

Wöhlerschule



Gymnasium der Stadt Frankfurt am Main

Introduction

The Woehlerschule is a public school offering a rigorous academic environment for grades 5 through 12. Students graduate with an Abitur, the highest German high school diploma, which is considered equivalent to the first year of college in the United States. The school has approximately 1,350 students and 105 teachers.

Administration:

Headmaster: Ms. Bleise
Vice-headmaster: Mr. Cloessner
Academic director: Mr. Wuest

Department heads:

Ms. Preis (languages, literature, arts)
Mr. Brueggeman (social sciences)
Mr. Schanbacher (mathematics, natural sciences)

Location

The Woehlerschule serves the city of Frankfurt, Germany's financial capital, which has a history as a center of trade going back well before Roman times. Frankfurt, the birthplace of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, also has a rich cultural tradition. Today Frankfurt is known as the headquarters of the European Central Bank as well as one of Europe's largest airports. With about 700,000 residents, Frankfurt is one of Europe's most cosmopolitan cities. Almost one-third of residents were born abroad or hold a foreign passport.

History

The Woehlerschule was founded in 1870 by the Frankfurt Polytechnical Society and named for August Anton Woehler, a former president of the society. Well-known alumni of the school include Erich Fromm, a pioneer of the practice of psychology; Walther Rathenau, German foreign minister during the Weimar Republic; and Elias Canetti, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1981.

Academic philosophy

The Woehlerschule, located in the Dornbusch section north of the city center, seeks to build on a tradition of liberal education and scientific inquiry which dates to its founding, and to reflect the diversity and dynamism of Frankfurt. In addition to preparing students academically for university study, the Woehlerschule places a strong emphasis on tolerance, initiative, social competence and an ability to shoulder responsibility.

Schools in Germany are not formally ranked but the Woehlerschule has a reputation as one of the most demanding of the gymnasia in Frankfurt as well as the state of Hesse. In 2010 the Woehlerschule attained the short list of 20 schools nationwide considered for the Deutsche Schulpreis (German School Prize) sponsored by the Robert Bosch Foundation and bestowed by the President of Germany. The Woehlerschule was the only school in the state of Hessen to be so honored.

The Woehlerschule has been officially designated by the Hessian minister of culture as an ecologically oriented school, in recognition of projects and instruction in the field of environment and sustainability.

Admissions and academic program

The Woehlerschule is a Gymnasium, the most rigorous of Germany's three secondary school tracks. Students are accepted following a review of their record and based on a referral provided by their elementary school. Students enter Gymnasium in the 5th grade. The "Oberstufe" or senior high school begins in the 10th grade. To earn their Abitur, required for admittance to a German university, students must pass a series of written and oral exams in mathematics and science as well as their chosen area of concentration.

The Woehlerschule focuses on math, natural sciences and technology as well as music. Students may also choose to concentrate in subjects such as history, English or French. However, math and science courses are required during all semesters of attendance regardless of a student's area of concentration. Courses in English and at least one other foreign language are also required. Students are expected to develop competence in use of information technology.

The academic program is organized according to the so-called G-8 system, which compresses a course of study previously completed in nine years into eight years. Because of the demands that the schedule places on students, there is a public debate about returning to a nine-year program. As is the case with most German schools, the focus is on academics and there are no interscholastic sports teams.

Grading

Students are graded according to their performance in class examinations and there is also a strong emphasis on oral participation in class.

Through grade 9, the grading system is on a 6-point scale (with 1 being the highest mark and 6 being the lowest). Beginning in the 10th grade, marks are on a 15-point scale (with 0 being the lowest mark and 15 being the highest mark; 5 or higher indicates a passing grade). The school does not calculate grade point averages and students are not ranked. The final Abitur grade serves as the basis for admittance to a German university.

Students are held to a very high standard and it is very rare for a student to attain perfect grades. The average Abitur grade in 2012 was 2.32.

Higher education

The vast majority of Woehlerschule graduates go on to university or other higher education. The school does not systematically track students after graduation, but alumni are routinely accepted to top German universities and to programs such as medicine or law where admission is extremely competitive. A small number of students pursue university education abroad. For example, a Woehlerschule graduate is currently enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.