

Richardson, TX AVID was implemented within Richardson High School in 2005. Since then, we have made considerable strides toward the school-wide integration of the AVID philosophy and practices. The number of sections we have offered to our students has continued to grow each year, from four sections in 2005-06 to thirteen sections in 2009-10. Our current enrollment is 249 students, and we project an enrollment of 273 students for the 2010-11 school year.

One of our goals is to ensure our teachers are educated and trained in AVID strategies within core and elective classes. We feel that the best practices shown within AVID strategies aid in closing the achievement gap across the school. TAKS scores continue to rise each year, for all ethnicities, as shown on our AEIS report. Generally, greater than 95% of AVID students consistently pass the TAKS test throughout all grades and content areas. We do not focus solely on the PreAP/AP classes for rigorous work and high expectations; our expectation is that ALL students should be challenged to achieve their highest level of achievement.

The site team works collaboratively to empower our staff through staff development sessions and the “AVID Accolades” electronic newsletter. Currently, we have thirty teachers, counselors, and administrators who are actively involved on the AVID Site Team. Every summer, we send at least four members of the site team, as well as all AVID teachers, a counselor, and administrator to AVID Summer Institute to receive training. The site team is comprised of teachers from multiple teaching areas, ranging from the four core subjects, to numerous elective and Magnet classes including health, speech, physical education, peer helpers, hospitality, technology, art, and co-op education. With the help of these diversified site team members, we have been able to spread AVID strategies school-wide in a more informal format. These teachers take the strategies and educate other teachers in their department, providing ways to incorporate AVID strategies in their individualized classes. As noted by Katie Fisher, one of our site team members prior to becoming an AVID elective teacher, “The first year I heard about AVID Cornell notes, I decided I was going to take that on for my Geometry students. Now, three years later, the majority of the Geometry teachers use Cornell notes in their classes. These strategies have truly spread school-wide.” As well, our monthly “AVID Accolades” electronic newsletter also includes strategies for student achievement that teachers are able to implement within their content area. These methods have proven to be successful in our goal of spreading best practices school-wide to benefit all students and promote college readiness.

RHS also works toward promoting a school-wide college-bound atmosphere. This initiative is conducted through multiple venues, including every teacher in the building posting a sign outside their classrooms which includes the teacher’s name, college attended, degree earned and classes taught. During the first semester, the AVID site team worked together to produce a Virtual Tour of Iowa State University. A representative from Iowa State spoke to multiple RHS classes about

going to college, expectations, requirements, and the overall college experience. All teachers throughout the school were invited to bring their class to the virtual tour which was held in the auditorium. Throughout the course of the day, more than 570 students were exposed to a college-life presentation. In our diverse school population, these opportunities provide more college exposure than many students receive at home. The AVID team has also provided access for all students to take the Princeton Review test in preparation for the SAT and ACT. This test helps students determine their potential success with the SAT and the ACT, which will help them determine which test to choose, as well as areas they need to improve. With the help of the counselors and site team members, we successfully conducted a full-length practice test for approximately 150 students on Saturday, November 21, 2009. Following the test, we held a strategy session for students and parents to review scores and test-taking strategies. Furthermore, our AVID students take two field trips every year. They visit a local college and a cultural site. Our field trips have taken AVID students to places such as Baylor University, University of Oklahoma, Texas A&M-Commerce, Louisiana Tech, Grambling University, Texas Woman's University, Southern Methodist University, North Texas University, Richland College, Museum of Nature & Science, American Airlines Center, Dallas Zoo, King Tut exhibit, and the John F. Kennedy Memorial. These experiences have broadened the students' perspectives on college, as well as provided an opportunity to personally experience culture and industry.

Richardson High School is a Recognized campus and a diverse school comprised of 2,346 students. Our population is 21.1% African American, 35.2% Hispanic, 35.7% White, .4% Native American and 7.6% Asian. Of our general population 42% are considered economically disadvantaged and 41.5% at-risk. There are a total of 839 students enrolled in a PreAP or AP course at RHS. Currently 78.8% of these students are passing their PreAP/AP class. Out of the 249 AVID students, approximately 98% are enrolled in a PreAP/AP courses and the remaining 2% have plans to enroll in such a course for the upcoming school year. During the Fall 2009 semester, the AVID student passing rate is was 70.05% and continues to increase every year. RHS has 65 students in the AVID program who are also enrolled in one of our nine Magnet programs. AVID has encouraged students to take on a PreAP or AP course, which they may not have normally taken before. Students often sign up for a PreAP/AP class prior to attending our AVID interview because they know the expectations of the program. These standards have become the expectation of our AVID students, and the word is spreading across campus and encouraging students to challenge themselves. AVID has also opened its doors to all ethnic groups, infusing the desire for rigor in traditionally underserved populations. Twenty percent of males in the AVID program are of color and 55% of AVID males are Hispanic. We adhere to the ideals of identifying students in the middle and, often, first-generation college bound students. This process includes recruiting students whose parents are from other countries, as they are considered the first generation in their family to attend an American college.

Beginning with the 2009-10 school year the AVID Coordinator, Elizabeth Brown, became actively involved in the RHS Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). With her involvement, we have been able to further embed AVID best practices into the school's CIP, as well as within the specific departments of math, English, science, and social studies. AVID strategies have also been included more frequently within our school staff development plan. One such staff development was conducted during one of our Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions. The AVID team presented a session for all teachers at RHS to provide them with an overview of AVID strategies. During this session, every teacher was provided the handout "AVID Strategies in a Nutshell" which outlined some of the most popular AVID and best practice strategies to promote rigor and critical thinking within classes. This handout was highly received and has since been shared with other schools in the district. The AVID department also conducted a course-specific AVID strategy staff development session during a teacher in-service day. The RHS AVID teachers created four separate presentations and divided the faculty into departments. The AVID teachers taught methodologies that teachers can use within their specific classes. The departments were: (1) math/science, (2) English/social studies, (3) counselors/physical education/fine arts/health/music/art, and (4) special education/career and technology/LOTE/speech.

AVID students participate in many of our presentations to answer questions, demonstrate strategies, and offer advice on instruction. This method also provides the students with experience in front of an audience. During a different staff development, a group of ten AVID students conducted an entire training session. With the help of the AVID teachers and site team, the students created a presentation and demonstrated several AVID strategies to the entire staff during a PLC meeting. This included strategies such as Philosophical Chairs, Cornell Notes, binder, journal logs, and WICR strategies. In addition, the students provided their own comments on what teachers can do to help students be successful in their classes. The staff comments were remarkable, and it was encouraging to see fresh young minds influencing the leaders of the school. As noted by our science department head, Aurora Everett, "After listening to impressive AVID students present strategies, I was inspired to prepare more and connect better. The students also validated that they do want rigor in all classrooms to prepare them for college. I was reminded of why I started my career in education-for the kids." The staff has since encouraged more student involvement as a component of staff development at RHS.

Additional ways RHS supports a culture of inclusion, is through access and support for students in rigorous courses through proper and extensive staff development of our teachers. Each month our faculty is trained on new teaching strategies within our PLC meetings. Aside from the strategic staff development aforementioned, our teachers are trained in college readiness strategies. Kim Carlton, ELA Curriculum Specialist, conducted a staff development titled, "Reading for Meaning and Interacting with Text in the Classroom." It covered strategies which included released TAKS questions, identifying and helping struggling readers, silent discussion,

and sample writing with text. The strategies were to promote high level open-ended thinking and writing skills in all content areas while providing a common tool of assessment for students.

Rigor at RHS is defined as challenging the student's intellectual and emotional self by exploring the world in which we live not only through literature and writing, history, math, and science, but also through the classes that allow students to explore technology, performing, and creating. It is teaching curriculum in such a way that students understand the subject matter on a personal level and understand complexities of the subject matter. Depth and quality of understanding is emphasized over amount of material learned. At RHS rigor is exemplified through all classes, not simply AP, PreAP or Magnet courses. This goal is carried out by each teacher's level of questioning in all courses, asking students to complete work under the constraint of time, and seeking texts (fiction and nonfiction) that help students ponder, expand, contemplate, and secure their values and their views of the world. AP courses require rigor as they lead to college credit. Advanced courses such as Debate, Mock Trial, Forensics, and Independent Studies allow students to practice rigor in all curricular areas where AP or PreAP courses are not offered. Furthermore, AVID emphasizes college-level effort in all courses in which AVID students are enrolled.

Open enrollment is our policy for all students, which enables every student the opportunity to have access to rigorous courses. With dual enrollment, any student is eligible to apply; however, the application process involves certain criteria to enable students to participate. RHS is unique because it provides nine magnet strands of coursework that meet a variety of student interests, which began in 1987. These programs include Science, Health Sciences, Robotics, Communications, Law, Visual Arts, Theatre Arts, Technical Theatre and Culinary Arts. Entrance into each strand of the magnet program has certain criteria ranging from grades to portfolio assessment to tryouts/interviews. Approximately 40% of the RHS population and 26% of our AVID students are enrolled in one of our magnet programs. Our projected magnet population for the 2010-2011 school year is 307, of which 21% are AVID students. As a magnet school, RHS receives students from around the district who would normally attend their home high school campus. Because of the overwhelming success of our magnet programs, RHS has a stellar reputation as an inclusive, accepting environment for students of all cultural backgrounds—a place where everyone can come and achieve their best. We take pride in the rigor of our programs, and for such a diversified student population, RHS yields some of the highest test scores in the RISD district.

Our district policy toward students' entry into rigorous coursework at both the middle and high school level has always been open enrollment. This process enables any student willing to take on the challenge. Teachers and counselors of 7th grade math students identify potential PreAP Algebra 1 students and encourage them to pre-register for the class. TAKS scores as well as current Math grades are used to help identify potential candidates. Native Spanish speakers are

encouraged to take the district's Verification of Credit exam early so that they can advance into AP language courses. At the high school level, teachers of non-PreAP/AP courses recognize and help identify potential PreAP/AP candidates and encourage these students to pursue a more rigorous curriculum. RHS is fortunate to have dedicated, diligent teachers who continue to push our students to their full academic potential.

Our school has an extensive number of opportunities to support and encourage high achievement for all our students. Our teachers attend regular staff development sessions that encourage strategies that push students to think beyond what is in front of them. AP and PreAP teachers attend strategy sessions and staff development throughout the year for their specific classes as well. Opportunities and support for students to succeed in rigorous classes include Saturday school, TAKS pull-out, Eagles Rising (school-wide tutoring program initially developed for athletes, but is open to all students), course and teacher specific lunch tutoring, Super Saturday TAKS tutoring, individual study sessions (AP Human Geography), flexible tutoring with all teachers, Upward Bound (student organization for college preparedness), progress reports, and student competitions (Math League). RHS supports rigorous coursework, higher level thinking and reasoning skills for all students.

Beginning in the spring of the 8th grade year, 4-year plans are developed for each student. Seeds are planted for these students to strive to push themselves to their greatest academic achievement. Each year, counselors present guidance lessons which focus attention on the PreAP/AP program, and they encourage students to enrolling in rigorous courses. During the fall of their freshman year, students and their parents participate in an academic conference with their counselors. Four-year plans are revised and discussed, academic potential is discussed and PreAP/AP course recommendations are made and encouraged. One night a year, an informational session is held for our Spanish-speaking parents. It is always well attended, and attention is focused on encouraging these families to promote academic achievement by encouraging their students to take rigorous coursework. We also make use of the AP Potential List that we receive every year from College Board following administration of the PSAT. Letters and phone calls are made to the parents of each student identified as having AP potential. From that list, we are able to identify certain students who have been sliding through in regular coursework and push them to a higher level of academic achievement. Also, the RISD district conducts a yearly PreAP/AP parent meeting in both English and Spanish for parents. This meeting takes place during the time of pre-registration so parents can have helpful information which will enable them to guide their students to make smart course choices.

Parents and students are provided a copy of the Program of Studies each year. Every spring, counselors conduct classroom guidance to present pre-registration information and, at that time, opportunities for taking PreAP/AP courses and Dual Credit courses are discussed. Students and parents are able to consult with their counselor as needed at any time regarding course selection.

Counselors developed a course guide for the AVID students to utilize during preregistration which helps them to determine appropriate core class selections in science and math based on current performance in grades and test scores.

Our goal at RHS is to continue to develop a culture of equity and rigor where all students learn, grow and succeed. As noted in the vision of RHS, we are all “learning today for tomorrow’s possibilities.”