



American Association of
Teachers of German

2025 ANNUAL AWARDS

November 9, 2025



Featured Partner Organizations



The Goethe-Institut is the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany, with over 150 locations worldwide. In the U.S., we support German teachers and students and facilitate German language courses for all levels.



Die Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen betreut mit knapp 100 Mitarbeitenden in Deutschland und mehr als 50 Fachberatungen für Deutsch als Fremdsprache sowie 15 Prozessbegleitungen für das Qualitätsmanagement an Standorten weltweit die deutsche schulische Arbeit im Ausland.



Located in a critically acclaimed landmark building in the heart of Manhattan, the Austrian Cultural Forum New York is Austria's leading cultural representation in the United States. The ACFNY presents highlights of Austrian culture in the US by organizing exhibitions and events in the fields of visual art, music, film, theater and literature. We promote a vibrant exchange between Austrian and American artists and international audiences, including by networking with academic and art institutions throughout the United States.



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Washington

Die Deutsche Botschaft Washington, die diplomatische Vertretung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, beschäftigt sich mit allen Bereichen des bilateralen Verhältnisses, u.a. der Wissenschaftskooperation.



The OeAD, Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation, works on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research. For more than sixty years we have been advising, supporting and connecting people and institutions in education, science, research and culture with our future-oriented programmes. As an agency of the Republic of Austria the OeAD contributes to inclusive, equal and high-quality education. We work in Austria, Europe and internationally in priority countries. The OeAD is the national agency for the implementation of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.



The German Studies Association is the multi- and interdisciplinary association of scholars in German, Austrian, and Swiss history, literature, culture studies, political science, and economics. GSA holds an annual conference and publishes a scholarly journal, the German Studies Review. Members are generally professors and advanced students at universities and colleges in North America, although there are several hundred members in Europe and Asia.



**KULTUSMINISTER
KONFERENZ**
*Pädagogischer
Austauschdienst*

The Pädagogischer Austauschdienst ("PAD") is the sole public organization in Germany working on behalf of the Federal States to promote international exchange and co-operation in the school sector. The PAD is a department of the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kultusministerkonferenz).



Our mission is to ensure that Americans have the opportunity to learn English and at least one other language.



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We envision a world where the language enterprise facilitates the free movement of people, information, and ideas; builds mutual understanding and acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity; and promotes the personal development of the individual.

Featured Partner Organizations



Wayside Publishing is dedicated to delivering innovative and engaging world language programs for your evolving classroom. Wayside creates German programming and continually expands their library of comprehension-based™ readers. Wayside Publishing delivers the highest quality textbooks and readers, as well as our comprehensive digital learning platform, Learning Site®. Wayside provides personalized service and professional development to help you inspire, empower, and challenge your students as they work towards communicative and cultural competence. Wayside Publishing offers teachers the tools to foster students' language, intercultural, and critical thinking skills to prepare them for the future. Our programs are research-based and are a combination of innovative resources, cultural exploration, current language learning pedagogy, and engaging and effective technology.



Xperitas is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization that has been providing students with educational language and cultural immersion experiences since 1972. Xperitas was the brainchild of Jim Phelan and Bob and Edie Green, who at that time were World Language teachers in Minneapolis, MN. Because of these very special teachers and the decades of shared experience of two nonprofit organizations, Intercultural Student Experiences (ISE) and Global Citizens Network (GCN), we are here today.

Hueber

Als Pionier entwickelt und vertreibt der Hueber Verlag hier bereits seit 1955 die weltweit erfolgreichsten Lehrwerke. Ob Deutsch als Fremdsprache oder Zweitsprache, ob mit 3 oder mit 90 Jahren: das einzigartig umfassende Angebot bietet für alle Ansprüche durchdachte Materialien, die einfach mehr Freude machen.



Klett World Languages

We are committed to building the future of World Languages by supporting educators and leading a transformative shift in language education throughout the United States. Our dedication drives us to provide the highest quality language materials in German, Spanish, French, and Italian, enabling educators to motivate and empower their students. Our content is specifically designed to foster authentic communicative competence and cultivate global citizens.

At Klett World Languages, our commitment lies in revolutionizing world language education in the United States, driven by our passion for educators and the positive transformation they bring. Together, let us build a future where language education thrives and opens doors to endless possibilities.



CBYX/PPP

Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange
Parlamentarisches Partnerschafts-Programm

The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) scholarship is for motivated high school students who want to experience a culture and learn a language through a full immersion experience.



Avant, The Language Proficiency Company. From learning to assessment to certification. That's the power of Avant's Language Proficiency Platform™. Whether you're a student, teacher, administrator, professional, or employer, Avant's industry-leading tools are transforming language proficiency every step of the way.

Avant assess offers adaptive, standards-driven assessments that measure language proficiency with precision. At the core is STAMP, the only computer-adaptive online language assessment available in over 140 languages and approved for college credit by the American Council on Education (ACE). These tools empower educators and employers with meaningful insights into real-world communication skills.

Cornelsen

Der Cornelsen Verlag ist einer der führenden Anbieter von Bildungsmedien im deutschsprachigen Raum. Mit hoher didaktischer Kompetenz entwickeln wir Produkte für den Unterricht und das persönliche Lernen – gedruckt, digital und crossmedial. Unser Unternehmen steht für Lernerfolg und anerkannt hohe Qualität – und das seit über 75 Jahren: Im Jahr 1946 hat Franz Cornelsen den Verlag gegründet, der seit-dem die deutsche Bildungslandschaft maßgeblich prägt.



For more than 40 years, the Trust for Insuring Educators (TIE) has been helping teachers, administrators and support staff at all levels, from preschool to post-graduate, get the insurance protection their families need. AATG members are eligible for valuable group pricing, specialized coverages, and association discounts on insurance protection from leading carriers. Learn more at aatg.org

American Association of Teachers of German Awards Presentation

Presented By: Angelika Becker, President of AATG

***The German Quarterly* Graduate Student Paper Award**

Presented by Jen William, Co-Editor of *The German Quarterly*

Max Kade Prize for Best Article in *The German Quarterly*

Presented by Jen William, Co-Editor of *The German Quarterly*

Best Article in *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*

Presented by Mathias Schulze, Co-Editor of *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*



Friend of German - Community Award

Presented by Julia Ruck, Equity Officer to the AATG Board of Directors

Goethe-Institut/AATG Outstanding GAPP Coordinator Award

Presented by Alysha Holmquist-Posner, Northwest Regional Representative to AATG Board of Directors

Goethe-Institut/AATG Certificates of Merit

Presented by Susanne Rinner, Program Director at the Goethe Institut USA. Susanne is presenting on behalf of Sebastian Vötter, Director Language Programs North America, Deputy Executive Director of the Goethe Institut USA.

German Embassy Teacher of Excellence Award

Presented by Sylvia Petzarsky, Representative from Cultural Affairs Section at the Embassy of Federal Republic of Germany

Post-Secondary Center of Excellence

Presented by Angelika Becker, President of the AATG Board of Directors

Friend of German - Educator Award

Presented by Stefanie Ohnesorg, Southeast Regional Representative to AATG Board of Directors

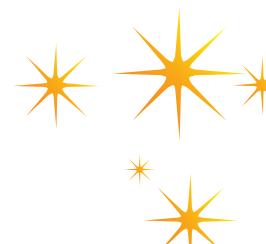
Outstanding German Educator Award

Secondary Award Presented by Mariah Ligas, Central Regional Representative to AATG Board of Directors

Post-Secondary Award Presented by Bridget Levine-West, Northeast Regional Representative to AATG Board of Directors

Lifetime Achievement Award

Presented by Bridget Levine-West, Northeast Regional Representative to AATG Board of Directors



The German Quarterly Best Graduate Student Paper Award



"Melusine, Emblem of the Self: The Female Traveler and the Contours of Acceptable Difference"

Andrew C. Sternhagen Schwenk
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois

The German Quarterly's 2025 award for the best paper written by a graduate student goes to Andrew Schwenk for the paper "Melusine, Emblem of the Self: The Female Traveler and the Contours of Acceptable Difference."

In his winning submission, Schwenk offers an engaging and ambitious exploration of the early modern German novel *Melusine* by Thüring von Ringoltingen (1457). Schwenk takes on challenging terrain and, with his close readings and skillful engagement with a vast array of secondary literature, navigates it with a fresh perspective that highlights the narrative economies and codes of class, gender, and sexuality embedded in *Melusine*. These codes operate differently from the conventions of the modern novel but at times feel strikingly postmodern, making Schwenk's analysis both innovative and timely.

Schwenk's emphasis on the motif of travel, especially as it intersects with questions of gender and sexuality, is refreshing and productive, enriching early modern scholarship while also contributing to German Studies' contemporary turn away from national paradigms with its comparative, transcultural approach. This well-written paper addresses a gap in the research and provides insights that will, in its published form, undoubtedly influence future scholarship on *Melusine*.

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Max Kade Prize for Best Article in *The German Quarterly*



"Knowing Gender in Kim de l'Horizon's Blutbuch"

Dr. Sophie Salvo, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois



The winner of the 2024 Best Article in *The German Quarterly* prize is Sophie Salvo's "Knowing Gender in Kim de l'Horizon's Blutbuch."

Salvo is an Assistant Professor of German in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Chicago. Her article demonstrates how gender emerges in Kim de l'Horizon's *Blutbuch* "as a signifier in search of its meaning." Expertly and adeptly employing contemporary theories of gender, Salvo argues that *Blutbuch*, a text that has made a strong impression in contemporary European culture, is relentless in its pursuit of gender possibilities—more alternatives, more explanations, more examples. Moving away from the almost necessarily reductive tendencies of theory, the novel rejects limited patterns in favor of boundless multiplication. It constitutes, Salvo argues, "a timely representation of gender diversity," and Salvo's interpretation represents a critical contribution to discourses of gendered categories and how they are used both theoretically and practically.

Salvo's ability to clearly parse complex theoretical discussions and relate them compellingly to de l'Horizon's text is impressive, as is how theory and literature are made to dialogue with each other in a way that embraces unresolved tensions in both text and theoretical frameworks. The textual analysis is creative, lively, and engaging.





“Racial literacy and performative pedagogies in the German theater practicum”

Dr. Morgan Koerner, College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina

The Best Article Award of *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* is awarded to **Dr. Morgan Koerner** (The College of Charleston) for the article “Racial Literacy and Performative Pedagogies in the German Theater Practicum.” This outstanding contribution addresses one of the most pressing challenges in our field: how to teach literature that engages race and racism when traditional drama methods, such as role-play and identification exercises, may prove problematic.

The article is both timely and innovative, offering a carefully theorized and well-researched exploration of racial literacy, performance pedagogy, and social justice, while also demonstrating how these concepts can be implemented in practice through a two-week theater unit. Reviewers praised the clarity of argument, the compelling structure, and the author’s courageous, reflective approach, highlighting especially the thoughtful integration of student responses and the creation of an exhilarating classroom experience. This article expands our pedagogical horizons and sets a high standard for scholarship in language teaching.



Friend of German - Community Award

Amy and Travis Jerde, Indiana German Heritage Society, Carmel Seiffen Sister Cities

Travis and Amy Jerde have made a lasting impact on German language education and cultural promotion in Indiana. Through their leadership in organizations such as the Carmel Seiffen Sister City, Indiana German Heritage Society, and the Carmel Christkindlmarkt, they have created meaningful opportunities for cultural exchange and public engagement with German heritage.

Their work directly supports German education. Travis leads the Kulturecke Docent Program, training high school students to educate thousands of Christkindlmarkt visitors and awarding scholarships through a competitive essay contest. Amy's authentic German baking, especially her beloved Kartoffelpuffer, helps fund cultural initiatives, including support for German Saturday schools and student scholarships.

Beyond events and fundraising, the Jerdes foster community and cultural exchange. Their efforts have strengthened German-American ties, inspired young learners, and made German culture visible and accessible to the broader public. Whether organizing immersive events like Jägerfest, hosting traditional dinners, or performing in folk dance groups, they bring people together in the spirit of Gemütlichkeit.

Their dedication has helped sustain and grow German programs across Indiana, making them true champions of German language and culture. The AATG proudly honors Travis and Amy Jerde with the 2025 Friend of German - Community Award.

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Goethe-Institut/AATG Outstanding GAPP Coordinator Award

Melanie Mello, Arizona German Language School, Chandler, Arizona

Melanie Mello has been involved with GAPP since 2013, when she successfully launched the first GAPP exchange at Saint Joseph High School, after years of persistent efforts to secure administrative approval. Her work laid a solid foundation that allowed her successor, Cornelia Langheinrich, to continue the program in collaboration with the Robert Koch Gymnasium in Deggendorf. After relocating to Arizona, Melanie began teaching at Chandler High School and revived a long-standing but dormant GAPP partnership between three local schools and the Otto-Hahn-Gymnasium in Nagold, Germany. Although she is no longer teaching at a traditional high school, Melanie continues to organize a GAPP exchange through the Arizona German Language School, a community-based program she founded. For the upcoming 2025-2026 cycle, she has partnered with Chandler Preparatory Academy, which will host the visiting German students. Melanie's continued coordination of a GAPP exchange outside of the traditional school setting is a testament to her passion and belief in the power of international exchange. Beyond her local impact, Melanie is a national advocate for GAPP. She frequently presents at workshops and national conferences to promote GAPP and share best practices. Through the GAPP Teacher Forum, she provides hands-on support to new coordinators—answering calls, sharing resources, and mentoring colleagues with generosity and expertise. Additionally, she has collaborated directly with the GAPP office, offering valuable feedback on insurance policies, form design, and program logistics. In all she does, Melanie brings professionalism, empathy, and an unshakable belief in the transformative potential of cultural exchange.





Goethe-Institut / AATG Certificate of Merit

Dr. Alina Dana Weber, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

Alina Dana Weber, whose innovative scholarship and teaching have reshaped the curriculum, has transformed German studies at Florida State University since 2013. An Associate Professor of German, she has designed more than twenty interdisciplinary courses that draw students from across disciplines and foster critical, creative engagement with German culture. As coordinator of the basic German language program, Dana modernized and hybridized the curriculum, continues to train and mentor teaching assistants, and organizes and hosts events such as Stammtisch, Gruselween, the Winter Holidays event, and currywurst parties. Her deep care for students is evident in the Maura Binkley Study Abroad Scholarship, which she co-founded to honor a beloved student and support transformative study in Germany. Widely recognized for her scholarship and service, Dana Weber is a recipient of FSU's Developing Scholar Award, serves on the Marshall and Rhodes Scholarship faculty committees, chairs the International Society for Cultural History, and serves as FSU's DAAD Research Ambassador—exemplifying excellence in teaching, mentorship, and intercultural exchange.



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Goethe-Institut / AATG Certificate of Merit



Dr. Claudia Grossman, Indiana State University, Indianapolis, Indiana

For more than two decades, **Claudia Grossman** has been a cornerstone of German language education and cultural outreach in Indiana and beyond. As Senior Lecturer in the German Program and Director of Overseas Study at Indiana University Indianapolis, she created engaging, well-designed courses—from German film to culture and cooking—that attracted students across disciplines and levels. She built and maintained high-impact study abroad and engineering internship exchanges, notably with the Technische Hochschule Mannheim, and inspired countless students to explore German language and culture firsthand. Even in retirement, Claudia continues to nurture German learning as the driving force behind the Indianapolis German Saturday School and through tours, essay contests, and presentations for the Indiana German Heritage Society and Carmel Christkindlmarkt. A long-time AATG Indiana board member and National German Exam testing chair, she exemplifies lifelong dedication to teaching, mentoring, and community building, ensuring that German studies thrive for generations to come.



Goethe-Institut / AATG Certificate of Merit



Dr. Sara Lee, Arizona State University, Chanzler, Arizona

A leading advocate for neurodiverse students, **Sara Lee** brings more than two decades of teaching experience, from elementary classrooms to graduate seminars, to her work as a key faculty member in Arizona State University's School of International Letters and Cultures. She is a certified OPI tester and serves on the German leadership team, where she organizes major outreach initiatives such as German Week, the Week of German Reunification, and high school language fairs. Sara also collaborates with K-12 school psychologists across Arizona to support second-language learning for students with dyslexia and other neurodiverse profiles, and she represents world-language learners with disabilities as faculty mentor of the Neurodiverse Devils student organization. A driving force within AATG Arizona and the Goethe-Institut's German Educational Multipliers (GEM) program, Sara strengthens the German-teaching community through events like German Week, high-school fairs, and teacher workshops. Her outreach, leadership, and tireless advocacy make her an exemplary educator who expands access to German language and culture.



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Goethe-Institut / AATG Certificate of Merit

Kathy Lockwood, Cascade High School, Everett, Washington

Kathy Lockwood has built a vibrant, learner-centered German program at Cascade High School in Washington over more than 25 years. Her communication-based instruction creates authentic, interdisciplinary connections while guiding students to use German in meaningful, real-world contexts. Ever creative, Kathy continually brings language learning beyond the classroom. She organizes German Immersion Camp and the German Student Convention each year and plans exceptional cultural field trips, such as visits to Leavenworth's Bavarian village and Seattle's Frye Art Museum. Her long-running "German Buddies" initiative pairs high schoolers with local second graders, building mentorship and excitement through activities like chalk art and Spaghetti Eis. For over two decades she has coordinated transformative German American Partnership Program (GAPP) exchanges, even securing opportunities for students with limited resources. Widely recognized with the U.S. Department of State's Citizen Diplomacy acknowledgment, the Klett USA Award, and the Duden Award, Kathy is a cornerstone of AATG-Washington and of German education statewide.





German Embassy Teacher of Excellence Award



Marissa Beck-Dean, Haines City High School, Haines City, Florida

Marissa Beck-Dean is a passionate and innovative German teacher at Haines City High School and IB, where she has taught since 2016. Her dynamic approach to teaching and her commitment to intercultural exchange have made her a standout leader in German language education across Florida. Marissa’s classroom is student-centered and culture-rich, blending rigorous academics with engaging activities that bring the German language to life. She has significantly expanded enrollment in German courses at her school and teaches levels 1 through 5, including college-level instruction. Her enthusiasm and dedication are evident in her energetic teaching style and her ability to connect with students of all backgrounds.



Beyond the classroom, she has made a lasting impact through her leadership and outreach. She revived Florida’s German Day events, organizing competitions and cultural activities for students across the state. In 2024 and 2025, she helped host these events, even bringing a busload of German exchange students from Bad Homburg to participate. She also leads international exchanges, providing students with immersive experiences in both the U.S. and Germany. Marissa is a respected presenter at professional conferences, sharing her expertise and inspiring fellow educators. Colleagues and supervisors praise Marissa’s professionalism, integrity, and servant leadership. Her school’s Head of IB describes her as “a true asset” whose dedication to students and passion for the German language are unmatched. Through her tireless efforts, Marissa Beck-Dean continues to elevate German language education and foster meaningful intercultural connections.



German Embassy Teacher of Excellence Award

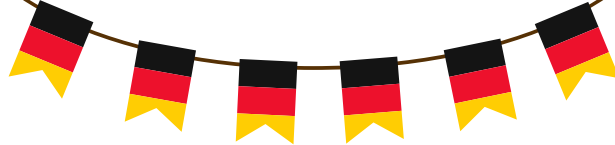
John Daigle, Lindale Middle School, Linthicum Heights, Maryland

John Daigle is a rising star in German language education at Lindale Middle School, where he has made a remarkable impact in less than two years. Stepping into a vacant position, John quickly revitalized the German program, helping students recover lost ground and exceed county averages in language assessments. His student-centered approach is evident in his creation of the district’s first middle school chapter of the German Honor Society, a testament to his commitment to academic excellence.



John actively connects students with the broader German-speaking community, organizing booths at local festivals, showcasing embassy displays, and building partnerships with local German clubs—including securing a financial donation to support his program. John’s dedication extends beyond the classroom. He organized a European trip for students and parents, offering middle schoolers a rare opportunity to immerse themselves in German culture and language. His efforts have inspired a deep appreciation for German among his students and colleagues alike. John Daigle has an innovative spirit, tireless advocacy, and transformative teaching style.





German Embassy Teacher of Excellence Award

Olga Shatalova, Billings High School, Billings, Montana

Olga Shatalova is a dynamic and visionary German teacher whose journey from Ukraine to Montana has enriched the language education landscape in profound ways. Since arriving in the U.S., Olga has transformed a struggling program into a thriving one, doubling enrollment and earning her district the AATG German Center of Excellence designation. Her classroom is a hub of immersive, proficiency-based learning, where students engage with authentic materials, movement-based activities, and real-world applications. Olga's students consistently excel on the National German Exam.



As President of the AATG Montana Chapter, Olga has reinvigorated the state's German teaching community—organizing growing events, launching a statewide newsletter, and mentoring new educators. Her leadership has brought inactive teachers back into the fold and fostered a vibrant, supportive network. Her teaching philosophy centers on accessibility, creativity, and intercultural understanding. Her students describe her as inspiring and deeply caring, with lessons that are both memorable and transformative. Whether converting her classroom into a German restaurant or supporting students through international travel, Olga's dedication is unmatched.

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AATG Post-Secondary Center of Excellence



Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota

The German Section in the German and Russian Department at Carleton College, located in Northfield, Minnesota, stands out as a remarkable example of innovation, collaboration, and dedication in post-secondary German Studies. Over the last decade, Professors Kiley Kost, Seth Peabody, and Juliane Schicker have revitalized and rebuilt their program from the ground up with thoughtful planning, creativity, and a strong commitment to students.

The curriculum at Carleton is designed to help students develop high proficiency in German while encouraging them to grow as critically engaged global citizens. Social justice themes, project-based learning, and ongoing proficiency assessments are woven throughout the courses so that students not only learn German but can really connect it to bigger real-world contexts. One signature project—a trimester-long social justice city tour—prepares students already in their first semester to explore their communities through the lens of German language and culture.

Enrollment has steadily increased at all levels, and students do very well on the Avant STAMP Language Proficiency Test for Higher Education. Many are recognized through international fellowships and Carleton's annual Honors Convocation too. Outside the classroom, students enjoy spontaneous conversation hours, independent research, and creative exhibitions in the German-Russian lounge—these activities help connect coursework with campus life in fun and meaningful ways.

The faculty are active beyond Carleton as well. **Professors Kost, Peabody, and Schicker** present regularly at state, national, and international conferences, and they lead workshops and publish research in top academic journals as well as more public online formats like blogs and websites. Their work spans environmental humanities, Disability Studies, East German film and music, and more. It's worth noting that each professor has received the ACTFL German Special Interest Group Award for Outstanding German Program Development and Advocacy.

This success is backed by strong institutional and community support, with several letters of recommendation included in their application. The Carleton German Section truly embodies what it means to be an AATG Center of Excellence and will no doubt continue to inspire German programs for years to come.





Friend of German - Educator Award

**Dr. Maria Sturm, German Society of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Dr. Maria Sturm has been a central figure in the German-speaking communities of Philadelphia for a good two decades. She exemplifies being a “Friend of German” through the multitude of her official functions in connection with the German Society of Pennsylvania, that not only contribute to German Studies but also create educational opportunities for the public at large. Throughout her career, Maria Sturm has been continually looking for ways to enhance the German Society’s relationship with the community, to strengthen German language programs, and to promote German culture. Her engagements range from actively supporting German teachers during the local “Sprachfest” to curating historical documents for the German Society of Pennsylvania’s Library. In this capacity, she has also been mentoring college interns, thus supporting them in their effort to gain practical experience in transcribing historical documents, as well as in preserving and curating the vast collection of this library. As chair of the Library Committee, she also played a key role in guiding decisions about cataloging, digitization, and institutional partnerships—particularly with the German Historical Institute, whose fellows regularly consult the library for their research.



Maria Sturm’s dedication to promoting German language instruction in the U.S. is equally impressive. In 2012, she co-founded PhillyKinder, a program that provides a social and cultural home for German-speaking families and offers German-language education for children of both native and non-native speakers. Originally part of the German Society, Maria successfully shepherded PhillyKinder into an independent, volunteer-run organization that continues to thrive and serve the region.

She is also an active member of the German Society’s Language Committee, whose declared goal it is to strengthen and broaden German instruction in the region in collaboration with other organizations. Within this context, her leadership was also central to organizing a Society for German American Studies (SGAS) Conference, as well as various regional events in cooperation with AATG. Her exceptional passion for promoting German language education and her dedication to strengthen German-American relations through her networking efforts and curatorial work have been transformational for German education in her region and beyond, and it is a pleasure to honor this immense accomplishment with the AATG’s “Friend of German Award.”

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AATG Outstanding German Educator Award - Secondary



Beth Lillskau, Prairie High School, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Beth Lillskau has spent her career promoting German and helping both her students and colleagues to reach new heights, not only in her home state of Iowa, but also in a supportive and inspirational role for German educators across the country.

Beth is known by her colleagues for her passionate and praxis-oriented approach to teaching in her classes. By using comprehensive input and well-researched pedagogy, she makes her class interesting, engaging, and accessible for students of all levels and abilities

In her school, she has been an integral force in the World Language department, helping to cultivate excitement for international relationships for her school community through her work building a travel program as well as leading the professional development of her department to offer the Seal of Biliteracy. Beth’s colleagues, administrators, students, and parents praise her for her determination and dedication to improving the status of not only German, but other world languages within her school community. Her efforts ensure that language learning can not be overlooked in her district.

Beyond her own classroom, Beth has also been a pillar for German educators across the nation through her work on the AP and AAPPL exams. She has been a consultant for the College Board and involved with the German department at the University of Central Missouri, helping them to revamp their curriculum and often advising on proficiency and assessment. Her activity with the University and encouraging of students to follow their love of German cannot be understated.

Beth is known as the spark that ignites her students’ long-lasting passion for German, with one former student praising Beth’s “unshakeable love for her students and the seeds of potential she sees within all of them.” The committee is proud to recognize Beth Lillskau as this year’s awardee, and the AATG thanks her for her thoughtful and powerful contributions to the field.

Dr. Pascale LaFountain, Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey

The AATG Outstanding German Educator Award is presented in recognition of excellence in teaching and outstanding contributions to the German teaching profession. An Outstanding German Educator has demonstrated excellence in German education, had an impact in local, state, or national arenas, and shown continued growth as a German educator. This year, the AATG is honored to present Pascale LaFountain with the AATG Outstanding German Educator Award, Post-Secondary.



Pascale LaFountain is Associate Professor of German and French at Montclair State University, where she has revitalized a program that, prior to her joining, had recently lost its German major, transforming it into a thriving academic community recognized with the 2020 AATG Center of Excellence Award. Today, the program boasts approximately 20 majors and over 40 minors and also includes several recent Fulbright award winners—all extraordinary achievements at a time marked by widespread national decline in the study of languages.

Yet Pascale's impact goes far beyond rebuilding: at Montclair State she has reimagined German Studies as a model of inclusive, community-engaged, and intellectually vibrant learning. This vision takes shape through a range of powerful initiatives: from collaboration on an innovative, open-access curriculum, to her nationally recognized SPARK Lab, to her work on the MLA-grant funded project CHILL (Career Hub for International Language Learning) that tracks and documents how alumni apply their language skills across diverse professional fields. Throughout these and other efforts detailed in her dossier, Pascale's extraordinary energy, collaborative ethos, and future-oriented pedagogical vision emerge as the driving force behind her transformative impact in our field. As her nominator summarizes, "Through her proactive leadership, collaborative spirit, compassionate teaching, and the sheer energy and expertise she brings to the profession, her contributions are unmatched in my 23 years in the field." The selection committee wholeheartedly concurs. Each juror left Pascale's dossier not only deeply impressed, but newly inspired by the scope, creativity, and integrity of the programs she has built—initiatives that have empowered students and colleagues alike to reach new levels of success.

Pascale approaches her work in German Studies with deep humility and a clear sense of purpose, consistently scaling up opportunities in ways that center student success and elevate the contributions of others. One of the most powerful examples of this ethos is her SPARK Lab: a credit-bearing community engagement initiative that places both undergraduate and high school students in local elementary schools to teach German. Designed to expand the presence of the language in the wider community, the SPARK Lab has become a catalyst for student growth and institutional change. As one letter writer affirms, Pascale's model represents "the SPARK program that the SPARK labs creators might not even have known that they were looking for." This work also exemplifies her commitment to equity within the field of German Studies. A recent article on the SPARK Lab's success, co-authored by Pascale with a high school teacher and an undergraduate student, reflects her commitment to what the committee called "vertical empowerment": opening pathways to scholarship for learners and educators across the academic spectrum. As the undergraduate co-author reflects in her supporting letter: "Thanks to [Pascale's] mentorship, I co-authored a research paper on SPARK as a model for future DaF teachers, presented our findings at the ACTFL National Convention in 2023, and earned my first publication credit."

Students across all levels effuse with praise for Pascale, describing her teaching as inspiring, intellectually generous, and deeply attuned to their learning needs. As documented by the many letters submitted, this means attuning to students' needs not only during undergraduate study, but already before prospective undergraduates begin applying to college, and continuing long after her students complete their bachelor's. Many directly attribute their Fulbright awards, pursuit of graduate degrees, ability to study abroad or participate in summer study programs via scholarship and grants, as well as later careers in teaching, translation, and international admissions, to Pascale's unflagging mentorship. As one student writes: "Dr. Lafountain shows students that education is more than time in the classroom; it is immersive, international, inclusive, and it can be empowering... Pascale's passion for being a teacher of German is felt through the impact she leaves with her students."

In addition to these important projects, Pascale's teaching-related scholarship is equally robust, with recent and forthcoming publications on inclusive teaching, community engagement, and the role of affect and identity in the language classroom. As one well-established scholar writes, "I've relied on Pascale's research and teaching to keep me up to date." She is also an extremely active contributor to the profession at large, routinely presenting at ACTFL, MLA, and NECTFL while also serving as a mentor and collaborator with teachers across K-16 levels. Her leadership has been recognized twice by her institution: she is the recipient of both Montclair State's university-wide 2024 Teaching Award as well as, in 2025, the first recipient ever of a new award, the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching, Montclair's highest honor for faculty.

In every area celebrated by this award, Pascale LaFountain exemplifies what it means to be an outstanding educator. In recognition of her innovative vision, ethical leadership, and extraordinary contributions to the field of German education, the AATG proudly presents Pascale LaFountain with the AATG Outstanding German Educator Award.

Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in German Language Education

Dr. Ingrid Zeller, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois



The American Association of Teachers of German proudly honors Professor of Instruction Ingrid Zeller (Northwestern University) with the inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in German Language Education. This award recognizes her extraordinary dedication to students and colleagues, her transformative leadership, and her tireless service to the profession.

For over three decades, Ingrid has been, in the words of her students and colleagues, “the cornerstone” and “lifeblood” of German at Northwestern. She is described as “the crux of [the program’s] success,” a faculty member “without whom not even the basic operations” of the program—let alone its signature initiatives such as German Immersion Day (GID)—would be possible. Her chair affirms: “There is, in short, no one like her in our department – and we have a highly competent, deeply committed group of faculty members.”

At the heart of Ingrid’s contributions lies her commitment to educational excellence. She has redefined what it means to encounter German in the classroom by extending learning into the wider world through architecture, music, film, and urban culture. Courses such as Bauhaus and Beyond: German Influences on the Chicago Skyline and German through Musical Journeys in Vienna embody her principle that “The City is Our Classroom.” She organizes excursions to theaters, opera houses, and architectural sites, and brings musicians and authors to campus. As Academic Director of AATG’s inaugural summer program in Bonn, she expanded these immersive practices abroad.

Ingrid’s mentorship leaves an equally profound mark. Former students credit her with guiding them from their first German class to Fulbright and CBYX fellowships, graduate study, and careers in teaching and beyond. One, now an educator, recalls: “Ingrid was the person who brought me to a Northern Illinois AATG Chapter meeting—an experience that solidified my decision to become a teacher.” Another, now at Google, testifies: “Inspired by her Kaffeestunde events, I began a similar event at Google’s NYC campus.” A current student captures the sentiment of many: “I am incredibly grateful for what I must have done in a past life to have the honor of being her student.”

Her leadership extends across the university and the profession. She has directed Northwestern’s German Writing Center for over twenty years—impacting nearly every student of German at the institution—chaired the Council on Language Instruction overseeing 19 programs, and served as Faculty Fellow and civic engagement leader. Within AATG, she has held nearly every local leadership role and, nationally, was a highly effective Presiding Officer of the Assembly of Chapter Presidents, praised for centering chapters on AATG’s core mission. Internationally, she has built bridges through long-standing participation in the Internationale Deutschlehrertagung (IDT). As former Executive Director Keith Cothrun affirms: “The teaching of German in the USA has benefitted enormously from Ingrid’s many contributions.”

Ingrid is also a prolific scholar and innovator. She has delivered more than 100 presentations, authored widely used curricular materials such as *Kurzfilm: German Short Films and Activities Manual*, and pioneered inclusive, praxis-oriented approaches to teaching. Long before DEI was central to higher education discourse, she modeled how to teach diversity and social justice through German.

As colleagues attest, Ingrid is “a teacher scholar who centers and foregrounds her students while engaging and collaborating with fellow educators to push innovation and excellence.” She embodies the highest ideals of our profession. For her lifelong contributions and the countless lives she has touched, the AATG proudly presents Ingrid Zeller with the Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in German Language Education.





Danke!

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