

# AVID Effectiveness Study

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## Advancement Via Individual Determination Program

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Finding ways to decrease dropout rates of students and enhance college admissions is a goal of many school districts nationwide. In the United States, thirty percent of high school students do not go on to pursue post-secondary education (Avidcenter.org, 2006). In addition, there is a gap in continuing education between minority students and non-minority students. The most recent report by the Center for Education Statistics ([www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov), 2006) indicated that minorities made up only 30% of students enrolled in degree-granting institutions. Of these students, 12.5% were African-American, 10.5% were Hispanic, and only 6.5% were Asian or Pacific Islanders.

The Clark County School District (CCSD), like many other large urban school districts, is trying to find ways to address the dropout rate in its schools. There are many avenues and dropout programs that aim to decrease dropout rates and increase college enrollment. One of these programs, the *Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program*, is a holistic approach that is being explored in some CCSD high schools. The purpose of this study is to examine whether the AVID program has been successful in CCSD schools.

## **The AVID Program**

The AVID program is designed to increase college participation rates, specifically targeting minority and underprivileged populations as a means to create educational parity among ethnic and income groups in the United States. According to recent studies, students participating in AVID have prospered in many ways. The program has been linked to enhanced bonds between students and teachers (Fashola & Slavin, 1998); elevated status and self-esteem of participants (Fashola & Slavin, 1998); positive perceptions from parents and caregivers (Oswald, 2002); the development of self-regulated learning strategies (Hubard, 1996) and a means to help realize reform initiatives for teachers and school districts (Hubard & Mehan, 1999).

AVID is considered an “untracking” program, as students who are potential underachievers are supported, mentored and coached to avoid a premature ending to their high school education and directed towards more productive, potentially successful college-bound programs. AVID uses techniques such as placing minority students in the same college preparatory academic classes as high-achieving students and providing special elective classes that meet for one academic period a day, every school day, for their entire high-school careers.

Activities associated with AVID programs include special note and test-taking strategies and organization techniques (Hubbard & Mehan, 1999). Another key component of AVID is “social scaffolding”, i.e. providing a supportive developmental environment including cultivation of critical thinking skills (Oswald, 2002). The program includes help in completing college and scholarship applications and visits to college campuses.“ AVID teaches low-income students explicitly in school what middle-income students learn implicitly at home” (Swanson, 1993). AVID supports a culture for the minority student where success is expected, not anomalous.

## Previous Research

Schools prosper from the implementation of AVID programs. Since its inception in 1980, AVID had affected the performance profile of the school by leveraging success of disaggregated subgroups of students, particularly African American and Latino students, as well as students from lower income families (Watt, Powell, Mendiola & Cossio, 2006). Of the more than 20,000 AVID graduates nationwide, 93% have gone on to college (Gomez, 2001). One study found, “students that participated in AVID were 20% more likely to participate in 4-year colleges and universities with the overall AVID college participation rate at 93%. (Mehan, 1996).

Participation in AVID is related to school accountability ratings. Watt, Powell, Mendiola, and Cossio (2006) over a 4-year period evaluated 10 high schools in four Texas school districts and found unanimous accountability improvement. Additionally, AVID participants had reduced dropout rates and higher college entrance rates when compared to non-AVID school programs. AVID students, with higher minority concentrations than the general school population, showed greater improvement on standardized tests, grade point averages and had better than average attendance than their non-AVID peers (Watt, Yanez & Cossio, 2003).

In summary, the research concerning AVID programs leads to two main conclusions, improvement in graduation rates and entrance into post-secondary education for students, and concurrent enhancement of school accountability ratings. AVID students prosper through mentoring programs, strategy instruction and a social commitment to the program and administrators.

Schools benefit based upon the increase in students graduating and pursuing higher levels of education. These facts are especially significant considering the focus and impact of the AVID program upon typically disadvantaged minority students.

## CCSD AVID Effectiveness Study

The goals and objectives of the AVID program within CCSD closely parallel those described in previous research. There are two long-term goals CCSD hopes to achieve with the implementation of the AVID program: to increase graduation rates and to increase college admissions for students exiting high school<sup>1</sup>. In addition to these long term goals, AVID within CCSD has developed three specific interim objectives:

- Objective I: *Students participating in AVID will take more advanced placement and honors courses.*
- Objective II: *The number of students participating in AVID will increase by the end of the 2006 school year.*
- Objective III: *Staff participating in the AVID project will report overall satisfaction with the program.*

These interim objectives will serve as a feedback mechanism for AVID staff. Feedback will allow AVID staff to determine if there are adjustments needed to be made to the program as is being implemented, the adherence to the fidelity of the program, and other factors that may affect the program quality.

## Program Analysis

Analyses of these objectives are described below in both chart and narrative form. The following section describes the student population that participates in the AVID program. Subsequent sections derive specific comparisons of achievement data between AVID and non-AVID students. These analyses will be used to determine whether the AVID program is on the right track towards the ultimate goals of increasing graduation rates and increasing college admission for exiting CCSD students. When the study cohort moves from ninth grade (2004-2005) to twelfth grade (2008-2009), a final AVID evaluation will be conducted in 2009 to see whether the program has reached its overall goals.

## Limitations

The overall goals of the AVID program are long term goals that can only be measured as a longitudinal study. The inherent limitation of this study is that these long-term goals can only be measured indirectly. Future evaluations, particularly for the 2008-2009 cohort, will be more reflective of AVID's effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> The current objectives emphasize both short-term academic improvements as the catalyst for long-term student success, defined as graduation and continuing education. The current evaluation focused exclusively upon short-term objectives as the AVID program within CCSD commenced with the 2004-2005 academic year and graduation and post-secondary entrance data are not currently available or relevant.

## **Objective I**

*Students participating in AVID will take more advanced placement and honors courses.*

AP/honors courses are a means designed for students planning to go to higher education institutions that have competitive admission requirements. The course work in Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) is more intensive and rigorous than traditional coursework. The AVID program compels participating students to take more Honors and AP classes in order to improve their chances for college admission.

For the analysis of this objective, AP/Honors data was compiled on a per semester basis. Thus, if a student participated in a course for a year, and was registered for two semesters, it was counted as two instances of enrollment.

The final analysis consisted of a comparison of the mean number of courses the AVID students took compared to the mean number of non-AVID<sup>2</sup>. The cumulative number of courses taken by AVID participants for both the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 academic years was 119 compared to 61 courses for non-AVID participants in the same time period.

**Table 1** The mean number of AP/honors courses taken for each student group.

Student Group	Number of participants	Mean number of courses
2004-2005 non-AVID	152	3.69
2004-2005 AVID	135	6.72
2005-2006 non-AVID	152	2.09
2005-2006 AVID	135	4.86

Results from Table 1 indicate students participating in the AVID program take more AP/honors courses on average than a matched sample of non-AVID students.

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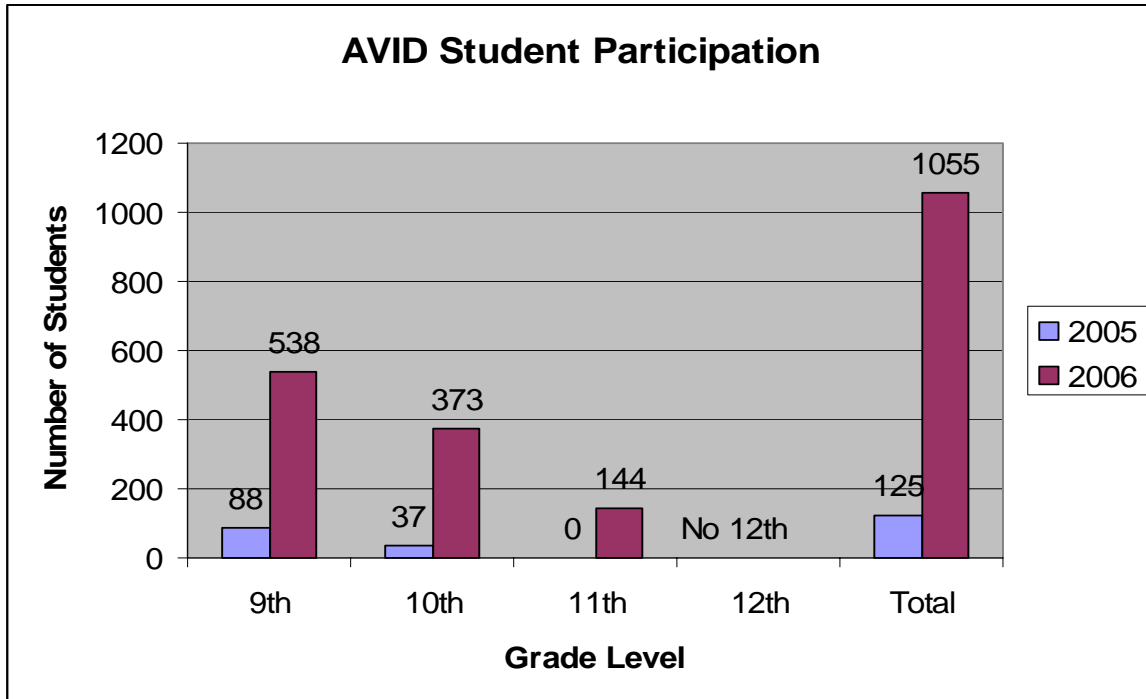
<sup>2</sup> Several aspects of data collection and sampling procedures should be noted. The student sample used in the analysis compared students that participated in AVID continuously in both the 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 academic school years. Eligible participants in the analysis were in 9th grade during 2004/2005 and advanced to 10th grade in 2005/2006. This criterion yielded 141 students (AVID group). Students were excluded from the AVID group if GPA data was not available for one of the years of the study period. This left 135 students in the AVID sample.

A matched-sample of comparison students were selected from schools with an AVID program (non-AVID group). Students in the non-Avid group were ineligible for inclusion in the comparison group if at anytime they were in the AVID program. The random sample of just over 200 students was refined to match the demographic profile of the students in the AVID sample. The comparison group yielded 152 students matched on eligibility for free or reduced lunch, gender, ethnicity, and English language proficiency. Care was taken to ensure that the comparison and AVID groups were similar in the types and counts of special education designations, marginal differences existed, but the differences were not significant and did not impact overall program evaluation.

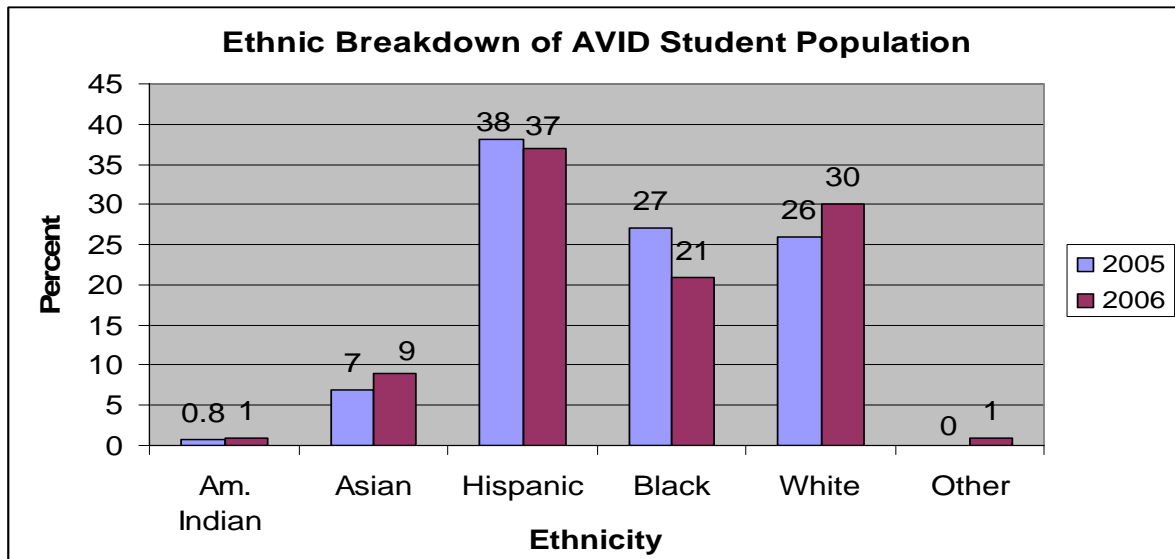
**Objective II**

*The number of students participating in AVID will increase by the end of the 2006 school year.*

The numbers of students participating in AVID in both the 2005 and 2006 years by grade level are illustrated below. The total number of current AVID students (1,055) represents approximately 2.2% of the entire CCSD high school student population (48,088). Chart 1 indicates that the growth of the AVID program from inception to the current year has significantly increased.



The AVID program targets students of diverse demographic backgrounds that under other circumstances might not pursue post-secondary education. The demographic data indicate in total 69.9% of the student populations participating in the AVID program originate from minority demographic groups.



A key component of successful program evaluation is the number and extent of resources dedicated towards a particular program. Paralleling the growth in AVID student and school populations, the number of school staff and tutors has evolved<sup>3</sup>. In the 2005 year, there were 95 AVID staff and 79 tutors. In 2006, the number of staff increased to 133 and tutors to 91 in the AVID program.

In summation, the AVID program within CCSD has grown considerably over the past two academic years. The number of participants, schools, staff and trained tutors has increased, thus objective II has been met.

<sup>3</sup> Core staff that consists of the AVID Elective Teachers, AVID Counselor, AVID Teacher Coordinator, AVID Administrative Designee and Principal.

### **Objective III**

*Staff participating in the AVID project will report overall satisfaction with the program.*

AVID trainings for school based staff and tutors were held throughout the 2005-2006 school year. A summer institute for AVID staff was offered in August 2005. One-hundred and seventy-two Clark County School District staff members and tutors attended. Evaluations were administered to participants at the conclusion of each training session<sup>4</sup>. Questions were asked regarding each training session and about perceptions of the AVID program overall. Participants responded using a Likert scale of 1-4 with 4 being “Strongly Agree”, 3 “Agree”, 2 “Disagree”, and 1 “Strongly Disagree”. The responses to both training sessions and the AVID summer institute were overwhelmingly positive. The mean score for all questions approximated 3.5.<sup>5</sup>

Participating teachers were administered a survey at the end of the 2005-2006 school year. Teachers were asked for their perception of the overall impact of AVID on students and level of administrative support for the program.<sup>6</sup>

- One hundred percent (100%) of teachers who responded felt that the AVID students and the AVID program had a positive effect on the student population in general.
- Eighty percent (80%) of teachers who responded indicated that administrative support throughout the year had been strong for the AVID program.

## **Conclusions**

Existing data supports the accomplishment of the objectives established by CCSD for the AVID program. The positive trends highlighted by the achievement results are accentuated by the increased participation of AVID students in AP and Honors courses. AP and Honors course are arguably more difficult, require a greater dedication of time and effort, and are a greater challenge for the typical student than traditional courses. AVID students more frequently elected to participate in these challenging academic environments.

One of the primary objectives of the AVID program is to prepare students for the rigorous academic challenges of post-secondary education. Greater voluntarily participation in more challenging classroom environments, which more likely reflects those encountered in colleges and universities, appears to be a significant benefit of AVID. As one of the overall goals of AVID is to encourage students to continue post-secondary education, taking more challenging courses is an important preliminary step.

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<sup>4</sup> Grants Development and Administration Evaluation of AVID Earmark Grant, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> The mean of the scores was >3.50 except for the AVID Data Collection Training on November 19 2005 where the mean for the questions: “The objective(s) of the presentation were met” was 3.45, and “The information reinforced/enhanced my professional competence” was 3.43

<sup>6</sup> This survey was administered only to teachers at AVID schools funded by the AVID Earmark Grant.



Lastly, attainment of the two overall goals of the AVID program still must be explored, graduation rates and post-secondary education participation. These long-term goals are beyond the time limitations of the current evaluation but should be pursued in future years.

## **Recommendations**

AVID is a program designed to cultivate, encourage and change the behaviors of disadvantaged populations that may have previously perceived post-secondary education as an unobtainable reality. AVID is a program with potential to redirect the course of a deprived student's life. If future resources are dedicated towards the AVID program, it is essential evaluation be focused towards long-term tracking of program participants. The AVID evaluation should continue to follow this cohort of AVID students until at least graduation in the 2009 school year.

For the 2006 school year and subsequent years, a more comprehensive evaluation would include additional qualitative information from students, teachers, and parents. AVID takes a holistic approach to increasing graduation rates and post-secondary education, therefore other salient information about participants should be factored into the overall analysis. For example, the AVID program intends to support, mentor and coach students; to enhance bonds between students and teachers; and to provide a supportive developmental environment for students. Information about these indicators should be collected and analyzed in subsequent years. It is hypothesized that this type of support and attitude change in students should increase the probability that students will graduate and aspire to post-secondary education. This type of qualitative information may not be reflected in quantifiable terms. The need for development of qualitative protocols is suggested.

Future evaluations, particularly for the 2008-2009 cohort, will be more reflective of AVID's effectiveness and will examine the program components and program fidelity.

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