

Jay Chrapala

Deutsch/English After-School-Program  
at the Luther School Lübeck

Six months review

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## I. Introduction

The following will serve as a review for the first 6 months of my work at the Luther School. The hope is to give a better understanding of my role, my experiences and what it is like to work at the Luther School as the bilingual English/German teacher.

## II. Brief description for the job as bilingual teacher at the Luther School

I am part of the after school staff for the bilingual German/English program. My job as a native English speaker, coming from Canada, is to try to incorporate the English language in a fun and relaxed way into the daily lives of the children. In order to help the children to start to feel comfortable using the English language as they grow and develop, so they can become fluent English speakers. Although, this is technically my job, there is so much more that we have to do. For example, we are often dealing with controversies, problems and fights between the children and have to serve as the authoritative figure to help dissolve the problem in a quick and friendly manner. This can be easier said than done with some kids, especially when a child is frustrated or upset. Understanding the problem and finding ways to stay calm and patient, so we can manage the situation that is best and safest for the children, as well as for the staff, is very important. Being there to help out our team leader, Frau Domanski and our staff in any way needed is also an

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important part of the job. Remaining open minded to take on new tasks and remain flexible are important, as situations can change rather quickly when it comes to working with so many kids and parents who come and go at all times of the afternoon. So as you may be assigned to one task or one room to monitor, you have to be ready when a problem or change arises to take over or help in another situation or room. For example, when a parent who does not speak German and only speaks a bit of English comes in, I can help to understand their needs and to translate to Frau Domanski. Or when a window gets broken inside the school, I can help to clean it up and make sure the area is safe for the children. So all in all, the job is very complex and you have to remain prepared to handle many different situations. Sometimes you are a teacher, sometimes you are monitoring noise and crowd control (like in the cafeteria), sometimes you are a security guard breaking up fights and arguments, sometimes you are a friend who is there to play and entertain the children and sometimes you have to be the voice of reason between right and wrong. Another one of my jobs at the Luther School, is to teach the children sports in a fun environment and also to teach them the importance of fitness. That both sports and fitness are great ways to help a person learn new skills, develop functional body movements and co-ordination, to push ones mental limitations and overcome obstacles through perseverance and not giving up, to learn how to co-operate with others and so many life skills that will be used later in life. As well as learning the importance physical exercise has in order to live a healthy lifestyle.

### III. Duties on a daily basis

For the most part, the beginning of each day, is rather similar. I show up to work and have some time to prepare for the day, before the program starts and the children arrive half an hour later. We as a staff, talk to each other about our day and our lives. This also gives time for Frau Domanski to explain to us any special circumstances that may be taking place that day or where she would like us to go and when we need to be there. Once the kids arrive, I normally stay in the Welcome room for 5-10 minutes to greet the children. Normally, I will start with going to the games room. This allows Claudia a chance to go over to the cafeteria to help monitor and control the children and the noise level there while the children receive lunch. During this time, I control the games room. Making sure the children ask if they can go get a game out of the game cabinet. Then writing the date, the name of the game and the children playing the game in the associated game registry book. After the children are done playing their game, they must show me that all the game pieces are accounted for and then sign their name in the book to de-register the game. The reason we have to enforce such a strict register/de-register policy is due to the fact that in the past, too many game pieces were lost and then many games could not be played properly. I will often participate in playing the games with the children, as they often ask me to play with them and also, I enjoy

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playing. This also allows me an opportunity to teach the children the rules or strategy of the game, as well as make sure everyone plays properly and remains friendly. Depending on the number of staff we have for that given day, I may stay in the games room until it is time for either my sport with fun class or my fitness class, which begins at 15:00 o'clock every Monday to Thursday and goes until 16:00 o'clock when the program ends for the day. Other times, I will go to one of the two homework rooms to help the children with their homework. When I help out in the homework room, there is always another staff member there who is a native German speaker. With this being said, I let that staff member help the children with any German language homework they may have and I help the children with their mathematics or English homework. These are always good moments where you feel like a teacher who is helping the children learn. Next I will describe my daily duties as follows, due to my sport with fun and fitness class schedules:

**A-Monday and Wednesday (Sport with fun class @15:00-16:00)**

Every Monday and Wednesday, I have the opportunity to teach my sport with fun class in the gym. For me, this is a very special time, when I can use my love and knowledge of sports. Being a natural athlete who has played many sports over my lifetime and an ex professional ice hockey player and long time ice hockey coach, I have learned so much from sports. I try to use these positive experiences and energy to engage the children in all sports, so they can understand and respect the skills and difficulties that come with each sport. It also gives me an opportunity

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to be in charge of what sport I would like to teach the kids and what exercises we will focus on that day. Normally, I will teach one sport for 3 to 4 consecutive weeks. I believe this allows the children to gain an overall understanding of each sport, as they do numerous exercises, learning the many different skills and rules involved in each sport. After finishing 2 to 4 skill oriented exercises during the class, I tend to end the day with the children actually playing the game. This way the children can try to incorporate the skills they just learned and practiced into real game situations. After focusing on one sport for 3 to 4 weeks, I will choose another sport to play, with the same agenda for proper learning and development. So far some of the sports we have played are: dodgeball, basketball, handball, hockey, badminton and soccer. Normally during my sport with fun classes, I will have one of the student teachers help me. Their role is to assist me in demonstrations of exercises, translate instructions in German when needed and help manage the children to make sure they are doing what is asked of them. This is very helpful as class participation can vary day to day and having a helping hand is always beneficial to ensure we can stay focused on the tasks at hand for the day and have fun while doing it. Also, every Monday at 16:00 o'clock we as a staff get together to have a teachers meeting, lead by Frau Domanski. These meetings take place on a weekly basis and allow us the time to discuss any issues, upcoming holidays, future planning, address any problems that may be occurring and come up with good solutions to move forward with. I feel these meetings are necessary and a good way for everyone to express their thoughts and feelings, so we can all work together to improve as a staff and come up with new ideas on how to do so.

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**B-Tuesday and Thursday (Fitness Class @15:00-16:00)**

Every Tuesday and Thursday, I have the opportunity to teach the children in my fitness class. This time is also very important to me, as I can express how living an active lifestyle leads to overall good health throughout ones life. I also have a great passion for working out and pushing the body's limits to make yourself physically and mentally stronger. This naturally comes from my sport background and always working out to become a better athlete, but also from my time working as a personal trainer in gyms and also as an ice hockey coach. On Tuesdays, I teach my fitness classes in the gym, where I have a lot of space and sport equipment to use. On Thursdays, I teach my fitness classes in the smaller Weltwetter room, due to the fact that the gym is used during this time by the Handball coach. For me, Tuesdays are always more fun and interesting than Thursdays, as I normally have more children who attend and I also have more space and equipment to use to come up with creative ways to work out with the children. An example of some of the exercises we have done are: jump rope, speed ladder, running patterns and obstacle courses. Thursdays are usually smaller numbers of children, due to the fact that Handball class is also offered at the same time as my fitness class. On these days, I tend to stick to more body weight only exercises that tend to take up less space, but also allow a good workout to take place. For example, body weight squats, lunges, pushups, sit ups and balance exercises. I enjoy creating new and fun exercise routines for every fitness class I teach, always focusing on developing the entire body. Regarding fitness with children, I believe it is important to teach

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them how to move their bodies properly. To learn proper movement patterns, balance, co-ordination, agility, speed, core strength, flexibility and overall body strength and power. We always start each fitness class with a dynamic warm up, utilizing many moving body parts to properly warm up our body, muscles, brain and heart. After our dynamic warm up is complete, we take a short break before beginning our workout for the day. Our workouts always try to include exercises that will develop the entire body and not just one muscle group. Then we usually end each class with some core strength exercises and a team cheer. The team cheer is a good way to encourage teamwork and positivity. That we all worked together to better ourselves and to understand that the workout is not a challenge against others, but a challenge against yourself to push yourself to be better and stronger than the day before.

**C-Friday (Play time only)**

On Fridays we have no AG classes or homework. Meaning the entire day is open for the children to do what they like and go into whichever activity room they choose. They also have the option to play outside on the playground when the weather permits. Most Fridays, I will remain in the games room the entire time, playing numerous games with the kids. Some of the favorite games played by the children are: Uno, Skipbo, Bingo, Chess, Lotti Karotti, Da ist der Wurm drin and Looping Louie. There are also many other fun games to choose from, these just happen to be the games I have noticed get played often. Some of the games are based of luck and others incorporate some strategy. Both types of games can be

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fun to play, but personally, I enjoy games that involve some strategy. As strategy games allow me the opportunity to teach the children the many different strategies the different games include. Also on Fridays, I am often asked to go outside on the playground to watch over the children and play with them outside. Sometimes it is just a matter of making sure the children play nicely with each other and share the toys, others it is actually playing along with the children and the least favorite is having to break up the many fights that occur on the playground. Some of the favorite games and things the children enjoy doing outside on the playground are: playing soccer, tag, hide and go seek, swinging on the swing and playing in the sandbox. Fridays tend to be a bit more relaxed, as the children can play and have fun all day. There also tends to be less children at our after school program, as many of them are picked up early and go home earlier than other days.

#### IV. Ways of incorporating English

Incorporating English dialogue into the children's vocabulary is something I do every day at work. It is easier said than done, as many kids do not want to learn English. It is my job to try and motivate the children and explain the importance of learning the English language and the benefits of doing so; for a better future. With English being the world language, it is important to help the kids understand that their future will be brighter learning the English language. As the world is interconnected these days, and knowing how to speak English will open many doors when it comes to, work, travel and positive experiences. Throughout the day,

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I have many opportunities to incorporate English. It starts when the children first arrive, as I can greet them in German and English. Teaching them simple greetings like: Hello, how are you, how is your day, are you ok? When I am in the games room playing games with the children, offers another opportunity to incorporate English. For example, every time I play Bingo with the children, I always make them say every letter and number in both German and English. This way they hear the letters and numbers in German and then in English to help teach them. Another example is playing Uno, as I make the children ask for the color they would like in English. Or playing Skipbo, where the children must say the numbers in English. These are easy and basic English skills that all kids can easily learn with time and repetition. Other opportunities to incorporate English are when I go into the cafeteria when the children are eating lunch. I can sit and talk to them, asking them simple English phrases like: What is your name, what is your favorite color, what is your favorite food, what do you like to do for fun, do you have any brothers or sisters. Normally, I will start by asking them these questions in German, then explain to them how to say it in English. Then I will get the children to repeat what I asked in English. Then they can answer the question in German, if they do not know how to say it in English, then I can explain to them how to answer the question in English and they will repeat the answer. Then making them ask me the same question in English and listening to my answer in English. I feel that this is an easy and stress free way to teach the children some basic and necessary English questions and phrases. When I go to the homework rooms, this is another opportunity for me to incorporate English. When working on mathematics, I will

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often use numbers in both German and English. Getting the children to practice saying numbers in English can be tricky, as German numbers are said backwards and English numbers are not. Example 35 in German is, five and thirty; in English it is thirty-five. This can be confusing for the children to have to switch the order in which they say the numbers. When it comes to their English homework, this is obviously an easy time for me to help and teach them new words and phrases. Also, when I am outside on the playground, offers more opportunities to use English with the children. If they want to play something with me, I can ask them to ask me in English. Or if they want to play a certain game or with a certain toy, I can teach them what that game or toy is in English. These times outside also offer a chance to communicate and bond with the children on a friendly basis and to learn a little bit about them. We can ask each other questions about personal interests, their families, their lives, how they are doing and so forth. Offering me more opportunities to teach them English. Lastly, I have my sport with fun and my fitness classes to teach them English. I always try to speak and explain everything in German and English. I will explain what the plan is for the class, what our warm up will be, give them physical and verbal demonstrations of each and every exercise or game, first in German and then in English. Always trying to explain to them, when I say this in German, this is how you say the exact same thing in English. Also, while performing repetitions in an exercise, I will use both German and English numbers and get them to repeat in English. There are some movements and exercises that I do not know how to say in German, and in these times I will perform the movement or exercise, explaining it in English. This way

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the children can see what I am doing and know that this is how they say it in English. Then they will naturally know what it is in German and hopefully remember what it is in English. At the end of each class when we do our team cheer, I will often switch between German and English words or phrases that we all say together. I feel it is important to try and incorporate English as often as possible. The more the children hear the English language and over time of hearing certain words and phrases again and again, they will hopefully and eventually start to learn more English and feel more comfortable using another language on a daily basis.

V. Problems or difficult situations that occur and how to learn from them

With any job you will come across difficult situations and problems that occur. Important is how you handle these moments. Trying to remain calm and patient are very important to solving and overcoming these situations. Here are some of the problems I have noticed over my time working at the Luther School. The biggest is too much fighting. With so many children from all over the world, with different upbringings, religions and beliefs coming together there tends to be problems. Every day there are fights, not just arguments but physical fights. There are a handful of troubled children who always fight and look for fights. These children become so angry so easily and their first instinct is to fight, not to speak and express themselves. We try our best to break up the fights, get them to explain what happened and to apologize to one another, but this is not always an easy task. Sometimes the children get sent inside when they cause too much trouble,

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sometimes they have to write a sentence repeatedly of what not to do and in worse case, we have to call their parents to come in and discuss the problem that occurred. For me the fighting is a real problem and needs to be addressed with harsher consequences, as it occurs too often and that also among the same group of kids. They need to learn how to solve their problems by communicating and not fighting. This is a big reason why I do not like going outside on the playground, as most of the fights occur outside. You feel more like a policeman or security guard when outside then you do like a teacher or helper. Another major problem is an overall lack of respect many of the children have for each other and for adults. I understand that kids will be kids and they need to live and learn from their mistakes, but not showing others respect is not ok. Often when we as teachers come to help solve a dispute or break up a fight, we have to ask the kids numerous times to stop. Too often our words fall on deaf ears and they do not listen to us. Some children even go as far as turning their anger on us and try to hit or kick us, when we are just trying to help. For me, this is not ok and cannot be tolerated. These kids need to learn to respect their elders and when a grown up is speaking to them, that they stop, look and listen to what is being said. This is difficult because these lessons need to be taught and learned at home by their parents. When the parents are not active in this, then it only makes our jobs much harder. The last difficult situation that I have come across is trying to get all the children to want to learn English. There are so many children that come from other countries that do not want to learn English. Maybe they are struggling to learn German as a second language and do not want to be bothered by trying to learn English as well. Even

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many of the German born children do not want to learn English. Perhaps they are still too young to realize the benefits they will have in the future by learning English. Other children may just be too lazy to want to learn, as I feel children these days are too soft and run from anything that is too difficult or that they do not understand. Instead of trying to learn and working at something, they would rather just give up without trying in the first place. This mindset will only lead to future problems later in life when encountered with problems and obstacles, which will come their way. It is important for us as a staff to try and explain this to the children and to remain calm in these heated and difficult moments. Explaining to them to use their words to solve problems and not their fists.

## VI. Summary: What do I really enjoy about the job

All in all, the positives of this job greatly outweigh the negatives. I have a lot to be thankful for. Working with children brings me great joy on a daily basis. To be part of their lives, to teach them important life skills and lesson is very interesting to me. Children's minds can be easily shaped and with the right people working together to teach them right from wrong, can shape who they become as a person. Knowing that you can be a small part of their positive development is a very special feeling. Being able to help teach the children numbers and English with their homework is very rewarding to me. Also I noticed positive change in some of the children after only six months: Some try to speak more English, some kids seem more open to try new things and not give up right away etc. The creativity I can incorporate during my sport with fun and fitness classes brings me great joy. Hopefully the

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children can see my passion and learn from it and the many exercises and sports we play together. Moments like these create not only fun, but also a positive learning environment. I enjoy having one of the student teachers help me out with my sport with fun and fitness classes. Having another person there to help explain, monitor and demonstrate makes my job easier. I also enjoy playing games with the children in the games room, as games are meant to be fun. Even though it can be a challenge, I enjoy incorporating English into the children's vocabulary. The feeling of teaching new skills and a language is very rewarding for me. Finding new ways to connect with the children so they want to learn is fun. Lastly, I enjoy the staff at the Luther School and the people I work with. They are all friendly, good-hearted people who are working for good reasons and to help create a better future for all of the children. Our weekly meetings are a good example of us as a staff working together to be better for the children and that is nice to see. Also something that is special among our staff is that when someone has a birthday, we always get together after work to sit, eat, drink and talk with one another. This is also very nice because you have an opportunity to learn about each other's personal experiences and lives outside of work and to become friends. To conclude, I am happy that I have this job at the Luther School after school bilingual German/English program. I hope that my efforts help make a difference in the lives of the children and that they enjoy having me be part of their lives, even if it is only for a few hours a day.