

AVID National Conference
College Readiness for All: Delivering the Dream
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Introduction

For the first time in AVID’s history, the 2010 National Conference brought together all previous national conferences, including *Juntos* (Hispanic focus) and *Up Where We Belong* (African-American focus), into one comprehensive educational event, attracting more than 1,500 attendees. The theme, “College Readiness for All: Delivering the Dream,” was manifested in more than 40 different concurrent session topics, which were divided into strands that spoke to a plethora of postsecondary readiness facets, each of which is discussed below.

This conference also celebrated the 30th anniversary of AVID, with an inspiring keynote from AVID Founder Mary Catherine Swanson, a dynamic panel discussion featuring renowned education experts, and comments by Greg Darnieder, US Department of Education Special Assistant to the Secretary for College Access.

General Sessions

Celebrating 30 Years

“Give them rigor and let them know you’re on their side.” – Mary Catherine Swanson, AVID Founder

These seemingly simple words, advice given by AVID Founder Mary Catherine Swanson to her son as he began his teaching career, profoundly sum up what she herself has done for thousands of students across our nation and the world.

In her keynote address, Swanson shared a bit of background for what many know as the AVID story. From growing up in the 1950s in a California farming community to working on the school newspaper at UC Berkeley, Swanson said, “I believed, with many others, that I could make the world a better place.” This was never truer than in 1980 when, as an English teacher at Clairemont High School in San Diego, Swanson boldly made a difference for 30 new students – a majority of them Hispanic and African American.

Despite strong opposition from fellow teachers and school administration, Swanson placed the students in rigorous Advanced Placement (AP) classes. “I knew we needed to educate all students well,” she shared. By supporting these students and bringing in tutors from a local college, Swanson provided the opportunity for all of her students – the first AVID class – to achieve success. And achieve success they did, with 93% being accepted into college, all graduating, and years later, many sharing their stories of success on “*60 Minutes II*.”

“Each (underserved student) has something missing at home,” commented Swanson. “What they need is stability; someone to whom they’re responsible.” Swanson developed a system of support for her first cohort of 30 students, including a teacher to whom they were responsible, and this college readiness system has now grown to touch more than 400,000 students in 4,500 schools, 47 states, and 16 countries in 30 years.

Her request to educators attending the conference was this: “Make sure fellow educators don’t have historic low expectations for students.”

The State of Education

“What trumps everything is rigor of courses that students take.” – Cliff Adelman, Answers in the Toolbox

A panel discussion was held on the first day of the conference, with education experts discussing college readiness and rigorous opportunities for all students. This panel included Dr. David Conley, professor of Educational Policy and Leadership in the College of Education at the University of Oregon; Dr. Donna Ford, professor of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University; Trevor Packer, vice president of the College Board responsible for the Advanced Placement (AP) program; and Bob Poole, a regional development specialist for the International Baccalaureate (IB).

Scott Swail, president and CEO of The Educational Policy Institute, moderated the discussion and made opening remarks about the importance of rigor. “The word ‘rigor’ was first introduced to the educational world in a 1999 report by Cliff Adelman entitled *Answers in the Toolbox*,” he noted. Up until this time, Swail declared, ACT or SAT results were most commonly relied on to predict college success. And, while these tests do provide a glimpse at a student’s level of proficiency, they don’t ascertain foundational skills and consistent rigor needed to truly prepare students for postsecondary success.

The first issue discussed by the panelists was that of achievement gap and key elements missing in terms of college and career readiness. Ford shared that deficit thinking, low expectations which have reached epidemic proportions at societal and school levels, is a major issue. “As we talk about closing the achievement gap, we cannot do that unless we open the doors to gifted education and Advanced Placement, and part of opening those doors means some changes that we as professionals have to make in terms of our thinking – our negative thinking – about African American children,” said Ford. She also pointed to the need for cultural responsiveness and competence with regard to policies, testing, and teacher quality. She said, “I don’t think the federal government or schools include in teacher quality the notion of cultural competence. I don’t think you can be a highly qualified teacher if you’re not culturally competent – if you don’t know how to work with children that live in poverty or come from a different linguistic background or different cultural background.”

Conley referenced data collected, which asked 9th graders about their college aspirations. The data showed a down-shifting of aspirations as these students reached the 12th grade. “If students don’t aspire, they don’t achieve,” said Conley. He then outlined ways educators can improve student aspirations:

- Help students set goals for themselves, from short-term to long-term.
- Emphasize effort over aptitude, which will change feelings of powerlessness.
- Keep cognitive levels high.
- Provide new and different ways of learning.
- Think of college and career readiness as a continuum.

Ford agreed that expectations of students are too low, citing phrasing such as, “When you go to college . . .” rather than “If you go to college . . .,” used with many minority students. She also pointed out that there aren’t currently enough minority teachers to serve as mentors.

When providing rigor, AP and IB programs are at the forefront. Trevor Packer cautioned, “AP is not a cure-all.” He continued, “It is part of a solution for improving college readiness.” He then suggested that the single greatest reason for AP exam score differentials is a lack of commitment to a college readiness culture soon enough. Bob Poole agreed, adding that preparation starting in a student’s middle school years is very important.

At the end of the panel discussion, panelists were asked what elementary schools can do to prepare their students to be college-ready. Each had a separate, but equally powerful, answer. Conley advised to help set high expectations and goals, Ford recommended desegregating gifted education, and Packer advocated for vertically aligned curriculum.

Like the panelists, Greg Darnieder, US Department of Education Special Assistant to the Secretary for College Access, also addressed issues facing education in America during his keynote on the last day of the conference.

“There is an education crisis in America,” he said. He pointed to evidence of such, including the fact that 75% of young Americans are ineligible to enter the military, either because they lack a high school diploma, have a criminal record, or are overweight¹; 1.2 million students drop out of high school each year; and only 24% of high school students are ready to be successful in college, with the percent for Hispanics and African Americans even lower². He shared a line from the movie *Invictus* that he thought rang true for our current educational state: “In order to build a nation, we must all exceed our own expectations.”

Darnieder went on to say, “In a report from MacKenzie, they compared countries around the world, looking at who’s at the forefront of educational improvement. What’s absolutely fascinating about what’s sparking countries’ improvement is that it’s typically an economic crisis.” Of the excelling countries, commonalities included selecting education professionals from the top third of their college graduates, rewarding such educators financially, and giving prestige to those positions.

Finally, he encouraged all in attendance: “We need all of you creating good trouble, necessary trouble.”

Student Panel Discussion

Students from Richardson Independent School District (Texas) made up the ever-popular student panel, a highlight of any AVID conference. Below are quotes from these remarkable students, as they answered questions regarding their AVID experiences.

- *“AVID gives you a map, basically, of how to get to college, and be successful in college, and graduate with a doctorate or something like that.” – Maria (12th grader)*

¹ “Teaching for America,” Thomas Friedman, The New York Times, 11/20/10.

² ACT report, “The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2010” – percent meeting all four College Readiness Benchmarks.

- *“The best thing about AVID is the support you get from your AVID family. When I was a 7th grader, I was confused, scared... AVID helps. It makes you feel better.” – Allison (8th grader)*
- *“AVID helps (students) become what they want to be – what they aspire to be.” – Petro (12th grader)*
- *“AVID has helped me tremendously in my postsecondary experience.” – Christopher (12th grader)? Is he an alum? How does he have a postsecondary experience?*
- *“Teachers push us – the bar they set gets higher and higher. Often, it’s difficult to reach their standards, but when you do, it’s so awesome.” – Sabi (11th grader)*
- *“Cornell Notes – it hurts, but it works. I know it’s preparing me for college.” – Reginald (12th grader)*
- *“This program is going to raise the roof. Kids in AVID didn’t know their potential before AVID. AVID will do its part in raising college-ready percentages, as Mr. Darnieder mentioned.” – Petro (12th grader)*
- *“My goal is to be a leader – like everyone is ants and I’m the big ant. I’ll help everyone.” – Jalen (6th grader)*
- *“My dreams before AVID were low. Now, I’m raising them higher and higher. I now want to be a doctor, but maybe a lawyer.” – Alex (6th grader)*
- *“I wish my elementary school teachers had given me inspiration. You like that someone says, ‘You’re going to do something great.’” – Petro (12th grader)*

Concurrent Sessions – Delivering the Dream

Delivering the dream of college readiness for all students is paramount to both the quality of life of each individual student, as well as the economic well-being of our country. Achieving this goal requires educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders to examine current policies and practices and incite change that will yield a positive difference in the lives of all students, empowering them with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful, whether they choose to obtain a college degree or immediately join the workforce.

Concurrent sessions offered at the conference spoke to various facets of delivering this dream via policy and practice: cultivating vertical alignment, developing college-ready cultures, implementing culturally relevant education, expanding strategies to support English Language Learners, and focusing on postsecondary. Each is discussed further below.

Cultivating Vertical Alignment

The notion of vertical alignment – the process of creating a seamless flow of education and instruction between educational levels – has proven to be critical in preparing students for postsecondary success.

AVID’s mission to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society is done with a systemic, aligned approach, starting in elementary school, persisting through middle and high school, and expanding into higher education.

Through this vertical alignment, students achieve greater success by building on skills and knowledge developed in earlier grades.

Elementary to High School Alignment

“Rigor is the only thing that I know of that isn’t subjective. If I prepare students with rigor, they have the best chance to enter college prepared.” – Dr. Aliber Lozano, AVID Center

AVID Elementary, currently available in districts already offering AVID Secondary, develops a feeder pattern system, exposing all 4th through 6th graders, who will be attending an AVID secondary school, to foundational skills needed before entering rigorous secondary courses.

As students reach middle school or junior high, they are recruited into AVID from the academic middle, through an application and interview process.

The secondary school AVID Elective course creatively focuses on writing, inquiry, collaboration, and reading (WICR) – vital skills students need for postsecondary readiness and success. These areas of learning, in addition to tutorials, Cornell Notes, and time management skills, build each year students participate in AVID, ultimately peaking in 12th grade, as they focus on concrete elements of their upcoming college experience.

Each AVID school is guided by 11 AVID Program Essentials, such as voluntary participation, inquiry to promote critical thinking, tutorials, collaboration, data collection and analysis, and rigorous course and study.

Dr. Aliber Lozano, AVID National Director of Professional Development, discussed the importance of rigor when he shared, “AVID defines rigor as using inquiry-based, collaborative strategies to challenge and engage students in content, resulting in increasingly complex levels of understanding. Research shows that rigorous curriculum is a greater factor in determining college graduation rates than class standing, standardized test scores, or grade point average.³”

To help students work and meet or exceed high standards in rigorous courses in all content areas, AVID helps students develop as readers and writers; develop deep content knowledge; know content-specific strategies for reading, writing, thinking, and speaking; and develop habits, skills, and behaviors to use knowledge and skills.

Alignment from elementary through high school provides a solid foundation from which AVID students are better prepared to graduate college-ready.

High School to Postsecondary Alignment

“It can be a terrible culture shock going to college.” – Dr. Ann Johns, Professor, San Diego State University

In a recent report by ACT, “The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2010,” only 24% of all ACT-tested high school graduates met all four of the College Readiness Benchmarks (English, Reading, Math, Science). To add to the problem, when graduates reached college, as

³ *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment* (1999) by Clifford Adelman, Senior Research Analyst, U.S. Dept. of Ed.

many as 40% took at least one remedial course⁴. As such, high school to college alignment is critical in better preparing graduates for college and career success.

Dr. Ann Johns, professor at San Diego State University, presented information on academic challenges facing students when they enter college, how successful students respond, and what we can do to better prepare students for college success.

Johns shared eight traits of successful and engaged college students and how these traits can be encouraged at the secondary school level:

- Flexible, open to change, willing to take chances, and intrigued by the possibilities.
 - Ensure successes in rigorous academic work by continuous practice.
 - Provide a variety of academic approaches, prompts, and activities.
 - Entice students through online and other presentations by engaged students.
- Possess accurate self-knowledge.
 - Promote a realistic investigation of goals and interests.
 - Help students to draw from prior knowledge and personal or academic experiences as they approach tasks.
 - Encourage self-reflection about literacy experiences.
 - Assist in the analysis of strategy use.
- View each academic class as different, yet related.
 - Assign an activity in which they analyze authentic prompts.
 - Ask students to look carefully at class syllabi.
 - With the students, figure out an instructor.
 - Help them determine the core class concepts.
 - Encourage making connections (mental grippers).
- Ask well-considered questions of those in the know.
 - Consider with students what they might want to discover about academic work through asking questions.
 - Identify who might be asked these questions.
 - Create the questions to be asked.
 - Role-play the posing of questions – and follow up.
- Demonstrate a willingness to self-assess and regulate as academic experiences change.
 - Encourage openness and appropriate responses to critique.
 - Help them to determine where their learning “bottle-necks” are.
 - Assist them to problem solve.
- Keep at it. (Not give up.)
 - Involve students in scenarios where they have, in fact, been down/defeated and come back.
 - Assess these scenarios for what they thought and did under the circumstances.
 - Explore how the same or similar approaches might be used in other contexts.
 - Keep encouraging problem definition and solution.
- Are aware that they are not alone.
- View the college or university as the place where they belong.

⁴ <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/college-success/49142.html>

While the understanding in each core subject relies on the knowledge built in previous grades, this is most apparent in mathematics.

The Algebra Issue

“Only 43% of high school graduates meet college readiness standards in math.” – 2010 ACT Report

One critical vertical alignment issue across the country is that of math readiness. If students are to graduate proficient in mathematics, a strong series of courses must be undertaken, starting with algebra in 8th grade. Many educators, however, are concerned about the ability of all students to succeed in algebra, and therefore, do not provide such rigor to all students.

Kathy Arno, AVID Grant Manager, shared some staggering statistics in her session entitled *“AVID Math and Science Summer Bridge Programs”*:

- Only 43% of high school graduates meet college readiness standards in math.⁵
- Only 1/3rd of Texas 8th grade students in 2009 were on track to be college ready in 11th grade.⁶
- Nationally, only 22% of 8th graders take algebra.⁷

In several concurrent sessions, various speakers communicated the same message, noting the importance of vertical alignment of math courses. “The math pathway from high school to higher education all ends up at remedial courses if students don’t take trigonometry or pre-calculus in high school,” illustrated Tammi Chen, executive director of Hawai’i P-20. As such, Chen’s organization is facilitating a Math Summit in Hawai’i that focuses on developing a smooth transition from high school to higher education, so that more students are successful in college entry-level math courses.

To better align math curriculum, many AVID schools have realized that they must enroll 8th grade students in algebra and provide them with support to succeed. Districts and schools, such as Richardson Independent School District in Texas, have also focused on better aligning math curriculum in 6th and 7th grade.

Richardson ISD piloted a 7th grade Pre-AP math class that automatically enrolls students who score 83.5% or higher on the state math assessment. In addition to focused instruction for these students, they also receive tutoring from AVID high school students who excel in math (which also provides community service for the high school students), participate in an after-school program, and attend Saturday School. Performance of students in this class has been in line with, or higher than, that of students in the typical Pre-AP math classes.

Three districts in the Austin area participated in a grant funded by the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation to provide math and science bridge programs to outgoing 6th and 7th graders. The

⁵ ACT. (2010). The Condition of College & Career Readiness.

⁶ Fuller, E. (2010). Supporting College Readiness: Preparing Middle School Students for High School Success in Texas.

⁷ The Education Trust, EdWatch State Reports 2006.

math programs, taught over the summer, prepared students for pre-AP 7th grade math and 8th grade algebra. Of the 93 students that participated in the pre-AP 7th grade math program, 90% who were in regular 6th grade math made an A or B in pre-AP 7th grade math, 97% who were in pre-AP 6th grade math made an A or B in pre-AP 7th grade math, and 87% who were in regular 6th grade math made an A or B in regular 7th grade math. Results were lower, but still positive, for the preparatory program for 8th grade algebra.

All 8th graders at Granger Junior High School in California are enrolled in 8th grade. “Students we were putting in lower math classes weren’t performing,” shared a Granger math teacher. “So we decided to raise expectations, provide support, and place all of the students in algebra.” Granger has found that students are achieving at greater percentages in algebra than they were in the lower math classes. Part of the support provided includes a unique after-school program, further explained later in this document.

Jackson Middle School in Florida learned that 6th and 7th graders who took advanced math were more prepared – and more successful – in 8th grade algebra. After a few years of refining their program, 92% of AVID 8th graders passed algebra with a C or higher and 90% taking honors algebra passed.

Developing Rigor & College-Ready Cultures

“When I hear school boards say, ‘College isn’t for everybody,’ I agree. But, are we going to cut students off from a chance at a good job as well? Let students make that decision once we’ve given them the best education we can possibly give them.” – Monte Moses, former Cherry Creek ISD Superintendent

Developing a culture of college readiness in school districts and on individual campuses requires dynamic leadership, high student expectations, effective partnerships, and a commitment to college readiness for all students.

Through various concurrent sessions, presenters shared advice on nurturing leadership, information on cultivating partnerships, and practices taking place at schools that have all led to developing college-ready cultures.

Research shows that district leadership has a very powerful correlation to student achievement. Monte Moses shared, in a session on superintendents’ roles in preparing all students for college success, “Effective district leaders focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented systems.”

With this in mind, Moses and Jim Nelson, AVID’s Executive Director and former Texas education commissioner, developed a listing of ten actions to promote college readiness, which are divided into four themes: Beliefs & Vision; Systems, Structures & Culture; Relationships & Support; and Leadership.

The ten actions are:

Beliefs & Vision

1. Make a genuine commitment to college readiness for all students.
2. Develop college awareness among staff, students, and parents.

3. Implement a more robust academic propulsion model.
4. Build effective (non-cognitive) attributes that promote college and life success.

Systems, Structures & Culture

5. Invert the curriculum planning model from K-12 to 16-preK.
6. Acknowledge and address student deficits.
7. Abandon pride of ownership and actively apply knowledge, research, tools, programs, and services from outside experts and companies.

Relationships & Support

8. Provide the support and scaffolding necessary to make college possible and tangible.
9. Listen to the voices and achievements of students (before and after graduation) and use the information to analyze program success and make needed changes.

Leadership

10. Provide energetic leadership to guide the way.

Making a genuine commitment to college readiness for all students is the core of the Beliefs & Vision theme. Moses illustrated this action when he noted, “If a doctor knows about a procedure that can save my life, I expect him or her to use it – not to say, ‘You get it and you don’t.’ But yet, that’s what’s happening in lots of places across our school systems.”

He went on to point out that the same skills required to be college-ready are also necessary to get a good job: “Results of an ACT empirical study show that whether high school students plan to enter college or workforce training programs after graduation, they need to be educated to a comparable level of readiness in reading and mathematics.”

Mike Neece, AVID Director of Systemic Initiatives, spoke about Systems, Structures, and Culture: “I want to start with this premise, that your educational system – your school, your district – is perfectly designed for the results you’re getting. Three critical pieces, if you wanted to change your results or improve your results, lie in your systems, structures, and culture.” He went on to say that the purpose of any system is to reduce variables. “What systems do you have in place that are reducing the variabilities of the outcomes for your kids?” Neece asked.

An example shared was inverting the curriculum planning model by starting with postsecondary knowledge and skills needed and then working backwards through high school, middle school, and finally, to elementary school. “There’s no guessing with this system,” Neece commented.

The third theme important to developing college-readiness – Relationships & Support – includes looking at mindset. “Mindset makes a big difference,” said Neece. “There are really two basic mindsets working in our kids – a fixed mindset about personal qualities and a growth mindset about personal qualities. If we’re going to systematically work towards college readiness, we have to look at the mindsets of our kids.”

Finally, Moses spoke about leadership. He said that superintendents and central office staff must provide energetic leadership to lead the way, set the vision and agenda, monitor progress, and listen. “Good leaders have good ears, said UCLA basketball coach John Wooden,” Moses quoted. “Our student panel is always so powerful. We need to be listening to our kids and listening to the teachers in the trenches.”

Tammi Chun, executive director for Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education, shared the leadership role her organization is playing in increasing college readiness in Hawai'i. She explained that Hawai'i P-20 has partnered with Good Beginnings Alliance, the Hawai'i State Department of Education, and the University of Hawai'i system to strengthen the educational pipeline, so all students can achieve college and career success.

“We all expect that the younger generation will achieve more,” Chun commented. “That’s not currently the case in Hawai'i, as we have fewer young adults with college degrees than adults ages 35-64.” To turn this tide, Hawai'i P-20 set a goal to have 55% of working-age adults achieve a two- or four-year degree and have 100% career- or college-ready by 2025.

As a recent Race to the Top grant awardee, Hawai'i included goals in their application for career and college readiness, such as achieving a 90% on-time high school graduation rate by 2018 and eliminating gaps in proficiency, graduation rate, and college-going by 2018.

Hawai'i P-20's role in promoting a college- and career-ready culture includes providing support to various college- and career-ready programs implemented in the state, data for decision making, and curriculum articulation.

One of the programs implemented in Hawai'i to encourage a college readiness culture is AVID, which currently includes almost 5,000 secondary students. “In a recent study of AVID teachers and students in Hawai'i, we found that 91% of AVID middle school students aspire to complete a four-year degree or higher, while only 79% of non-AVID students have the same aspiration,” Chun shared.

Other AVID schools and districts throughout the country have also been successful – like Hawai'i – in improving college aspirations, readiness, and school culture. Below are stories of a handful of such schools.

JEB Stuart High School & Glasgow Middle School (Falls Church, VA)

Eric Welch, AVID Coordinator at JEB Stuart High School, shared how his school and the middle school feeder have implemented the AVID and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs to increase rigor and create a college-ready culture. JEB Stuart has a 74% minority population, with 70% of students born in another country and a majority on free/reduced lunch.

“We knew that we needed to find a way to get more kids into IB,” Welch shared. Through the direction of their school leadership, JEB Stuart began AVID in 2005, with their feeder school, Glasgow Middle School, beginning in 2006. “Our principal described AVID as a booster shot for our IB program,” he said.

“AVID and IB share the same larger goal: preparing students to be successful in college through rigor,” said Welch. He pointed out though, that while the curricular goals are well-aligned, there are issues that arise with the logistics of each program, in addition to conflicts with state and district requirements.

“When we decided to implement AVID, one of our first issues was determining if we could put more students into IB classes,” said Welch. Increasing the number of IB classes also increases the number of IB-trained teachers needed, which brought teacher attitudes about “those students” to the forefront.

“We were able to train more teachers to teach IB classes because our administration made IB program expansion a priority. It was also helpful that IB was encouraging schools to make their programs more inclusive,” said Welch.

Issues also arose in meeting IB course requirements and state “advanced diploma” requirements, as taking the AVID Elective eliminated the ability of students to take all required IB and/or “advanced diploma” courses. As a result, the decision was made not to focus on meeting all of the IB Middle Years Program (MYP) requirements. Welch shared, “What we gave up with MYP ultimately helps the IB program when students reach 11th and 12th grade. And, although IB students can’t do the AVID Elective their senior year, we believe the rigorous IB diploma is a triumph of the AVID Program.”

Students are encouraged, however, not to focus on the state’s “advanced diploma” requirements and instead, remain in AVID if they’re not working towards an IB diploma. “As long as students do AVID and some IB courses, they will be prepared for college, and this is what college admissions officers are looking for,” he commented.

Ultimately, Welch believes AVID was just what students needed to boost them into IB classes. “The bottom line, if you’re going to do AVID and IB together, is that there needs to be some give and take, creativity, and flexibility . . . and keep your eye on the larger goal of preparing students for college.”

Richardson Independent School District (Richardson, TX)

Richardson ISD (RISD), located in northern Dallas County, is comprised of 55 campuses serving more than 35,000 students. The district implemented AVID in 2003 and now offers it at all secondary campuses and ten elementary campuses. In total, there are 1,734 secondary AVID students and 1,921 elementary AVID students.

The district, which has experienced a change in demographics over the years, becoming a minority majority district in 2008, with minority students being a majority of the total student population, found AVID to be a system that successfully prepares all students for college, while developing a college-focused culture on each campus.

Carmen Steward, AVID District Coordinator, added, “AVID has truly come in and changed the dynamics of our advanced level coursework.” In addition, AVID students’ passing rates on state assessment tests significantly surpass that of non-AVID students.

RISD’s AVID program has created a college-ready culture through implementation of ReadStep, a College Board assessment that provides early feedback on students’ skills, in 8th grade; PSAT testing in 9th and 10th grade; Accuplacer testing in 10th grade; and Princeton

Review in high school. Schools also take students on college campus field trips, display college pennants outside each teacher's room, and blow up college acceptance letters for display. Unique initiatives that have enhanced the success of AVID in RISD include "The 85 Challenge" and Saturday School. Beth Brown, RHS AVID Coordinator, explained "The 85 Challenge": "Students commit to setting aside 85 minutes a week to study at home, earn at least an 85% in all classes, and work together as an AVID community of learners to obtain a class passing rate of 85% in every core subject." To motivate students, competitions are held between grade levels, grade checks occur every week, and additional opportunities for support are provided via Power Lunches (tutoring during lunch) and Saturday School.

Saturday School, which started as a detention period for those not attending Power Lunches, have also been transformed into learning opportunities, with tutors and teachers present to help students in areas where they are struggling.

"AVID has become a very critical part of how we help our students be successful every day," shared Steward.

Mount Vernon High School (Mount Vernon, WA)

Mount Vernon School District, made up of 6,200 students, 49% of whom are Hispanic and 64% low-income, implemented AVID in 2003, at the same time they began offering Advanced Placement courses. Like most schools that have effectively implemented AVID, much of their success is attributed to complete district support, a dynamic leadership team at each school, teachers that believe in the program, and the use of data and analysis to guide decisions and improvements. A unique challenge facing the district, and to a greater extent the high school, is a staggering mobility rate of 27% districtwide and 41% at the high school level. This challenge, however, has not made the success their AVID students have achieved stagnant.

AVID in the Mount Vernon school district has grown to include 22% of their student population. When comparing 2008 Washington state reading assessment scores, achievement gaps for AVID students all but closed, with all AVID sub-groups (White, Hispanic, Free/Reduced Lunch) scoring approximately 90%, higher than any sub-group from a state or district perspective. In the state math assessment, while there are still gaps in achievement based on sub-groups, each sub-group scored significantly higher than the same sub-group on a state or district level.

Mount Vernon High School principal David Anderson views AVID as a belief, not a program. He said, "You're not implementing a program, you're implementing a belief and a structure system that will help promote students and staff to a different level of what should take place, instead of what has been taking place."

This philosophy was motivated by a strong sense of shared vision for the high school. In Ken Blanchard's book, "*Leading at a Higher Level*," Anderson mentioned that vision is discussed as something that provides guidance for daily decisions so that people are aiming at the right target, not working at cross-purposes. A vision, Blanchard states, should have three vital components:

- A significant purpose
- A picture of the future
- Clear values

For Mount Vernon High School, their vision is to prepare every student for a successful postsecondary experience. Their picture of the future is improved graduation rates. And, their values – which they refer to as common expectations – include improvement, high yield strategies, Advanced Placement, and timeliness.

“The reason I think AVID has been so successful in Mt. Vernon is because there’s been collaboration between all of us – district office, school office, and classroom,” shared David Scott, former AVID District Coordinator.

Granger Junior High School (National City, CA)

Located in the poorest city in San Diego County, Granger Junior High School faced quite a challenge in 2002. The school was unsafe, with a high gang presence; it was the lowest performing school in its district; and students were unmotivated.

In 2003, the school began changing its culture, raising expectations for students, and developing a dynamic after-school program. All 8th graders were enrolled in algebra and additional help was provided through after-school support classes facilitated by Granger teachers. Five-question weekly quizzes were implemented in all core subjects, with any student scoring a 70% or lower required to attend tutoring the following week. And, AVID strategies were embedded throughout the school.

AVID strategies that continue to be especially effective include Cornell Notes, tutorials, higher-level thinking questions, and collaboration. All desks are arranged in pairs or groups to encourage collaboration and facilitate academic discourse. Word walls and sentence frames are also posted throughout each classroom to emphasize academic vocabulary.

The after-school program became a cornerstone to Granger’s success. At the beginning of the school year, all students were enrolled in the program. Each day, through a folder system, teachers determined who needed to attend, either because of failing the weekly quiz from the week prior – and thus attending a support class – or because of not completing an assignment – and thus attending the Academic Enrichment Center (AEC).

Granger is now one of the highest performing schools in its district. A Granger teacher noted, “The key to our success has been accountability, consistency, and follow-through. We tell our kids, ‘No hay pobrecitios a Granger’ (“No poor things at Granger”). We expect more and they achieve more.”

Jackson Middle School (Orlando, FL)

Jackson Middle School was like many inner-city schools – high gang violence, truancy issues, and low student achievement. Then, in 2004, they implemented AVID and things began to change.

To provide rigor to their AVID students, a majority were enrolled in Honors Algebra. Unfortunately, because the school was not initially allowed to offer the course during the regular school day, students took the course before school each day. The first year, only 27% of students

taking Honors Algebra passed. As teachers continued working with students – and AVID permeated their campus – 92% of 8th graders passed algebra during the 2009-2010 school year.

Students' improved math scores can be attributed to several factors. First, the International Baccalaureate program was launched at Jackson in 2007. This provided a greater foundation of rigor for students and important training for teachers. Additionally, in 2008, focus was placed on 6th and 7th grade students' math instruction, increasing the rigor, which provided for stronger vertical alignment in preparation for 8th grade algebra. Finally, the AVID site team encouraged use of AVID strategies schoolwide.

To encourage the use of AVID strategies, and as part of its transition to a college-ready culture, Jackson developed a College-Ready Schoolwide Implementation Plan. The plan included six areas of focus – many of which are common to AVID: writing skills, inquiry skills, collaboration, reading skills, culture of college awareness/self image as a future college student, and organizational skills. Below each area are goals set for the school year, along with action items to help achieve the goals. For instance, under inquiry skills, one of the goals was, “Students in all grade levels use Costa’s levels of questions to formulate higher level questions in content areas,” and the action item associated with this was, “Costa’s levels are included in student planners. Introduction/review of Costa’s delivered in August pre-planning staff development.”

Lisa Crangle, Jackson’s AVID Coordinator, said, “We made it clear to staff that we’re an AVID School, not a school with an AVID Program.”

Advanced Placement (AP) Incentive Program - Worcester, MA; Ysleta, TX; Colton, CA
Faatimah Muhammad, AVID Western Division Assistant Director, and Gary Kroesch, AP teacher, shared information on a three-year grant focused on increasing AP success in Worcester, MA; Ysleta, TX; and Colton, CA. Goals of the program included increasing six key components:

- The number of AP course offerings
- The number of teachers who are trained to help low-income and minority students succeed in Pre-AP and AP courses
- The number and percent of low-income and minority students enrolled in AP courses
- The number and percent of low-income and minority students who take and pass AP tests
- The number and percent of low-income and minority students who take college entrance exams
- The number and percent of low-income and minority students who enroll in college

To accomplish these goals, the three districts were brought together for a conference on grant leadership and cultural coherence. Common learning activities were demonstrated and taught, including Socratic Seminars, Cornell Notes, and levels of questioning. Support was then provided over the next three years.

At the end of the grant period, increases were seen in all six key components. AP offerings were doubled, the number of teachers trained went from 131 in 2006 to 758 in 2009, and 907 students applied for college in 2009, as compared to 537 in 2006.

Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) We should run by Granger. We had their PPT posted online and needed to take it down. Not sure what the issues are.

DoDEA operates schools in districts located on military installations around the world. Of their total student population, 8.4% are AVID students, with 43% White, 21% African American, and 14% Hispanic.

Jonathan Petrick, AVID Coordinator for Ramstein Middle School in Ramstein, Germany, and Wendy Cooley, AVID Coordinator for Kinnick High School in Yokosuka, Japan, shared how AVID is supported at DoDEA schools in several ways. First, they said, data is infused into AVID program management and provided to schools. This data is then used for recruitment, grade monitoring, and program monitoring of rigorous curriculum enrollment, grade point average, school certification data, postsecondary attendance and scholarships, and more. Second, capacity is built through effective professional development. DoDEA teachers and staff participate in AVID Summer Institutes, Area AVID Conferences, district educator trainings, and continuous school improvement trainings at the district and school level. Third, fidelity to AVID's certification Essentials is ensured with the implementation of an Electronic Certification Portfolio/Certification Evidence Document. These items include suggested evidence sources below each indicator on the Certification Self-Study (CSS) and embedded supporting documents within the respective indicator to assist in collecting information. Teacher feedback on the Certification Evidence Document has been very positive, Petrick and Cooley shared, with one teacher commenting, "This has taken the guesswork out of what we need to prepare."

DoDEA schools have taken AVID schoolwide, transforming systems, instruction, and the culture of their schools, ensuring that all students are college-ready. "Not every student may go to college," said Petrick. "Because these kids come from military families, some plan to join the military as well. We're trying to build their options." Cooley added that she reminds students that if they get a college diploma, they can enter the military as an officer.

Petrick's school has found particular success in implementing a study skills course that all students take at the end of each day. At the beginning of the school year, an instructional activities calendar is developed, outlining daily activities. "Every teacher receives this calendar packet so that everyone is literally on the same page," Petrick commented. Included are various AVID strategies, including binder checks, critical reading, and Cornell Notes. During the first month of the course, students and teachers focus on learning about preferred learning styles, personality types, and ideal careers for each student. This then assists both the teacher and the student throughout the year in using effective learning strategies.

Cooley's DoDEA school in Kinnick, Japan, has also implemented several unique initiatives to build a college-ready culture. These initiatives include "Life After Kinnick," a freshman seminar, a college resource room, and a drop-out prevention girls' group. The drop-out prevention girls' group meets weekly, with a focus of motivating and redirecting students to accept ownership of their academic future through positive choices and self-discipline. As a result of this group, 100% of participants' grades have improved and truancy has decreased. One student commented, "I truly love going and I am also starting to like going to school, and this is all due to the loving faculty members – people who actually care about us."

British Columbia AVID

SRDC, a Canadian non-profit research organization, is evaluating whether the AVID Elective class can help 9th to 12th grade students in British Columbia (BC) access postsecondary education. The large scale project, established by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the British Columbia Ministry of Education and being conducted under the leadership of Dr. Reuben Ford, includes more than 1,500 students and 21 schools in British Columbia.

In his presentation, Dr. Ford pointed out that critical to the evaluation is determining whether AVID-eligible students who take the AVID Elective are more likely to access postsecondary education than if they took existing high school electives. As such, the evaluation used a randomized design where AVID-eligible students were randomly assigned to either a program group (AVID Elective class) or control group (no AVID Elective class). Then, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered – and continue to be gathered – from multiple sources to determine outcomes.

While the evaluation will not be complete until 2012, initial findings shed some light on the question. Dr. Ford shared that over the first three years of the investigation, the program group experienced more AVID strategies than the control group, implying that AVID changed the educational experiences of the program group students. Strategies showing the greatest differential between the program group and control group included tutorials and Costa's Levels of Questions, Cornell Notes, and visits to postsecondary institutions.

Initial findings also show that AVID has had a positive impact on students taking the most rigorous math course offered. And, while AVID students received lower grades in 9th grade (their first year of AVID) than those in the control group, by 11th grade, their grades recovered, with fewer AVID students failing classes than those students in the control group.

The Interim Impacts Report states, "Results to date support the idea that AVID may be a promising program for enhancing BC students' achievement in high school and their chances of meeting postsecondary program eligibility requirements."

Implementing Culturally Relevant Education

"I don't become what I think I can; I don't become what you think I can; I become what I think you think I can."
– Dr. Chance W. Lewis, professor, Texas A&M University (from *Kunjufu*)

Several concurrent sessions at the national conference focused on barriers to achievement by minority students and solutions for developing culturally relevant education.

Dr. Chance Lewis, professor at Texas A&M University, shared a listing of barriers to Black male achievement⁸, although the barriers can also be viewed as common for other minority and low-

⁸ *Kunjufu* (2005)

income students. They include: school beliefs, teacher beliefs, student beliefs, student culture, curriculum, low expectations, and low requirements.

One step toward removing these barriers is understanding cultural proficiency and teaching with cultural relevance. Lewis provided the following formula for culturally relevant pedagogy: Academic Standards + Relevance to Students in Their Life = Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

He also discussed five types of teachers, based on the work of Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu (2001):

Custodians – Use the same lesson plan every year; make derogatory statements.

Referral Agents – Don't educate children, refer them to someone else.

Instructors – Honestly admit they teach subjects, not students.

Teachers – Experts in subject matter and learning styles.

Coaches – Understand subject matter and pedagogy, but more importantly, bond with students.

“When we look at this, many prospective teachers are prepared to be custodians and referral agents, and they may not even know it,” said Lewis.

Dr. Donna Ford would likely agree. She shared during the panel discussion, “College graduates with teaching certificates are not prepared to teach in real classrooms,” referring to their general lack of cultural proficiency. “We need other courses taught in college to teachers – courses on diversity, poverty, language.”

But what is cultural proficiency? Carmen Serret-Lopez, Senior Program Specialist with the Los Angeles County Office of Education, defined cultural proficiency as “an inside-out approach for examining and changing personal, professional, and organizational policies, practices, values, and behaviors, leading to effective cross cultural communication and interaction and to meet diverse students' needs and close educational gaps.”

The Los Angeles County Office of Education has developed both an AVID recruitment packet and professional development to move their collective cultural proficiency forward. The recruitment packet includes a listing of culturally proficient recruitment tips, including “Target local community groups of underserved populations such as churches, park and recreation centers, city groups, community partnerships, etc.” and “Include current AVID students who are male, African American and/or Hispanic, etc., as part of the recruitment process.”

Serret-Lopez shared a quote from Sonia Nieto: “Millions of children historically have failed in American school systems, particularly children of color from urban and rural low socioeconomic status. Schools cannot change poverty or the living conditions of those children; however, schools can change ways to reach and teach all children.”

It is with this understanding that Serret-Lopez and her colleagues approached the AVID Cultural Proficiency Continuum and its use in professional development. “The continuum provides six points that indicate ways of perceiving and responding to cultural differences, and ultimately helping to measure cultural competence,” said Dr. Laurie Wiebold, AVID Regional Director. She continued by explaining each of the six points:

- **Cultural destructiveness** – An intentional attempt to eliminate or denigrate other people’s culture or aspects of culture.
- **Cultural incapacity** – Believing in the superiority of one’s own culture or the dominant culture – and behaving in ways that disempower another’s culture (unintentional, but still destructive).
- **Cultural blindness** – Acting as if cultural differences do not matter or as if there are no differences between/among cultures.
- **Cultural pre-competence** – Recognizing the limitations of one’s skills or an organization’s practices when interacting with other cultural groups, but enacting policies/practices that don’t fully address the problem or create new problems.
- **Cultural competence** – Aligning personal values and behaviors with the organization’s policies and practices in ways that are inclusive of diverse cultures and adaptable to their needs, even if such adaptations do not specifically serve the needs of the dominant culture.
- **Cultural proficiency** – Holding and promoting a vision that individuals and the organization are instruments for creating a socially just democracy; interacting with colleagues, students, and families, as advocates for lifelong learning to serve the needs of all groups with an emphasis on closing gaps for underserved groups.

To end the session, Wiebold shared research by Mark Anderson⁹ on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, which suggests that teachers perceive themselves and the school to be more culturally proficient than the students perceive them to be. Further, teachers who perceive themselves to be culturally proficient think this is the same as cultural awareness. Finally, as educators learn more and strive to be culturally proficient, they realize and understand how far from proficiency they truly are.

Patrick Briggs, AVID Texas Assistant Director, and Corey Gaither, AVID/AAMI teacher, further expanded on cultural issues important to successfully educating all students in a highly energetic presentation on culturally relevant teaching.

Briggs shared, “According to Dr. Gloria Ladson Billings, culturally relevant teaching empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge skills and attitudes. So what does that mean in the classroom? It means that teachers are using the background, knowledge and experiences of their students to inform lessons and methodology.”

The African American Male Initiative, which AVID launched in 2006, focuses on providing educational opportunities to, and increasing the number of, African American males who graduate from high school and are college-ready. “If we get them in, we know what we can do with the trajectory of their lives,” said Briggs. With this in mind, Briggs and Gaither pointed out that culturally relevant teaching doesn’t mean changing what you’re doing, it means changing how you’re doing it. They then provided 12 tools and examples for culturally relevant teaching:

⁹ Anderson, Mark. 2010. “A comparison of teacher and student perceptions of cultural proficiency at the high school level.” Claremont University.

1. Change the delivery and provide scaffolding and tools to get there.
When assigning a long-term project, provide intermediate deadline dates for portions of the project to ensure students stay on pace.
2. Include movement, interaction with peers, and collaboration to make connections to the curriculum.
Allocate a section of your classroom for students who need to get up and move during class.
3. Create lesson plans that allow for inclusion of all learning styles, including left-brain and right-brain instruction.
In addition to writing, allow students to draw or communicate information in another format.
4. Activate prior background knowledge to increase long-term memory.
Rather than having students just read about Anne Frank, first conduct a Socratic Seminar on discrimination to provide students with background knowledge.
5. Identify and develop your students' talents.
If teaching about the digestive system, allow students to present their reports in their own way, whether that be through a skit, cheer, work of art, rap, etc.
6. Arrange student seating that is conducive to collaboration.
Pair up desks or arrange desks in groups, with students facing each other, to encourage collaboration.
7. Include book choices, articles for discussion, and guest speakers from a diverse group.
Bring in role models who are positive and of the same ethnicity as your student population.
8. Establish verbal and non-verbal cues and create a call and response.
When needing to bring down the noise level in your classroom, establish a non-verbal cue that you'll use consistently as a signal to quiet down.
9. Display images on the walls that reflect all people.
Pictures and posters should reflect the diversity of your students.
10. Ensure that students who need the most attention are close to the teacher.
Make an effort to know the needs of your students.
11. Set up cultural centers that allow students to showcase their backgrounds.
Create a story board center where students can each write a sentence, collaboratively developing a single story, based on a writing prompt such as, "One day, when we went on a field trip . . ."
12. Dedicate a section of your classroom to praising student achievements.
What you celebrate is what you value. This can include calling parents when students do something well.

Finally, Briggs discussed the importance of equity as it relates to preparing all students for college readiness. He said, "Equity is moving students from a different place to a common place." Understanding cultural proficiency and implementing culturally relevant teaching in the classroom provides a path for students from different cultures to achieve and be successful.

Expanding Strategies to Support Underserved Students

"Our ultimate goal is to provide access to what AVID provides and to what college preparatory curriculum provides." – Michelle Mullen, AVID Curriculum Consultant

The US Department of Education indicates that more than 5 million school-aged children – more than 10% nationally – are English Language Learners (ELLs). States with the highest ELL populations are California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois.¹⁰ 65% of these ELLs are born in the United States and many become labeled “long-term” ELLs because of their lack of English proficiency.

As part of the concurrent session entitled “*Successful Strategies for English Language Learners in Math and Science*,” Miguel Espinoza, AVID Science Teacher, and Sandy Francis, AVID Math Teacher, shared information on second language acquisition:

- **Increased time spent by ELL students immersed in the mainstream classroom doesn’t equate to learning English more quickly.** Language is not “soaked up.” Students need to be able to process what they’re learning and be provided multiple ways of learning.
- **Cognitive and academic development in a student’s native language has an important and positive effect on second language acquisition.** Research shows that the most significant student background variable is the amount of formal schooling they’ve received in their first language. While non-native speakers in a second language do well in their early schooling years (K–3), they do less well in grades 4–12, when the academic and cognitive demands of the curriculum increase rapidly if they have little or no academic or cognitive development in their first language.
- **The cultures of students affect how long it takes them to acquire English.** For instance, students from a modern industrialized country will learn differently, and in different time, than those from a rural agricultural area. Writing systems of their native country can also affect language learning.
- **Second language learners will acquire academic English faster if their parents continue to speak in their native language at home.** The primary reason for this is that the language will be richer and more complex. Children will eventually translate basic concepts into English. Additionally, if a parent is reading in the native language, they’ll spend more time discussing the story and asking questions.

Based on the five ELL Domains of academic vocabulary, reading development, writing development, oral language development, and metacognition, Espinoza and Francis shared teaching strategies they’ve found to be effective with ELLs, although, they noted, the strategies can clearly be used with all students. Some of these strategies included:

- **Student-Tutor-Teacher** – This is a feedback strategy that allows students to tell you how much they feel they’ve learned. The teacher asks a question regarding the ability of the students to lead a discussion on the content just taught and the students reply by circling or writing “student” – meaning that they’re still learning the information – “tutor” – meaning they could help another student understand the information – or “teacher” – meaning they could teach the class the content.
- **Fold-Its** – Fold-Its help develop vocabulary with a more complex understanding. To create a fold it, students fold a sheet of paper in half. On the outside, they write the word and draw an illustration of the word. On the inside, they write a cognate (similar word in

¹⁰ <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/faqs/view/4>

their own language) or link term and the definition of the word. Then, below that, they write a context sentence with the word.

- **Facts in Fours** – This strategy builds vocabulary and metacognition. The student creates a table with four columns and four rows. He writes one letter at the top of each column and the teacher provides one term for every row. The student then comes up with a characteristic of the term that starts with the letter in each column. To add a bit of fun, Francis recommended making the last term something fun, like the teacher’s name or the name of the school.

To ensure that ELL students, especially long-term ELLs, have full access to AVID and college-preparatory coursework, AVID has piloted an English Learner College Readiness (ELCR) project – a multi-year middle school curriculum to accelerate the acquisition of academic skills and language by long-term English learners.

Michelle Mullen, AVID Curriculum Consultant, presented information on the project in a session entitled “*English Learner College Readiness: Supporting Long-term English Learners on the Path to College.*” She said, “Our ultimate goal is to provide access to what AVID provides and to what college preparatory curriculum provides.” She pointed out, though, “Trying to work with English learners in high school is too late. We found that we needed to focus on middle school.”

The ELCR program, which is currently being piloted in eight California middle schools, provides English language development courses for intermediate ELLs to accelerate their academic language acquisition and entrance to AVID and college preparatory high school coursework. This is accomplished through three initiatives:

- **Spanish for Spanish Speakers** – Courses available starting in middle school as a pathway to AP Spanish in high school.
- **ELCR Team** – Content area teachers and ELCR course teachers work together to plan instruction that supports academic language building and student achievement.
- **Summer & Year-long Course Sequence** – Language development courses with an AVID overlay, starting the summer between 6th and 7th grades and continuing through the summer between 8th and 9th grades, including a 7th grade year-long elective and an 8th grade year-long elective.

Preliminary qualitative data on the project has been positive. Larry Guthrie, director of CREATE who is tracking the project’s students, shared that students show an increased sense of competence and confidence, most are using academic language correctly in discussion, and they’re taking Cornell Notes, maintaining their binders, and participating in tutorials at various levels of skill.

Supporting Postsecondary

“AVID Postsecondary treats the student not just as a learner, but as a whole person.” – Joe Kuzzio, professor

AVID’s College Readiness System, a system that started as a high school elective course to successfully help all students become college-ready, has, over the years, moved into middle school, elementary school, and now postsecondary.

Three key issues prominent in today’s postsecondary arena are completion, time to degree, and remediation. Eileen Friou, AVID National Director of Postsecondary, shared startling facts in a session entitled “*AVID Postsecondary Overview*.” She said, “76% of college students who take remedial reading and 63% of college students taking remedial math don’t ever attain an associate’s or bachelor’s degree. Additionally, only 57% of enrolled college students earn a bachelor’s degree in six years.” Clearly, remediation can have negative consequences for both completion and time to degree.

Additionally, while colleges focus heavily on recruitment, Friou stated, “That’s not enough.” There must be a continued focus in a student’s 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years of college if the problem of persistence is to be diminished.

Finally, she shared that there are the issues of organization and time management at the postsecondary level. “These are some of the biggest issues at postsecondary, as it’s difficult for students to balance classes, work, and social activities,” she said.

Because of the success in AVID Secondary and AVID Elementary, Friou shared that postsecondary institutions asked AVID to assist them with students who came to college not ready for the rigor or college level coursework.

In its first pilot year, AVID Postsecondary began to collaborate with institutions of higher education to support students with the goal of increased learning, persistence, completion, and success beyond college.

Friou told attendees, “It’s a systemic initiative to support students who are under-prepared for college by:

- Providing academic training to develop college success skills needed for academic success, persistence, and degree completion.
- Reducing barriers that traditionally limit levels of academic achievement.
- Facilitating professional development using student success pedagogies applicable across disciplines and student success services.”

As AVID Postsecondary was developed, five Essentials were developed. They are:

1. Administrative Leadership and Support
2. AVID College Planning Team
3. Professional Development
4. AVID Freshman Experience and Beyond
5. Data Collection and Research

Currently, there are 14 colleges participating in AVID Postsecondary. “And, while AVID Secondary looks very much the same from school-to-school, AVID Postsecondary looks a little different at each college,” said Friou.

Assisting AVID with developing this postsecondary system is a team of educators, including Joe Kuzzio, a professor at ____?_?_?_____. In his review of AVID Postsecondary, he characterized the program in the following way:

- **Holistic** – It engages the whole student and the whole college.
- **Systemic** – It involves a systematic and comprehensive set of strategies that, collectively, have the potential to have a synergistic and transformative effect on campus culture.
- **Sustained** – Long-term support is planned for and continued across time that ensures ongoing institutional commitment and cumulative impact.
- **Empirical** – It builds on a solid research base that spans multiple campuses and involves longitudinal assessments of students over time.
- **Customized** – It’s tailored to fit campuses where it will best work for students and that are most likely to commit to and benefit from its strategic approach.

Lori Brandt Hale, associate professor at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, MN, one of the AVID Postsecondary pilot colleges, shared her college’s AVID experience. She said that AVID began at Augsburg with strategies embedded in a course already required and with a cohort of students that had already been identified as academically underprepared.

After finding success with the initial course, Augsburg then faced the challenge of determining how to provide AVID to a larger group of students. They didn’t want to bring in a whole new program – “There were already a plethora of student support services,” said Hale. They also realized that the effort and time dedicated by the professor of the initial class was unlikely to be replicated by other faculty. Ultimately, AVID was introduced as a training session for faculty on AVID strategies. “We had a great turn out, and because participating faculty response was so positive, we started with a more sustained professional development program,” shared Hale.

The professional development program consisted of a commitment to attend AVID workshops and a minimum of three AVID faculty discussions. Initially, 40 faculty members signed up, with 30 completing the training. The program allowed faculty members to be engaged in matters of pedagogy, equipped them with strategies to better address the range of student needs, and created a familiarity and enthusiasm about AVID.

While AVID Postsecondary is only in its initial stages, early findings have been positive. As an example, Skagit Valley College’s Nursing Program saw its retention rate increase from 50% to 93%.

In an effort to see similar results in Texas, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) recently partnered with AVID to address postsecondary issues in its state. Evelyn Hiatt, THECB deputy assistant commissioner, shared, “Of the students in Texas who enrolled in college in 2003, 66% didn’t graduate by 2009, with the percent not graduating even higher for Hispanic and African American students.” This problem of persistence led the THECB to investigate solutions, landing at AVID.

Hiatt said, “There were no higher education programs that had either the scale or the research history to back up claims of high success. AVID had 30 years of research to back up claims that

it was successful in getting students ready for college and their data involved literally thousands of students, primarily those who were first generation college students, Hispanics, African Americans.”

Thus, AVID Postsecondary began at 25 colleges in Texas in 2010. AVID and the THECB used the Five Essentials for Postsecondary to guide practice and campus expectations:

1. Administrative Leadership and Support
 - Identify an AVID Postsecondary Liaison to lead, coordinate, and support the AVID College Team.
 - Establish an AVID College Team of eight or more members with representation from administration, faculty, and student affairs.
2. AVID College Planning Team
 - Collaborate with the AVID Postsecondary staff to develop a multi-year AVID Texas Postsecondary plan.
 - Conduct a minimum of two AVID College Team meetings to continue the development of the multi-year plan.
 - Collaborate with AVID Postsecondary staff to determine criteria and selection process of students to participate in the project.
3. Professional Development
 - Send a team of at least eight to attend the AVID Summer Institute for summers 2010 and 2011. Planning team and faculty must attend.
 - Coordinate a schedule of contracted professional development and college visitation days with the AVID Postsecondary staff.
 - Have all AVID Freshman Experience Course faculty attend appropriate AVID training no later than the conclusion of the summer 2011 semester.
4. AVID Freshman Experience and Beyond
 - Pilot the AVID Freshman Experience Course in fall 2011.
 - Develop plans for an AVID Center on campus, including the site, purpose, and resources needed.
5. Data Collection and Research
 - Meet standards of clear and measurable work product as provided in AVID’s Postsecondary Essentials.
 - Participate in the AVID Postsecondary research and evaluation.

Hiatt shared that future plans include providing participating campuses with more funding, placing more emphasis on the role of tutorials and AVID Center on campus, and bolstering morale of key players who may be resistant to change.

Conclusion

AVID’s national conference, “College Readiness for All: Delivering the Dream,” provided attendees with refreshed enthusiasm and concrete strategies for improving college readiness for all students.

Through the dynamic general sessions and plethora of concurrent session topics, these educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders gained advice and learned what others are doing to incite changes that are yielding a positive difference in the lives of students. Through cultivating vertical alignment, developing rigor and college-ready cultures, implementing culturally relevant education, expanding strategies to support English Language Learners, and focusing on postsecondary, we can truly provide academic excellence and equity.

As each attendee who experienced these three days of inspiration and education goes back to share what they learned, the dream of delivering college-readiness to all students will become a closer reality.

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