

Latin . . . Beyond the Four Walls of Your Classroom

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Adore words

Latin is a subject that frequently makes parents cringe, students tremble, and principals desperate to find a teacher. So, when one starts talking about integrating Latin, people will often give me a blank stare. It can be quite a struggle to have a Latin program at all, much less an integrated one. I know that we do not dream of students who merely recite Latin vocabulary, nor is our only goal for Latin class that students improve their SAT score. (I hope.) I believe that integration can make the difference between an average Latin class and an extraordinary one. Integration can come in two different forms. First, we can integrate into Latin class the pedagogy of other areas of the curriculum. Second, we can integrate content between Latin and the other subjects.

Integrate Latin pedagogy

Because of a fear of Latin, we often do not treat Latin pedagogy as we do the other areas of curriculum. I find that many otherwise excellent books on classical education reach the chapter on Latin and simply say something to the effect of “just do it.” Latin is part of our curriculum. It is not outside of it. Latin is more than something to “check off” in the curriculum. To expect a Latin teacher to teach classically, without any guidance, is as foolish as expecting any other teacher to teach classically, without any guidance. Sadly though, that is what happens to many Latin teachers.

Since I have not been able to

find an excellent book on classical Latin pedagogy, what I do instead is read through any of the well-known books on classical education as though they were exclusively about Latin. I take the advice

effectively for my curriculum and students. Reflecting on these types of questions changed how I taught Latin.

After considering how other grammar teachers used songs in

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given for history, science, math, or logic classes and substitute in my head—Latin. Therefore when these books discuss the use of songs in teaching grammar students history, I ask myself the question, “How can I use songs in Latin?” When I read that chants are an excellent way to practice the multiplication tables, I think, “How can I use chants in Latin?” A book mentions coloring as a means of focusing students’ attention during a history lecture. “How can I use coloring in Latin in a similar way?” Debate is discussed for logic-aged students. “How might I include debate in Latin?” Discuss the great books in literature classes. “What great books of Latin literature should I be discussing in my classes?” Use presentations to practice rhetoric skills. “How can I include presentations in Latin class?” I make a list of these types of questions as I read. I also reflect on what methods I have observed other teachers using. Next, I sit down with my curriculum and consider which methods would work most

their curriculum, I began writing songs for concepts that confused my grammar Latin students. My students struggled to remember the genders of third declension nouns, so I wrote a song on this topic. If you make a list of the basic content your students need to know, it is not that difficult to rearrange the words and put them to a public domain tune. Remember that such tunes should be published in 1922 or earlier. Lists of such tunes are available online from sites such as the Public Domain Information Project. If writing a song is outside of your comfort zone, you might look at songs available for purchase through Classical Academic Press, Memoria Press, and Issachar Press. You might also ask another teacher who is gifted in this area for help.

I read about and saw other teachers using chants in their classrooms, so I tried using chants for pieces of information that students needed to learn verbatim. A simple hand motion or increase in volume on certain words can make an otherwise “vanilla” recitation memorable to younger students. I created such

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a chant for the principal parts of verbs. My students used their fingers to denote first, second, third, or fourth conjugation and suddenly a rather tedious piece of information was exciting to them.

Last year I introduced drawing to my Latin classes after observing another teacher using coloring in history class. Yes, we color in Latin class, but always with a purpose. I found a stained glass window in our town that included a Latin phrase my students had memorized. I took a picture of the window and projected its image on the board. While I discussed the origin of the art and its meaning, my students sketched the image in their Latin notebook. In this way that art and the Latin saying will always be linked in their minds. Plus, when they are in that section of town, I guarantee that they will be asking their parents to go see the original stained glass.

Depending on the age group that you teach, singing, chanting, and drawing may or may not be effective. If your students are older, you might try incorporating debate and discussion in your Latin class. Topics of debate can stem beyond discussing translation exercises. You might host a debate/discussion around a grammatical concept or irregularity in a text. Allow students to work together to create definitions in addition to translation. Give them the responsibility of presenting a topic. This works especially well if the topic is one that has been introduced in past years but which students have not yet mastered. By forcing them to put the concept into their own words, they have to process the peculiarities and verbalize them to others. Student work could be used as the summary of information

instead of referring to a textbook.

All of these ideas are a form of integration. They came from considering Latin as part of the overall curriculum and borrowing pedagogical techniques from other areas. Utilize books and articles that are outside of the Latin scope and observe other teachers around you who are teaching the same age group. The more our Latin classes are presented in a uniquely classical way, the more integration of the content will flow.

Examples of Latin integration

There are endless ways to integrate Latin and the rest of the curriculum. Use your school's scope and sequence as a guide. If some sort of overview document does not exist, then interview teachers and create an informal scope and sequence. Once you have an overview document, highlight various points of overlap that can be capitalized through Latin studies. Be mindful of all parts of the curriculum.

History

If a class is learning American History, then sprinkle sayings from that era of time into their study of Latin. Look for applicable sayings from monuments, primary source documents, or the arts and sciences of the time period.

Phonics

Integrate phonics by borrowing markings from the phonics program used at your school. Many phonics programs mark long and short vowels. Help children relate these markings to macrons if your Latin program utilizes them. This will help students see the relationships between their grammar and spelling in both English and Latin.

Art

One might integrate art by tying historically famous Latin phrases to a work of beautiful art. For example, a phrase such as *sola fide* could be discussed while the students look at a painting of a Christian they have been studying in history, Bible, or science.

Science

Tie scientific Latin terms to the areas of science that students are studying. The constellations, periodic table, and binomial nomenclature are some aspects of science that lend themselves to integration.

Field trips

Field trips are another way to integrate Latin and "find" it outside the Latin classroom. Many churches, government buildings, and museums will have Latin inscriptions in them. If you find clusters of Latin in your area, a Latin scavenger hunt might be an energetic ending to an already scheduled class field trip to the museum or capital. Even as an informal "scavenger hunt," students should be encouraged to find Latin outside the classroom. They might present their findings through Latin "show-and-tell" at appropriate times during the school year.

Latin integration isn't just for Latin teachers

One does not have to be a Latin teacher in order to integrate Latin. Yes, Latin can be scary. Perhaps some of the fear might be waylaid through a Latin in-service or a Latin-focused staff meeting. It would be helpful for general education teachers to understand the major differences between Latin and

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English syntax, grammar, and pronunciation. Teachers could also be directed to Latin dictionaries and translators available online as well as in mobile applications. With such tools at hand, the fear of Latin can be abated. You do not have to know Latin in order to help your students look for Latin throughout the curriculum.

Literature

Encourage students to look for derivatives and Latin roots during their individual and classroom reading. Even the youngest students should be able to use their Latin to help them decode unfamiliar words. If your class encounters a word whose origin is questionable, encourage the students to bring up the word in Latin class. This will put the job of “remembering” on the students. In such a way, the Latin teacher can dialogue with students on vocabulary from their regular classroom. Students naturally and eagerly will report back to their other teacher what they have learned. Such dialogue takes only a little prompting from the teachers, and the students will do the work of relaying information between teachers.

Math

Obtain a basic list of Latin numbers from your school’s Latin curriculum. Keep this in your math curriculum for easy access. These numbers will be a helpful tool when students study the metric system and geometry. Reminding the students that *centum* means one hundred and *mille* means one thousand takes a lot of the confusion out of the metric system.

Science

Science and Latin afford almost

innumerable opportunities for integration. You might provide students with a specific section of their journal or binder for Latin integration. Such a section could be as simple as a list of Latin terms encountered in science class. The student who understands that the abbreviation for gold (Au) is derived from the Latin for gold (*aurum*) will be far less likely to forget this information than one who sees this abbreviation as arbitrary.

Revel in the beauty of Latin

The integration of Latin (whether through pedagogy and/or content) can lead to an

extraordinary Latin class because it incorporates into our study an aspect that we often miss—beauty. Drills, details, and derivatives are all necessary and good, but do not forget to give students time to revel at how amazing this God-created language is. By integrating history, science, art, phonics, etc., you lead your students in appreciating how information is connected. Latin is a beautiful language. Consider it outside of the four walls of your classroom. Teach it with beauty.



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