

Homer sings again during lunch hours, intersessions, after-school classes

High school Latin teachers search for eighth day, 25th hour to teach Greek

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In Fall 1995 John Towle, the Latin teacher at the Williams School in New London, Connecticut, published a paper titled "High School Greek" in the *Athenaze Newsletter*. It described a program of studies that he had been carrying out for three years in which he introduced Greek into his Latin program. In the eighth and ninth grades he taught Parts I and II of the Oxford Latin Course; in Latin III in addition to covering Part III of the Oxford Latin Course, at the beginning of which Quintus, who has been studying in Athens, visits Delphi, he taught the basics of Greek grammar, *pari passu* with the Latin. In Latin IV, he taught his usual two Latin authors but added the remainder of the elementary Greek textbook and the first four chapters of the intermediate book. The enthusiasm in Mr. Towle's combined Latin and Greek classes was so great that the students mastered as much Latin as students had previously mastered in the Latin-only courses, and some students did more than was required in the Greek. In the fifth year students could choose either AP Latin or a continuation of their study of Greek, labeled Greek III. Mr Towle's program resembled a curriculum that I had proposed fifteen years earlier at the ACL Institute in Omaha, Nebraska (*CO* 60.2, December-January 1982-83, pages 33-37).



In an article titled "A Call for Greek in School: Recovery of a Renaissance Tradition" in the winter 2000 issue of *Texas Classics in Action* (pages 12-16) and in the Spring 2000 issue of *The American Classical League Newsletter* (Vol. 22, No. 3, pages 21-24), Richard Evans, who teaches Latin at St. Thomas' Episcopal School in Houston, Texas, argued eloquently that "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." His Latin II students learn the Greek alphabet, the definite article, and simple verb forms and are able to read short, easy sentences on their own and to follow easy passages from the New Testament with help from the teacher. In Latin III and IV he introduces them to Greek texts that bear on the Latin works they are reading. In fall 2000, I sent out a questionnaire to all school teachers on my New England-wide data base who had identified themselves as teaching Greek and to all on the nation-wide list of Greek teachers kept by the American Classical League (about 280 teachers in all). To date I have received more than 170 replies. The respondents were excited by the survey and glad that someone out there was interested in what they were doing in their teaching of Greek, and they were eager to make contact with others teaching Greek. Their determination to teach Greek despite all the obstacles and their creativity in finding ways to do it were truly impressive. The responses are all on my

website (<http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~glawall>).

In the responses it was the non-traditional teaching of Greek that really attracted my attention. One respondent reported he taught Greek to ten students meeting four to five hours a day in a coffeeshop during a three-week intersession between semesters. Several reported teaching Greek after school, but the lunch hour seems to be more popular. One teacher reported that he teaches independent study Greek twice a week during lunch hour in three levels; he began in 1997 with twenty students and by 2000 his students had finished Plato's *Symposium* and were reading lyric poetry. At a state-funded charter school the teacher, alongside his five-level Latin program, teaches introductory Greek during lunch hour on Wednesdays. He uses Pharr's *Homeric Greek*, one chapter per week; he assigns weekly translation exercises, which the students check on their own, and students do a vocabulary quiz on their own; each class meeting begins with a three-minute grammar quiz, and then they go through the vocabulary and grammar lesson in half an hour. There is one test per marking period, and the stakes are high: if you fail any quiz or test, you're out. Others offer Greek before school begins, e.g., 7:30–8:30 A.M., with, as one teacher reports, "great success"; in four levels his students progress from the J.A.C.T. Greek course through selections from Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Plato's *Apology*, Homer's *Iliad*, and Plato's *Symposium*. One respondent began teaching Greek in 1993 with a dozen students meeting every day at 7:55 A.M. for an hour before regular classes began. His students wanted to improve their linguistic proficiency and their knowledge of English, but their interests and motivation varied considerably. Over half aspired to become medical doctors or engineers, though other students wanted to be politicians, UN translators, and ministers. One student remarked, "Whatever career I might pursue, I believe that the benefits received from a more comprehensive knowledge of history and English (through Greek, among other languages) will be helpful in achieving success and contentment." This teacher remarked that his students were a heterogeneous lot and admired the language and culture for various reasons. One student said, "The thing I like most about the Greek language is its uniqueness and how beautiful it sounds when you speak it." This student was concurrently enrolled in the AP Catullus-Ovid class and, with a little help on the Greek side, led a discussion of Catullus's poem 51 as a translation and expansion of Sappho fragment 31. Another student interested in philosophy stated that he admired the Greeks' way of thinking about the human being. Another student was into Indo-European linguistics and would frequently ask the teacher to elaborate cross-culturally on grammar. The students enjoyed

the class, the teacher reports, in spite of its early-morning hour, because it was "laid back," because "learning was happening," and because it was "different." The teacher sums it up as follows: "What I aim to accomplish in this course is to instill a sense of admiration for the language and culture of the Greeks and to equip my students with the skill to look at the Greeks' world view and to gain a better understanding of themselves via language. As an added bonus, students begin to realize that learning something challenging can be engaging and fun."

One respondent had twenty-two Latin II–IV students who wanted to study Greek, and he divided them into two groups, each group meeting three times a week, one group before school, the other after; the students are rewarded with bonus points on their Latin grades, but the teacher remarks, "It is entirely pro bono on my part."

Here are a few examples of the many ways in which the survey showed teachers including Greek in their Latin courses. The new teacher at the Williams School in New London, Connecticut, was continuing John Towle's innovative coordination of Greek and Latin studies. Some teachers offer a "Greek Week" as part of Latin II, introducing the alphabet, a few words, the numbers, and basic etymology. One respondent offers a combined Latin II/Greek I class, in which both the Latin II syllabus and the first ten chapters of the Greek textbook are completed in one year; students may then continue with Greek II or Latin III the following year. Another teacher was introducing Greek in Latin III and having his students read sort passages from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Greek in his AP Vergil class and passages of Sappho in Greek in his AP Catullus/Horace class. Another respondent teaches the first fifteen chapters of Clyde Pharr's *Homeric Greek* on an independent study basis with her Latin IV students. Another reported that she has her students do two weeks of Greek in the last quarter of Latin IV; she teaches the alphabet, transliteration, roots, and a few vocabulary words and has her students read and watch Greek drama and do a paper on one of

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Euripides' plays. Several teachers do a two- to four-week unit of Greek following the AP Latin exam or sometimes in the fourth quarter of Latin III; one, who admits she has never studied Greek formally and who plunges her AP students into Greek for a month after the AP exam, reported that her students "love writing the Greek letters and reading the Greek aloud in less than a week." One teacher has a fourth-year Latin class for students whom she describes as "not up to the challenge of AP"; these students learn Greek along with their fourth year Latin by choosing to devote either the fourth quarter or every Friday to Greek. One of the most recent respondents is a retired Latin teacher who was called back into teaching when a local school district was about to drop its Latin program for lack of a qualified teacher. His Latin II students from last year are all continuing into Latin III this year, and they have asked that he teach them some Greek along with the Latin III course.

In conclusion, I quote the following response that gives a fairly detailed description of an attractive fourth-quarter Greek unit:

I teach a full schedule of Latin, levels I-V, with IV/V alternating the two A.P. syllabi. We are the third largest language behind Spanish and French at a public high school of over 3000 students, where we also offer German, Japanese, and Hebrew.

There is no regular Greek course, but the fourth quarter of the second year class is devoted to providing the students with a background in things Hellenic.

We start with Internet research on six components of Greek culture: architecture, sculpture, pottery, philosophy, drama, and army. This provides background for us then to explore one Greek tragedy in translation (*Alcestis*), and parts of two Platonic dialogues (*Republic* and

Theaetetus), also in translation.

We then move into the language phase, which involves learning the alphabet and simple vocabulary. For grammar, students learn the cases of the o-stems and a-stems and the forms of the first aorist active for verbs. From this they transliterate and translate simple sentences of my composition, along with trying to figure out authentic sentences relating to something we have already studied, such as the "anthropos metron" doctrine of Protagoras, which ties in to the *Theaetetus* they have read. The vocabulary list includes Latin equivalents of all the words ("dux" for "strategos," for example), so we have some fun translating sentences back and forth from Latin to Greek.

Finally, we end with selections from the Curtius Rufus account of Alexander. This is also punctuated with authentic Greek statements about the general, which the students are able to decipher with some glosses.

I do not use a textbook for this, but prepare my own materials. Crosby and Schaeffer is the text to which I would refer them for further study, should they ask. ✽

