

# Greek, Too: The Recovery of Greek in American Schools

That the study of Greek is marginal or non-existent in most schools is a regrettable fact; and this marginalization of Greek in American schools, which occurred at the beginning of the 20th century, continues: 114,000 National Latin Exams in 2001 vs. 1134 National Greek Exams in some 73 schools and a few colleges (*The National Latin Exam Newsletter*, Spring 2001; "2001 ACL/NJCL National Greek Exam-List of Prizes").

The issues before us now are these: Is it possible to restore a richer Classics curriculum, one including Greek as well as Latin, to American schools? And if such a restoration is feasible, how can it realistically be accomplished? I believe that the answer to both questions is definitively "yes!" Several recent panels and conferences on the promotion of Greek in schools demonstrate a more spirited concern about school Greek now than has been in evidence over the past decade. The mechanism for such a re-establishment of a fuller classical curriculum in American schools lies squarely with Latin teachers and the growing strength of Latin in our schools. One may think of the Renaissance precedent of Latinists' spearheading the recovery of Greek in Italy.

For Latin teachers to be efficient reformers, however, they need an historically accurate vision of their field, the Latin language, Roman literature, and its dynamic and continuous interaction with the Hellenic language and intellectual traditions.

From the earliest times the Greeks penetrated and molded Italic civilization. Greek craftsmen and purveyors of culture, high and low, settled in Rome, supplying words from their various callings. Roman nobles brought Greek pedagogues to instruct their children. The upper classes became bilingual, receiving formal instruction in Greek even before their own language. (L. R. Palmer, *The Latin Language*, 176)

These facts of cultural and linguistic history require, if the Latin teacher is to present his/her area richly and broadly, some teaching of Greek background to their students of high school Latin. The opportunity exists here for Latin teachers to demonstrate curricular leadership as classicists, rooted in an historic, Greek and Latin philological tradition. By focusing on their own bilingual Renaissance heritage, Latin teachers can lead the recovery of a fuller classical program in schools. A Greek sub-curriculum, well planned and tightly integrated with Latin, can offer the student an introduction to Greek without sacrificing the momentum of the Latin curriculum.

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