

CarPe Latinam IV

The new semester has begun and it is time yet again to remember your SANDALS when in your classroom: Spectate Audite Nunc Dicite Agite Legite Scribite! As I've mentioned several times before, this handy little acronym (by Rick LaFleur) is featured on a free downloadable poster from the CPL website at www.camwscpl.org which will look great in your classroom.

And are you ready for the new year, for including more oral Latin in your classroom, for more acting, reading and writing? If you teach at the secondary level (especially if you are a new teacher), you may find that all of your enthusiasm, your creativity, and your knowledge will be forced to take a back seat to the simple day to day dealings with middle school and high school students.

I confess that I was forced to look very seriously at my own classroom management procedures this summer because of the “challenges” I faced last year with my own students. The most frustrating aspect of working with low-income students is the amount of time wasted in dealing with those who don't bring the materials necessary to begin warm-ups, let alone keep up with texts and folders. This year I've turned it around by creating a series of rotating jobs for the students so that I'm able to focus on what I do best—teach Latin.* The following jobs rotate daily and are posted on a bulletin board:

Legatus: the keeper of the “time-wasting” spiral (see below) who writes down the names I tell him or her too; he/she also has permission to write down names of those causing trouble when I'm helping an individual student (my eyes on the back of my head).

Tribunus: the keeper of the bell which is rung when there are only 5 minutes left in class so that we can clean up, ask questions, review objectives, sign athletic grade slips, etc. The *tribunus* will also lead some of the drills each day.

Centurio: the leader of each row who retrieves the folders and spirals from the file drawer each day (limits the number of students out of their seats). All folders, warm-up spirals and textbooks are kept in the room so that no one is without materials. If classwork needs to be completed at home, folders and books may be taken home. If they are forgotten, that person's name goes in the “time-wasting” spiral.

The “time wasting” spiral works in the following way:

1st time in the spiral during a 3 week period: 1 minute after class

2nd time in the spiral during a 3 week period: 1 minute after class plus lunch detention

3rd time in the spiral during a 3 week period: the above two, a written action plan for changing behavior and a phone call home.

* I highly advise all teachers and future teachers to read Harry Wong's *The First Days of School* which will provide solid, practical and logical advice about creating effective classroom procedures to promote a highly productive class.

4th time: referral to the office.

This spiral, which students maintain (and I review), provides me with the written record of behavioral problems without my having to take time away from teaching Latin to maintain it myself.

In addition, taped to each desk is a library book pocket with red and black pens. These are checked during the last 5 minutes of class (after the *tribunus* rings the bell) to make sure all the pens are in place.

The benefits of these procedures are multiple. To begin with, for the first time I have *all* of the students working on warm-ups at the same time because all of them have their materials. They are highly productive from the first moment of class no matter what their backgrounds are like.

The next challenge I face is getting students to work together cooperatively, to help each other maintain a standard of high achievement. Each row is a century (and each class is a legion) even though there are only 4-5 people per row. When students have a written assignment, there are four jobs that rotate within the century:

lictor: insuring each person is on task, formatting their paper appropriately and actively participating.

lector: reading the sentences/exercises in Latin out loud

vocabularius: looking up vocabulary when meanings are unknown

grammaticus: watching endings, making everyone focus on the details of inflection, etc

These jobs do not work well without teaching the students how to ask each other questions (what is referred to as “accountable talk” in our school district):

What case is that? How do you know?

What is the ending?

How do you translate it in English? (Do you need “to” or “for”?)

Is it the subject? Direct object? Indirect object?

What tense is it? How do you know?

What is the personal ending? etc.

The smart kids need to know how to ask the questions of the strugglers as much as the strugglers need to know how to ask questions of the smarter kids.

The results so far are amazing. The quality of the work (mechanics as well as translations) that has been turned in so far has been high. My classes are truly student-centered and consistently productive. The students are helping to manage the class as well as help each other learn, and for the first time I feel that I am truly free to focus on teaching Latin. CARPE LATINAM!

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