

Herald



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TO THE *UTMOST* OF OUR POWER

MR. BRIAN KUIPER

There are 2 dangers that are common to most organizations as they mature. One danger is that they become stagnant and set in their ways. They are so happy with the way things have been that they *never* consider changes. They are ruled by tradition and unable or unwilling to make change. The other danger is that they are *constantly* changing with time and with every new idea that comes their way. This becomes unsettling for members of the organization so that they are not sure how much time to invest in the new procedures, wondering just how long they will last.

So, how is Heritage Christian School doing as maturity sets in? Parents make a vow at baptism to rear their children to the “utmost of their power”. A school society was formed to assist parents in this good work. The Board, voted as representatives of the society, hires teachers and staff who are committed to assisting parents in this matter. We teach together to the utmost of our powers. How can we get better at this work? What can we do to make Heritage a better place?

Numerous answers can be given to the questions. The writer provides several answers admittedly from the perspective of one mired firmly on the inside of the organization. You may have different or more complete answers. As I will suggest, feel free to share them with me or with Board leadership for our consideration.

Part of the answer includes a recent effort of the Board that will soon be completed. The Education Committee is in the process of creating a parent handbook that outlines for parents and students all of the important things about the school that parents need to know. In the process, all important policies and procedures of the school received review and updating. Some of the updates were needed because we were rooted in tradition. Others came as a result of new state or federal laws. Many of the policies became strengthened by the addition of scriptural references that supported the rationale behind the policy. During this process, other committees including transportation and building had opportunity to look at things we could update in these areas.

Part of the answer includes recent work by the Board in areas of curriculum and instruction. The Board has committed to hiring a director of curriculum and instruction to ensure that content being taught within grade levels is consistent and spirals upward as students move through the school system. This person will primarily be responsible for the *WHEN* and *WHAT* of curriculum

while the Education Committee through the Administrator continues to observe and assess the HOW of content and the spirituality of the instruction. In some other specific areas, in recent years, the Education Committee has considered proposals regarding foreign language immersion programs, 5 day kindergarten, studied and continues studying school safety and security as well as a positive student code of conduct and consequences associated with breaking that code. We have updated the mathematics curriculum materials for K-6 and strive to interview and place teachers in areas where they can demonstrate their greatest strengths.

Part of the answer includes a commitment of the Board to continuing education for the staff. The school budget every year includes somewhere close to \$20,000 for teacher professional development. Additionally, we receive about \$6500 yearly in Title II money from Hudsonville Public School district. This is state money that we receive on a per student basis for professional development conferences and workshops. Normally, when teachers attend a workshop or conference that has implications for other staff, they are required to make a presentation to the rest of the staff for our food for thought. While some of these classes, conferences, and workshops are necessary for re-licensing, many teachers have used this as an opportunity to earn a Masters' degree. Our staff this year has 8 teachers with Masters' degrees and 2 more who are very close. While this doesn't automatically make someone a better teacher, it normally does have an impact on teaching practices.

Part of the answer includes opportunities that the Board has afforded parents and teachers in the past year. The Board surveyed parents last May and

teachers last November. The results of the surveys have become a regular topic of discussion at committee and Board level, and have led to many discussions on how we can make Heritage a better place. If you had strong opinions about the school or thoughts on change, but could not address them due to the nature of the surveys, PLEASE talk to school leadership about your ideas. While the staff is full of wise and knowledgeable people, asking them to advance your cause is not a tried and true way to bring about change. Neither is taking to social media or discussing together at the campfire. When speaking to leadership, you might hear that this idea of yours was recently studied and rejected for certain reasons. That doesn't mean you have bad ideas. It just means those ideas aren't as good for the school as you might think. You might also be asked to write a proposal to a committee. This is the best way to bring attention to your idea. When committee chairmen receive a letter, they are required to put it on agenda. Then, committees will talk and discuss. In this way, you can be assured that your idea for improvement or change has been heard by the right people.

In the end, we strive to make Heritage a better place daily – as parents and as staff and as Board members. Better comes in small steps. I recently attended a meeting in which the speaker addressed BETTER and BEST. He cautioned us that if BEST is our goal, we might miss out on getting BETTER. Together, at school and in our homes, let's continue to work to be better. Better educators, better parents, better Christians ... To His glory!

FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Dear parents,

This past Fall the Education Committee (EC) sent out a letter that briefly summarized results of the electronic survey taken by parents at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. As indicated in that letter, we received responses from about 67% of our constituency regarding their perceptions of teacher performance in the areas of teaching, communication and classroom management. Since then the EC has put together a summary sheet of average scores for each teacher, and has shared these results with the teaching staff as a means to help them identify potential areas for improvement. These summary sheets were also intended as an encouragement for our teachers, as the overall

scoring from parents indicates that they are largely positive about the work our teachers are doing.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas of this past year the EC also provided our teaching staff with their own survey, which asked them to score a broad range of questions related to their work, their opinions of the administrator and board, and to institutional issues such as morale and communication. Information from this survey is extremely helpful to the board, as it provides us with important insights about school operations that are not immediately obvious during our regular classroom visits each month. It also helps us to understand where we can improve at an institutional level, which is the typically where a board operates.

The results of the teacher survey were shared with our staff at a teachers' meeting in January, and are an ongoing platform for discussion by the EC. One clear outcome of this survey was the board's decision to hire a *Director of Curriculum and Instruction* (DCI) to help our administrator manage the task of organizing and aligning the curriculum across nine grades and twenty-four classes. An ad for this position was posted in bulletins across our denomination, and the EC recently interviewed applicants.

While reviewing results from both surveys, the board recognized a prominent theme that we feel ought to be addressed more broadly in our community. *This theme is the need for better communication between nearly every group of individuals involved with the educational mission of HCS.* As an entire community, we need to discuss intentionally how we can improve in this area. The most important reason that this is necessary is because proper communication is essential for getting our students the best educational training possible, especially in light of our current growth pattern, which is expected to reach three classes per grade by the 2021 school year! Ensuring that each student is learning up to his or her potential, and that the educational experience is equal across classes within a grade is a significant challenge that requires everyone to work together in the exercise of communication.

As we think about ways we can improve our communication within the HCS community, the best place for each of us to start is within the sphere that God has assigned to us. If I know my God-ordained place within HCS, then I can identify the answers to the following questions: (1) *To whom* should I be communicating? (2) *What* should I be communicating to them?

While this seems like a relatively simple exercise at face value, it immediately becomes more complex when we closely examine the number of different parties within our community. Our community *directly* includes parents, students, teachers, teacher aides, Resource and Discovery Center staff, Special Education staff, office staff, administrators, and board members. It *indirectly* includes individuals in the Hudsonville Public Schools district, local and state government officials, and law enforcement, all of whom have some degree of input or oversight at HCS. Not every one of these parties needs to be in direct communication with each other, which is why there is no single way to resolve the various issues with communication all at once.

That being said, there are a few things all of us should keep in mind as we evaluate ways to improve communication. The first of these is that *all communication is a two-way street.* It is unfair to demand of others that they communicate with me if I am unwilling to do so myself. At the same time, it is

also unfair for anyone to be unreceptive to communication *from* others, while offering it liberally *to* them. Solutions to the problem of poor communication—which we all want to identify—will inevitably include changes in the activity and behavior of *everyone* in our covenant community.

Part of this discussion should necessarily focus on the use of social media, which has a growing influence in our community—for better or worse. Like other electronic platforms, social media sites such as *Facebook* can be used for good communication that builds up others and keeps everyone well informed about school events. But social media can also be used for inappropriate or harmful communication that damages relationships between the many individuals in our community. As a board, we find it somewhat disappointing that many good suggestions—and perhaps some less beneficial ones—find their way onto *Facebook* and other social media platforms without ever being brought *directly* to the attention of the board, administrator or teachers. We urge our constituency to carefully consider—or reconsider—their use of social media to discuss HCS policies and decisions. If you have a suggestion you would like the board or administrator to consider within a reasonable timeframe, please bring it to us. Otherwise, please refrain from using *Facebook* or other social media sites as a private forum for unhelpful discussion.

At the board level, the EC has been working to implement a number of changes that we hope will improve communication among our staff, between teachers and parents, and between teachers and the board. A brief description of these efforts is listed below.

1. **Hiring a Director of Curriculum & Instruction (DCI):** As mentioned above, this position represents a new way for HCS to coordinate instruction across classes and between grades. The individual hired into this position will be responsible for ensuring that teachers are working together to provide a systematic curriculum and instructional model that best serves all of our students.
2. **Implementation of a Lead Teacher at each grade level:** As our school moves toward having three classes per grade, it will be increasing important for teachers in each grade to coordinate their teaching goals and content. With this in mind, the EC plans to assign a Lead Teacher for each grade starting in the 2018-2019 school year. This will ensure that students receive a uniform education, and will also decrease the breadth of content that our Resource and Discovery Center staff need to prepare for on a daily basis.
3. **Improving on teacher communication in upper grades:** Results from the parent survey

suggest that parents perceive a significant difference between the level of communication from teachers in grades K-4 and 5-8. Some of this is to be expected as students become increasingly responsible for their day-to-day educational tasks and stewardship of time outside of the classroom. At the same time, however, there are also ways for teachers in grades 5-8 to make this transition toward high school a more gradual and intentional process. The administrator and EC will continue working with teachers to develop a consistent model of communication that holds students accountable, but also ensures that parents know when and why this is happening.

As we move into the final third of this school year, the board would like to thank everyone who contributes to the mission of HCS each day. We have been greatly blessed with a wonderful facility, capable and Godly teachers, and a dedicated administrative staff who desires to see covenant children educated in the fear of the Lord. Please remember to pass on a word of thanks to anyone you see actively serving this kingdom cause. Sometimes a simple, quiet "Thank you" can go further in improving communication than larger institutional efforts. If you are wondering how you can get involved....start there!

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT ~ MR. BRENT DEYOUNG

It is with praise to God that the Building Committee is able to report that the school building and grounds are in good working order. The fire suppression system has been repaired as was approved at the last society meeting, and a new nitrogen system is now working properly.

I would like to thank the men who have served on the Building Committee the past years during the transition from the old building to the new. Having served on the committee just before the move to Beavertown and then to the facility we have now, I see the tremendous amount of work that was done to make this all possible.

One of the improvements is the hiring of a Facility Manager. I have not been working with Todd Timmerman long, but I will tell you that he has made the job of maintaining the building much more streamlined.

As most of you have probably heard Todd is moving on. I, along with the rest of the Building Committee, am sad to see him go, but wish him the best in his new endeavor. We are now in the process of looking for his replacement. If you or anyone you know has experience in the field, please apply.

INSURANCE COMMITTEE REPORT ~ MR. JOEL ENGELSMA

The Insurance Committee of Heritage Christian School continues to meet with our insurance agency on a regular basis to discuss current health benefits and viable alternatives. While the average increase for insurance for those who reside in Michigan rose 27.6% from 2017, because of our grandfathered pre-ACA plan Heritage has seen only a relatively small increase in our premiums.

The Insurance Committee also continues to monitor liability coverages for our school building and operations. We continue to keep in mind the staff, students, and facilities needs, while working to keep the overall cost of all plans affordable. We are thankful for the stability in premiums we have seen and thankful for the support of Heritage Christian School supporters to provide for this need as well.

It has been our pleasure and privilege to have Mr. Todd Timmerman working here at Heritage as our Facility Manager from before the day we opened our doors until now. Small tasks, huge tasks, easy tasks, and the most work intensive tasks were all tackled with skillful efficiency and (mostly) a good deal of enthusiasm. Todd has moved on to a new job. We will miss him, but also wish him the best. If you happen to see him, please extend your gratitude for a job well done! Thank you, Mr. Timmerman!

IS THERE AN APP FOR THAT? ~ MRS. ERIKA AALSMA

In the 20 years that I have been teaching, technology has progressed far beyond what I would have ever imagined. There is the potential to use technology to enhance learning in so many positive ways. I can have the students gather around me to listen to a story, or if I want each one to be able to see the text and illustrations clearly, I can project the pages of a book directly using my document camera. If we are working on research reports in the classroom and can't find any books about a specific topic, the students and I can use the iPad to look up information. When the students log in to their Chromebooks during computers, they simply hold up a little card with a QR code that is scanned by the computer's camera. They can use different sites to create video reports about animals, books they've read, and much more. Our math curriculum has a site that has manipulatives for multiplication, telling time, and geometry, allowing the students to use the mouse to physically move manipulatives on the screen, explaining to their peers how they've solved a problem. During Bible, I can use a virtual whiteboard app to write notes, draw pictures and record the story as I tell it. Then I can quickly send the story home to any students that are sick, and they can listen from home. There are websites for practicing spelling words, working on multiplication facts, reading and exploring information, and so much more.

If so much is available to us via technology, is there still value in the "old ways"? Does it pay to haul out the flash cards and review those multiplication facts over and over and over? Is there worth in writing those spelling words 5 times in preparation for the test? Why even bother going over the practice pages for a math test or a grammar test? **Isn't there an app for that?**

In all honesty, yes, there probably is! Search the App Store on your iPad or your Kindle, and you will find apps for almost anything. But, in terms of connecting

with your child in regards to their learning, there is nothing quite like a little one on one multiplication fact review or spelling practice.

I am certain that many have experienced extreme frustration and even tears during homework time. Wouldn't it be better for everyone involved if Billy could just practice his math facts on the iPad? While it might be easier and even more efficient to find an app or website to help with homework, there are definite benefits to taking the time in our already busy schedules to work together.

- 1) If you show them you care, they care! The more time you take to work with your child, the more time they take in the classroom. "Mrs. Aalsma, did you correct my spelling test yet? I've been working hard, I think I did really good!"
- 2) As an adult, you can share with them study skills and habits that benefited you in your own schooling. I can't count the number of times a student has said to me, "my mom/dad showed me how to do the problem like this" (which was the exact same way I had taught the lesson!) Sometimes, it means more coming from you!
- 3) If you share in the struggle of learning the material, you can share in the success of mastering it. Everyone benefits from a trip to the ice cream shop after a hard earned A.
- 4) It can be fun! Turn math fact review into a competitive game of war. Make silly stories or sentences to remember spelling words. "My mom taught me a way to remember that word!"

One on one practice and review is a way to watch your child engage in his/her learning. It allows you to observe firsthand the growth and development that is taking place. Plus, they love it! Even if they grumble or complain, when they talk about studying with mom or dad, they always have a smile on their face. Sit down at the table, cozy up on the couch and read a book or even open the iPad or Kindle together!

WORKING MEMORY – CAN WE IMPROVE IT? ~ MRS. DEB ALTENA

In our work in the Intermediate Discovery Center, we strive to teach our students learning strategies that will help them work to the best of their ability in the general education (regular) classroom. A child's learning process begins with storing information in his/her working memory. This is a critical brain function that "refers to the ability of the brain to hold and manipulate verbal and visual information in the mind for brief periods of time." Working Memory can be thought of as the doorway to Short Term Memory which, in turn, leads to Long Term Memory. We use working memory when we look up a phone number and repeat it enough times so that we can dial the number without referring back to the book. Working Memory acts as a notepad for temporary

recall of information. For example, in order to read a sentence, we need to hold in our minds the words at the beginning of the sentence in order to understand the meaning of the whole sentence when we are finished.

We can draw an analogy of the different components of memory by comparing them to the size of plates. Some people have a meat platter size working memory. These are the type of persons that can hold many details (food) on their plates and hold them there or move them around (manipulate) to get at the particular detail they wish to use. More "food" or items can be added to the plate without falling off because there is plenty of room.

Most people have a regular dinner plate size working memory. They have enough room to hold and manipulate the necessary information for daily living and learning. There is adequate room, for example, to remember someone's name 30 seconds after being introduced to the person.

A smaller number of people have a much smaller sized plate of working memory, like a salad plate or even a teacup sized plate. When given new "food" or information, this person doesn't have enough room on his/her plate to hold the current information without pushing something else off the plate.

Remembering our description of using Working Memory to read and understand a sentence, the person with a teacup sized Working Memory will have much difficulty remembering the words at the beginning of sentence by the time it is at the end of the sentence. We can see how this will greatly affect a student's ability to comprehend the material that is placed in front of him/her during a typical school day. Answering simple questions at the end of the text that require immediate recall of information is very difficult for this type of student. Because the words keep "falling off the plate," it is also difficult for the student to look back at the text and find the correct answer to the question. "Having a limited working memory capacity often results in losing crucial information when trying to follow instructions and details of what to do next" (Carahaly). Therefore it is difficult for the student to even begin an assignment. When he/she finally figures out the instructions, either by asking his peers or teacher, the student has long forgotten the original content of the lesson or material the student is working on.

There are several more deficits that a student with poor working memory can experience:

- getting poor grades in reading and math
- being easily distracted
- being reluctant to answer questions in class

Fortunately, there are some simple techniques and even games that can be done at home to increase Working Memory. One of the simplest things to start with is to have your child go over the material that was presented in class that day. However, the child must not merely read the material but recite the material. In this way the child is using more of his senses as he/she goes through the information. This tried and true technique helps transfer the information into long term memory.

Some suggestions of games that promote auditory skills to remember a sequence are as follows:

- Battleship
- Telephone game
- Simon Says
- Red Light – Green Light
- Bop-It and Bop-It Extreme
- Guess Who by Milton Bradley
- Whack a Mole (good for visual memory, too)

To promote visual memory the following games are suggested. These games require holding pictures and letters in our memories.

- Zingo by Binary Arts (it's like bingo but with a fun twist for quick recognition of matching pictures
- Simon (an old game but still fun to challenge yourself with how much you can remember)

The best news on this subject is that brain research shows that the brain does have the ability to shape and re-network itself. Our God is truly a great wonderful and creator. We are indeed "fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm139:14)

Sources:

- L. Carahaly, MA, CCC-SLP, "The Connection Between Memory and Learning", Outlook, LDA of Michigan
- M. VanOverloop, "Let's Play Games" Summer 2008 Herald
- Integen, Inc. "Memory and Related Learning Principles"
www.web-us.com

LITERACY-RICH HOME ENVIRONMENT ~ MISS COURTNEY PETERSON

I am currently working towards my Master's Degree, and I am in my final project stage where I read and review literature on an educational topic that interests me. I chose to do my project on creating a literacy-rich home environment. A literacy-rich environment is basically a home environment that exposes children to books and reading and also encourages them in reading skills. Some examples of having a literacy-rich environment include exposure to literacy artifacts, using literacy functionally, verbally referencing literacy, library use, encouragement in reading, and parents modeling and teaching reading skills. I have found a lot of interesting research on the

topic and have learned a lot about the importance of reading at home with children and encouraging their love for reading. What follows is a short summary of the research I have compiled on the topic.

Home literacy environments expose children to language and literature at a young age, and they play a role in a child's readiness for school. These environments are crucial for toddlers and preschoolers as the experiences they receive in these settings can help advance language and cognitive skills necessary for school. Children need to have frequent opportunities to develop their phonological awareness and alphabet skills.

Reading with children at home can help with language and vocabulary development. These skills will be built on later in life when children start to develop decoding and comprehension skills in school. Reading with children can also help with social-emotional development with children. Through interactions with print, children begin to make sense of the symbols in the book and learn about print orientation and other print conventions. Parents can also support children at home by building decoding and knowledge of literacy skills. They can help to focus the child's attention on the print by pointing to it while reading, and they can explicitly teach concepts such as letter names, letter sounds, and words.

Reading with children at home is one of the most common ways to create a literacy-rich home environment. However, it is also important to have books at home, take trips to the library, use

technology, and model good reading practices. When reading aloud with children, adults should specifically make references to print either verbally or nonverbally as well as ask questions and describe the pictures to the children.

In addition to reading aloud with children, parents can work on phonics instruction with children by having them work on breaking apart words into segments or blending the pieces of words together. The home environment needs to be supportive of literacy, and parents can create this by being involved with schooling, encouraging children to explore print concepts, and show enjoyment for reading themselves.

I encourage parents to continue the work they are doing at home with their children by supporting them in their school work and helping them to develop a love for reading.

ELEMENTARY MUSIC INSTRUCTION AT HCS ~ MRS. JANE WOUDEBERG

Praise the LORD: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise. Psalm 33:2-3

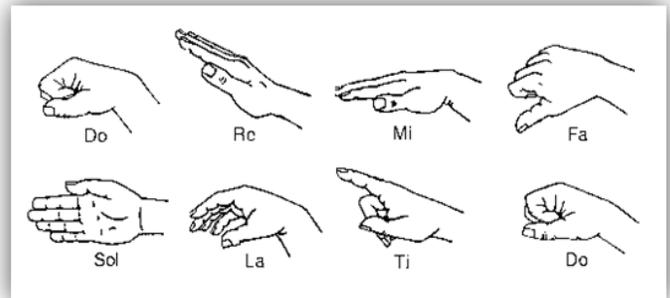
Participation in singing has been an important aspect of student life at Heritage Christian School since its advent in 1985. Yet in the last few years, thanks to the dedication of gifted volunteers, the first, second, and third graders at HCS have also benefited from well-crafted instruction in the fundamentals of music and singing. This valuable program aids students in their ability to sing skillfully and confidently. Three years ago, Mrs. Jan Lubbers began to take on the challenge of planning the curriculum and the lessons. This year she is assisted by Mrs. Laura Kamps, Mrs. Heather Dykstra, and Mrs. Stacey Schimmel.

The goal of the elementary music program is to consistently teach students at a young age the important concepts of beat, rhythm and pitch, and encourage them to use proper techniques for singing and playing music before bad habits develop. In addition the program also fosters an appreciation and enjoyment of music. Using the program, we strive to help each child develop the unique gifts God has given them, hopefully assisting them in using those skills throughout their lives in praising Him.

The instructors are able to develop good singing skills beginning in first grade. They explore the four different ways we use our voices (singing voice, shouting voice, whispering voice, and talking voice), and how the singing voice is different from the others. They teach what the word *pitch* means and what *on* or *off* pitch means. Young boy's voices are not yet ready to sing low like their dad or older brothers, so they are instructed not to *sing in the basement*. Boys need to sing the same vocal range as the girls. The

students also learn by *echo singing* with the teacher. This means that they match the teachers' voice and pitch. In addition, they sing in small groups or individually. They also use the solfege scale to help when they get to choir.

First through third graders also begin to develop an understanding of rhythm and beat. In first grade they read and practice basic rhythms using pictures and stick symbols. In second grade they learn note values



and begin to read and play rhythms up to a few measures at a time. Third graders play rhythms of whole songs by reading music notation. In addition, since counting is an essential part of playing music correctly, all grades practice the good habit of counting out loud whenever playing rhythms.

It has been very encouraging for the music teachers to see the progress that the students who have been through all three years of this program have made. The group as a whole seems to understand the content well and be able to put it into practice when playing or singing. Their experience has also been that some children who may struggle in one area of

music often excel in another area so they don't get too discouraged and want to give up. The students have also learned that something rather difficult at first soon becomes much easier with practice.

The third graders have been participating in the elementary music program since they were first graders. I asked Mrs. Aalsma what her impressions of the music program are. She replied, "It builds their confidence, which in turn helps them to be more enthusiastic about singing. They also are on pitch almost all of the time. They are learning about notes, beats, etc. This helps with reading music and learning unfamiliar songs more quickly." Madison

Schimmel is a third grader. She enjoys music class, and said, "I'm really thankful for the good teachers who teach it (music class). We praise God and learn to read music."

I'm grateful for the work of these skilled volunteers who are aiding young students to become more skillful and confident singers. Their curriculum will benefit the future choirs of Heritage Christian School. I'm confident that the students who enter choir will do so with a solid musical foundation. Their endeavor will aid students to reach their musical potential, so that they are better able to lift up their voices to give glory to God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY ~ MRS. BRENDA PASTOOR

In an age where children are expected to learn sooner, and develop faster, and technology butts into every aspect of our lives, I would like to take a moment to encourage you to let your children *play*! Too often children are expected to grow up too quickly and before they are ready; they are being pushed beyond their age. They are only little once – let them play!

First of all, let's discuss what "play" actually is. Merriam-Webster defines play as a "recreational activity; especially: the spontaneous activity of children." From Playtime.ie, "Play is the medium through which children learn to understand the world around them." It involves both the body and the mind. Play includes imaginative play using a play kitchen, dolls, stuffed animals, toy cars, etc. It includes physical play such as games like tag, duck-duck-goose, hopscotch, using a playground, a trampoline, or a bicycle. Play includes board games. But play doesn't have to mean having a specific item in mind to use. Children will play with whatever is at hand: a mud puddle and a stick to an intricate set of Legos! Visit the playground at HCS some spring day and you will see it all! All kinds of play!

Play, however, especially in the early school years, shouldn't be limited to recess or after school! The Child Development Institute states that the age period of three to six years of age is the fastest growth period for the frontal lobe networks, and the speed of processing, memory and problem solving is increasing at a remarkable speed during this time. The brain weighs 90% of its adult weight by six years. The frontal lobe is critical in decision making, thinking and studying, in personality, and the ability to speak fluently and meaningfully.

You may wonder why all of these kinds of play are important. Let's take a look at a few examples. Playing games of any kind, whether board games or outdoor running games, encourage children to learn to take turns and how to follow rules. Games increase a child's language development and

communication skills and decision making. Games also encourage learning how to win and lose (hopefully graciously), a very important life lesson! Physical play encourages a child's body to develop both gross and fine motor skills, balance, and dexterity, build muscle control and strength, and eye-hand coordination. Building with any type of materials (blocks, Legos, Lincoln Logs, K-nex, even rocks or sticks found outside) encourages planning, visual-spacial skills, and fine motor skills. Cooperation and social-emotional skills practice is a huge benefit any time children play together.

But *how* can you, as a parent, encourage more play from your child? First, don't rely on technology to entertain your child. While I agree that there are *many* useful and beneficial learning products available that use technology, video games and such are a passive type of entertainment that involve minimal interaction. They should be enjoyed sparingly. Instead, provide opportunity for real play! Give children *time* to play. Provide materials they can manipulate in multiple ways. Allow them to make a mess in the house. (I know, I know! This was a hard one for me, too! A fort out of the couch cushions? Really? And you want to save it until Dad gets home to see it?! Play-dough, paint, sidewalk chalk, ... Is your skin crawling?) Give your children permission to play. Make it their job! A child complaining of boredom is ripe for using his/her imagination! Encourage your children to play; even better, play *with* them!

The benefits of play so are numerous: decision-making skills, social-emotional skills, language development, higher level thinking skills, communication skills, language skills, listening skills, cooperation, gross and fine motor skills, personal awareness, and the list goes on. Based on that list, the following statement from Kay Redfield Jamison rings particularly true. "Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity."

TEACHING THE TEACHER ~ MRS. KAITLIN BYLSMA

Quite often when I'm praying with my first graders, I thank God for the students because they teach me something new almost every day. Occasionally - maybe once a year - a student will ask me about it. A few weeks ago I again got that question that makes me smile every time: "What do you mean when you say that we teach you things, when you're the one teaching us?"

I think I answer the question a little bit differently each time, but it typically sounds something like, "Well, you don't teach me how to read or do math like I teach you, but I learn many other lessons from kids. God knows exactly what lessons His people need to learn, even teachers. That's why He gave me you."

Cheesy as it might sound, it's true. For the most part, the students accept this as an adequate answer, but now and then I'll have "that one student" who needs an example in order to really know what I mean. Following is a list of things I could say if asked what I have learned from children:

- I have learned how to forgive and forget. I've never seen a six-year-old hold a grudge. They get mad at each other, sure, but they get over it so quickly and soon are playing together again as if nothing happened.
- I have learned that a SHOCKING number of Heritage families apparently have no chairs around their dining room tables! I have decided this judging by the amount of students that try to walk around my classroom while they eat lunch.
- I have learned that kids can be the kindest beings on earth. Sometimes they know just what to say to their neighbor to pick them up when they're down. They can be so gentle and caring to a fellow student in need.
- I have learned that kids can also be cruel. They have the same rude and unkind thoughts as adults, but without the tact that adults have to keep from voicing them. They need to be taught to think before they act and to love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- I have learned that no matter how many times you tell first graders to go to the bathroom, someone will have to go right as I'm about to end the day in prayer. And it will be an emergency.

CHANGING THE THINKING OF THE BRAIN ~ MR. MIKE NOORMAN

As they learn more about the way God created our mind and body to work, experts are finding that certain lifestyle habits of students, including those with various learning disabilities such as ADHD, can change the way their brain works and promote learning.

For all of us, how well our mind and body work depends on how well we take care of ourselves. If we don't sleep well for multiple nights in a row, we

And it will be a student who needs to catch the bus.

- I have learned that we should be outraged about sin! Much of our first grade Bible curriculum is about the Israelites wandering in the desert. The look of shock and horror on some of their faces when they hear that the Israelites complained and rebelled against God yet again is very endearing. Too often, especially as adults, we become desensitized to sin, and teaching first graders has shown me that this should not be so.
- I have learned that many hands make light work. If a student drops his or her entire box of crayons, you can bet at least ten kids are going to help pick them up. You can also be quite sure that at least two of them will come running from the opposite side of the room!
- I have learned that it's okay to make mistakes. My current class is very good at reminding each other, "Everyone makes mistakes!" Their favorite lately is, "Even teachers make mistakes!" I'm pretty sure that's in reference to my piano-playing abilities.
- I have learned that when work is disguised as a game, it is infinitely more fun.
- I have learned to practice what I preach. Kids take in more information visually than auditorily; they use their eyes more than their ears! I can hound them all day long about being kind or making sure to walk in the hallway, but if they don't see me doing it myself, they're not going to do it either.
- I have learned to love purely and unconditionally. The love that these covenant children show to one another and to me is truly a small reflection of our Father's unconditional love for His people. It makes all the hard work worth it!

These are only a few examples of the things I've learned from my students in three and a half years of teaching. There are many more that I can't even put into words. The time I spend with 23 first graders every day is truly a blessing, and when I thank God for my students, I wholeheartedly mean it!

should not expect to be able to work, play, think, or even pray as we would when well rested. This is the same for eating. We tend to get a bit short and snippy, and lack the patience required to relate to others if we are hungry. We need to eat and sleep because our bodies need both of those things to be healthy. This is the way God made us. If we have healthy habits, our bodies will be given the fuel they need to function properly.

The side effects of an unhealthy lifestyle will reveal themselves in time, but when our bodies get what they need, we will be more efficient workers and have better relationships with others. Parents and teachers can keep this in mind when helping their children navigate the demands of school and life, and our school's curriculum should include programs that encourage healthy living.

There are many possible applications of this to our physical and spiritual lives, but because much of my work revolves around supporting students, parents, and teachers dealing with learning difficulties, I would like to share information about what all students can do to positively influence their ability to learn in school.

Even though students might look the same on the outside, every mind does not think the same. This is evident by the fact that each year, parents of students with ADHD prepare themselves for the rollercoaster of day-to-day life. The symptoms of ADHD become invisible barriers to "doing school" successfully. Forgetting to do homework, losing assignments, and "not paying attention" are only some of the symptoms of an ADHD brain.

If your child struggles with symptoms of ADHD, do a little research on ADHD and talk to your child's teacher to get their observations of your child's work. Once you understand their specific difficulties, there are some great articles and magazines that can be used as resources. ADDitude magazine (additudemag.com) and understood.org are two good ones. Two well-known researchers in the area of ADHD to investigate are Dr. Russell Barkley and Dr. Thomas Brown. This research can be used to develop appropriate strategies to assist your child in their learning.

In your research, you will find that there are two types of ADHD, the inattentive type and the hyperactivity type. Also, based on the most recent research into the broad topic of ADHD, you will find that a more appropriate explanation of what we see in school is called executive functioning disorder or EFD.

Executive functioning (EF) is the term used to describe how the brain works in relation to focus, problem-solving, organization, memorizing, learning from our mistakes, and managing impulses. All of these things affect our learning and social development; they also sound a lot like what we would usually call symptoms of ADHD. Executive functioning difficulties, however, do not only impact individuals with ADHD.

EFD can affect students in school in a variety of ways. They may be getting good grades but struggle to pay attention in class, hand in homework in on time, and stay organized. Other children with EFD may struggle to take notes, separate unimportant

from important information, and keep their mind from wandering during class.

Individuals with EFD may appear forgetful, chronically late, distracted, disorganized, or unmotivated. EFD is also related to conditions such as Asperger's, OCD, depression, anxiety, and learning disabilities.

The work of executive functioning is the job of the prefrontal cortex in the brain, which is the conductor of many of our brain's activities. The EFD brain works differently than other brains. Experts have found that they can stimulate the brain in this area and make it possible for us to improve our brain's executive functioning. This is great news! What do people who struggle with EFD need to do to their brain? Well, they need to prepare their brain to change.

Our brain cells need to grow in order to learn new information, and our brain needs to be ready to be plastic (shaped or molded) for this learning to take place. How do we get our brain ready to change? We need our brain to increase its production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which makes our brain ready to be plastic. Investigation of the chemicals created and transmitted by the prefrontal cortex of brain has led us to discover that BDNF is a protein that influences brain function by making our brain ready to be plastic.

What can students who struggle with EFD and other related conditions do to increase the production of BDNF? The answer to this question takes us full circle. I began by laying out the importance of proper eating and sleeping habits because they have a direct impact on how our mind and body work. A quick google search will show you that the amount of BDNF can be increased by intermittent fasting or caloric restrictions, modifying your diet, supplements, losing weight, exposure to heat, cold, and sunlight (producing Vitamin D), and social enrichment (especially in early life). One of the more effective means of increasing BDNF is through intense exercise.

Exercise is really beneficial for our brains. All of the side effects of exercise help our brains work effectively and efficiently. When we have a habit of exercise, our bodies create the chemicals needed to effectively use our executive functioning skills. Regular exercise increases the production of BDNF and therefore prepares our brains to learn and sets the groundwork for our bodies to be emotionally, mentally, and physically under control.

Based on the research being done by Dr. John Ratey and others, not only does exercise increase a person's ability to learn more effectively, individuals who do not exercise are more likely to become depressed, procrastinate in their work, and struggle with planning and organization skills. Adding exercise

to a student's schedule has also been shown to decrease suspensions for students who were chronically getting into trouble and decrease absenteeism from others.

Exercise can stimulate our attention system, help us feel motivated, turn on our memory system, make all of our brain cells ready to grow, and help regulate our emotions. According to Dr. Ratey, it has been shown that the more fit a child is, the better learner they can be.

Increasing BDNF through exercise can also have a direct effect on our abilities to plan and prioritize, stay

organized, initiate or delay a response, evaluation consequences, learn from mistakes, maintain focus, and improve our working memory. Amazing! Our brains can change!

When addressing the struggles related to executive functioning difficulties, start with these three important parts of the treatment plan: eating healthy, getting the proper amount of sleep, and doing 30 minutes of intense exercise each day. Exercise is only a part of the solution, but a big part of producing the chemicals that our brain needs.

BUILDING UP OUR NEIGHBOR ~ MISS BECCA GRITTERS

We are now about six months into the school year. Rules and routines have been set, and students have grown comfortable with their new classmates and teachers. With this growing ease in our schedule, it is easy to get caught up in the year and forget about the classmates and schoolmates that we pass in the halls each day. Small, unkind words, thoughtless actions, or a turn of a shoulder can really hurt a neighbor whether it was intended to or not.

Thankfully, we attend a covenantal school where we are constantly built up and reminded of the calling God has for us to build up our neighbor. Through school devotions on Mondays, chapels on Fridays, and friendly reminders from teachers and staff in the hallways, we are reminded to closely consider our words and actions and the affect they have on the people around us.

In our classroom, we see these reminders as well. One of verses memorized in second grade is I John 4: 7-12 "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." We discuss how we can love one another and build each other up in a way that we are reflecting the love of God through our words and deeds. Some of my students' favorite Psalters to sing are Psalter 369 "Brotherly Love" and Psalter 113 "The Friend of the Poor." In Bible when studying the Kings of Judah and Israel, we see the difference between the kings who surrounded themselves with prophets and companions who encouraged them to listen to God's commands and the kings who aligned with Baal worshippers and wicked nations. These kings were ultimately drawn further and further away from the love of God, and their actions reflected this.

We have set a goal this year to be friends and classmates that build up our neighbor. We took time

in writing class to think about ways that we could build up our neighbors at school or at home:

- "You can build up your neighbor if you play nice and share your toys." – *Evan B.*
- "I can build up my neighbors by being kind and helpful." – *Laura K.*
- "I can be a good, good friend by helping them reach a book on the top shelf." – *Lexi B.*
- "I can build up my neighbor by playing with them. I can build up my neighbor by helping them. You can build up your friend by helping them with a project." – *Brayden C.*
- "You can build up your neighbor by making them feel better if they get hurt." – *Ella B.*
- "I can build up my neighbor by playing with them." – *Livie B.*
- "If someone didn't have a friend you could ask them if they want to play, or if someone was hurt you could ask them if they want some help." – *Conner G.*
- "I can build up my neighbor by helping them if they fall on the ground. I could pull them back up. I can build up my neighbor if they got hurt. I could make them feel better by not laughing and by saying very nice words to them." – *Alexis L.*
- "I can build up my neighbor by being nice to them." – *Peter VS.*
- "You can make them happy by sharing your candy with them." – *Gavin DH.*
- "I can build up my neighbor by not calling them names." – *Emery S.*
- "I can build up my neighbor by reading the Bible to them." – *Cameryn DB.*
- "If someone needs help, you should help them." – *Dylan VT.*
- "You can be a good neighbor by helping your neighbor at something hard." – *Malaya K.*
- "I can be nice even to people who are mean to us." – *Paige DB.*
- "I can build up my neighbor by helping them up." – *Bryce S.*

- “You can build up your friend by playing with them on the playground.” – *Grant D.*
- “You need to not be mean but be nice to them. You need to be nice to them and care for them and love them. To build someone up means to brighten up their day. To build up someone’s day means to care for them. And, if someone doesn’t have a friend you can ask them if they want to play with you.” – *Andrew D.*
- “When your brother comes home, make him his favorite food and get a sticky note and write Surprise! And take a toothpick and make a smiley face on a banana so the smiley face will turn brown.” – *Isaac K.*
- “This is how you build up a friend. Tell people about God. Be very, very kind. Read the Bible. Let other people go first. Do nice stuff without being told.” – *Olivia W.*
- “You should love your neighbor and comfort them.” – *Josiah VK.*

ABOUNDING LOVE FOR THE PSALTER ~ MRS. KATIE BAATENBERG

Lately, the Psalter has brought about much communication and discussion among its users. Regardless of what side of the fence one has firmly planted their roots concerning the revision of the Psalter, the love that abounds for this book clearly has manifested itself.

One thing that I truly love about the Psalter is that it is often sung at joyful occasions in one’s life. These occasions are ones where the believer truly feels the blessings of God resting upon them. From that moment going forward, the Psalter number sung at that event leaves a deep impression on the child of God and is called to remembrance when it is sung in the future.

Let me paint the reader this picture. When my husband and I were informed by a doctor, whose second language was English, that we were going to be blessed with an American baby girl, we fully expected that we would love her. When we actually held her in our arms, the love we felt went above and beyond our greatest expectations. But listen readers, the joy didn’t conclude. Jeff and I then had the opportunity to bring her to church and have her baptized; something we had witnessed others do many times. God bestowed upon us the opportunity to make a vow before our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, a vow that stated our firm resolve to raise her as a child of God by His grace. The pinnacle to this occasion was singing Psalter 393. I remember experiencing so much joy while singing this number that I literally had to catch my breath. Seven and half years have swiftly come and gone since Mila was baptized. However, each time we have sung 393 in that time span, I let my mind wander back to that moment, a moment in time that as a child of God, I felt His blessings and everything was perfect.

I asked my students to write about a Psalter number that is connected to a memory imprinted into their minds. I shared with them what I shared with you. A diligent and polite student raised his hand and kindly

informed me that they, being 6th graders, might not have had as many life experiences as I have had. As I embark upon the age of 20 plus 20 this year, I saw truth in that statement. Those who couldn’t think of a memory, a compromise was made. Tell me about your favorite Psalter number; that was an assignment they could fully embrace.

Whether the student wrote about a memory connected to a Psalter number or their favorite number, I was struck how even at this young age, the Psalter resonates within their very beings and hearts. Parents cannot change hearts; teachers cannot change hearts. But God, the Creator of the heart, alone can do wonderful things. As a teacher in a Protestant Reformed School, I stand amazed how God uses the Psalter to work that grace and spirit in the lives of our students.

- *Alden Corson* - Singing Psalter #255 reminds me of the All-School-Program when I was in third grade. #255 sounded beautiful when the whole school sang it. The words are joyful; the tune is catchy. I enjoy singing this number now as much as I did in third grade.
- *Emma Byker* - Psalter #83 has a special memory for me. The memory that comes to my mind is when on Sunday nights, we would go to our bed and ask my dad questions about the sermon. Sometimes we would sing; I remembered singing #83 together as a family.
- *Alyana Ensink* - Although I love many of the Psalter numbers, I claim #265 as my most loved. I favor this beautiful number because it shows the mighty power of God. The tune is also one of the most enjoyable ones for me to sing. It sounds amazing when people sing it together.
- *Hannah Holstege* - Psalter #426 brings a memory to mind. My dad would often sing 426 to me when trying to get me to sleep. This number stands out as one of my dad’s favorite numbers. One finds many beautiful numbers in the Psalter.

- *Emma Kooienga* - I strongly favor Psalter 53 because it brings back a memory of my cousin, Austin Lotterman's funeral. As I sat in the pew, the second graders came up to sing this number. Number 53 comes from Psalm 23. Verse three tells us, "Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale, yet will I fear no ill..."
- *Leah Bleyenbergh* - My Grandpa VanTil enjoys many of the Psalter numbers, but one he especially favors. He loves number 306, and admires the words and tune. Verse three really stands out to him because it speaks to him in a comforting way. It says that we can rely on God.
- *Leanne Wassink* - My Great-Grandfather Wassink is not feeling well now; the number that he treasures the most is 383. Every time my family goes to see him, I look at a frame with the words of Psalter number 383. I want to sing this song to our powerful Maker. I think how amazing the Lord is to create us and forgive our sins.
- *Jillian Miedema* - My most well-liked Psalter number is 111. I enjoy this number because it tells us how God will hear our prayers and lead us forward on the right path. I think that is important because when we are in trouble, we can be assured that God will answer our prayers.
- *Kenton Van Overloop* - Psalter number 403's energetic tune makes me want to sing. This song talks about how great God is, and what He has done for us. God knows all the stars by name, but takes the time to take care of us. We are called to praise and thank Him.
- *Abby Schimmel* - Psalter number 247 climbs to the top of my list. This song teaches us that we can always rely upon God for help no matter what troubles come our way. I treasure the sweet-sounding, melodic tune and comforting, thoughtful words to this song. Plus it is really easy to play on the piano.
- *Joelle Dykstra* - One finds many wonderful numbers in the Psalter. I highly enjoy number 71; this number reminds us that God will strengthen us and sustain us. I find this song very comforting because it speaks of God's sovereignty controlling all things.
- *Carli Vanderschaaf* - God has given us many excellent Psalter numbers to sing, and one that I am attached to is 383. I enjoy this wonderful number because it teaches us that God's ways are much higher than our ways. He has a spectacular plan for us that exceeds our limited minds and is only for our good and the glory of His name.
- *Eliza Van Singel* - One of the most inspiring Psalter numbers to me is 187. Psalter 187 really speaks out to me, because it teaches of the lovingkindness Christ gives unto us. This number creates an enjoyable comfort to know that we receive this love for free. Everytime I sing this song, it helps me see the bountiful love that God gives to us.

CURIOUS FRIDAY ~ MISS LIZ VANDRUNEN

My favorite time of the week in my 4th grade classroom takes place on Friday afternoons. During this time, I don't teach lessons, I don't give any grades, and my students do all of the work on a volunteer basis. This class is called Curious Fridays and has quickly become one of my (and my students) favorite times of the week!

I often wish I could take my students along with me when I travel! God has created so many interesting and amazing places in the world to see and explore. When traveling, I am continuously reminded of just how big our God really is. After thinking about how I could bring this sense of awe and amazement to my students in my classroom, I decided to start by encouraging my students to see and explore the world from where they are now. Thanks to the library and internet, this isn't too hard to accomplish.

So, what is Curious Fridays? It is a class held on Friday afternoons, and the guidelines are rather simple: the students are told that they may research

something they are curious about and share it with us! None of my students are required to present, no grade is given, the expectations are flexible, and there is no time limit. The students take turns taking over the classroom and teaching us about something that they are curious about. Though I require no one to participate in Curious Friday, the amount of participation has been incredible! I initially planned on having only one Curious Friday presentation each week, and we've upped it to two. If the students let me, they'd already have every slot booked until the end of the year.

I launched the year by giving the first Curious Friday presentation and the students took it from there. If a student has an idea, they will ask me if they can be in charge of Curious Friday in an upcoming week. I ask them what their topic is going to be, what method of presentation they are going to use, offer them assistance if they would like any help, and hand them a sheet to guide them in their preparation.

Here's a sample of the sheet my students get from me when they ask if they can be in charge of Curious Friday in the coming week:

Curious 4th Graders conquer...
CURIOS FRIDAYS!



So, you're in charge of **Curious Fridays** this week, huh?!

We're so excited for you to share something you're curious about with us!

FIRST, pick a topic of something that is really interesting to you! It can be anything! What are you curious about? What is something you love to talk about, read about, hear about, etc...?

SECOND, decide how you're going to tell us about it! You can use a Poster, a YouTube video, pictures, a guest speaker, a PowerPoint, a video you made, a game, a speech, etc.... Be creative! The sky is the limit!

THIRD, create it! It can be as long or short as you want it to be. You can send me anything you want to show the class. I am here for ideas, help, assistance, encouragement, you name it!

So far this year, we have heard a firsthand account from a World War 2 veteran, went on a field trip to the Netherlands (complete with Wilhelmina peppermints of course), dived into the ocean with whales, experienced a climb to the top of Mount Everest (we're planning a field trip there soon), saw a video compilation of a student's vacation to the Creation Museum/Ark, learned the specifics of the SR-71 fighter jet, saw the eruption of Old Faithful, explored the Great Barrier Reef, stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon, were coached on the basics of duck hunting, and the list could go on!

I have been so proud of all the hard work my students have done for their Curious Friday projects. Not only have they learned how to successfully present information, but they have really improved in their ability to ask and answer good questions. They have learned how to use technology to find reliable facts and credible information. They have become so

much better at listening to their peers and giving helpful, quality feedback. They've learned how to connect things we are learning about at school to what is going on in the world around us. They've checked out books from the library that I've never seen students check out before. They've become better at asking questions, and more dedicated to finding answers to questions they may have. My favorite part of Curious Fridays is seeing the wonder on the student's faces as they learn about parts of God's creation that they never knew about before. In the words of a student, "I love Curious Fridays because we can research God's world, see His design, explore things in creation and learn about so many interesting things." So if you're ever bored on a Friday afternoon, stop by 4B after lunch and as we begin each Curious Friday class, we'll loudly ask you, "What are you curious about?!"

WINNING IS#6? ~ MR. DOUG DEBOER

As tennis legend John McEnroe used to say to the officials, "Are you serious?" Yes, the AOK League is serious, and that is indeed what the League's constitution states. Our school is one of thirteen member schools that make up the Allegan, Ottawa, Kent Christian Middle School League. Our League is divided into two divisions based on school size. Byron Center, Calvin, Dutton, Heritage, Hudsonville, Legacy, and Zeeland are in the bigger school group with enrollments of 370 and greater. Adams, Allendale, Hope, Jenison, Moline, and West Side make up the under 370 group.

Our constitution states that all coaches should emphasize the following five points:

- A. *Nurture spiritual growth*
- B. *Improve understanding and skills of the sport*
- C. *Train students to become better athletes*
- D. *Promote and foster teamwork*
- E. *Encourage fun and hard work*

The constitution then goes on to state that the above list is to be a priority over winning and that in order to help ensure this happens, ALL students play. In addition seventh graders playing time is to be as evenly distributed as possible. For eighth grade teams playing time does not have to be equal, but everyone plays in every game. Our League provides guidelines and rules for each sport that help to implement these points above winning. Five periods, instead of the usual quarters, with the score being erased after each of the first three periods in seventh grade basketball is one example.

In order to keep a balance of pure competition and participation our League's rules also contain some other important items. The League strongly encourages schools to include all seventh grade students who desire to participate. In certain sports

this has led schools to field two teams of seventh graders instead of one. This idea of not cutting has also led to some schools fielding two teams in the eighth grade. This emphasis on participation is part of another constitutional item that states a seventh grade athlete may be moved up to the eighth grade team only if needed because of lack of numbers on the eighth grade team. The idea of this being that we are more about participation for all, then about the development of one or two players.

Our constitution also states that the seventh grade teams are to be limited to three days of participation a week. This is for games and practices combined. The eighth grade is supposed to be a limit of four days. These limits may be exceeded on occasion if absolutely necessary by permission of the athletic director. Winning is not part of the criteria for exceeding the limit.

The League's constitution also has a section that addresses the behavior of the coach. This section has statements such as, "*Coaches shall instill in their players graciousness in both winning and losing and insist on the highest standards of conduct and attitude among players both on and off the playing field or floor.*" Another sentence in this section states, "*Coaches shall maintain constant and evident concern for the spiritual growth and development of the student/athlete.*"

All of this is designed to help us fulfill the purpose of our League as stated in Article II of its constitution: "*The AOK League will focus on the spiritual, educational, social, emotional and physical needs of Christian middle school athletes.*"

Our League is serious; serious about putting winning in its proper place.

Remaining 2017-2018 School Year Calendar

March 10, 2018 – Spring Children’s Clothing and Toy Sale

March 30 – April 6, 2018 – Spring Break

May 3, 2018 – Kindergarten Roundup

May 3, 2018 – 5th - 8th Grade Band and Choir Concert

May 7 - 18, 2018 – MAP Testing

May 18, 2018 – Kindergarten Program

May 22, 2018 – All Schools Band Concert

May 28, 2018 – No school (Memorial Day)

May 31, 2018 – Last day of school (1/2 day) and Graduation

2018-2019 School Year

August 27, 2018 - School starts (Monday)

August 31 & September 3, 2018 - Labor Day Break

October 18 & 19, 2018 - Teachers’ Convention

November 22 & 23, 2018 - Thanksgiving Break

December 24 – January 4, 2019 - Christmas Break

February 15, 2019 - Mid-winter Break

March 29-April 5, 2019 - Spring Break

May 27, 2019 - Memorial Day

June 4, 2019 - Graduation (1/2 day)