

MIZZOU

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Around the Columns

Teaching Latin before school

When most people want a change of pace, they might go shopping or take a trip. But not Stephanie Sanchez, a senior from St. Louis who majors in journalism and classics. Instead, she decided to teach Latin to youngsters before they start their day at Grant Elementary School in Columbia.



“First thing in the morning, I have six little boys from third to fifth grade,” Sanchez says.

“I’m still groggy. But they’re bouncing off the walls, and they get it [Latin].”

MU senior Stephanie Sanchez teaches Latin to Grant Elementary School students before school. Photo by Nicholas Benner

David Schenker, associate professor of classical studies, has been Mizzou’s link to the program for 17 years. That’s when he first arrived at the university and his children were students at Grant. “I taught in the program as long as my kids were in school. After a certain point, I realized it was a wonderful possibility for some of our classics majors to get some experience in teaching. It’s good for them to get a little taste of it before they get thrown into the fire.”

Since then, some Mizzou students have taught Latin for a small stipend paid by the Grant PTA. Others take the job as part of a service-learning course for credit.

“A few students decided teaching is not for them,” Schenker says. But Sanchez loves it. Her pupils learn plenty of Latin — words for animals, body parts and even passages of Winnie the Pooh.

Sanchez likes ending the class sessions with a crowd-pleasing game called Gladiator. “We sit in a circle and play this glorified version of rock, paper, scissors,” she says. In case it’s new to you, three swords beats a shield, a spear beats a sword and a catapult beats two people’s shields.

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