahlen d. Halbjahre			Summe einfach	Summe zweifach
	12/1	12/2	13/1		
Elektrotechnik	06	09	08	23	46
Englisch	11	12	11	34	68
2 Kurse des 3. Prüfungsfachs (12/1, 12/2 oder 13/1) (Punktzahl einfach)				(08)	11
Punktsomme (mindestens 70, höchstens 210 Punkte)				II. =	136

III. Qualifikation im Prüfungsbereich					
Prüfungsfach ²⁾³⁾	Halbj. 13/2	Punktzahlen Prüfungsergebnis			Summe
		schriftl.	mündl.	vierfach	
Elektrotechnik	08	06	--	24	32
Englisch	13	12	--	48	61
Mathematik	11	08	--	32	43
Gemeinschaftskunde	12	X	09	36	48
Punktsomme (mindestens 100, höchstens 300 Punkte)				III. =	184

IV. Gesamtqualifikation (mindestens 280, höchstens 840 Punkte)			
Gesamtpunktzahl (I+II+III)	563	Durchschnittsnote	2,3

V. Sprachenfolge			
In der ersten und zweiten Fremdsprache ist Unterricht in dem für den Erwerb der allgemeinen Hochschulreife erforderlichen Umfang besucht worden			
1. Fremdsprache: Englisch	2. Fremdsprache: Französisch	3. Fremdsprache (deklarativ): ---	

VI. Dieses Zeugnis schließt weder das Graecum noch das Latinum ein.

VII. Bemerkungen
--- keine ---

Ludwigshafen, den 6. Juni 2000

W. K. P. (Dienstsiegel der Schule) *W. K. P.*

Dar(Di6) Vorsitzende der Prüfungskommission Der(Die) Schulleiter(in)

Für die Umrechnung der 6-Noten-Skala in das Punktesystem gilt folgender Schlüssel: (GYTE 97 b, WB)

Notenstufe	Schr. gut (1)	gut (2)	befriedigend (3)	ausreichend (4)	mangelhaft (5)	ungenügend (6)
Punktzahl	15	14	13	12	11	10
	09	08	07	06	05	04
	03	02	01	00		

1) Grundkurse, die nicht in die Qualifikation eingebracht wurden, sind in Klammern gesetzt; „(1)“ = dieses Grundfach wurde freiwillig außerhalb der Pflichtstundenzahl belegt.
 2) Das 3. Prüfungsfach wurde in den Halbjahren 12/1 bis 13/1 als 3. Leistungsfach belegt und mit Beginn des Halbjahres 13/2 zum Grundfach abgestuft.
 3) „GK-Geschichte“ = Leistungsfach Gemeinschaftskunde mit Schwerpunktfach Geschichte, entsprechendes gilt für „GK-Sozialkunde“ oder „GK-Wirtschaftsgeographie“.

Like a regular Gymnasium student, the students at a technical Gymnasium have three written exams and one oral final examination.

2.3.4.3 Commercial Gymnasium

The commercial Gymnasium is the third and final type of German Gymnasium. Unlike the regular Gymnasium, the commercial Gymnasium, like the technical Gymnasium, starts in grade 11 and is also a three-year secondary school. The commercial Gymnasium can be compared to a college in the United States, but only on a freshman and sophomore level. As in a technical Gymnasium, students who have finished Realschule, or students who have already finished their apprenticeship at a company and want to specialize in business and economics, usually attend these schools, as well as Gymnasium students. The student body is usually similar to those at a technical Gymnasium.

As in a technical Gymnasium, students in a business-oriented Gymnasium usually do not speak a second foreign language; therefore they study their second foreign language for three years, starting with grade 11.

As in the technical Gymnasium and the regular Gymnasium, students pick three intensified courses in grades 12 and 13: One must be a science class (mathematics, physics, chemistry, or biology); one must be a language-related class (German, English, history, or geography); but the commercial high school, the third class must be in management. These courses make up the German "Abitur" examination. Students have three written exams and one oral final.

2.3.5 Gesamtschule

This type of secondary education developed since the early 1980's and followed an educational reform. The Gesamtschule, which does not exist in each German state, tries to encompass the three traditional schools in Germany: the Hauptschule, the Realschule, and the Gymnasium. A student has the opportunity to go up or down in the school-system as his academic abilities increase or decrease, just as she/he would in the other schools. At a Gesamtschule, however, the student can stay in the same school without having to switch between individual schools. The Gesamtschule offers all three German Secondary School degrees, depending on the level in which the student is enrolled: the "Hauptschulabschluss," the "Mittlere Reife" (or "Fachhochschulreife"), and the German "Abitur," the degree one receives on graduating from Gymnasium.

2.3.6 Berufsschule

The German Berufsschule is a secondary school that follows education in a Sonderschule, Hauptschule, Realschule, and sometimes the Gymnasium. These schools are uniquely German and cannot be found in the American school system. The purpose of this school is to teach apprentices the basic skills that are needed for their future jobs as chemists, secretaries, technicians, and barbers, for example. This education generally combines a practical and a theoretical education, and the courses provided will be job specific.

For example, a bank or insurance apprentice would take business and economic courses in the Berufsschule and learn the basic theories for two days a week. The other three days a week, the apprentice would learn practical skills and how to apply the theories learned in the classroom and apply them at the company and in the real world.

A class schedule for a Berufsschule student could look like the following:

Berufsschule Mannheim

Weekly Class-schedule - 2nd year apprentice

Period	Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	8:00 - 8:45	C	C	Project-Competence	C	Special Business
2	8:45- 9:30	O	O	Business English	O	Special Business
15 minutes break		M	M		M	
3	9:45 - 10:30	P	P	Special Business	P	Accounting
4	10:35 - 11:20	A	A	Special Business	A	Tax Law
15 minutes break		N	N		N	
5	11:35 - 12:20	Y	Y	Regular Business	Y	Financial Management
6	12:25 - 13:10			Insurance		Insurance
		until 4pm		until 4pm		

A grade report would resemble the following:

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

FRIEDRICH-LIST-SCHULE MANNHEIM

Halbjahreszeugnis des Kaufmännischen Berufskollegs

Klassenstufe 2	Schuljahr 2004/05	1. Halbjahr
Vor- und Zuname	Yvonne Becker	
geboren am	07.10.1976	
in	Frankenthal	
Ausbildungsberuf	Versicherungskaufmann/-frau	

Leistungen in den einzelnen Fächern:

Berufsfachliche Kompetenz

Schwerpunkt Betriebswirtschaft	gut	Steuerrecht	sehr gut
Schwerpunkt Steuerung und Kontrolle	gut	Alfinanz	gut
Schwerpunkt Gesamtwirtschaft	gut	Wirtschaftsenglisch	gut
Projektkompetenz	gut	-----	---

Bemerkungen: Teilnahme am Schulversuch: Kaufmännisches Berufskolleg in Teilzeitform
- besonderer Bildungsgang für Abiturienten -
Bereich Versicherungen

Datum: 17. Januar 2005



ek. G. Ebert
Klassenlehrerin Ehlert (OSIRin)

[Signature]
Gesehen:
Für die Berufserziehung Mitverantwortliche/r
(Ausbildungsstätte)

Notenstufen:
sehr gut (1), gut (2), befriedigend (3), ausreichend (4), mangelhaft (5), ungenügend (6)

2.4 Evaluation of schoolwork

As in every country, student's performance is evaluated in order to show the strength and weaknesses of the student in each subject. In addition of a student's performance in the classroom, every report card includes a summary of how many days of classes a student missed every semester, and if the student was excused from classes for that time.

In the Grundschule, the primary education, a student in Germany receives a written evaluation as well as a graded evaluation. As I mentioned in section 2.2.1 Grundschule, a student in grades 1 and 2 is exclusively evaluated by the classroom teacher in a written evaluation, which is handed to the student's parents or guardians in form of a report card (Zeugnis) every semester. An example of a report card of this kind can be found on page 13. In the 3rd and 4th grade, students also receive numerical grades between 1 (the best grade possible) and 6 (the worst grade possible), for each subject taken (described in detail in the next paragraph). Exclusively in the Grundschule, a student is graded in four separate forms in the subject of German – oral German, written German, German grammar and reading skills. A student's handwriting is also evaluated exclusively in the Grundschule. An example of a report card of this kind can be found on page 14.

	best grade -----> worst grade					
Numeric Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6
Written Grade	sehr gut	gut	befriedigend	ausreichend	mangelhaft	ungenuegend
	very good	good	satisfactory	sufficient	inadequate	insufficient

The definition of each of these grades will be explained in this paragraph. The grade *sehr gut* (1) reflects that the student's performance exceeded the expectations of the material covered in class and the student's knowledge of the material covered was very good. The grade *gut* (2) reflects that the student's performance exceeded the expectations of the material covered in class and that the student's knowledge of the material covered was good. The grade *befriedigend* (3) reflects that the student's performance fulfilled the expectations of the material covered in class and that the student's knowledge of the material covered was satisfactory. The grade *ausreichend* (4) reflects that the student's performance just fulfilled the expectations of the material covered in class and that the student's knowledge of the material covered was sufficient. The grade *mangelhaft* (5) reflects that the student's performance barely fulfilled the expectations of the material covered in class and that the student's knowledge of the material covered only includes the basics but is inadequate. The grade *ungenuegend* (6) reflects that the student's performance didn't fulfill the expectations of the material covered in class at all and that the student's knowledge of the material covered doesn't even include the basics and is totally insufficient.

Secondary education (grades 5-11) also measures a student's performance on the numerical scale between 1 and 6. Similar to the United States school system, letter grades can include the signs + and -, reflecting a good numerical grade as well as a bad one. Even though those special border-line grades exist, they are not reflected in the report cards that are also handed out to the parents or guardian each semester. An example of a report card with numerical grades only can be found on page 22.

3. Major Differences

There are many differences between the U.S. and the German school system. Some of those differences are minor, others are quite different. Grading is an example of a difference that is minor, given the fact that both grading systems try to evaluate a student's performance on a predetermined scale. The difference is that the American system uses letter grading whereas the German system uses numeric grading, but the basic principles behind them are the same. Other differences, some of which are major, are not so similar and are unique to each school system. Some of these major differences I will cover in this paper, but there are many more differences between the two systems. This paper will only cover only major differences, including failing and retaking classes, student course choices, and after-school activities.

3.1 Failing Classes and Retaking Classes

As in the United States and other countries, the materials covered in some courses in the German education system are above the ability of some students; other students are simply too lazy to follow the material in school. This will result in the student receiving a failing grade, which in Germany is *ungenugend* (6).

Unlike in the United States, where the student usually has the opportunity to retake the failing class in a summer session or in the next semester, a failing grade of *ungenuegend* in the end of the year report card in Germany will result in two different outcomes. Either the student can stay in the same school and repeat the entire school year, or the student can go down a level and continue his/her studies at a lower level school. There are also other ways a student might be forced to redo an entire school year besides receiving an *ungenuegend* in one or more subject. If the student receives two or more *mangelhaft* (5) grades in his/her end of the year report card, it has the same effect as receiving one *ungenuegend*.

For instance, if a Gymnasium student in 7th grade receives an *ungenuegend* in French as a final grade at the end of the year, that student has the option to redo the entire 7th grade on the Gymnasium level or step down to the Realschule and continue his/her studies in the 8th grade. There could be exceptions to this example, depending on which class the student fails.

As I mentioned in section 2.3, Secondary Education in Germany, the first two years in the secondary education (grades 6 and 7) in all of the schools are referred to as the orientation years. Those two school years are the only two school years in which a German student will not be forced to redo an entire school year for failing a class.

3.2 Course Choices

As I have mentioned, German students have a limited choice among the courses they must take. In fact, every student between the 1st and 6th grade has the same courses with no choice in the courses they take, unless he/she attends a special secondary school.

The courses a student may choose starting in 7th grade are also limited and mostly depend on the kind of school the student attends. In the Hauptschule, the subject “work-studies” is added into the curriculum. As mentioned in section 2.3.2 Hauptschule, work-studies is divided into three areas: housekeeping, technology, and the economy. A Hauptschule student may choose to focus on one of those three areas in greater detail than the others.

In the Realschule (Section 2.3.3), a student will have the choice between two main subjects, a second foreign language and a natural science course. The second foreign languages offered on a Realschule depend on the availability of teachers as well as the general interest of the student but usually include French and Latin, sometimes even Spanish and Italian. The natural science course is usually divided into three components – biology, physics, and electronics. Those courses are more practical than the usual science courses in Germany, and more “hands-on” work is done in those classes to prepare the students for later work in those fields.

In Gymnasium (Section 2.3.5), a student has two opportunities to choose a course. In 7th grade, the student has to pick a second foreign language. Choices here also depend on the availability of faculty as well as student interest but usually include French and Latin, and also sometimes Spanish and Italian. As mentioned in section

2.3.5.1 Gymnasium, Gymnasium students have to pick three major courses for the 12th and 13th grade: a science class (mathematics, physics, chemistry, or biology), a language-related class (German, English, history, or geography, second foreign language), and an optional class (depending on which courses a Gymnasium may offer). Depending on her/his major courses, each student will be assigned some regular/minor courses.

Besides the course choices I have listed in this section, the only other choices students have include some voluntary classes that are usually offered in the afternoons on a teacher's voluntary basis. Most of these courses include computer courses, typing courses, and foreign languages. All students in the German education system enjoy a basic core course system that will depend on the school they attend, but it provides students on the same level with the same basic knowledge.

3.3 After School Activities

Unlike in the United States, after-school activities do not play a large part in the German education system. Many after-school activities are called "Arbeitsgemeinschaft (AG)" (study group), which are taught by teachers on a voluntary basis. Because the AG are on voluntary basis and are not paid for, they are rare in German schools. Some schools though will provide funds for AGs, which might include all kinds of activities, such as athletics, typing, programming, art, orchestra, choir, drama, and theater.

In Germany, athletics are usually performed on a club level in each town instead of at the school-level, but some German schools offer soccer, field-hockey, tennis, or basketball team in order for their school to participate in an event called "Jugend Trainiert fuer Olympia" (Youth Training for the Olympics), a national athletic competition that begins at the state-level and ends in a national final tournament in Berlin.



Therefore, German students do not have the same kind of identification with the school they attend that most American high school students do. School spirit is a word that is not too common in Germany. Instead, people identify with their local club teams as well as their hometowns or suburbs.

4. Final Thoughts

For me, who went through the German education system in a “non-traditional” way, the differences between those schools and the way they functioned was always a given yet unrecognized fact to me. I finally started to recognize the differences between the German schools and another school system, the school system in the United States, when I attended Cary-Grove High School in Cary, Illinois, as an exchange student in 1997 and 1998. After my experience in the United States, I started to question the positive as well as negative aspects of both systems and the social affect on me and the people I knew. I know that neither school system is perfect, but from my point of view, a combination of both school systems would be more beneficial to both countries.

Throughout this Honors Thesis I have explained in detail how the educational system in Germany works. I have also learned where the weaknesses and strengths in the German school system lie by comparing it to the educational system in the United States. Being able to compare both systems made me appreciate the opportunities I had to be an exchange-student in an American high school and able to write about that experience for my honors thesis at my American University, Bemidji State University. Overall, writing this thesis has been a great learning experience for me.

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