

ARISTOI CLASSICAL ACADEMY

The Clarks go to Washington, submitted by Wendy Clark



The Clark Family in Washington, D.C.

During National Charter Schools Week in mid-May, it was my honor to join four other Griffin families from the Elementary Katy, Upper School, and Aristoi Cypress campuses in Washington, D.C. for the #BackOff Our Charter Schools rally.

Our family has been a part of Aristoi for over 10 years. My eldest, Kylie, began as a kindergarten student in Mrs. Beane's class and is now a rising sophomore at the Aristoi Upper School - Katy campus. In the intervening years, four additional Clark children have become Griffins as well – we have rising 1st, 5th, 6th, and 8th grade scholars this year. Our family feels truly blessed to

have found a tuition-free, classical school dedicated to the trivium model of education in pursuit of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. Aristoi is a perfect fit for our family in many ways, and we are grateful for the opportunity to see our kids grow in virtue as they pursue knowledge and wisdom.

Like other charter schools, Aristoi offers a unique alternative to families for whom their local school districts might not be the best fit. Due to many reasons, such as location, socioeconomic standing, or lack of opportunities in the community, students are poised to take advantage of the tailor-made offerings charter schools can provide – with educational models focusing on STEM, career readiness, or performing arts, for example. Aristoi, of course, offers classical education as our niche model of choice. The grammar, logic, and rhetoric stages of learning provide an incremental method of learning not what to think, but how to think – and then how to express that thought in a concise, rational manner.

Over 1000 concerned parents and students descended upon Washington, D.C. for a rally at the behest of charter school parent advocacy groups across the nation. Proposed regulations from the U.S. Department of Education regarding Charter Schools Programs (CSP) grants present several key obstacles to charter school growth and funding. Among the most concerning of these proposed changes would make it harder for new schools to apply for a new charter (thus keeping the number of charter schools down) or for schools like Aristoi to expand (limiting expansion unless more stringent criteria is met). Additionally, these proposed regulations would mandate charter schools partner with local school districts – even though these districts are often hostile to the charter school community.

Our trip to D.C. included a morning outside the Department of Education, where a small rally was held and letters challenging the proposed CSP rules were collected from over 200 concerned charter school families. Immediately following this demonstration, a much larger rally of over 1000 attendees commenced in Lafayette Park, just in front of the White House. For over an hour, numerous charter school families from across the United States shared their concerns about the CSP changes, as well as their passion for public charter education. After the rally, several Aristoi families headed to Capitol Hill and met with their elected representatives' staff. In these meetings, we shared our love for Aristoi and encouraged our lawmakers to protect charter schools and the autonomy of our parents and school board.

While in D.C., our family visited the Washington Monument, The Capitol grounds, the Library of Congress, the Lincoln Memorial, and several Smithsonian museums. The two major highlights for me and my two Griffins were the National Archives, where our kindergartener recited the Preamble of the Constitution right in front of the Constitution itself, and the Vietnam War Memorial, where we made an etching of our great Uncle Petie's name.

For more information and to stay abreast of local and national legislation impacting charter schools, follow The Texas Public Charter School Association on Facebook or visit their website at <https://txcharterschools.org/>.