

The sky is the limit



Why the Anne-Frank-School was named Germany's **school of the year** for 2013

In the last nine years, not a single student has left the Anne-Frank-School without a diploma. Students are never held back, transferred to different schools, or dropped out. "For our students, the sky has to be the limit," says school director Angelika Knies. "That's why we work with both highly gifted students and students with learning disabilities - and we're very successful with both groups." The crowd applauds. Knies is on the stage at the award ceremony for the Deutscher Schulpreis (German School Award 2013), receiving this year's grand prize from German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The Anne-Frank-School, just outside Hamburg in Bargteheide, is this year's winner.

"Everything they do helps make these children and teens stronger"

From its humble beginnings in 1989, in a single-family home with seven teachers, the Anne-Frank-School (AFS) has become a success story. Every year, demand for spots in the school's five classes is twice the number of spots available; congratulations are always in order to the kids who earn the chance to attend. The jury visited the school for two days to observe classes and talk with teachers, parents, and students, and they were particularly impressed with the way teachers interacted with their students. "They do



Der Deutsche Schulpreis Every year, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Heidehof Foundation present the German School Award under the motto, **Give learning wings!** A jury selects Germany's best schools according to six criteria: performance, dealing with diversity, quality of lessons, responsibility, school life, and the school as an institution of learning. All award winners become members of the Akademie des Deutschen Schulpreises (German School Award Academy), where they can share experiences and ideas. A total of €243,000 in prize money is awarded, with the outright winner receiving €100,000.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel presented the 2013 German School Award in Berlin.

Photos: M. Lautenschläger

more than just pay lip service to methodology. They are very close to their students. Everything they do helps make these children and teens stronger," says Michael Schratz, a professor at the University of Innsbruck and the jury's spokesman.

And the numbers bear this out. In the fifth grade, one-third of students are on a university track, one-third are on course to attend a modern secondary school, and one third are on track to attend a secondary-technical school. At AFS, all of them study together until tenth grade. After these five years, more than half of the young boys and girls (53 percent) exceed all expectations and go on to a higher educational track.

"You can do even more. Now prove it!"

Lars Frederic Rexa is a prime example of this. His primary school teacher told him: "You belong in a modern secondary school; university is probably not an option for you." But then his mother enrolled him at AFS. The 19-year-old just completed his university entrance exams in economics/politics, English, and German. Now all he has left is the oral biology exam, and he's done it. Lars has both himself and his teacher Alexa Basner, who passed away last year, to thank for this. "After I took the secondary-technical school exam in tenth grade, she said to me: 'Lars, you can do even more. Now prove it!' And so I dove into my studies head first."

Students at the Anne-Frank-School look after themselves, as well as their fellow students and the school as a whole. In the "performance" category, the jury awarded the school top marks, with special praise for the mentoring program, the seminars on strengthening self-efficacy, and the social awareness and group training programs.

As winners of the 2013 Deutscher Schulpreis, AFS will receive €100,000 to use for whatever purpose it deems fit. After summer vacation, Knies wants to meet with everyone at the school to decide what to do with the prize money. She already has one idea: investing in further education to make the school even better.

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Short video about the Anne Frank School



Robert Bosch lecturer Torsten Weller spent two years in the Russian Far East.

The eastward march continues

For 20 years, **Robert Bosch lecturers** have been small-scale ambassadors in foreign countries

Two years ago, 28-year-old Torsten Weller left Germany for Russia's far east - for Chita, the capital city of Zabaykalsky Krai. This is Russia's easternmost province. Sparsely populated, it lies directly on the border with Mongolia and China. To the south, the Trans-Siberian Railway cuts across the steppes, and mountain ranges span the frozen north.

Weller came to Chita as a lecturer with the Robert Bosch Stiftung. He taught German at the local college, organized cultural events, and - as the only German among a population of 300,000 - was a popular interview subject for the local media. He was like an ambassador, on a smaller scale. "Germany is frequently mentioned in the Russian media. Many people in Russia are well informed about current events in Germany and even have relatives there," Weller says. Still, the clichés of orderly, punctual Germans and the memories of World War II remain. "The memories of the war aren't really about anti-German sentiment. They're more about creating a feeling of solidarity in the face of modern problems, which include high youth unemployment, corruption, and extreme levels of alcohol consumption."

Eastward from Poland to China

For twenty years, the Robert Bosch Stiftung has been sending lecturers abroad to teach German at colleges and convey an idea of what modern Germany is like. While the "Wild East" had already begun in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary in the 1990s, its frontier slowly moved toward Russia and China. And the lecturers went along with it. With the support of the foundation, more than 800 of them were able to spend one to two years in a new country. They worked at 250 host institutions in 27 countries. Local junior employees help out in tandem, joining the lecturers to form international teams at the colleges.

At first, Weller was disappointed by his students' poor language skills, as they made a number of his project ideas impossible. But after two years, he is leaving Chita secure in the knowledge "that the reputation of the German department has improved," as has the number of students who are learning German. A successor will continue his work this fall.

The program offers the young lecturers an opportunity to acquire international experience and further training. For the last two years, they have also been able to take part in the foundation's own occupational training course at the University of Hildesheim, Education Management at Colleges in Eastern Europe and China. In Chita, Weller was most interested in how the border region operated. Now he'll get to experience that from the other side: he's starting his postgraduate studies in Beijing soon.

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