

Building Skills through Teaching Latin

I spent the summer of 2015 in a typical way for a teacher: envisioning what pedagogical improvements I could make in the new school year. Because of a school-wide push toward a more coherent vision of content literacy and an improvement in writing across the disciplines, I concentrated on a study of what Tony Wagner (2014) calls the Seven Survival Skills. I wanted to see how these skills might make explicit many of the strengths implicit in studying Latin, the topic of our “elevator speech” in promoting the Classics. I settled on Critical Thinking, Communication, Creativity, and Collaboration as the goals for my class this year; these terms, coincidentally, are the 4 C’s of EdLeader21, a professional learning community I found in my continuing research. The last skill is not only a learning goal but also a hallmark of the way this generation learns, but students still need to learn how to collaborate effectively and respectfully.

I have over the years included an increasing amount of culture, mythology, and history into my Latin classes, but now I am developing a series of assignments for each level of Latin in order to help students apply this content to more than their understanding of the Latin on the page. They will use the content as a starting point to learn the skills of the 4 C’s. One immediate and tangible payoff of this work will be a much better preparation for the essay-writing task of the Latin AP exam (as well as a better experience with the syllabus material in that course) because the students will have better tools for analyzing and appreciating the literary texts they will be reading. I have included work on this AP expectation during all levels of Latin in previous years, and those assignments will continue to be incorporated and improved. I also believe that this overt skills work will benefit the students in their other classes, in their preparation for college-level work, and, eventually, by preparing them for a myriad of workplace expectations. While my class will not fully employ project-based learning, I am borrowing

elements of this approach as I develop my new lessons. Keeping backwards design in mind, I believe that the students will be more engaged if they see the importance of their efforts beyond the walls of my classroom. While my school does not require Student Learning Objectives (SLO's), I will also be developing them for these new assignments and working on a set of "can do" statements for Latin language skills as the year progresses.

In this paper, participants will learn 1) the rationale for this approach, the learning goals of my program, and the lessons I have employed to reach these goals, 2) how participants can develop similar curricula for their own classrooms, and 3) how to improve student performance on the essay section of the Latin AP through an emphasis on skills-based instruction.

Bibliography

EdLeader 21. <http://www.edleader21.com>. Last accessed September 18, 2015.

Wagner, Tony. *The Global Achievement Gap*. Revised and Updated Edition. New York: Perseus Books, 2014.

----- <http://www.tonywagner.com/7-survival-skills>. . Last accessed September 18, 2015.