

Latin as a Required Course: possibilities, challenges, and successes relative to DEI

This paper explores the role that the required study of Latin plays at Washington Latin Public Charter School in Washington DC with a focus on how this requirement intersects with questions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This non-selective charter school has required the study of Latin since its founding in 2006 and currently has an enrollment of slightly more than 800 students in grades 5-12 across two campuses within the District. Especially noteworthy for this panel is that the school's demographics are nearly identical to the city's demographics, and as such the school serves a student body that is uniquely diverse and arguably more diverse than most schools, whether considering counterparts inside or outside of Washington DC. Even further, most of these students study Latin for no fewer than five years with the end result of a Latin program that educates a uniquely diverse cross section of students, especially when compared to programs in urban environments where Latin is an elective.

After establishing these unique demographic features from data provided by the US Census Bureau and the school governance organization of DC (OSSE), the paper articulates what the Latin requirement contributes to the life of the school and education of the diverse students whom the school serves. In summary format, the essential arguments of the paper are that 1.) The required study of Latin helps to unify the diverse school community around a challenging yet rewarding goal, 2.) The required study of Latin helps students and faculty alike to foster direct and genuine ownership in the history, art, and ideas that undergird most of our present debates and discussions today, 3.) The required study of Latin teaches our students to be deliberate, meticulous, readers of language (i.e., the "art of slow reading"), and 4.) The required study of

Latin boosts student skills in English vocabulary mastery, literacy (functional and critical), mastery of essential grammatical concepts and terminology, study skills, and the discipline required to acquire other languages. The paper references the bibliography below in support of these four arguments.

The culminating section of the paper explores the challenges associated with bringing about the above stated aims through the required study of Latin, namely, how to ensure that all students realize them in a way that is equitable and sensitive to learning differences. This naturally leads to a discussion of the methodologies adopted and the textbook series chosen to engage the students in the required Latin sequence, ranging from *Elementa* in the 5th grade, Latin novellas in the 6th grade, Orberg *LLPSI* in 7th-10th grade, and even *Suburani* for students who come to the school in 9th grade instead of 5th grade. Another prominent feature of this final section of the paper are specific students (anonymized for privacy) who illustrate some of the school's successes. Some examples:

- A student with down syndrome who successfully completed the required Latin sequence with a 95% average who, among other things, developed an ability to identify and manipulate Latin texts as well as produce spoken Latin sentences to demonstrate an understanding of indirect statement.
- Several students with At-Risk background experiences and realities who completed the required Latin sequence and are thriving, whether as current seniors or recent graduates.
- Students who continue to study Latin after the required sequence in AP Latin and postAP Latin, a few of whom are current Classics majors at Ivy League schools and small liberal arts colleges.

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