The AVID Program in AISD, 1999-2002
2001-2002 Evaluation
Austin Independent School District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

For students with adequate family, financial and community support, it is relatively simple to provide an education that meets the students• needs and leads to higher education. Unfortunately, not all students have such a background. Other struggling students are disengaged from school due to lack of previous success, boredom, or simply feeling that school is irrelevant to their futures. These students frequently underachieve in school, and while capable of higher education, effectively lock themselves out by selecting an unchallenging curriculum.

AVID is a program designed to help underachieving students with academic potential prepare for entrance into colleges and universities. In the program, participants are primarily from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds. In AVID, these students are placed in a college prep academic program, and are provided a support system to help students achieve in these classes.

The base for the support system is the year-long AVID elective class, which meets for one academic period a day. Students are expected to enroll in the AVID class every year from the time they are selected for the program until graduation. The AVID class features explicit instruction in the skills needed for success in advanced classes such as note taking, assignment tracking, and college-level writing. In addition, the program provides in-class tutorial support to help students fill any gaps in their educational backgrounds. To develop critical thinking skills the class includes Socratic seminars (a inquiry-based system of learning and problem-solving) and philosophical chairs (debate of current issues). Beyond the classroom, AVID assists students and their parents to develop expectations that the students can achieve a college degree. Study trips, college visits, and guest speakers all play a part in making college a real possibility for students who generally will be among the first in their families to attend. The AVID program also provides professional development to the AVID teachers who then train others g8tru

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college-level writing. In addition, the program provides in-class tutorial support to help students fill any gaps in their educational backgrounds. To develop critical thinking skills the class includes Socratic seminars (a inquiry-based system of learning and problem-solving) and philosophical chairs (debate of current issues). Beyond the classroom, AVID assists students and their parents to develop expectations that the students can achieve a college degree. Study trips, college visits, and guest speakers all play a part in making college a real possibility for students who generally will be among the first in their families to attend. The AVID program also provides professional development to the AVID teachers who then train others on their campuses.

In AISD, the AVID program has been funded under a Title I - Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) grant. The CSRD grant was awarded to the district in 1999 and funded the project for three years. The program was funded on eight secondary campuses across the district … Burnet, Dobie, Lamar, and Webb middle schools and Bowie, Lanier, McCallum, and Reagan high schools. The CSRD grant funding has ended with the end of the 2001-02 school year; it is time to review where the AVID program has been and where it may go in the future.

AVID Fit with other AISD Initiatives

Table 1: Student Populations Targeted for Services by AVID, Bridges, and GEAR UP

Participation Considerations	AVID	GEAR UP	Bridges	Project Advance
Grade-Level	7th -12th Grades	Single student cohort in 8th grade in 2002	9th Grade	Mainly 12th Grade
Low Socio-Economic Status	Free/Reduced Lunch	Free/Reduced Lunch	No target established	No target established
Ethnicity	Under represented college populations	Under represented college populations	No target established	No target established
First Generation College Student	First generation college	First generation college	No target established	First generation college
School Attendance	Students without major attendance problems	No target established	Students w/ poor attendance record	No target established
Discipline Issues	Students without major discipline problems	No target established	No target established	No target established
Course Grades	Students w/ •CŽ course average	Students in danger of failing or needing help w/ advanced coursework	Students with grades below 75 in any 6-week grading period	Students taking courses that qualify them for college
TAAS/TAKS Performance	Students passing TAAS	Students failing TAAS	Students failing TAAS	Students passing TAAS/TAKS

Several programs in AISD offer tutoring and share specific goals to close the gap in high school and college preparation. These shared goals are:

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID):

> To prepare underachieving students from groups traditionally underserved in post-secondary education to be eligible for and successful in four-year colleges and universities.

Bridges to Ninth-Grade Success:

> To increase graduation rates in Texas public schools by reducing the numbers of students retained in ninth grade or who drop out.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)

> To encourage young, low income, at-risk students to have high expectations, stay in school, and complete the required courses to enter college. This program serves

Figure 1: Ethnic Distribution of AVID Participants by School, 2001-02
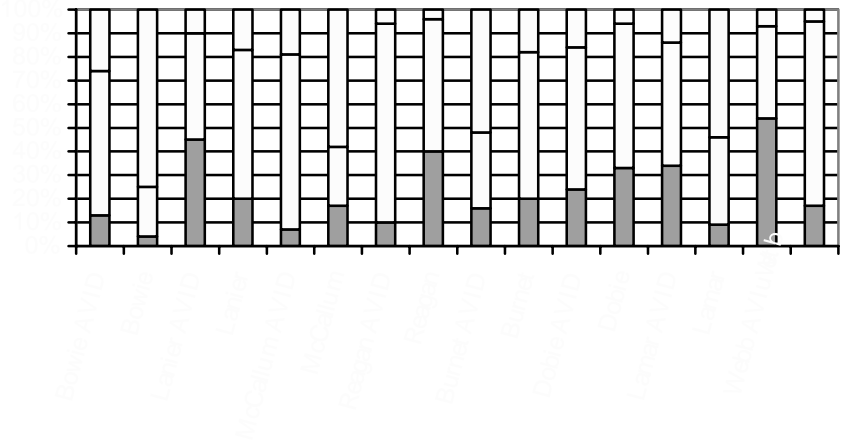
Only at Reagan High School are there large numbers of students classified as having limited English skills, although participants with adequate English skills sometimes have parents whose English is limited. Most of the schools have significant numbers of students in poverty in the AVID program. Few AVID students are identified as gifted and talented.

Figure 3: AVID Participants by Gender, 2001-02

year to make up for the deficit. Since a typical course load includes 7 credits of courses, only a student failing at least two full year courses (or parts of more) will fail to advance. Other students may be struggling but will still continue to advance. In the 2001-02 school year, 30 AVID students (13.3%) failed to gain 5 credits and 13 (5.7%) did not have the total credits to advance to the next grade. Report card and course history data were analyzed for these 28 students to look for patterns as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Patterns of Failure among AVID High School Students

School	# Under 5 Credits/ # Failing to Advance	Selection Issue	Too Many Advanced Classes/Too Little Support	Behavior Issues	Exit AVID
Bowie er	Q 0.502 0 0.50				

COLLEGE TESTING

Eighteen of the AVID students took either or both of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT … 14 students) or ACT Assessment (8 students). These few students represent only a first indication of how AVID students will fare after high school. On average, the AVID students still lag the state average scores on each of these tests. The average AVID student taking the ACT scored 17.5. This value compares to an average 20.6 in AISD and 20.2 composite for Texas.[2] The average SAT score of 961.4 was also lower than the 1043 in AISD and 987 average score for Texas.[3] However, four of these students achieved scores that were high enough to exempt that student from the TASP exam (minimum 500 on each part of the SAT or 22 on each of the English and mathematics portions of the ACT). As more AVID students reach graduation, college entrance exams and acceptance should continue to be monitored.

COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

AVID students in AISD are just beginning to graduate from high school so participants• college futures are not yet evident. However, there were 126 seniors who participated in AVID in 2001-2002 in districts across Texas. One hundred-sixteen of these students responded to a survey conducted in April and May of 2002 (Cossio, Huerta, and Watt 2002)[4]. Of these students, 85% indicated they would graduate on the Recommended plan and an additional 9% would graduate on the Distinguished Achievement plan. Ninety-eight percent planned to attend college after graduation. Sixty-one percent planned to attend a 4-year college while the remaining 37% planned to attend a two-year college. It will be a substantial increase in college goinges if these figures apply to AISD in the future. In the 2002-2003 school year, evidence of college attendance will begin to be collected for AISD.

TAAS RESULTS

AVID students performed well on the Exit level TAAS. Table 9 indicates the performance of AVID 10th graders on the TAAS as compared with that of the school as a whole. Table 10 shows middle school TAAS performance. While the passing rates of middle school students• are below those of the high school students, taken as a whole, the middle school AVID participants• performances met or exceeded that of the school as a whole.

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[2] From the ACT website http://www.act.org/news/data/02/states.html
[3] Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator SyAISlyj 9.48 0 7onded t.. ny1 Tow tng 7.9cat30.(pow tngp)1/da

Table 9: Exit TAAS Passing Rates for High School AVID Students and School-wide in 2001-02

School	AVID Students # Taking			% Passing			School-wide % Passing		
	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading
Bowie	17	17	17	94	94	94	94	95	98
Lanier	16	16	16	100	94	94	66	70	81
McCallum	21	21	21	95	100	100	92	86	93
Reagan	14	14	14	86	86	79	66	63	74

Source: AISD Student Records

Table 10: TAAS Passing Rates for AVID Students and School-wide in Middle School, 2001-02

School	AVID Students # Taking			% Passing			School-wide % Passing		
	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading
Burnet	38	61	61	84	92	90	72	81	74
Dobie	21	55	55	76	82	87	66	71	70
Lamar	22	43	43	95	98	95	82	91	90
Webb	37	48	48	62	79	77	71	78	76

Source: AISD Student Records

SUMMARY OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

By most measures, AVID students are performing well in school. Attendance continues to be strong and TAAS passing rates exceed those of the student body. End of course passing rates are generally very high. Most students are taking advanced courses and passing them. All of these measures show that AVID students do well in measures normed for Texas.

Student achievement still shows room for improvement. AVID students are beginning to take courses and exams normed for a national student base. Significant numbers of AVID students are beginning to take the college-level AP classes. Performance on the AP exams lags the performance of other examinees at the AVID schools, but just taking these exams is a mark of how far these students have come from the •C studentsŽ who entered the AVID program.

A small number of AVID students are unsuccessful in the program. These students are in danger of not advancing to the next grade and not graduating on time. Examination of these students• profiles may suggest some program improvements.

RESULTS OF PARENT AND STUDENT SURVEY

SURVEY PROCEDURES

The AVID program manager distributed both parent and student surveys to the AVID elective teachers in late April of 2002. Teachers were to allow students to complete the survey in class and to take the parent surveys home for completion.   Surveys were completed during the last week of school. Survey information collected did not include names or identification numbers.

There were 436 students in the AVID program in 2001-02. Of these, 293 surveys were collected from students (67%). One hundred fifty-five parent surveys were returned (34%). These return rates were not evenly distributed. Burnet Middle School did not return any surveys (the Burnet AVID teacher indicated that surveys were returned by campus mail but none arrived) and McCallum High School did not return any parent surveys. Only four parent surveys were returned by Bowie High School. It is anticipated given the low response rate that parent surveys are more likely to represent the views of the most involved parents at those schools that returned surveys and may not represent the views of AVID parents as a whole.

PROGRAM IMPRESSIONS

Both student and parent surveys indicate a positive overall response to the AVID program. By nearly any measure, responses to the program reflect that students are doing well and that both students and parents increasingly see the AVID participants as college-bound students.   Sixty-four percent of the parents and fifty-seven percent of the students report that the students are happier in school since joining AVID. Younger students and those who have been in the program for less time are more likely than older students to report that school has improved for them. It may be that the less experienced AVID students have more immediate memories of how they felt before and since joining AVID, while students who have been in the program longer may be more likely to have •normalized• their experiences.

It appears that some AVID students feel themselves more stressed in the program than they were before joining it. Thirty-five percent of the parents (reporting on their children) and 40 percent of the students report that they are more stressed since being in AVID. About 30 percent of each group disagree with that premise. Some of this stress may have come from the more difficult academics. Thirty-seven percent of parents and 25 percent of the students report that students have failed classes since starting the program. These statistics are not cause for immediate concern, but should be monitored to ensure that the program does not reduce a student•s ability to graduate on time.

The students appear to be willing to complete the more difficult coursework involved as part of being in the AVID program. Sixty-two percent of the students plan to stay in the program, with 14% planning to leave and a similar number undecided (program departures include students leaving due to moving or district tracking patterns). Most students (55%) agree that they are taking more challenging coursework in the program (17% disagree). Students in the program longer are more likely to report that they are taking more challenging coursework. This claim is supported by their reports of numbers

of honors courses. Two thirds of the students report taking 2 or more advanced or honors courses.

PROGRAM FEATURES

Students hold positive opinions on all aspects of the AVID program. However, there are some interesting differences in how the program features are perceived. At four of the seven schools, few students understood the term, •Socratic Seminar.Ž Where students understood the term (high schools) the seminars were thought to be only fairly

However, it is important for students to understand that risk exists when they sign on for the program.

- !" Counsel new participants that their performance may decline initially.
- !" Determine how much support the program can provide to struggling participants. Consider setting up a •triage• system to provide additional support for failing students. Consider adding tutor hours to work with small groups of these students.
- !" Provide additional support in conjunction with other district initiatives to support AVID participants especially as they transition to high school.

COMMUNICATIONS

Parents have suggested that they would like more frequent communications from the AVID program. Several approaches to this are possible. Selection of an approach should be guided by the characteristics of participant parents, availability of teacher time, and feedback from families.

- !" AVID teachers could prepare a monthly or 6-week newsletter that outlines major projects and upcoming events.
- !" AVID teachers could provide a narrative description of student progress to accompany report cards. This note should be no more than a paragraph.
- !" Students could produce a class newsletter for their parents with teacher assistance and guidance.

REFERENCES

Cossio, G., Huerta, J., and Watt, 2001-2002 Texas AVID Senior Report. The Center for Applied Research in Education. June 24, 2002.

Haycock, K (2001). Helping All Students Achieve: Closing the Achievement Gap Retrieved April 15, 2002 from http://www.cdl.org/resources/reading_room/print/achieve_gap.html

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