



Home of the Panthers

*"Freude am Lernen"* –  
Joy of Learning

---

# Parent Handbook

1846 E. 64<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Anchorage, AK 99507

Phone: 907-742-0900  
Fax: 907-742-0945

[rilkeschule.asdk12.org](http://rilkeschule.asdk12.org)  
[info@rilkeschule.org](mailto:info@rilkeschule.org)

## *Rilke Schule: From Idea ...*

In March 2006, veteran German teacher Jo Sanders made the daring proposition to create a German partial-immersion charter school in Anchorage. A core group of like-minded people went to work and 18 months later, on August 22, 2007, Rilke Schule German School of Arts & Sciences opened its doors as Alaska's first world language charter school.

Rilke Schule is a partial-immersion German school, where students are taught half of the school day in English and the other half in German. The school spans elementary (K-5<sup>th</sup>) and middle school (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>), which allows middle school graduates to transition seamlessly into well-established high school German programs across Anchorage and Eagle River. As of the 2016-17 school year, a German immersion program has been established at Robert Service High School, thereby making it possible for students who begin at Rilke Schule to take advantage of 13 years of German immersion instruction.

Unlike traditional programs that are governed by the Anchorage School District, Rilke Schule is governed by the Academic Policy Committee (APC), which in turn reports to Anchorage School Board. It is similar to traditional neighborhood schools in most aspects; however, it is exempt from several public school requirements, and thus enjoys more freedom in policies, budget control, and curriculum selection.

Rilke Schule is closely aligned with the Anchorage School District's prescribed curriculum and the Alaska State Standards in all subjects except German. The standards for German are based on the National Foreign Language Standards, which include the Alaska and ASD world language standards.

Rilke Schule has a dress code intended to instill a sense of belonging and pride in the school and to eliminate any idea of competition in the matter of personal dress. The school believes in "nurturing cultural curiosity and fostering lifelong learning." Thus, the Rilke Schule community tries to involve the whole family in school life through the celebration of traditional German cultural events.



## *... to Opening*

One of the school's guiding mission principles is to instill respect for the diversity of humankind and we strive to attract a diverse student population.

Rilke Schule teachers have received diverse training on immersion teaching methods. Occasionally, our teachers are sent to immersion conferences and intensive language classes on a rotating basis.

Students are encouraged to develop pen pal relationships with students from our two German partner schools, and upper grade students may participate in an exchange program every other year.

## *Cultural Celebrations*

Rilke Schule makes every effort to celebrate the most important cultural holidays of the German-speaking countries. We have already established some traditions:

- \*St. Martin Lantern Walk and Coat Drive in early November
- \*A visit from Nikolaus and his helper Knecht Ruprecht to all the classrooms around December 6th
- \*Fasching/Karneval costume celebration in early spring

As our school grows, we continue to incorporate more traditions and cultural celebrations into our program. These events solidify our students' understanding of the German culture as they learn about the history of traditions, memorize associated songs and/or poems, create craft related art projects, and get to experience and share these celebrations with their fellow students, Rilke Schule families, and the wider community.



---

## *Our Educational Standpoint*

### **Mission**

Rilke Schule German School of Arts & Sciences is a K through 8 school that provides an outstanding education focused on high academic achievement by engaging each child through an enriched language curriculum taught half-day in German.

### **Vision**

Our teaching focus is on language, arts, and sciences and fosters creative expression through drama, arts, music, and sports. With the support of parents and the extended family, our school creates a community, which is immersed in the German culture and promotes international awareness. Our school nurtures a child's natural curiosity and cultivates life-long learning.

We believe in:

**Multilingualism:** Multilingualism is the norm in most of the World and we believe that children who know more than one language will be better prepared for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**World Citizenship:** By exposing our students and their families to and immersing them in a new culture, we will promote informed, active, and responsible world citizenship.

**Respect:** We believe that all children learn best when they are known and understood as individuals. Each child at our school will be accepted and challenged in the manner that is most appropriate for them. We instill respect for the diversity of humankind by applying a social curriculum that is as important as the academic curriculum. This will include manners and etiquette.



**Challenges:** We believe that children rise to academic challenges that are developmentally appropriate. We are committed to providing a learning environment that teaches students to do their best work and to strive to reach their potential.

**Involvement:** We believe that at the heart of every vibrant school are involved parents, extended families, and the local communities. Board members, faculty, and families share in the daily tasks and long-term planning that comprise the ongoing functions of the school.

**Healthy Lifestyle:** We practice healthy living through nutritious eating and regular exercise in school.

**Sustainability:** We are committed to the policy of “reduce, recycle, reuse.”



## *Rilke Schule Goals*

1. Students will learn to speak German fluently and will have a deep understanding of heritage, cultural norms, and customs of German-speaking countries and use German to acquire knowledge not available to them in English.
2. Community Service – each child will actively be involved in the community to learn that helping others is part of being a responsible world citizen.
3. The school will have a financial plan to assure sustainability.
4. Students will have pen pals and e-mail pals in German-speaking countries. Regular exchange trips to partner school(s) will be made and the school will host students from partner school(s).
5. Every family is expected to fulfill a volunteer commitment of at least 36 hours per year to help the school with various needs. Families will also be involved in joint projects, field trips, festivals, performances, and similar activities.
6. Traditional holidays and festivals of the German-speaking countries will be celebrated.
7. The curriculum will meet the Content Standards for Alaskan Schools in all areas.
8. Performance standards in each subject area will be evaluated regularly in order to ensure continuity and effectiveness.
9. Students performing below ‘proficient standards’ may be offered tutoring for German and/or English subjects.



10. The school, its faculty and staff will collaborate with other learning entities to enrich the school life. We will work with ASD German faculty to develop an excellent German high school program to provide our students with an opportunity to continue their advanced German studies beyond 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We will work with members of the German government, the Goethe Institute and the American Association of Teachers of German to provide pre-service and in-service staff development.
11. Professional development and additional staff training will be emphasized during in-services, as well as on other special occasions.
12. Parents will be continually informed about student progress and school events through: newsletters, website, notes sent home, phone calls or e-mails from teachers, regular and special parent conferences, and the use of student portfolios
13. Staff will be given the opportunity to improve their German through seminars in German-speaking countries.
14. Based on interest, the school will provide before and after school enrichment programs, such as music, drama, sports, travel, and homework club.
15. The school will maintain an active recycling program and will participate in local, national, and international ecological and conservation projects.
16. If demand exists, German classes will be offered in the evenings for interested parents and community members.



Rilke Schule artwork

## *Schools: Partners for the Future*

*Rilke Schule receives €15,000 from German Government*



German Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has launched the “Schools: Partners for the Future” Initiative (“Schulen: Partner der Zukunft”; short PASCH). Its goal is to build a worldwide network of at least 1,000 partner schools through which to awaken young people’s interest in and enthusiasm for

modern-day Germany and German society.

An additional 45 million Euros was earmarked for the initiative in 2008, which was coordinated by the Federal Foreign Office and implemented in cooperation with the Central Agency for Schools Abroad, the Goethe Institut, the Educational Exchange Service of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the states in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Academic Exchange Service.

The initiative plans to support many schools with a broad range of services to extend young people’s skills, preparing them for study in Germany and a subsequent career in which an ability to communicate in German is essential.

The number of full grants for study in Germany is to be doubled for graduates of German schools abroad and partner schools. The international award program will allow even more pupils from abroad to experience Germany first hand for several weeks.

Rilke Schule is a member of the PASCH Initiative and has also been recognized by the German government as a German Immersion School Abroad. The school receives annual financial support from the German government.

In 2014, Rilke Schule was named a German Center of Excellence by the American Association of Teachers of German.



## *Rilke Schule Verein (RSV)*

The Rilke Schule Verein is the parent, teacher, community organization (PTO) supporting the Rilke Schule. Verein is the German word for: association, club, union or society. The Verein is a non-profit corporation that is legally separated from the school, but does not exist without the school.

### **The Rilke Schule Verein has the following goals:**

#### **Recruit Students**

Financial support from the state is based on the number of enrolled students. In order for the school to meet its budget, the target number of students has to be recruited and maintained. Fewer students means reduced financial support.

#### **Coordinate Volunteers**

Even with state funding, the needs of charter schools extend beyond the money provided by the state. Strong charter and optional schools rely on the support of parents, family members, and community members. Volunteers provide many educational benefits and enrichment opportunities to the students of the school. Supporting the teachers and administration extends their ability to teach our children.

#### **Raise Funds**

Every school has needs that are not met by state, local and federal funding. This is especially true in charter schools where the school must pay for its own facilities. Supplemental fundraising can pay for equipment, supplies, faculty, training, professional development, enrichment programs, special events and more. The more money raised, opportunities for our children are made possible.

For more information about the RSV, please visit

[rsv@rilkeschule.org](mailto:rsv@rilkeschule.org)

---

## *Frequently Asked Questions:*

Choosing a school for your child is a difficult and involved decision. With so many alternatives available, parents are often left with many questions and feeling rather overwhelmed. We hope that this section will help you with this process and answer most of your questions. Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance at [info@rilkeschule.org](mailto:info@rilkeschule.org).

### *What is a Charter School?*

Charter schools are non-sectarian, tuition-free public schools that operate within the district under contract with the school board. Charter schools offer alternative teaching methods or curricula and more independence than regular public schools. They are usually started by parents, teachers, and/or community members who apply to the Alaska Department of Education for a "charter", which defines the school's specific mission and goals and how these goals will be measured. Charter schools are accountable to their sponsors, parents and families, the state, and the public for achieving measurable results in student achievement and for implementing fiscally sound management.

### *What is an Immersion Program?*

Immersion schooling differs from traditional instructional approaches, in which world languages are taught as separate subjects. In this program, children are "immersed" in the language for half of the school day. English-speaking children learn to understand, speak, read, and write German by hearing and using it continually during normal classroom activities. Care is taken to ease students into the new language and to ensure comprehension. Progress and performance are carefully measured.



## *Questions*

### *German Immersion – How does it work?*

Students learn to speak German fluently and develop a deep understanding of heritage, cultural norms and customs of German - speaking countries. Our non-German speaking staff will have the opportunity to acquire German skills to support the immersion in all phases of school life.

Our immersion program encompasses a half day of instruction in German in the subjects of reading, writing and language arts, math, and a combination of science, health and social studies (Sachkunde). Subjects taught in English include reading, writing and language arts. Math is supported on both sides.

Physical activity and sportsmanship are emphasized both in P.E. and in after- school activities. Students have pen pals/e-mail pals at one or more partner schools in German-speaking countries and student exchange trips are arranged every other year.

### *Will my child's English language acquisition suffer?*

NO! Research consistently finds that the immersion experience actually enhances English language development over time. Immersion students who complete a full program perform better than non-immersion students on almost every academic measure available. Immersion education is enriching in every area of academic study and will give your child the advantage of becoming bilingual as well. Over three decades of studies consistently show that immersion students achieve as well as or better than non-immersion peers on standardized measures of verbal and mathematics skills administered in English.



## *Questions...*

### *Why should my child learn another language?*

Scientific research has shown that learning another language increases achievement in basic skills such as communication and listening. It enhances brain development and memory, improves understanding of the student's native language, and gives a new perspective and understanding of language. Furthermore, it promotes awareness, appreciation, and acceptance of other peoples and cultures and prepares students to participate more fully in the global community and marketplace. Immersion students become more flexible thinkers and exhibit greater nonverbal problem-solving abilities. Many studies have consistently found that immersion students do as well or even better than non-immersion students on standardized tests.

### *Why should my child learn another language so early?*

Brain research has shown that for greatest accuracy and excellent pronunciation, language learning must begin before the age of ten. Children use what they learn in one language to reinforce concepts and terms they've learned in the other.

### *Why German?*

It is estimated that one in four Americans is of German descent. There is a rich history of Germans in America and in Alaska. More than 1,100 companies in German-speaking countries have subsidiaries in the United States and over 750 American companies do business in German-speaking countries.

\*German and English are the primary business languages of the European economies.

\*German is the most frequently recommended language by U.S. universities. Over 60,000 German-speaking tourists visit Alaska each summer, creating a demand for Alaskans who are comfortable in that language.

## *Questions...*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, one of every six Alaskans claims to be of German ancestry; about 45,000 live in the metropolitan area of Anchorage; 1,100 were born in Germany. German has proven to be a language of high interest in Alaska. Alaska has the second highest percentage of students learning German in the United States, after Pennsylvania. Every high school in Anchorage has a solid German program and local students and teachers have won national honors, including free trips to Germany. The University of Alaska now offers a major in German, so students can now continue their education in their home state. Germany has provided a rich literary, musical, scientific and political legacy for the evolution of Western Civilization. Ten percent of the books published in the world are in German. Mastery of German provides insights into German literature, science, history and culture, which cannot be obtained in translation.

### *Nobody at home speaks German – Is this a disadvantage?*

No, it is expected that the majority of students come from English - only speaking households. The immersion program is designed to teach children who don't have any prior German language knowledge. After-school tutoring and homework help may be offered if a student needs some extra assistance. Since the entire school is immersed in the German culture, students will have plenty of opportunity to hone their German skills outside of the classroom. For parents who are interested in learning German alongside their children, adult German classes are offered in partnership with the Otto Geist Schule.



## ***Questions...***

### ***What can the parent do to support the child's learning experience?***

- \*Read with your child(ren) daily.
- \*Become involved in your child's school life (join the Rilke Schule Verein, volunteer at the school, go on field trips, participate in school festivities, etc.).
- \*Get to know your child's teachers.
- \*Encourage, but do not force, your child to speak German; be patient, it will happen in time.
- \*Expose your child to German outside of the school setting (videos, books, clubs, etc.).
- \*Let your child know how proud you are that s/he is learning German.

### ***When will my child be fluent in German?***

Learning another language is a long-term commitment. While listening and reading skills will be comparable to those of native speakers of the same age after 2 – 3 years, speaking and writing skills will develop more gradually. When your child leaves Rilke Schule after 8th grade, our intention is that s/he will have a close to native-like speaker ability.

### ***What is the minimum age for attending?***

According to the ASD Policy Handbook, Section 440.1 Minimum Age: *Any child who is six years of age or who will become six years of age on or before September 1 of the school year shall be considered a child of school age, except that a child who will become five years of age on or before September 1 of the school year can be received into kindergarten.*

Contact the ASD Department of Elementary Education at 742-4242 for information regarding testing for students who do not meet the minimum age requirement.

## ***Questions...***

### ***Are there any school fees?***

An Activity Fee of \$125 goes toward special school supplies, such as art and sciences and specialized German materials. See also under “Policies”.

### ***I heard there is a school uniform. Is that true?***

There is a dress code, consisting basically of collared shirts or blouses (such as polo shirts) and solid, muted-colored pants, skirts, jumpers, skorts or shorts. More specific information is available at <http://rilkeschule.asdk12.org/policies/dresscodepolicy/>.

### ***Are there before/after-school programs?***

Yes! The school enrichment activities depend on demand and the availability of teachers as sponsors. Examples include Rilke Schule Drama Club, Homework Club, Travel Club and sport activities. Other before and after care options are available through organizations who are partnering with Rilke Schule and families must contact them directly to participate. Please check our website for current programs.

***If you have any other questions or would like to schedule a school tour, we encourage you to give us a call. We will gladly provide you with any information or show our school to you.***

***Tel: 907-742-0900***



## ***Policies at Rilke Schule***

The following paragraphs represent the most important policies. Some are abbreviated due to space constraints. Please visit our website for a full copy.

### ***Admission***

Admission to Rilke Schule is by lottery. Mandatory lotteries are conducted by ASD administration in March and August each year. Visit <http://www.asdk12.org/welcome/lottery/> for specifics. Siblings of attending students must participate in the lottery process to be admitted, but are given preference.

*Rilke Schule German School of Arts & Sciences* is a “school of choice” for ASD students and each student must comply with the school rules and standards.

### ***School Fees***

When you register your child, an Activity fee of \$125 will be levied for each child. This fee goes toward special school supplies, such as art and science supplies and specialized German materials, which differ from class to class.

The fee is used for items such as:

- \*Art supplies for the various projects throughout the year
- \*Field trip buses and entrance fees
- \*In-class project supplies
- \*Technology upgrades

---

## ***Policies***

### ***Curriculum***

*Rilke Schule* is closely aligned with the Anchorage School District's prescribed curriculum and meets the Alaska State Standards in all subjects except German. The standards for German are based on the National Foreign Language Standards, which include the Alaska and ASD world language standards.

### ***Assessment & Grading***

Rilke Schule has enjoyed a 5 Star ranking according to the Alaska School Performance Index since the inception of the scale in 2012-13. Each student's math and language arts skills are measured through AIMSWeb.

Standardized tests are administered as per ASD requirements. The staff and the APC review the overall results of both the standardized tests and the German assessments to determine how the program can be improved.



## ***Policies continued***

### ***Calendar***

*Rilke Schule German School of Arts & Sciences* follows the ASD school calendar regarding holidays. School days are from 8:15am to 3:00pm Monday through Thursday and 8:15am to 1:45pm on Friday. Before and after school activities are offered on all school days for a fee. The RSV makes available a program called Fun Friday held from 1:45-3:00pm on that day. Parents are encouraged to drop off students from 7:45-8:10am daily. Classes begin promptly at 8:15am and all students must be in class at that time, if not, they are considered tardy.

### ***Nondiscrimination Policy***

Enrollment policies, access to curriculum, services and activities of the program are non-discriminatory with regard to religion, language, physical handicap, or national origin of children and their parents. The *Rilke Schule German School of Arts & Sciences* will adopt the code of conduct of the ASD, as well as the following statement of non-discrimination from the Anchorage School District:

*The Anchorage School Board is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, age, national origin, economic status, handicap, and other human differences protected by law. No person shall be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of educational opportunities and services, academic or extracurricular, offered by the District.*

### ***Food Service***

Students bring their own lunches and eat in the gymnasium. *Rilke Schule* promotes a healthy food policy. No candy, cookies, cake, puddings, other sugary food or fried chips are allowed in lunches or snacks. Milk, 100% fruit juice, and water are allowed; no soft drinks are permitted.

---

## *Policies...*

### *Transportation*

Parents or guardians of students are responsible for timely transportation to and from school. There is no school bus service available.

### *Dress Code*

The school dress code is intended to instill a sense of belonging and pride in the school and to eliminate any idea of competition in the matter of personal dress. We believe that dressing according to the code shows respect for the school community, fosters a sense of teamwork, and mitigates the influence of materialism in our school. Students must wear collared shirts, solid-colored sweaters and muted solid-colored bottoms. Please check our website for detailed dress code guidelines.

### *Student-Teacher Ratio*

The ideal student- teacher ratio for Rilke Schule classes are 22 students in grades K and 1, and 25 students in grades 2 through 8. While we strive not to exceed these numbers, exceptions are made to balance overall enrollment numbers and to accommodate sib-ling placements.



## *Websites of Interest*

Dictionary:

<http://www.leo.org>

Goethe Institut:

<http://www.goethe.de>

German Embassy in Washington, DC:

<http://www.germany-info.org/relaunch/index.html>

German radio:

<http://www.surfmusik.de>

German Food:

<http://www.germandeli.com/>

<http://www.germancorner.com/>

German Books (children and adults):

<http://www.amazon.de>

(Amazon Germany will ship any number of books, CD's, DVD's, games to Alaska.)

About Germany:

<http://www.aboutgermany.com>

### **Children websites**

Hamsterkiste:

<http://www.gbiu.de/Hamsterkiste/index.html>

Young Germany:

<http://www.young-germany.de/>

Märchen der Brüder Grimm:

<http://www.udoklinger.de/Deutsch/Grimm/Inhalt4.htm>

Zzebra:

<http://www.labbe.de/zzebra/index.asp>

## *How did Rilke Schule get its name?*



The school's namesake is Rainer Maria Rilke, who was born in 1875 in Prague, Bohemia (modern day Czech Republic).

He is considered one of the German language's greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century poets and writers. He wrote in both verse and a highly lyrical prose. His poetic style was rich and supple, varying from simple to the elaborate and profound. Rilke has been attributed with transforming the German language into a poetic language with his dense, lyrical style and his startling images that portray the complexities of modern life and their

effects on the sensitive human being. Rilke's poetry is generally characterized by striking visual imagery and musicality. His poetry and writing was greatly influenced by his wandering life among literary people as well as his travels, notably by trips to Russia, Italy, North Africa. He was a superb and prolific letter writer. Rilke's reputation has ascended to great heights since his death in 1926. Most of his work has been translated.

The school's mascot is a panther in reference to Rilke's poem 'Der Panther' (The Panther) – see back page for the German poem and an English version of it.



***Der Panther***  
***Im Jardin des Plantes, Paris***

Sein Blick ist vom Vorübergehn der Stäbe so  
müd geworden, daß er nichts mehr hält. Ihm  
ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe  
und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt.

Der weiche Gang geschmeidig starker Schritte, der  
sich im allerkleinsten Kreise dreht,  
ist wie ein Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte, in  
der betäubt ein großer Wille steht

Nur manchmal schiebt der Vorhang der Pupille  
sich lautlos auf –. Dann geht ein Bild hinein, geht  
durch der Glieder angespannte Stille – und hört im  
Herzen auf zu sein. –

*Rainer Maria Rilke*

***The Panther***  
***Jardin des Plantes, Paris***

His vision from the passing of the bars is  
grown so weary that it holds no more.  
To him it seems there are a thousand bars and behind a  
thousand bars no world.

The padding gait of flexibly strong strides,  
that in the very smallest circle turns,  
is like a dance of strength around a center in  
which stupefied a great will stands.

Only sometimes the curtain of the pupil  
soundlessly parts –. Then an image enters,  
goes through the tensioned stillness of the limbs – and  
in the heart ceases to be. –

*Rainer Maria Rilke*