

Flipping an Elementary Latin Program: Rationale, Reactions, and Results

In 2017, the author, who oversees the elementary Latin and Greek programs at a large state university, incorporated the “flipped classroom” pedagogical approach into the beginning Latin sequence at this institution. The author's primary goals were to increase enrollments, which had been shrinking for several years, and also to ease the transition from elementary to intermediate translation courses--a bridge which often has been quite difficult for students to cross in the department's grammar/translation-style program. Students taking elementary-level Latin (a four-hour course) had previously spent four days per week in traditional lecture classes. With the new approach, students now spend three days per week in traditional face-to-face classes and spend a fourth hour working online. Online material includes a library of video tutorials, practice quizzes, actual quizzes, and grammar worksheets. Under the new system, students watch a series of video tutorials and memorize new vocabulary and forms before they meet face-to-face with their instructor. Thus, they are much better prepared on the first day of a new unit than in previous years. Although most instructors still spend some class time reviewing new grammar, in the classroom there is now a much heavier focus on translating continuous Latin text. The change has allowed students to maximize time with their instructors, who are able to offer their students more hands-on coaching about how best to tackle an unfamiliar Latin passage. After two years using the "flipped classroom" approach, the department has seen noticeable growth in enrollments, at least in part because a course which meets three days per week fits much more easily into students' schedules than a course which meets four times per week. Most students have responded quite positively to the change, often noting that the flipped

format forces them to become active learners of the language and that the online material serves as an effective resource for review and for exam-preparation.

This paper will discuss the format of the flipped Latin program (which involves approximately 10 sections of Latin I and II each year), how the department's program has benefitted from the change, problems which have become apparent after the flipped format was instituted, and changes which have been made over the last two years in response to some of those negative effects. Most importantly, this paper will present the results of a formal pedagogical study conducted both among the 300 students enrolled in the elementary Latin sequence during academic year 2019-20 and among the teaching assistants and instructors who cover the elementary and intermediate courses. The qualitative study focuses on students' and teachers' reactions to the flipped format and on the effect the flip has had on student learning outcomes. While the talk will be most interesting to those who teach in college programs, many elements also will be of interest to secondary-level teachers who are looking for innovative teaching methods and ways to use class time more efficiently.