

AGIA SOPHIA ACADEMY

PROGRESS REPORT

Fall 2004



AGIA SOPHIA ACADEMY
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Words of **Gratitude** from the Headmaster

*Thy Nativity, O Mother of God, has brought joy to all the world;
for from thee arose the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,
Who, having dissolved the curse, has given His blessing,
and having abolished death, has granted us life eternal.*

—Troparion of the Mother of God

It's hard to believe that we have been up and running for over two months now. The first day of school was September 8th, the feast day of the Nativity of the Theotokos. Looking back on the few weeks, there is a lot to be thankful for:

There's something appropriate about receiving the Cup of Life on the first day of Agia Sophia Academy's existence as a school. The first Orthodox Christian school in Oregon was born and on the same day, our staff, parents, and students received the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from the chalice. We are so blessed to be able to have worship as an integral part of our school day.

God has blessed the school with excellent teachers. From our volunteers to our part and full time staff—we are blessed with teachers who love our kids and want what is best for them. Each one has made significant sacrifices to be here and our school is the better for it.

There are, of course, numerous other things for which we could give thanks. But these four things really exemplify the blessing that this endeavor has been for all of us. Thanks be to God.

† Deacon Kevin Haan

Our first field trip, a day at the zoo, went over well. A number of parents came along and this helped the teachers to be able to teach some rather than spending all their time keeping the kids together. God blessed us with great weather and an enjoyable day viewing His creatures.

Parent Volunteers—we have been blessed with parents who want to be involved in their children's education and who want to contribute to the success of our school. The staff of Agia Sophia Academy is very thankful for the help and contributions made by so many of the parents. We couldn't do it without you.



We have had almost two terrific months of school in the Agia Sophia Primer class. Words cannot express the daily gift of joy bestowed upon me by the children. Let me share an overview of our progress and a preview of things to come. First, we continually read about and discuss the wonder of God's creation and the stories of God's people from ages ago. We learn about many of His Saints. We sound and write the letters a,s,t,c,m and b, and write the words on, an, and I in order to make our first sentence: "I sat on a cat". (illustrated, of course). We read an average of three books each day (the kids will tell you that every story I read is my favorite story!). We count over and over from 0-9 and use our math blocks to show how many each number really means. We talk about how people 'wrote' long ago and we made our own clay tablet message. We use the colors of God's rainbow to create paintings and drawings. We talk about our five senses and experiment with guessing scents. We find shapes on our walks to the park, and use our ever-challenged sense of hearing which we need for listening! We count, compare and sort sets of things and enjoy both music and Greek lessons too! My expectations of the children are set high because at this age they are eager to learn and are capable of accomplishing so much in a relatively short period of time. Most of the children know the "name" of each letter, but we are working on learning the sounds that they make as well as writing them legibly. Most know their numbers and counting to various levels, but we will be working on place value as well as greater/less than, sets of things and addition/subtraction. We will also begin a timeline and continue our study of history/geography/art with a unit on the Sumerians. It is evident that the children are respectful of God and of one another and helpful in ways that are not common in such young people. We do have areas we need to work on, mostly in listening and waiting our turn, but these will come in time and there is a balance that needs to be struck so that they may express themselves, but not to the point of overshadowing the learning process. I want the best possible experience for each of them!

—Mrs. Powell

IN THE CLASSROOM



TESTIMONIAL

From a PARENT

The following is an unsolicited statement from the mother of a Primer student at Agia Sophia. “Yiannis is really thriving on the church and school environment. I can tell already this is the right choice for him. He is so proud when he tells people “ my church has a school and that is where I belong”. I think he really was needing to feel like he belonged somewhere (everybody needs that I think) and he is already getting that feeling of belonging. I am surprised how quickly it shows in his behavior at home. Not like he has turned into the perfect kid :) But when Yiannis comes home from school he is beaming. That light he shines so innocently hits the corners of my own daily spiritual life which I have neglected. Without even knowing he challenges me with my own faith, not so much faith but rather my walk. I think this school year will not only be good for him but for all three of us.”



CURRICULUM UPDATE

Agia Sophia Academy boasts a superior curriculum that “challenges” the brightest students, yet is also accessible to those who need the extra help. Several years of hard work has been devoted to researching and developing curriculum appropriate for an Orthodox Christian Classical School. Agia Sophia academy owes many thanks to the team of educators from Ohio who now form OCS-NEO (Orthodox Christian Schools of Northeast Ohio).

Yet, curriculum is only as good as the teacher who breathes life into it. Like our Orthodox Faith, the Orthodox Trivium is an incarnate curriculum and depends heavily on the faith, dedication, and love of learning the teacher possesses. Our staff not only love the children and their subject areas, but are devoted to Truth. Our Faith reminds us that Truth is a person, Jesus Christ.

As committed Orthodox Christians, our staff are devoted to modeling the ultimate goal of our curriculum: the good and virtuous person. As the school year has begun, much time has been spent laying a foundation for behavior and how the students are to be good stewards of their education. This includes respecting our lovely facilities at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, giving our enthusiasm and attention to our studies and teachers, saying prayers corporately at the beginning and end of the school day, as well as before all meals and snacks, and learning how to share and encourage one another. We believe that without taking the time to deliberately practice these virtues, the best curriculum, in the end, will fail.

The ethos of a school is established early on. Visitors have already commented on how truly joyful and enthusiastic the students seem towards their studies. Parents say how their children feel they “belong” at school for the first time. One student woke up on a Saturday morning disappointed that it was not a school day!

In the coming months, students will continue to study Greek, Grammar, Spelling, Math, Science, Art, Music, Latin, the Faith, and History; but let us not forget that they are always studying those of us entrusted to their learning—be they parents, priests, teachers, godparents, or fellow parishioners—first and foremost.

—Carrie Thienes

Development Update

A BIG thank you to all of the supporters and friends of Agia Sophia Academy! Since March 2004, fifty five gifts, totaling nearly \$65,000, have been received. In addition, we would like to thank AGRO (Association of Greek Restaurant & Business Owners), AHEPA and the Daughters of Penelope for their generous support: We are so grateful to have received such tremendous support in only eight months.

In addition to what has been received, the Academy currently has a two-year fund-raising goal of \$100,000. Our goal for the next 10 months is to raise at least half of this amount - \$50,000.

Thanks to the following people who donated their time and various in-kind gifts to help prepare and supply the classrooms:

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Steve & Sophia Kosaris

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John Somarakis
Carrie Thienes
Nick & Mary Triantafillou

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If you would like to support Agia Sophia Academy please contact our Development Director Mary Chios Triantafillou at 503.234.7031 or E-mail at marychios@comcast.net



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