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"Know Yourself": A School Program in Ancient Greek Studies across the Curriculum

Our program, Ancient Greek Studies in the Schools, takes as its theme the Socratic call to the examined life. As we enter further into the 21st century, we ask participants to explore what it means to be human through the lens of Greek antiquity. Our primary goal is to reinvigorate ancient Greek studies in the schools through professional scholarship, development of curriculum materials, and a community outreach on the history, culture, and accomplishments of ancient Greece.

We started with two teachers from one school district (Newton, Massachusetts) in collaboration with the Department of Classical Studies at Brandeis University. The program has now, however, broadened to encompass a consortium of school districts in Massachusetts (Newton, Waltham, Brookline, Boston, Cambridge, and Wellesley) in addition to several charter and independent schools. Each year 20 Greek Study Fellows meet regularly with project humanist, Prof. Koloski-Ostrow of Brandeis (and other Boston-based scholars) for a series of ten seminars that focus on a work of Greek literature, history, or philosophy. Fellows also participate in a two-week a Study Tour of Greece that features sites encountered in the texts read during the course. On the Study Tour we concentrate on the historic, mythological, artistic, and religious significance of each setting. Teachers actively participate during the trip and share knowledge with each other by cooperatively leading discussions along with the project humanist.

In addition, the program fosters workshops and ongoing discussions of ways to integrate Greek studies and teaching; it insures, on the completion of the project period, the continuation of professional development in Greek antiquity. In conjunction with the program, the teachers create a pool of resources for the teaching of ancient Greece including websites, books, maps, slides, and videotapes. After the project period, Greek Study Fellows make themselves available as leaders and mentors in other school systems in New England and elsewhere. Our first cohort of Greek Study Fellows (1999-2000) completed its formal tenure in December 2000 and will have an impact on thousands of children. Cohort 4 (2002-2003) completes its tenure in December 2003. We now have 100 teachers in the pipeline as we embark on year 5. The program is gaining in visibility and momentum. This paper describes the seminars and study tour, and offers a summary of some of the major accomplishments of the program to date in curriculum development for the schools, materials created for dissemination, and additional outreach efforts.