

# Parent Handbook



Dear Parents:

Avail Academy exists to help educate their children toward a life of responsible discipleship in Jesus Christ. The success of Avail Academy depends to a large degree on the strength of the dynamic partnership fostered between parents and the school. Communication and shared knowledge of goals, policies and procedures are important to the success of this partnership.

This *Parent Handbook* contains the important information that will help you to understand and support the goals, policies and procedures of Avail Academy. It also contains information about the important events you can look forward to during the school year.

Please take the time to read through this *Parent Handbook*. Refer to it often as questions arise throughout the year.

Sincerely in Christ,

Wendell Schaap  
Lead Principal – Blaine Campus

**Edina Elementary Campus (K-8)**

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□952-927-5304

**Blaine Campus (K-8)**

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**AVAIL MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY**

## **Mission Statement**

Avail Academy provides quality education that is fully integrated with a biblical knowledge of God and his world, supporting Christian parents and the church in nurturing children as disciples of Christ.

### **Values:**

#### **Cultural Connectedness**

Because of its distinct Biblical rootedness, Avail embraces cultural engagement without fear.

#### **Thoughtful Discipleship**

Focusing on developing a Kingdom mind, Avail cultivates faithfulness and humble service.

#### **Nurturing Community**

Through a nurturing attitude, Avail models life within the body of Christ and cultivates grace-filled interactions with all.

#### **Transforming Education**

In every institutional way, Avail creates excellence that changes lives, practices, relationships, organizations and culture.

#### **Opening Opportunities**

Through attitudes and practices, Avail makes it possible for all Christian families to participate in its distinct Christian education.

# Precepts of the Avail Academy Philosophy of Education

**We believe** that all things exist to glorify God, whom we know in Jesus. Therefore, we must teach children that every part of their lives must serve Christ's glory.

**We believe** that because God made and upholds his creation, it is of essential goodness and worth. We take delight in all aspects of the physical world, the theoretical world and biblically lawful human activity as good gifts from the Creator. Therefore, the Avail Academy curriculum must study the entire created order; reflect the principles of truth, goodness, and beauty vested in our world; and interpret each fact in the universe as belonging to the upholding work of God.

**We believe** that God made men and women to tend the world as bearers of his image. Therefore, we must teach children, of whatever ability, to study our world and use its resources to fulfill our task of stewardship.

**We believe** that God has created a world of order, not chaos, and has given human beings the ability to understand the created order.

**We believe**, however, that sin darkens our hearts and understanding of the world. Therefore, we teach that all human culture is affected by sin and falls short of glorifying God. We must continually evaluate all human actions, including our own, from a biblical perspective.

**We believe** that the Scriptures are God's inspired word and that, as we are illumined by the Holy Spirit, they teach us how to view all of life and creation. Therefore, we support education that accepts everything contained in the Scriptures and which interprets all things in the universe according to them.

**We believe** that Jesus Christ, as Lord of all, renews his people in his image and calls them back to the task of tending his creation. Therefore, we support Christian education which does not divide life into secular and sacred parts, nor ignores any part of the world as outside its interests.

**We believe** that Christ has called the members of his community to serve him together and has obligated them to teach their children how to serve in his kingdom. Therefore, we affirm that education is the task of the whole Christian community; Avail Academy takes its place beside the family and the church and fulfills a unique role in instructing and nurturing students.

**We believe** that children of believers are members of the Christian community and are regarded as God's servants. Therefore, we support schools which encourage students, beginning while they are young, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in everything and to use their skills in the interests of the kingdom of God.

## Teaching for Transformation

Throughout its history, Avail Academy's central focus has been the integration of faith and learning

in our educational program. In 2014, Avail embarked on an initiative that is intended to further develop that strength. Over the next three years, Avail will implement the “Teaching for Transformation” (TfT) curriculum planning model. TfT is a framework that serves as a guide for our teachers as they continue to bring God’s story into every part of our curriculum and instruction. It is our goal that our students will see God’s fingerprints in everything that is taught, understand God’s story of redemption, and see their role in his redemptive story.

Teaching for Transformation reflects our conviction that our calling as Christians is, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to work for transformation of everything that is broken in this world, looking forward to that day when Christ will make all things new. Developing this transformational understanding and commitment in our students is a crucial component of Christian education.

The TfT model begins with the biblical story of creation-fall redemption/restoration. Based on that biblical view of the world and God’s activity in it, we describe the qualities and characteristics that we desire students to develop as God is revealed to them in all things. These discipleship concepts—the TfT model calls them “through-lines”—are the big-picture ideas around which we organize curriculum. As teachers from kindergarten through grade 12 shape unit and lesson plans around through-lines such as God-worshipping, creation-enjoying, or community-building, students will move beyond mere knowledge to addressing the question, “How now shall I live?”

The TfT framework has been developed by the **Prairie Centre for Christian Education (PCCE)** in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

## **Educational Philosophy**

As an extension of the Christian home, Avail was founded as a cooperative ministry through which parents can joyfully carry out their duty as Christian parents to nurture their children in the Lord.

At Avail all subjects are taught so that the world and human life are illuminated and made meaningful by God's special revelation, the Scriptures. Our goal is to prepare students with wisdom and confidence as they take their place in God's world. Thus, the biblical understanding of God and humankind and history and nature permeates the whole curriculum. All subjects are taught in their relationship to God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, and to humans as fallen and redeemed creatures who must glorify God and serve others.

The curriculum of Avail is traditional in the sense that emphasis is given to the mastery of reading, writing, and mathematics. Instruction in phonics is begun in kindergarten. The mathematics program stresses conceptual reasoning, as well as the learning of computational skills. A love for quality literature and the arts is instilled in students at each grade level. And a comprehensive K–8 computer science curriculum equips students with the skills to effectively use technology to access, analyze, and evaluate information resources.

Formal Biblical training is given by way of Bible study, memorization and devotional music. While not orienting children specifically for membership in a particular church, the Bible course attempts to give the student an increasingly organized and systematic knowledge of the Bible and a growing understanding of its truths. Children are taught to know God, love Him, enjoy Him, and witness of Him in a life of service to God and man.

## **Enrollment and Admission**

The admission policy of Avail is inclusive and open to all children whose Christian parent(s) show evidence of a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and a genuine, positive interest in Christian education. Avail Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of color, race, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and/or athletic and other school administered programs.

Enrollment at Avail is limited to 25 students per classroom. Therefore, it is necessary to have a policy of priorities for admission. If more than 25 students have applied for admission to a grade, the following criteria are used to determine priorities for the admission of students:

- a. Families who presently have students at Avail, who have returned pre-registration forms and who have paid pre-registration fees are given first priority for admission.
- b. Priority is then given to families who are members of a metro supporting church, by date of application.
- c. For all other families making application, priority is normally determined by the date applications are received.
- d. Special consideration for admission may be given to families who transfer into a metro supporting church, but they will not be given priority over siblings of current families already on the waiting list.
- e. Up until the time that pre-registration is completed, families willing to enroll students during the school year will have priority over those waiting until the following fall. After pre-registration, new families may secure a place for the fall by paying the required pre-registration fee.

Avail maintains class waiting lists which are set up according to the priorities listed above. Children enrolling in kindergarten must be five years of age by September first of the year they enroll. Children entering first grade must either be six years of age by September first, or have successfully completed kindergarten (MN Statutes 120.096).

Parents desiring to enroll their children in Avail should secure an application form and a pastor's reference from the Avail website or the school office. Prior to enrollment, all prospective parents are interviewed by the Board of Avail through a properly designated committee.

If a child is entering Avail Academy at any grade level other than kindergarten, parents will be requested to sign a release form for obtaining the child's cumulative record from the previous school attended. The information in this folder, along with the input of the parents, will be used to determine grade placement. In certain cases, a test battery is administered by the principal or designee, to assist in grade placement. All grade placement is determined by the administration of the school.

# STUDENT INFORMATION AND POLICIES

## Assemblies/Chapels

Several times during the year, assemblies or chapels are held for the entire Avail student body. A variety of programs are planned throughout the year. Parents are informed of these assemblies and chapels with notices in the **Avail Happenings**, a weekly newsletter sent to the parents. On these occasions parents are invited to join the students and teachers for these assemblies or chapels.

## Kindergarten Program

The Avail Kindergarten class meets for three full days per week throughout the school year (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). A fourth day extension (Thursday) has been added for the 2017-18 school year. Kindergarten serves as a transition link between home and school. It provides a Christian atmosphere and training ground to prepare children for specific learning skills and helps them develop desirable social habits. A detailed handbook which discusses the Kindergarten program more fully is available from the school office.

## Core Curriculum

The core curriculum is defined as those subjects that are taught at all levels and are required subject matter for all students.

### **K—5**

Art  
Bible  
Computer  
English  
Handwriting  
Health  
Math  
Physical Education  
Reading  
Science  
STEM  
Social Studies  
Spanish  
Spelling

### **Middle School**

Art  
Bible  
Choir  
Computer  
Composition  
English  
Health  
Literature  
Math  
STEM  
Physical Education  
Science  
Spanish  
Social Studies

Electives are a part of the Middle School program, and students are required to participate in a number of electives each year. Electives regularly offered include Citizenship and Band, in addition to a variety of *exploratory* courses offered during the spring Exploratory Week. A complete listing and description of all Middle School courses is available to parents in the Avail office.

## Co-Curricular Opportunities

To enhance the educational program of the school, students can participate in a variety of co-curricular opportunities and academic contests. These special opportunities include: Geography Fair, Geography Bee, History Day, Math Counts, Minnesota Math League Contest, an Environmental Learning Experience, Science Fair, and Spelling Bee.

# Instrumental Music Program

The Avail Instrumental Program consists of three levels:

## ***Level I – Recorders***

All fourth graders participate in this course which teaches the basic concepts of instrumental playing. Students should practice at least one and a half hours per week.

## ***Level II - Beginner's Program***

Fifth grade students, as well as any older students, may enroll in the beginner's instrumental program. This program consists of group lessons during most of the first semester and includes group rehearsals and performances second semester. Students are also required to take individual lessons on their instrument, which can be scheduled during the school day for an additional fee. Students in the Beginner's Program are expected to practice 15–20 minutes each day.

## ***Level III - Advanced Program***

All 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students who have made sufficient progress in their playing may participate in this level, which develops their ability play more complex music within a larger ensemble. Performance opportunities are provided throughout the year at various chapel services and two scheduled concerts. Students in this program will be expected to practice 30–40 minutes per day.

## Grading Scale

Student assessment is a continuous process. In addition to the traditional report card, many teachers also make use of student *portfolios*. A portfolio is a collection of student work samples which represent the progress the individual student has made during the assessment period.

The primary students (grades K – 3) are graded on a S (satisfactory), N (needs to improve), or I (is improving) system.

Letter grades are used in grades 4-8. The following grading scale is used by Avail teachers in determining letter grades:

A+	99-100	C	78-80
A	95-98	C-	75-77
A-	93-94	D+	72-74
B+	90-92	D	69-71
B	87-89	D-	66-68
B-	84-86	E	65 and below
C+	81-83		

## Extended Day

This program provides supervised care before and after school, Monday through Friday for current students of Avail Academy.

- Any family wishing to use the extended day program must complete the registration form and include the registration fee prior to using the service. Registration forms can be obtained from the school business office and can also be found on ParentsWeb
- Payment for use per time per student is billed to you at the end of each month. A late fee per child per 15 minutes will be charged if students are picked up after 5:30 p.m.

- The extended day program will be available for you to use on a regular schedule each week or on a “drop in” schedule as needed.
- The program is open only to current students at Avail. Preschoolers cannot be enrolled in the program.
- The program will be in session only on school days. It will not operate on in-service days or any other day in which school is not in session. It will not operate on special half-days such as the final day of school. The morning hours are 7:00-8:40. The afternoon hours are 3:30-5:30.

## **Health and Wellness Policy**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to assure a school environment that promotes and protects students’ health, well being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity within the context of our Christian commitment.

### **General Statement of Policy**

- Avail Academy (Avail) attests in faith that we are all created by God and are called to honor that creation by honoring our bodies. We must strive to develop the discipline of healthy lifestyle choices in order to glorify God.
- Avail Academy recognizes that nutrition education and physical education are essential components of the education process, and that good health fosters student attendance and education.
- The school environment should promote and protect students’ health, well being, and ability to learn by encouraging healthy eating and physical activity.
- Children need access to healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive.
- All students in grades K – 12 will have opportunities and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Students’ lifelong eating habits are influenced by the types of food and beverages available to them. Schools have a responsibility to help students establish and maintain lifelong healthy eating patterns.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Nutrition Education and Promotion**

- Students at Avail Academy will receive nutrition education that provides the knowledge they need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Nutrition education will be framed in the context of what God has commanded us in His Word.
- All school personnel will strive to model and reinforce positive nutritional concepts.
- Avail discourages the regular use of foods, including candy/sweets, or beverages as rewards for academic performance or good behavior (unless this practice is specifically noted in a student’s individual education plan or behavior intervention plan.)
- Teacher’s use of food as learning tools or as manipulatives should be practiced with discretion and only on a limited basis.
- Classroom celebrations should encourage healthy choices and portion control.
- Children wishing to celebrate their birthdays at school should limit treats to one per child. Non-food items such as pencils or stickers are encouraged. A book or a gift to the classroom in lieu of individual

treats should also be considered. The classroom teacher should be notified in advance if a birthday treat will be brought to the classroom.

- Snacks served during the school day or in after-school care should make a positive contribution to children's diets and health. School personnel will assess if and when to offer snacks based on timing, children's nutritional needs and other considerations.

### **Communication with Parents**

- It is important that students receive consistent messages from the home and school regarding good nutrition and healthy lifestyles.
- Avail recognizes that parents and guardians have a primary and fundamental role in promoting and protecting their children's health and well-being.
- The school will encourage parents to pack healthy lunches, snacks, beverages, and treats for their own children.
- Parents, students or volunteers who wish to bring food that will be shared among students must get permission from the classroom teacher prior to bringing this food to school.
- Due to allergies as well as dietary restrictions and parental preferences, students are discouraged from sharing food, snacks, or candy with their classmates without teacher permission.

### **Additional Notes**

- The school will provide students' access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks.
- The school will make every effort to provide students with sufficient time to eat after sitting down for school meals and will schedule meal periods at appropriate times of school day.
- The school will discourage tutoring, class meetings, or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities.

## **Homework**

Homework responsibility varies with the grade level. Teachers will address the issue of homework at the Open House held in September. The following homework guidelines have been established:

### ***Grades K–2***

Generally homework at these grade levels is not routine as far as daily assignments are concerned. There may be some projects that students are asked to do at home that relate to daily work and that provide additional practice for skills and concepts being learned.

### ***Grades 3–5***

At these grade levels, homework will vary according to the individual child's needs. However, homework is not intended to be a regular, daily routine. If time is used efficiently by the students, most work can be done in school. Again, there may be assignment related projects that can only or best be done at home. Homework will also be used to provide the necessary practice and drill that students need to learn basic skills and concepts.

### ***Grades 6–8***

At this level, homework is more common. Most assigned work can be completed at school if study hall and class time is used wisely. Some assignments, however, require extra time and research which will necessitate work outside of the classroom. Included would be the following: test preparation; book reports; work not

finished during class time; special projects requiring research at a library or museum; and preparation for special events such as science fairs, spelling bees, etc. Middle School students who come to class unprepared will be assigned to the noon study hall.

## **Library Media Center**

At each campus a school library media center is in operation for the benefit of all students. Computers with internet access are utilized by library media specialists to help students learn how to locate sources of information, evaluate sources for rigor and bias, and synthesize the information that's found. Students may check out materials for two-week periods. We also encourage parents to make use of the excellent libraries available in the metro area.

## **Field Trips**

On various occasions notices are sent home to parents informing them of class field trips planned by the teachers. All field trips are a privilege. Students may be denied this privilege because of poor behavior or attitude. All bus regulations as outlined in the Avail Bus Safety Code must be followed. Copies of the Avail Bus Safety Code are available in the school office.

## **Lunch and Milk Program**

Daily hot lunch is available to the students and teachers. Student participation in the hot lunch program is optional. Information about the cost and menu is sent home each month. Parents are asked to assist with serving hot lunches.

Students may participate in the milk program if they desire. White milk, either 2% or skim, is available to all students for a small fee.

## **Discipline Policy**

Avail has an established discipline or behavior policy which views discipline as nurture and emphasizes both instruction and correction. The instruction is preventative discipline with the goal of developing the student's ability to make moral decisions based on God's Word. This instruction consists of teaching norms, standards, and expectations in a positive way. Teachers and other persons with authority at the school are responsible for establishing an atmosphere of respect and obedience. Corrective discipline is applied clearly, fairly, and consistently.

Specific guidelines for student behavior have been established and teachers are responsible for communicating these standards and expectations to the students and for seeing that these standards are maintained. We are committed to working closely with parents when disciplinary problems are faced. All requirements are reasonable in nature and discipline is administered in an understanding and loving manner with the intent of fostering the growth of the students.

It should be understood that the school reserves the right to dismiss a student who shows that he/she is not amenable to the standards of the school, or whose influence on other students is unfavorable.

## **Middle School Behavior Plan**

Avail Academy strives to maintain a classroom and school environment where academic work and progress is taken seriously and education can occur. Students must be taught that they are responsible for their attitudes,

actions and comments. Avail Middle School students are subject to a special behavior plan to promote cooperation and unity among the student body and to provide an environment conducive to learning.

Students who do not demonstrate acceptable behavior will receive a detention notice from their classroom teacher. The detention notice must be taken home and signed by a parent of the student and brought back to school the following day. The student must turn in the detention notice to his/her homeroom teacher. Failure to return the detention notice may result in the student being kept out of class until the parents can be contacted.

A student who receives 4 tardies in a marking period will be assigned a detention.

## Human Dignity Policy

Harassment of students by other students, employees, or members of the public is unlawful and contrary to our religious beliefs and the commitment of Avail to provide a safe and stable learning environment. It is the policy of the school that all contact between students, teachers, and other adult employees demonstrate respect for individuals, not making a person feel uncomfortable, nor disrupting a stable learning environment.

## Damages

A certain amount of wear and tear on textbooks, school desks, and school property in general is to be expected. As Christian stewards or caretakers, students should take pride in using these materials wisely. Excessive damages inflicted by students to any school property will have to be compensated for by the student before the end of the school year.

## Dress Code

Personal dress and appearance should be honoring to God and a positive witness to others. The way we dress can reflect our feelings and attitudes and affect our actions and behavior. This is an area where individual preferences may need to be sacrificed for the common good.

Parents and maturing students are encouraged to make *thoughtful* choices. The key terms in our dress code are “modest”, “clean”, and “in good repair.” Parents and staff will cooperatively be responsible for enforcement of the dress code.

## Guidelines

1. A student’s grooming should be neat, clean, and in good taste. Clothing should be manageable and appropriate for the season and activity. Clothing must not be torn, ripped, or have holes.
2. Clothing, accessories, jewelry, perfume, and hairstyles should be free from distracting, unsafe, or immodest peculiarities.
3. Outdoor apparel, including hats, are not to be worn in the classrooms.
4. Shorts and skirts should be of respectable length. At a minimum, they must be long enough to reach the fingertips when arms and fingers are extended at their side and the shoulder is relaxed. Gym shorts that are worn outside of pe classes must also meet this requirement. Shorts with at least a 5 inch in-seam are recommended for middle school students. Tight fitting shorts, tight shorts, or cut-off shorts are not allowed.
5. Sleeveless basketball type sports jerseys should not be worn unless a t-shirt is worn under the jersey.
6. Dresses, shirts, and tops should have a modest neckline, cover the midriff (when standing or sitting) and the top of the shoulder. No tank tops or spaghetti tops will be allowed.
7. Students must wear shoes during school. Loose-fitting footwear may not be worn during recess or p.e. activities.
8. Discretion must be used in wearing pictorial or slogan-bearing shirts and blouses. The staff reserves the right to judge whether or not such items are offensive.

9. Judgment regarding the appropriateness of a student's appearance will be made by the staff. Students will be consulted and informed of dress code infractions. The student will be given an opportunity to correct the dress code infraction or the student will be given a Avail issued t-shirt and/or pants to wear for the remainder of the day.

## **Practical Considerations**

1. Boots, snow pants, and coats must be worn when the weather dictates.
2. Students are responsible for their own clothing and other belongings. Clothing, lunch boxes, bags, etc. should be labeled.
3. A "lost and found area" is located in the school for items left by the students. Parents and students are encouraged to check it periodically. At the close of each school year, all items left at the school are donated to a local cause.

## **Telephone Use**

Parents who wish to talk to teachers, are asked to call school before classes begin in the morning (8:15–8:40 a.m.) or after classes dismiss in the afternoon (3:45–4:15 p.m.). Teachers and students will not be called to the telephone during class, except for an emergency. Messages can be left for teachers and staff by calling the main office. Messages for students can be relayed to them by the office staff. When they are not available, please leave your name and number on the answering machine, and your call will be returned. Students are allowed to use the school telephone with permission from a teacher or office personnel. Students should arrange after school activities with their parents *before* leaving home in the morning and not by phone during the school day.

Cell phones are not to be used by students during the school day without teacher permission. Parents wishing to get a message to their child should call the school office and the message will be relayed to the child.

## **Student Birthdays**

Birthdays of students are acknowledged in each child's respective classroom. If parents want to send along a birthday treat to distribute to the class, state health codes prohibit home made food items.

Being invited to a classmates birthday party is a highlight many children look forward to during the school year. However, birthday parties can also be a source of great disappointment if most classmates are invited to a party and a few are not. To make birthday parties a positive experience for all students, please consider the following recommendations:

1. If you are not inviting the entire class to your child's party, consider inviting either all the boys or all the girls.
2. If you are going to invite just a few classmates, please keep the events out of the school routine where it becomes common knowledge as to who is invited and who is not. For example, do not hand out invitations at school or have guests transported directly from school to the party.

The goal of these recommendations is to promote an atmosphere in which all children experience the love and acceptance of one another.

## **Library Birthday Club**

Students are encouraged to join the Avail Library Birthday Club by donating a book to the library on their birthday. Students can browse through the Avail "Bookstore" to select a book they would like to purchase for the library. Information about the student's selection is sent home to parents for their review and approval, and a bookplate honoring your child will be placed in the book.

## Health Services

Health services are provided through the public school district and includes such things as vision, hearing, and scoliosis screening and maintaining current health, dental, and immunization records for each student. Children entering school for the first time, either kindergarten or any other grade, must have a medical examination prior to the opening of school. Forms for this purpose are available from the school. Under Minnesota Statutes Section 121A.15, all students entering a Minnesota elementary school, day care center, or nursery school for the first time must submit a written statement from their physician that they are immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, hepatitis B, and rubella. Forms for the physician to fill out for this purpose are also available from the school.

## First Aid and Illness

- If a student requires more than basic first aid, 911 will be called.
- If your child is absent due to illness, please call the school office at 952-927-5304.
- If your child has had a fever of 100 degrees or more, the child should stay at home for 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal. If your child has vomited or had diarrhea, the child should also stay home until 24 hours after the last episode. If your child has any rash, check with your family physician before sending the child to school.
- All communicable conditions (e.g. chicken pox, strep throat, head lice) should be reported to the school and notices of the symptoms will be sent to all students in that classroom.
- If your child is ill at school, the office staff will attempt to call the parent first and then the name on the Emergency Card.

## Medications

The administration of medication at school is discouraged. Whenever possible arrangements should be made so that it is not necessary for teachers to administer medication to students at school. In those cases where it is necessary for medication to be taken during school hours, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. All medication, prescription *and* non-prescription, must be in the original bottle. For prescription medications, the pharmacist will supply a duplicate bottle so one can be kept at home and one can be kept at school. Both bottles should contain the name and phone number of the pharmacy, the student's identification, name of the physician, name of the medication and the dosage to be given.
2. When sending any medication, prescription *and* non-prescription to school, parents and the child's physician must send written permission authorizing the administration of the medication.
3. All medication sent to school must be under the supervision of school authorities and be kept in a locked cabinet. Students are not allowed to carry any prescription or over-the-counter medication on their persons, or keep any form of medication in their lunch bags/boxes, or in their desks or lockers.
4. Students with asthma are permitted to carry inhalers with written permission from their parents.

## Screenings

Students will be screened in the following grades:

Vision: Grades 1, 3, and 5

Hearing: Grades K - 2

Scoliosis: Girls in grades 5 and 7 and boys in grade 8

## Insurance

The Avail Board requires that each child attending Avail be covered under some type of accident insurance plan. Information about the plan available through the school can be obtained in the fall of the year. There are various options available through the school insurance plan



# PARENT INFORMATION

## Parent-Teacher Communication

Open communication between parents and teachers is very important and the responsibility of both parties. If parents have any questions or problems concerning general school policy, they should contact the school principal to discuss their concerns.

In the spirit of Matthew 18:15-17, if a specific problem or question arises that relates to a particular child or classroom teacher, parents should contact the teacher responsible for the class and discuss it immediately. If the result of a contact with a teacher is unsatisfactory, the matter should be brought to the attention of the principal. If no satisfactory explanation or solution has been reached, the problem can be brought to the attention of the Education Committee of the Board. As a last step, if all the preceding contacts have not solved the problem, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Board.

## Reports to Parents

For students in grades K-8, progress reports are issued after each trimester marking period. These reports consist of grades and comments regarding academic achievement, effort, work habits, and character development. Parents may receive mid-term reports during each trimester.

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice yearly in conjunction with the end of the first and second marking periods. Additional conferences may be arranged whenever parents and/or teachers determine it is necessary.

## Testing

The progress of the students in grades 3-8 is measured annually by nationally-normed achievement tests. Avail uses the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment published by NWEA. Results of these tests are shared with parents.

## Parent Publications

The Avail newsletter, **Connections**, is published regularly throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to submit the names of grandparents and relatives who would like to receive this monthly news bulletin from Avail.

The **Avail Happenings** is emailed to parents and posted on RenWeb at the beginning of each school week and is an in-house communication especially written for parents of students. It keeps parents informed of various school activities and current topics of discussion related to the school.

## Room Parents

Each year two or three room parents from each classroom are asked to serve as room hosts for the class. The responsibilities include scheduling and setting up class parties, taking lunch and noon hour supervision once a month (grades K-8), hosting various evening functions of the school and other miscellaneous duties. A specific list of duties is established each fall. Parents interested in serving in this capacity are asked to inform school office personnel.

## **Visiting**

Parents and other interested adults are welcome to visit the school. We do ask that you make arrangements with the school office in advance so you do not arrive and find that a particular class is on a field trip or is involved in testing and not able to have visitors. All visitor must sign in at the office.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteer help is a vital part of Avail. Many parents are involved in regular volunteer work at the school, working as tutors, teacher aides, or teaching special interest classes. Other volunteer work includes such things as building and ground maintenance, office clerical work, taking inventory, committee work, and much more. In the spring each family receives a volunteer sign-up form for the purpose of stating their committee preference. We encourage parents to become involved in the school experience of their children as much as possible.

## **Parent Teacher Fellowship**

The Avail Parent Teacher Fellowship is an organization formed to promote and support the cause of Avail Academy and to strengthen the bonds of fellowship among Avail school families and supporters. PTF Board Meetings are held once a month during the school year. Activities and functions of the PTF include: sponsoring fundraising activities, and hosting special events, such roller skating parties and movie night, with the purpose of helping Avail families to become better acquainted.

## **Event Committees**

During each school year a number of events are sponsored by the school and/or the Parent Teacher Fellowship (PTF). These events are special opportunities of fun, fellowship, and/or fund raising. It is through the cooperative effort of all Avail families that these events are possible. The funds raised through these events are utilized to enhance the educational program of the school.

## **TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION**

## **Bus Transportation**

Buses are used to transport students on the scheduled field trips throughout the year.

### **Bus Rules**

During the year, students will be transported on various field trips using Avail buses. Drivers assigned to transport students for Avail are licensed and certified by the State of Minnesota, and have undergone training in safety, first aid, and emergency procedures. Upon entering the bus, students will be expected to observe the following rules:

1. Go immediately to a seat without crowding, shoving, or disturbing others.
2. Be seated at all times during the bus ride.
3. Sit facing the front of the bus.
4. Remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop and the driver opens the door.

The following actions are prohibited on the bus because of their potential for distracting the driver's attention and interfering with safe operation of the bus:

1. Tampering with safety and emergency equipment.
2. Throwing objects in the bus or out the window.
3. Extending arms, hands, or heads out of the bus windows.
4. Speaking loudly, shouting, and yelling.
5. Raising or lowering windows without the permission of the driver.
6. Irritating other passengers on the bus by bothering their persons and/or property.

### **Bicycles**

Students may ride bicycles to and from school but not while at school. Parents assume full responsibility for bicycles used and for the conduct of students while bicycles are in use. All bicycles are to be parked in the area designated on the school grounds. Skateboards and rollerblades are not to be used while at school.

# SCHOOL SCHEDULE, ATTENDANCE, AND EVENTS

## School Hours, Arrival, and Dismissal

School arrival and dismissal times will be announced prior to the start of each year based on district busing schedules. Once students have reached school they may not leave the school grounds without permission and supervision until dismissal. Students are not to arrive more than 15 minutes prior to the start of school.

All students are required to leave school promptly at the end of the school day. Students not picked up within 15 minutes of dismissal will automatically be checked into the Extended Day program, and parents will be charged the appropriate fees. Whenever a student is to be picked up or transported from school in anything other than the regular manner (carpool, Avail vehicle, walking, etc.), there must be notification from the parent or guardian in the school office. If there is not such parental notification, students will be sent home in the usual manner of transportation.

### ***Late Arrival***

All students arriving after the start of school must report to the office for an admission pass.

### ***Early Departure***

Students leaving school prior to dismissal should notify the teachers of any classes they will miss. Parents must report to the office to pick up a student dismissal slip. Students will be dismissed from class after the classroom teacher has received the student's dismissal slip.

## Attendance, Absences, and Tardies

Minnesota State law requires that all elementary age children be in regular attendance at school. Since most subjects are cumulative in nature, punctual, regular attendance is extremely important. The child who is absent misses considerable instruction and discussion. When the continuity of the program is disturbed, students lose interest in carrying out their responsibility in regular class work.

Student absences also become a drain on teachers' time and energy as they prepare homework for the students, review the work when completed, set aside time to present concepts and skills introduced during the child's absence, and administer any tests and quizzes missed. In addition to the above, the frequent occurrence of unexcused absences does not promote a positive attitude toward work, punctuality, and the importance and value of pursuing academic excellence.

Students must be in school by 1:00 pm to participate in extracurricular activities that day.

**Excused absences** - absences caused by illness, injury, medical appointments, family emergencies, death in the family, or impassable roads due to weather. Please bring a doctor's note and turn it in to the school office when returning from an appointment. Parents may request homework be prepared. This may be picked up in the office between 3:30-4:00 pm from the office. Students have the same number of days to make up work as they were absent.

**Unexcused absences** - any absences without notification, family vacations, oversleeping, private lessons, missing the bus, suspension from school. Teachers are not required to prepare homework in advance. Alternative assignments may be provided at the teacher's discretion. No time extensions will be given for homework, tests, or quizzes unless they make arrangements with the teacher before they leave.

**All absences require a notice from the parents or guardians.** If a child is absent from school, parents are asked to inform school personnel by either calling and/or sending written notification to the school. Absentees are checked each morning by office staff. If teachers or office staff have not received notification from parents, a phone call will be made to the parents to verify that the child is absent with parental knowledge.

Absences are noted on student progress reports as excused or unexcused absences. For excused absences, teachers, with parental cooperation, will oversee that the child's work is made up within a reasonable amount of time. For unexcused absences, full responsibility for completing the work missed (that can be assigned as homework) rests with the parents and the students. Work missed must be made up within a reasonable amount of time. Teachers are not required to prepare make-up work in advance.

Following three or more days of unexcused absence in succession, parents may be required to pay an hourly fee to reimburse assistants and tutors who will help the child in making up work that cannot be done away from school. The tutor or assistant will review with the child new concepts that were introduced during the child's absence, go over the child's homework, and administer tests and quizzes.

Middle School students are responsible to see that missed work and tests are made up. It is their responsibility to initiate a meeting with the respective teachers to learn what assignments, tests, etc. were missed. All work not made up within a reasonable amount of time will be reflected in the student's grades. If the work missed requires tutorial assistance, an hourly fee may be assessed.

### **Tardy/Early Release**

- Students are tardy if they are not in the classroom ready to begin class at 8:50 am.
- Students will receive a half-day attendance if they arrive between 9:20 am and 1:00 pm.
- An early release will be recorded when a student leaves between 3:05 pm – 3:30 pm.
- A tardy is recorded as either excused or unexcused using the same criteria as absences.
- Students will receive a half day attendance when they leave school between 1:00-3:05 pm.
- Tardies are not recorded for students who arrive late in the morning due to bus transportation. Tardies are recorded after the students have arrived, whether it is the beginning of the day or after a break, if the student is not seated (with materials) and ready to begin class when the bell rings.
- Students need to come to the office for an admission pass if they arrive late. Parents must come to the office if they take their child out of class early. They will receive a dismissal pass that must be given to the teacher of the student at that time.
- Each trimester, habitual, unexcused tardies will be addressed with letters after the 4<sup>th</sup> unexcused tardy, and then a parent conference after the 8<sup>th</sup> unexcused tardy.
- If a student reaches 10 absences in a trimester, the credit for the class may be forfeited. Student absences should not exceed 10% of the total number of school days.

## **School Calendar**

Each spring a school calendar is prepared for the following school year and distributed to parents. Usual yearly vacations include three days for Thanksgiving, two days in October for Teachers' Convention, two weeks for Christmas, one week for Spring Break, and single days for Labor Day, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, and Memorial Day. The school year consists of a minimum of 170 student days.

## **Staff In-Service Days**

During the school year a number of days are set aside for the professional growth of the staff. These dates are noted on the school calendar. There are no classes for the students on these days.

## **Cancellation of Classes**

When inclement weather makes it impossible to conduct school, an email will be sent to all Avail families and an announcement made over radio station WCCO (830 AM). Cancellations will also be announced over TV stations WCCO – 4, KARE—11 and KSTP—5. If it is necessary to cancel school during the day because of a storm, parents will notified by an e-mail and phone call from the school.

## **Grandparent/Special Friend Day**

Each spring a special day is set aside for students to invite grandparents or special friends to visit the school. Activities for this half-day include a special assembly program and time for grandparents to visit individual classrooms.

## **School Pictures**

Since many parents appreciate having a yearly record in pictures of their children, individual pictures of all students are taken each year, usually in the fall. Parents are under no obligation to purchase pictures of their children.

## **Special Events**

As part of our educational program, a number of special events serve as opportunities to motivate, challenge, and recognize students blessed by God with unique talents and abilities. In addition to the material in this handbook, detailed information about each event is sent home several weeks prior to the event, and parents are asked to encourage and assist their children in various ways, as well as attend the event if possible.

### ***Elementary Musical Night***

The elementary musical/drama night is an annual event in which students in grades K – 5 present a drama or musical. The time, energy, and work involved in preparing and presenting these plays is a unique and exciting learning experience for the students. This event is usually held during the fall or around the Christmas holiday.

### ***Creative Expression Night***

Creative Expression Night is an annual event held in the spring for students in grades K, 2, 4, and 6. Students are involved in preparing speech selections that are presented to an audience of parents, friends, relatives, and classmates.

### ***Track and Field Day***

Students in grades six through eight along with several other Christian schools participate in a track and field meet sponsored by Avail Academy. The students practice and are given instruction and assistance during physical education classes in preparation for this event. Parents, relatives, and friends are invited to join us for the day.

### ***Curriculum Night***

A Parent Curriculum Night is held during the month of September. Parents are invited to school on a designated evening to meet with their child(ren's) teacher(s). The teachers share information about the curriculum, classroom routines, and the goals they have established for the year ahead. While this evening is not a time to discuss individual student needs, it does offer information about a teacher's approach and expectations.

## ***Science Fair***

Seventh grade students are given the opportunity to prepare and present a science project for the Avail Science Fair. Students learn how to conduct a science project as part of the fifth and sixth grade science curriculum. Entries for our local Avail Science Fair are displayed at a school function. Students are also encouraged to enter the Twin Cities Regional Science Fair. Winning entries at the regional fair go on to the State Science Fair. Participation in the Science Fair is a requirement of all seventh grade students.

## ***Concentrated Study***

For two weeks of the school year, Avail students participate in an in-depth study of a country or region. During the study an effort is made to immerse the students in the culture of the people as much as possible. Special speakers, films, and activities are utilized to make this an engaging learning experience for the students.

## ***Middle School Drama/ Musical***

The middle school drama/musical is the annual spring play presented by the middle school students. The rehearsal, preparation, and performance of the musical is a highlight of the year for many of the students. Incorporating drama and singing, it is an excellent opportunity for the students to develop their acting, singing and performance skills.

## ***Geography Fair***

Each year a Geography Fair is held at Avail. This fair is held in connection with the Minnesota State Geographers' Fair. Students are encouraged to submit a project that relates specifically to the selected topic or that relates to geography in general. All sixth grade students are required to participate in the Avail Geography Fair.

## ***History Day***

Students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade are required to participate in the annual History Day program. This program encourages students to explore a historical subject related to an annual theme. Students may submit a creative project, original performance, media presentation or a research paper.

## ***Classroom Showcase (K-5)***

A "Portfolio Night" is held each spring for students in grades K – 5. On this evening, students share items they have been working on over the prior months. The student is the host and the parents and siblings are the audience. It is an opportunity for students to point out ways they have grown from the beginning of the school year. The purpose of the evening is for the parents to become better acquainted with their child's school work and school routine.

# **Calvin Christian School Society**

## ***Introduction***

Avail Academy is a private school, owned and operated by the Calvin Christian School Society. The Society is comprised of parents and other Christians who are dedicated to providing quality Christian education. Parents, believing they are responsible for their children's education, have established Avail as a center for learning where Christian principles permeate all instruction. From the community of Society members, a Board of Directors is elected to oversee the administrators and teachers in carrying out the daily operation of the school.

## ***Basis and Purpose***

The Articles of Incorporation of Calvin Christian School state that "the purpose of this Society is to maintain a school for the daily instruction of our children, directed toward the end that these children may occupy their places worthily in society, church, and state."

The basis of the Calvin Christian School Society is "the infallible Word of God as interpreted by Reformed standards, viz., the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort."

The Society is governed by the following principles:

- a. That all things have been glorified to the end that the Triune God may be glorified in and through them;
- b. That God by His wise covenant arrangement has appointed the parent to be responsible for the training of the child to the end that God and His glory shall be central and supreme in life's total experience;
- c. That the training of the child shall be continued under the parent's responsible supervision in a school that carries out the basic God-honoring, God-centered program begun in the home.

## ***Membership***

All parents and guardians of children attending the school are eligible for membership in the Avail Society. All members of the Society are required to attend a Society Membership Class and to indicate in writing their agreement with Articles II and III of the Calvin Christian School Constitution and the Precepts of the Philosophy of Education. Membership includes the privilege of voting at the meetings of the Society as well as readiness to participate in activities on behalf of the school and a commitment to support the school both prayerfully and financially. A copy of the Calvin Christian School Constitution can be obtained from the school office. Meetings are held each school year to explain and discuss Society membership with prospective members. Prospective Society members must attend one of these classes prior to joining the Calvin Christian School Society.