

PREPARING CHILDREN
FOR FREEDOM,
LEADERSHIP,
AND TRUE CREATIVITY

Pursuing Truth
through public
education in
Greater Houston


ARISTOI CLASSICAL
ACADEMY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2033

YOU'VE GOT TO BE HERE

IMAGINE...

Witnessing a teenager direct his peers to a specific passage of *Dante's Inferno* to support his thesis on the medieval worldview



Or, young students proclaiming the Preamble to all near and far on Constitution Day.



Or, the hush of the crowd as they watch to find out which fifth or sixth grade poet wins the coveted Goblet of Apollo.



What's it like to be a part of a community that gives over **3,000** volunteer hours to benefit students each year?

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO HAVE TEACHERS WHO ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT LEADING STUDENTS TO BECOME LIFE LEARNERS?

What is it like to learn important mathematical facts and figures and then have your teacher point out that you are learning **INTEGRITY** and **HUMILITY** at the same time?

IMAGINE how our society will benefit from young people who seek Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

IMAGINE what impact these students will make on the world as young adults.

...And realize that they can succeed in life because they can choose to do the hard things.

...And can think critically and creatively to solve some of our society's greatest ills.



AND IMAGINE what could happen if **ALL** young people were given the opportunity to receive such an education.

IT WOULD CHANGE THE WORLD.

DEAR FRIEND,

Aristoi believes that responsible citizens of virtuous character and the families they build are foundational to a flourishing society; therefore, we are striving to make authentic classical liberal arts education available to all who desire it, beginning in the Greater Houston area, tuition-free.

What is a classical liberal arts education? It is Western Civilization's millenia-old tradition of preparing young people for lives of leadership, creativity, and true freedom. Although it may look different in various places and times, classical liberal arts education always assumes:

- there is such a thing as Truth, and it is knowable;
- the primary aim of education is to acquire both the tools to discern Truth and the disposition to delight in it;
- the pinnacle of human excellence can only be described in terms of Virtue, not popularity or power or wealth;
- the pursuit of Truth and a life of Virtue are best cultivated by engaging with the "Great Conversation," a living exchange among the classic compositions, achievements, and personalities from all times and places.

An education appropriate to free men and women must outfit them for the adventure of life, not just a first job or someone else's predictions about the future needs of the economy. That is why we are calling on you to partner with us to redefine the educational landscape of Greater Houston as we strive to return the pursuit of Truth to public education.

It is for such a time as this that we meet you at the crossroads of our civilization.

Sincerely Yours,

Matthew D. Watson
Superintendent



WHO WE ARE



**AN URGENT,
COUNTERCULTURAL
MISSION**

THE ORIGIN OF ARISTOI

The school opened in 1996 as West Houston Charter School, with an emphasis on fine arts. In 2006, the school board voted to transition to a classical school model, an educational option previously available only in area private schools. Enrollment increased immediately as new families recognized the value of a tuition-free classical education.

In 2010, the K-8th grade charter school was renamed Aristoi Classical Academy. The high school was opened in 2014 with the addition of ninth grade and had its first graduating class in 2018. Today, Aristoi enrolls over 1,300 K-12 students across three campuses.

As a tuition-free charter school, any student may gain acceptance through a lottery enrollment process. Aristoi receives state funding like other public schools, but does not receive local tax revenue. Private donations supplement the remaining revenue needed for operating expenses.



Aristoi By the Numbers

22 max class size
for K-4

25
max class size for
grades 5-12

1,300+
total enrollment across all
three campuses - and growing!

4 options for high
school students
for their fine arts
requirement - band,
choir, art, or theatre

17 options for
student clubs and
sports for extra-curricular
involvement

1 mission to
encourage
students to develop a
passion for learning
that gives them the
means to become
responsible citizens of
virtuous character

46%
percentage of faculty
holding advanced degrees

IN THE CLASSROOM

Traditionally, schooling in the West has recognized that the truly educated person must master the various liberal arts in a succession of unique stages. Drawing on the centrality of the Trivium in the modern classical education renewal, and in order to foreground Aristoi's countercultural program of intellectual formation and character development, we use the following nomenclature to designate each Academy's academic divisions:

Grammar School (K-4)

Boys and girls enter into the Beauty of reality through their senses, building a capacity sustained attentiveness and a vivid moral imagination.

- Fairytales and classic poems form children to love Beauty, reverence courage, and aspire to nobility of life.
- Teachers initiate children into the world of math conceptually, so that they do not simply learn math facts, but come to "think mathematically."

Logic School (5-8)

Young scholars train to discern Truth by developing sound habits of mind, distinguishing the nature of the relationships between ideas, people, times, and places.

- The formal study of Latin commences, disciplining thought and communication toward precision and clarity.
- Utilizing Circe Institute's "Lost Tools of Writing" program, scholars learn to write persuasively and powerfully in response to any prompt.

Rhetoric School (9-12)

Emerging leaders take personal responsibility for the Good, encouraging and challenging their community out of a mature engagement with the Great Tradition.

- Each fall, the Freshman Serve Day launches ninth grade scholars into full participation in Aristoi's tradition of virtuous leadership, both on and off campus
- In Aristoi's Humane Letters sequence, Rhetoric School scholars wrestle with the ultimate questions of human existence through daily Socratic conversation centered on the classic texts of Western Civilization

"I like teaching a wide spectrum of students that reflect the real range of the United States. This leads to more fruitful discussions and conversations. In this model of education, you are educating their sensibilities and whole character. You are not just inputting data or only forming skills. Being able to teach curious students great texts and great history is why I work here."

It's important not to see the world as divided into little, narrow niches of activity, but to see that everyone is connected both in terms of what they're doing and what their vocation is, which is to be a good person. Real education should not just prepare you to "succeed" in life, but prepare you to have no regrets in death, too. That is arguably the most important thing."

*Shane Slowey
Human Letters Teacher*



CAPSTONES

At the completion of each of the three Aristoi schools - Grammar (K-4), Logic (5-8), and Rhetoric (9-12) - students complete a capstone project:

As the Grammar School Capstone, fourth grade students research and enact—in dress, dialect, and details—an historical character for the “Living History Museum.” Fellow students and the community can learn from these students through their presentations.

As the Logic School Capstone, eighth grade scholars collaborate to choose and study a musical theatre work, studying the work’s historical significance, author biography, music, character development, and more. They then produce and perform the musical for the delight and edification of their community.

As the Rhetoric School Capstone, seniors work towards the defense of their yearlong creation of a Senior Thesis. Starting junior year, students research and select their thesis topic. Throughout senior year, students explore and analyze research on their chosen topic. The yearlong writing and research journey culminates in Thesis Defense in the spring where scholars present their findings to a live audience, are questioned, and must defend their position.



FINE ARTS

Seeking Truth, Beauty, and Goodness certainly leads students to the fine arts. Each school draws students into greater appreciation of the fine arts:

In the Grammar School, all students learn the recorder and experience art and music classes.

In the Logic School, these offerings expand and also include the 8th grade class producing the 8th Grade Musical.

In the Rhetoric School, students may participate in art, theatre, band, or choir. They may choose more than one fine arts program if desired.

ATHLETICS

In the classical tradition, Aristoi teaches that a strong body makes the mind strong. In fact, Rhetoric School students (9-12) have the option to refine their athletic capabilities three times per week for class credit. Aristoi offers several athletic sports programs for students to not only strengthen their bodies, but learn perseverance, teamwork, and leadership:

- basketball
- cross country
- disc golf
- flag football
- soccer
- swimming
- track
- volleyball



ARISTOI CLASSICAL ACADEMIES STRATEGIC GOALS

When you find a good thing you want to tell everyone about it; when you have experienced something life changing you want others to have the same experience. Aristoi is growing because parents want to partner in the education of their children with a school that is committed to pursuing truth and virtuous leadership. Here are the next steps.

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM



Academics is our “core business.” From the fountainhead of vibrant classrooms led by master teachers, Aristoi’s mission of human formation flows into each campus’ community life—the playing fields, the clubs, graduation and the journey beyond. But everything starts with the classical liberal arts course of study through which young men and women equip themselves for a lifetime of discerning and delighting in the Truth.



Academic Program Strategic Goals

Aristoi Academies’ curriculum, instruction, and programming will be continually reinforced to support the learning goals of each of the three schools - Grammar (K-4), Logic (5-8), and Rhetoric (9-12):

- All 4th, 8th, and 12th grade scholars will complete the “Classical Capstone” project before transitioning to the next school.
- Continue to build an environment that nurtures well-rounded students, including excellent fine arts, performing arts, extracurriculars, and athletics.
- Enhance partnerships with parents to build Aristoi families’ classical liberal arts literacy, assist parents with guidance on raising virtuous young men and women, and foster friendships among parents.
- Improve faculty fulfillment by increasing salaries and intentionally structuring operations to allow for greater collaboration between teachers, departments, and campuses.
- Increase central office capacity by making strategic hires to support expanding mission.



INTENTIONAL GROWTH IN... FACILITIES

- **2025:** Aristoi - Katy Grammar School (K-4) will move into a permanent building on the Morton Road campus; the 11th Street campus in Katy will be sold; portable buildings placed at Aristoi - Cypress on the Crossover Fellowship campus which will temporarily support enrollment growth.
- **2027:** Identify and move into a new, permanent facility for the Aristoi Cypress campus.
- **2024-2029:** Identify and establish two new campuses in the greater Houston area.
- **By 2033:** Aristoi Classical Academies will operate a total of six K-12 academies in the Greater Houston area, providing a tuition-free classical education to approximately 5,500 students and their families.



FUNDRAISING

- **Beginning in 2023:** The capital campaign will raise \$4 million by the end of 2024 and have Aristoi en route to generating an average of \$3+ million per year in private gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations by 2027.
- **2023:** Pursue long-term partnerships with mission-aligned local leaders, community stakeholders, and private foundations whose support will allow Aristoi to found new campuses.
- **2024:** Develop an Aristoi Institute for American Classical Education so that we are able to foster our own faculty's growth in authentic classical education and begin to achieve a statewide, regional, and national profile.
- **By 2033:** The Aristoi network will generate \$60 million in revenue, at least 15% of which will come from private donors.



Initial renderings of third Aristoi location



“Aristoi has prepared me for college by teaching me how to work hard. The expectations at Aristoi are high, and working to meet those expectations have prepared me for the expectations of college. Aristoi, especially the senior Rhetoric class, taught me how to write an excellent paper. All the years of writing, editing, and re-editing essays have given me the skills necessary to produce a well-structured, thought-out paper.”

Emma Aguirre | Aristoi Alumna, Class of 2019



ARISTOI CLASSICAL
ACADEMY
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