

# **Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)**

## **What Is It?**

AVID, an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination, is an "untracking" program designed to help underachieving students with high academic potential prepare for entrance to colleges and universities. The AVID approach to untracking places previously underachieving students (who are primarily from low income and ethnic or linguistic minority backgrounds) in the same college preparation academic program as high-achieving students (who are primarily from middle or upper-middle income and "majority" backgrounds). AVID features a rigorous academic elective course with a sequential curriculum for grades 7 through 12 that focuses on writing, inquiry, and collaboration as methodologies to accelerate student progress.

## **Why Did It Get Started?**

The idea of untracking low-achieving students was introduced to San Diego in 1980 at Clairemont High. Under a court-ordered desegregation decree, minority students from predominantly ethnic minority schools in Southeast San Diego were bussed to the predominantly white school. Mary Catherine Swanson, chair of the English department, and the Clairemont faculty were unwilling to segregate African-American and Latino students into a separate, compensatory curriculum. Instead, they placed the bussed students in regular college prep classes and developed a support system that included tutors, note taking, writing as a tool of learning and, most importantly, open discussion between students and staff about how students learn best.

AVID soon spread beyond Clairemont High School. In 1984, one of Swanson's colleagues went to Madison High School, where she helped introduce AVID. Swanson was called to the San Diego County Office of Education in 1986 to implement the model county-wide and, in the spring semester of 1987, the San Diego City Schools School Board mandated the AVID's adoption in every high school. The program has since been adopted also by the Department of Defense Dependent Schools in Europe and Asia. By 1997, more than 500 high schools and middle schools in eight states and 13 foreign countries had introduced AVID programs.

## **How Does It Work?**

AVID coordinators and site teams select students for the program. Low-income and linguistic minority students who have average- to high-achievement test scores and C-level grades, students who would be the first in their family to attend college, and students who have special circumstances that could impede their progress to college, are eligible for AVID..The AVID curriculum at both the middle and high school level is composed of a series of libraries organized around writing as a tool of learning, inquiry, and collaboration. The curriculum is typically taught 2 or 3 days a week and AVID students complete formal writing domains based on anticipated college-level writing experiences. The previously underachieving students who are placed into college prep classes are not left to sink or swim, however. AVID has arranged a system of supports to assist students in making the transition from low-track to high-track high school classes.

## **What Are The Costs?**

AVID is typically funded at the school-site level by school district, state, federal, or grant monies. The program coordinator required by AVID comes from the existing staff; tutors are recruited from local colleges and universities and paid for their services. Schools pay for staff development and curriculum materials. The cost for one classroom of 30 students is usually less than \$10,000 per year.

## **How Is The Model Implemented In A School?**

Professional training and staff development are crucial ingredients in the AVID process. Staff development occurs in two stages. AVID Center conducts a summer institute in San Diego and other parts of the country each summer. AVID teachers are encouraged to attend and to bring other staff members to the institute. AVID Center provides follow-up staff development during the school year at school sites.

Each AVID Coordinator is encouraged to establish a "school site team" composed of teachers in academic departments, counselors, and administrators. This team provides advice and helps extend the model throughout the school. AVID Coordinators and school site team members are also encouraged to visit "demonstration schools" to see programs in operation.

## **What Is The Evidence That The Model Is Successful?**

Approximately 10,000 students have graduated from AVID programs and the program has been thoroughly researched by a

variety of entities, including private foundations and federal and state agencies. Over 90 percent of AVID's graduates attend college and 89 percent of those students are still in college after 2 years.

A study of the AVID program in 14 high schools in the San Diego City Schools system from 1990 to 1992 found that, during that period, 1,053 students who had participated in the program for 3 years graduated, while only 288 students started the program but left after completing 1 year or less. Of the 248 students selected randomly for follow-up, 48 percent reported attending 4-year colleges and 40 percent reported attending 2-year colleges. The 48 percent rate of enrollment in 4-year colleges for students who have been "untracked" compares favorably with the San Diego City Schools' average of 37 percent and the national average of 39 percent.

The AVID untracking program assists the academic achievement of low-income African-American and Latino students. Of the Latino students who have participated in AVID for 3 years, 43 percent enroll in 4-year colleges. This rate compares favorably to the San Diego City Schools average of 25 percent and the national average of 29 percent. Of the African-American students who have participated in AVID for 3 years, 55 percent enroll in 4-year colleges, compared to 35 percent from the San Diego City Schools and a national average of 33 percent.

AVID students who come from the lowest income strata (i.e., their parents' median income is below \$19,999) enroll in 4-year colleges in equal or higher proportions to students who come from higher income strata (parents' median income between \$20,000 and \$65,000).

## **Where Can I See It?**

Demonstration sites are available in many parts of the United States. Contact one of the AVID Centers for the nearest sites.

## **The Research Base**

The AVID model is based on research suggesting that all students can learn challenging material if the right types of support are provided; and, more specifically, that low-performing students do better when they are given accelerated learning opportunities rather than remedial material. The model also derives from research on alternatives to tracking, and theories and research pertaining to how to foster the positive relationships and supportive conditions that are so important during students' secondary school years.