

# U.S. Schools Using Greek and Latin to Boost Reading Skills

When The Nation's Report Card released the 2015 reading scores for high schoolers, the public got confirmation of what it has long feared: student achievement has been gradually declining in recent decades.

But is it possible that those scores could be improved by reintroducing Greek and Latin into school curriculum?

According to a recent article in [PBS Newshour](#), several U.S. schools are doing just that.

Using a Greek and Latin program geared toward elementary aged students, the schools have found they can streamline English vocabulary education and can also build reading comprehension as students recognize Greek and Latin roots and then decode word meanings. The reason behind this is simple:

*"A single root can generate over 100 words," said Joanna Newton, the reading specialist at Woodlawn, who runs the professional-development group. "If you teach a kid even 10 roots over the course of a year, that's like 1,000 words they can potentially unlock on their own."*

*Teaching root words also gives students a way to play with language and see it as something they can reason through. "It makes them more aware of words, that words hold meaning, and that the language is purposeful," said Emily Ulrich, a 4th grade teacher at Woodlawn, who has been using the approach for three years. "It gives them confidence, too, when they're reading and they see parts of words they're familiar with."*

The article goes on to explain that the school (Woodlawn Elementary) which implemented this program saw some

interesting changes in reading achievement:

*“Between 2014 and 2015, Woodlawn saw increases in its standardized test scores for reading, particularly at the grades in which most teachers were using Latin and Greek roots. (The percentage of 4th graders passing went up by 28 percent, and for 5th grade, it rose 19 percent.)”*

Experts are quick to caution that these increases may be due to other school policies, and not the Greek and Latin instruction. But considering that [Australian schools](#) recently incorporated a similar Greek and Latin program into their curriculum and saw huge gains not only in reading, but in math and science as well, it seems quite plausible that the reading achievement at Woodlawn could be related to the introduction of Greek and Latin.

Interested in introducing your own children or students to Greek and Latin roots? Check out [Greek and Latin Roots: Keys to Building Vocabulary](#), the guide used by teachers at Woodlawn Elementary for games, ideas, and instruction in these languages we’ve seemed to have lost touch with in recent decades.