

## Reviving the Classics: The Importance of Teaching the Classics in Low-Performing and At-Risk Schools

As an educator in secondary education, I have spent many hours in meetings about numbers. It seems as though our educational system has become something of a data collector: churning out graphs and statistics indicating whether or not our students are “successful.” Students are reduced to the number they received on their SAT, ACT, AP, or state exams, and teachers and their abilities are analyzed based on their students’ scores. Meanwhile, schools are lauded or condemned in direct correlation to this data. These state-standardized tests were created originally to help schools, teachers, and students from *all* socioeconomic backgrounds; however, the at-risk schools suffer the most. Generally stated, there is a correlation between affluent school districts and high-performance schools. At-risk and low performing schools begin to worry about surviving rather than thriving. Many begin to “teach to the test” and to focus solely on sciences, math, and technology (STEM) while allowing the humanities to fall to the wayside. Meanwhile, schools in more affluent areas are not only surviving, they are thriving in all subjects. Since their tests are indicating proficiency in STEM subjects, they have the opportunity to also focus on the humanities; therefore, these are the schools in which Latin and the Classics are being taught. The effects are cyclical. At-risk schools are heavily focused on STEM and what the state requires them to pass. High-performing schools are already thriving in these “core” subjects and, thus, they can move on to, what many would consider, “luxury” disciplines. In short, low-performing schools are not teaching the Classics because it is considered a “luxury” subject. As a result, the study of Classics is enveloped in a myth: that it is only for the “intellectual,” the wealthy, and/or the religious. So how do we introduce the Classical world into low-performing and at-risk schools? We need to overcome the myth and

knowledge and exposure are key. In this paper, I will address the misconceptions that the general populace has over the study of Classics, the advantages of teaching the Classics in low-performing and at-risk schools, and I will provide suggestions as to how we can overcome the herculean task of reviving the Classics in secondary education and making it accessible to students from all backgrounds.