



***Twin Cities German Immersion School  
Foreign Teacher Acclimation Manual***

*June 2009*

*By members of the Classroom Support Committee of the  
TCGIS Parent-Teacher Organization*

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**Hello, Newcomers, and our warmest welcome to you!**

**With the intention of helping you settle into Minnesota and smoothing some of the transition challenges previous newcomers have had, the TCGIS PTO has written this manual for you to peruse and/or use at your convenience.**

**Together, Minneapolis and St. Paul are known as the Twin Cities. Each city has its own unique character, and we hope you take the opportunity to explore and enjoy both! The cities' websites offer a great starting point to get to know the area, even before you arrive:**

<http://www.stpaul.gov/>

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/>

**1. Arrival**

**Prior to your arrival at Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport please feel free to contact one of the parent/teacher volunteers for a pick-up service from the airport. Otherwise there will be a number of metered taxis available to get you to your final destination. The fare to Minneapolis is around \$30 and to St. Paul \$25, give or take a little. There is also a light rail connection from the airport to downtown Minneapolis—just follow the signs and buy a ticket at one of the ticket machines (\$1.75 or \$2.25, credit cards are also accepted).**

**Pick-up service:** please dial country code 001 for the US if calling from abroad

**Sylvia Oxenham**                      **651-646-0148**                      [s.oxenham@yahoo.com](mailto:s.oxenham@yahoo.com)

**Silke Moeller**                      **612-788-1168**                      [smoeller@umn.edu](mailto:smoeller@umn.edu)

**Kami Blackwell Kinney**            **651-494-2086**  
[blackwell.kinney@juno.com](mailto:blackwell.kinney@juno.com)

**Chris Weimholt**                      **651-645-7965**                      [john.g.weimholt-2@tc.umn.edu](mailto:john.g.weimholt-2@tc.umn.edu)

**Nancy Bostrom**                      **651-698-0210**                      [bostromfamily@earthlink.net](mailto:bostromfamily@earthlink.net)

## **2. Tours**

**If you are interested in a little sightseeing tour, please contact Gina Vader at (763) 432-2274 or Chris Weimholt (651) 645-7965 [john.g.weimholt-2@tc.umn.edu](mailto:john.g.weimholt-2@tc.umn.edu). They'll be happy to give you one of their famous Twin Cities tours, so you can get an overview of what you have gotten yourself into.**

## **3. Social Security Number**

**You will find that almost nothing is possible without a Social Security Number (SSN), so you should apply for one as soon as possible. The Department of Social Security is located:**

**SOCIAL SECURITY  
190 5TH ST E STE 800  
ST PAUL, MN 55101**

**Toll-free 1-800-772-1213**

**Office Hours: MONDAY - FRIDAY: 09:00 AM - 04:00 PM**

#### **4. Accommodation**

##### **a) Short term accommodation**

**There are a number of parent volunteers who are willing to offer short term accommodation, so that you have time to look around and find a place you would be happy to rent.**

**Silke Moeller 612 788-1168**

[smoeller@umn.edu](mailto:smoeller@umn.edu)

**Sylvia Oxenham 651 646- 0148**

[s.oxenham@yahoo.com](mailto:s.oxenham@yahoo.com)

**Nancy Bostrom 651-698-0210**

[bostromfamily@earthlink.net](mailto:bostromfamily@earthlink.net)

##### **b) Long term accommodation**

**This is a place that has been satisfactory in the past**

**Highland Village Apartments**

**845 Cleveland Ave**

**St. Paul**

**Tel. (001) 651 6983897**

**Fax (001) 651 6984892**

<http://www.highlandvillageapts.com>

**We recommend the following areas in St. Paul/Minneapolis for convenience:**

**Macalester-Groveland, Highland Park, Saint Anthony Park, Como, Merriam Park**

**Helpful websites for finding an apartment:**

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

<http://minneapolis.craigslist.org/>

*Note: There have been problems in the past of paying the deposit if trying to rent from Germany – Please contact our PTO president Leslie Watson if you encounter any problems. Leslie Watson (612) 789- 7877 [leslie38@comcast.net](mailto:leslie38@comcast.net)*

**If you need assistance or advice with finding accommodation please contact Mary-Fred Bausman Watkins (651) 699 8271 [mary-fred@comcast.net](mailto:mary-fred@comcast.net)**

*Note: The majority of rental places are unfurnished which brings us to the next point on the list.*

## **5. Furniture**

**There are a number of furniture places in the Twin Cities, but compared to German prices you will find most shops rather expensive. Lucky for you there is:**

**IKEA**

**8000 IKEA Way**

**Bloomington, MN 55425**

**(952) 858-8088**

**It is also worthwhile to check out your local Target. The following is closest to school: 1300 University Ave W, St. Paul, (651) 642-1146**

**Sometimes, asking around at the school might land you the piece of second-hand furniture you've been looking for. The PTO and Elternbrief are terrific resources for finding what parents have to offer.**

## 6. Telephone and Internet

**In the past getting a land telephone line to your house has been somewhat of a headache, since you need a credit record in the US in order to have the telephone installed. Most of our Amities and teachers from Germany have been using Skype to call home. It is easy to use and very cheap (only 2c a minute and free when calling from computer to computer). For cell phones, there are a number of companies (Verizon, Comcast etc.) that offer prepaid phones at relatively reasonable rates.**

**For technical problems with PC or internet connection contact:**

**Duane Wiste (651) 639-9138**

**Jesse Zibble (612) 867-6272**

**Silke Moeller (612) 788-1168**

## 7. Car

***Important: The international driving license (Internationaler Führerschein) issued in Germany is not accepted in Minnesota. You can drive with your German license initially but you will have to get a MN driving license within 3 months of your arrival.***

**In order to be as clear as possible a short summary of recent procedures and requirements for applying for a driver's license in German:**

### **a. Führerschein**

Sobald man einen FS beantragt (@ 445 Minnesota St - Downtown St. Paul), muss man direkt den Sehtest machen. Danach geht es dann sofort an einen multiple-choice Bildschirm für die theoretische Prüfung.

Vorbereiten kann man sich mit einer Informationsbroschüre.

<http://www.dps.state.mn.us/dvs/DLTraining/DLManual/PDF/2008ClassD/08%20ClassD%20Manual%20Web.pdf>

**Tipp:** Unter anderem wird gerne nach den besonderen Regeln für Schulbusse, nach Fahrradfahrern auf der Strasse und Strafkonsequenzen nach irgendwelchen Vergehen gefragt

Wenn man die theoretische Prüfung bestanden hat, hat man nun die Wahl:

1) Man gibt den deutschen FS ab und kommt um die praktische Prüfung herum. Der ganze Prozess dauert dann bis zu 6 Wochen, bis der FS zugeschickt wird. Solange gilt allerdings ein Bescheinigung von der Führerscheinstelle als vorläufiger FS und man darf bereits offiziell fahren.

2) Wer seinen deutschen FS nicht hergeben möchte, muss neben der theoretischen auch eine praktische Prüfung machen. Das gilt natürlich auch für diejenigen, die keinen deutschen FS haben.

- Wer keinen deutschen FS hat (oder behauptet keinen zu haben), muss bis zu 3 Monate auf einen Termin für die praktische Prüfung warten, denn es wird davon ausgegangen, dass man Zeit braucht, um Fahrpraxis zu gewinnen.

- Wer Zeit sparen möchte, kann den deutschen FS übersetzen lassen (Kosten: etwa \$70, Anbieter z.B. <http://www.precisionlanguage.com/main.html>) und dann direkt einen Termin für die praktische Prüfung vereinbaren. Mit der Übersetzung des FS gilt der Nachweis ausreichender Fahrpraxis als erbracht. Der „roadtest“ findet dann oft auf einem Verkehrsübungsplatz statt und ist relativ einfach. In der Regel bekommt man den FS in ca. 10 Tagen und kann seinen deutschen FS behalten.

**Wichtig:** Daran denken, dass sie bei der FS-Stelle eine ausreichende ID sehen wollen: Unbedingt Pass UND Social Security Card mitnehmen. Am besten auch noch das Visum. Und eben evtl. den deutschen FS.

**Despite some public transport and some bicycling opportunities, having a car is almost essential to getting around the Twin Cities. Please note that the German “Unfallversicherungsnachweis” is not recognized here in Minnesota, so leasing a car turns out to be expensive due to the high insurance rate. Your best bet is buying a used car.**

**b. Reliable used car dealers:**

**Saturn** [www.saturnstpaul.com](http://www.saturnstpaul.com)

**Maplewood Toyota**

**Schmelz Countryside Volkswagen**

**c. Car Insurance and AAA (the American ADAC):**

**Progressive** (super cheap in comparison to others)

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

Julie Scott

Personal Lines Account Manager

Quality Insurance Service

1648 Rice Street

St. Paul MN 55117

651-489-1347 Office

651-489-5403 Fax

[julie@Qualityinsuranceservice.com](mailto:julie@Qualityinsuranceservice.com)

*She is the best!*

**AAA - American Automobile Association** [www.AAA.com](http://www.AAA.com)

**d. Reliable garages for auto repair:**

- BP at Marshall/ St. Clair(include address/phone number/web address)
- Maplewood Toyota (not the cheapest but very good and honest service!) (include address/phone number/web address)
- St. Paul Automotive,  
910 Randolph Ave, St. Paul 55102  
651-298-0956  
<http://stpaulautomotive.net/>
- *St. Paul Automotive (near Randolph and Victoria) customer service is top notch*

## **8. Health Insurance**

**Health insurance is a bit different here than it is in Germany.**

**All health insurance is private health insurance but that does not mean you have to shop around for it.**

**In the US, the employer negotiates with the insurance companies. Once they have come to a deal, the employer offers the health plan to its employees. Large employers may offer multiple insurance plans, but for a small employer like TCGIS there is typically only one option.**

**Your employer will cover some of your health insurance costs (just like the Arbeitgeberanteil in Germany), but the amount depends on your specific contract. For details on your health plan, please contact the school office.**

**Once you know which health plan the school is offering, you can go to the health plan website and find a list of doctors and clinics that work with this insurance plan.**

## 9. Bread (and grocery stores)

Again, you might find it a bit disappointing hunting for that good old loaf of bread. Bread here tends to be much softer and less substantial than our German varieties. A few places however have managed to come quite close to the real thing. The first two stores listed below only sell breads, etc. the others sell groceries as well.

**Breadsmith**, 1579 Grand Ave, in the Macalester Groveland neighborhood of St. Paul Tel: 651-690-3224.

**Cupcake**, 3338 University Ave SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414, (612) 378-4818

**Cub Foods**, (German isle) for Pumpernickel and Vollkornbrot, Midway Plaza, University Ave.

**Lund's**, 2128 Ford Parkway in the Highland Park, St. Paul Tel: (651) 698-5845

**Kowalski** (Laugenstangen)!! 1261 Grand Ave, St Paul - (651) 698-3366

**Worldmarket**, online only

**Whole Foods** (organic products), 30 South Fairview Avenue, in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood of St. Paul Tel: (651) 690-0197

**Trader Joe's** [www.traderjoes.com](http://www.traderjoes.com) in St. Paul, 484 Lexington Parkway South., Tel: 651-698-3119.

## 10. Winter

Last but not least, prepare yourself for quite a bit of winter weather. The cold front that hit Germany last January will give you a good idea of what is to come. The simple secret for survival is good clothing, and long underpants are a must.

**One local store with good winter and general outdoor gear: REI**, 1955 County Road B2 W, Roseville Tel: 651-635-0211

**Tipp: Put a few Schuheinlagen aus Wolle into your suitcase.**

## ***Resources for Leisure Activities in the Twin Cities***

<http://minneapolisparcs.org> <<http://minneapolisparcs.org/>> (maps and descriptions of bike paths, parks, and outdoor events)

<http://www.comozooconservatory.org> (warm, humid, green place to go in winter)

<http://www.thingstodo.com/states/MN/twincities.html>

<http://www.twincitiesfinearts.org> <<http://www.twincitiesfinearts.org/>>

<http://www.mnhs.org> (an excellent variety of history museums)

[http://www.\\*city\\*pages.com](http://www.*city*pages.com) <<http://www.citypages.com>> (local free newspaper)

<http://www.mnstatefair.org> (a “must do” event at the end of August)

### **Local newspaper online (also has lists of events)**

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

### **Other suggested websites**

<http://www.avalonschool.org> <<http://www.avalonschool.org/>> (we share our school building with this unique school)

**We hope you will find our little tips helpful. We are looking forward to welcoming you into our school community.**

**The PTO Classroom Support Committee:**

**Sylvia Oxenham**

**Leslie Watson**

**Kami Blackwell Kinney**

**Nicole Grenz**

**Lisa Antony-Thomas**

**Barbara Holmes**