

THE TORCH BY NOVA CLASSICAL ACADEMY

THE TORCH



A DEEP DIVE INTO CLASSICAL EDUCATION

The Torch: Why Latin? March 2022

For the month of March, I have two guest contributors on the question of why **we teach Latin at Nova Classical Academy**: Dr. Don Burrows and Dr. Maura Williams. Both Drs. Burrows and Williams teach Latin and Greek in our Upper School, and have developed the following guide for students and families to address the teaching of ancient Greek and Latin as an integral part of our classical curriculum and pedagogy.

Latin teachers everywhere are often asked the question, "Why Latin?" Responses may include facts about well-researched advantages in overall academic and professional achievement, vocabulary enhancement, and SAT scores. Or, a teacher may emphasize the effect of Latin on

English and the preparation for studying the Romance Languages (French, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Portuguese). However, **language study confers benefits well beyond the capacity to communicate in another language.** Learning a new language facilitates making sense of one's own language, culture and perception, as well as those of others.

Latin and Greek are inflected languages, that is to say, the endings of words indicate their role in a sentence, not the word order, as in English or the Romance Languages. What this means is that students must **deliberately interrogate each sentence to properly translate it into English, engaging their higher-level thinking skills and their understanding of how language works.** This attention to grammatical detail in turn helps students organize their own ideas when tasked with composing their own writing.

For students who are charged with developing logical and rhetorical abilities, understanding how language is put together (metalinguistic awareness) is a crucial skill set and accounts for **why classical education still utilizes ancient, inflected languages in its curriculum.** Having been trained to be persistent in their attention to linguistic detail, our students analyze rhetorical strategies, and then apply these skills to the crafting and critiquing of their own rhetorical expressions or those that they encounter in the "real world." **After all, the articulation of a sound, logical argument is virtually impossible without sound, logical grammar, if it is to be persuasive.**

Ultimately, the skills Latin and Greek students at Nova Classical Academy learn serve the same goals of classical education: **to develop a solid knowledge base, to advance critical thinking, and to polish rhetorical articulation--in the belief that citizens of the world should master these abilities to successfully operate within the global marketplace of ideas.**

Finally, as part of a recent Board training on classical education, I [Dr. Johnson] encouraged our Board members to read an [article](#) titled "Classical Education: An Attractive School Choice for Parents from the Manhattan Institute" (2021). I appreciate many aspects of this article's argument but wanted to point out that Nova Classical Academy's approach to Latin is contrary to the idea that "Latin signifies elite status". Our Latin and Greek teachers work tirelessly to **make these languages accessible to everyone,** so that all students are poised to successfully operate within the global marketplace of ideas.

Curate ut valeatis (May you all be well!),

Dr. Burrows, Dr. Johnson, and Dr. Williams

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. Johnson".

Dr. Johnson
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