

# TEACHER CANDIDATES ABROAD: USING DIGITAL TOOLS TO EXPERIENCE CULTURE & DEVELOP DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE

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# Setting the Stage.....



<https://vimeo.com/222290209>

# Purpose of the Travel Course

Teacher Education students participate in an Experiential and Educational Travel Course to Germany

## Opportunities:

- Experience another country – similar but different
- Learn about culture, educational policy and schooling (K-12 and Higher Ed), and course content in the major
- Interact with fellow German university students
- Earn 3 hours of credit in their program of study



# Trip Details and Context



## Who?

- 7 Elementary Education students
- 1 Speech-Pathology student (SPED minor)
- 2 Teacher Educators

## Where?

- Pädagogische Hochschule-Ludwigsburg (Ludwigsburg University of Education)
- Housing: Two apartments in the Eglosheim neighborhood, Ludwigsburg, Germany

## How and When?

- Flew to Stuttgart, Germany then by train to Ludwigsburg and later to Munich
- Visited the Swabian & Bavarian regions of Germany
- Students took an accelerated course in their major with German TCs , in English, on the LUE campus
- *May 9-25, 2017*

# Key Elements of the Trip

- Travel and cultural experiences
- School visits: Realschule and Waldkindergarten
- “Living Like a Local”
- Coursework:
  - [EDEL 446: Digital Literacy](#)
  - HPE 305: Adventure-Based Learning



# Conceptual Frameworks

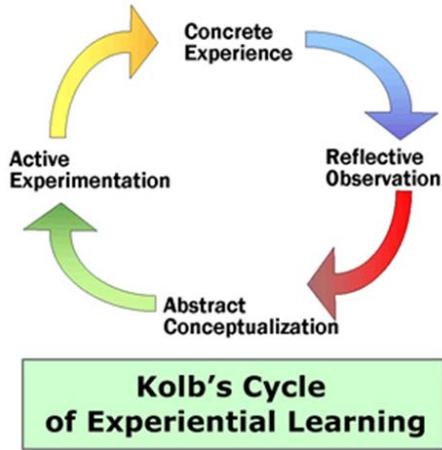


image by Karin Kirk

## Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC)

Experience – doing the task

Reflection – “*the what?*” details of the task

Conceptualization – “*the so what?*” generalizing what happened

Experimentation – “*the now what?*” transfer to other settings (deriving meaning)



Graphic by Nancy Luke from CC0 images

**Technology to support reflection, multimodal representation, & authentic purposes**

The 4 Cs: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication

Global Learning: Reflection on Experience through the lens of

Perspective Taking & Cultural Diversity (<https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/global>)

# What Happened: Cultural & Travel Experiences

- Maximizing time in country
- Balance of breadth with depth
- Encouraging them to “Be here now....”



Schloss Ludwigsburg



Dachau Memorial



Konigsee & Berchtesgaden



Heidelberg Castle



Munich

# What Happened: Realschule & Waldkindergarten

- Schooling: Noticing similarities and differences (e.g. pedagogy)
- Considering the lens of cultural diversity
- Language barriers?



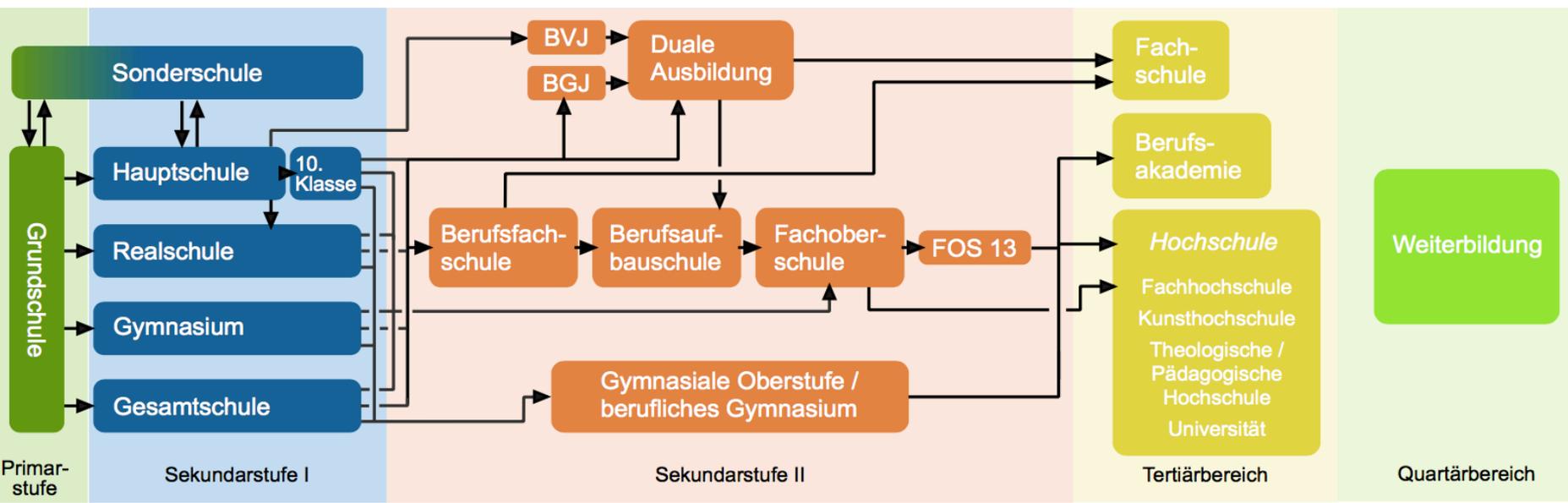
Realschule



Waldkindergarten



# German School Organizational System



Graphic in the Public Domain, Wikimedia

Alles klar? Get it?

# What Happened: “living like a local”

- Shopping, transportation, eating & drinking
- German buddies
- Perspective taking
- English, bitte?



“they are just like us...but different, too”



Food & Drink



Getting Around

# What Happened: Getting Around by foot

- Pre-departure orientation focused on packing, currency, and WALKING
- The culture of walking in Germany
- We warned them.....
- “You will walk a lot.”



There.....



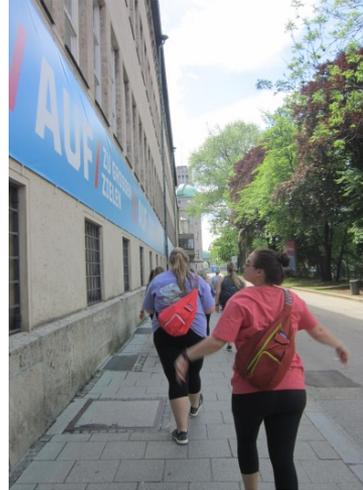
Luggage

...and back again



# What Happened: Getting Around by foot

You need to know this. Really. You will walk thousands of steps and many miles.



# WHAT WAS LEARNED: JUST HOW MUCH?



- Each student and faculty wore a Fitbit™ Charge HR activity monitor
- There were ten participants
- Each day activity was tracked just prior to going to bed
- Number of steps and distance traveled was tracked daily
- Activity was tracked for 14 days (13)
- Travel days from and to the US were not tracked.

## Activity Data Summary

### TOTALS (N=10)

1,903,702 steps (1,403,562 / 6)

832.28 miles (658.59 / 6)

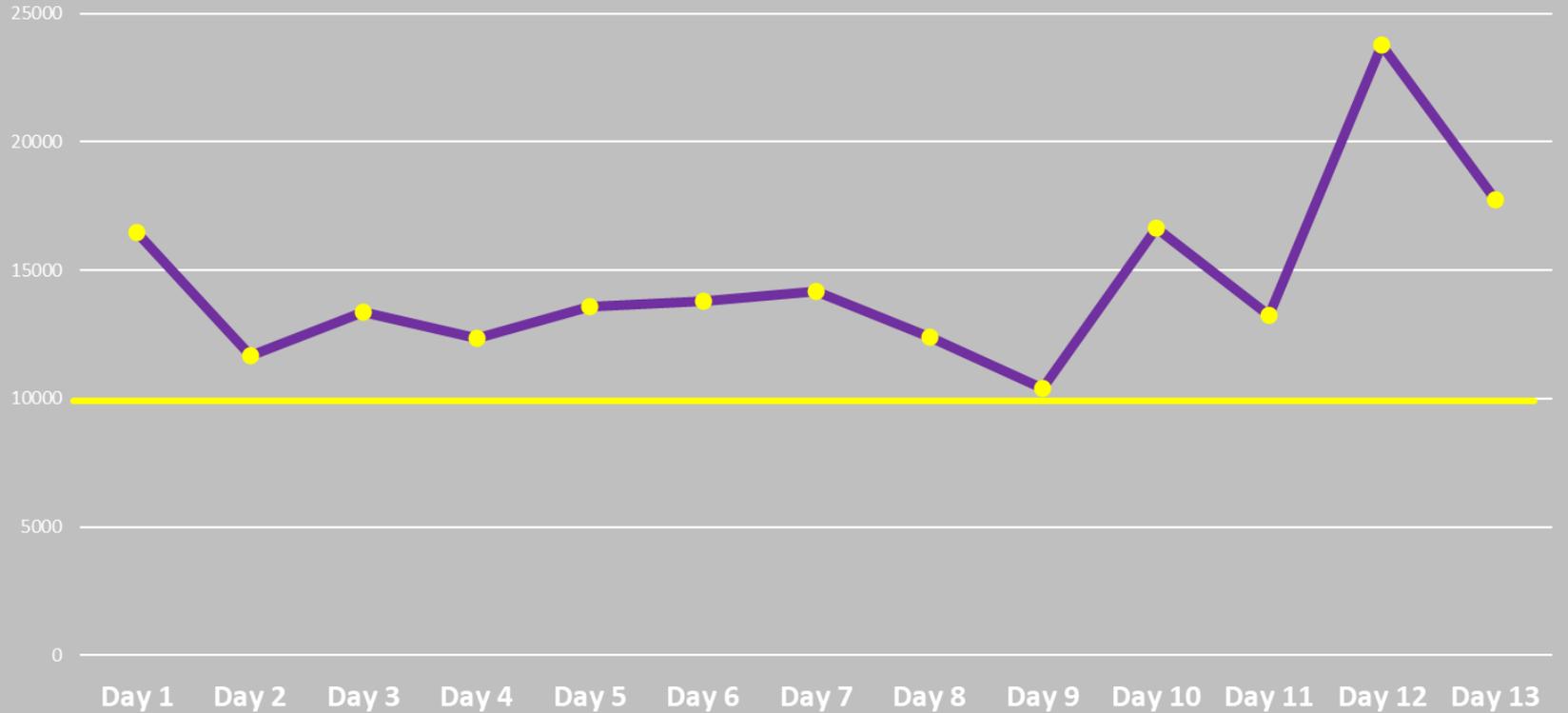
### MEANS (N=10)

14,643.86 steps daily (16,706 / 6)

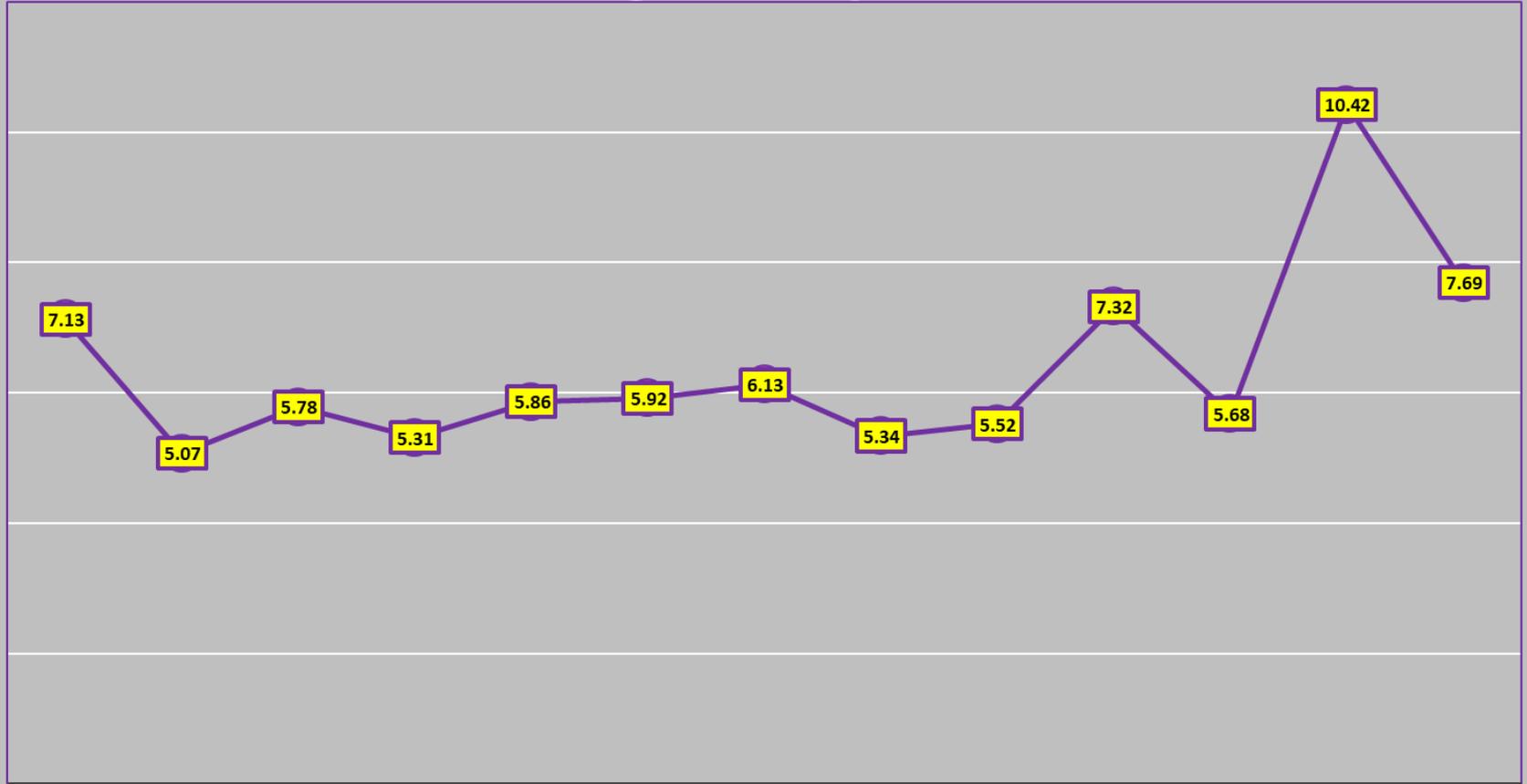
6.31 miles daily (7.62 / 6)



# Average Daily Steps



# Average Daily Miles



DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

DAY 4

DAY 5

DAY 6

DAY 7

DAY 8

DAY 9

DAY 10

DAY 11

DAY 12

DAY 13

# What Happened: Coursework

- German & American Students: Alike but different
- Cultural Diversity & Perspective Taking
- Digital Literacy and Adventure-Based Learning
- Artifacts from the tech course: blogs, digital stories, final reflection paper, observation by instructor



Putting the 4Cs into practice

# What Happened: Two Apps and A Story

- Unpacking misconceptions through interaction & collaboration
- Developing global understandings
- Digital Literacy: Course activities
  - Goosechase: Team photos and videos (“mixed” membership)
  - [30 Hands](#): Small group, open-ended, collaborative stories



Community Building and Teachable Moments

# What was learned: Emergent Themes



- ❖ Examining misconceptions:
  - “Germans are rude.” “Germans drink beer and eat schnitzel.”
- ❖ Language barriers are uncomfortable but not impossible
- ❖ This experience was life changing and eye opening. As related to being:
  - A global citizen – open heart and mind
  - A future teacher – confirms my choice of profession
  - Grateful for what I have in my life “at home”
  - A future traveler
- ❖ Comparison/Contrast relate to *external* as well as *internal observations*
  - **External:** transportation, clothing, societal “rules” and practices such as behavior in class
  - **Internal:** importance of friendships, teaching practices and philosophies (care, social justice)

# What was learned: Student Reflections on School

- The instructors hold class outside no matter rain or shine and teach the students how the world ...This kind of learning is very hands on and I think that most children thrive off of it.
- ... speak an entirely different language can leave such a big imprint on our lives...While we walked through the woods, we would come to multiple spots where the kids made little teepees or fire pits; these spots were the kids' playgrounds
- I had no idea what to expect or what type of lessons the teachers would incorporate in the wilderness as oppose to the classroom. I was very impressed by the teachers and their creativity to think outside the box.

# What was learned: Student Reflections on School

- ..we got to interact with the Realschule students by teaching them about North Carolina and also doing a English language activity with them... German schools and teachers are very similar to American schools and teachers...I cannot wait to go back and try some new things in my Intern II placement in the fall
- Rain, shine, snow, you name it; these kindergartners are out in the woods going about their day...they play, sing, make teepees and learn many life skills that they may not learn in a classroom. They did not speak any English, but that did not stop any of us from making wonderful connections with them. It truly is amazing how you can make a friend even without speaking each other's native language... the outdoors is their classroom ...that is amazing to me.

# What was learned: Student Reflections on Dachau

- This [place] really showed me that as a teacher I much advocate for respect and tolerance within my classroom but also show students that hate is not the way...
- [we] are uncomfortable talking about it, but the Germans make their students learn and completely understand how wrong it really was...German students are required to visit the concentration camps as part of their curriculum...[they] need to be educated about their country's history, however bleak it was
- As we walked away from Dachau, I thought about all the people who never had the chance to walk away and leave, the poor innocent people whose lives were taken ..I appreciate getting the chance to experience something so sobering and will encourage others to do the same
- ..take it from someone who's had the experience...walk through alone, think deeply, shed some tears if you have to because this is an experience you will never forget.

# What was learned: Student Reflections

- The Germans are so nice about it when either they do not speak English or I can't understand them. I have not experienced any anger towards me because of that. It makes me think about how Americans act towards anyone in our country that does not speak English. We get frustrated easily with them and do not give them a chance. Experiencing being the foreign one, I have developed more understanding and respect for those in my own country.
- This trip not only helped me grow as a person but as a teacher. I got a chance to see how important it is to be culturally aware of other [people] and even environments. This lesson is not only vital when traveling but when you are teaching in a classroom since not every student is going to come from the same background, place or even mindset. This gives me a chance as a teacher to open the minds of my students and show them that it is okay to be different from your peers..

# What was learned: Student Reflections & Artifacts



Our Digital Storyteller

I talked to a German student named Flo...he visited Charlotte for a semester. I asked him if he had gotten home sick, and he told me, "No, because I knew was going to go back at the end of trip." He was able to enjoy his trip so much because he knew how to live in the moment. This is a skill I really need to develop. Flo's perspective was so different from my own...but then I realized that there are a lot of benefits to living in the moment, and being less homesick is apparently one of them. I'm going to try to live in the moment a little bit more from now on

I wonder if a lot of Germans think the way that Flo does. I know for a fact that most Americans do not. We're all so worried about the future that we can't seem to enjoy the present. For example, when we go on vacations, we're so obsessed with taking pictures that we don't really stop and see sights through our own eyes.

# What's next: Recommendations

- Pre-departure: Preparations
  - Arrange for as much as you can in advance
  - Offer tips and information and provide time for questions
  - Bring in previous student travelers as “guest speakers”
  - Meet monthly prior to travel once group is set
- In country: Breadth and depth of activities
  - Variety of activities (e.g. cultural/historical sites, urban and rural areas)
  - Engage with German culture “in the middle” rather than “the outside” of
    - People & places
    - German buddies and peers in class
    - Be a part of German life (e.g. public transportation, commerce)



# Questions?

Contact information:

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- [ncluke@wcu.edu](mailto:ncluke@wcu.edu)



A photograph of a city skyline featuring several prominent skyscrapers. In the foreground, a multi-arched bridge spans across the frame. The buildings are illuminated by warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The text 'THANK YOU' is overlaid in the upper center of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

THANK  
YOU