



## Profile Narrative

Aristoi Classical Academy in Katy, Texas is a first-generation public charter school in its 20<sup>th</sup> year of operations. The school opened in 1996 as West Houston Charter School, with an emphasis on fine arts. In 2006, the student population was only 192, and there were many unfilled seats. After careful deliberation, the school's board of directors voted to transition to a classical school model, an educational option previously available only in area private schools. Enrollment began to increase immediately with the new focus as families began to see the value of securing a free classical education.

In 2010, the K-8<sup>th</sup> grade charter school was renamed Aristoi Classical Academy ("ACA"). "Aristoi" is a Greek term referring to nobility. The school's mission is to provide students with an academically challenging Classical Liberal Arts education that encourages them to develop a passion for learning and that gives them the means to become responsible citizens of virtuous character. ACA uses "the trivium" to organize the stages of learning based on a child's natural stages of intellectual development. The grammar stage (K-4<sup>th</sup> grades) provides a thorough foundation in phonics, spelling, grammar, literature, vocabulary history, biology, and basic mathematics. The logic stage (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades) focuses on higher mathematics and the application of logic to all subjects (e.g., paragraph construction, thesis writing, textual analyses, the scientific method, and historical questions). In addition, beginning skills in logical argument and debate are fostered in this stage. In the rhetoric stage (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades), students learn to write at a collegiate level, speak eloquently, and defend original ideas. Public speaking becomes second nature. Seniors present and defend a thesis prior to graduation.

This open enrollment charter school has become enormously popular in the Katy community. Once permission to add a high school was granted by the state, 9<sup>th</sup> grade was added in 2014, with a new grade level added each subsequent year. The 2016-17 school year opened with 761 students in grades K-11 and a waiting list totaling 258. In 2018, ACA will celebrate its first graduating class. The increase in enrollment is a testimony to the success of the rigorous classical education model. ACA students scored impressively on the 2016 STAAR test. In high school, for example, 100% of ACA students earned Level II (satisfactory) scores for English I, compared to 62% statewide. Similarly, ACA scores for Algebra 1, Biology, and English II were 93%, 95%, and 90%, respectively, compared to statewide scores of 68%, 49%, and 63%.

The school has outgrown its small campus in historic Katy and has had to lease additional space to serve the growing student body. Therefore, 22.16 acres of land have been purchased at 5610 Morton Road (Katy) to build a K-12 campus. The first phase will include a multipurpose facility with a gymnasium, stage, offices, restrooms, locker rooms, an adjacent kitchen and service area, and three modular buildings with space for twelve classrooms each. Planned completion for Phase One is July 2017. An athletic field on the northeast corner of the property will be used for sports and physical education programs. Limitations of charter school funding create financial challenges that traditional public schools do not face. For example, charter schools receive less funding per student as they are ineligible for local tax revenue, and they receive zero funding for facilities. Thus, ACA must rely on philanthropic support in its ambitious efforts to provide children in Katy and West Houston with an excellent classical education and suitable learning environment.