



VALOR

Avail Academy Newsletter

Voice

Winter 2024



WHAT WE BELIEVE

Mission: 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.

Vision: Avail Academy will thrive as a provider of distinctively Christian elementary and secondary education and will lead the larger community to adopt Christian education as a priority.

Values: Cultural Connectedness, Thoughtful Discipleship, Nurturing Community, Transforming Education, Opening Opportunities

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It was a blessing to see so many of you at the Fellowship Dinner in November. Incoming President Ross Douma, and Dr. Tim Van Soelen (Director of The Center for the Advancement of Christian Education) spoke to the community about their excitement for Avail Academy and the authentic way we integrate faith and learning. Dr. Van Soelen articulated the Teaching for Transformation (TfT) framework that Avail implements, a framework that guides our purposeful integration of faith and learning.

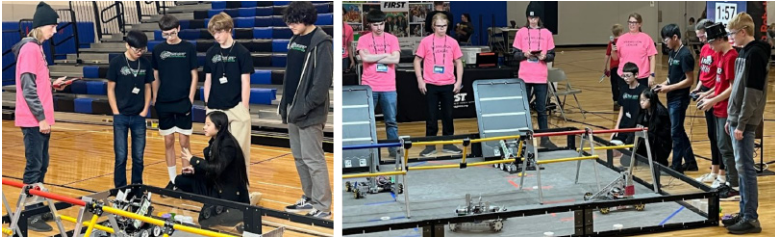
If you visit our campuses, you will see the following core practices of TfT in action: Deep Hope, Throughlines, and FLEx (Formational Learning Experiences). Teachers' Deep Hope statements for their classrooms highlight the most important learning they hope will take place in their class. Throughlines highlight how students and teachers will actively participate as restorative agents in God's world. We aim to act as beauty creators, community builders, creation enjoyers, earth keepers, God worshippers, idolatry discerners, image reflectors, justice seekers, order discoverers, and servant workers. Formational Learning Experiences, or what we call FLEx, takes learning beyond the classroom, challenging students to use their learning to do real work that meets a real need for real people. For example, in a 1st grade science unit, students learn about the ear, instruments and sound, but they also develop a relationship with students from the Minnesota Deaf School. Other examples of FLEx include 5th grade visits to Cloverleaf Senior Living; middle school creating Love Bombs for the Love, Sophia project; high school students organizing a blood drive, creating small businesses, and working with the University of Minnesota to study local river mussels.

TfT helps teachers intentionally design learning experiences that not only teach academic content, but encourage Avail students to live out what they learn in the classroom. In so doing, they fulfill their role as people in God's Story doing real work for the Kingdom!

In Christ,
Kyle Mast, K-12 Blaine/Fridley Principal



NEW Robotics Program: Congratulations to Avail's robotics team for placing 3rd out of 13 teams at their meet in early November! In the 5 matches they have played, they have made it on the winning alliance for 4 matches & tied for the 5th one. As a result, they made it into the finals for the elimination match round. Matches start with a field inspection of the team's robot. During the match, drivers control the robot to tackle different challenges.



English Composition Celebration of Learning: The 11th and 12th grade students in English Language and Composition celebrated their learning by singing hymns. For the last couple of weeks students have studied the structure and characteristics of hymns, discussed the ways in which God's people throughout history have written and sung hymns, and then wrote lyrics to familiar hymn tunes.

In this course, which is integrated with their Environmental Science course, Mr. Schaap's Deep Hope is that their reading and writing would make them "Wide Awake" to the truth about their identity as God's image reflectors and the intimate relationship God desires for us and His creation. One of our long-term learning targets is "I can deepen my ability to name what is good in God's creation," and writing hymns is one way we hit that target.

Singing their hymns together not only celebrates the good work students have done, but also affirms what Mr. Vande Glind's Environmental Science storyline so aptly states, "With All Creation We Sing!".



COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

High School Small Businesses: High school economics students launched their own small businesses to learn about entrepreneurship and stewardship and to apply their learning in the real world. Students created business plans and then presented their plan to a guest investor. The students have sold their products in the community with several businesses turning decent profits! Students who have created profitable businesses have shared that they plan to use the money to support other nonprofits as well as put some of the funds towards their Washington DC trip this spring.



National Honor Society Service Project:

The Avail chapter of NHS organized a service project at Redeemer Reformed Church to take over the weekly cleaning responsibilities. Their work not only blessed the church, but also saves cleaning fees, freeing up funds for Redeemer to invest in Christian education throughout the Twin Cities.



FRIDLEY CAMPUS

Marching Band: Six Avail High School students joined the University of Minnesota Marching Band, along with more than 1,000 high school student musicians and cheer teams, to perform for the more 48,000 fans during halftime at the Gopher football game. Earlier in the day students got to spend time meeting members of the U of M's marching band and also enjoyed playing with the Edina High School Marching Band for tailgaters.



Alumni Basketball Night: We welcomed alumni and former coaches at a game in December, where both boys basketball teams secured a win vs. Lakes International Language Academy (LILA). Alumni caught up over root beer floats and also participated in contests during half time. It was a joy to see graduates return and hear about how God is currently moving in their lives.



VALOR ATHLETICS:

Cross Country: Senior Justin Kroeze qualified for the Minnesota State Cross Country Meet where he was an all-state runner placing 13th with a time of 16:30. Reflecting on his two years of cross country, Justin says, "I learned to enjoy running and what it takes to work hard to accomplish a goal." He is considering running cross country in college and is looking forward to his senior track season this spring.



Basketball: During the basketball game on December 14, senior Zachariah Schaap scored his 1,000th career point. While he is honored by the accomplishment and recognition, he notes, "Basketball is all about team success. Everyone on the team is equally successful, just certain people have different roles which can give them more points or more rebounds based on their gifts." As the season continues, he is hopeful that the team will achieve their potential or higher. Whatever the season brings, Zach is thankful that his team and his coaches focus not only on being excellent at basketball, but also on growing as disciples of Christ. "I strive to be excellent and win in basketball; however, I will remember far greater what my coaches taught us about more important things in life, like our relationships with others and especially with God."



Find Your Voice: Taking her third and fifth grade students to a concert by the Minnesota Orchestra is one way Mrs. Kroeze challenges her students to both see God’s Story and live as people of God’s Story. They hear a variety of music related to the harvest season and showcasing Hmong and Native American folklore. The beauty of the music and dance as well as the skill of the composers and musicians enables students to be both God worshipers and creation enjoyers! Mrs. Kroeze’s elementary storyline is “Find Your Voice,” and she hopes that attending concerts like this will inspire students to find their own musical voices – perhaps as an instrumentalist, a dancer, or even a composer – and live into the Deep Hope she has for them.



Middle School Connect Group: This year the middle school has engaged in a brand new program called CONNECT. Students in grades 6-8 are divided into three different teams. In these teams and participate in competitions and devotions designed to increase community, provide space for faith discipleship, and create opportunities to grow in character through serving others.

Greek words used to name the groups describe the kinds of character that we hope to cultivate in middle school: Axios, Atomos, and Meraki. Our first trimester has provided valuable time for students to create deep relationships with each other. We celebrate the community space, the learning and the growth that is provided in these groups, and we can’t wait to continue this rhythm into the rest of the school year!



COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

Third Grade FLEx: The third graders have been studying water and climate in science. As a part of their water unit, they have learned about communities around the world who do not have access to clean water and face challenges daily to get the water they need. Their deep hope for the FLEx: “We will experience and understand the challenge of walking for water. We will grow in compassion for people who walk for water every day.” Students walk to nearby Laddie Lake to collect water and bring it back to class to investigate what was in the water and to purify it. They also carry large jugs of water outside school for thirty minutes to experience the difficulties of carrying heavy water. This FLEx allows us to grow in our understanding of not only our need for physical water, but our need for spiritual water as well. John 4:14: *“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* To meet a real need for water in our community, 3rd graders and their families donated bottled drinking water that will be given to Hope 4 Youth, an organization that supports homeless teens in Anoka County.



Christmas Program: During our annual Christmas program, students in Kindergarten through 5th grade performed, The Little Drummer Dude. We are thankful for the many hours our teachers and students dedicated to this program. A special thanks to Mrs. Schevenius for directing the 5th grade band and to Mrs. Beekman for being the choral and theatrical director. What a wonderful evening it was for our students to praise God as they proclaimed the good news of Jesus' birth!



Physics of Flight: 4th and 5th grade students who participated in Mrs. Amen's "Physics of Flight" class visited the Crystal Airport and learned about the Civil Air Patrol. The students sat inside the cockpit of an airplane, viewed planes from the control tower, and attended a class on the applications of flight.



Zoo Visit: Mr. Petersen's 5th Grade class recently had the opportunity to visit the Minnesota Zoo. While at the zoo, the 5th graders observed animals, appraised zoo enclosures, and participated in an exhibit design class. For the seventh year now, the Avail Academy 5th graders at the Edina campus are participating in the MN Zoo ZOOMS Design Challenge. Over 5,000 students across the state participate in this engineering challenge to design exhibits and enrichments for

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

Thanksgiving Food Drive: Our third grade class coordinated a food drive competition for our entire campus from November 6-17. Due to the generosity of our students and families, we were able to donate 2,035 pounds of food to the VEAP food pantry in Bloomington. This was the largest single donation that VEAP has ever received! This formational learning experience (FLEx) fits with our Teaching for Transformation framework as it is real work that meets the real needs of people in our community. Thanks to Mrs. Stark and the 3rd grade class for being servant workers and justice seekers!



a chosen animal each year. This year students are tasked with redesigning the American Bison and Black-tailed Prairie Dog exhibits to better suit the needs of visitors, zookeepers, and the animals. When completed, projects will be submitted to zookeepers for judging. Some projects may even be invited to the zoo for a second round of formal judging in March!

Minnesota's Best Winner Award: Avail Academy was recently voted Minnesota's Best 2023 Bronze Winner for Best Elementary School! In 2022, our middle school was blessed to receive the same recognition. Praise the Lord for continuing to write the story of Christian education at Avail Academy and thank you to our incredible teachers, staff, students, families, donors and community!

Inspiration Point: The middle school students and staff from Blaine and Edina campuses traveled to Inspiration Point Camp in September. It was an excellent experience full of team building, environmental inquiry lessons, leadership skill development, and community worship.

Christmas Concerts: The Blaine Middle School and Fridley High School Band and Choir Christmas Concert took place at the beginning of December. At the concert the students served as beauty creators and God worshipers. It was great to see so many in our community attend, and a highlight was the congregation singing "Hark! The Harold Angels Sing" with the band and choir. The Edina Middle School Christmas Concert took place at Calvary Church and featured both band and choir music celebrating the birth of our Savior.

Valor 5K Challenge: The Avail community celebrated our 2023 Valor 5K Challenge in October. We raised over \$100,000 for Christian Education on Purpose at Avail Academy! Thank you to all who participated in supporting our school!

Fellowship Dinner: We raised over \$150,000 at our annual Fellowship Dinner in November. We had the opportunity to hear from Tim Van Soelen, Executive Director of the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education (CACE). Tim shared how Avail Academy uses the Teaching for Transformation model in our classrooms to integrate faith and learning in all of our subjects. We also heard from our new President, Ross Douma. Ross shared his excitement about joining Avail Academy in January. Thank you to all who attended our dinner and for your generosity to Avail Academy!



PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Legacy Giving: Interested in giving to Avail Academy through an IRA rollover? The IRA charitable rollover allows taxpayers to make tax-free charitable gifts directly from their Individual Retirement Accounts to Avail Academy. Individuals aged 70½ or older can choose Avail Academy as a beneficiary for their required minimum distribution without being taxed.

Contact Heather Wessman with questions at hwessman@availacademy.org

Avail Accelerators Business Partners: Avail Academy is grateful for the generous support of our business partners! Our partners understand the critical role their businesses can play in being a catalyst for equipping students in developing Christ-centered worldview to aid them in serving their communities, state, country and world.

Welcome to our new Accelerators!



Avail Accelerators

PLATINUM PARTNERS

Aaron Hall, Attorney
Bethel University
Bell Band Mortgage- Jake TeWinkle
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BRONZE PARTNERS

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Edina, MN 55416

SAVE THE DATE!

High School Musical: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, April 25-27

Middle School Track Meet: April 26

Grandparent's Day: May 3

Blaine Campus Spring Musical: Annie Jr., May 1-3

Edina Campus Spring Musical: Beauty and The Beast, May 2-3

Do you know of someone interested in learning more about Avail Academy?

Schedule a Tour to see our Blaine, Edina or Fridley campuses in action!



Christian Education on Purpose

Blaine K-8 Campus
8966 Pierce St. NE
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Fridley 9-12 Campus
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