



# Mite Development Program 2008-2009



## Objective

The purpose of the AVHA mite program is to teach hockey skills to boys and girls in a fun environment. We emphasize the basic skills kids need as they mature as hockey players, with a heavy emphasis on skating. Kids do not need to know how to skate to participate. We will teach them. Competition is limited, but increases as the kids move through our mite program.

Any boy or girl who resides within our association boundaries and who will be 5 years old by December 31, 2008 is eligible to play mites. Sessions begin in late October and run through mid March. Our primary indoor ice times will be on Saturdays and Sundays at one of our two Apple Valley rinks (Apple Valley High School and Hayes Arena). We will also utilize outdoor rinks for weekly practices when weather permits. Kids will participate largely with their peers as a group, but will also be placed on a team and will have team-specific activities.

AVHA will be instituting a new Mite program for the upcoming season. We will be organizing mites into four levels:

- Mite 1: Beginner - K and 1<sup>st</sup> graders
- Mite 2: Intermediate -K/1<sup>st</sup> graders
- Mite 3: Intermediate 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> graders
- Mite 4: Advanced 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> graders

After a developmental period of roughly 6 weeks, there will be an evaluation period for all of our mite boys and girls conducted by a mite committee including the PDC, Mite Program Leader, and lead mite coaches. We will try to place mites appropriately using the above as a guide. Preference will always be given to the older and more experience player when it comes to selection for a higher level when applicable.

Our first year players (new to hockey) at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level will most likely be placed as a Mite 3 and not with the younger Mite 1 level unless requested.

Our top 22-28 mites will be placed on one of two advance mite teams. These teams will compete in an "area District 6" schedule with Burnsville, Eastview, Jefferson, Kennedy, etc. The maximum number of games will be 12 as dictated by District 6.

The cost for games or extra practices ice will be the responsibility of the advanced mite players and will not be incurred by the remaining mites or AVHA, similar to a traveling team.

Once levels are selected, there will not be much difference from how the mite program has been run in the past few years. We will continue to practice primarily on Saturdays and Sundays with outdoor ice during the week. Depending upon numbers of kids at each level, we will group kids with their peers from a skill level.

## **Why are we doing this?**

The Advanced Mite Level is an alternative to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grader/4th year mite option to move up to the Squirt C Level. Currently, we do not anticipate pulling up our 3rd graders to supplement the Squirt C program. We will be trying to sustain the Squirt C program with only 4th and 5th graders. However, if numbers at the Squirt level dictate a need, as in the past, we will review this decision. This decision was made based on the following rationale:

1. Most of the other District 6 programs offer some form of tiered mite program including an Advanced Level.
2. None of the other District 6 associations with the exception of Eastview promote 3<sup>rd</sup> graders to the Squirt C level. Some pull kids up on a case by case basis as we also have done in the past.
3. This provides an appropriate level for many of our 4<sup>th</sup> year skaters in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade that allows outside competition at a minimum (max 12 games).
4. We hope, with the numbers growth, to get to a point where we can fully sustain our Squirt C development level with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders.
5. Speaking with many of our Squirt coaches and parents, there were some concerns with the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade involvement at the C level. There were generally favorable opinions by the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders involved.
6. As a program, we feel that many of our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have had difficulty adjusting to Squirts (i.e. full ice games, rules, etc.). We hope by exposing our Level 3 & 4 Mites to full ice contests, it will allow our Squirt coaches more time to teach skills and less time teaching some of the basic rules such as offside, icing, where to line-up etc. Because our mites will still have the same amount of development time, we feel this is a very good way to utilize our ice. We are also exploring playing contest with other associations at our Mite 3 level to help with their adjustment as mentioned above.
7. We have established a great Mite program and we don't think we will be altering the structure of what mite ice-time will look like. However, we have a number of players/families who by their fourth year are looking for something different. The advanced mite level provides "something different" for these players/families along with a nice transition to traveling hockey at the Squirt level.
8. By choosing two advanced mite teams, it decreases ice costs for additional practices/contests that will be included.