

“SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO”

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PETRA'S PURPOSE STATEMENTS

by Petra Academy

Vision (what we see): Students prepared to live purposeful, godly lives.

Mission (what we do): Recognizing our need for God's grace, Petra Academy strives to awaken love and wonder in our students by teaching them to observe with humility, think with reason, and articulate with charity for the flourishing of humanity and the renown of Jesus the Christ.

We want to see our **students** equipped with the "tools of learning" that will prepare them not only for further studies in college and in a wide range of vocations, but for living full and exuberant lives that take great delight in all God's works. But more than that, we long to see our students, so equipped, to give themselves to a hurting world, to be those "who will hold on to Christ firmly with one hand and reach out the other, with wit and skill and cheerfulness, with compassion and sorrow and tenderness, to the places where our world is in pain" (N.T. Wright, *For All God's Worth*).

We desire that our **faculty** exemplify the pursuit we envision for our students: that they are diligent and eager about what they teach, always learning themselves, and loving their students in Christ's love. We want them to have a clear understanding of classical education, both

DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A DEFINED VISION FOR YOUR STUDENTS, FACULTY, RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS, AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

in its application in their classroom and how their work fits into the whole.

As a school that bases its mandate from parental authority, we want to welcome the presence of **parents** at our school and in the classrooms. We want to be responsive to the concerns of parents within the parameters of the school's mission. We desire and need parents to share a sense of responsibility for the school, to be enthusiastically involved and supportive.

We want to be supportive of our local **community**, above reproach in our business dealings and engaged in community activities. Particularly, in the body of Christ, we long to exemplify our unity in Christ that transcends the diversity of our backgrounds.

Petra Academy is an ACCS-accredited school in Bozeman, Montana.



AMPLIFICATION OF PETRA'S MISSION STATEMENT

RECOGNIZING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE . . .

All of us are fallen; all of us need redemption. This includes parents, and this includes our kids. Because of our fallenness, we see interactions through blurred lenses that affect our desires, words, thoughts, and motives.

The solution is not to look to ourselves for hope in some self-deluded self-esteem (which, by the way, is not a virtue); the problem—for us and for our students—is not that we have too little self-esteem, but that we have too much! Any hope of solution is to look outside ourselves to Christ.

The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus is up to the challenge. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us that, “. . . by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

We have been saved from death and hell, but we often forget verse 10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Indeed, we have been saved *from* something, but we have also been saved *for* something.

To do any of this requires daily discipline, prayer, self-examination, repentance, and all of this requires

grace to even desire it, let alone do it. Obedience to God's word is what makes us fully human; we want and need to learn to love to obey. God's law is the trellis that supports our love growing. Obedience equals freedom, for us and for our students, but it is God's grace that makes any of it possible.

. . . PETRA ACADEMY STRIVES TO AWAKEN LOVE AND WONDER IN OUR STUDENTS . . .

Our students run the risk of going through life in a state of slumber. Many have been lulled to sleep perhaps by a disengaged family life, a culture full of distractions, or perhaps a church that has sadly exchanged discipleship for entertainment.

Most of all, students—like all of us—are preoccupied with what they love, and what they love is not always good. James K.A. Smith, in his book, *Desiring the Kingdom*, sums up the quest of education in this question:

“What if education was primarily concerned with shaping our hopes and passions—our visions of ‘the good life’—and not merely about the dissemination of data and information as inputs to our thinking? What if the primary work of education was the transforming of our imagination rather than the saturation of our intellect? And what if this had as much to do with our bodies as with our minds? . . . What if education wasn't first and foremost about what we know, but about what we love?”

The good news is that our students have been lulled only to *sleep*, not to *death* (at least not yet). Like Sleeping Beauty, they need to be awakened to life through a kiss of love *from beyond*—engagement full of affection, wisdom, and understanding. Plato said that when we expose students to order, rhythm, and harmony, they will not only choose them, but also love them. As we expose them to size and scale, to precision and detail, to story and language, they will wonder—and wonder, said Plato, is the beginning of philosophy.

But philosophy to be true must be able to be lived, which is why we have teachers—those who have not only given their lives to learning and loving these philosophies, but are striving to *live* by them as well. As co-heirs of the promise given, as disciples of what has been taught, and as fellow human beings desperate for the same grace and redemption, our teachers have been awakened by Christ’s love and wonder, and strive to do the same in our students.

. . . BY TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE WITH HUMILITY . . .

Teachers occupy a unique position of presence and relationship with their students. Our teachers make use of time-tested means to teach, and are held accountable by God and our school for what they teach. And yet, while they are under authority, they are also *an* authority in the lives of the students, and are worthy of respect from those they seek to teach as well as from those who have asked them to teach *in loco parentis*, that is, “in the place of (but not in place of) parents.”

Good teachers do not teach *subjects*; they teach *students*—not just the *what*, but the *why* and the *how* as well. Good teachers teach students to observe, doing so out of a particular framework or story of the world, which affects how they and their students interact. They teach students that identity comes not from *within* but from *without*, that if students will observe the world around them—through their senses, with their curiosity,

in their context and environment—they will find their place in it with help from parents and teachers guiding them to such discovery.

Observation requires humility—to *receive* rather than to *project* meaning, to *respond* rather than to just *react* to an idea. To observe with humility is the result of a student recognizing that she does not know something, which Socrates calls the beginning of wisdom. To observe instead with arrogance is the completion of ignorance.

. . . THINK WITH REASON . . .

While we are emotive beings, we also can be and are called to be rational ones. Perhaps a better word here is “reasonable” to define a thought or action that utilizes both emotion and rationale.

But more than just reasonable thought is our need for *right* thought; that is, for “obedient” thought, for surely there is thought that is “wrong” and “disobedient.” Thomas Aquinas makes this distinction when he challenges us to “love truth and hate falsehood”—you can’t do both. We are to love truth because all truth is God’s truth, but it requires effort and is not easy since we are fallen. Jiminy Cricket got it wrong. We should be careful to “always let your conscience be your guide,” because our conscience is fallen like everything else and needs redemption.

To think with reason means to think God’s thoughts after him, to “set our minds on things above” as Colossians 3 reminds us. To recognize that words still carry weight and that that matters; to embrace that seeds of charity must be sown in order to grow souls that grow into logical emotive beings.

. . . ARTICULATE WITH CHARITY . . .

Mechanics of expression are important, which is why we attempt to teach students to learn to submit

to, practice, and emulate good forms. These good forms come by way of what might be thought of as an apprenticeship of revision, in which innate ability is considered, but not made more important than good preparation for expression.

Teachers promote a care for words, a right thinking based on obedient logic, and a gentle but firm rhetoric that causes students to blossom like the fruit of the Spirit of God's word. Students are taught the importance of exegizing their audience as much as their content, understanding that the whole point of their presentation is for the persuasion and benefit of *others* rather than for themselves.

We implement the historic modes of persuasion—ethos (or character), logos (or content), and pathos (or appeal)—to affect emotion and experience. We study the craft of language for the beautiful use of it, not for its own sake, but for the sake of influencing the embrace of Aristotle's transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty. We practice and hone the ability to speak and awaken others by way of conviction, integrity, love, and good will for our audience. This leads to flourishing and any growth in Christ.

...FOR THE FLOURISHING OF HUMANITY...

Mankind flourishes when in proper relationship with the God who created him. Augustine speaks of this in *The City of God* when he speaks of the enculturation (or *paideia*) of students to become good citizens of the City of God within the culture of the City of Man. We believe that as we build good citizens for God's Kingdom, they will be good citizens of our country. Rather than Republicans or Democrats, we are ultimately called to be Monarchists!

What are the results of a flourishing humanity?

- Development of heart, mind, and body (illustration

of facility)

- A value for what is old, not because it is aged, but because it is timeless
- A value for what is new, not because it is novel, but because it is what God is doing
- A value for what is true, not because we care about who's right, but because we're called to care about what's right
- A value for what is good, not because we are, but because we've been redeemed to be
- A value for what is beautiful, not because it is optional, but because it's essential to human flourishing

. . . THE RENOWN OF JESUS THE CHRIST.

“Renown” is the condition of being known or talked about by many people. We value what Jesus says because this—all of this—is for the renown of his name, not ours. The narrative story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation is the story of God's desire from Genesis to Revelation that we would be his people and he would be our God. Jesus the Christ—the very Son of God—is the crux of this story, and as it has always been His story, we want our story at Petra Academy to reflect that.