

Santa Maria, CA AVID was introduced at Fesler in 2000. In the past decade, our AVID Program has developed through a continual process of evolution. Initially, only one section of the AVID elective was offered and it took place before the school day started. This year, 20% of our students are enrolled in AVID elective classes that are now scheduled in the regular school day. Three sections at each grade level (7th and 8th) are scheduled for the 2010-2011 school year. The site team has worked diligently to refine our recruitment practices, adhering closely to the philosophy that “AVID is a program for ordinary students who can be empowered to achieve extraordinary things.” AVID students are required to enroll in the most rigorous courses offered (7th Grade Honors Math; 8th Grade Algebra; Honors English) and are expected to sign contracts promising to commit additional time to their studies (via zero period or lunchtime tutoring) should their grades demand it. The rigor of our coursework, combined with unwavering support has made our AVID program extremely powerful and successful.

Students enrolled in AVID Elective classes consistently achieve at a higher level in advanced courses than students with similar STAR scores, GPAs, etc but are not enrolled in AVID. AVID students experience a significant increase in their grade point average and generally are the best students in all of their classes, even though they are enrolled in the most challenging courses offered. At Fesler Junior High School, the most rigorous classes are the Honors/GATE English classes, Honors Math in 7th grade, and Algebra in 8th grade. Students who successfully complete Algebra earn high school bearing credits.

Our students primarily come from poverty – 74% qualify for federal free/reduced lunch (compared to 69% statewide). The majority of families in our school are Hispanic (83%) with 38% being English Learners. AVID provides the support that levels the playing field for students of poverty and linguistic disadvantage. Students thrive in the tutorials and find much valued support from peers and college tutors. Our AVID teachers are especially gifted at creating a ‘family’ environment with an excellent safety net where students feel free to take risks in asking questions and proposing answers even when unsure.

The principal, site team, and various staff members attend the Summer Institute each year where many hours are spent discussing the things that resonate from the course strands. It is through these discussions that the year’s staff development plan is created. Some of the outcomes are that the entire faculty has fully implemented Cornell Notes in every subject area (including PE, Exploratory classes and Special Education) and that many teachers have incorporated interactive notebooks (not only as means of classroom organization, but as a way to achieve WICR on a daily basis). Several teachers also use philosophical chairs and Socratic seminars as a means to encourage higher levels of inquiry. More than 20% of Fesler’s teachers are trained in the implementation of AVID Tutorials and incorporate this powerful methodology into their core classes. Fesler’s AVID program is a strong component of our school-wide culture and we achieved National Demonstration Site status in October 2009.

All students are invited (via assemblies, bulletins, and newsletters) to apply for AVID. The site team and AVID Student Leadership Team hold an assembly for our current students and visit each of the feeder elementary schools to give a presentation and distribute applications. Each year for the past three years, Fesler has increased the number of sections AVID electives, going from 2 to 6. In the 2010 – 2011 school year, 25% of the student body will be enrolled in AVID. All students enrolled in AVID are also enrolled the most rigorous classes along with the other highest achieving students in the school. Concurrently, Fesler has also increased the number of sections of Algebra, 7th grade Honors Math, and Honors English in both grades. Inviting teachers to the Summer Institute (where they hear many people with the parallel philosophies) has helped break down some of barriers related to the question of under-prepared students' entry into rigorous courses.

Student support is critically important, especially for “less prepared” students taking challenging classes. Most often, these students do not have anyone at home with the knowledge to assist them with homework, so school support is essential. We provide a daily “zero period” – before school, peer-led tutorials under teacher guidance. University tutors and peer tutors (180 hours/week) provide academic role models in all the core classes. This is an essential element in students' successes in the very rigorous classes. The WICR strategies that are taught in the AVID elective class provide the educational path for the students to follow. They learn time management, study skills, how to ‘chunk’ a text, highlighting material for ease of understanding, using the ‘buddy’ system when they feel lost or confused – survival skills for all courses!

All Fesler students are provided the opportunity to attend two 8 week supplemental sessions which focus on math and reading/language arts. This class meets on Tuesdays after school from 3:45 – 5:45 p.m. (Tuesday Late Class = **TLC**). Nearly 200 students participated in the Fall TLC, and about 125 students enrolled in the Spring TLC. Almost an entire Algebra class (largely AVID) attended TLC, spending both hours with their Algebra teacher (by their own choice!) and that is another strong testament to our students' commitment to academic excellence.

For the past three years, there has been a trend of increased enrollment in AVID elective classes and therefore increased enrolled in the more rigorous classes by English Learners, students of poverty, underserved students and males of color. The AVID recruitment process has become more refined and the AVID team more polished as the members have gained experience. This spring, during the recruitment process, the Team concentrated on recruiting males of color and we are excited to report that finally the 7th grade AVID Elective class of 2010-2011 will have more boys than girls!

The AVID Site Team monitors At Risk students, sometimes mandating lunchtime tutoring when indicated. We have a substantial number of AVID trained tutors available for this task. In the AVID elective classes, these same tutors provide a ratio of 7 to 1. University tutors and peer tutors, trained in the AVID tutorial model, provide tremendous support to AVID students in the

most rigorous classes. Of course, these tutors provide assistance to non-AVID students as well, creating an environment of equity and full inclusion within the most challenging courses.

The Site Team is composed of teacher leaders representing each of the content areas resulting in buy-in by influential staff members. Many members of the Site Team are also members of School Leadership Team, which serves as a liaison group between teachers and administration. The Site Team promotes active recruitment of new members to attend Team meetings, provide input on AVID students, and attend the Summer Institute.

Students and parents are provided information on course selection and registration in both English and Spanish through monthly newsletters mailed home, automated phone calling, student assemblies, and evening meetings. Counselors and administrators meet with students and parents to discuss and review options. Parents are informed about the impact that 9th grade course selections can have on high school graduation and the college application process. Fesler continues to make “being informed” a priority for all parties involved in students’ education. We are proud to note that Fesler’s efforts have paid off as our students have continued on the path to higher education. The data that the high schools report to us shows that a high percentage of our AVID students are entering colleges and universities. We also have anecdotal evidence in the form of letters from former students who are attending college.