

THE IMPACT OF LATIN INSTRUCTION ON YOUTH LITERACY RATES IN NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Introduction

- In New York City, only 49.1% of New York City public school students in grades 3–8 are reading proficiently. Research, including a study from Penn State University, suggests that Latin instruction improves students' grammar, vocabulary, and analytical skills, thereby enhancing literacy outcomes.
- This research project looked at qualitative and quantitative data through oral history, interviews with educators, analysis of subject-specific literature, and publicly available test score data.



Objectives

- This project seeks to address two primary questions:
 - What impact does Latin instruction have on youth literacy in New York City public schools?
 - How does access to Latin instruction vary according to socioeconomic status and geographically dependent school resources and funding?
- By evaluating educator experiences and standardized student assessments, this study aims to provide a holistic picture of how Latin functions in contemporary public education. Ultimately, the project seeks to inform recommendations for how classical language instruction might strengthen literacy initiatives in New York City and beyond.

Methodology

01

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with three main components to examine the relationship between Latin instruction and youth literacy outcomes in New York City public schools.

02

Data was collected through three main methods: a comprehensive annotated bibliography of existing related scholarship, oral history interviews with educators and quantitative analysis of publicly available ELA test scores from over 1000 schools.

03

Textual sources were collected from existing literature which relates to the subject of Latin as a tool for developing youth literacy and its impact on schools ranging from under resourced to highly resourced.

04

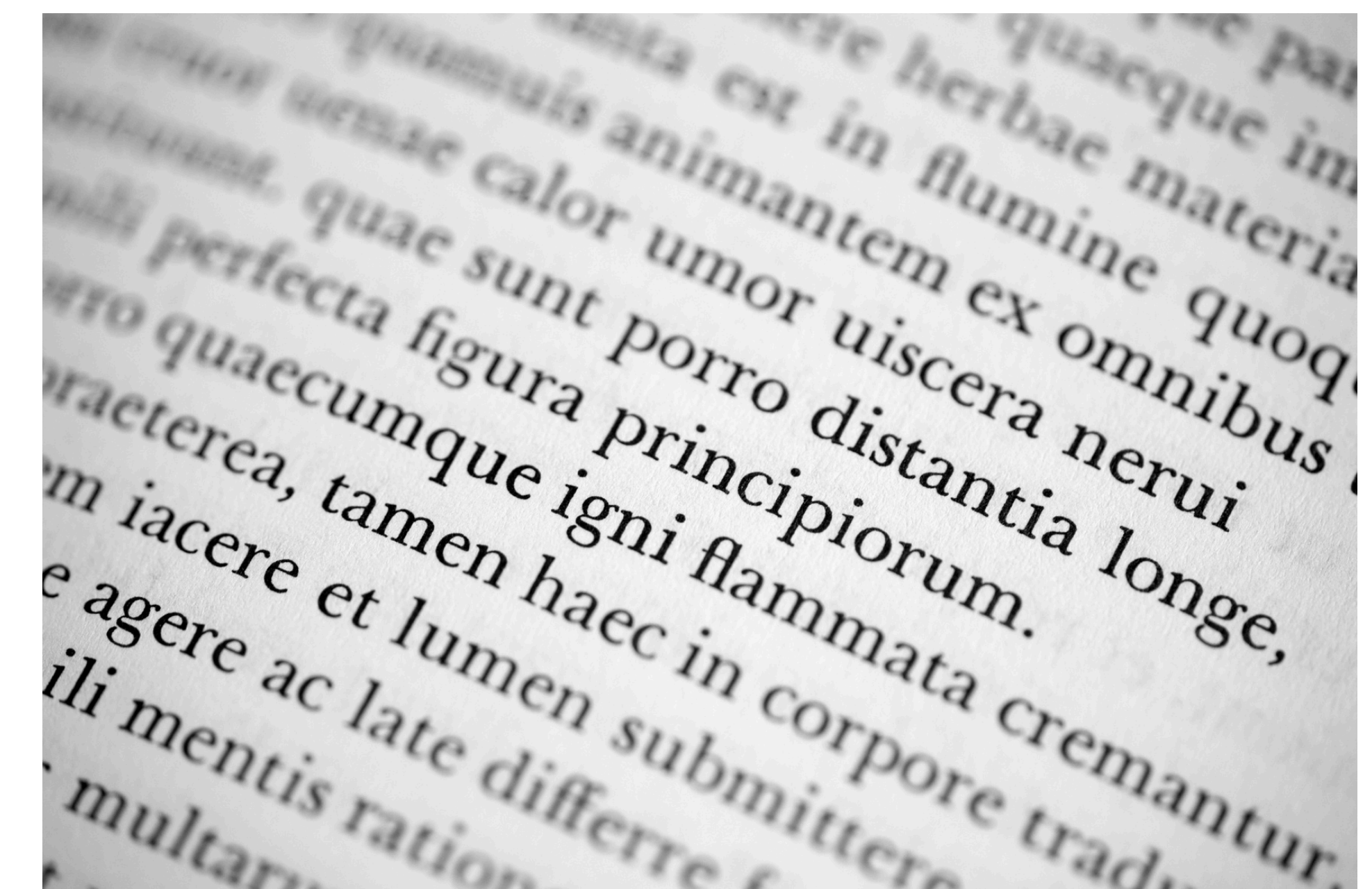
Subsequently, five oral history interviews were conducted with educators to gather qualitative data regarding their experiences with Latin instruction and the effects of such instruction on their performance and comfortability in literacy focused areas of study.

05

The analysis consisted of drawing correlations between the presence of Latin, borough of the school, and what percentage of students scored higher than Level 3 in the ELA assessment – the marker of literacy according to the NYC Department of Education.

Quantitative Analysis

- Only 3 out of 1,124 public schools surveyed across New York City's five boroughs (excluding specialized + screening schools) teach Latin.
 - Two from Manhattan, one from Brooklyn.
 - Mean % of students scoring at least level 3 in ELA assessment (NYC DOE standard for literacy) is 89.1%.
- 253 public schools surveyed from the Bronx.
 - Mean is 34.0% for students scoring above level 3.
- 272 public schools surveyed from Queens.
 - Mean is 53.3% for students scoring above level 3.
- 0 of these 525 public schools from Bronx/Queens offer Latin, according to their school reports listed on NYC DOE website.



Qualitative Conclusions

- The main takeaways from the five interviews were that:
 - Latin has not been equitably distributed throughout NYC schools.
 - there is a lack of state/federal funding and support for ALL foreign language programs in NYC public schools, but especially Latin.
 - there is a lack of Latin educators to staff language programs.
- Educational programs such as The Paideia Institute's *Aequora*: Teaching Literacy with Latin which brings Latin to underserved communities are making great strides through volunteerism to make Latin a tool for improving youth literacy more accessible on broader scale.

Next Steps

- A continuation of this research would be to develop an independent definition for literacy outside of the NYC DOE's definition through ELA assessment.
 - A part of this would also seek to understand whether particular emphasis on vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension of all languages lead to a correlation of higher literacy outside of Latin alone.
- In another direction, this research leads to the question of what and how to achieve the most actionable steps to making Latin more accessible and widespread in public school curricula such as they have historically done in the United Kingdom (UK).
- Traveling to the UK to work with community-based initiatives such as The Latin Programme: Via Facilis which helps to bring Latin to state schools as a means to support English literacy.



Key Sources & Acknowledgements

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