

# THE GERMAN-AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (GAPP) AT CLEMENTS and TRAVIS HIGH SCHOOLS

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## Overview of GAPP

The German-American Partnership Program (GAPP) is a high-school exchange program that has been linking American and German high schools in long-term partnerships since 1972. There are currently around 750 such partnerships in 48 U.S. states and all 16 German *Bundesländer*. The program's primary purposes are to help students improve their foreign-language skills and to promote mutual cultural understanding. The program is supported and funded by the U.S. and German governments. More information is available at [www.goethe.de/gapp](http://www.goethe.de/gapp).

A GAPP partnership typically works as follows: exchanges occur every year or, as in our case, every other year. On the German end, the program is coordinated by a teacher of English, and on the American end, the program is coordinated by a teacher of German. The American and German schools each have 10-20 participating students who are matched with a partner across the Atlantic. In the spring, the German students visit the U.S. for about 3 weeks, attending school and living in the families of their American partners; in the summer, the American students visit Germany for 3-5 weeks, likewise attending school and living in the families of their German partners, usually with some extra travel added. All participants also work together on a learning project.

## History of GAPP at Clements and Travis High Schools

The history of GAPP in FBISD began in 1997 when Clements was matched with a German school in Bremen. We conducted successful exchanges with that school in **1998** and **2000**, with a total of 17 American and 22 German participants. However, the school in Bremen chose not to renew the program after the 2000 exchange, and we were assigned a new partner school in Cologne. Clements conducted exchanges with Cologne in **2002** (11 Americans, 15 Germans), **2004** (8 Americans, 11 Germans), **2006** (17 Americans, 17 Germans), **2008** (17 Americans, 19 Germans), **2010** (16 Americans, 20 Germans), **2012** (17 Americans, 20 Germans), **2014** (17 Americans, 20 Germans), and **2016** (16 Americans, 20 Germans). Travis joined the partnership for the **2018** exchange (14 Americans [4 Clements, 10 Travis], 20 Germans). Total participants so far: 150 Americans, 184 Germans. Future exchanges, with Clements and Travis continuing to work together, should occur in even-numbered years (2020, 2022, ...).

## Our Partner School in Germany

Our partner school in Cologne is the **Lessing-Gymnasium**, which has about 1000 students in grades 5 through 12. The *Gymnasium*, the most rigorous of the three types of German high schools, culminates in the high-stakes *Abitur* examination at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. A passing score on the *Abitur* is a prerequisite for study at a German university. The Lessing-Gymnasium is located in an area called Zündorf on the southern outskirts of Cologne. Cologne, located on the Rhine River and settled since at least 38 B.C., was elevated to the status of "Roman colony" in 50 A.D. and still has many Roman ruins. It is the fourth largest city in Germany, with a population of about one million.

## GAPP 2020

The 2020 exchange will involve a record number of students on both sides. The German group of 23 students and 2 teachers will spend a few days in New York before visiting Texas from March 29 to April 13, 2020. We will take them to local attractions such as downtown Houston, the Galleria and Water Wall, Space Center Houston, Brazos Bend State Park, an Astros game, and a Rockets game as well as on a road trip to Austin, Fredericksburg, and San Antonio.

The Fort Bend ISD group of 23 students (15 from Clements and 8 from Travis), led by Mr. Buck and Mr. Hulse, will travel to Germany on May 31 and return home on July 6, 2020 (5+ weeks). The visit to Germany will feature an initial three days of sightseeing in Heidelberg and along the Rhine River; about three weeks in Cologne (June 3-21), during which students will live with host families, attend school, and take numerous field trips within Cologne and to nearby Aachen; and a final two weeks of travel (June 21 to July 6) to Berlin, Potsdam, the Spreewald, Leipzig, Berchtesgaden, Munich, Dachau, and Castle Neuschwanstein. We will cap the trip off with a day on which we will visit one location in each of the four German-speaking countries: Lindau, Germany; Bregenz, Austria; Vaduz, Liechtenstein; and the ruins of Castle Wartau in Switzerland. Assisting with chaperoning duties will be Clements assistant principal Anne Beckman.

The cost of the trip, including a group health and liability insurance policy but excluding most lunches/dinners during the touring portion and spending money, will be around \$3300. Students must also bring along about \$900 in spending money for meals during the touring portion, souvenirs, and pocket money during the stay in Cologne.