Promoting German language and culture...

Last year, AATG members were invited to apply for Deutsch macht Spaß grants to support local campus or community events to promote German learning and engagement with German culture. Thanks to funding through the German government’s Netzwerk Deutsch program, grants of up to $500 were awarded to support creative and innovative projects.

Read about what members are doing—how they are keeping German visible and prominent in their schools, as well as reaching out to the broader community to spread the message that Deutsch macht Spaß!

More project reports will appear in the next AATG Newsletter.

Apply for a Deutsch macht Spaß grant this year.
Project proposals will be reviewed and funded on an ongoing basis.
The final deadline for submission is August 15, 2017. Find details here.

Making Writing in German Fun at North Carolina Central University

Three events were organized to promote writing in German at North Carolina Central University. First we held several panel discussions addressing prewriting, utilizing translation techniques, and writing in response to a German film or a poem from the readings in the German Literature & Film class.

During the first event, students recited poetry in German with Spanish, French, and English translation, because we wanted to attract ALL! We were joined by several visual artists with connections to Germany who featured their art pieces for us to describe in our future writing. Throughout the semester, students kept on creating, writing several pieces in reaction to German-speaking films viewed in class. At the International Fest, students presented their own writing in German with English translations to over 300 guests including the campus community as well as the local community. It was a great success. We hosted the P.E.N. Day of the Imprisoned Writer commemoration with readings and recitations of poems in various languages along with my colleague, Dr. Xaubet from Spanish. Students spoke about what it means to them to express themselves freely and what it means if one is NOT allowed to do so. We again had a great event with more than 80 students attending. At each event, we served German food and international treats and distributed information about our German minor and advanced German courses. We now have contact information for more than 200 interested people, and will continue to advertise and recruit for German.

—Claudia A. Becker, North Carolina Central University, Durham, NC

Frau Dr. Claudia Becker, Herr Stevons, Frau Sosa Almonte, and Frau Hicks at the International Fest at North Carolina Central University
German-American Friendship Night at Ashford Park Elementary School

Over 250 people—50% more than our original goal!—came to the German-American Friendship Night at Ashford Park Elementary School: families of students, area residents, and the German community, including representatives from the Goethe Institute, the German Cultural Foundation, the German School of Atlanta, and volunteers from Agnes Scott College’s Faust Club. All of our students learn German, most in weekly classes. To encourage families to explore the German language and culture together, several stations were set up:

Essen: Families enjoyed comparing German and American food: Bratwurst and hot dogs, Käsespätzle and mac & cheese, and pretzels dipped in Nutella and peanut butter. Over all the German food rated the highest, especially Käsespätzle which was generously donated by a local German restaurant.

Sport: We partnered with a local children’s soccer club, and after learning different terms in German, children were invited to play Fussball.

Lernen: Children were given sheets of labels with German words, such as body parts and clothing items. They then taught their parents and siblings the words, and labeled them! We also shared take-home vocabulary on different topics, prepared by the Goethe Institute.

Kunst: We want everyone to know that our school IS “Die Deutsche Schule”. The children used their handprints to create a giant German flag, which is proudly on display in the hall—and truly connects the children with what they are learning.

This was a huge success! Not only did we grow the Brookhaven area’s understanding of our German programming, it gave us a platform to forge new relationships with the Atlanta German community. Having programs such as this allows us to recruit new teachers, new families and bring much-needed volunteers and funding to program. Due to the overwhelming response, we hope to make this a yearly event at our school.

—Barbara Ingram, Ashford Park Elementary School, Brookhaven, GA

Christmas in Germany Festival in Hollidaysburg, PA

All of my German students were involved in our Christmas in Germany Festival. Many planned presentations, designed their stations, and stayed after school to make posters and decorations. 33 students came after school on Friday to help set up, and 45 students worked at the festival.

Posters announced the free festival, and mentioned activities for the whole family, including pre-school and elementary students. Many families from the community came—there were 114 children present! The local news station reported on the festival, including a Facebook live video of my students explaining how to make Strohsterne from kits we got through the grant. 13 different learning and activity stations offered visitors cultural information about Germany, or the opportunity to do crafts, learn a song, learn about German Christmas traditions, or play a game. The festival was very successful—many visitors stayed for hours.

—Alicia K. Schmouder, Hollidaysburg Area Junior and Senior High School, PA
Der Genius: A Marathon Reading at Wake Forest University

A novel entitled Der Genius was published in Germany in 1794 and quickly became a sensation. It was translated into English as Horrid Mysteries and became so notorious that it appeared on the list of “horrid novels” parodied in Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey. Ludwig Tieck, a key figure of German Romanticism, was a university student when Der Genius was published. Excited by the reputation of the book, Tieck sat down with his friends one afternoon and read aloud from it for 10 hours straight!

A marathon public reading of Der Genius was staged at Wake Forest University, recreating this episode from German literary history. For 10 hours, approximately 25 different faculty members and undergraduates took turns reading aloud from the Gothic novel. A detailed program provided a chapter-by-chapter summary of the work, which allowed participants and audience members to understand the context of the section that they were reading, even if they were not able to be there the whole time. We also printed publicity fliers and purchased decorations for the stage that heightened the Gothic atmosphere, and provided refreshments.

The event was considered a great success by the department, was very popular with student participants, and increased our campus visibility—we had more students wanting to participate than we had time slots!

—Rory Bradley, Wake Forest University, NC

Martin Luther in Minnesota

In 1517, Martin Luther posted his “Ninety-five Theses” on the door of the church in Wittenberg, sparking the Protestant Reformation. The German Studies program at the University of Minnesota Duluth recently hosted a celebration of this anniversary. To prepare students to visit the exhibit “Martin Luther: Art and the Reformation” at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, German instructors created lesson plans about Martin Luther for each proficiency level. Students in German classes at Duluth East High School visited campus to take part in these lessons with the University of Minnesota Duluth students.

In addition, a community-based event, Luther’s Legacy: 500 Years, featured talks by Dr. David Carlson on “Earth Stewardship: Lutheran Roots for a New Reformation” and Pastor Karen Bockelman on “Luther and Music.” Music students performed a selection of Luther’s hymns, and German students read a number of Luther’s quotes in German and English between performances. The Deutsch macht Spaß grant funding helped increase the visibility of the German program and its connection to local high schools and the broader community.

—Holly Brining, University of Minnesota Duluth

German Reunification Celebration and Career Expo in Georgia

Students and parents from Starrs Mill High School and Whitewater High School, Georgia, gathered with representatives from the German Consulate in Atlanta and guests from Paderborn University. Students received awards for their participation in poster and essay competitions on the themes of German Reunification and Career Goals of German Students. Meredith Steinmetz from the Goethe-Zentrum discussed the positive benefits of learning German both personally and professionally and the growing role that German companies are playing in the economic life of Georgia. Virginia Gibbs, Coordinator of Work-Based Learning & Youth Apprenticeships for Fayette County Schools, spoke about internship opportunities with German businesses and how students can apply to participate. Banners made by the students and plaques were presented to the German Consulate and the Goethe-Zentrum to show appreciation for their support of German programs in Georgia. Guests then attended a reception in the cafeteria with food catered by the Home Economics classes at Whitewater High School.

—Patrick Wallace, Whitewater High School, Fayetteville, GA
Oktoberfest at Sam Houston State University

The first annual Sam Houston State University Oktoberfest, funded in part through the Deutsch macht Spaß grant, attracted over 200 attendees from the university and local community! It was a resounding success for our program in terms of visibility. 14 student volunteers were involved, ranging from students enrolled in German classes to students minoring in German. Attendees were able to:

• Get to know German cuisine, which included Wurst, Kartoffelsalat, Kraut, and other traditional dishes. Attendees received small recipe cards after a brief explanation by the chef on how to prepare the dishes at home.

• Learn German phrases taught by advanced students in German

• Participate in competitions: these included a Bierstein race, which had an obstacle course; a fashion contest for folks who showed up in Oktoberfest-inspired attire; and a Schnitzeljagd, which included stations all over our university featuring German cultural activities

• Listen and watch two performances—one featuring three local bands, which played contemporary German songs. The other was a student group from a local high school, in traditional southern German costume, which performed and taught folk dances to attendees.

Family-friendly events were included to accommodate children: Students operated small soccer stations at which everyone who made a goal received a small prize.

Because of their involvement as participants and/or co-organizers of the event, at least four students have signed up for the minor in German and a list of 35 students has signed up to learn more about the German language program! We look forward to hosting this event every year. The Deutsch macht Spaß grant made it possible!

—Ervin Malakaj, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX

Bavarian Folk Dance-Off! at Manzano High School

24 German students worked together to host a Bavarian Folk Dance-Off during the school’s Halloween Carnival. Dance team students practiced the routine for several weeks, and even integrated some original choreography, while retaining the basic 9-step and 12-step Haushammer sequences. A week ahead of time, posters around the school announced the Dance-Off with the slogan “Join in, keep up, compete to win prizes!”

On the day of the Dance-Off, dance team students wore Trachten all day to stir up interest. In the plaza in front of the entire school, they danced to the song “Reit im Winkel,” then circulated through the crowd inviting other students to compete. The dance team instructed the contestants in the steps—then contestants got up and danced Bavarian-style! Contestants won German candies and t-shirts as prizes. As a finale, the team danced to “99 Luftballons” by Nena.

The event was a hit! Faculty members and administrators were impressed. The dance, the music, the costumes, the prizes, and the camaraderie all support awareness of German and the recruitment of new students.

—Heather Boni, Manzano High School, Albuquerque, NM
Field Trip to Washington, DC

The primary goals of our Hopkins ‘Deutsch macht Spaß’ project was to provide students learning German at Hopkins opportunities to interact with each other and faculty members outside of class, use German in fun ways outside the classroom, and to expose them to German away from campus, specifically in Washington, DC.

Our first event was a field trip to Washington, DC. A group of 8 students travelled together from Baltimore, Maryland, to Washington, DC, on the local commuter train. This was a group of students from different courses and because they are advanced speakers, they practiced their German language skills throughout the day.

While in Washington, we visited several sites of interest to German including the Trabi Parade at the Spy Museum and the German-American Heritage Museum. The group shared a meal at Vapiano, a company founded in Germany and franchised in Washington, DC. The main event of the field trip was to visit the E Street Cinema and the Goethe Institut’s FilmNeu Film festival. We were joined by a faculty member from Howard University. The group saw the movie Auf Einmal. Following the movie, the group exchanged ideas and thoughts on this particular movie, as well as German film making in general.

At our second event, Kulinarisches, a large group of students from Beginning German to Advanced German, as well as German majors and minors, joined two graduate students and two faculty members for an evening of cooking and eating together. Students learned how to cook Zwiebelkuchen, Kartoffelsalat, Bratwurst and Obstkuchen, as well as how to make Apfelschorle.

—Deborah McGee Mifflin, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

German “Goodie Bags” as a Recruitment Tool

Everyone knows how much younger students look up to high school students, and how they always want to do what the older kids do. We would like to get the younger students excited about the German language and culture, and go home and share this with their parents.

Shakopee High School German Club members stayed after school to decorate canvas bags and fill them with German goodies to give to students in 6th and 7th grade who are considering signing up for German. The students brainstormed ideas and phrases to write and decorate on their bags, and then decorated the canvas bags. When students are given their registration packets and information for the 2017-18 school year, they find out that students who visit Frau Nienow at Shakopee Junior High on registration night will receive a goodie bag. There is already buzz around the bags as little brothers and sisters of the high school students want to know when and how they can get a German goodie bag. This project has been a great tool in order to boost interest and publicity of the Shakopee German program.

—Amy Engler, Shakopee High School, Shakopee, MN
Martinstag Open House

The DANK German Language School in Arlington Heights, Illinois celebrated St. Martinstag, an eventful and successful morning that many will remember, focused on the tradition of St. Martinstag and helping people in need. Our students, from age three to the adult learners, participated, along with many parents, grandparents, friends, and community members with children.

The motivation of our teachers was phenomenal—everybody contributed with crafty ideas and practical know-how. A student volunteered to dress St. Martin properly with sword and helmet, and to sew a cloak which would be easy to rip apart. Everything came together smoothly as we finalized the logistics for the day. We advertised in several papers and on social media. It was a true team effort, with help and support of many of our parents who were eager to participate in this special event.

Volunteers helped with crafts and storytelling. Students met in different rooms to learn about the historical figure St. Martin, craft a lantern, practice songs, or make a St. Martin drawing. Later, everyone assembled for the lantern parade into and around the courtyard, led by a teacher. The parade then gathered around an improvised stage where the 4th and 5th graders beautifully reenacted the story of St. Martin in German. The drama was very well orchestrated and well received. Participants were encouraged to bring gently used coats, and there was an overload of donations—the bin could not even hold all the coats. Everyone then enjoyed hot cocoa and baked goods—a Wachtmann for the younger students, and a German Bretzel for everyone else.

—Silvia Schmid, DANK Chapter 26, Arlington Heights, IL

Spieletag—Forging Connections between High School and College German Programs

This project’s goal is to encourage high school students to continue with their German studies in college by having high school students interact with college students of German, showing them that German in college is doable, that German is relevant and can be fun. Susanne Sutton, University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), collaborated with Gail Zik at Mt. Hebron High School to create a “Spieletag bei Mt. Hebron High School.”

UMBC has a direct exchange program with the University of Kassel. Two students from Kassel, Lisa Gertenbach and Kevin Szostek, are studying to become teachers in Germany and worked with Susanne Sutton on this project. Leading “Spieletag bei Mt. Hebron High School” meant that Lisa and Kevin would gain a unique perspective of American high schools, and the high school students were able to interact with two leaders from Germany who are closer to their own age. Deutsch macht Spaß grant funds were used to purchase a set of authentic German board games and language learning games, along with prizes. The game instructions were simplified so all students, regardless of where they were in their language learning, would understand how to play the games “Spitz pass auf” and “Das längste Wort”.

During “Spieletag bei Mt. Hebron High School” all of the German classes met in the cafeteria, and were able to spread out, giving small groups the chance to enjoy the dynamics of the games. All students seemed to be engaged and enjoyed the various games as they rotated through the stations. Judging by the fun everyone had and the positive feedback from teachers, students, school administrators and the German exchange students, Spieletag was a success.

—Susanne Sutton, University of Maryland Baltimore County, and Gail Zik, Mt. Hebron High School, Ellicott City, MD
In school and in the community

Community Adventsfeier

Our goal for the Adventsfeier was to provide an insight into German culture for the members of the community, awaken interest in German language and enrollment in German language classes we offer, and be lots of fun for all who attended. Toddler classes put their shoes outside the classroom door and the 10 to 12 year olds had fun filling them. The 6 to 9 year olds baked Nicholas-Brötchen, and the 4 to 6 year olds made Weihnachtsmänner. The Jugendtreff, a monthly gathering of German-speaking teenagers, baked Weihnachtsplätzchen. A group of pre-and elementary schoolers, led by some older children, prepared a Singspiel “Grosser Stern was nun?” for the Adventsgottesdienst. 10 to 12 year olds, at the A-2 level, worked on a PowerPoint in German on Advent customs in Germany and Austria. Adult beginning students were able to understand the PowerPoint and had a lively discussion of the customs and how they related to their own families’ customs.

The culmination was the community craft day and German Advent service. The children made Strohsterne, farbige Papiersterne, Bienenhonig-Kerzen, Gläser für Teelichter, Lavendel Duftsack, and Badesalz. Participants included children from the school and also peers from outside the school. People were able to register for the event by using our website, which enhanced participation from outside. Older children from the school and parents showed up at the craft-making to help the little ones with crafts.

An Adventsgottesdienst in German was held at the Mountain View Methodist Church, whose pastor, Steve Warren, speaks German. The service included the play presented by the students, with readings done by church members, teachers from the school, and members of the community. This event was open to the larger Boulder/Longmont community and we all shared refreshments afterwards, making many contacts for our school, thanks to the Deutsch macht Spaß grant. We invited all students of our school and their parents, the members of the Mountain View United Methodist Church, the members of local Stammtische, and members of other churches and the general community. Our estimated attendance: about 150 people!

—Kandace Einbeck, Boulder School for German Language and Culture

German Film Course

Deutsch macht Spaß grant funding helped me design an engaging film class for my students while promoting the German program at South Mecklenburg High School. German 6 meets every other day for the entire school year. Using the films and textbooks purchased, I created a semester outline for the students much like a college-syllabus. The students and parents were informed that the class would be similar to a college class to help students prepare for the rigor of college German.

For the first part of the class, we are focusing on Weimar Cinema, with an in-depth analysis of the state of Germany and its people at that time, using these films: Berlin: Symphony of a Great City; The Blue Angel; Fritz Lang’s “M”; and Triumph of the Will. Next, we will focus on cinema related to the cold war and the fall of the Berlin Wall. We will view the following films: Vergiss Amerika; Goodbye Lenin!; Sonnenallee; and Das Leben der Anderen. Then we will view an array of modern films such as: Lola Rennt; Bella Martha; and Die Welle.

Each screening involved reading a chapter in our textbook, German Culture through Film, stopping between scenes for a discussion, and a final essay. I have been very impressed with the insight that students have provided thus far. Students will also create their own short films, which will be used to encourage other students to take German.

—Molly Rowland, South Mecklenburg High School, NC
Promoting German language and culture...

Last year, AATG members were invited to apply for Deutsch macht Spaß grants to support local campus or community events to promote German learning and engagement with German culture. Thanks to funding through the German government’s Netzwerk Deutsch program, grants of up to $500 were awarded to support creative and innovative projects.

Several reports on last year’s grants were featured in the February Newsletter. Read more about what members are doing—how they are keeping German visible and prominent in their schools, as well as reaching out to the broader community to spread the message that Deutsch macht Spaß!

Apply for a 2017 Deutsch macht Spaß Grant
Project proposals will be reviewed and funded on an ongoing basis. The final deadline for submission is August 15, 2017. Find details here.

Give a Gnome a Home at Mountain View High School

This project was devised to increase visibility for the high school German program and to increase German enrollment for the coming year. Supplies were purchased to craft gnomes out of wooden pegs, felt, fabric, and embroidery floss. High school students crafted gnomes and “adopted” them as part of our curriculum. A highly visible bulletin board across from the cafeteria was used to display pictures of the students with their newly adopted gnomes.

Then the students created gnome homes from supplies purchased with the grant. Students participated in a classroom debate, in German, about their homes, which were then displayed in the library. All of the German classes, as well as the general student body, were invited to view the homes on display and vote for their favorites.

The next step was meeting with middle school geography, world civilization, and band teachers—who were presented with a desk-top set of gnomes related to their content area along with professionally decorated gnome cookies. At the middle school information night for parents and students, a display provided information about the fun things German can offer students like the GAPP exchange, culture days with food, and the fact that students can receive university credit for taking upper level German 3 and German 4 classes. Students were given a ‘Top 10 Reasons to take German’ brochure with a packet of Gummibären stapled to the brochure. Many parents and middle school students now know about the high school German program and are interested in signing up for next school year.

—Cassie Shelton, Mountain View High School, Meridian, ID
German Immersion Day at Cony High School and Maranacook High School

“Bleib ruhig und sprich Deutsch”

30 students from both Cony High School and Maranacook High School made this their motto for the day when they participated in the “Deutsch macht Spaß - German Immersion Day.” The German teachers Deborah Backman (Cony) and Justin Fecteau (Maranacook), with much help from Isabel Choinowski, the German intern working at Cony, planned out an entire day of authentic German food and drinks, German games, a German movie and lots of fun - and all that, of course in German! A great chance for the students to practice and improve their language skills outside the classroom in a very relaxed atmosphere, while playing fun games and immersing themselves in the German culinary world. Five German-speaking Augusta area community members joined the group of excited students, which made the Immersion Day even more authentic and interesting.

Starting the day with a typical German breakfast, the kids quickly opened up and gained confidence to speak German during group games such as a Scavenger Hunt, Pictionary, and “Schokolade Essen.” For lunch, the students learned to cook Schnitzel and Spätzle. For the German culinary experience, German cakes couldn’t be missing from the agenda. In a fun bake-off, the students baked four different German cakes, such as the German Käsekuchen and Apfel-Streuselkuchen. As a reward for their participation the students were not only given a T-shirt with “Bleib ruhig und sprich Deutsch” but also lots of little German prizes such as Gummi-Bears and buttons with German sayings at the end of the day. The German Immersion Day was a great success and everyone had a fantastic time being immersed into the German culture. The students who participated can’t wait to do it again.

—Deborah Backman, Cony High School, Augusta, ME

German Outreach Program at Capital High School

Delta Epsilon Phi German National Honor Society members from Capital High School reached out to our feeder elementary school. Two Delta Epsilon Phi students gave forty-five minute long German lessons to a third-grade class. On Monday, high school students taught the younger students ‘die Zahlen’ from 1 through 20 using videos, songs and games. On Wednesday, they introduced ‘die Farben’ using finger paint and candy. And on Thursday, they taught ‘die Körperteile’ using the game ‘Simon sagt’. Overall, our elementary outreach went very well. The high school students loved interacting and teaching the third graders German. The third graders really enjoyed the lessons the Delta Epsilon Phi students prepared for them. We hope to continue this program each year.

The second part of the project was to promote German at the junior high school level. We have two feeder high schools we will reach out to before scheduling. Our goal is to make German visible and appealing so incoming sophomores sign up for German. German is only offered at the senior high school, so it is very important that we promote signing up for German amongst the freshmen and the Jr. high schools. This portion of our Deutsch macht Spaß grant funds were used during the Sophomore Orientation Night. The Capital High School German program set up a booth with hot chocolate and German cookies, and invited incoming sophomores to learn about the German program at Capital High school. Our booth will not only featured inviting German treats, but also visuals as well as German club members to promote the German program and answer questions.

—Toni Gorton, Capital High School, Boise, ID
In class and in the community

German in the Community in Fishers, Indiana

The German program at Fishers High School promoted German with a display and activities at our city’s Oktoberfest. The Deutsch macht Spaß grant provided funds to create and build carnival type games for younger students which will be used again, and to purchase needed Oktoberfest supplies, such as balloons and streamers, and German prizes—tattoos, stickers, candies, etc. German club students assisted with activities and at the booth to help the community learn more about the language and culture of Germany.

The outreach at the festival increased awareness of the German program, and publicized future events. Because the booth was so well attended, the turnout at the Bratfest was the best ever, and the GAPP Gala was practically standing room only. GAPP participants for the next exchange in October 2017 reached the maximum of 25! The increased enthusiasm for these two events were in part due to promoting them at the Oktoberfest.

—Robin Geisinger, Fishers High School, Fishers, Indiana

Buttons for German Program Visibility

We applied for a Deutsch macht Spaß grant because it is absolutely necessary in our school to aggressively sell German and we have a very limited budget with which we may do so. And as the demographics of our school change, maintaining an excellent German program becomes increasingly challenging.

While it used to be true that simply having a reputation for excellence automatically attracted students to our program, this is no longer the case. We have to market ourselves. The button maker and supplies that we purchased with this grant helped us add a new way to promote German at Aiken High School and in the middle school that sends us most of our students.

This year, in an ongoing effort to maintain our program and attract students to it, we set up displays at open house, orientation, PTSO meetings, etc. At any appropriate gathering of students and/or parents, we asked for permission to champion our program, to talk up German in our school community, to remind everyone that we are here and that learning German is a great thing to do. We created posters and banners to put up whenever one of our students accomplished something wonderful. We created fliers to promote the German-STEM connection. We distributed copies of favorable newspaper articles (about the National German exam, for example). We will be making videos and presentations to show to local civic groups. We have done and will continue to do whatever we can to energetically market our program.

And now we make buttons. And they are popular, especially in the middle school. The response to our buttons has been quite positive. For example, we expected our Ich liebe Deutsch buttons to be a hit and they were. What we did not anticipate was that students would really enjoy making the buttons, especially designing visually interesting buttons. It has become a popular activity at club meetings, in fact. That was a nice, unexpected bonus.

—Lisa Lader, Aiken High School, Aiken, SC
Science Class for Kinder: Deutsch im Kontext: Typisch Mensch!

The German Language School for Children offered a science class in German for 8 to 12-year olds to attract families who are interested in engaging their children in STEM activities while exposing them to the German language. The hands-on approach of the class was designed to help students engage in meaningful “learning by doing” experiences. The class, “Deutsch im Kontext: Typisch Mensch!” focused on important basic scientific concepts, hands-on activities, and experiments related to the biology of humans. Students learned not only new science concepts but also new vocabulary and grammar in a stimulating environment. Students could sign up for individual classes or the entire series.

Each week had a different focus: Einführung ins Experimentieren und Kennzeichen von Lebewesen; Das menschliche Skelett und unsere Gelenke; Unsere Sinne ausspionieren; Stoffe trennen; „Slime“ige Angelegenheiten—Kohlenhydraten auf der Spur; Versuche mit Kohlenstoffdioxid; Versuche rund um die Dichte; and Candy Chemistry.

The Science Class was a novel way of advertising for our school and added to its positive image. We will definitely continue to offer science classes – perhaps as a summer camp with a science focus. Without the Deutsch macht Spaß Grant, this project might not have been realized and students would have not been able to experience a new form of language learning.

—Sandra Fenzl, German Language School for Children, Seattle, WA

Gustavus German Club

The goals of the German Club at Gustavus Adolphus College are to encourage and promote the study of the German language and culture, celebrate the expression of German in the lives of members, and expand appreciation of German in general to the greater public.

The Gustavus German Club put on a number of events, assisted in activities, and co-sponsored showings, with the help of a Deutsch macht Spaß grant. The semester starting off by raising awareness — Schultüten for each German course increased students’ cultural awareness, and the German hit songs at the student involvement fair brought attention to the Club. The Oktoberfest’s festive atmosphere was a great success. German club members performed songs and skits as part of the International Festival on campus, creating treats to celebrate St. Nikolaus day. The club worked with another campus group to co-sponsor a viewing of the documentary film Before the Flood, in recognition of Germany’s leadership in green technology. The wrap-up activity for the semester was Activity Night, which began with dinner and playing German games. Afterwards, students created “Study Bags” for German classes for finals week, filled with candy for quick energy and German memes to get laughs and support psychological wellbeing.

By spreading events throughout the semester, the Gustavus German Club maintained a presence for new students to join at any time. This resulted in a large increase in popularity and recognition of the club on campus. The club looks forward to continuing the success! More outreach has been done to work with other organizations. In addition, a stronger focus on education will be taken by structuring events around showcasing German history and promoting the experience of German culture.

—Austin Warner, German Club, student of Patricia Branstad, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota
Connecting through German

Deutsche Zustände—Workshop Oklahoma

The Deutsch macht Spaß grant supported a workshop at Oklahoma State University for high school students and teachers, as well as college/university students and instructors. The activities featured a guest scholar from Berlin, Dr. Benno Fischer.

In a German II university class, Dr. Fischer led a discussion of Brexit and its ramifications for Germany. Later that evening, he led the German Club in a discussion of the EU, Brexit and prospects for the future, all in German, with just brief translation assistance. Fourteen members from all levels of German study attended—and it was one of the most stimulating German Club meetings ever held.

In an advanced German literature class, Dr. Fischer led a discussion centered around the books they’re reading. He was asked about how he remembers the Fall of the Wall and how the memory of the border between former East and West Germany is being kept alive in Berlin. Then came the workshop for high school German teachers and their students. Some students visited an intermediate level class, where students discussed how fluent one would need to be to get along in Berlin, as well as differences in housing and home buying in Germany and the US. Other high school students joined an advanced conversation class focused on films, and discussed questions related to topics Nirgendwo in Afrika. In each class, guests participated along with the regular students in lively discussions. Later that day, Dr. Fischer gave a presentation “Deutsche Zustände 2016” on current events in Germany, including the refugee crisis, Germany’s role in the crisis and in Europe, and the future of the EU. The presentation was followed by a question and answer session. All agreed that Dr. Fischer’s presentations were extremely informative, highly stimulating and intellectually challenging.

—John R. teVelde, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

Dinner und Deutsch

At the German-American Society of Omaha, German students and their guests got dressed up (think prom), enjoyed German food, mingled with other area German students and their guests, and participated in cultural activities such as German card games and dancing to modern German music.

As they entered, students were welcomed and offered Karneval/Fasching masks. Students were encouraged to mingle—helped along by placemats with phrases to facilitate conversation in German. Each table was named for a street in Germany, as a lead-in to the theme of the Nebraska State German Convention this year, Durch die Straßen des Lebens. Each table was challenged to figure out in which city their street could be found, and prizes were awarded. Dinner included Wienerschnitzel or Jägerschnitzel, Kartoffelsalat, grüne Bohnen und Sauerkraut. For dessert there was a Schokoladentorte und rote Grütze. The students commented on how delicious the food was. The Heimat Tänzer from the German-American Society volunteered their time to perform for and interact with the students, exposing the students to historical elements of German culture. Next came activities, planned by the Bellevue West High School German Club students, to encourage students to interact in German with students from other schools. Various games were played that integrated the German language and prizes were awarded. Finally, modern German music was played and DJ lights were turned on for the dance portion of the evening. The Deutsch macht Spaß grant helped support the ticket cost, along with decorations and prizes.

The Dinner und Deutsch event received positive feedback from students and teachers, who said they had an awesome time and want to come next year. Even those who will graduate plan to come back for this event!

—Amanda Messerschmitt, Bellevue Public Schools, Nebraska
Rocktoberfest

Rocktoberfest (Rockwood Oktoberfest) began four years ago, when teachers in the Rockwood School District wanted to bring together German students from six middle schools and four high schools to enjoy German culture outside of the classroom. Each year the festival has grown, with more activities added. This year, to increase awareness of the German programs and to help them grow, invitations were extended to community members, other elementary and middle schools, and German organizations in the St. Louis area. The Deutsch macht Spaß grant supported the purchase of supplies to enhance the festival, both now and in future years. Students enjoyed many activities—dancing to a live band, enjoying German food, singing in German, tongue-twister contests, and more. A chocolate tasting event was a special highlight. In previous years, approximately 100-125 people participated. This year there were well over 200 students and family members, who all enjoyed the event—which should increase the interest and support for German in the Rockwood schools!

—Kim Hotze, Rockwood School District, Missouri

Easy German DC Video Workshop

With the help of a Deutsch macht Spaß grant, the New School of Northern Virginia hosted four leaders from the non-profit Easy German, which has produced German language street interview episodes since 2006. Video guru Janusz Hamerski, co-founder Carina Schmid, translator Ben Eve, and frequent host Isabell Schmid all arrived for an exciting weekend in DC. They worked with a diverse group of 20 students and six teachers from The New School (Fairfax, VA), Northern Virginia Community College, Peninsula Catholic High School (Newport News, VA), Northside High School (Roanoke, VA), Liberty High School (Bealeton, VA), the German School (Potomac, MD), and the Goethe Institute DC.

Participants broke into groups to develop questions before heading into Arlington and DC for interviews. The first group went to the Heidelberg Pastry Shoppe, which has been in DC for 41 years. They interviewed the owner and founder, Wolfgang Büchler, who is well-known for his German charm and culinary skills as a baker and pastry chef. In the afternoon, the entire workshop team assembled at the German Embassy to meet the Director of the German Information Center USA, Dr. Stefan Buchwald, who focuses on bringing the many sides of modern Germany to the United States. After an in-depth introductory talk in German and English, Dr. Buchwald fielded questions from students and teachers. Then they went back outside to film a shorter interview in front of a colorful segment of the iconic Berlin Wall. After wrapping up the episode, the entire crew headed for the White House. It was an incredibly crowded afternoon, but that provided more opportunities to “catch” German tourists taking pictures of DC’s most famous address. It also gave more student interviewers and camera teams a chance to try out their skills.

The workshop day on Sunday can be summed up in ten words, “Work hard, don’t give up, and have fun making videos!” participants divided into five groups. Three groups cut the footage from the three interview locations down to the best material, while two groups practiced interviewing and producing mini-films. Wow! The completed video of the weekend, including several student interviewers, is available on YouTube as Easy German 166—In Washington D.C.

—Virginia Palmer-Fuechsel, The New School of Northern Virginia, Fairfax, VA