

Advancement Via Individual Determination

Mission Statement

The mission of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is to ensure that students “in the middle” who have the potential to be successful in a college preparatory path will:

- a. succeed in a rigorous curriculum,
- b. enroll in four-year colleges,
- c. enter mainstream activities of the school, and
- d. become educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society.

What is AVID?

The AVID program is designed to meet the educational and social needs of students in the middle—students who, with support, have the potential to succeed in a rigorous course of study and go on to attend and graduate from a four-year college or university. Through AVID, students—often from those groups most underrepresented on postsecondary campuses—are prepared to meet four-year college entrance requirements by mastering college preparatory curricula.

The foundation of the AVID program is an elective class that provides academic support for students who aspire to college and who would benefit from daily in-school instructional support in order to be successful in a college preparatory course of study. AVID course content includes instruction intended to improve a variety of skills; tutorials designed to increase higher-level thinking and success in rigorous courses; and motivational activities, guest speakers, and college and career exploration.

Most students can succeed in rigorous courses and get into and through college by perseverance, hard work, and, as the AVID program’s name reveals, “individual determination.” However, many students need assistance in reaching the goal of going to college. AVID students are placed with a strong group of peers and adults who share a commitment to academic excellence and who work together for student success. In the AVID classroom students find high expectations, encouragement, day-to-day help, a vision of college as an expected and attainable goal, and guidance in and skills for reaching that goal. Ultimately, AVID provides a social and academic structure to support students as they work to succeed.

Who is served by AVID?

AVID targets average students who have the potential to succeed in a rigorous academic program if given both opportunity and support. It is not a remedial program for failing students, nor is it a program for gifted students who are underperforming. Candidates for the AVID program are identified by counselors, teachers, parents and/or students themselves according to the following criteria:

Ability-academic potential to succeed in college preparatory courses

- a. GPA of 2.0-3.5 in regular on-level classes
- b. Standardized test scores between 4th and 6th stanine in language arts and math
- c. Enrollment in algebra (or higher) and a foreign language (HS) or algebra or a foreign language (MS)
- d. Passing scores on all SOL tests attempted

Desire and Determination

- a. Desire to attend college
- b. Willingness to undertake demanding preparation for college

- c. Good attendance record
- d. Appropriate classroom behavior and few or no discipline referrals
- e. Willingness to give up another elective in order to reach their goals

Membership in an underserved group

- a. Students “in the middle” who are receiving no other services
- b. Students who may be the first in their family to attend college
- c. Students who may be from groups historically less likely to attend college

Why is AVID needed?

Enrollment and success in a rigorous course of study in high school has been correlated with success in college, yet students in the middle often take the least challenging courses and graduate, if at all, with only basic coursework that reflects minimal challenge. In today’s society, where a college education is becoming a basic requirement for many jobs, challenging youth to reach their highest potential is a critical need.

What does AVID accomplish?

AVID is designed to achieve specific objectives:

- a. To enroll students in honors and advanced classes and to support them in being successful in a rigorous college preparatory program of studies.
- b. To help students develop the study habits and academic skills needed to succeed in college preparatory courses and college.
- c. To foster positive attitudes toward school and higher education.
- d. To help students become knowledgeable about colleges, develop a plan to get into college, research financial aid plans and scholarship programs, and apply to a variety of appropriate colleges and universities.
- e. To achieve enrollment in a four-year college or university upon graduation from high school.
- f. To ensure that the presidents and admission officers of public and private colleges and universities are aware of AVID and the caliber of AVID students.

What does AVID include?

- a. Strong academic focus. The AVID curriculum is designed to help students succeed academically and to focus the attention of the teacher and student on academic goals.
- b. A requirement that students be involved in a rigorous course of study that will meet the requirements for college enrollment. The experience of being in advanced courses with rigorous content alongside high-achieving students, with support from AVID boosts students’ academic expectations and levels of achievement.
- c. The provision of an enduring academic and social support network. AVID students are surrounded by a support system that expects and rewards hard work, perseverance, and academic achievement. As students work together in the many collaborative activities in AVID classrooms, a strong peer group that values academic success emerges. AVID coordinators, teachers, tutors, and counselors serve as nurturers and advocates for students, as well as instructors and program managers. AVID students are challenged to work hard by caring adults and a demanding, focused peer group.
- d. Writing, inquiry, collaboration, and reading (WIC-R) as the core focus of instruction. Because of their link to success in middle school, high school, and college, these four components provide the foundation upon which the curriculum is built.

- e. A tutorial component designed to foster higher-level thinking. AVID tutorials utilize a non-traditional model in which trained tutors, often college-age role models, help students become independent learners by exploring ideas and questions generated by their classroom learning.
- f. A core group of teachers and other staff members, the AVID site team, dedicated to supporting the success of the AVID students. The AVID teacher is a facilitator in a community of teachers, counselors, administrators, and tutors working together for student success.

What does an AVID class look like?

In schools on a traditional schedule, the AVID class is an elective class that meets daily. Two periods per week are devoted to developing the academic strategies needed to succeed in rigorous classes; two periods per week are devoted to tutorial sessions; and one period per week is set aside for motivational activities and career and college exploration. In schools with block scheduling, the class is structured to reflect a similar distribution of instructional time.

During the two periods per week devoted to development of academic skills, students are taught time management, good study habits, and effective study skills. They learn and practice higher-level thinking skills, effective reading and writing strategies, library research strategies, test taking skills, and interviewing and presentation skills. They learn to participate attentively and take comprehensive notes in all their classes. Students are taught the Cornell note-taking method, which assists them in organizing, analyzing, summarizing and reviewing material, and helps them prepare for tests. Notes are kept in an AVID binder that is checked weekly. Students prepare for the PSAT, SAT, and ACT by reviewing math and language arts and by developing vocabulary skills and test-taking strategies.

During the two tutorial sessions per week, college students, retired educators, and/or adults from business and industry tutor AVID students. Students prepare for tutorial groups by developing questions about the material they are studying in their other classes. In tutorial groups, under the tutor's guidance, students discuss class notes, clarify questions, explore ideas, review for tests, and resolve troublesome homework problems using a Socratic method of shared inquiry which facilitates the development of higher-order thinking skills. In the process, they become better at listening and expressing ideas, and they discover, understand, and remember ideas because they are actively involved in discussing and defending them.

Tutorial groups not only help with the work at hand but also address the reluctance of many students to seek and use help. This unwillingness to take advantage of resources prevents students from resolving questions and persevering in difficult courses. Through tutorials AVID students develop habits that are associated with the most successful college students: seeking help when needed and studying intensely in collaboration with classmates.

Motivational activities and career and college exploration are scheduled for the equivalent of one period a week. Guest speakers expose students to career options and inspirational stories. Field visits to businesses expand career awareness, and college tours and speakers help students visualize college as a realistic goal. Former AVID students now in college are some of the most powerful speakers, communicating that college is an attainable goal and that AVID charts a direct path.

What kind of commitment do the students make to the AVID program?

The AVID program requires hard work and perseverance and is effective only if participation is voluntary. Students must sign a contract agreeing to:

- a. Enroll in AVID as an elective class.
- b. Enroll in a rigorous course of study.
- c. Study at least two hours a day and complete all assignments.
- d. Maintain an organized AVID binder that includes class notes, study material, assignments, and completed work.
- e. Participate in AVID tutorial groups.
- f. Assist teachers and students in maintaining a positive learning environment.
- g. Participate in AVID field trips and activities.
- h. Take the PSAT and SAT or ACT in high school.
- i. Apply to several colleges and universities in the senior year.

Are students ever dismissed from the AVID program?

Although AVID attempts to address a number of the issues that can get in the way of school success, there are occasions when students are not successful in the AVID program and the required college preparatory courses. Students may be removed from the AVID program if they are not fulfilling their contractual agreement and are not meeting with success in the AVID program. The AVID teacher and the AVID counselor discuss concerns with the student and his or her parents. If improvement is not seen in the student's performance and/or attitude, the student may be removed from the AVID program based on the following criteria:

- a. Student does not do homework, keep an AVID notebook, complete assignments and/or prepare for classes.
- b. Student is no longer enrolled in college preparatory classes (for example, a middle school student drops algebra or foreign language).
- c. Student is a chronic absentee.
- d. Student has disciplinary issues.
- e. Student qualifies for services that more appropriately meet his/her needs.

What role do parents and guardians play in AVID?

The involvement of parents and guardians is a priority in AVID. AVID parents and guardians want their children to succeed and are an integral part of the learning team. As part of admission into the AVID program, parents and guardians are informed of the rigorous AVID curriculum and are required to sign a document of commitment to support their student. Parents and guardians are kept informed about program events and expectations through newsletters, telephone calls, and parent meetings. Parent/guardian meetings help build a strong adult peer group through which parents and guardians can encourage one another, share information, and become more involved in the overall school program.

Who makes up the AVID site team in a school?

Each AVID school has a team that consists of an administrator, the AVID classroom teacher(s), a guidance counselor, and subject area teachers from each of the core areas. These site team members serve as advocates for AVID students and the AVID program and provide a collegial support group working to ensure the program's success.

Principals provide instructional support and recognition, allocate resources to the AVID program, and ensure that the school's schedule and organization take into account the needs of the program.

AVID teacher/coordinators teach the AVID classes and work with other teachers to monitor student progress and, with the support of the site team, oversee tutors, arrange motivational and enrichment activities, coordinate parent programs, and arrange for speakers and college tours. AVID teachers serve as site team coordinators and are responsible for overseeing the program and for sharing techniques with colleagues.

Guidance counselors, working with AVID teachers, use AVID criteria to screen and select candidates for the program. They ensure that AVID students are placed in college preparatory classes. They assist the AVID teacher in monitoring the achievement of AVID students and in disseminating information about the program. Additionally, they assist the AVID teacher in securing guest speakers, arranging field trips, and conducting parent meetings.

Subject area teachers from English, math, social studies, science, foreign language, and other subjects are trained in AVID program techniques, which they incorporate into their classroom instruction. They work with the AVID teacher to monitor student progress. A teacher from each core subject area serves on the AVID site team as an advocate for the AVID program and a liaison to the school community.

Tutors, recruited from colleges and universities, from retired teacher rolls, and/or from local business and industry, are trained in AVID strategies including writing, reading, inquiry, and collaboration. They have an important role in challenging and supporting students and providing support to the AVID teacher.

How are AVID staff members trained?

School personnel who work with the AVID program receive comprehensive staff development designed to help them set high expectations for themselves and their AVID students. AVID teachers and site team members learn techniques to ensure that their students are given the academic and motivational support needed to complete a rigorous academic program of college preparatory courses. Intensive, continuous training prepares all AVID site team members to use the program's methods, fosters commitment to AVID's belief system, and promotes effective teams.

Training programs include:

- a. The AVID Summer Institute, a five-day conference sponsored by the AVID Eastern Division Office and attended by the entire site team from each AVID school. New AVID personnel learn AVID techniques, while returning site team members learn new strategies, work together to plan for continuous program improvement, and focus on the leadership strategies needed to support the AVID program and integrate the AVID philosophy and practices into the overall school program.
- b. Regional workshops conducted by the AVID Eastern Division Office for AVID site teams in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- c. Regular in-service training for AVID teachers conducted by the local school division to meet the specific needs of local sites.
- d. Training for all tutors provided by the local school division office.

For research measuring the effectiveness of AVID, please see <http://www.avidonline.org/info/?tabid=1&ID=1099>