



# SCOTTSDALE PREPARATORY ACADEMY

## A Great Hearts Academy

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Dear Spartan Families,

Open enrollment for the 25/26 school year ends next Friday. Enrollment season provides a chance to meet prospective parents, answer their questions, and get to know what they are looking for in a school. I always enjoy these sessions as I get a chance to brag about what we do and why we do it. And I am constantly impressed by the questions and how so many parents are looking for an experience for their children that is in consonance with our mission and vision. Through this exercise, I have learned so much about what animates our parents, and it says something about us as a society and the countercultural nature of our school. That our school looks so different than most and that so many parents seek out our unique school gives me hope for our future as a country.

Although we are very different compared with schools of today, each American generation has had a repository of people who appreciate, emulate, and aspire to higher things. For when a civilization's appreciation for true, and good, and beautiful things dies - quite simply, that civilization dies. It has happened over and over in history. This repository of men and women who perpetuate the good - this bastion of intellect and morality in a society is what our Founders called a "natural aristocracy". Not a birthright aristocracy, but an elevated position in society based on hard-work and purpose. This civic virtue is what has always made America not just great, but good.

We like to think that schools such as Scottsdale Prep play a key part in educating this repository of men and women who perpetuate the good and who are essential for the flourishing of our country. We pride ourselves on the fact that our purpose is not to simply fill students' heads with facts and figures and statistics and dates and formulas and such. Our charge, rather, is to have a conversation with our students - to explore the depths of humanity and the wonder of creation - to study the most important and highest things and thereby to ennoble students' hearts - giving our students "Equipment for Living" which is found in the study of the liberal arts.

This concept of education is not wholly new, or even partially new. This is an old concept that goes back to the genesis of Western Civilization and the Greeks and was a cornerstone of the founding of our great nation. In fact, two months before our Founders had even signed the Constitution, they passed the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Article 3 reads, "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

Abraham Lincoln said, "The classroom of one generation is the government of the next." If this is true, we have a large responsibility - teachers and parents - to make sure that students are educated properly. However, in so many of our educational institutions today, instead of studying Euclid, Locke, Shakespeare, Churchill, and great ideas, most schools educate our students about current cultural trappings and fleeting trends. The parents who seek out what we provide, understand what a *real* education looks like, and they hold our feet to the fire in providing it. Thomas Jefferson put it this way, "A people who expect to be both ignorant and

free, expect what never has been and never will be.” Jefferson was not only speaking of political freedom, but the freedom of the mind that a liberally educated human can achieve.

One thing that can be said of the best activities that we can engage in as humans - the highest activities, is that the benefit of the activity IS the activity itself. Education is beautiful and good and full of truth. There are very few human activities that are more edifying.

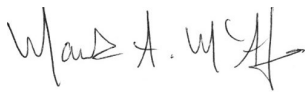
Unfortunately, much of our country seems to think that we can continue to miseducate our youth and the blessings of liberty and prosperity will somehow continue to flow.

Our parents understand the world their children are entering, and they are looking for a partner in helping to gird their children against the prevailing winds of modern culture. Our students are entering a world that values virtue in word, but less so in deed. A world where the age-old ideas of rigor and hard-work sound great until things become rigorous and hard. Where honesty is valued until telling the truth becomes costly. More and more, we live in a world where situational ethics and moral relativity are the norm – that is, there is no absolute right or wrong or universal principles, only a pragmatism for what is useful in the moment. Moreover, we are living in a society that goes out of its way to actively ridicule those that attempt to live their lives with character. As C.S. Lewis says in *The Abolition of Man*, “In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”

As a school, our goal is not to reflect the world around us by teaching students how to navigate the sewer. We seek to study the highest things and rise above the prevailing culture in an attempt to ultimately steer our society toward goodness and virtue. Our Founders wanted their posterity to pursue good and true and beautiful things, and we have been given stewardship over their conceptions and sacrifices.

It is our distinct honor to provide an education which we know will be a blessing to our families, our community, and our country. To those families seeking this sort of education, welcome! Let us, together, raise a generation of Americans who will become a remnant from which to build not only stronger children, but a stronger nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. McAfee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "A".

Mark McAfee  
Headmaster