

Dear Families:

Greetings. As Aristoi sets sail for another year, it might be helpful to set our sights on what we hope to accomplish in our journey. A perhaps falsely attributed remark of Winston Churchill sums up what that might be. Once when visiting the U.S. and asked what vintage of drink he would like (or what hotel he might stay at; the story varies), Churchill replied, “I am a man of simple tastes. I am satisfied with the very best.” This sentiment blends very well with our school—Aristoi Classical—whose Greco-Roman name really translates as “the best best” or “best of the best.” But what is *the Best*?

Simply put, our school ethos consists in the best books being taught by the best teachers to students who will give their best, with the overarching hope that these same students one day will become the best men and women, the best ladies and gentlemen, the best citizens they can be. We aim to be satisfied with the very best.

What does all that mean exactly? Well, the books and subjects the school teaches, from the early elementary grades up through the senior year, are the classics, the “great books,” the *real deal*, we might say. That does not mean that the books and subjects are impossibly difficult or über-erudite or meant to be kept in a museum. That means they are more real, more revealing, more memorable, and, frankly, more fun than the hodge-podge of forgettable lessons and texts one typically finds in schools these days. We want our students to walk alongside Hansel and Gretel and to argue about whether Mr. Darcy is a gentleman or a jerk, or just “a single man of good fortune” who needs Elizabeth to straighten him out. (And what young man doesn’t need similar straightening?) We want the greatest stories, real and literary, to come alive in the imagination of our students. It is really that simple.

Not everyone can pull that off. We need the best teachers as both “guides on the side” and as “sages on the stages.” We need teachers to usher our young folks into the world of *the best* that has been thought and said, done and discovered. The only teachers who can do that successfully are those who live and breathe these books, who themselves have embarked on these vessels of human life and flourishing.

Then the students come aboard. They must give it their best. Their best does not refer to a particular grade or ranking on a standardized test. Churchill as a young lad was not a very good student at a renowned *classical school*. He excelled at English and history (especially military history) and fencing, but he did poorly in Latin at a time when Latin was the bulk of the curriculum. *The Best* means students giving their all, of being *in the game*. Many of the stories and problems and concepts students encounter in a classical school are so complex that scholars and statesmen have dedicated their whole lives to understanding and answering them. We do not expect perfection from the beginning. What we want is young people’s minds and hearts to come alive. We want to set them on a course towards happiness by learning what their minds and hearts can do when properly exercised.

It promises to be a great journey. We may experience some rough waters from time to time. What expedition doesn’t? But we expect to arrive into port nine months from now with teachers, students, and parents having given it their very best.

Dr. T. O. Moore
Headmaster