

Universität Koblenz-Landau
Campus Koblenz
Fachbereich: Integrierte Fremdsprachenarbeit
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<p>Bericht über das zweite Blockpraktikum vom 3. September bis 16. Oktober 2006 in Monterey, CA., Santa Catalina School</p>

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4. Semester

Report about my internship at Santa Catalina School
from September, 3rd till October, 16th 2006

1. About Santa Catalina School

Santa Catalina is an independent Catholic school which offers the full range of school education from pre-kindergarten up to high-school. The school is a boarding-school for high-school students. It is located 125 miles south of San Francisco (2 hours by car) in the small town of Monterey.

The school system is divided into two sections: The Lower and the Upper School.

In the Lower School there are approximately 260 students. The classes are as follows:

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten: 24 students with two full-time teachers.

Grades 1-2: 24 students with one full-time teacher and one full-time assistant teacher.

Grades 3-5: 24 students with one full-time teacher and one part-time assistant teacher.

Grades 6-8: 18 students with one full-time teacher.

The Upper School, from grade 9 to 12, consists of 290 girls (153 resident, 137 day). The average class size amounts to 14. More than half of the students live on campus. The rest are day students, who are at school only from 8 am to 5 pm.

The students who live on campus cannot visit their parents at the weekends. There are extra visiting periods, for example open weekends, on which the kids could visit them. On Sundays the parents are allowed to pick up their children for a few hours to go to the beach or have lunch, dinner or what else they like to do.

As Santa Catalina is a Catholic school, it has its own chapel, and masses for the students are held regularly. The school is lead by Sister Claire, a charming and progressive nun. She is also in charge of the application process.

Beside the school education, Santa Catalina offers a lot of leisure facilities for its students. The school has its own swimming pool, four tennis courts, a big sports field and a gymnasium (with a fitness room). In accordance with the American sports system, Santa Catalina has several school teams of Water-Polo, Tennis, Hockey, etc. During my time in Santa Catalina there were big tournaments against other schools on an almost weekly basis.

You can find more information about Santa Catalina school at www.santacatalina.org

2. Application, Accommodation and Expenses

I applied for my internship about four months before it began. My letter of application included a covering letter, a Curriculum Vitae and a letter of recommendation from the University of Koblenz (from Dr. I. Martin, IFA English).

The school was very much interested in making everything as comfortable as possible for me. I had the opportunity to live on campus in a little apartment for school staff and could also eat at the school cafeteria. I did not have to pay anything for the little apartment and the meals, one example of the American hospitality.

As I wanted to avoid visa bureaucracy, I decided to travel there with a tourist visa for six weeks. Luckily, no visa problems occurred.

3. My work in class

During the six weeks I worked in the third grade with Mrs. Gerstl, the head teacher, and Miss Stark, the assistant teacher. The class consisted of 24 students. The school day at Santa Catalina starts at 8 am and finishes (for the third grade) at 3.15 pm. The students have one recess of 15 minutes after the second period and of course they have lunch (40 min) at school. These are the only breaks. The subjects of the third grade are: English, math, religion, art, music, social studies and PE (physical education). The school has its own library and once a week the class has a presentation there. The librarian introduces new books to the kids and motivates them to read more on their own and to present the books they read to each other.

My work in class was to assist the teachers, to observe the different way of working and of course to gain some more experience in teaching. As there was a lot of creative work in this third grade, I prepared a lot of material which was used in the lessons. I created papers and other material the kids used for their work in class.

Another job was to take the third grade to the different classrooms if the lessons were not in their usual classroom. The campus is very big and so there has to be a chaperon who looks after the kids while they move to the different rooms.

When the kids had PE, I had to help the girls to get changed, to get packed and to dry their hair after the swimming lessons.

I also had the opportunity to teach the students of the third grade some lessons of German. Besides teaching some German words and explaining about the German school system, I tried to make the German language and mentality more accessible to the kids. As they do not learn German at Santa Catalina, the kids really appreciated learning words of a foreign language from me. Because of the huge differences between the American and German school systems, the kids were surprised and had a lot of questions. The kids were surprised, for example, about the fact that in Germany students don't have to wear a school uniform and that the kids don't have lunch at school. They asked what the students wear at school and what people in Germany eat etc. They were also surprised about the kinds of houses we have in Germany and that everything is a lot smaller. I showed them some pictures. They also loved the garden of my parents' house!

When one history teacher got to know that there was a German intern at the school, she asked me to speak to her two seven grade classes about Germany. This lecture included Germany after World War II, the Berlin Wall, the two German states, life in the German Democratic Republic etc. I also talked about the German way of life, food, music and activities for young people. The two lectures were very interactive and I prepared a lot of material the students could look at. For example pictures of the Berlin Wall, maps of Berlin with the wall and some pictures of my parents' house to show them how the Germans live. I also brought some German music the kids could listen to, which they liked very much. As the students did not know much about Germany they were very interested about the topic and had a lot of questions. So it was a lot of fun for me to tell them something about my home country.

4. School activities

During my third week at Santa Catalina a lot of classes went on daytrips. Some teachers asked me to accompany them. Of course I took the chance and so I saw a lot of the region around Monterey.

Our first trip was to Salinas, where we visited the John Steinbeck museum. After visiting the museum we walked to the birthplace of this famous American author. There we had a special lunch: Steinbeck fans were giving us some insights about the life of Steinbeck there.

Another trip was to San Francisco. There we visited several sights of this impressive city. At first we had a brunch at the Sheraton Palace Hotel, which is a fancy and popular place. Other stops were the Grace Cathedral, Chinatown and the Golden Gate Park. Apart from doing the normal tourist program we also visited the de Young museum, where the kids had to answer

questionnaires. In this museum works of Mexican and other Latin-American painters are presented. One teacher also showed me the Japanese Tea Garden. This is a beautiful and peaceful place where you could stay for hours.

Beside the trips to San Francisco and the Steinbeck museum, I also accompanied classes to a “Space and Science Centre” in Oakland and to an experimental-farm. There the kids could experience their knowledge from their science lessons in reality. At the centre we saw two movies and learned a lot about the living life and the planets.

5. Conclusion

I think it is very meaningful to do an internship in a foreign country, especially if you have a foreign language as an additional subject. As I had to speak only English during the whole six weeks I improved my language skills a lot, which is very useful if you like to teach English. Furthermore it is a very nice experience for yourself and your personal development. You are in a foreign country where you do not know anyone and you have to find your way through all the new things and the different way of life. It also was very interesting to get to know the different mentality of the American people in contrast to the German. The American people are very friendly and hospitable. They love to help you whenever you need help and they like to get to know people from Europe because for them it is pretty far to travel there. Of course it was a good experience to get to know the American school system and the American way of teaching. Besides having the longer school day, the American system is more focused on sport activities than the German. That means the students have to do sports every day. Furthermore the American school lessons are more connected with interactivity. So the kids learn a lot of stuff by singing songs, playing games or doing other activities and the blackboard is not used very often. One other very important thing is the patriotism of the American people. Every lesson starts with the pupils singing the American national anthem and all American people are very proud of their nationality.

Finally, I can say that I am very glad that I did this internship at Santa Catalina. I had six wonderful weeks and it was a great experience to work at a school like Santa Catalina. I really appreciated the American hospitality and mentality. All the people were kindly and friendly and made it easy for me to feel good.

