Avilla Christian Academy Character Growth Plan

Grades 7-12

Purpose

The purpose of the Character Growth Plan is to guide and assist students in building wholesome character that reflects Christian values. The plan involves both rewards and consequences. When students act in ways that do harm to themselves or others, we want to remind them that every human being is created in the image of God and has been purchased with the blood of Jesus. Humans are of the utmost value and are to be treated with dignity, care, and respect. Jesus urged that we love our neighbors as ourselves. He told his disciples to love others as he had loved them. That means a love that is sacrificial—a love that puts the other’s welfare and interests above one’s own. Indeed, Jesus went so far as to tell us we must love our enemies, just as he loved us while we were at enmity with God. The ultimate definition of sin is simply this: “a failure to love.” That is why Jesus taught that the two commandments which sum up the whole of God’s law are to “Love God” and to “Love your neighbor.” When students act in unloving ways, we want to provide consequences that will teach them why such behavior is harmful. We want them to take time to think about how their actions hurt others and/or themselves, and how such choices undermine God’s purpose in furthering his kingdom in and through their lives. We want to discourage the building of habits which will ultimately bring harm, sorrow, and regret.

When students demonstrate wholesome character that reflects the teachings of our Lord, we want to recognize and affirm them for making wise choices. We want to reward them so that they will desire to repeat virtuous behavior and choices. We want our students to build healthy habits of loving others as they grow in their awareness of how much God loves them. This is the rewards part of the Character Growth Plan.

Together, the consequences and rewards comprise a system of discipline. Discipline is not a negative process; it is positive, and it is meant to benefit the student. Discipline is providing teaching and guidance in an attempt to lead students down a wholesome and healthy path of living. Discipline is a form of love. It is because we love our students that we endeavor to provide them with discipline. The word “discipline” is closely related to the word “disciple.” It is what Jesus did with his disciples; he gave them direction, teaching them to distinguish between good and evil. To fail to provide an environment of discipline for our students would be a failure to show them love; it would amount to neglect. Therefore, at ACA, we live by this code of discipline which we call the “Character Growth Plan.”

Process

Our Heavenly Father knows us perfectly, and he knows what is best for us. Human parents, guardians, and teachers are imperfect. We want to do what is best for our children, but we fall short. At ACA we humbly recognize that we do not have all the answers. We know that as fallen, sinful, humans we will not always get it right. That is why we state up front that the ACA Character Growth Plan is not a panacea for every challenge a student faces. It is meant to provide a foundation and some consistency in the process of discipline. However, it is not etched in stone. Over time, as we observe what works and what doesn’t work to help our students grow in Christian virtues and values, change will occur. So the Christian Growth Plan is subject to amendment now and then. There will also be times when student choices and behaviors need to be...
Infringements

When one begins to consider all the ways in which a person might fail to show love toward his or her neighbor, it becomes obvious that there are perhaps an infinite number of ways this could happen. There is no way that we could make enough rules to account for all the possible things a student might do that would merit a warning or a consequence as a means of discipline. Therefore, the Character Growth Plan lists just nineteen of the most common infringements that occur in a school setting. It also provides a catch-all category called “other” to allow for things which do not appear as a specific category on the list of infringements. Following is a list of the most common infringements which will lead to reminders/warnings and consequences. Each infringement is defined with some precision. Some choices and behaviors students do might overlap categories. Students should carefully read the infringements and definitions so they know what to be careful about in their behavior. They should also use common sense in knowing that there are many more things not necessarily listed or defined which would still be unacceptable. The basic principal governing all infringements is that an infringement is something that shows a failure to love, respect, and care for oneself and/or others.

1. Academic Dishonesty
   Academic dishonesty occurs when a student engages in any type of cheating on a test or assignment. It happens when a student attempts to circumvent, avoid, or disrupt the educational purpose of an assignment or test. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism. It also happens when a student tries to enable another student to engage in academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty undermines the very purpose for which we are in school, and thus constitutes a major offense. In addition to receiving a Character Growth Reminder (CGR), academic dishonesty will typically result in a grade of zero for the assignment or test in which academic dishonesty occurred.

2. Bullying
   Bullying occurs when someone intentionally and repeatedly acts with unwanted aggression toward another person in order to inflict emotional and/or physical pain upon that person. Bullying can employ a variety of active and/or passive techniques that can involve words and/or actions. Bullying is a major offense that will not be tolerated, but will incur serious consequences in addition to receiving a CGR.

3. Cell Phone Misuse
   Cell phone misuse occurs anytime a student uses a cell phone during class time without expressed permission from the instructor. It also occurs anytime a student uses a cell phone for a purpose other than that which the instructor intended. Cell phones provide technology that can be beneficial or detrimental to our educational purpose. Cell phone use requires responsibility. Whenever cell phone use becomes a distraction rather than a benefit to our educational purpose, students are in danger of having their cell phone privileges revoked. In addition to a CGR, cell phone misuse will typically result in the confiscation of the phone for one full day on the first offense, five days on the second offense and third offenses, and thirty days on all further offenses throughout the year.

4. Class Disruption
   A class disruption can include many things. Examples would be talking with others when one is supposed to be focused on the instruction or work, shouting or making loud outbursts, making unnecessary noises, saying something that would likely get members of the class off-task, unnecessarily drawing attention to oneself so that the teacher must compete for attention, passing notes, throwing items, disregarding a seating chart, etc. Anything that unnecessarily and adversely causes a loss of educational time for other students or causes a disruption to the teacher’s agenda could be considered a class disruption. Depending on the level and/or frequency of the disruption(s), the student may receive teacher-assigned consequences in addition to receiving a CGR.

5. Computer Misuse
   Computer misuse occurs whenever a student is using a computer for a purpose other than that which the instructor intended. It happens when a student uses the computer for purposes other than education, even if just for a moment. Computer misuse also occurs when school computers are used for hacking, changing the code of programs, or overriding
violation of the rule against fighting. Fighting is a major offense that will not be tolerated. It will typically receive consequences in addition to issuing a CGR.

12. Illegal Item or Substance
An illegal item or substance violation occurs anytime a student has in his or her possession (including in his or her locker or vehicle or other owned item on campus) an illegal substance or item. It includes, but is not limited to, the use of such an item or substance and/or the exchange of such an item or substance with another individual. Possession of illicit drug paraphernalia, weapons, electronic cigarettes, or any other item or substance that is closely related to, or unreasonably bears resemblance to, an illegal item or substance also constitutes an illegal item or substance violation. Students who are on any sort of medication which is to be taken during school hours must have a parent leave their medication(s) with the office along with written instructions indicating when it is to be dispensed and in what dosage(s). This includes over-the-counter medications. Students will not be given any medications (including pain relievers, cough drops, medicated creams or lotions, etc.) without written permission from a parent or guardian. Students are not allowed to have prescription medications in their personal possession while on school property. Possession or use of an illegal item or substance will likely result in receiving consequences beyond a CGR. Depending on the substance or item, offenses in this category could result in the notification of law enforcement officials. All students, as well as their backpacks (or other means of storage) and their lockers, are subject to unannounced random searches and to searches whenever there is a reasonable suspicion of a violation in this category. Searches will not be carried out as a means of harassing a student, and when done, will be done in a manner that seeks to uphold the dignity of the student. Any searches for possessions a student may have on his or her person (in pockets, etc.) will not involve a teacher physically touching the student. If the student is uncooperative revealing what items might be contained within his or her clothing, law enforcement officials may be called in to conduct a physical search of the student.

13. Inappropriate Language
Inappropriate language is the intentional use of profanity or unnecessarily vulgar language in one’s conversation (whether personal, private conversation or when vocalized in the hearing of others present at school). Inappropriate language can also occur in writing of notes, etc. The quoting of characters in literature or writings studied for academic purposes, or in a writing assignment in which the writing of such quotations serves the purpose of an assignment does not constitute a violation of the inappropriate language rule. ACA does not condone the use of such language in one’s personal life, but it recognizes that such language is used in the world, and quoting its use in an appropriate context is not, in itself, sinful or a violation of our calling to love one another. Such restricted use of “inappropriate” language shall not be abused or used as a loophole to circumvent the general intent of this category.

14. Instigation or Accessory to Infringement
Instigation occurs when a student does not directly violate a rule, but encourages or provokes somebody else to violate a rule. An accessory is somebody who assists someone else to violate a rule or who helps conceal a violation of a rule, or who is uncooperative in an investigation to discover who was responsible for the violation of a rule. Regarding investigations to discover who is responsible for a violation, students should think carefully about the contemporary ethic that one not “rat out” one’s friends. One must always consider what Jesus’ ethic of love requires. Love requires that we act in the long-term best interests of another person even if it involves cost to ourselves. Love requires the speaking of truth. No “friend” should expect another friend to lie or deceive in order to protect him or her from deserved consequences.

15. Insubordination
Insubordination is a refusal to follow the reasonable instructions or requests of any authority. Insubordination is a major offense since it undermines the authority that is necessary for teachers and other adult staff to fulfill their function in seeking to minister to students. Insubordination will typically result in consequences beyond the issuing of a CGR.

16. Not Engaged in Lesson
Not being engaged in the lesson happens when a student is not actively paying attention to instruction being given or when a student is not actively doing assigned work during allotted work time. It also happens when a student finishes tests or assignments too quickly due to an attempt to ‘get the work over with,’ or does not put forth adequate intellectual effort to achieve maximum learning. When students legitimately finish assignments and tests earlier than other students,
unwise choices, we also want to recognize and affirm them when they consistently make wise choices and exhibit Christian virtues and character. Therefore, the Character Growth Plan employs an element of rewards, not just consequences. At ACA we prefer to “raise the praise” and “minimize the criticize.” Although we recognize that due to their fallen and sinful nature, people require reminders, warnings, and occasional consequences, they truly are energized and motivated, and they tend to thrive when there is recognition, affirmation, praise, and occasional rewards for positive growth and wise choices. God originally made us “very good” according to Genesis 1. And according to Ephesians he has made us for “good works which he has prepared for us,” and he is about the business of shaping us into the image and likeness of his Son, Jesus. He has given us gifts to be used in ministry, and we are citizens of his righteous kingdom. God has a law that reveals his ethical standards, but the same God is a God who grants continual grace and mercy as he “brings to completion” his work of salvation in our lives. Despite how it is sometimes conveyed, Christianity is not a negative religion which seeks to demean or beat down what God has made and has declared to be good. He does not seek to rob of dignity those for whom he gave his own Son as a redemptive sacrifice. Christianity presents an optimistic world view. It values people. It teaches that every person is worth the price of the precious blood of Jesus. Christianity dignifies us by reminding us that we are “co-heirs with Christ” and “partakers of the divine nature.” Therefore, at ACA, we want to accentuate the positive in our students. We want them to see their strengths, recognize their infinite worth in God’s eyes, and develop a healthy self-esteem. For it is only the awareness of God’s unconditional, unswerving, sacrificial and astounding love for us that we are enabled to truly love others and act toward others in loving ways.

**Character Growth Credits**

Therefore, the following system of rewards is a component of the Character Growth Plan.

1. Whenever a student goes for ten consecutive school days without receiving a Character Growth Reminder (CGR) he or she will drop a level of discipline. Details about this are listed above under the heading “Dropping Levels.”

2. Whenever a student goes for ten consecutive school days without receiving a Character Growth Reminder (CGR) he or she will be awarded five Character Growth Credits (CGCs).

3. Whenever a student goes for twenty consecutive school days without receiving a Character Growth Reminder (CGR) he or she will be awarded ten Character Growth Credits (CGCs).

4. Whenever a student goes for thirty consecutive school days without receiving a Character Growth Reminder (CGR) he or she will be awarded fifteen Character Growth Credits (CGCs).

5. After having gone thirty consecutive days without receiving a Character Growth Reminder (CGR), every further ten consecutive days a student goes without receiving a Character Growth Reminder (CGR), will result in another fifteen Character Growth Credits being awarded. Thus forty days earns fifteen credits, fifty days earns fifteen more credits, and so on. Any issuing of a Credit Growth Reminder will interrupt the cycle, and the student will be starting again with five Character Growth Credits for ten consecutive days without a Character Growth Reminder.

6. Teachers and Staff can also give Character Growth Credits to students for individual positive exhibitions of notable character. For example, if a teacher notices a student making a positive choice of making a personal sacrifice in order to help another person in some way, the teacher may, at his or
The following scale will be used for 1st through 12th grades:

A  90%-100%
B  80%-89%
C  70%-79%
D  60%-69%
F  59% and below

Parent-Teacher Communication

It is a fact that frequent parent-teacher communication has a significant impact on student success. We have several avenues for you to keep abreast of what is going on in your child’s academic life. We encourage you to take advantage of these. It is always best to deal with any issues of concern with your child’s academics earlier rather than later.

Conferences

All parents/guardians will be scheduled for a parent-teacher conference with their child’s teacher during the first and third quarters. Parents/guardians may always request additional conferences with their child’s teacher as needed. Please plan to attend these important conferences.

Gradelink

Avilla Christian Academy uses the Gradelink student information system. You are able to go online at any time and see your child’s posted grades and upcoming assignment and test dates that have been posted. If you have not received your username and password for your Gradelink account, please contact the office to obtain these. We encourage parents/guardians to check their child’s academic progress on Gradelink on at least a weekly basis.

Website and Email

The website for Avilla Christian Academy is www.avillachristian.org. Each teacher has an individual page on this website. There you can find information about your child’s teacher(s). You can also email the teacher(s) from this page.

Standardized Testing

Each spring, schools across the country administer to students a series of standardized tests in order to assess the knowledge and skill levels of students in the core subject areas. Avilla Christian Academy uses the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for grades 1-8 and the Stanford Achievement Test for grades 9-12. The scores and results of these assessments are distributed to the parents. In order to ensure that the assessments provide an accurate measure of your child’s ability, it is important that your child gets a solid night’s rest on nights prior to the assessments, and that he or she has a full and nutritious breakfast the
Families may complete the service hours through one or more parents/guardians. For families who have more than one student attending Avilla Christian Academy, it is only necessary to fulfill the number of hours that would be associated with the oldest child (preschool or K-12).

Service hours enable parents to be more involved with the school. Students whose parents are involved in their school are more likely to succeed in school. Service hours also set a great example to our students whom we also ask to serve as part of growing their Christian character. And service hours enable Avilla Christian Academy to control costs which benefits us all. If, for some reason, a family is unable to complete the appropriate number of service hours during the year, the option exists of paying fifteen dollars per hour in lieu of completing the service hours. Please be sure to check in with the office prior to doing your service hours, and have your service hours documented in the office each day you contribute service to Avilla Christian Academy. At the end of the school year, any outstanding service hours that have not been completed will be converted to a fifteen dollar charge per hour and will be added to the family’s account. We thank you for supporting your child’s school with both your time and your finances.

**STUDENT SERVICE HOUR PROGRAM**

Students enrolled in grades three and above will be encouraged to complete works of service that will benefit their community. This is part of the character education, and these opportunities benefit our school and community as well.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**Health Requirements**

Each child must have all required immunizations before the start of the school year. Contact your family doctor or the local public health department for details.

**Health Screenings**

Various student health screenings are conducted during the year and current health records are kept for each child. Such screenings include hearing, vision, and scoliosis checks.

**Illness Policy**

In order to prevent the spread of any illness, do not send a child to school under any of these circumstances: The child . . .

- has had a fever in the last 24 hours
- has vomited in the last 24 hours
- has a rash (other than allergy-related)
- has a red or sore throat
- has red, running, or swollen eyes (other than allergy-related)