

# Helping Latin Programs Survive and Thrive

## I. Maintaining the Health of your Latin Program

BE PRO-ACTIVE. Strengthen your Latin program and garner the support of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community.

A. Build networks in the local community to develop a broad base of public support for your program.

1. Get to know parents of students (not just Latin students!) in your school.
  - a. Go to athletic events that have high parent involvement but low spectator turnout: e.g., swimming, wrestling, tennis, hockey, lacrosse, soccer, etc.
  - b. Invite parents of current students and former students and parents to Latin club programs such as plays, banquets, and field trips.
  - c. If you do not have a Latin Club, start one. We must become cheerleaders to a certain extent in order to be seen and heard.
2. Miss no chance to gain publicity for your program, your students, and yourself.
  - a. Award prizes to the best students and give names to local media.
  - b. Get your students to enter the national Latin contest, state Latin contest, state Latin Day, writing contests, etc., and give names of those who receive certification and awards to local media.
  - c. Invite reporters for local free “shoppers” and local newspapers and stringers for big newspapers to events like plays and banquets.
  - d. Send out a press release when you go to a professional meeting, take a workshop or a seminar, or put on a workshop or program of your own.
  - e. Seek advice from state and regional classical organizations on how to put out press releases or to put them out for you if your school will not let you.
3. Education is too important to leave communication with local school boards solely in the hands of local administrators.

Attend the meetings of the school board in the town where you teach and the one where you live if it is not the same. Give positive advice on issues and show a commitment to quality education. It will be harder for a board to eliminate such a teacher’s job even if the administration is not supportive.

4. Make friends with important local people and create an advisory board of community leaders for your program.

- a. A good way to make contacts is by offering to give illustrated lectures on Greece and Rome to local service clubs such as the Rotary, Lions, Masons, Kiwanis, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Junior League, etc.
  - b. Approach prominent parents of former students or prominent former students if you have any.
  - c. Do not be afraid to approach directly such people as bank managers, heads of companies, media personalities, doctors, and lawyers. The worst someone can say is no. You will probably uncover several enthusiastic supporters if you ask enough people.
- B. Build professional networks that can be called upon to support your program in the face of threats. For example:
1. Invite college professors of ancient history, ancient art, Greek, Latin, Mythology, etc. to talk to classes.
  2. If not already a member, join and be active in your state and regional classical organizations.
- C. Undertake professional development to obtain, retain, or upgrade, your certification to protect your position. For example:
1. Ask to do an independent study course with a college professor in a subject that you want.
  2. Attend summer institutes and state workshops and seminars.
  3. Organize your own workshop through the Humanities Council in your state. Your state and regional classical associations can help devise a proposal with you.
- D. Build interdisciplinary bridges with teachers of other subjects, so that they will have a vested interest in keeping your program going. For example:
1. Offer to do a talk to an English class on Latin roots as a way to improve vocabulary and spelling.
  2. If an English teacher is reading a Greek tragedy in translation, have the Latin club perform it or show a film version and invite the English class to participate.
  3. Offer to give a talk on the Roman province relative to a modern language like French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German. There are lots of good books in English on the individual provinces, from which it would be easy to crib a talk.
  4. History courses are also fertile ground for interaction.
  5. Develop a coordinated unit in your school that would involve Latin, and one or more other subjects: History, English, Civics, Science, or Modern Languages.

## **II. Immediate Threats to your Latin Program**

DO NOT BE DEFEATIST. GET HELP FAST. As soon as your school board or administration starts to think about cutting or reducing your program take the following actions:

A. Call the presidents of your state and regional classical organizations.

Organize students and parents to support you in front of the school board. Your state professional associations should be asked to send friends of the classics to give supporting arguments.

B. Contact the local media to get their support.

C. Have students, parents, and other supporters write “letters to the editor” prior to the date of any official action of the administration or school board.

*Suggestions compiled by Professor Allen Ward, Department of History, University of Connecticut. Suggestions were made by members of the Classical Association of New England.*