



# Big IDEAs

Dropout  
Prevention  
Strategies

## Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

### Purpose

AVID is a comprehensive middle school through senior high school reform program designed to prepare educationally disadvantaged students who have demonstrated potential for success in a rigorous secondary school curriculum for four-year college eligibility. First developed in 1980 by Mary Catherine Swanson, head of the English department at San Diego's Clairemont High School in 1980, Avid now serves 115, 000 student in more than 2, 200 middle and high schools in 36 state and 15 countries.

### Target Population

The AVID program selects students based on the following criteria:

- Ability: Are the students getting Cs and Bs but are capable of more? Can they succeed in college preparatory courses with support?
- Desire and determination: Do they want to attend college? Are they willing to work hard to get there?
- Membership in an underserved group: Are they in a low-income household? Will they be the first in their family to attend college? Are they historically unlikely to attend college?

Once selected, AVID students are placed into rigorous courses and provided intensive and targeted support to ensure their success in these courses. Teachers become advocates and guides for their AVID students and counselors change from “gate-keeper to facilitator.” AVID also creates site teams of administrators, teachers and counselors who focus on supporting the

AVID students, through increased communication and coordination.

### Major Components

- AVID is an acronym that stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination.
- AVID is an in-school academic support program for grades five through 12 that prepares students for college eligibility and success.
- AVID places academically average students in advanced classes.
- AVID levels the playing field for minority, rural, low-income and other students without a college-going tradition in their families.
- AVID is for all students, but it targets those in the academic middle.
- AVID is implemented schoolwide and districtwide.

AVID also provides comprehensive professional development to teachers and administrators as part of its support to the schools. Teachers use the AVID curriculum, which was developed by middle and senior high school teachers in collaboration with college professors. It is driven by the WIC-R method, which stands for writing, inquiry, collaboration, and reading. Writing in all subjects is emphasized with a focus on clarifying and communicating thoughts. Students also are encouraged to ask questions, critically read, inquire, clarify, analyze and synthesize information. AVID students learn in a classroom where the AVID teacher is more of a facilitator and advocate and partners with the students in their learning.

Parents are asked to sign a contract agreeing to support the AVID requirements, encourage and support their children and attend AVID meetings. Parents are kept informed about program events, and many often participate in planning programs.

### **Evidence of Effectiveness**

When implemented as designed, the AVID program has impressive evaluation results. It has been shown to improve schoolwide standardized test scores, advanced-course enrollments, and college enrollment. In 1996, Hugh Mehan published his study of the AVID program in eight high schools and found that AVID graduates outperformed their comparison groups in college enrollment. Moreover, 89% of the AVID graduates were still enrolled in college after two years, and 92% of all AVID graduates enrolled in college—75% higher than the overall student population (Mehan, H., Villanueva, I., Hubbard, L., Lintz, A. *Constructing School Success: The Consequences of Untracking Low-Achieving Students*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

The AVID center has evidence to indicate that the proportion of Latino students taking AP exams is seven times higher among AVID students than among U.S. students overall. The center also reports that 95% of the 30,000 AVID graduates enroll in two- and four-year institutions of higher education, and 85% complete their four-year college requirements.

### **Implementation Considerations**

Mary Catherine Swanson, AVID founder, and Robert Gira, AVID national program director, provide recommendations for implementing AVID on a schoolwide basis. These include:

- Well-trained teachers and tutors with large numbers of AVID students who meet the selection criteria;
- A multi-year approach for the AVID elective courses to serve a large portion of the AVID-eligible students;
- Regular meetings of the school's site team, which includes administrators;
- AVID essential components should minimally be “routine,” with key components moving to the institutionalization level;
- Multiple AVID elective teachers from diverse academic areas;

- A plan to expand the use of AVID tutors schoolwide through peer tutoring and college tutors;
- The school should plan to train, within four years, at least half of the teachers, through the summer institute and AVID path trainings; and
- Key teacher leaders are fully trained to become AVID staff developers thus building school capacity.

### **Costs**

The AVID program costs about \$3 per student per day the first year and declines in cost to about \$1 per student per day by the third year.

[www.avidcenter.org](http://www.avidcenter.org)

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