

Learning Disabilities in the Classics Classroom

Learning disabilities and neuropsychological conditions that affect cognition or memory may not be as apparent to instructors as more visible disabilities, but they have a great impact on students' ability to succeed as classical scholars. While secondary teachers may receive some instruction in accommodating the needs of LD/SPED students, that training is seldom geared toward the particular challenges of classical subject matter; most instructors at the college level do not receive any training at all.

Building on the CAMWS publication, [Latin for Students with Learning Disabilities](#), this panel reopens the conversation about learning disabilities in the classics classroom by introducing a new generation of teachers, researchers, and their methods. We seek to provide key information about common disabilities that impact classroom performance and disseminate strategies to help students of classics succeed. The focus of the panel will be primarily pedagogical, but also touch on current psychological understanding of how learning works and current scholarship on studying classics with neurocognitive disabilities.

The panel has four main goals. First, it seeks to raise awareness that students with learning difficulties often take classical languages and culture classes, particularly Latin and general education courses. In fact, many are encouraged to enroll in classics classes because of their small size and high proportion of student/professor contact. Second, the panel intends to familiarize classicists with how common learning difficulties like autism spectrum disorder and dyslexia manifest in the classroom. Hidden disabilities can appear as disruptive behavior or lack of diligence on the part of students if not properly understood. Third, the panel will introduce a number of strategies and learning tools available to classics instructors to help students with

disabilities and improve the learning environment for all. Finally, the panel will introduce some of the LD related classical pedagogy projects currently underway.

The panel consists of six papers, each of which contributes a unique perspective to the topic of neurocognitive disabilities and classical pedagogy. It will begin with a student's perspective on learning classical languages with dyslexia, delivered by a clinically diagnosed dyslexic with a Classics PhD. This paper will describe the challenges and facilities of acquiring Latin and Greek at the high school, college, and graduate level. A second paper, delivered by a psychologist, will give a neurocognitive perspective on the conditions discussed in the panel. This paper is of particular value to the panel because it offers the kind of expert psychobiological knowledge seldom available to educators.

A third paper will discuss best strategies for teaching Latin to secondary school students with a variety of physiological and neurocognitive challenges. A fourth paper will describe a project that seeks to develop mythologically based pedagogical tools to help instructors empower youth with autism to a greater sense of self-worth. Finally, two papers will discuss how to support students with learning disabilities at the college level, one that focuses on language learning and another on cultural courses in translation. These papers will also touch on the importance of institutional support for students with learning disabilities and the history of classical scholarship's engagement with disabilities pedagogy.