

Latin at the Middle School Level: Who Are Our Students? How Do We Reach Them?

Can middle school students learn Latin successfully? Are they able to study Latin grammar cheerfully? The presenters of this workshop enthusiastically proclaim the answer to this question is *ita, vero!* This presentation will begin with an explication of cognitive theory of language learning. Analysis of recent research in this area, including that of Alan Baddeley, Richard Sparks, Susan Gathercole, Elena Grigorenko, Lynn Snyder and others, will provide a framework for an introduction to the concepts of working memory, phonological processing, and phonological memory. A discussion of learning difficulties concomitant with weaknesses in the aforementioned cognitive capabilities will follow.

So what then can middle level Latin teacher do when faced with students exhibiting known problems of language learning? Cognitive theory also provides answers to this question. Presenters will not only define and illustrate problems of Latin learning, but also elucidate techniques, which may be used overtly to support student success. They will define, illustrate, and give examples of concepts crucial to the creation of successful Latin grammar and reading lessons. These concepts include multi-sensory structured learning, categorization tasks, coordination of components of the Latin language, and “chunking” or breaking complex information into component parts. Research and practice prove that these methods are helpful to all students, including those with learning problems.

Following this analysis, experienced middle school teachers will present specific examples of techniques and materials, which facilitate Latin learning by middle school students. Since these materials are rooted in the theoretical framework of cognitive theory, they are specifically designed to head off the cognitive problems, which may occur for learners at all levels. Due to circumstances of their developmental levels, middle school students require overt

cognitive support to ensure success. Attendees will be encouraged to contemplate the application of this theory and these techniques in their classrooms.