Statement of Teaching Philosophy

As a teacher of German language and culture, my goal is to help students understand that "learning German" means accomplishing tasks and goals using language: negotiating, questioning, playing, collecting and interpreting information. Writing is a tool for expressing meaningful ideas and reading a means of getting information, increasing knowledge, questioning, interpreting, and growing. I want my students to learn strategies and reasons for communicating in interpretational, interactive, and presentational modes.

In order to achieve these goals, my primary tasks are

- To apply methods that enable each student to use German from his/her entry point toward acceptable and attainable goals,
- To recognize student strengths in order to build confidence, and
- To assess each student's German language capability in a clear, fair, ongoing process.

Since there are as many ways of learning as there are students, I try to continue to review and update traditional methods, for example, most recently by:

- Supplementing multiple-stage essay assignments with peer-writing conferences and holistic grading,
- Encouraging mini-presentations in small groups that allow students to rehearse, give each other feedback and increase overall production and comprehension,
- Introducing more reading and reading strategies from elementary German onwards,
- Developing pedagogically sound uses of new technology supporting primary skills and encouraging inquiry and lifelong learning (Wimba, Websearch, Courseworks),
- Using portfolio evaluations beginning at the intermediate level, and
- Individualizing language support to advanced students so that "bridge courses" really lead to successful communicators.

Whether beginners are trying to master the basics of the German gender system and build logical responses to simple personal questions, or intermediate students are discovering links between fairytales, Romanticism, and the Greens, or potential majors in "Berlin: Past and Present" are honing structures while interpreting the city's subway system or multicultural politics or poetry, my role is informed by the same basic principles:

- I teach German language and culture to my students in German.
- My classroom aims to be student-oriented.
- My approach to teaching and language acquisition is a functional one in which students apply German to learn German.
- Becoming functional in a foreign language requires years of practice, and I set expectations accordingly.
- Assessment using rubrics, models, and feedback needs to be applied at all levels to help students to progress and to keep track of my teaching effectiveness.
- It's essential to remain flexible and open to new developments and to build on time-proven principles of teaching.

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Richard Alan Korb, December 2006