

PCA FAMILY BRIEF

PCA Educational Philosophy

Working draft for family review and shared understanding

For: PCA Families

Date: September 2026

Status: Working Draft for Family Review (FALL 2026)

Why we are sharing this with families PCA's Educational Philosophy puts into words the convictions that should hold our work together across classrooms, teams, studios, relationships, service, and leadership. For families, we hope it makes clearer both what you can expect PCA to provide for your child and what we will increasingly invite and expect from students as they grow.

What this reflects—and why coherence matters

I hope that as you read this, you see a great deal of the PCA you already know. This philosophy reflects long-standing Christian commitments at our school and many of the things families consistently tell us they value: strong academics, Christ-centered formation, a caring community, meaningful relationships, and opportunities for students to create, compete, serve, lead, and grow in character.

This philosophy is both descriptive and aspirational. It names much that is already strong at PCA while also clarifying where we want to grow in consistency and coherence. Coherence matters to us not only academically, but across the whole program and purpose of PCA. We want students and families to experience one school whose classrooms, arts, athletics, leadership, service, relationships, and Christian formation reinforce one another rather than operating as separate efforts.

From last year's Academic Vision to this year's work

Last year's Academic Vision invited every family to grow with us in six areas: character and spiritual growth, academic excellence, competition and teamwork, creativity, servant leadership, and the wise use of technology. Based on our own review, feedback from the community, and continued work by faculty and leaders, we are going one layer deeper this year. The Educational Philosophy gives those commitments stronger theological and educational grounding and helps us see how they hold together.

This continuity is deliberate. We are not setting aside last year's vision or replacing good work already underway. We are naming the convictions beneath it more clearly so that curriculum, teaching, student formation, athletics, arts, leadership, and school culture can increasingly move in the same direction—with greater focus, support, and shared purpose.

A working draft—and a working perspective

What follows is a true working draft. Faculty and staff are studying it together, and we will continue listening to school leaders, the Board, families, and others in our community through the fall and early winter. Our aim is to publish the final Educational Philosophy by February 2027. When the review is complete, we will share the final philosophy with families and note the major ways feedback helped clarify or strengthen it.

But “working draft” does not mean we are waiting until February to work from these convictions. They already guide our work this year: strengthening curriculum coherence, supporting teachers, tending healthy class and grade-level communities, and helping students grow as whole people who are increasingly ready to contribute. I hope families experience greater continuity, focus, and coherence as that work becomes more visible.

Questions for family reflection

- Where do you most clearly recognize the PCA you already know and value?
- What most reflects what you hope PCA will cultivate in your child over time?
- What needs clarification, qualification, or greater attention before we finalize it?

If you are willing, please share your thoughts through the brief feedback form below.



Thank you for taking the time to read this thoughtfully and to share your perspective. I hope you recognize much of the PCA you already know and value, while also seeing more clearly where we are seeking greater consistency, coherence, and faithfulness.

A school entrusted with the education and formation of hundreds of children over many years should be clear about the convictions guiding that work. This philosophy is our effort to preserve what is strong, be candid about where we need to grow, and give our community shared direction. Most importantly, I want it to make clearer what you can expect from PCA as we partner with you in the formation of your children. I am deeply grateful for that trust and partnership, and I appreciate your help in finishing this work well.

With gratitude,

Mike Runey

Head of School

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Working Draft

I. Christ Over All

Portsmouth Christian Academy exists because we believe and teach that Jesus Christ is Lord.

He is Lord of creation, Lord of truth, Lord of wisdom, and Lord of the Church. In Him all things hold together. Therefore, education at PCA is not divided between sacred and secular. Every subject, every classroom, every rehearsal, every field of play, and every stage of development belongs under His authority.

We believe that every student is created in the image of God — endowed with dignity, capacity, and purpose — yet also in need of redemption and restoration. Education, therefore, is not merely the transfer of information but the formation of persons: hearts directed toward God, minds trained for truth, and lives ordered toward obedience and joy.

We teach and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with clarity and humility. We do not presume the spiritual condition of any student, nor do we replace the essential work of parents and the local church. Rather, we labor alongside all families and churches that confess the historic Christian faith, bringing biblical truth into disciplined study of all subjects, daily relationships, creative work, competition, and emerging service and leadership within a culture that often challenges Christian conviction.

We also warmly welcome families who come to PCA without sharing this confession—for its academic excellence, character formation, or caring community—and we care for every child entrusted to us with the same honesty, dignity, and love.

II. Shepherded Formation in Community and Cohort

Formation at PCA happens within relationships.

Faculty and staff do more than fulfill roles; they shepherd, support, and serve. Teachers instruct and mentor. Coaches shape character. Staff members create the conditions in which learning and formation can flourish. Students are not anonymous participants in a program; they are image-bearers entrusted to our care. As they grow, they increasingly shape and lead the community as well. In this way, we disciple them.

We seek to cultivate a community marked by Christ-centeredness, Biblical integrity, compassionate love, humility, joy, curiosity, and excellence. These are not abstract ideals but lived commitments, practiced daily in classrooms, hallways, rehearsals, practices, and conversations.

Spiritual formation is the integrating center of our school. Students are taught to read Scripture carefully and curiously, to think Biblically about reality, to repent when wrong, to forgive appropriately, and to walk faithfully with courage and grace. We trust the Holy Spirit to work in hearts. Our responsibility is faithful teaching, patient guidance, accountability, and love.

At PCA, students are formed not only as individuals but within class and grade-level communities. Each student is expected, with support appropriate to age and need, to come ready and willing to engage: to offer teachers and classmates honest attention and their best effort; to contribute

questions, ideas, gifts, work, and encouragement that build others up; and to receive with humility, gratitude, joy, and discernment what others contribute. Engagement does not look identical in every student. Attentive listening, thoughtful silence, careful work, courageous participation, perseverance, and service can all be genuine forms of contribution. Students are not merely recipients of a PCA education. As they mature, they increasingly share responsibility for the learning, character, and flourishing of their cohort and school.

III. Loving God with the Mind

We believe that loving the Lord with heart, soul, mind, and strength requires disciplined intellectual formation.

Academic study at PCA is an act of stewardship first of one's mind. Students are taught to pursue truth carefully, reason soundly, communicate clearly, and persevere through difficulty. Intellectual virtues such as attentiveness, accuracy, thoughtful analysis, and clear expression are cultivated deliberately.

We are committed to strengthening and maintaining the coherence and consistency of our academic program so that students grow steadily in competence and confidence. A clearly articulated, standards-based curriculum with designed objectives provides the strong spine of our instruction, providing solid preparation for each stage of learning. Through alignment of intermediate outcomes and thoughtful course design, we commit to institutional clarity that supports both experienced and developing teachers as they guide their students toward the designed objectives. We align instruction, assessment, and progression so that students advance with clarity, confidence, and demonstrated mastery.

Clear expectations and aligned resources allow teachers to focus their energy on formation and instruction with shared direction and confidence. At PCA, excellence is pursued as faithfulness. We labor patiently toward mastery, believing that disciplined growth honors the God of truth and prepares students to engage and serve wisely and effectively at our school and increasingly in the world.

IV. Whole-Student Formation

Because Christ is Lord over all, formation extends beyond the classroom.

PCA's commitment to whole student formation is best represented in a common picture we call the formation wheel.



Whole-Student Formation Wheel

Every student's wheel looks different.

At Portsmouth Christian Academy, whole-child formation is not a one-time experience. It is a steady deepening over time. As students move through each season at PCA, they grow in skill and interest in academics, character, leadership, athletics and creativity. Every lane reinforces the others, shaping graduates who are prepared, grounded, and ready to lead with purpose.

At the center is our commitment to building Christian character in every student. And, in every area, we see Christian character formation as central to every child's personal development.

Christian character is at the center—not as a separate program, but as the integrating core that informs and animates academics, leadership, creative expression, and competition. These domains do not compete for the student or operate as disconnected programs. Together they provide distinct yet integrated opportunities in which knowledge, wisdom, skill, confidence, mastery, relationships, and character are cultivated, tested, and offered in service to God and others. As we measure growth and mastery within each of these four arenas in the years ahead, Christian character will remain the center they all point back to—not a fifth item on a list, but the reason the other four matter at all. Wise stewardship—of time, attention, technology, and relationship—is not a separate lesson but a discipline students practice in every arena of formation.

In Athletics and Competition

From early play to meaningful competition, students learn perseverance, composure, and courage. Pressure reveals character as students compete individually and on teams. Coaches shepherd hearts as well as sharpen skills. Students are taught to represent Christ in victory and defeat — responding with humility, gratitude, and resilience.

Competition becomes a training ground for integrity and witness in the pressures of life.

In Artistic Expression and Creativity

Creativity reflects the image of a creative God. Students explore, practice, revise, and refine their work in music, art, writing, labs, performance, and design. Each student will be challenged to create both individually and collectively. They learn that true beauty requires discipline and that excellence grows through humility, patience, and effort.

Creative work becomes both expression and contribution to the life of the community.

In Service and Leadership

Leadership and leader development at PCA is key aim, and it all begins with faithful followership. Students learn to listen well, serve sacrificially, and honor others.

Responsibility grows over time — mentoring younger students, leading initiatives, serving in councils, captaining teams, guiding small groups, and carrying significant leadership roles. Christian leadership is characterized by one's courage, accountability, and humility toward leading others to fulfill a goal or objective while honoring God and caring for the people.

V. A Developmental Journey Toward Maturity

Such multifaceted formation of a PCA student's mind, body, and soul requires significant years of shepherding by many people. Growth in wisdom, skill, and character unfolds gradually and often unevenly. Children mature at different rates. Teachers and coaches continue to grow in their craft. Class communities develop their own strengths and challenges.

PCA therefore attends not only to the growth of each student, but also to the health, readiness, and contribution of the cohorts in which students learn. No class community develops identically. Within each one, students learn to persevere through difficulty, navigate difference and conflict, encourage one another, receive correction, celebrate others' growth, and carry increasing responsibility for the common good. We also expect each student to feel welcomed, known, loved, and cared for within each cohort, and to help their classmates feel the same.

PCA therefore structures its program intentionally according to the changing capacities of children and adolescents, cultivating habits appropriate to each stage while committing to steady coherence and faithful progression across the years.

In the early years, students absorb truth through repetition, imitation, and joy. They develop trust, attentiveness, and foundational habits of gratitude and self-control.

In the Lower School years, they build core academic skills and disciplined study habits. They learn to work diligently, think carefully, and participate responsibly in both classroom and community life.

In the Middle School years, students learn to analyze arguments, recognize faulty reasoning, compare worldviews, and think critically with discernment. Academic expectations increase. Competitive, creative, and leadership responsibilities become more structured and demanding, revealing character and building maturity.

In the Upper School years, students are challenged to synthesize knowledge, articulate conviction with clarity and charity, and apply Biblical truth thoughtfully to complex cultural and moral questions. They assume meaningful leadership, pursue excellence with greater independence, and prepare for faithful participation in the local church and the wider world.

At every stage, the goal is increasing wisdom embodied and applied— conviction joined with competence, humility joined with courage, joy joined with perseverance, all in community.

VI. The Fruit We Seek

At PCA, we expect faithful formation to bear visible fruit in time. When students are known, challenged, supported, contributing within strong cohorts, and increasingly entrusted with responsibility, we expect to be surprised by how they grow what they do. Their growth may become visible through academic achievement, creative work, competition, character, service, or leadership. We understand these accomplishments as more than recognition or status: they are evidence of

God-given capacities being discovered, disciplined, and offered for God's glory and the good of others.

PCA refuses to treat adolescence as a waiting room for meaningful adult life. Students are given age-appropriate opportunities to do challenging work, serve real needs, create and perform for others, compete with integrity, mentor younger students, strengthen their class communities, influence the school, and exercise genuine leadership. Because our students are expected to engage in and grow in every facet of the formation wheel every year, we find they readily take on young-adult roles beyond PCA earlier and with greater confidence, helping their churches, neighborhoods, and employers in ways that impact the world for good.

By graduation, we see young men and women who can:

- **Think Biblically and critically** — about truth, culture, and the choices before them.
- **Demonstrate capability with wisdom** — bringing knowledge, skill, judgment, and perseverance to meaningful work.
- **Engage with skill and compassion** — giving to and receiving from communities and relationships with courage, humility, and love.
- **Go, knowing Christ and ready for their faithful next steps** — whether those steps lead to college, career, military or missionary service, the local church, or other forms of calling.

We do not expect identical accomplishments or uniform development. Students possess varying gifts, encounter distinctive challenges, and mature at different rates. Formation is not passive: school, family, church, and student each participate in the work, with students assuming greater ownership over time. PCA's commitment is to tend the whole student faithfully, steward healthy cohorts, provide appropriate challenge and support, be candid about growth, and invite every student into meaningful contribution—to the glory of God and the good of others.

VII. Rooted in God's Faithfulness and Place

Since our school's founding in 1979, God has been faithful to Portsmouth Christian Academy. Through seasons of growth, challenge, and refinement, He has provided leaders, teachers, families, and resources to sustain this work of formation in our students.

Our campus along the Bellamy River is a daily reminder that creation declares the glory of God, and that God is a God of formation and transformation. Across seventy acres of woodland and tidal shoreline — beneath maples and pines, oaks and linden trees, amid osprey and deer — students learn within a setting that invites attentiveness, wonder, stewardship, and gratitude. This place forms us.

For many, arriving at PCA feels like stepping across a threshold into something set apart. Yet we are not removed from the world. Situated in the heart of the Seacoast, we exist to serve its families and local churches, preparing students to move confidently from this place of formation into lives of faithful presence and service.

We believe this is a place where generations of students will continue to come to know God more deeply, learn, grow, and thrive as whole people in community when we live out this philosophy faithfully, season over season, year over year. Every adult who serves at PCA — in classrooms, offices, fields, studios, and facilities — participates in this shared calling of forming young people who know Christ more, seek His call on their lives, and are equipped and ready for their next faithful step that will impact God's world for good.

We give thanks for all God has entrusted to us at PCA, and we accept the responsibility to steward it wisely for those who will come after us and ultimately His glory.

Our shared work This philosophy's credibility emerges when embodied in relationships, classrooms, programs, and students' growing lives. Faculty and staff wisdom and faithful practice, individually and corporately, are indispensable. Their good efforts multiply further when we are well partnered with parents as families and collectively.