

memorandum

Date: 1.22.09 | **From:** REL West at WestEd
Re: The Impact of AVID on High School Retention and College Readiness

Request >>

What does the research say about AVID programs and the impact these programs have on keeping students in school and helping them to graduate college-ready?

Requestor: Woodrow Wilson Foundation

Response

Description of AVID

AVID, or Advancement via Individual Determination, is a college-readiness program designed to support underachieving middle and high school students—particularly those with low-income, first-generation immigrant, or ethnic minority background—in preparing for college and increase the enrollment rates of these students in four-year institutions. Students are eligible if they have middle to high achievement scores and average grades. AVID high school participants enroll in rigorous college preparatory classes, such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses; attend a required daily AVID class; participate in AVID for at least three years; and receive structured AVID tutoring twice a week from a college student.

According to its website, www.avidonline.org, AVID operates in nearly 4,000 schools in 45 states, the District of Columbia, and 15 countries, and serves more than 320,000 students in grades 4-12. Of the nearly 12,700 AVID graduates in 2008, 78 percent were accepted to a four-year college.

AVID was founded in 1980 by Mary Catherine Swanson, an English teacher at San Diego Unified School District's Clairemont High School in, because of concern that a large number of average-performing students were unlikely to pursue postsecondary education. When the program began, participating students attended a required elective class every day that provided academic and social support to succeed in rigorous college preparatory classes. This component continues along with other support services.

Summary of Findings

According to the research, **AVID programs have positive effects on their high school participants.** Below are select findings that suggest that AVID students are better academically prepared for college than had they not participated in an AVID program. These AVID students:

- **Experienced increased graduation rates in AVID high schools and districts**, while graduation rates decreased in non-AVID schools and districts.¹
 - **Attended school more often than did their non-AVID peers attending the same schools.**²
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- **Enrolled in Advanced Placement courses in higher numbers than before the presence of AVID at the same school.** In some schools, AP enrollment rates increased dramatically among AVID students compared to their pre-AVID demographic and academic peers.³
- Comprised **the 87 percent that were “on track to graduate,”** compared to 62 percent of non-AVID peers in a three-year Texas study.⁴
- **Who are Latino, met college-readiness standards and attended a 4-year college at higher rates** compared to non-AVID students in one San Diego County study.⁵

These findings are drawn from three studies:

Effective Dropout Prevention and College Attendance Programs for Latino Students

(Fashola & Slavin, 1998)

This report reviews the research on programs designed to reduced dropout rates and increase college-going rates among at-risk middle and high school students. AVID is identified by the authors as one of four effective programs that provide academic support and prepare underrepresented students for higher education. This review examines only those seminal studies from AVID’s early implementation years that met their criteria for study rigor. When data for Latino students were isolated, the authors found that AVID had positive effects on graduation and college-going rates for this group of students.

Implications of One Comprehensive School Reform Model for Secondary Students Underrepresented in Higher Education

(Watt, Powell & Mendiola, 2004)

This three-year study of 10 Texas AVID high schools finds that AVID students performed better on various standardized tests and attended school more often than did their non-AVID peers attending the same schools. The study also suggests that the increase in AP course enrollment in all 10 AVID schools implies that a higher percentage of underrepresented students are being prepared for college than before the presence of AVID.

Schoolwide Impact and AVID: How Have Selected Texas High Schools Addressed the New Accountability Measures?

(Watt, Powell, Mendiola & Cossio, 2006)

This four-year study of 10 high schools in five districts compares improvement in schoolwide and districtwide accountability measures among AVID high schools and districts with accountability improvement in non-AVID schools and districts. Preliminary findings show that AVID schools and districts improved in four areas: advanced course enrollment, completion of advanced graduation plans, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) testing, and high school graduation in four years. In comparison, non-AVID schools and districts saw gains in two areas: completion of advanced graduation plans and AP/IB testing.

Additional Studies

The two studies described below do not address questions about secondary school retention or college preparedness but do provide additional context in regard to AVID and may be of interest.

The Magnificent Eight: AVID Best Practices Study. Final Report

(Guthrie & Guthrie, 2002)

This evaluation studies the efficacy of AVID’s 11 program essentials in eight California high schools whose records showed consistently high performance by AVID students. In addition, the authors examine how well each school implemented the program. A key finding is that all eight schools with effective AVID programs maintained a high level

of fidelity to the AVID program essentials. Part II of the report presents a detailed narrative description of program implementation in each of the eight high schools, including the schoolwide effects of AVID and changes in student outcomes. Data show that between the school years, 2000-01 and 2001-02, **the percentage of AVID students enrolled in AP courses increased in all eight high schools.**

Advancement Via Individual Determination: Method Selection in Conclusions About Program Effectiveness

(Black, Little, McCoach, Purcell & Siegle, 2008)

This two-year evaluation study of three AVID middle schools offers **preliminary findings that show a positive effect on middle school students' achievement in language arts.** In addition, the authors present a noteworthy finding that a rigorous study of an AVID program requires a minimum of three years and the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The authors note that some current research on the effectiveness of AVID may not meet these methodological criteria, and may, therefore, only be reporting preliminary findings.

References

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- Watt, K., Powell, C., Mendiola, I., & Cossio, G. (2006). Schoolwide impact and AVID: How have selected Texas high schools addressed the new accountability measures? *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 11*(1), 57–73.

Sources and methods used for this memo

We conducted a thorough search on Google Scholar, ProQuest, and ERIC, using the key phrases *AVID* and *Achievement via Individual Determination*. We also searched the AVID website. From the initial nine studies reviewed, we selected two for inclusion in this memo based on the rigor of their methodology and data analyses, and a third based on its rigor of analysis in reviewing other AVID studies. These selected reports have undergone a peer-review process, and their findings are presented in this memo. We also included two evaluation reports that may be of interest during the decision-making process, but whose findings don't directly answer the memo question.

Endnotes

¹ Watt, Powell, Mendiola & Cossio, 2006

² Watt, Powell & Mendiola, 2004

³ Watt, Powell & Mendiola, 2004; Watt, Powell, Mendiola & Cossio, 2006

⁴ Watt, Powell & Mendiola, 2004. These students “on track to graduate” were on the Recommended Graduation Plan (24 credits) or the Distinguished Achievement Plan (24 credits, plus four advanced measures), a Texas state graduation requirement.

⁵ Fashola & Slavin, 1998. At the time of this study, California students completed A-F course requirements for eligibility to a four-year university. Current college-readiness requirements include completion of A-G requirements.

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