

**An interview with two exchange students
-A comparison of two countries-**

Amy (16) is an exchange student from the USA and has already spent three months in Germany. Lara (17) from Germany was an exchange student, too, and has been four months in the USA. Now they provide an insight for us into the differences between American schools and German ones.

Lara, you have been four months in the USA, right? So, what is the biggest difference to your school in Germany you have noticed first?

Well, the first thing I remarked when I went through my new school were the clothes my classmates were wearing. I had known about the dress code, but I had not expected it is so heavy-handed. You haven't seen anyone like he has been looking in his free time.

Yeah, most people think there is a duty to be in uniform at American schools, so, is there?

Oh no, most exclusive private schools have uniforms for their students. No, the dress code at my school indicated how we have to wear our "normal" garments. Girls weren't allowed to be dressed in Hot Pants and had to be suited discreet. Baggy pants and T-shirts with slogans were forbidden, too.

And do you know why it has been so strict at this school?

Yes, you heard about the "Columbine Massacre", I think. 15 students were killed and so the security measures have been boosted. My school was very big, with 1500 pupils, therefore school security sent you home, when you did not abide by the dress code, because you perhaps could have a weapon under your jacket. The same it was with backpacks. You had to run to your locker and to store it in directly, if you did not want to be looked at weird.

So the safety is very hard, it seems. Amy, is it just as acerb in your school in America?

No, it isn't. At home, we're only two or three hundred people, so there is just a casual dress code. It's more like a big family, you could say, everyone knows everyone.

Well, then, what can you say about the lessons and your teachers here in Germany? Are

they like the same as they are in your country?

No. They are truly not. In my “real” school the tutors don’t really care about students, who don’t pay much attention to tuition. In Germany, the teachers are all so... formal and inflexible. But what really caught my eyes were the subjects I would have to do. More than 13! And every day others! In my school there are possibly five or eight, maximal! And your schedule doesn’t change every day. Furthermore, you can choose subjects you like or you are talented in more detailed. For example, in USA you can choose algebra, trigonometry or geometry. Here they all together are simply maths.

In your home country you go to a High school, don’t you? I know, in America, children are going to different schools, depending on different ages. Is there something comparable with the bargain you get after secondary school here in Germany, you know the “Abitur”?

Hm... I think there isn’t something assimilable, because of the differentiation by age and not by the effort of the children. The best certificate you can get in USA is by finishing the college. So many teenagers work after school and attend charity projects to look better for good colleges. And they are doing their best for doing the SAT well. It’s an important test that counts a lot for colleges.

Thank you very much for telling us so interesting differences between American and German schools. I am sure we all can now better imagine what the other school life is like.

Leontine Oettle