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ABSTRACT

This study identifies the main components of the AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, program through an extensive review of literature. AVID has been in existence for over thirty years and has been implemented throughout the United States and across the world. This paper addresses the specific implementation of the AVID program as an elective course for selected students in addition to school wide integration, while focusing on how AVID effects dropout rates, college admissions, and preparedness of students for rigorous courses. AVID strategies are discussed thoroughly in light of gaining a better understanding of the principle factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the program. After reviewing the AVID program within the site school, results indicated that the AVID program was perceived as effective due to the support of a strong site team and AVID elective teacher. Implications for future research and utilization of the strategies are discussed.
Chapter One: Introduction

In an educational world that is constantly changing, school systems around the country desperately seek programs and interventions that will persist in providing a positive academic school environment for students. With the epidemic of an ever increasing dropout rate, programs such as AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, become imperative in providing resources schools need to ensure that students successfully stay in school. In addition, AVID equips students with the necessary skills needed to be prosperous in college and other future endeavors.

Union High School is part of a low-income rural district at the southern tip of Sampson County. Embodying students from seven surrounding communities, it is the largest school district within our county and is comprised of predominately African American students with the Hispanic and White students equal but significantly lower in number. Due to the fact that Union is the only high school in our county that has over 80% of students on Free or Reduced Lunch, Title I funding allows the exploration of alternative programs like AVID to help prepare students for rigor not only in high school but at the post-secondary level.

The mission of the AVID program is to incorporate strategies that will assist in closing the achievement gap while focusing on college readiness as well as the 21st Century learner (“Advancement Via Individual,” 2010). Often times the “middle of the road” student is left behind as we tend to place more emphasis on the higher and lower learner. Many of these students are first generation college bound. Without the extra attention and strategies that AVID can provide, these students would normally dropout or not work to their full capabilities. AVID can instill the motivation needed to assist students that would otherwise fail in reaching their maximum potential.
In hopes of reducing the dropout rate, increasing test scores, and offering additional support for college readiness, Union High School hopes to implement the AVID program to afford its students the opportunity to be all they can be. With the success rate of AVID in other schools around the country, the implementation of this program at Union should have similar results.

How successful are the strategies that AVID uses? Does this program really keep low-income minority students from dropping out? By taking the more rigorous courses and correlating them with the AVID elective class, do students tend to perform better in the classroom and on end-of-course exams?

The research question to be answered is how will AVID prove successful in creating an environment that will prepare students for college through providing the means necessary to undertake the more rigorous courses, in addition to offering the support needed to maintain attendance while assisting in other areas where students struggle?

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

The purpose of AVID at its origination was not to restructure the entire school; however, it has grown to be a school-wide effort transforming the way in which teachers teach and students learn. The underachieving students seem to be growing rapidly and with the number of students per elective class limited, the only way to effectively help all students is to utilize the AVID strategies throughout the school (Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2002).

AVID’s mission is clear and simple. It strives “to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society” (“AVID”, n.d.) AVID lays a firm foundation that will support and help balance low income rural school districts as well as minorities, and those students that are first generation college bound (“AVID”, n.d.). There are
48 states in the United States that put into operation the techniques that AVID uses to facilitate the learning process of students. AVID has exploded over the past few years from being utilized in just one classroom all those years ago to being implemented in over 16 countries serving over 400,000 students.

With the dawn of No Child Left Behind, educators have been frantically searching for ways to improve instruction to meet the rigorous standards of high accountability. Schools have to reconsider the way in which they educate and prepare their students if they want measured success in meeting the standards outlined by this piece of legislation. In discovering ways to incorporate strategies that will assist teachers and schools in meeting accountability targets, they must first understand what obstacles they are faced with. “Course failures, suspension and expulsion rates, and high school dropout rates are higher in the ninth grade than any other high school grade levels” (Smith, Akos, Lim, & Wiley, 2008, page 32). With this information, schools can first pull the data essential to their population and establish a foundation for putting into practice programs like AVID.

Our society today places great emphasis on bettering our educational system and providing every avenue possible to ensure that schools produce a globally competitive student. In order for state departments, school districts, and schools to prepare students for the world that awaits them. Programs are needed that utilize and incorporate strategies that will supply motivation and techniques that will afford students the opportunity to be successful.

One such program is AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination. Through such programs like this, researchers have been able to identify ways to help students who struggle with learning. With the change in the educational curriculum becoming more
demanding and rigorous, schools have to require higher expectations from teachers in order for students to follow suit. Programs, like AVID, have afforded students in addition to teachers the opportunity to push themselves to their maximum potential.

The AVID curriculum has been in existence since 1980. High school English Teacher, Mary Catherine Swanson, realized that students from low-income families did not necessarily have the resources needed to ensure success in school (Mason, 2008). Many times students from low-income families struggle to gain admission to and succeed in college. We often implement programs that focus on supporting students who are on the higher and lower end of the learning spectrum and most of the time we forget about the students that fall in between. AVID however, spotlights the “middle-of-the-road” students. Rothstein (2001) expresses how AVID “singles out the often ignored adolescents who are below middle class but not among the most disadvantaged” (paragraph 3). This program certainly provides every opportunity for schools to reach out to the most often “forgotten student”. Mary Catherine Swanson created a chain of support when building this program so students that fell in the middle would not become the missing link. Not only was she like a “mother” to them, they additionally received encouragement through collaboration with the other AVID students. In essence, they became a family which, in many cases, was what students needed. Students that fall in the “academic middle” are most often times overlooked because in most cases they will not be represented in the higher achieving classes but they will also not qualify for the special education program (Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2003).

When Mary Catherine Swanson first started AVID in the San Diego Unified School district, she was creating a program that would essentially help the new students that entered into her school. The original student body was cut and most of the “better students” were sent to a
newly built high school. Based upon a court ordered mandate, Clairemont High School had “500 ethnic minority and low-income students bused into the previously all white school” (Swanson, 1994, page 1). The students that were bused in did not come with a strong academic background, something the teachers at Clairemont were used to with the old group. Before the integration, this school was sending approximately 80% of their student population to college (Swanson, 1994). Four years later the faculty met with the students on a regular basis and things began to turn around. The AVID program had worked wonders in this school and allowed them to “embrace the Goals of America 2000…” (Swanson, 1994, page 1).

The students that are targeted by implementation of this program should be dedicated to working hard, in addition to having an ambition to attend college (“Avid, n.d.”). Many of the students that are represented in the “middle-of-the-road” category do not inevitably lack the mental capacity to perform well in their classes. They often times lack the organizational, college readiness and social skills needed to thrive on a scholarly level. AVID takes these areas in which the elected students exemplify problems and formulates a rigorous curriculum that helps develop the skills needed to flourish in the regular academic classroom. The components of AVID are set forth to not only promote college entry but assist in maintaining a level of academic excellence.

**Site Teams**

One way to combat the lack of motivation by some students, AVID requires schools to employ a site team that serves as the representatives for the school. Usually made up of academic teachers, counselors, and administrators, this site team will hold regular meetings to constantly evaluate the success of the program and its effectiveness. The site team’s main responsibility is to initiate and propel the school wide change that AVID seeks (Swanson, 1995). This team provides the framework needed for establishing effective teaching and learning practices. These
meetings usually occur once a month with a large portion of the meeting time being devoted to planning events and activities that AVID students can become involved in.

In the high school AVID class, site team members look for students who usually put forth little effort and are barely surviving on a day to day basis. Most of these students have the ability to do much better, but lack the motivation and determination needed to work to their highest potential. Mason (2008) also adds that these particular students lack study skills essential in supporting better grades as well as a more rigorous academic curriculum. AVID does not look for the “at-risk” student but the one who has the potential to succeed in a rigorous classroom but does not have the support and encouragement needed to do so. “AVID provides students a place to feel safe, a place to belong, a place for ego status, and a place for self-actualization…” (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007, page 26).

Essential Criterion

AVID establishes set criterion that schools must follow and report on. When schools adopt this program they must implement eleven essentials to be considered a certified site. “These essentials include the use of selection criteria for students, enrollment of students in rigorous curriculum, a strong emphasis on writing and reading that integrates critical thinking and collaboration, tutoring with trained college tutors, and implementation of the program by an interdisciplinary site team” (Swanson, 2000). Altering these essentials from the way they are originally stated can completely undermine the entire philosophy, principles, and experiences on which this program built its foundation. (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007).

The site team consists of a number of school personnel such as administrators, teachers, counselors and district coordinators. They will attend a Summer Institute usually held in several locations throughout the country. This event typically last for a week and furnishes the site team
with the resources necessary to ensure AVID success at their school. This training is extremely intensive and is a significant reason why AVID has flourished over the past several years. In addition to receiving AVID resources, the site team is rigorously trained on how to incorporate strategies that relate to writing, inquiry, collaborative, and reading within the AVID classroom. The push of this program is not to just stop with the AVID elective class but to empower the entire school to incorporate the strategies that prove so successful in that one classroom. This program assists students in taking ownership in their learning as well as increasing their knowledge of post-secondary options (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2002).

**Selection of Students**

The student selection process must essentially focus on selecting students that are considered underachievers and fall in the academic middle. These particular students have the ability to be successful but need the additional assistance that the AVID curriculum can provide to push themselves to their maximum potential. One imperative aspect of selecting students is that participation must voluntary. The AVID site team can encourage students to become a part of AVID but cannot force students to sign on.

A group of numerous students will be identified based on the criteria that AVID sets and will be asked to complete and application. Again, whether students turn in that application is completely and totally up to them and their parents. Once all of the applications have been collected the members of the site team will conduct interviews with each student (Melenas, personal communication, February 21, 2011). After the interview portion, the site coordinator will review each student’s transcript to identify other criteria that will help them be accepted into the program (Melenas, personal communication, February 21, 2011).
The AVID program can be implemented at the middle school and high school levels. Research shows that the AVID curriculum is more successful at the high school level when the feeder middle school also incorporates the program. In most cases those students that elect to be in AVID at the middle school will also want to remain in AVID at the high school. This helps the high school program because these students will already be familiar with AVID. This will be a positive aspect for upcoming freshmen because the transition to high school proves to be stressful because of the major differences between the two educational levels.

McIntosh and White (2006) discuss how vital the transition process is for students shifting from middle school to high school. They also convey how important the freshman year can be for students. If the freshman year is successful, students will not only have a thriving high school career but will also graduate. On the flip side, dropping out of school will weigh heavily on the minds of students whose experience during that freshman year is dreadful and inferior to that of years past. Hussey and Smith (2010) note that “a transition is a significant change in a student’s life, self-concept and learning: a shift from one state of understanding, development and maturity to another” (page 156).

**How it Works**

AVID is an enormous program that has proven successful over the past thirty years. This program has not been able to grow as rapidly as it has without several levels of support. AVID is a program that is implemented in schools, but it could not have accomplished this much success without being organized into numerous levels. Schools cannot produce success stories without having some sort of support from an entity that is more powerful and greater than it. The structure of AVID is an important as the strategies that provides students the opportunity to be prosperous. Previously reviewed research shows that the success of the AVID program in a
school is up to the discretion of the school’s site team. However, the site team has the assistance of their district, which leads to the regional office, which leads to the divisional and national sites (Arellanes, Bishop, and Castruita, 2007).

At the school site, the elective course teacher and site coordinator will provide the leadership needed for the other site team members and will be the first people contacted when questions arise. The site structure has to also rely on a very diverse team to assist in other duties that AVID requires such as, parent and community involvement event, test preparation and numerous other aspects of AVID (Arellanes, Bishop, and Castruita, 2007).

The district and regional AVID sites are an essential part in the success of AVID. As the schools sites begin to grow, many districts appoint a district liaison that will be responsible for coordinating the site team efforts, acquiring additional resources, and serves as the representative to the regional advisory board (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007). The director also “oversees training in the AVID curriculum, professional development conferences and tutor training, site visitations, student and parent conferences, data collection and research, post-secondary relations, and provides other support” (Arellanes, Bishop, and Castruita, 2007, page 13).

The state director is held accountable for providing direction and support for all regional directors. Their responsibilities also include “building a statewide infrastructure, supporting and monitoring regional directors, developing a statewide advisory board, overseeing AVID Summer Institutes, collecting statewide data, developing statewide support for the AVID programs, and administering the state budget” (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007, page 13).

Divisionally the United States has been separated into the West, Central, and East regions. These three divisions are assigned a director whose responsibilities include supporting
the “state and regional directors; outreach and resource development throughout the divisions; 
policy, procedure, trend monitoring, and analysis; and coordination with AVID center” 

The AVID center is located in San Diego, California where AVID was first born in a 
small English classroom in a low income school district. AVID is a nonprofit organization and 
was formed to strengthen the AVID community by providing a quality curriculum that is 
innovated through current research (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007).

Throughout the research there was an assortment of information collected on the 
importance of the AVID elective teacher. This one person has been deemed with the success or 
failure of the program and majority of the achievements of AVID is based solely on how 
effective this one particular teacher will be. AVID provides a certain criteria that an elective 
teacher must possess. Just a few of the character traits that a person should embody to be 
considered for the this prestigious position is that of leadership, dedication, organization, 
commitment, and a desire to assist those students that are considered underachievers (Arellanes, 
Bishop, & Castruita, 2007). The person assigned to the AVID elective course should be one that 
is well-respected by theirs fellow co-workers and one that is extremely enthusiastic about their 
job and advocating for students (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007).

AVID integrates lessons into the elective class that teaches students how to calculate their 
grade point average and set goals for their high school career. It also affords students the 
opportunity to express what they are excited about or what they fear about being in high school. 
Students are able to open up and share with the group their concerns and are able to work 
through them together as a group.
Not only is the transition from middle school to high school important, but also the evolution of a dependent student to an independent student is important. One fundamental aspect of the transition process is for a teacher to scaffold a more autonomous student. For this to occur a learner “must have the knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities necessary to pursue their studies; together with the power, self-confidence and motivation to exercise these attributes” (Hussey, and Smith, 2010, page 157).

Swanson created the AVID elective class to offer support and assistance to those elected students in hopes of boosting their confidence in their ability to be successful in the academic classroom (Watt, Powell, Mendiola, & Cossio, 2006). By providing the additional encouragement, students are able to approach their freshman year with a more positive outlook. It is important for students to be prepared for the 21st Century. In order for this to occur schools must find ways to increase attendance rates and increase graduation rates. Research has shown that AVID’s curriculum adequately prepares students for a life in the 21st Century. Hussey and Smith (2010) express the importance of being an autonomous student but also recognizing when to still seek guidance from others. The difference now is a student that is willing to learn more on their own will be able to decipher when to rely on the direction of others or to go with their instinct. The objective of programs like AVID is to assist teachers in creating a more “student centered” environment and less of a “teacher centered” environment. This way, students not only learn the material but also how to apply what they have learned to situations that form around them. This is why the AVID elective teacher is an essential part of the success of the students partaking in the AVID curriculum.

The AVID elective teacher is viewed as the “mother” or “father” figure for these students. The AVID elective teacher plays a very significant role in making sure the program
runs smoothly and effectively. The teacher selected to undertake this task has to be well respected by the other faculty members not just as a person, but as a strong instructional leader. This person should have at least three to five years of teaching experience. Because of the demands of the AVID program, the elective teacher must have high expectations of their students and constantly monitor their progress throughout their academic courses. The elective teacher plays a significant role in the tutoring process and serves as an advocate for the AVID students.

The AVID site team and especially the Lead Elective Teacher play a very significant role in the execution of the program (Watt, Powell, Mendiola, & Cossio, 2006). The success and strength of AVID lies in their hands; therefore, the site team, including the elective teacher, needs to be comprised of members that exemplify hard work and dedication as well as high expectations. They are there to promote success and be that constant cheerleader that most of these students need. Because of the focused attention and resources that AVID affords these students, the transition to high school is facilitated; therefore, reducing the number of failures, repulsions, and dropouts.

Organization and structure are a vital part of providing a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Bartrom (2008) states that “without organization you are lost” (page 21). A teacher cannot expect for students to be organized if they are not. More times than not, students take on the persona of the teacher that is leading them. For this reason, it is extremely important that the AVID elective teacher be one that is exceptionally organized in order to provide instructions to her students on the importance of being organized and having structure. This proves true in the AVID classroom because organization is a big push. Students are required
to maintain one notebook for all their classes. Students are graded based on how they organize their notebook, and AVID lays out the criteria through the use of a rubric as seen in Appendix A.

The goal of AVID is to assist students in becoming a “deep learner” one in which can take the material taught, dissect it, and know how to apply it. This type of learning is more than just “regurgitating” information for the simple fact of passing a multiple choice test (Hussey, & Smith, 2010). Students actually learn. This is so important in the transition process not just at each level of the educational experience but in becoming a more advanced learner.

Although transitioning a student from each level of education is important in their success, the same proves true in helping them with their self-concept. Hussey and Smith, (2010) tell us that a “person’s self-concept is the set of beliefs that they have about their personality, abilities, tastes, aptitudes, powers, characteristic behavior, appearance, gender and social standing” (page 160). When transitioning a student, it is equally important that educators do not forget the importance of character education. It is also our duty to help instill in our students those aspects that will help them in the journey we call life. Even though having a strong academic background is critical in being accepted to college and finding a good job, the basic characteristics of everyday living is just as important.

There are numerous reasons why schools, without programs like AVID, and teachers like to see character education implemented within the school building and classrooms. Brannon (2008) noted that building character education within the school day creates an environment that is conducive to learning by providing a more caring and calmer atmosphere. Although AVID does not have specific character education lessons that are taught to the students directly, AVID does promote character education. AVID indirectly teaches students how to be responsible, organized and self-disciplined. By affording the students the opportunity to be a part of a family,
students become extremely comfortable in sharing their beliefs and talking about their abilities and appearance.

While it is important to implement character education within the school, many teachers also think that this responsibility should not fall solely in the hands of them. In order for what students learn at school to resonate with them, they must see the same practice in their home and community. Brannon (2008) conveys that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to properly and positively impact children. AVID provides numerous activities throughout the school year that does just that. Parent nights are held where parents or guardians are highly encouraged to become involved with their child and to participate in activities like, CFNC, acceptance and contract signing nights as well as college workshops. Additionally, the surrounding community is also urged to become a part of the AVID program. Schools extend an invitation to surrounding businesses and parents to show their support by giving presentations to the AVID students in hopes of inspiring them to perform at their maximum potential in all areas.

Learning to work with other people of all different backgrounds is another significant quality of having good character. Letting students work in groups or teams provides them with the necessary skills and experience that proves valuable as they continue to move up. The more real-world the situation the better a student will be prepared for what lies ahead (Chowdhury, Endres, & Lanis, 2002).

Once again AVID proves to be a front runner in this area. AVID students work in groups, problem solve, and make decisions by operating as a team. AVID incorporates strategies that fosters teamwork; therefore, assisting students in enhancing their ability to become team players. It also helps them recognize the importance of working together and how that can affect their work as well as their future.
On the other hand, in order for character education and team work to truly be effective, there should be a set of norms established. Davidson, Fisher, and Lickona 2009, character education researchers, tell of their work with schools and how it has helped them identify four keys to excellence in character education practice. Schools have to build a community that is willing to support and challenge groups while building norms that will hold each member accountable for doing their work. Secondly, students have to be able to assess their strengths and weaknesses and then constantly monitor their progress toward their goal. Students should study positive and negative examples of others work to learn how to apply what they did or did not do to their own work. Lastly, sharing and presenting is particularly important because is show the progress that students have made toward achieving their goals.

One reason why AVID has been so successful is because it employs policies such as the ones mentioned above. To utilize majority of the strategies that AVID exercises, you first have to understand the strategy by extracting what will be expected. In addition, students have to understand their strengths and weaknesses in order to know which part of the strategy they will excel. One way in which students can identify their strengths and weaknesses would be implementing a learning styles inventory at the introduction of the class. This will also help the teacher gain a better perspective of their students. This again, will assist students in understanding their team members strengths and weakness in order to work together to comprise a dominate team. Students are building the character needed that will help them be more of a team player as well as gaining a better understanding of what real-world experiences will be like.

Berger (2006) notes that schools need to create an environment where students think that it is “cool to care.” AVID provides this for students. The AVID students have one thing in common and that is AVID. They can use this to cohesively form a bond that will eventually
spread throughout the school helping to create an atmosphere that is caring and full of integrity. Students take pride in their school and in each other; ultimately the school flourishes because of the cohesiveness that exists. “Character education is teaching children about basic human values, including, honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, page 2). AVID contributes to the success of schools because it was created to provide the additional support students need to be successful; therefore, creating an environment that promotes learning and character.

**Goals of AVID**

One goal of AVID is to produce students that are well balanced between academics and social interactions. Part of the extra assistance that the elected students receive is time built into the AVID elective course to provide tutoring services in the areas they exhibit the most problems. In most schools across the country, tutoring is offered by every teacher after school to assist those students that struggle in their courses. AVID, likewise, provides the same services but during the school day. This way, students are able to receive tutoring during and after school and will receive that additional help they need.

Even though tutoring is such an important aspect of academic success, many have misconceptions on who is eligible to offer tutoring services. The obvious answer would be teachers; however, countless schools are integrating something called peer tutoring. This form of tutoring is an evidence-based approach that teachers employ within their classrooms for a number of reasons. In order for the peer tutor to be effective, they have to know how to assess whether the “tutee’s” response in right or wrong. This presents a challenge for teachers as they have to be aware of the placement of peer tutors (Wood, Mackiewicz, Van Norman, & Cook, 2007).
The incorporation of peer tutoring links back to the importance of crafting a school environment that will benefit the construction of a student’s character. Whether they are the peer tutor or the tutee, both will gain a better understanding of the significance of teamwork. This correlates with the implementation of character education and AVID because both programs take a prominent stand on producing a well-rounded, equally balanced student.

What is the use in offering a tutoring program if you are not aware of the needs of the students? Roskosky (2010) explains that “tutoring must be specific and targeted.” In the AVID program tutors are provided in each academic area. These tutors are selected from the student body and evaluated based on their performance in each subject area. Tutors will be chosen in the areas of Math, English, Science and Social Studies. AVID will also incorporate tutors from within the community on a volunteer basis if needed. Again, AVID endorses community involvement and this is just one of numerous ways they can boost the neighborhood support for the school. AVID requires that tutoring occur in the elective class at least twice a week. The AVID elective teacher will identify the academic area in which each student in her class exhibits the most need. They will then be assigned to a tutoring group where the elected peer tutors will enter the classroom and perform tutoring sessions with the AVID students. Without the specific identification of the area in which AVID students exemplify the most problems, tutoring periods would be useless.

AVID tutors do not focus on one specific area during the tutoring sessions. Students are placed in the academic tutoring session that best suits their needs at that time. This is the reason why the AVID elective teacher keeps a close eye on the students in order to know which tutoring session they need the most. In a study conducted by Michael Parkinson (2009), after one semester of peer assisted tutoring, this analysis showed that there was a substantial difference
between the group that was tutored verses the one that was not. This is essentially one goal of
AVID. This program strives to provide a way for students to learn that would otherwise struggle
without the resources that it offers. AVID wants to establish a firm foundation for students
academically and socially so they are prepared to be successful at the next level or whatever
future endeavor they undertake.

In the AVID tutorial process students will follow a ten step method with the first step
requiring them to take notes in their academic classes, in the form of cornell notes. Once they
have done this they must complete a tutorial request form in which they will be mandated to
include some higher level questions that will come from anything they have covered in their
class. Students can gather these questions from notes, quizzes, test, etc. and must be in their own
words. Step three in this process is where the peer tutors or community tutors come into play.
During the next tutorial session, the teacher or the tutor will collect the tutorial request form from
the students. The students will be required to have the resources they will need to help support
their questions at this time as well. During the tutorial session, students will be divided into
several groups depending upon the needs of the students and what academic areas the students
exhibit the most problems. Once the students are separated, the tutorial will begin with a higher
level question being presented to the group. From that point the tutor and the group members
will begin to ask questions to help the student that posed the question. As the process continues
the comprehension of the student presenter will be checked by the other group members and the
tutor by asking clarifying questions. The process begins to repeat itself at step seven and will
continue through all of the students within that tutoring group. When the tutoring sessions gets to
step eight, students will be expected to complete a written reflection on what they learned
through this process. After the reflection, students have to turn in the “TRF’s” in order to be
graded. The last step of the process will be a debriefing process about the tutorial process and students will be able to confirm what they have learned in their academic class (“AVID coordinators handouts”, 2010).

It is very important to understand that students will have to be prepared for these tutoring sessions. For homework the night before a tutoring session, the students have to prepare plan and complete their “TRF”. This is the beauty of AVID tutorials. Students have to take an active part in the tutoring process. They have to come prepared with questions that they need clarification on and these tutoring sessions are more student-led than teacher-led.

Students within the AVID elective class have to interact with their peers and other adults. Whether it be with tutors, other AVID class members, college and career representatives, or teachers, students have to understand how to be social. Because of the interactions that take place in the AVID elective, students are able to improve their social interactions and learn more about how to talk to others and respect others. Students have to show respect to their fellow classmates when working in groups or participating in Socratic seminars or philosophical chairs. They do this by first understanding that each person has their own opinion about a certain topic and that they all do not have to agree. Students also have to recognize that it is perfectly fine when others do not agree with their opinion and they should respect their classmates no matter what the circumstances may be.

Students also must know how to talk and carry themselves in front of college advisors when visiting campuses across their area. AVID also provides the means necessary to have speakers that come into the classroom to present material on careers, college, and numerous other topics. Students have to understand how to hold a conversation with these individuals. Students are able to learn manners that are indirectly associated with AVID.
Drop-out Prevention

This leads us to the next critical aspect of AVID, drop-out prevention. With drop-out rates becoming ever increasingly higher, schools search for every avenue possible to ensure that they keep students in school. The National Dropout Prevention Center has investigated why students drop-out and have discovered some major risk factors that lead students to poor attendance which leads to dropping out of school. One of the major factors contributing to higher drop-out rates and lower graduation rates is a student’s performance and engagement with school. Poor academic performance has remained one of the most consistent predictors of school wide dropouts. Students that frequently receive poor grades, low test scores, and cannot keep up with course work, will be the students that eventually drop-out of school (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007).

Often times students believe that receiving their GED is the fastest and easiest way to get a high school diploma. Many do not realize that a GED can limit their chances for jobs and career opportunities. Although people with a GED can find jobs, those students that drop-out of high school are even more limited in their selection due to the fact that employment is scarce. Because the job market is so competitive, employers are requiring employees to possess certain academic skills. “As dropouts look for employment, their options are restricted by their limited knowledge and ability, as demonstrated by their lack of a high school diploma” (Tejwani, Pedroza, Hoffman, 2009, page i).

Career Development

Part of the AVID curriculum incorporates career awareness. Not only do students have the opportunity to become academically stronger through AVID, they will also be provided strategies on how to become more aware of career possibilities. Students will participate in
career activities that will facilitate their process in choosing careers that are best suited to their interest. Furthermore, they will explore and discover numerous job descriptions, salaries, college requirements, and day to day working conditions of thousands of jobs. AVID students are afforded every avenue possible to investigate a career that appeals to them. Every month an AVID site team member is responsible for recruiting and bringing in at least two local career speakers that will help students focus on different careers and hopefully help them determine what career path they want to journey down. With the extra attention that AVID places on career awareness, students are less likely to drop-out of school. They will better comprehend what employers will be looking for in employees, what colleges will best serve them based on their career choice, and the steps they need to take to successfully seek a career of their choice. There are numerous aspects of AVID that work together to decrease the drop-out rate and increase college admissions. AVID’s curriculum pushes for all students to be college ready material before graduating high school. By implementing this specific program, schools can increase their graduation rate because research shows that “AVID sends one third more students to 4-year colleges than the local and national average” (“AVID”, n.d.).

States are beginning to align their high school courses of study with that of university requirements. In order to reduce the number of students needing remediation, school districts must present its students with a “well-aligned” curriculum that will better prepare them for college courses. The remediation rates have been high over the past several years and seem to be increasing with each passing school year. The disadvantage of students taking remediation courses will result in no college credit being earned (Conley, 2006). In order for colleges to become aware of where students need to be placed, many require students to take a placement test. This will determine if students need to be assigned to these remediation courses or if they
are ready to enroll in regular college courses. Research has proven that students who begin in the remediation courses are the ones that usually abandon their college career (Conley, 2006).

**College Readiness**

This is the beauty of AVID. It provides a curriculum that not only assists students in adapting to life as a high school student, adjusting socially through exemplifying character, but also providing strategies to help students focus more on college readiness skills while reducing the drop-out rates. Students that are a part of AVID can potentially visit up to eight colleges during their high school experience. This is extremely valuable to many students because as stated earlier, AVID is normally implemented in your lower income school districts where many of the parents did not attend college. Being a first generation college student is one of the qualifying factors that help students be selected for this program. AVID has an exceptionally high percentage of students that attend college after graduating high school because of the way in which it prepares students for the rigor they will encounter there.

“One of the most basic requirements for increasing high school success and college readiness is ensuring that all students have access to a standard college-preparatory curriculum” (Finkelstein & Fong, 2008, page 2). AVID takes it a step further than just your regular “CP” courses. AVID students are required to be enrolled in at least one honors level course their first year in high school in hopes of increasing the number of honors courses for each year they remain in AVID to even taking advanced placement course during their junior and senior year if still in AVID. This provides the rigor that students need to be completely successful at the college level; hence the reason why AVID produces such high college acceptance percentages. The intensity of the courses that students take in high school can not only affect their acceptance into college, but their actual completion of a bachelor’s degree. (Watt, Powell, Mendiola, &
Cossio, 2006). Again, the expectations of many schools that implement AVID are to take these types of strategies and incorporate them into the everyday curriculum of each classroom in hopes of the entire school becoming more “avidized.”

Counselors play a significant role on the AVID site team as they contribute to the college readiness piece. Even though research has shown that counselors are overworked and assigned duties that essentially keep them from truly promoting college awareness with students, AVID provides a whole curriculum that is devoted to college readiness and offers a way for counselors to take part in classroom discussions on preparing for college and succeeding while there (Burdman, 2010). Even though counselors are overburdened with the everyday stresses of their job and sometimes seem not able to provide what students need, AVID’s college curriculum provides a way for the elective teacher to deliver instruction on becoming prepared for college.

In addition, Burdman (2010) also expresses how colleges need an accurate picture of the skills that students possess and how prepared they are to handle college life before they enter college. Because AVID is well known for its college readiness program, colleges recognize right from that start that AVID students will be prepared for what lies ahead of them and the rigor that college incorporates. Colleges understand that AVID students are afforded every opportunity to gain the necessary skills needed that will assist them in being the kind of student they are considering for admissions to their institution.

**Academic Preparation**

All high school students, not just the elected students in the AVID program, should be exposed to the rigor that this program brings to the table. It is imperative that all students are prepared for postsecondary education as well as a life in the workplace. Once educators, as well as all other stakeholders involved, work together to prepare students for life after high school,
only then will they be ready for the adventurous journey that awaits them (Corbett, & Huebner, 2007). Whether students make the decision to go to college or enter the world of work, having a good solid high school foundation is imperative for their success in their adult life.

AVID’s curriculum affords students with the opportunity to construct a firm foundation and then build upon that foundation as they grow stronger and stronger as individual students. The methodologies that AVID employs consistently aids in successfully increasing test scores and overall course grades. Strategies like Learning Logs, Cornell Notetaking, and WICR are just a few tactics that students in the elective class can use to help them retain material being taught. Once again, when students learn these strategies through the AVID elective class, they can begin to use them throughout their other classes. “Students will have much more difficulty retaining the lessons and skills learned in AVID if they aren't reinforced throughout their school day” (Gira, 2010, page 4). The strategies that AVID incorporates are tailored to assist students in reading and writing which are two areas that have persistently exemplified low achievement over the past several years.

Writing is a part of everything that we do on a daily basis. Allen (2003) tells us that “the ability to express one's thoughts in writing is an essential part of being educated” (paragraph 1). No matter what academic subject a student is in, writing will be a fundamental aspect as it is incorporated into lessons, homework, tests, and projects. Students need to possess the ability to write well. Not only do students need to understand the importance of writing for school purposes, they also need to recognize that employers look for employees that possess these good writing skills. Writing is a form of communication and is one of the soft skills that majority of businesses look for when hiring new employees.
Writing is more than just words being put down on paper; it is the ability for students to think deeply about their topic and express that in a worthwhile way. Words are useless without a strong meaning behind them. This is the reason why many researchers feel that writing and thinking are related. Thiers (2006) expresses that “quality writing can only flow from well-focused thinking – sorting out ideas and opinions from facts, selecting the most powerful facts or opinions, and organizing according to overarching ideas” (paragraph 2).

Typically, reading and writing work in conjunction with one another. Students are most often times asked to read material and write about it. Some misconceptions of writing and what it entails have entered in the thoughts of various individuals over time. Writing is more than just essays, research papers, and letters. It can be answering questions, journal entries, completing resumes and job applications and numerous others. However, in every case, students will have to read the items first in order to know what to place in the various parts of the document they are reading; hence, the reason why reading comprehension is so important. When reading you have to contemplate the purpose of the material you are perusing in order to understand what will be expected when participating in a writing activity. In addition, those students that exemplify difficulties in reading will also struggle in writing and vice versa.

AVID developed a strong curriculum that assists students in in the two areas of reading and writing. The AVID elective teacher utilizes countless strategies that aid in the developing of reading and writing skills that students need to possess in order to be successful in high school and beyond. One methodology that AVID employs is the use of Learning Logs. Students are able to write about what they did, what they have learned, and questions they may still have about the topic they covered in class that day (Mullen & Boldway, 2005). This particular writing activity can help students prepare for upcoming exams because it allows them to clarify ideas and
“uncover” those areas in which they need further assistance (Mullen & Boldway, 2005). Learning logs can be very beneficial once the student has made a decision about what the focus should be and has organized the log so that it becomes an effective instrument for learning.

Similarly, AVID incorporates the Cornell Notetaking system in order to facilitate the note taking process for students. Mullen and Boldway (2005) states that there are three advantages to using this system. The first advantage of using Cornell notes is “it is a method for mastering information, not just recording facts” (Mullen & Boldway, 2005, page 11). In order for this system of note taking to be effective, students simply cannot copy down word for word what the teacher is lecturing about. They must pinpoint the major facts and place their thoughts in a logical sequence being sure to skip lines in between their thoughts. Mullen and Boldway (2005) also state that students need to strive to write and note the main ideas of the lecture. The additional information that the teacher provides is basically useless without the keys concepts.

Secondly, Mullen and Boldway (2005) say that cornell notes are an efficient way to take notes. The purpose of taking notes in this manner is to be able to produce a learning tool that will assist students at home with studying. After class, students are to take their notes and formulate questions on the left-hand side of their paper. They will do this by first underlining or highlighting key words or phrases and being sure that all items in their notes are complete (Mullen & Boldway, 2005). Once each student has completed the above tactics, they proceed to the bottom of their Cornell notes to write a reflective summary that is usually just a paragraph in length (Mullen & Boldway, 2005).

The last advantage of taking cornell notes is, “each step prepares the way for the next part of the learning process” (Mullen & Boldway, 2005, page 11). A student cannot write a reflective paragraph without first having read material or listened to a lecture in class. Students will first
have to actively participate in a lecture discussion, write down the main points of the discussion with at the facts to back it up, refine the notes by underlining and highlighting the key phrases or words and formulating questions, and then writing a reflective summary. Each step builds upon the foundation that was laid from the phase before it.

The AVID Cornell Notetaking System touches on every aspect of reading and writing. It helps students to actively engage themselves in class lectures and requires review of the material after class time. Despite what many think, taking notes is a form of writing and cornell notes requires students to write in paragraphs, reflect over what they have written, and then summarize. In order to do this, students have to be able connect thinking with writing and comprehend what they are learning in class and reading. This type of notes taking system can work even when watching movies, reading a piece of literature, and lecturing. Mullen and Boldway (2005) lists the five steps to cornell note taking as being recording, refining, reciting, reflection, and review. Students are able to gain numerous skills just in this one strategy that AVID utilizes.

Another noteworthy strategy that AVID devotes an enormous amount of time to is Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration and Reading (WICR). This is the foundation that AVID uses to incorporate the strategies like Learning Logs and Cornell Notes. The writing category allows for students to become overall complex learners. Students are able to take information and use their higher-order thinking skills to scrutinize and examine the problem. As stated earlier, writing is closely tied to reading and with this model that AVID uses the writing enables students to become better readers. In addition to the strategies mentioned above, AVID also integrates the use of quickwrites, peer evaluation and process writing to help students become better writers (“AVID coordinators handouts,” 2010).
Inquiry is what engages students in thinking. Instead of being so dependent upon the teacher and other classmates, students have a desire to think for themselves and dig deep to discover the answer to the questions independently. At this stage is when the elective teacher would incorporate strategies like Socratic Seminar, Philosophical Chairs, and Tutorials (“AVID coordinators handouts,” 2010). Students will have the opportunity to express their opinion and not necessarily be wrong, but persuade other students to join them in their way of thinking. All of these strategies evoke discussion with a set of expectations that students must follow. The way in which students are cognizant of their classmates or teammates builds that character that is needed to help them understand the positions of others and the importance of working together for a common goal. Students are able to get a grasp on learning through their questioning techniques and the way in which they mutually respect and are mindful of their other classmates (“AVID coordinators handouts,” 2010).

The “c” in WICR stands for collaboration. Collaboration is the ability for people to work together and understand that differences may be present but compromise is needed to find that common ground. Collaboration is all about working together as a team and being supportive regardless of what you want. In AVID students are able to explore and ask questions of each other but in a way that evokes student lead activities and learning. The focus becomes more student-centered than teacher-centered. Students are able to remember more information about topics covered in lectures or activities because they are actively engaged in learning (“AVID coordinators handouts,” 2010).

The last acronym “r” has been saved for the very last because of its importance. It is extremely difficult to partake in the other three aspects of WICR, without being able to read and comprehend. In order for students to learn when reading they must be able to connect what they
are reading to prior knowledge, understand text structure, and use “text-processing strategies” (“AVID coordinators handouts,” 2010). Students have to be able to see the importance of what they are learning in addition to understanding how they can apply what they have read or learned to their everyday life. Without connections, reading would be useless to a lot of people. This is another reason why AVID is so important to those middle of the road students. It takes what they would normally learn in a classroom by just listening and completing worksheets, and brings it to life in a whole new manner. Students begin to see the connections and start to have that burning desire to do better and learn more, and before long, they want to go to college and become something they never thought they could be.

AVID’s methodologies do not have to be used only in the elective course, but all throughout the school in every classroom. Again, this is a goal of AVID in the sense that schools will take off with the strategies that it employs and will utilize them throughout the entire entity. AVID does employ a great curriculum, but how do students have the time to be a part of this curriculum when they are required to take so many other academic classes a day?

The students that are elected to be a part of the AVID program will be required to take the AVID elective class. There are several different ways that this class can be implemented into the school day. AVID does not dictate to a school which way they should incorporate the elective course as long as the students get to be taught the entire curriculum. Part of the site team’s responsibility is to identify which structure of implementation will work better in the daily schedule of their school.

The AVID elective class can be incorporated in with another academic course which will last for the entire year. Students will be given forty-five minutes of instruction in their academic course as well as the AVID elective course everyday until the end of the school year. Because
the AVID elective teacher is having to essentially teach two different curriculums, both the academic course and the AVID elective class will have to be year-long because there would be no other way for students to receive all the material needed to be successful in both courses.

Another option for implementing the AVID curriculum is for a school to employ someone that would only teach AVID and the strategies that help students to be successful. This seems to be the most effective way to integrate the AVID curriculum in schools that seek to better their middle of the road students. When a teacher has the ability to teach only the AVID curriculum they have the capability to go above and beyond what AVID expects. When you have to couple two courses together it limits what you can teach and how effectively you can teach it. The focus of AVID can be expressed in a more operational manner when it is just one curriculum being taught.

Schools also choose to exercise the AVID program by implementing it year-long but utilize a school schedule with an “A/B” option. In this manner, the AVID teacher would teach their original course on “A” days and the AVID curriculum on “B” days or vice versa. If schools decide to go this route, the teacher would not have to teach two different courses everyday, but one course every other day.

Again, the way in which schools decide to integrate AVID is totally dependent upon what will work better for them and their schedule. Schools have to review several details that factor into the decision of how they will employ this program. Schools have to decide if the funding is available to even purchase the AVID program. Once that decision is made, then they have to consider how they will incorporate AVID into the school schedule and who the elective course teacher will be. This again, will be dependent upon the amount of funding that a school has available. Once these decisions have been made, the AVID site team will be created and the
major decisions from that point on will be made by them. The site team provides the support that AVID needs to continue to be successful at all levels. The site team members will usually attend a Summer Institute as long as the funding is still there to send them.

**Research on Effectiveness**

There have been several studies conducted on AVID and its effectiveness. Do the strategies it employs actually help underachieving students be successful? One such study was conducted in Texas, over a two-year period, where AVID was implemented in seven school districts across the state. AVID seemed to be the most suitable program to address the needs of these districts in Texas.

These school districts in Texas were experiencing high drop-out rates and low test scores from their African American and Hispanic students and because AVID is known for its high academic performance and college admission percentages, Texas felt this was a great solution for reprimanding their problem (Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2003). The main findings of this study discovered that AVID was a tremendous success with the proper implementation. It revealed that “strong instructional leadership, using AVID strategies school-wide, and staff development, underachieving, economically disadvantaged, ethnic minority students can succeed in a rigorous curriculum” (Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2003, page 58).

This study also revealed that a high level of participation by the administration, mainly the principal, and the counselor was critical to how effective AVID was incorporated into the school. Their support and knowledge about placing students into the more rigorous courses including advanced placement made them very crucial participates on the AVID site team. On the other hand, schools where the principal and the counselor did not play an active role, found
that AVID students were not being placed in the more advanced courses and they struggled to make this great program work (Watt, Yanez, and Cossio, 2003).

Probably the most notable observation in the schools that adopted AVID was the fact that the strategies being implemented were not just confined to the AVID elective course. The additional site team members began incorporating the AVID strategies within their classrooms and before long, they were sharing these strategies with their co-workers. As time passed, the site team members interviewed fellow teachers within the building in an attempt to push AVID throughout the building. There were mixed reactions among the teachers as some were comfortable with their current method of teaching while others took the AVID strategies and “modified” them to fit their classroom (Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2003).

When inspecting this research further, the data proved that AVID is one of the best reform programs that schools can purchase to help in every aspect of improving their school. For those students in AVID the passing rate in mathematics and reading by almost 15% and 7% respectively. More remarkable than the increase in the math and reading scores has to be the data collected on attendance rates. In the years that data was collected, AVID students increased their attendance by almost two and half percent while the rest of the student body stayed roughly the same each year (Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2003).

Based on the research AVID seems to be a great reform program for low-income schools due to the extra attention that it provides to those middle of the road students. In addition, the research shows that all of the strategies that AVID employs provides the boost that students need to be successful not just in the academic classes but above and beyond their school experience. AVID increases test scores, attendance rates, and college admissions while decreasing the dropout rate.
Summary

AVID is a program that has been around for over thirty years. It was amazing to discover that a program, which research says is so effective, is one that many have never heard of. Just the mere fact that many educators are not aware that such a program exists, is more than enough reason to dig further into AVID and gain a better understanding about this supposedly highly efficient program. Initially, educators may think this is just one more “quick-fix” to an ever changing educational world.

AVID has numerous strategies that make it successful which appeals to those school systems looking to implement this program into their schools. The focus of this study on AVID is to discover resources and data that support the effectiveness of the strategies implemented through this program. The intention of AVID is to better prepare students for college by offering support and encouragement through an elective course that will help students gain skills needed to succeed in more rigorous classes. In addition, AVID strives to reduce the drop-out rate, incorporate character education and career awareness, better prepare students for the transition between educational levels, AVID methodologies, and the structure of the program.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This study identified the key strategies that make AVID successful. It also explored the structure of the program to determine how it worked. In order for a study of this caliber to be conducted, research on each topic had to be located and numerous other sources found to ensure its accurateness. Extensive research was uncovered on the AVID site team, essential criterion, selection of students, how the program works, the goals of AVID, drop-out prevention, career development, college readiness, academic preparation, and the effectiveness of AVID, through internet searches, book reviews, journal articles, AVID resource material, and interviews with
current AVID personnel. Once all of the resources were found, an exhaustive review of the literature began. The research was organized based upon the number of resources found for each section and the importance of that particular component to the AVID program. As the research was conducted more strategies that AVID incorporates, in addition to illuminating additional information about the structure of AVID, and the importance of all parts working together in unison, were discovered.

The research was collected from numerous web-sites, interviews, books and articles and was organized in a way that highlighted the best aspects of AVID while focusing on those areas that persistently exhibit problems for schools. An outline was created and sources were placed in their proper category to facilitate the thought process. Once the sources were placed in the accurate section, each document was thoroughly examined in order to extract those aspects pertinent to this study. Ideas were summarized and organized into subheadings. An extensive literature review was created to detail the information that was summarized.

**Chapter 4 – Findings**

All of the strategies discussed throughout this study were extremely important to the overall effectiveness of AVID. Transitioning, character education, drop-out prevention, and college readiness are all major issues in education today with an emphasis placed on the latter two. With these concerns at the forefront of many conversations in education today, it was impossible not to include them in the research because AVID strategically addresses them all. School systems and schools are constantly looking for programs that address several of the concerns listed above; hence, the motive behind finding research on these particular aspects and linking them to AVID.
Moreover, there is a sense of passion for truly helping young students in becoming successful. Any research that can be found on increasing the graduation rates and college readiness can be used not just to prove programs like AVID work but for regular implementation within the entire student body. Any educator that is truly in education because of their desire to help students succeed would want to focus on the aspects mentioned above because of their aspiration to help students. This being another reason why the focus of this study included those issues that resound in the minds of many teachers and administrators on a daily basis.

As stated earlier, this study exposed several strategies that AVID implements that prove to be extremely effective in schools. Within the AVID elective course, the elected students are able to gain access to these strategies which will aid in facilitating their high school experience as well as college. The students taking part in the AVID course are not the only ones that will reap the benefits of this program. The entire student body can be exposed to all of the strategies that AVID incorporates on a daily basis. In the beginning this was not the focus of AVID, but over time schools have become “avidized” because of additional teachers integrating some of these approaches within their own classrooms.

AVID’s instructional methodologies places a great amount of concentration on the WICR model. This model is what pushes those middle of the road students to excel in the more rigorous courses. These methodologies include “W”, writing as a tool of learning, “I”, inquiry method, “C”, collaborative, subject-specific learning groups, and “R”, reading as a tool of learning (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007). Each one of these areas consists of different unique strategies that afford students the opportunity to improve their ability to learn and apply material being taught.
Writing allows students to think in more complex ways and express their thoughts and feelings. Writing also is the basis for “thinking, learning, and growth” (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007, page 35). Writing enhances the thought process because students are able to capture their thoughts on paper where their thoughts become a record that can be reviewed. Writing also enables students to absorb and grasp new concepts and build upon the foundation that has been laid by the teacher. It can also be a way that students can be sure that they fully understand the topic. There are three different strategies that were discovered within the research that AVID utilizes for the writing to learn part of WICR: notetaking, learning logs, and the writing process, discourse mode lessons (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007).

Of the three strategies mentioned above only two were consistently mentioned within the sources found. These are notable approaches that would be useful to any school wanting to incorporate strategies that assisted with writing. The note-taking system that AVID adopted was that of the Cornell system. This system requires for students to record detailed information on the teacher’s lecture, movie, or text. Furthermore, the cornell note-taking system requires students to clarify their notes by highlighting or underlining key points and then creating question to be put in the left-hand margin concerning what they have just identified as critical aspects. They are also mandated to write a summary at the bottom of the page that will reflect upon what they learned from their notes (Arellanes, Bishop, & Castruita, 2007).

This system of note-taking expedites the studying process because it is easy for students to review what they already know and check it off so they do not spend all of their time studying material already familiar to them. Most educators struggle with students taking notes effectively in addition to them actually learning the material that is being taught. With the implementation
and discovery of the Cornell note-taking process, students remain alert in the classroom and teachers can be assured that students are getting what they need from their lessons.

The learning log is another strategy used by the AVID program that helps students improve their writing skills. Learning logs are useful because they permit students to write about and reflect on what they did in class, what they learned, and what questions they may still have about a topic (Mullen & Boldway, 2005). Students are also able to make connections to their personal experience. Learning logs are an excellent tool to use in any classroom and will engage students in thinking, writing, and learning. In a math classroom, students can write an explanation to other students about how to solve a problem. In a history classroom, students can place themselves in a particular time period or become a specific person and write from that point of view. Students can also do “focused writing” where students are required to write non-stop about a topic they are studying. The teacher will put a time limit on the writing assignment and will usually utilize this type of learning log to find out what students know about a topic (Mullen & Boldway, 2005).

It is clear to see that this strategy is an effective instrument for helping students to enhance their writing skills and thinking skills and in turn will assist them in the learning process. Educators, whether they are AVID teachers or non-AVID teachers, would want to utilize this in their classroom to assist students in being successful in their particular subject area.

The AVID research also revealed another strategy that many teachers are not familiar with but exemplifies a more student-led environment in which teachers can evaluate students based upon their true knowledge of the subject at hand. Philosophical Chairs engages students in conversation, listening, understanding, and thinking. The teacher will present a situation to the students that will require them to rely on what they have learned and make a decision as to which
section they will sit in. When the teacher presents the problem they will also present two possible outcomes and the student will have to make the best decision they can and then make their way to the proper section (A. Yelverton, personal communications, March 21, 2011).

Once this is completed students will begin to argue their point of view and the students have to listen intently in order to know whether they want to change their position from their original thought or continue to stay where they are. Before students can speak their opinion and begin persuading others to join them, they must summarize or repeat what their last classmate just said. The beauty of this strategy is the fact that once a student has spoken they have to wait until at least three other students have spoken on their side before they can speak again. This eliminates the fear of most teachers that have an issue with just one or two students talking and the other students hiding in the background. It is also important to note that students cannot attack others that have a different opinion and are arguing their point of view, but instead they address the idea.

The goal of this strategy is to get the students engaged in learning and let them be the ones hashing out a solution to a proposed issue. This instructional technique is exciting on so many levels. The teacher is able to facilitate this process and also gain a better understanding of those students that understand the concepts and those that need additional help. Students are required to become critical thinkers and hash out the issues with little help from the teacher. The students are able to enhance their listening skills, their critical thinking skills, and their ability to exemplify mutual respect for their classmates. This is a great strategy that touches on numerous aspects that teachers can only hope that their student’s exhibit.

The AVID site team is an essential part of making the AVID program successful. This team is responsible for making decisions, planning, and coordinating the program. They provide
the foundation needed to ensure that the students benefit from the strategies that are implemented.

Not only does the site team have to build the foundation of the program, they also have to ensure that the program follows the essential criterion that the AVID program has laid out. These essential have to be followed at all times and will have to be reported to main AVID office at the end of the school year.

There would be no AVID program without the students. They must be selected based on certain criteria but will in essence have to volunteer to be a part of the program. The site team cannot force students to take part in the AVID elective course or curriculum they can only provide the encouragement some need to take that step forward. Students must apply and be interviewed before the selection is made.

Being as AVID is a separate curriculum, students are taught strategies that will assist them in being successful in rigorous courses. In addition, AVID incorporates a college readiness and career awareness piece that will help students prepare for the next level. AVID provides the support needed to students that have the potential but not the resources to fully reach their maximum potential. By providing these students with numerous strategies such as organizational skills, critical thinking skills, and life application, AVID can essentially help students push themselves to be better and better.

Even though AVID does not offer specific lessons on character education, most students will gain a better understanding of character because of what AVID requires. Teamwork, self-discipline, and dedication are just a few of the traits that AVID can help instill in those students that take the course.
The goal of AVID is to assist students in becoming a well-balanced individual. Students are afforded the opportunity to participate in tutoring sessions. This can be extremely beneficial because they have the extra time needed to be provided additional assistance in those academic areas they struggle with the most. These tutoring sessions are specific drawing upon the academic areas in which the students exemplify the most problems. Students have to follow a ten step method in order for tutoring sessions to be effective.

In addition, AVID can also help reduce the drop-out rate in schools. The students that are enrolled in the AVID course have attendance rates higher than those that do not. Students also have a tendency to drop-out of school because they lack the ability to be successful on end-of-course tests and lack of participation in school. AVID identifies strategies through use of the WICR model that will assist students in becoming more successful in high school and beyond.

College readiness is a large part of the AVID curriculum. Students are able to take college tours and be provided with tips that will help them be successful while in college. Universities look for rigor in an applicant and AVID is able to afford students with the opportunity to be successful in the more advanced courses. This will allow the college acceptance rates to increase because now the students that just had the potential now have the resources to accompany that potential.

AVID has a strong curriculum that can certainly benefit the students taking the course but also the entire school. Originally AVID was to only be a part of the elective teachers’ classroom, more and more schools are becoming “avidized” because of the filtration of the strategies into regular classrooms.

AVID encompasses various strategies that all prove to be successful in the AVID elective course as well as school wide. This section only focuses on a few of the strategies that all
educators could certainly use in their classrooms and would have a desire to use because of what they do for students as well as themselves. Most educators that want their students to be successful will incorporate strategies such as the ones mentioned above in order for them to have every opportunity to gain skills needed to be prosperous not just in their classroom, but all aspects of life.

Chapter 5 - Results

In the previous chapter there were three strategies mentioned that are excellent examples of how teachers can engage, involve, and self-motivate students to become active participants in their learning. It is important that these particular strategies, as well as numerous others that AVID employs, be incorporated into every classroom within a school building. The strategies within this study have been proven to be highly effective and can be implemented in just about every aspect of education.

The main focus of education today is to get students prepared for the 21st Century. That includes taking every step we can as educators to get students to critically think and improve their reading and writing skills which leads to a decrease in the drop-out rate and an increase in college admissions. Having been around for over thirty years, AVID has proven that it is a successful program and that it employs a good strong curriculum for low-income school districts. It provides a way for the middle of the road minorities to receive a decent education by offering the support and encouragement they need to prosper in a rigorous course of study.

This type of program, from what the research has shown, would be an excellent fit for Union High School as implementation began this school year. Union has over 80% of students on free and reduced lunch and only the top 20% of students attend a post-secondary institution
where they will further their education. The dropout rate increases with every year that passes with failures increasing and attendance dropping off dramatically.

All of the AVID strategies will continue to be implemented and hopefully they will begin to filter into additional classrooms in order to assist those that are not in the AVID elective course. One disadvantage that Union faces is the fact that our feeding middle school does not have an AVID program at this time. As research showed, AVID is more effective at the middle school level and would drastically help the high school AVID course if students have already been exposed to the curriculum. In addition to this, Union is currently the only school in the county that has the AVID program, making it difficult to collaborate with the other county high schools.

The research also showed that the success of this program was strongly hinged upon the enthusiasm and dedication of the AVID elective teacher. As in the case of numerous other AVID schools, Union has the ability to provide a strong elective teacher that is determined to make this program work and change the lives of many students at Union. In addition, the AVID elective course is more effective when it can be offered as one class and not coupled with any other course. However, in the case at Union, the funds are not available to have just one teacher teaching only AVID; it must be taught in conjunction with one of our academic courses. This is where the AVID site team plays a dramatic role in ensuring that additional support is provided in order for AVID to be successful at this school.

In an effort to ensure that AVID continues and that the strategies it brings with it remains in the district for years to come, the county has decided to filter the program down to the district’s feeder middle school. This will certainly help in the effort of preparing students for transition and already being prepared for the rigor they will encounter in high school.
Since AVID is still in its initial stages, there is not enough data to prove whether the program will actually be successful at Union or, as in some cases, be a complete flop. As with all things, time will tell whether the program will be a success for this school and district and if this was money well spent.

As time goes on and all aspects of the AVID program are implemented, more and more teachers and students are becoming accustomed to the very different “student-led” learning approaches. Professional Development, which is required to take place per the AVID curriculum, will continue to be conducted. Teachers will continue to see different strategies modeled in an effort to “avidize” the school. The three strategies that were mentioned above are the ones that seem to have grabbed the attention of many teachers at Union. These approaches have proven to be an answer that many needed to help boost the skills of their students. One struggle that some teachers have is getting students to take notes and to learn the material while doing so. Teachers like for students to take notes and review them after class, most times at home before class the next day. What would be the point of giving notes if students never take the time to examine them?

With AVID’s Cornell note taking system, teachers are able to incorporate a system for their students to take notes that will meet their standards and help students develop critical thinking skills. The same proves true with the learning logs. Teachers are able to assess their students in order to find out what they know and what they still have questions about by using a simple writing technique. Students will be able to gain better skills in addition to learning material being taught in class.

Some teacher would be resistant to using the Philosophical Chairs because they feel it gives students too much control in class. Others love it because it is more student-centered and it
engages students in listening, thought, and learning. The goal is to get additional teachers to use this method so all students will be familiar with the process with the hope being to incorporate it throughout the school. No matter what subject a teacher teaches, this strategy can be utilized.

It is the consensus that Union will successfully implement the AVID program in their school and not limit it to just the AVID elective class because of the dedication of all stakeholders. The success of this program, however, is dependent upon the strength of the site team, especially the elective teacher, principal and counselor. In an interview by Michael G. Shaughnessy, (2005) Swanson sums up AVID this way:

“In AVID we teach explicitly how to take good notes, how to use those notes for study and clarification, how to develop questions on those notes, how to ask good questions in study groups or in classes, how not to restudy what one already knows, how to be able to explain concepts to someone else, how to write new concepts in one’s own words, how to read effectively and review effectively.”

Through the research AVID has proven to be a great program and educators would want to implement a curriculum such as this that at their school in order to successfully prepare students for the journey that lies ahead of them. Union, in this case, has nowhere to go but up and with the implementation of AVID they are well on their way.
References


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# Table 1.1 – AVID student notebook rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Overall Organization</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pencil/Pen pouch (2 points)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dividers (5 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatness (3 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agenda/Daily Planner/Calendar</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legible (1 point)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-to-date (4 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tutorial Request Forms</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Forms (20 points)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cornell Notes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Academic lessons/1 AVID (9 points)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Binder Total:** 100