

# Australian Schools Brought Back Greek and Latin – and Are Seeing Amazing Results!

In 2015, less than 40% of American 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>-graders achieved [proficiency in reading](#). Public schools have been trying to boost these numbers for years, but have had little success.

But news out of Australia may offer a new way to boost not only America's reading proficiency, but math and science proficiency, as well. How? They're teaching students some Latin and Greek.

From [The Australian](#):

*“A program that borrows from the classics is giving pupils who have fallen behind their classmates a huge boost in deciphering English and even helping with maths and science.*

*Some children have advanced by six years in as many weeks, by using the technique to decode words and broaden their vocabulary, research has found.*

*Pupils learn dozens of prefix, stem and suffix meanings, most originating from Greek or Latin, so they can work out what words mean, or can have an educated guess.*

*Research at Northumbria University found that children made, on average, 27 months of progress, but one school reported a small group improving their reading age by six years. Exam results have risen, not only in English but also other subjects, because children are more confident with terminology.”*

Such reports underscore the benefits which many have attributed to learning inflected languages such as Latin or

Greek. According to author and classical education enthusiast [Dorothy Sayers](#), learning Latin helps in the five following ways:

### **1. It Demystifies English Grammar**

Despite never learning proper English grammar, Sayers was able to write and speak far better than others who did. This she attributed to her knowledge of Latin grammar, which is much less confusing and more structured than that of English.

### **2. It Boosts Vocabulary**

According to Sayers, “Latin is the key to fifty percent of our vocabulary-either directly, or through French and other Romance languages. Without some acquaintance with the Latin roots, the meaning of each word has to be learnt and memorized separately....”

### **3. It Lays the Foundation for Other Languages**

Because it is at the root of many popular modern languages, learning Latin first greatly reduces the time investment for other languages. Sayers attests that her knowledge of Latin enabled her to learn Italian in a relatively short amount of time – as an adult!

### **4. It Sheds Light on Literature**

On this point, Sayers notes, “The literature of our own country and of Europe is so studded and punctuated with Latin phrases and classical allusions that without some knowledge of Latin it must be very difficult to make anything of it.”

### **5. It Boosts Comprehension**

Such is particularly true when it comes to word derivation. As Sayers implies, a knowledge of Latin would instantly allow us to recognize how our understanding of such modern catch phrases as “civility” and “justice” are rather flawed.

As history demonstrates, Latin and Greek used to be regular fare in America’s public schools. Is it possible that the modern rejection of the classical languages has contributed to

the falling proficiency scores with which America wrestles today? Would we, like the Australians, see a revival in reading, math, and science if we restored Latin and Greek to the public school curriculum?