

The Sky is the Limit_Issue 4

GERMANY

Going to school in Germany

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A few days ago, second- and third-grade students returned from Germany. We went there as exchange students. We would like to tell you a little bit about German education system and some differences between our school and the school in Geislingen.

They have 4 years of primary school and 7 years of secondary or vocational school. Their first lesson starts at 7.45 and the last usually ends at 16.20. Their lessons are a little different than ours, they have fewer subjects in one day, but double lessons are quite common. They don't change their classroom unless they have Biology, Chemistry or Physics. They have a 5-minute exercises break once a day, so that they can stay focused through the day. Their classrooms are humble, they have green boards with chalk and overhead projectors, so that the teachers can show students how to calculate or what answer is correct. They also have a small ping-pong table in every classroom so that the students can relax and play ping-pong during the breaks. They said they would get smart boards soon. The school surroundings are cultivated; there are benches, parking spots for cars, bikes and motorbikes. Apart from that, they have a smoking area – like we do.

Their breaks are similar to ours, but they have a 15-minute break between the third and fourth lesson. Their lessons are very relaxed and students don't have to stand up and say hello to the teacher. Also, all the teachers look very young and have friendly and relaxed relationships with their students. We noticed that they talk to each other outside the classes and that the teachers are always prepared to help if a student is having problems. We were confused by the fact that students in the same class aren't the same age, they are between 16 and 19. The lessons are very interesting because they have Economics and they discuss current events, which we think is missing in our lessons. They also have Ethics and Religion (they can pick between Catholic and Evangelical). At 12.50 they have a lunch break that lasts 1 hour, but they don't have a warm cooked meal like we do and that's what we missed the most. We are grateful for having that option. However, German students can buy some sandwiches, chocolate bars, juices and French fries, because in Germany they don't have a habit to have a big lunch like us, so they have a snack at school and they eat a big dinner at home.

