

Teaching Latin through Aequora in Massachusetts

Teaching in an urban school district has many challenges, not least of which is providing not only formal Latin language instruction but finding ways to enrich and enlighten students prior to when the high school language course selection takes place. The purpose of this paper is to show some ways to tackle such challenges, based on the example of the Aequora site in Massachusetts.

Many of the students in the local school district are immigrants to the United States, so their backgrounds are quite varied. What many of them share, however, is that their native languages are Romance: as a result, they have a distinct advantage when they arrive to the Aequora classroom. If they have been formally schooled in their homeland, and have learned English through the grammar-translation method, they have a head start before they become Latin students. Thus, they are in a very good position to excel.

What the Aequora program has provided is a fun and engaging curriculum which can be employed in crucial middle school years in order to excite students about Latin. Another aspect that I had not anticipated was the excitement of the high school students who volunteered at the Aequora site. These students loved sharing their Latin skills with the younger set. Many said they had not realized that they knew so much as they worked with the middle schoolers in Aequora. As this paper will show, this is a win-win situation.

Classics teachers are often told to make curriculum relevant to the students: as I intend to show, having the high-school students work with their middle-school counterparts accomplishes that very goal. Student volunteers see the value in their own knowledge by being able to dive right into the Aequora lessons and excite their younger counterparts. In conclusion, what

Aequora has done in the school district is to bring upper classmen together with young students resulting in an enriching experience for all involved.