

Getting From Facts to Policy: An Education Policy Convening

Raising Student Achievement with AVID
(Advancement Via Individual Determination)

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Problem Statement

Closing the achievement gap and increasing the college-going rate for students from low income and minority families is a significant policy dilemma. Increasing their opportunities, participation, and success in courses of high rigor will better prepare them for post-secondary access and success. Seven percent of the class of 2007 did not pass both sections of the California High School Exit Exam. African American and Hispanic students' pass rates on the exam lag behind the state average. Additionally, for the same groups, the four-year dropout rate is higher than the state average.

With more restrictive state and federal mandates, coupled with the basic need to prepare students for post-secondary education or the workforce, schools and districts are pressed to find , cost effective academic supports that can be utilized broadly to reach more students.

Policy Recommendations

California needs a policy that supports funding programs such as AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), which have a proven history of raising student achievement for all students, and in particular, students who are underrepresented and without a college going tradition. AVID, an integrated, systemic program, not only works with a core group of students, but reaches students schoolwide and districtwide as a comprehensive reform strategy.

Background

The mission of AVID is to ensure that all students, especially least-served students in the middle: (1) will succeed in the most rigorous curriculum, (2) will succeed in a rigorous, college-preparatory path; (3) will enter mainstream activities of the school, (4) will

increase their enrollment in four-year colleges, and (5) will become educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society. AVID's systematic approach is designed to support students and educators as they increase schoolwide/districtwide learning and performance. AVID's primary goal is to enhance equity on the path to college. To do this, AVID targets B, C, and even D students who want to go to college but are not achieving at the level needed to reach that goal. AVID places these students in college preparatory classes, and provides a scaffold of academic and social structures to help them succeed. AVID Center provides professional development for teachers to prepare and support them as they implement the academic and social structures that enhance student success and achievement.

AVID Center recently introduced the AVID Elementary program, which introduces the AVID academic and social support structures starting in Grade 4. AVID Center proposes to work with schools in districts throughout the state to expand their AVID implementation into the elementary level and demonstrate the effectiveness of providing consistent and coherent academic and social support structures throughout a student's educational experience. To expand the program, AVID Center will work with districts to implement the AVID program in grades 4-12 in a feeder pattern of schools that feed into one another (elementary to middle to high school) to demonstrate the effect of participation in AVID on long-term student success.

Need for System.

Disadvantaged students from low-income homes are more likely to drop out of school, less likely to take college preparatory and advanced courses, and less likely to enter colleges (especially four-year institutions) than are their more affluent peers. There are many reasons for this disparity. Too often, families and teachers of low-income and minority students, and even the students themselves, expect less of them than they do of white and more affluent students. The students' peer groups often do not value and may even denigrate academic achievement. Low-income and minority students may see few role models of people like themselves who have succeeded through education and do not perceive this as a realistic path. Even those students who express a wish to attend college often have little idea of what it takes to make that dream a reality, from what courses to take to how to apply to colleges. In addition, many minority and low-income students spend their high school years tracked into courses that do not meet the entry requirements for a four-year college or university, effectively blocking them from the opportunities that come with higher education.

AVID has proven to be one of the most effective ways to increase the likelihood that a young person who comes from a low-income family will graduate from high school and go on to enroll in, and complete, a four-year college degree program. AVID does not focus on making sure that these students do not fail. Instead, AVID focuses on making sure that these young people succeed – and on giving them the scaffold of strategies and support they need to achieve academically in high school and to persevere through college. This includes support for key transitions in their education, particularly from middle school to high school.

Target Population.

AVID targets B, C and sometimes even D students in grades 4-12 who want to go to college but are not achieving at the level needed to reach that goal. AVID places these students in college preparatory classes (including honors and Advanced Placement classes), and then provides them a scaffold of social and academic structures to help them succeed. These structures include an AVID elective that teaches study skills and college preparation, tutoring to support achievement in rigorous academic classes, and curriculum and inquiry-based teaching methodologies that stress writing, reading and collaboration.

AVID Goals

The overarching goal of the AVID program is to prepare students for college. To reach that, several benchmarks need to be achieved:

- Benchmark 1: Increase the number of teachers in each school who are highly trained to help disadvantaged students succeed in college preparatory, pre-AP and AP courses.
- Benchmark 2: Increase the number and percentage of disadvantaged students in each school who enroll in college preparatory, honors and pre-AP courses.
- Benchmark 3: Increase the percentage of disadvantaged students in each school who maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher in college preparation courses.
- Benchmark 4: Increase the number of disadvantaged students who successfully complete an honors or AP class.
- Benchmark 5: Increase the percentage of targeted students who score at or above proficient on the district assessments in reading and math.
- Benchmark 6: Increase the number and percentage of disadvantaged students in each school who graduate from high school.
- Benchmark 7: Increase the number and percentage of disadvantaged students in each school who enroll in college.

Ultimately, the result will be an increase in the percentage of disadvantaged students who graduate from high school, enter a college or university, complete a baccalaureate degree (or higher), and enter career paths that enable the individual to support his or her family and contribute to the community.

AVID Program Components

Key components of the AVID program include:

- The AVID Academic Elective. Each participating student enrolls in an AVID elective course, which is a part of the student's regular schedule of credit bearing courses. The course meets daily (or less often for longer periods if the school is on an alternative schedule). Two of the five class periods per week are spent on academic training and college entry skills. On these days, students learn through inquiry. They learn study skills, notetaking, time management, critical reading, library research, test preparation, essay writing, test-taking strategies and how to write college entrance essays and prepare for entrance exams. Students spend another class period each week on career exploration, understanding the academic preparation required for career choices, and researching colleges. The final two class periods per week are spent in AVID tutorials. During these sessions of the AVID Elective course, trained college and peer tutors provide tutorial facilitation to the AVID students to support their success in their college preparation courses. Students participate in tutorial groups to help develop the habit of intense studying with classmates and gain deeper understanding of the course content.
- AVID Curriculum and Teaching Methodology. "AVID Methodology" is not about changing curriculum – it is about allowing almost all students access to a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, and providing professional development to support vertical teams of teachers. The teaching methodologies most effective in this quest (WICR) include Writing as a tool for learning; emphasis on Inquiry; a Collaborative approach to learning; and Reading to learn. To provide teachers with the tools needed to support students in their academic achievement, the AVID program provides rigorous, sequential curriculum materials in three areas: (1) *The Student Success Path*, which provides curriculum focused on study skills, organization, test preparation, time management, goal setting, reading, oral language, and writing; (2) *The College Path* curriculum, which focuses on choosing a college, major, and career, and the process of entering college; and (3) *The Write Path*, which provides an integrated reading and writing program for content area classrooms, complete with carefully structured lesson plans for teachers, teacher resource guides, student guides, and reproducible activities. AVID also offers curriculum for English Language Development designed to support the teaching of critical reading and writing strategies to English language learners.
- AVID Professional Development for School Site Teams. Each participating school district forms a District AVID Team that coordinates the implementation of AVID across schools. Each participating school within the district forms an interdisciplinary team that includes the AVID elective teachers, content area teachers, counselors and academic administrators to lead the implementation of the AVID program at their site. Intensive professional development is provided to members of the school and district teams to prepare them to implement and expand the AVID program at their school. AVID professional development activities include training sessions at the school site that focus on using the AVID Path series curriculum, monthly site team meetings to reinforce the AVID training and develop the team's

leadership capacity, and the AVID Summer Institute, a weeklong intensive training event attended by the entire site team from each AVID school.

- Tutorial Program. Each participating school is required to provide tutors for AVID students (7 students per tutor). The participating schools are required to provide the funding needed to hire the tutors (in many areas, tutors receive work-study or college credit, so there is no cost to the school). The employment and supervision of tutors are part of the school's commitment to the AVID program; AVID trains members of the site team to train the tutors.

Impact - The California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

CAHSEE addresses state academic content standards in English-language Arts through grade 10 and mathematics through Algebra I. The graduating class of 2006 was the first class held accountable to the CAHSEE which required both sections of the exam be passed in addition to all other graduation requirements before a diploma could be conferred.

Newly released exit exam data spanning both Northern and Southern California school districts include a revelation that policymakers say is nothing short of extraordinary: AVID students are outperforming their non-AVID peers—not by a fraction, but substantially.

What is particularly noteworthy is that AVID students do not receive specific preparation for the exit exams. What then is at work here? Their success speaks to the philosophical underpinning of the AVID program: simply, students perform better when they're challenged with rigorous coursework and receive academic and peer support—a point that is substantiated by a large body of research.

As the *Sacramento Bee* pronounced in its Oct. 16, 2003 editorial: "But there's at least one student group within the Elk Grove district that is acing the exit exam. Are they from affluent families? Are they the white and Asian kids? Are they the children of doctors, lawyers and college professors? Not exactly. This group of high performers participates in something called Advancement Via Individual Determination, a program that provides tutoring, study skills, motivation and college counseling to poor teenagers whose parents have never been to college."

Similar outcomes should be expected from students who have been enrolled in the AVID elective for at least three years attending schools in districts that make AVID a priority program.

Funding for AVID implementation

AVID is a cost-effective program. After three years, the cost averages approximately \$1.05 per student per day. That figure only includes the cost for students in the AVID

elective. Schools train content area teachers and are able to spread the program schoolwide, exposing the strategies and methodologies to all students.

The first year costs include Summer Institute, AVID Libraries, tutors, staff development, travel and lodging: approximately \$2.75 per student (30) per day (180 days).

Second year costs approximately \$1.17 per student (60) per day (180).

Third year costs approximately \$1.05 per student (90) per day (180).

Summary of Key Data Points from AVID’s Third-Party Research

- Independent research indicated that 95 percent of AVID students reported enrolling in college, 77 percent of whom enrolled in four-year colleges (CREATE, 1999).
- Latino AVID graduates attend four-year colleges at almost two times the national average and the program’s African-American graduates at one-and-a-half times the national average.
- After two years, 89 percent of the AVID students in one four-year university were still enrolled and on track for graduation; this retention rate is far higher than the college average. (Mehan, 1996.)

Summary of Key Data Points from AVID’s Annual Data Collection (2006):

- 98 percent of AVID students plan to enroll in a college or university.
- 76 percent of 2006 AVID graduates were accepted to a four-year college.
- AVID Students, who take many AP tests every year, show greater ethnic diversity than AP test-takers do overall. The proportion of Latinos taking AP exams is over five times higher among AVID students than among U.S. students overall.
- 89.3 percent of AVID students complete university entrance requirements.

Data Snapshot: Ramona HS Pre- and Post-AVID

	1988-89 Pre-AVID	2002-03 Post-AVID
White	66%	34%
Hispanic	21%	53%
African American	9%	9%
Asian	4%	3%
Limited English Proficient	4.2%	11%
UC/CSU A-G Completion	17%	46%
# of AVID Students	0	452
# of AVID Sections	0	13
% taking SAT I exam	24%	54%
Avg. SAT I total score	849	918
# (%) of students in AP	28 (1.6)	265 (13.0)