

The Role of Leaders in AVID Schools
and the Impact on Student Achievement

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University

in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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November 29, 2010

Falls Church, VA

Keywords: AVID, AVID Leadership, Program Essentials, Program Implementation

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ABSTRACT

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program is designed to provide resources and strategies to enable underrepresented minority students to attend four-year colleges. Research indicates that the success of the students enrolled in AVID depends on the strict adherence to the AVID components. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the principal and administrator's understanding of, commitment to and involvement in AVID accounted for the difference in student achievement between a successful school and one that is not.

AVID is a program with demonstrated results, however it is costly. Building principals have to be willing to use a teaching position to staff the AVID coordinator/teacher position, and school districts have to employ tutors for the twice-weekly tutorial sessions. In these difficult fiscal times, districts are looking for places to make adjustments. AVID's demonstrated effectiveness for students in an individual building, as well as district-wide, will be the key to keeping AVID from falling subject to budget cuts.

Some of AVID's 11 essentials are instructionally based, such as Cornell Notes and WICR, which directly impact what occurs within the walls of the classroom. Others are more leadership-based, such as staffing and policies for student selection. Yet a third set consists of things which are not actually essentials or may be less tangible, but still have a great impact on AVID, such as the perception of AVID students by peers, the perception of AVID students by the school community in general, and the understanding and oversight of the program within the building. This study focused on the essentials that are leadership based as well as those which

are less tangible. It is essential to know what factors in a school make AVID implementation meet with the greatest success.

A comparative case study methodology was used. The study used Grade Point Averages to determine two focus schools, and then interviews with principals and AVID administrators was conducted and analyzed. This study demonstrated that the key person in any site is the administrator who directly oversees the program. This individual must be thoroughly trained in all aspects of AVID so that program essentials can be implemented according to AVID guidelines and decisions regarding student success are based on accurate information.

Assessment of program implementation is a multi-level process. In order to get an accurate picture of a program implemented in multiple schools, it is essential to first be sure that implementation is uniform within a specific building. Schools that have more than one teacher implementing a program must be monitored to be sure that there is a uniform practice within the building. Those involved with program oversight need to start there, especially if grades are being used as a basis of comparison.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Lucille Callahan. Through her life and actions, she taught me to persevere no matter what comes. Her message has always been to accept the fact that things may be challenging at times, but giving up serves no purpose. I thank her for that!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the members of my committee, Dr. William Glenn, Dr. Larry Byers, Dr. Walter Mallory, and Dr. Travis Twiford for their encouragement and support. Most especially, I would like to thank Dr. Glenn for his patience, insight, and editorial assistance. A special thanks to Dr. Twiford for his willingness to step in and offer support very late in the process.

I would like to thank my husband, Tim, my children, Michele, Justin, Joshua, and their spouses, Walt, Cassy, and Audra. When I got discouraged, I knew you would expect me to continue and get my work done. Tim, thank you for your love and devotion and for stepping in with the day-to-day responsibilities involved with home and family, therefore permitting me time to dedicate to my study. Kids, purchasing the diploma frame as a gift was not exactly subtle!

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to my co-workers – you know who you are! You encouraged, prodded, supported, and gave me time when I needed it. Without your support, I could not have finished this work!

Thank you to my best buddies, Nancy Mercer, Liz Payne, and Sandy Kretzer for making sure we continued with our weekly support meetings, for not allowing me to quit, and for becoming a very real part of my family. I love you all.

Finally, I would like to thank God, with whom all things are possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Mary Catherine Swanson created the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program in 1980 to provide support for low-income and low-achieving minority students, help them do well academically, and ultimately transition them into four-year colleges. Swanson believed that students who had the potential to succeed would do so if offered a rigorous curriculum and the support to reach their potential. She also held that positive relationships with adults, structures for study and organizational skills, and expectations that students would enroll in college were the keys to a post-high school education for students who may not have believed that higher education was a possibility for them. Swanson firmly believed that hard work, perseverance, and individual determination would enable such students to achieve academic success.

The initial AVID program acquired students from general education classes, put them in classes that are more rigorous and provided them with a set of mechanisms to enabled them to be academically successful (Hubbard & Ottoson, 1997). Instruction was provided in classes designed to teach organizational skills and a note-taking system to help prepare for tests. Students were trained to ask questions that would clarify their understanding of class content, and expected to implement all of these fundamentals to gain acceptance into and be successful in higher education.

AVID originated in a San Diego high school, but when the success offered to those high school students became widely known, other schools began to use AVID as a program to transition students from middle to high school. High school implementation of AVID started in a single school where the teachers didn't hold high aspirations for their students, and grew into a

program implemented in 3500 schools in 45 states and 15 countries as of fall 2007 (AVID Center, 2008). Swanson (1996a) found that the need to support minority students who had the potential to attend college did not begin in high school but needed to begin in middle school and continue through their high school years. For that reason, a program designed to meet the needs of middle level students began in 1989-1990 in the San Diego City Schools. Since that time, middle level programs have increased dramatically (Swanson, 1996a). She expressed that while middle school students needed the same AVID strategies, the developmental level of middle school students and the structure and curriculum of middle school required that program modifications be made. Swanson believed that the goal of the high school AVID program was to prepare students for and get them enrolled in college, and the goal of the middle school program was to prepare AVID students for the transition to high school (Victory, 1998). The middle school focus on writing, with an emphasis on writing a thesis statement and essay preparation, prepared them for the transition to high school writing styles and skills for citing resources (Jacobson, 2007).

The AVID program curriculum consists of eleven program essentials considered crucial to student success. These essentials are:

1. The student selection process
2. Voluntary participation by adults and students
3. Enrollment in AVID elective
4. Rigorous course and study
5. Writing and reading curriculum
6. Inquiry to promote critical reading
7. Collaboration between teachers

8. Trained tutors
9. Data collection and analysis
10. District and school commitment
11. Active and interdisciplinary site team

According to the 2007 AVID Awareness materials, each of these program elements involves a level of commitment on the part of the students and adults involved in the program. Hubbard and Ottoson's study (1997) demonstrated that variance in program implementation, and the compromised program performance, were areas for future study. Hubbard suggested that variations be investigated to identify the key elements of AVID and which of them can be adapted and still not interfere with the progress of the students.

Significance of the Study

Fidelity to all AVID elements varies between sites, even within an individual school district. School districts provide funding for AVID, but building level school leaders, meaning principals and assistant principals, set the priorities in their buildings. Understanding of the AVID program allows building administrators to oversee implementation and clearly grasp the value of the program.

This study utilized a comparative case study methodology to examine the relationship between the building leader's and AVID coordinator/teacher's understanding of the program, their commitment to the program, their level of involvement in monitoring program success, and student achievement. It was understood that a case study would not provide data generalizable to make definite determinations, the depth of information provided by this methodology did allow theories to be developed about the relationship between building leaders' knowledge of the

AVID program, their involvement in AVID implementation in their building, and student success.

Statement of the Problem

Administrators are placed in leadership roles in schools comprised of minorities, immigrants, and children whose parents who have never been to college; many of whom have not even graduated from high school. John Dewey stated in his 1916 publication *Democracy and Education* that the key to democracy is education. As we prepare our middle school students to go to high school, and eventually college, it is essential that we provide this generation of learners methods and strategies to become educated and prepare them to become contributing members of our democratic society.

Minorities in certain areas of our democracy are quickly becoming majorities. This changing demographic must be educated and AVID is a way to facilitate this. AVID is a program with demonstrated results, however it is costly. Building principals have to be willing to use a teaching position to staff the AVID coordinator/teacher position, plus school districts have to employ tutors for the twice-weekly tutorial sessions.

Implementing AVID with fidelity and knowledge of the key instructional practices demonstrates increases the return on the school's investment. Black, Little, McCoach, Purcell, and Siegle (2008) conducted a mixed methods evaluation of AVID program implementation. The researchers studied two cohorts of AVID students and statistically analyzed the results of their data. They found that student success was increased when there was consistency in program implementation and when teachers were familiar with AVID instructional strategies (Black et al., 2008).

Some of AVID’s 11 essentials are instructionally based, such as Cornell Notes and WICR, which directly impact what occurs within the walls of the classroom. Others are more leadership-based, such as staffing and policies for student selection. Yet a third set consists of things which are not actually essentials or may be less tangible, but still have a great impact on AVID , such as the perception of AVID students by peers, the perception of AVID students by the school community in general, and the understanding and oversight of the program within the building. This study intended to focus on the essentials which were leadership based as well as those which were less tangible. It was essential to know what factors in a school made AVID implementation meet with the greatest success. The categories for those essentials are found in Table 1 below.

Table 1
AVID Essentials

Leadership Based Essentials	Instructionally Based Essentials	Other Implementation Essentials not specifically set forth by AVID
Student Selection	Rigorous Coursework and Study	Communication of AVID Mission to Staff and Students
Voluntary Participation by students and staff	Reading and Writing Curriculum	Staff Development offered to staff
AVID elective offered during school day	Inquiry to promote critical reading	Communication with receiving high school
Trained tutors		Promotion of program to community
Collaboration Opportunities offered to staff		
Data analyzed and shared with staff		
Oversight of Program Implementation		

Research Questions

Looking at the academic success of the AVID middle school students in the highest and the lowest performing AVID schools in a district, what aspects regarding program implementation explain some portion of that difference?

The following sub-questions were answered in the study:

a. How did the implementation of leadership based essentials differ between the two sites?

b. How did the two sites differ with regard to

1. The principal's understanding of the AVID program?

2. The principal's commitment to the AVID program?

3. The principal's level of involvement with the AVID program?

c. How did the two sites differ with regard to

1. The AVID administrator's understanding of the AVID program?

2. The AVID administrator's commitment to the AVID program?

3. The AVID administrator's level of involvement of involvement to the AVID program?

Definitions of Terms

Ability Grouping – Ability grouping is the practice of placing students in classes or sections based on their level of ability.

AVID – Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a program which began in San Diego City Schools in 1980, and designed to provide academic supports, strategies, and organizational skills to allow underrepresented minority students the opportunity to go to college.

AVID Components – The elements which are all part of the AVID program. These are the mission statement, student profile, program essentials, a list of ten guiding principles, and a set of instructional strategies.

AVID Curriculum – The set of instructional strategies which follow the mnemonic WICR. W is for writing as a learning tool, I is inquiry method of learning, C is for collaborative, subject-specific learning groups, and R is for reading as a tool for learning,

AVID Effect – The impact AVID implementation has on the broader school demographics such as attendance and drop out rates.

AVID Eligible Students – These are students who are capable of completing high school and attend college but are part of a group considered underrepresented in higher education. These students fit into a set of criteria and are selected based on that profile.

AVID Guiding Principles – Ten principles of AVID which must be closely adhered to in order to effectively implement the AVID program,

AVID Mission Statement – The statement published by AVID Center outlining what is needed to ensure the education of all students, particularly those who are underserved.

AVID Program Essentials – Eleven elements that are considered crucial to student success,

AVID Student Profile - Criteria for AVID student selection.

AVID Tutorials – Trained tutors serve as facilitators during AVID elective classes. They encourage the students during the Socratic Seminar element of the AVID curriculum.

College Preparatory Courses – College Preparatory Courses are rigorous courses taken by college-bound students in preparation for the level of work expected in college.

Core Classes – These courses are Language Arts, math, science, and social studies.

Cornell Notes – Cornell Notes are a note taking system developed at Cornell University in the 1950s. Students take notes on the right hand side of the paper and questions and keywords on the left. The note taking format allows the student to fold the paper between the right and left section and quiz him or herself in preparation for an assessment.

Grade Point Average – Grade Point Averages are numeric values which are assigned to grades and then averaged together to arrive at a GPA. Typically, GPA scales range from the lowest value of 0 to the highest value of 4.

Interdisciplinary Site Team – The interdisciplinary site team is the AVID team in a building with members from multiple disciplines, such as math, language arts, science, and art.

Quickwrites – A quickwrite is a strategy where individuals are given a set amount of time to respond to a question. Students may then be asked to share or read their quickwrite to the others in the group. Quickwrites are usually done as a reflective activity based on their learning

Reciprocal Teaching – Reciprocal teaching is a reading instruction technique which involves problem solving strategies to improve reading comprehension and encouraging students to engage in higher level skills while reading. The strategies are Clarifying, Predicting, Questioning, and Summarizing. This is planned by the teacher and takes place in a small group setting.

Socratic Seminar – A Socratic Seminar is a session where the AVID students bring a question to the AVID class and a group of students discuss the question, using higher level and critical thinking skills, all in a respectful and courteous manner.

Tracking – Tracking is the practice of placing students in a group or class based on their academic ability. This term is synonymous with ability grouping.

Untracking – Untracking is the educational practice of placing students of various abilities in a group or class. This term is synonymous with heterogeneous grouping.

Limitations and Delimitations

According to Gay and Airasian (2000), a limitation is defined as, “An aspect of a study which the researcher knows may negatively affect the results or generalizability of the results, but over which he or she has no control” (p.305), and an assumption, also according to Gay and Airasian (2000) is, “any important ‘fact’ presumed to be true but not actually verified” (p.56). According to Roberts (2004), “...the terms delimitation and limitation are confused” (p.129). Roberts (2004) also states that a limitation is a factor which may impact the study, but over which the researcher has no control. A delimitation is something that is controlled by the researcher.

Based on Roberts’s definition, this study contains delimitations. While grade point averages were not a perfect indicator of student progress, the use of these data provided the information to determine the focus schools. Another delimiter to the current study was that only middle school programs were examined. This study was conducted in a large, affluent, school district with resources which may not be available in districts with less to invest in such a program. Finally, while the study provided depth of information that a qualitative study offers, the sample is limited to two schools. These results are not generalizable to other settings, though they may provide insight into the functioning of AVID programs at other schools. This may be an area for future study.

This study also included limitations. The school district studied was a large, suburban district with considerable financial and human resources. The resources may well not be available to smaller districts with less financial resources and fewer employees. Also, the

student demographic in this particular district is such that, despite its size, financial resources, and suburban setting, there are many students who fit the profile of an AVID student. Small, affluent districts may not have the same pool of students eligible for the program.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study, statement of the problem and its significance, the research question, definition of terms, limitations and delimitations of the study, and an overview of the dissertation. Chapter 2 contains a review of literature relating to the AVID program, student selection, and elements that are essential to program and student success. Chapter 3 describes the methodology for conducting the study and the steps that were taken to complete the study. Chapter 4 is a presentation and description of the data. Chapter 5 is a summary of the dissertation, an interpretation of the findings, and the conclusions that can be drawn as a result of what was learned in the course of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter examines and describes the historical aspects of the AVID program, the program components, AVID as it relates to gender and minorities, the program implementation in California and Texas, and the initiative to untrack minority students and prepare them for college enrollment (Mehan, Datnow, Bratton, Tellez, Friedlaender, and Ngo, 1992).

The History of AVID

Rapidly Changing Student Demographics

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* that segregated schools violated the Constitutional Rights of students being educated in these segregated schools. This ruling led to bitter racial, cultural, and economic conflicts (Freedman, 2000) which threatened to undermine the purpose and the spirit of the ruling.

Clairemont High School in San Diego County, California, was one of the schools affected when the County of San Diego enforced its desegregation order in September, 1980. White, middle class teachers who had been teaching White, middle class honor students found themselves teaching in a school where half of their former students were bused to University City High (Freedman, 2000) and 500 low-income, predominately Hispanic students arrived on their doorstep expecting to be taught (Ruenzel, 1997). The demographic of Clairemont High School changed from 95% White to 38% minority in a very brief span of time.

Teachers at Clairemont High quickly realized that their entire approach to teaching needed to change. Previously they had outstanding achievement scores. Most of the courses that they taught were college-prep. The perception of the teachers regarding their new students was

that their educational goal was limited to graduation, at best. Two of Clairemont's teachers, Mary Catherine Swanson and her mentor, Jim Grove, believed that the survival of American democracy depended on educating *all* students, which was in sharp contrast to the opinion of many of Clairemont's veteran teachers who believed their job was to teach subject areas, as quickly as possible, to their college-bound honor students (Freedman, 2000).

The Birth of AVID

AVID was created by Swanson in 1980 as a reform which would provide support to low-income and low-achieving minority students, designed to help them do well academically, and ultimately be successful in four-year colleges. This program took students from general education classes, put them in more rigorous classes, and provided them with a set of mechanisms to enable them to be academically successful (Hubbard and Ottoson, 1997).

In the beginning, AVID faced multiple challenges. Many of Clairemont's veteran teachers, who had been there since it opened, felt they had played a large part in the formation of the culture and the curriculum, left the school to follow their wealthy, affluent, White students to University City High, a brand new school opening in a White, professional neighborhood. Some of the other teachers that remained felt that they were trapped in an impossible situation (Freedman, 2000). Therefore, Clairemont was faced, in large part, with an inexperienced and/or disgruntled faculty. Many of the teachers at Clairemont helped design and open the school 25 years before and were angry about the decision to desegregate their school. They were used to having 80% of their students go to college (Swanson, 1996) and feared that this would no longer be the case.

Swanson and Grove believed that education is everyone's responsibility, a result of the combination of collaborative efforts of teachers who implement best practices, the influence of

the entire community, and taking the steps needed to tailor education to the needs of the learners is well worth any time and effort taken (San Diego County Office of Education, 1991). Swanson and Grove recruited 30 ethnically and culturally diverse students who had a grade point average between 1.5 and 2.5, and who were not in classes that would adequately prepare them for acceptance into college. These students agreed to enroll in college prep classes, to take responsibility for completing their homework, and to give up one elective class. In place of the elective was the first section of AVID where these students were provided with the academic and emotional support needed to succeed (Swanson, Mehan, & Hubbard, 1993).

When AVID was implemented in Clairemont, core teachers were skeptical. These teachers doubted that the AVID students would be able to perform on their own, and that their successes were merely a result of group work. The science teacher at Clairemont accused two of the AVID students of 'group learning' on a test when he stepped out of the room for a minute, implying that they had cheated while he was not watching them. Word of the scandal spread through the building; the sense was that the AVID students had not gotten their A and B grades honestly. It seemed as if the school was looking for a reason to doubt the success of the program and the possibility that these new students who had invaded their school might succeed. The AVID students were put on trial, and had to retake the test, orally and individually, to demonstrate that they had mastered the material. When they were able to demonstrate that they knew the concepts on the test, the science teacher changed his opinion of the students, but the students realized that many shared the skepticism regarding them and their success. The AVID students decided, as a group, to write a letter to their teachers, explaining their struggles, and inviting the teachers to stop into Ms. Swanson's classroom to observe the AVID class, the organizational and note-taking strategies that were being taught; all of the students signed the

letter. AVID soon became well known around the Clairemont campus and teachers began to stop in to visit. Teachers observed the group as they worked together, bonded personally, and found themselves asking questions about why the AVID program was working with these minority and low-income students, as well as what they could do to improve their instruction of these students (Freedman, 2000).

A group of these interested teachers became the very first AVID site team who met regularly to discuss the curriculum, the needs of the students, and the program as a whole. The teachers met with the AVID tutors and examined the pedagogy. They talked about Socratic questioning. Instead of instructing the students to solve a binomial equation, the rhetoric was, “Tell me everything you know about binomial equations” (Freedman, 2000, p.123). The site team was constantly looking for ways to improve their craft, to provide better opportunities and strategies for the AVID students, and to determine what steps they could take to move these students toward college acceptance. These students succeeded and got the attention of the school, the county, and ultimately, the state of California. Although Clairemont was one of the smallest schools in the San Diego district, by 1984 when the first group of AVID students graduated, Clairemont had become one of the top three feeder schools to the University of California, San Diego and ranked fourth of 17 district high schools enrolling graduates in full time post-secondary education. Of the original 30 AVID students, 28 went on to four-year colleges and the other two enrolled in community colleges (Swanson, 1993). Now, AVID is implemented in 3500 schools in 45 states and 15 countries as of fall, 2007 (AVID Center, 2008). As with many things in education, AVID continues to grow and improve. As stated above, AVID was first begun in 1980, and, as of 2001, 93% of the more than 20,000 AVID students have gone on to college (Gomez, 2001).

One example of the growth of AVID in other places occurred in the state of Kentucky. In 1989, The Supreme Court of Kentucky handed down a judgment to address the unequal allocation of funds, stating that, “Since we have, by this decision, declared the system of common schools in Kentucky to be unconstitutional, Section 183 [of the Kentucky Constitution] places an absolute duty on the General Assembly to re-create, re-establish a new system of common schools in the Commonwealth” (Hubbard & Mehan, 1999a, p.88). The state funds were being dispersed in such a way that kept the students in poorer school districts receiving less funding than those in more well-to-do districts. The state legislature was mandated to remedy the problem; AVID was the solution proposed by many of the districts (Hubbard & Mehan, 1999a). AVID is one way to level the playing field for all students, giving the AVID student an equal opportunity to go to college. AVID, according to Rothstein (2004), propels students into the middle class who may not otherwise land there.

The Components of AVID

AVID, as an initiative, has many components. There is a mission statement, a ‘What is AVID?’ statement, Student Selection Profile, a list of Program Essentials, a set of ten guiding principles, and very specific pedagogical strategies. The proper implementation and ultimate success of AVID students hinges on the full, strict adherence to these components (Hubbard & Ottoson, 1997) who found that localities have implemented the elements of AVID quite differently. There were teachers who believed that AVID students were not going to improve, no matter what support was offered to them. Hubbard and Ottoson’s study (1997) demonstrated that variance in program implementation, and the compromised program performance, were areas for future study. Hubbard and Ottoson (1997) suggested that these variations be

investigated to identify the key elements of AVID and which elements can be adapted and still not interfere with the progress of the AVID students.

The AVID Mission Statement

AVID Awareness Materials, prepared and published by AVID Center (2007) lists the following as the AVID Mission Statement:

Our Mission:

The mission of AVID is to ensure that ALL students, and most especially the least served students who are in the middle:

1. will succeed in rigorous curriculum
2. will complete a college preparatory path
3. will enter mainstream activities of the school
4. will increase their enrollment in four-year colleges, and
5. will become educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society.

AVID's systematic approach is designed to support students and educators as they increase schoolwide/districtwide learning and performance.

The AVID Student Profile

AVID works best for the student in the middle (Swanson, 1996), the underachieving student who may do the minimum to get by, who may not see the relevance of education for their lives, or who doesn't see college as a possibility. In order to identify these students, a profile was formulated for students who would benefit from the AVID program. The profile is:

Students with Academic Potential

1. Average to high test scores
2. 2.0 – 3.5 GPA

3. College potential with support
4. Desire and determination

Meets One or More of the Following Criteria

1. First to attend college
2. Historically underserved in four-year colleges
3. Low income
4. Special circumstances

The profile provides a framework for identifying students who would be candidates for AVID, however, there must be a commitment on the part of both student and family to follow the guidelines and meet the academic expectations set forth. Students have to demonstrate that they want to do better, while parents must do their part by agreeing to support their children and expecting them to do their very best to meet the challenges set forth in a rigorous course of study. The students are expected to benefit from the curriculum, to actively participate in what the AVID elective class offers (taking notes, organizational skills using an AVID binder, tutorials, and field trips), to carry those skills into their other classes, and have no behavioral problems (Bushweller, 1998). Parents and students sign a contract stating that they agree to the terms outlined by AVID, then their names will be put into the pool to be considered for acceptance (Gomez, 2001). When looking at the pool of applicants, the individuals responsible for recruitment put student information on a grid and use that information as a basis for acceptance. Organizers of the AVID program caution teams to look at each child holistically and not to allow any one requirement keep any student in or out of the program, but to consider the whole child (AVID Center, 2007).

AVID Program Essentials

The 2007 AVID Awareness Materials publication lists eleven essentials to the AVID program. These each involve a commitment on the part of the student and the adults involved with the implementation. These adults may be decision makers, AVID site team members, or AVID tutors. Essential elements of the AVID program are shown to be:

1. AVID student selection, using the criteria listed above;
2. Voluntary participation – both on the part of the AVID students and on the part of the AVID teacher. At a later point in this literature review, it will be noted that current and former AVID students indicated by survey that the most important element of the AVID program is, from their perspective, the AVID teacher. It would seem unlikely that a teacher who is mandated to teach the AVID students, as opposed to one who volunteers, would show the same level of buy-in to the AVID philosophy, curriculum, and methodologies;
3. AVID elective class offered during the school day – this requires a level of commitment on the part of the administrator to allow one or more teachers to teach the AVID elective, therefore pulling him or her from a content area;
4. Rigorous course and study;
5. Writing and reading curriculum – writing has been shown to be a valuable element of a successful education;
6. Inquiry to promote critical reading – this is done during the sessions dedicated to Socratic Seminars as well as to tutorial sessions, both of which are part of the curriculum;
7. Collaboration – between teachers. As AVID was growing and developing, core content teachers tended to tell Ms. Swanson that the AVID students were ‘her problem,’ making

such statements as “this student is your responsibility; he does not belong in this school much less in my college preparatory class” (Swanson et al, 1993, p.5). This attitude has been addressed as the success of the program became more apparent;

8. Trained tutors – these are often former AVID students, retired teachers, or students at local colleges. These people are trained in the role of tutor and are paid for their service to the program;
9. Data collection and analysis;
10. District and school commitment;
11. Active and interdisciplinary site team.

Victory (1998) stated that all students are expected to benefit academically from AVID in spite of the fact that, due to the number of essentials in the program, not every essential meets the needs of every student.

The Ten Guiding Principles of AVID

The San Diego County Office of Education (1991) set forth ten principles of AVID which must be adhered to in the implementation of the AVID program. Upon closer examination of these principles, it becomes clear that the role of the teacher, school, and student is defined clearly and these definitions provide powerful pedagogical methodologies in any situation. They are:

1. Both teachers and students are viewed as powerful and capable of changing the current pattern of student underachievement.
2. Both teachers and students are empowered through developing tools needed for successful learning and teaching.
3. Both teachers and students form teams that nurture, challenge, and focus on success.

4. The role of the teacher is redefined and re-conceptualized to be an advocate for students, not just the transmitter of information.
5. Teachers learn effective instructional strategies that enable them to work with heterogeneous groups of students in an academically rigorous environment.
6. The program is comprehensive in scope, flexible in meeting individual needs, and continuous in its support for both teachers and students.
7. The program is integrated into the regular school staffing, curriculum, and funding through the work of the site collaborative team.
8. The program focuses on teaching those who are caught in the underachieving middle and thereby enhances the effectiveness of the school for all students.
9. The school accepts learners where they are and leads them to understand and successfully negotiate the complexities of the educational system.
10. The program is based on the long-term commitment and dedication of school personnel to achieve significant outcomes for students and teachers (p.8).

The AVID Curriculum

AVID instruction is based on a five-day rotation based on the assumption that the AVID class meets on a daily basis. The weekly rotation includes two of five days teaching the AVID curriculum of support and assistance, two days of tutorials, and a day set aside for binder evaluations, guest speakers, field trips, and motivational activities (AVID Awareness Center, 2007).

The AVID curriculum implements instructional strategies that prepare students for college preparatory work and critical, higher-level thinking (AVID Awareness Center, 2007).

The curriculum follows the mnemonic:

W – Writing as a tool for learning

I – Inquiry method

C – Collaborative, subject-specific learning groups

R – Reading as a tool for learning (AVID Awareness Center, 2007, Section 6, p.1)

W is for writing; this is done in various ways, such as the writing process, class notebooks and lecture notes following the Cornell Note format, ‘quickwrites’ and learning logs and journals. According to the AVID Awareness Materials (2007), Cornell notes are a system of note taking adapted from a system developed at Cornell University. Students are trained to take detailed notes from textbooks and class lectures. The right hand side of the paper is used to take detailed notes and the left-hand narrow margin is used to write questions or clarifications about those notes (AVID Center, 2007). Writing is seen as a tool for learning (Mehan, Hubbard, Lintz, & Villaneuva, 1994), not merely as an activity. *I* stands for inquiry which includes skilled questioning, Socratic Seminars, critical thinking and open-ended activities. Inquiry, according to Mehan et al. (1994), is the collaboration between the tutors and the students in the AVID elective class. *C* is collaboration; group projects, study groups, response/edit groups, tutorials, read-arounds, and jigsaw activities, all designed to create an atmosphere of interdependence and greater success. Collaboration is the strategy of students working together to achieve instructional goals (Mehan, et al., 1994). *R* is reading, concentrating on text structure, SQ5R (survey, question, read, record, recite, review, reflect), reciprocal teaching, and ‘think-alouds’ – all strategies to improve reading and comprehension.

AVID Skills and Academic Rigor

AVID has an emphasis on academic rigor. Rigor, as defined in AVID Awareness Materials (2007), is the goal of helping students develop the capacity to understand content that is *complex, ambiguous, provocative, and personally and emotionally challenging*. Academic rigor, then, would mean subjects or courses designed to push students to enroll in courses that might otherwise be intimidating. Sapp (2006) even went so far as to applaud efforts in Orange Glen High School in Escondido, CA at which AVID students are linked with gifted and talented students in the same courses for the purpose of socialization. Placing low-income, minority students in rigorous classes and helping them to succeed was and is the goal of AVID. Adelman (1999) conducted a study for the U.S. Department of Education that found that the greatest predictor of college success is involvement in rigorous coursework during high school.

Students in AVID are asked to take rigorous courses for which they may not be prepared. They need skills and strategies to help them attain this ambitious goal. These skills are designed to help these students in AVID, in college, and in life (Nelson, 2007). AVID students are asked to develop:

1. *Organization and study habits* that will aid them in homework and exams. This also helps the students retain information that they have been taught;
2. *Effective questioning and active learning* help AVID students become critical thinkers and active learners. They look at questions from many perspectives and come to understand that there is not always just one correct answer;
3. *Class participation* can be difficult for students who lack confidence but the success of AVID students depends on active interaction between the teacher and the student.

Teachers need to be aware of misunderstandings and active participation allows the students to work collaboratively with the teacher and classmates;

4. The *ability to synthesize information* is the final skill emphasized with the AVID students. Information is available from multiple sources and the students must learn to pull this information together into one body of information (Nelson, 2007).

“AVID students are encouraged to acquire new skills. When they pick up a book, they’re thinking about what they’re reading, not how well they’re reading it. They learn to process information more deeply, review things they didn’t understand the first time, and make connections between what they’re doing now and what they learned earlier” (Swanson, Marcus, and Elliott, 2000, p.27).

The AVID Team

AVID implementation in any school setting requires individuals with tiered levels of responsibility. The AVID district director, the highest level on the continuum, has the responsibility for arranging staff development, for providing technical support to AVID sites, for data collection and research, and for outreach and publicity. This individual also arranges for partnerships with local agencies and postsecondary institutions to provide tutors, summer programs, and assist with student enrollment. Finally, this individual is charged with communicating between his or her division and the AVID Center for contacts, planning, conference planning, and certification. (AVID Center, 2007).

The subsequent tiers shift to the school level. Each site has a coordinator who also serves as a teacher. This individual is tasked with assembling a site team for his or her school. “The purpose of an AVID site team is to provide a framework for systematic reflection about

classroom experiences among students and teachers to promote collegial interaction within an individual school” (AVID Center, 2007, Section 4, p.2).

The AVID Site Team

Each AVID site has a team of educators. This team meets monthly to discuss AVID implementation within the building and ways to model the instructional strategies that are key to the program. This team works with the teacher/coordinator to implement the essentials that are needed for recertification, accepts the responsibility to plan and oversee AVID events and projects, and assists with recruitment, and as many members of the team as possible attend the summer institute.

Within the building, the site team consists of the administrator, counselor, AVID coordinator, any additional AVID teachers, Language Arts teacher, math teacher, science teacher, and social studies teacher. Other interested individuals, such as instructional assistants and electives teachers, are welcome to be part of the site team. Each of these individuals has a specific role to play within the team:

Administrator

This individual must support the teachers in their use of AVID materials and strategies. He or she must empower the site team and then follow through with the implementation guidelines that the team determines are essential. He or she must also be sure that the students who are chosen to participate in AVID are given the opportunity to enroll in rigorous classes and that recruitment of teachers and students to be in the program are done with the AVID mission in mind (Watt, Powell, & Mendiola, 2004).

Counselor

The counselor's role, while not clearly defined in AVID materials, is to assist the student with course selection, keep the parents involved with the progress of their child, and be available to assist when and if the students are faced with the social and academic challenges brought on by being part of the AVID program. The counselor should be vital in the recruitment and selection process, and should be personally invested in the success of the AVID students. When the challenges seem too great, the counselor should help the student to continue to see the benefits of the program and stay enrolled. According to the AVID Awareness Participant Materials (2007), one year of AVID enrollment is not enough to make a meaningful difference in a child's education. However, AVID is not a fit for everyone, and students can be 'de-selected' (AVID Awareness Participant Materials, 2007) if they are not meeting the terms of their contract. This, however, should be a long process, but one in which the counselor should be involved.

AVID Coordinator/AVID Teacher

The coordinator is usually one of the AVID teachers. This person is expected to schedule and lead monthly AVID site team meetings, function as the liaison between the site team and the administrator, coordinate data collection and certification information, facilitate implementation of AVID on the campus, and be an instructional leader. In addition, this individual leads recruitment, field trips, and activities for students and parents. The AVID elective teacher has, as part of his or her role, the responsibility for providing the students with a place to belong (Oswald and Austin Independent School District, 2002). "The main backbone of the AVID program is the lead teacher/coordinator. He or she acts as a coach, constantly expecting the best academic performances from both the teachers and the students" (Slavin and Fashola, 1998,

p.84). The AVID classroom is an environment of support and encouragement which allows the students to achieve in school. Bushweller (1998) cited a longitudinal study report found in *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Resnick et. al., 1997) where threats to adolescent health were examined. The study found that positive bonds between teachers are the major factor which prevents adolescents from engaging in self-destructive behaviors. One of the essentials for successful implementation of AVID in a school is the voluntary participation on the part of teachers as well as students. Since the teacher/student bond is so critical, teachers who are teaching AVID have to desire to be there, as opposed to being mandated by their administrator.

Core Subject Teachers

This team of core teachers meets to discuss the AVID implementation and to work for a true ‘learning community’. This team analyzes data and determines what needs to be done as shown by the results. They are to be ‘seeking information, processing information, decision making, planning, and implementing’ the AVID curriculum within their school (AVID Center, 2007). They are instructional leaders who model the research-based instructional strategies to their colleagues. AVID Awareness Materials (2007) state that the AVID core teacher, “should be recruited to the position, rather than assigned. As with AVID students, the teachers should commit to the program voluntarily, with full understanding of the expectations and goals of AVID” (p.6). Watt et. al. conducted a study of high school seniors who remained in the AVID program that showed the importance of AVID teachers. Focus groups were conducted in four Texas and four California high schools, and the students reported that being part of AVID was like a second family. They stated that the AVID teachers assumed more family-like roles in their lives, as opposed to the role of teacher (Watt , Johnston, Huerta, Mendiola, and Alkan, 2008).

Some students even continued to seek the support and advice of their AVID teacher after no longer being formally enrolled in the program (Watt et. al., 2008). On the negative side, Black et al. (2008) found that one of the causes of inconsistent results regarding the effectiveness of the AVID program is the level of implementation by the AVID teacher (Black et al., 2008).

Gender, Minorities, and AVID

Hubbard (1997) examined the relationship between gender in high school success and career goals in an ethnographic study. She stated that often studies closely examine ethnicity and class membership, but omit gender as part of the bigger picture. Gender is an important consideration when looking at cultural factors that influence educational success. “Gender, as a socially constructed identity, acts in a reflexive way to inform our beliefs and attitudes towards education” (Hubbard, 1997, p.5). According to Hubbard (1997), both male and female students in the AVID program stay in school and go to college in record numbers compared to their non-AVID peers.

Hubbard’s study looked at 30 African American (20 female & 10 male) AVID students who were active in the program. The first element of the cultural identity of the girls was that their position as a female in the family brought a set of expectations regarding their future and their opportunities. The families of the women in the AVID program held high expectations for their children to attend college. However, the reasons were different for the families of males. The females were career oriented and saw college as a way to have a better life, while males saw college as a gateway into professional sports. When conversations were held about career goals, females were able to name specific paths, while males were less specific and took a secondary position to their goal of playing professional sports. While males were hopeful that they may

one day be professional athletes, they were realistic in their understanding that it was unlikely that this would happen (Hubbard, 1997).

Another interesting factor discovered in Hubbard's 1997 study is that women in the study had parents who directed them to attend historically Black colleges. The stated reason for this is females could experience being part of the *majority* for a change. Females who followed this directive had parents who supported their decision. AVID teachers in this study took this opportunity to show the females historically Black colleges which resulted in pushing the girls towards attending four-year colleges.

Males, on the other hand, also received support for college, however their parents indicated that entrance into the military would be a satisfactory alternative. Males shied away from historically Black colleges because they did not feel that the Black colleges would offer them the athletic opportunities that other schools would offer, therefore distracting them from their goal to be a professional athlete. As a result, many males attended community colleges and were at a greater risk of not graduating (Hubbard, 1997).

Most of the AVID students in this study would have been first-generation college students and came from low-income families. It appeared that the fact that these students may be the first in their family to attend college serves to influence the beliefs of the families towards college and gives some insight into how these families may be looking at college from a purely utilitarian perspective. Females in the study stated that the attitudes of success from their families were matched by the attitudes of their AVID teacher. This insight put them in a position to see that the opportunities provided by AVID would greatly enhance their economic opportunities. The females observed the financial difficulties that their own families were

suffering and wanted a better life for themselves. Males and females all saw education as a 'path to a better future (Hubbard, 1997).

Oswald and Austin Independent School District (2002) conducted an evaluation of the AVID program in the Austin Independent School District where they looked at data collected from 1999-2002. These data consisted of results from a survey of 436 students, of which 67% of the surveys were returned, and a parent survey of which 34% were returned. Oswald and Austin Independent School District used the data gathered from these surveys as well as data from schools about graduation rates, grades, state assessments, college testing, and college enrollment.

Oswald and Austin Independent School District (2002) noted that often substantially more females than males enrolled in AVID. The possible reasons posited were that students decide independently to enroll in the program, and that females may apply more frequently. Also noted was that certain behavioral characteristics are essential for a student to stay in AVID, such as few discipline problems and good attendance at school. Finally, girls at this age may be more willing to accept the added work load required to be part of the AVID program (Oswald and Austin Independent School District, 2002).

A study conducted by Halle and Kurtz-Costes (1997) examined the family influence on achievement of low-income African American children. While Halle's study does not focus on AVID, some of what she found is applicable to the current literature review. Halle and Kurtz-Costes (1997) interviewed 41 children and their primary caregivers on measures of self-concept and academic-related beliefs. While low-income African American students often lag in their skills and are twice as likely to drop out of school as their White peers (Entwisle & Alexander, 1988), the Halle and Kurtz-Costes (1997) study shows that an attitude of parents towards their children, both male and female, that allows the students to perceive themselves as capable does

have a positive correlation to academic success. It was found that there was an important relationship between parental attitude, behavior, and expectation for success and increased achievement in both male and female students.

Diemer (2006) examined influences upon career development in minority students and those considered economically disadvantaged. This study involved over 25,000 participants from over 1,000 schools who participated in a survey. The results of the survey were analyzed to test the hypothesis that there is a connection between parental support and vocational choices. He contrasted minority students with White students in regards to the connections they make with career choices and employment options. He found that students of color may not live in a context that pressures them to identify with the working world and that they may not have the pressure to identify with an experience outside of their own lives. Students who are taught behaviors and strategies, as well as high expectations, will be more able to look outside of their own social context. School programs, such as AVID, can offer this opportunity to students who have not considered college a possibility since they have no experience with it outside of the context of school (Diemer, 2007).

Akos, Lambie, Milsom, and Gilbert (2007) wrote an article examining career choices and the relationship between career aspirations and achievement. This study consisted of a quantitative analysis of a sampling of 812 middle school students in North Carolina. The results of the study led the authors to make a strong recommendation that counselors work with parents, students, and schools to promote excellence and make course selection decisions to avoid limiting their future career opportunities (Akos et al., 2007).

Carnevale (2001) cited an Educational Testing Service study looking at multiple factors that influence student decisions regarding college. One of those factors was a rigorous course of

study. The study showed that 86% of students enrolled in a rigorous course of study completed a bachelor's degree, as opposed to 76% in a challenging curriculum and 51% in a less demanding course of study. Even more noteworthy was the report on minority students. Black students in a rigorous curriculum completed a bachelor's degree 73% of the time, Hispanics 79%, Asians 89%, and White students 86%. The numbers compare favorably to the figures for students from the groups of 45%, 61%, 87%, and 75% respectively. This study supports the belief that the rigorous curriculum offered by the AVID program is key to getting minority students to complete a bachelor's degree.

Encouragement and belief in the student by the AVID teacher would have a positive impact since the teacher/coordinator is seen as a motivator, teacher, facilitator, partner-in-learning, and a student advocate (Swanson, 1996). The teachers in Halle and Kurtz-Costes's study (1997) demonstrated that they believed in the students and, in turn, the students believed in themselves. Similarly, Black students in AVID appeared to have a very different educational experience than Black students in the same school who were not in AVID (Hubbard, 1999). The teachers held high expectations for all students, regardless of gender, or economic status, and the students were convinced that they were capable of attending college. The teacher helped the students, both male and female, forge their career path more successfully than their non-AVID peers. According to Hubbard and Ottoson (1997), "The academic success of African American females and males in this untracking program is the result of a reflexive relationship that has occurred between structure, culture and agency" (p.28).

Tracking, Untracking and Ability Grouping

One of the crucial rudiments of the AVID program is untracking. In order to fully understand what is meant by untracking, an understanding of tracking as an educational process

is necessary. Also, a clear understanding of the types and justifications for tracking is essential for a comparison and contrast of tracking with untracking.

Tracking

Oakes (1987) defines tracking when students who have similar academic needs are placed in separate classes and instructional programs. Oakes, Gamoran, and Page (1992) states that throughout a student's educational career, track assignments are consistently correlated with income and race. Low income and non-Asian minorities are overrepresented in lower tracked academic classes. Hubbard and Mehan (1999a) found that students who come from minority and low-income backgrounds do poorly in school, drop out at a higher rate, do poorly on standardized tests and in their classes, and often do not stay in college if they choose to apply and attend.

Oakes (1987) states that tracking comes in two forms: curriculum tracking and ability grouping. *Curriculum tracking* is typically found in high school and is defined as a system where students are classified in one or another track, such as college-preparatory, vocational, or general, and are expected to complete the courses designated as those essential to each track. *Ability grouping*, which occurs in elementary and middle school level educational settings, is where students who are determined to have similar academic levels are placed in the same classes. High schools often have an overlap in curriculum and ability types of tracking. In Oakes's study, she found that it is not unusual to find a student in a general education track, and overlap into a higher academic track by being placed in an honors class.

Tracking assumes that students learn best in an environment when they are grouped with students who are on a similar level or have similar prior achievement levels. Oakes (1987) also states that there is a belief that slow or incapable learners suffer emotionally when they are

placed in classes with brighter peers, and that they may be left to feel inferior. Finally, as Oakes (1987) states, some teachers and administrators feel that it is easier to teach students and classes who are believed to be on similar levels.

Another point discussed by Oakes (1987) relates to student outcomes. She makes four points regarding tracking and its impact. Tracking does seem to be advantageous to students who have been placed in the highest tracks, and that the achievement of high ability students can be enhanced by tracking. Along that same vein, tracking is a true hindrance to those who are not in a top group. Particularly in vocational tracks, student graduates may not even have the skills at graduation that make them employable. She also argued that there is no validity to the claim that heterogeneously grouped students who are slower suffer emotionally by being grouped with higher ability students. As a matter of fact, the opposite was true. Finally, tracking, which is designed to help students by homogeneously grouping them, actually widens the gap and accentuates the differences that students brought into the educational setting. Reed (2008) reinforces the findings of Oakes and states that students in lower tracks receive a very different educational experience than their peers in higher tracks and that teachers expect far more of students in higher tracks than those in lower level tracks. Oakes (2008) went so far as to state that the “social consequences of tracking, sorting students according to preconceptions based on race and social class and providing them with different and unequal access – are part of the core logic of schooling” (Oakes, 2008).

Elementary ability grouping leads to tracking in middle school and eventually in high school. Burriss, Welner, Wiley, and Murphy (2007) examined International Baccalaureate (IB) course enrollment in a suburban New York school district and found that students made decisions early in their educational career that may have unknowingly impacted their ability to

take IB courses in high school. “Eliminating the last vestiges of tracking at the middle school yielded higher achievement scores and set the stage for successful reform at the high school” (Burriss et al., 2007). Students seldom move from one track to another, and when they do, it tends to be in a downward direction. Hubbard and Mehan (1999), state that tracking can actually impede the progress of Black students. Tracking which begins in elementary school and ends in high school creates a situation where underserved students are unprepared for the AP classes that serve as gatekeepers. Therefore, tracking leads schools to reserve their higher-level curriculum for only the most accomplished students.

North Carolina initiated an educational reform in response to high-stakes testing. State legislators implemented merit pay for teachers whose students met or exceeded state standards (Watanabe, 2008). Watanabe conducted an ethnographic study consisting of classroom observations, teacher interviews, and a review of student work. The findings are consistent with those found by Oakes, Hubbard, and Mehan. Instruction provided to students in academically gifted tracks was higher quality than that offered their peers in general education tracks. Watanabe (2008) found that instruction in general tracks was less explicit and more geared toward preparing for state assessments. It was also found that more reading and writing activities occurred in classes considered academically gifted because teachers held the expectation that students could complete more of the assignments on their own outside of the classroom. By the end of a school year, one teacher’s academically gifted class read and discussed two more novels than the general track students. Watanabe (2008) observed one teacher in two classes, one academically gifted and one general track. This teacher, using the same novel and curriculum plan, used very different strategies when teaching his or her classes, offering the academically gifted student opportunities to reflect and respond on a higher level.

Mickelson and Everett (2008) looked into enrollment patterns in North Carolina in response to the educational reform. They found that the reform ultimately resulted in stratification in course enrollment, and that race and ethnicity played a large part in decisions regarding academic track and course selection (Mickelson and Everett, 2008).

Ireson and Hallam (2009) studied academic self-concepts in British school students. In their study, they examined 23 secondary schools where they collected the general and academic self-concept and the achievement of 1600 14 and 15 year-old students grouped by ability. They cited Oakes in their work and confirmed what she states to be the case; tracking is often detrimental to student achievement. The focus of their research was the self-concepts of adolescents, and considered academic self-concept to be a large part of self-concept. Students in schools who had highly stratified tracking programs had a poorer self-image, and therefore performed worse, than those in schools that were less rigidly tracked.

Another study of British school done by Wiliam and Bartholomew (2004) looked at ability grouping in mathematics. This study took place in London and was comprised of 955 students in 42 mathematics classes. Wiliam and Bartholomew (2004) found that tracking does produce greater achievement in higher-level students, but can prove to be harmful to others, therefore increasing the achievement gap. Wiliam and Bartholomew also looked at teacher behavior and found that instruction improved when students were heterogeneously grouped. In spite of the fact that the teachers reported that they disliked teaching mixed-ability groups, the quality of their instruction improved and was delivered in ways so as to meet the different needs of the students.

Burris, Welner, Wiley and Murphy (2008) sum it up nicely in an article detailing a longitudinal study on the effects of tracking:

Research indicates that high-track classes bring students an academic benefit while low-track classes are associated with lower subsequent achievement. Corresponding research demonstrates that tracks stratify students by race and class, with African American and Latino and students from low-socioeconomic households being dramatically over-represented in low-track classes and under-represented in high-track classes (p.571).

Untracking

Untracking (Mehan et al, 1994) is the process of assisting a small group of students from general and vocational tracks and moving them into college preparatory classes. Untracking involves replacing ability grouping into mixed-ability groupings. This often happens in conjunction with shifts in pedagogical strategies, curriculum and assessment adjustments, and strategies designed to make education more accessible for diverse groups of students (Wheelock, 1992). A group of University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) researchers found that untracked schools tend to deliver instruction by teaming the educators and employing block scheduling. Another scheduling system, referred to as double-dose scheduling, allows students to take two periods of a course daily if they are struggling with that content area (Loveless, 1999).

Mehan et al. (1994) sums made the following statement about untracking and AVID:

Latino and African American students who have participated in an untracking program for their high school careers develop a critical consciousness about their educational and occupational futures. The Latino and African American students in an untracked educational setting become academically successful without losing their ethnic identity. They adopt the strategy of ‘accommodating without assimilating’ (p. 91).

Robert Slavin (1990), a researcher at Johns Hopkins University, synthesized and compiled studies conducted by several researchers. He found that there is no evidence to support the theory that ability grouping has a positive effect on achievement in secondary schools, though there are admitted limitations to the size and scope of his study. Hoffer (1992) contends, however, that Slavin's 1990 study shows that there are positive elements to ability grouping, albeit just for higher achievers. While Slavin (1990) does make that statement, he does make counterarguments as well. Grouping by instructional level or by content area was instructionally ineffective. School districts that choose ability grouping as an instructional practice need to be aware of the burden of proof for unequal and anti-democratic grouping practices, such as tracking, lays on the shoulders of those making the decisions. Knowing all that we do, it is hard to justify the continuation of such a practice (Slavin, 1990).

Hoffer (1992) conducted an experimental study, as opposed to the others which were non-experimental or quasi-experimental, to determine the true effects of ability grouping. He compared students in tracked and untracked contexts in both high and low ability groups. He used statistical methods to account for grouping effects and varying student backgrounds. Hoffer found that, "data showed that grouping does in fact produce instructional groups that are relatively homogeneous in student aptitude, that the pace of instruction closely follows the average aptitude of reading groups, and that teachers frequently adjust students' group assignments up or down in response to their progress" (p.206). His study also affirmed research done by Oakes (1985) where it was determined that upward mobility is likely to be very difficult. Ability grouping early on places a student in a track that moves more slowly and covers less ground. Therefore, the longer the student remains in a lower track, the further behind he or she gets in relation to content. Hoffer's 1992 study, therefore, reinforces that done by Oakes (1985)

and large parts of that done by Slavin in 1990: “Ability grouping thus appears to benefit advanced students, to harm slower students, and to have a negligible overall effect as the benefits and liabilities cancel each other out” (Hoffer, 1992, p.205).

Tracking is a complicated practice with multiple implications. Tracking as an instructional process does benefit some, as research shows, but often exacerbates the achievement gap that we currently find in our schools. Rubin (2008) conducted an interpretive study using a multiple case study design to better understand these implications. This study focused on three public high schools, one with a low-income, mostly African American student demographic, the second a high income, predominately White student population, and the third comprised of diverse socioeconomic predominately White and African American students. Rubin (2008) found that when detracking formerly tracked educational environments, opinions based on student achievement shaped the reform. Detracking reform in the low income school was based on the opinion that these students were of low ability, and that detracking in the homogenous, high income school led to instruction geared to the individual learner more than found at the other sites (Rubin, 2008). It is clear from the research that tracking as an instructional practice, as well as the initiative to detrack, is a process that must be carefully undertaken and that the multiple layers must be considered if student success is to be attained (Rubin, 2008).

Gamoran (1987) conducted an extensive study in which he investigated the correlation between course selection and achievement. While much of his study followed a different tangent than this one, several applicable points were made. First, he found that the strongest predictors of achievement are the instructional experiences of each individual student, and that these experiences are constrained by the structure within a certain school environment. From that, he

found that when a student is placed in a college-preparatory class, they achieve to a higher degree than their peers in non-college preparatory classes, which agrees with some of the other studies mentioned in this chapter. A final cogent point in Gamoran's 1987 study relates to statements made above regarding the unlikelihood that a student who is placed in a lower track will ever ascend to a higher one. He found that general education students have a statistically significant advantage over vocational tracked students, but that this gap is considerably less than the advantage academically tracked students have over the general education students. Since students have a difficult time moving from a lower to a higher track, and there is a proven advantage in achievement when students are in academic courses, logical reform consists of giving students the opportunity to be placed in programs such as AVID where they are put in an academic path and provided the supports they need to succeed.

AVID's system of untracking shifts the policy towards underachieving students from compensatory and remedial education. Instead of reducing the curriculum for lower achieving students, AVID strives to keep them in a rigorous curriculum and provides them the support they need to achieve. AVID places underrepresented low-income and minority students in college-preparatory classes with high achieving students (Hubbard, 1999). AVID has been successful in preparing these underrepresented students in college-preparatory classes. Latino students who were in AVID for three years enrolled in college at a rate of 43%, as opposed to the national average of 29%. Also, African American students who were in AVID for three years enrolled in college at a rate of 55%, as compared to the national average of 33% (Hubbard, 1999).

When Swanson first devised AVID as an untracking program, she saw it as a challenge to take her minority low achieving students who were stuck in low or slow tracks and hold them to a higher standard. Hubbard and Mehan (1999) state that:

The hallmark feature of AVID's untracking effort is the replacement of students from nonacademic tracks into college preparatory classes. The intention is to have students take advantage of heterogeneous grouping. Previously underachieving students are expected to benefit academically by learning side-by-side with high-achieving students (p.93).

Interestingly enough, the teachers who remained at Clairemont came to see the untracking element of the program as an opportunity to continue to teach the college-preparatory classes they were used to teaching, even though they remained skeptical of the professional and practical implementation of the program as a whole (Hubbard & Ottoson, 1997).

Despite the research stating that tracking can be detrimental to student learning, Charles Nevi (1987) holds firm to the belief that tracking, when done correctly and for the right reasons, can be beneficial. He also states that the evidence against tracking is overstated and misunderstood. Nevi (1987) states that tracking can be traced all the way back to the one room schoolhouse in the 1880s where a young teacher was faced with a class of students on various academic levels. Tracking came as a result of one teacher's need to meet the academic needs of a multi-level, multi-aged group of students. Then, Nevi believes, tracking has been reinforced by federal programs such as Chapter 1 and programs for gifted and talented students. These programs require different, specialized instruction for the students who qualify for these programs. Nevi (1987) states, "...one method of trying to improve the instructional setting for selected students, or what one researcher refers to as a search for a better match between learner and instructional environment" (p.25). The schools, according to Nevi, did not create the diversity in the students, but must accommodate them, possibly through grouping based on their needs and instructional levels. If one were to read Nevi's article exclusively, and not look work

done by Oakes, Swanson, Slavin, and Hubbard to name a few, his point of view appears to make sense. It is essential to look at both sides of the tracking story. “Achievement follows from opportunities – opportunities that tracking denies” (Burriss & Welner, 2005, p.598).

The Wider Effect of AVID on Schools and Students

The AVID Effect

Some schools have noticed what they call ‘The AVID Effect’. This is, as described by Watt et al. (2006), when school-wide change is noted as a result of the implementation of AVID. AVID directly impacts the performance of a selected group of students who then represent the school’s broader demographic.

In schools where a sizeable segment of the student population is underachieving, it makes no sense to institute a peripheral program for just a few students. The truth is that the entire school is doing poorly, the teaching and learning need to be radically improved. For all students to meet high standards, the entire instructional system, the entire school, must be substantially changed” (Swanson, 1996a, p.1).

Swanson et al. (2000) found that in California, AVID high schools outperformed non-AVID California high schools in attendance, lower drop-out rates, percentages of students enrolled in a college-preparatory sequence of courses, and the number of graduates that have enrolled in four-year colleges and universities (Swanson, 2000). The AVID students directly impact the performance of a group of students who then have a positive effect the school’s broader demographic profile (Watt et al., 2006). In Texas, this has been seen in improved attendance as well as in the state-mandated standardized tests (Watt et. al., 2006). In addition, Watt, Huerta, and Cossio (2004) found that AVID had an effect on Texas high schools where a higher level of Advance Placement course enrollment than non-AVID schools was observed.

Swanson (1993), when discussing the success of her first AVID class of graduates, stated that she had two goals: first to enroll minority students in rigorous classes and prepare them for college; second, to change and improve instructional practices school-wide. She discovered after implementing AVID that the Clairemont faculty members were actually discussing student learning and implementation, inquiry methods, and collaborative learning groups (Swanson, 1993). Guthrie and Guthrie's AVID Best Practices Study (2002) found that teachers who do not specifically teach AVID students began to utilize some AVID instructional strategies in their classrooms, such as Cornell Notes, Socratic Seminars, and collaboration. Teachers who were not part of the AVID site team, but taught Advance Placement students and had AVID students in their classes, had positive things to say about them. The teachers themselves expressed some interest in learning about the AVID program (Guthrie and Guthrie, 2002). Guthrie and Guthrie (2002) also stated that spreading AVID methodologies to other classroom has an effect on instruction in the entire school, and offers a broader group of students AVID-like support. School leaders in eight California high schools studied by Guthrie recognized the power of tutoring, and instituted before and after school tutoring programs for all of their students. Some of these schools used Federal Title funding to train non-AVID teachers in AVID-type instructional strategies that would affect all of the students (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2002). Guthrie also found that, due to the success of the AVID students in honors classes, the door was opened to non-honors students, and the number of honors courses and sections had to be increased (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2002).

A teacher, Castro Stanley, from Mt. Pleasant High School in San Jose, California, stated that she loves AVID because its goals and aims extend beyond the walls of the AVID classroom into the curriculum of the entire school. This allows other students, who may be at risk of

dropping out, instruction using some of the AVID strategies, which benefits them as well. She stated that the other teachers in the building see that AVID is well structured and focused. These are basic skills that all students need to be taught (Lockwood & Secada, 1999).

Attendance

Larry and Grace Pung Guthrie (2002) conducted a longitudinal study of ten Texas high schools consisting of a sample of 1158 secondary students. The study looked at three performance indicators; Grade Point Averages, SAT-9 scores, and advanced placement course enrollment. Guthrie's 2000 study found that attendance rates of AVID students is nearly 5% higher than their classmates in 1999-2000, and 3% in 2000-2001 and 2001-2002. Students in AVID schools as a whole increased their attendance rates by three percentage points in 1999-2000 and 2001-2002 (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000).

Oswald and Austin Independent School District (2002) prepared a program evaluation at the Austin, Texas Independent School District found by examining student records that AVID students as a group are more likely to attend school on a regular basis, and is seen as one indicator that AVID provides the students with a sense of belonging. The teachers and tutors who work closely with the students create a supportive atmosphere for student achievement (Oswald and Austin Independent School District, 2002).

Dropout Rates and College Enrollment for Minorities

An important role played by the AVID teacher is helping students be prepared for college, so students need to remain in school to acquire these skills. Students are provided with the skills and information needed to complete applications, with test-taking strategies, writing essays, and completing college applications. Almost all of the AVID activities are geared

towards college application and entry, and this fact is never lost sight of (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2002).

Mirel and Angus wrote an essay on an interesting study of educational standards conducted by the Department of Education using data from the years 1928, 1934, 1949, 1961, and 1973. This study looked at patterns of course-taking by high school students and uncovered while doing their research that policymakers believed the best way to increase the number of high school graduates, prior to 1973, was to make the curriculum less challenging and more entertaining. However, between 1973 and 1990, when the standards were tougher and graduation requirements raised, the number of high school graduates actually increased, the number of students taking academic courses, as opposed to vocational, increased by 10%, and the national dropout rate dropped from 14% to 12% (Mirel & Angus, 1994).

The constant reminder of college as the goal results in students taking AVID classes enroll in college in numbers which exceed the local and national averages of the districts where they are located. African American students who are in AVID enroll in college 1.5 times the national average for enrollment by African American students, and Latino AVID graduates enroll in college two times the national average for Latino students (AVID Center, 2007). Another statistic worthy of note is that of the AVID students who enroll in college, 89% are still enrolled after two years (AVID Center, 2007).

AVID students benefited from daily reaffirmation that college was a necessity for future occupational success. Students were academically successful in spite of the discriminatory practices they faced in the broader context of their school and community because they received the academic and social supports from AVID to do well (Hubbard, 1999, p.379).

Whitaker (2005), in a quantitative study of 1960 students, researched college course taking patterns in AVID students and, once again, confirmed the success of the program. This study collected data from various sources and utilized Analysis of Variance to test her hypotheses. She found that “Students with higher grade point averages can compete for college acceptances and merit based scholarships. As these students enroll in and complete honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses their academic profile is enhanced and they are more prepared for the rigor of college” (p. 127).

The College Board launched a task force in 1999 to examine minority underrepresentation in higher education. The group concluded that promoting academic achievement for minorities must become a priority since the number of minority students in our schools is rapidly increasing. According to the results of the Task Force, which was comprised of 31 distinguished educational leaders and leaders from other sectors of society, there are two views to consider when looking at achievement. One is educational attainment, which means earning a bachelor’s, graduate, or profession degree, and academic achievement, which means developing skills and subject mastery. In the realm of educational attainment, as of the mid-1990s, underrepresented minorities received less than 13% of all bachelor degrees awarded by American colleges and universities, up from 9% in the early 1980s. Professional degrees attained by African Americans grew from 7% to 11%, and doctoral degrees remained steady at 6% (College Board, 1999).

Perna (2000) cites statistics showing that college enrollment had grown for African Americans and Hispanics, and even though more of these minorities are attending than ever before, remain underrepresented in higher education. African Americans and Hispanics make up 10% and 8% of undergraduates, respectively, and that bachelor degree recipients (7% and 4.2%

respectively) are still underrepresented when considered against the college-age population of 14.3% and 13% respectively (Perna, 2000). Perna found that one concern of the African American students were uncertain about attending college because they were not sure that the costs would outweigh the long-term benefits of a college education. Mahoney and Merritt (1993) confirmed this in a study of 40,848 Virginia high school seniors, 19% of which were Black. This study found that the cost of a college education is a major factor behind declining college enrollment, particularly Black, middle class, Virginia residents (Mahoney and Merritt, 1993).

Mehan et al. (1992) conducted a study of the AVID program in the San Diego public school system. His research confirmed the statement made above regarding percentages of AVID students in college as compared to the national average. Mehan interviewed 144 AVID graduates from the 1990-1991 class and found that 50% of them were enrolled in four-year colleges. The local average for enrollment at this time was 38% and the national average was 39% (Mehan et al., 1992). Mehan completed another report in 1994 where he analyzed the results of a survey of 248 1990, 1991, and 1992 AVID graduates. 120 of the 248 graduates (48%) were enrolled in four-year colleges, 99 (40%) were enrolled in two-year colleges, and the final 29 students (12%) were engaged in another type of activity such as church service, volunteerism, or traveling (Mehan et al., 1992). These results are for students who participated in AVID for three academic years. All of these statistics, as with the others cited above, are above the local and national averages.

A study done by the California State Postsecondary Education Commission (1996) looked at nine student academic programs which were chosen on the basis of commonalities such as collaborative learning, and the goal of increasing the number of participants who attend

higher education. AVID was one of the programs analyzed and, again, the results showed that participants of these programs, including AVID, enrolled and attended four-year colleges at a rate higher than local, state, and national percentages (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

Dropout data were summarized by Fashola and Slavin (1998) in a review of several programs designed to increase college attendance for students at risk, including AVID. The authors note that a high-school diploma is now a minimum qualification for full participation in the U.S. economy, factory jobs that do not require a diploma are decreasing, and dropouts are seriously at risk. According to Fashola and Slavin (1998), “Between 1972 and 1994, the White non-Latino dropout rate (individuals aged 16 – 24 out of school without a degree) has diminished by more than one third, from 12.3% to 7.7%. The African American dropout rate has diminished by more than 40%, from 21.3% to 12.6%” (p. 160).

In contrast, the dropout rate among Latino students has always been high and has only slightly diminished (Fashola and Slavin, 1997). Latino middle-income students drop out at the same rate (23.9%) as low-income African American students (24.5%) (Fashola and Slavin, 1997). A contributing factor for the higher dropout Latino rates is thought to be immigration. 43% of foreign-born Latinos are likely to drop out, first generation Latinos drop out at a rate of 17% and second generation rates are 24% (Fashola and Slavin, 1997). This study looked at six programs implemented in San Diego County designed to lessen the rate of at-risk Latino students from dropping out, and AVID was one of the programs examined. The majority of students considered in this study were Latino, and 43% of that pool of students attended four-year institutions. This figure was an overall rate taken from two San Diego County AVID groups, and compared with the San Diego overall rate of 25%. The results of this study showed that

AVID was effective in enrolling students into college and was a program worthy of consideration for serving students considered to be at risk (Fashola & Slavin, 1997).

AVID Graduates

The relationship developed between the teacher and the class members in AVID begins to be like that of a family. One of the characteristics of a family is that they keep open lines of communication, and, according to Guthrie and Guthrie (2000), the AVID family is no different. AVID graduates who participated in a four-year longitudinal study were often in touch with their AVID teacher and their classmates. Nearly half of the students questioned in Guthrie's study stayed in contact with their teacher, and 74% were still in contact with their AVID classmates, even three or four years after graduating from high school (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000). According to Hubbard and Ottoson (1997), "For AVID, the ultimate creator and user of knowledge is the AVID student who makes the effort to make the grade" (p.53). According to a student, "I am more motivated to go to college because AVID made me want to go" (Hubbard & Ottoson, 1997, p.53).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, information regarding the history, elements, and instructional strategies of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) were researched. The issue of underrepresented minorities in college-preparatory classes, as well as in colleges, was examined. Curriculum tracking for instructional purposes, the relationship between gender, family expectations, and AVID were also discussed. The school-wide effects of having the AVID program in a school, and the long-term effect of AVID on students were further areas of interest. There was no information available which shed anything but a positive light on the AVID program and the impact it has on minority students.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The AVID program is designed to provide resources and strategies to enable underrepresented minority students to attend four-year colleges. Research indicates that the success of the students enrolled in AVID depends on the strict adherence to the AVID components (Hubbard & Ottoson, 1997). The purpose of this study was to determine whether the principal and administrator's understanding of, commitment to, and involvement in AVID accounted for the difference in student achievement between a school where AVID students were academically successful and one that is not. This chapter includes the principle research questions and sub-questions, research method rationale and process, participation selection process and study setting, procedure for data analysis, and a summary of the chapter.

Research Questions

Looking at the academic success of the AVID middle school students in the highest and the lowest performing AVID schools in a district, what aspects regarding program implementation explain some portion of that difference?

- a. How did the implementation of leadership-based essentials differ between the two sites?
- b. How did the two sites differ with regard to
 1. The principal's understanding of the AVID program?
 2. The principal's commitment to the AVID program?
 3. The principal's level of involvement of involvement to the AVID program?
- c. How did the two sites differ with regard to
 1. The AVID administrator's understanding of the AVID program?

2. The AVID administrator's commitment to the AVID program?
3. The AVID administrator's level of involvement of involvement to the AVID program?

Research Method Rationale and Process

Comparative Case Study

The intention of the study was to look at two school sites and delve deeply into their AVID program implementation. For these reasons, it was decided that a comparative case study would be best suited to the purpose and would provide the information required to answer the research questions.

A case study, according to Slavin (2007), is when a third party delves into and evaluates a single program or setting. In an example of a comparative case study found in Slavin's 2007 book, it says:

The researcher's goal was not to make definitive claims or generalize her findings to a wider population. Rather, she wanted to study the operation of the merit promotion policies in these two schools in depth and begin to theorize about how the promotion policy was perceived and how it evolved over time (p.152).

Similarly, this study focused on an in-depth analysis of AVID in two schools.

Merriam (1998) states:

While case studies can be very quantitative and can test theory, in education they are more likely to be qualitative. A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than

confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research (p.19).

Merriam (1998) goes on to discuss a comparative case study methodology where two or more case studies are compared to get a ‘cross-case analysis’ and further states that the more individual cases studied, the more credible the interpretation. Merriam (1998) also states that multiple case studies enhance internal validity and generalizability. Yin (2009) agrees with Merriam’s analysis of the benefits of multiple case study methodology. He states that the validity and generalizability arguments are lessened with the addition of more cases to compare. Yin (2009) feels that your minimum goal should be two cases to build your theories upon.

Purposive Sampling

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) define sampling as a process used by the researcher to choose members from a defined population, with the expectation that this sample is representative of the population. Tashakkori, Abbas, and Teddlie (1998) describe purposive sampling as, “selection of individuals/groups based on specific questions/purposes of the research in lieu of random sampling and on the basis of information about these individuals/groups” (p.76). Gall et al. add to Tashakkori and Teddlie’s definition by stating that the purposive sample will be “information rich” (p. 650).

This study implemented purposive sampling to determine the sample schools taken from the pool of middle schools based on student Grade Point Averages. The two sample schools offered ‘information-rich with respect to the researcher’s purposes’ (p. 310).

Grade point average data were provided by the school district’s AVID coordinator who collects data as part of the AVID’s National Certification process, and was made available to the researcher. Core class grade point averages (GPA) data for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school

years were gathered for seventh and eighth grade AVID students in each building and for sixth grade AVID students in buildings where AVID is offered on that level. The combined GPA for the respective years was averaged to determine a point calculation indicating growth or decline in progress. This provided the final positive or negative value for each school. The school whose AVID students that showed the greatest growth and that showed the least growth as determined by the average GPA calculation became the focus of the study.

Grade Point Averages from elective classes were not considered due to the fact that students are free to choose electives, and some electives may be more challenging than others. Due to the differences in content and expectations, there is inconsistency in grading across the elective courses. This inconsistency may have served to provide an inaccurate picture of a student's progress and, therefore, skew the data that was gathered for the purpose of this study.

Following the determination of the sample sites, principals at the two schools were contacted by letter (Appendix A). The purpose of the letter was to describe the study and arrange an interview. Interviews were digitally recorded at the interview sessions, and the interviews transcribed. The researcher arranged for interviews with the AVID administrators that were also transcribed. Finally, the researcher arranged a brief observation of ten to fifteen minutes in the AVID coordinator/teacher's classroom. These observations were scheduled during a Socratic Seminar session to enable the researcher to see these sessions in action. A Socratic Seminar Rubric was provided by AVID (AVID Press, 2006), and this was used as a guideline for the behaviors observed during the class (Appendix B). These interviews and observations were analyzed to look for patterns, themes, and discrepancies in program implementation.

The researcher conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews using an interview guide. Seidman (2006) describes the guide as, “preset questions to which they want answers or about which they want to gather data” (p.91). Merriam (1998) states that an interview guide can range from, “dozens of very specific questions listed in a particular order” to “topical areas jotted down in no particular order or something in between” (p.81). The researcher is a novice, so, according to Merriam (1998), there may be a greater level of comfort if questions are thought out and written down prior to beginning the interview process. Yin (2009) points out that interviews should be, “guided conversations rather than structured queries. In other words, although you will be pursuing a consistent line of inquiry, your actual stream of questions in a case study interview is likely to be fluid rather than rigid” (p.106). Yin (2009) also cautions that one weakness in interviewing is lack of recall on the part of the interviewer, which is the reason this researcher chose to record and transcribe interview sessions.

The researcher created an interview guide for each of the interviews, which are Appendices C and D found at the end of this document. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, copied on to a compact disc, and rendered into a readable text for analysis by the researcher.

Setting

This study was set in a large, east coast school district. This district houses seven middle schools and two secondary schools, which were the focus of this study. Each of the school sites was assigned an alphabetic code, letters A through I. The researcher was the only individual who was aware of the coding system, and the system-coding key was stored in a locked cabinet separate from the locked cabinet where the data itself is stored.

Confidentiality

Johnson, Burke, and Christensen (2004), say that confidentiality means that only the researcher and his or her staff are aware of the identity of study participants. The researcher was the only individual dealing with data, which lessened any concern about identifying schools or individuals featured in the study. Data security procedures were discussed above.

This study was specific to the school district being researched. The researcher was the sole collector and analyzer all data. The researcher analyzed the grade point average data to determine the focus sites, conducted interviews, and analyzed the interviews for recurrent themes, commonalities, and discrepancies. At the conclusion of the study, the results of the study will be shared with the school district to allow a benefit from the information gleaned.

Procedure for Data Analysis

Internal and External Validity

Validity in a qualitative study has a different perspective than that of quantitative. In a quantitative study, according to Merriam (1998), data are presented and analyzed using variables and provides a very concrete description of the procedures that were followed during a study. This contrasts with a qualitative study where, according to Merriam (1998), the researcher answers questions in such a way to demonstrate that the conclusion of the study makes sense based on the information gathered. Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998) state that the purpose of qualitative research results is not necessarily to generalize results to a larger population, but to transfer the results to similar settings. They also state that a thick description provides the researcher with the evidence that he or she needs to make the conclusions and inferences that come from this type of research methodology. “This is close to the idea of external validity of

inferences/conclusions in general and specifically” (p.92), in a sequential qualitative research design.

Yin (2009) outlines four tests typically used in empirical social research that also lend themselves to case study research. These tests are construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. He feels that construct validity is a particular challenge because people who are critical of this type of research find the subjective nature of data measures and analysis objectionable. One of the manners cited by Yin to ensure a heightened level of construct validity is to establish a clean chain of evidence during the data collection phase, which was embedded into the plan of this study.

Internal validity presents another challenge for case study researchers. Yin (2009) states that there are several tactics for addressing internal validity, two of which were used in this study, specifically explanation building and addressing rival explanations. These tactics occur during the data analysis stage of the study.

The third test, external validity seems a barrier to case study research, so Yin (2009) states that the purpose of statistical research is to generalize to broader settings. Yin (2009) states:

This analogy to samples and universes is incorrect in when dealing with case studies. Survey research relies on statistical generalization, whereas case studies (as with experiments) rely on analytic generalization. In analytical generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory (p.43).

Yin’s fourth test, reliability, means that the research is presented in such a way as to allow another researcher to follow the same research process and come up with the same results

and conclusions. “The goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study” (Yin, 2009, p.48).

According to Yin (2009), “The analysis of case study research is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies” (p.127). The researcher needed to examine the interview question responses to look for emerging patterns, themes, descriptors, and discrepancies that accounted for the differences in AVID student achievement. Once themes were discerned, typed text was scrutinized for the elements which were present in the high-achieving school which are absent in the low-achieving school. “The goal is to analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case” (Yin, 2009, p.141).

Yin (2009) states that it is imperative, no matter what methodology chosen by any researcher, the analysis has to be the highest quality possible. He states that there are four principles that ‘underlie all social science’ (p.160) and require careful consideration by the researcher. These four principles are, according to Yin (2009): first, the analysis should attend to all the evidence; second, all ‘major rival interpretations’ need to be considered; third, the analysis must address the ‘most significant aspect’ and ignore any detours or confounding elements; fourth, the researcher should use ‘their own prior, expert knowledge’ to add crucial information to the analysis of the data.

As previously stated, the analysis in this study began by coding the nine middle schools in this district alphabetically, using the letters A through I. Core class grade point averages were entered into a spreadsheet, one column each for grades six, seven, and eight. Using the averaging function on the spreadsheet application, values were calculated for each grade level at each school, and those were examined to look for discrepancies or trends in student progress within school sites. Due to the fact that some of the middle schools offer AVID as an elective in

grade six and others do not, to eliminate the effect of this discrepancy, the grade level averages were used to create an overall average indicating progress for a school site. These were the values used to determine the most and least successful AVID elective implementation. Examining these values while incorporating them into the calculation, interesting discrepancies and trends were discovered and noted.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher included the rationale for choosing a mixed-method design, the method for choosing the sites involved in the study, data collection methods, and the procedure for data analysis. This information was pulled together to form a picture of AVID implementation in the two sites being studied, and subsequently, this information can then be used to inform policymakers and help inform future practice.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to determine whether the principal's and administrator's understanding of, commitment to, and involvement in AVID accounted the difference in student achievement between a successful school and one that is not.

The research questions that guided this study are:

Looking at the academic success of the AVID middle school students in the highest and the lowest performing AVID schools in a district, what aspects regarding program implementation explain some portion of that difference?

The following sub-questions were also be answered in the study:

- a. How did the implementation of leadership-based essentials differ between the two sites?
- b. How did the two sites differ with regard to
 1. The principal's understanding of the AVID program?
 2. The principal's commitment to the AVID program?
 3. The principal's level of involvement of involvement with the AVID program?
- c. How did the two sites differ with regard to
 1. The AVID administrator's understanding of the AVID program?
 2. The AVID administrator's commitment to the AVID program?
 3. The AVID administrator's level of involvement of involvement with the AVID program?

This chapter presents the results of this study. The initial section of the chapter will set forth the demographic data of all of the schools in the selection pool including the analysis of the

data which led to the choice of the two focus sites. The next section consists of a description of the schools. The third section presents data from the interviews, and the chapter ends with a brief summary of the process.

Overview of AVID in the Middle Schools

AVID is an optional program in the school district being investigated, with 9 of the 26 middle and secondary school sites offering AVID as an elective. The district provides no specific funding for AVID teachers; the number of AVID sections offered is at the discretion of the principal, who must absorb the teacher's salary in the building staffing determinations. Each principal makes the decision to offer AVID based in part on information provided by the Office of Instructional Services, which informs principals whether they qualify to have AVID tutors work with their students. The district determines whether to offer funding for tutors based on socio-economic and ethnic data for each site. It is unclear whether schools are told specifically how many tutorial hours they are authorized to have and conflicting answers were offered when probing the answer to this query. The most telling response came when I asked a principal about this and this individual was not aware that AVID tutors were paid, but thought that it was done on a voluntarily basis.

Demographic Data

Table 2 shows the percentage of AVID students in all of the district's middle schools. This chart demonstrates that the number of students being served by the AVID program increased by 37% from 2007-08 to 2008-09, with the greatest percentage increase, 3%, occurring in seventh grade.

Table 2

Percentage of Middle School Students Enrolled in AVID District-Wide by Grade

Percentages by Grade	2007-08	2008-09
	Total AVID Students in County = 818	Total AVID Students in County = 1121
6th Grade	5% (42 students)	5% (59 students)
7th Grade	9% (70 students)	12% (129 students)
8th Grade	26% (213 students)	24% (269 students)
9 th – 12 th Grades	60% (493 students)	59% (664 students)

Table 3 shows a grade-by-grade breakdown of all AVID students in the district. The percentage of sixth grade students remained constant and the percentage of eighth grade students dropped. The chart indicates that AVID enrollment increased rapidly in the two years being studied, and seventh grade increased more rapidly than the other two grade levels. AVID student enrollment overall increased by 132 in the nine middle schools offering the AVID elective.

Table 3

AVID Enrollment by Grade Level

Percentage by Grade	2007-2008	2008-2009
	Total Middle School AVID Students in County N = 325	Total Middle School AVID Students in County N= 457
6th Grade	13% (42 students)	13% (59 students)
7th Grade	21.5% (70 students)	28% (129 students)
8th Grade	65.5% (213 Students)	59% (269 Students)

Table 4 shows the combined gender breakdown of all AVID students in the school district as a whole. While males composed a greater number of students in both cases, the percentages were consistent. The breakdown of this data for middle schools alone was not available to the researcher.

Table 4

AVID Membership in Grades 6-12 by Gender

Gender	2007-08	2008-09
	Total AVID Students in County = 818	Total AVID Students in County = 1121
Male	56%	57%
Female	44%	43%

Table 5 illustrates ethnic breakdown of in all AVID secondary school sites. It is seen that there was a minor fluctuation in the percentage of White students and Black students, but again, percentages are basically consistent. Table 6 indicates the number of students in each ethnic category for the AVID middle schools only.

Table 5

AVID Membership in Grades 6-12 by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	2007-08	2008-09
	Total AVID Students in County = 818	Total AVID Students in County = 1121
White	25%	23%
Black	19%	22%
Hispanic	36%	36%
Asian	15%	14%
Multiracial	4%	5%

Table 6

AVID Membership for All Middle Schools by Ethnicity

School	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian		Multiracial		Other	
	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09
A	9	14	9	9	14	17	5	5	1	3	0	0
B	2	3	6	4	9	10	2	5	2	3	0	0
C	3	3	5	11	7	4	3	4	1	1	0	0
D	13	13	12	8	16	17	6	8	2	8	0	0
E	16	22	14	24	45	48	28	22	4	4	1	2
F	5	6	1	4	10	22	4	9	2	0	0	0
G	3	10	7	19	11	12	3	0	2	4	0	1
H	6	13	6	27	8	20	0	5	0	3	1	0
I	14	7	1	3	1	9	4	10	0	1	0	0

Table 7 illustrates the percentage of students in each of the middle schools considered economically disadvantaged in the district involved in the study. School E, School C, and School A have the highest number respectively. These three schools all had greater than half of their student population considered economically disadvantaged. School I had the lowest percentage by a substantial margin and their percentage dropped from year one to year two.

Table 7
Percentage of Students Considered Economically Disadvantaged

	2007-08	2008-09
	Total Percentage of Students Considered Low Income	Total Percentage of Students Considered Low Income
A	51.7%	50.7%
B	32.0%	34.3%
C	52.0%	51.5%
D	21.9%	23.6%
E	56.1%	57.2%
F	44.5%	40.9%
G	28.8%	27.7%
H	37.7%	36.1%
I	14.1%	12.8%

Table 8 illustrates the number of AVID students in each of the AVID middle schools as compared to the entire student population. The AVID program enrollment grew in each of the middle schools in this district. School H showed a substantial increase in the number of AVID students in their school; 47. Schools B and C had the lowest increase; each an increase of four students.

Table 8
Total Student Enrollment Compared to AVID Enrollment in Middle Schools

	2007-08		2008-09	
	Total Students	Total AVID Students	Total Students	Total AVID Students
A	1150	38	1170	48
B	813	21	797	25
C	775	19	748	23
D	973	49	976	54
E	989	108	975	122
F	902	22	931	41
G	971	26	886	46
H	1104	21	1095	68
I	1304	20	1261	30

Discussion of the Selected Sites

Site Selection

Table 9 illustrates the data used to make the final determination regarding which schools to study in depth. The table presents the Grade Point Average for all of the students in a school, as well as an examination of the Grade Point Average for only the AVID students. Upon examination of the table, all schools showed an increase in overall Grade Point Average for their general student population. The range in the increase is .25, from .02 in School I to .27 in School B. However, the Grade Point Averages for the AVID students paint a different picture. In three of the schools, A, F, and G, the Grade Point Average for the AVID students dropped from year one to year two, while the others showed a gain. The Grade Point Average range for the AVID middle school students was a substantial .88, from -.31 in School A to +.57 in School B. These two schools then became the focus of this study due to this discrepancy.

Table 9
Grade Point Averages for All Students Compared to AVID Students in Middle Schools

School	Average GPA for All Students			Average GPA for AVID Students		
	2007-08	2008-09	difference + or -	2007-08	2008-09	difference + or -
A	2.90	2.94	0.04	2.93	2.62	-0.31
B	2.88	3.15	0.27	2.64	3.21	0.57
C	2.67	2.89	0.22	2.57	3.04	0.47
D	2.85	3.02	0.17	2.72	2.88	0.17
E	2.75	2.90	0.16	3.04	3.07	0.03
F	2.53	2.71	0.18	3.07	2.87	-0.20
G	2.69	2.75	0.06	2.75	2.63	-0.12
H	2.87	2.97	0.10	2.45	2.84	0.39
I	3.10	3.12	0.02	2.90	3.25	0.35

Schools A and B were selected based on the differences in bold between 2007-08 and 2008-09 GPAs

School A

The principal of School A, Mr. Anderson, has chosen to commit one instructional position exclusively to AVID. The individual who serves as the teacher/coordinator was previously employed by the district as an AVID tutor. As with other schools in this district, the AVID teacher currently carries a full five-class load. This individual's entire schedule is dedicated to AVID classes.

School A has gone through some transitions with its AVID program. The principal has been in his position for four years and has been the constant through these changes. However, the remainder of the staff involved with AVID has changed frequently. The Assistant Principal, Ms. Allen, serves as the AVID administrator. The person assigned to be the AVID administrator has changed once over the last four years. Prior to and in the first two years of this same four-year window, there were two individuals who each taught one section of AVID and served as co-coordinators. Two years ago, one of those two teachers left to work at another school and the other assumed another role within School A. In that same year, the current AVID teacher was hired to be the half-time AVID teacher/coordinator and half-time coordinator for another program. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, this teacher's duties became solely directed towards AVID instruction, coordination, and communication within the building. The current teacher was familiar with all parts of program implementation when assuming the role of AVID teacher/coordinator because she had previously worked as an AVID tutor.

School B

The AVID program in School B has been more stable throughout the years. When the principal, Mr. Brown, assumed the leadership role in the building the AVID program was already in existence. Mr. Brown kept the program in place as it existed and depended on others in the building, who had more experience with the program, to keep it running.

The administrator in charge of the AVID program, Ms. Boyle, had previously served on the AVID Site Team, as the counselor, at another school. When assuming a position as a member of the administrative team at this school, she was offered the opportunity to attend a national AVID training seminar. She also stated that the move to the role of administrator just seemed to happen naturally.

The two AVID teachers at School B have attended training on AVID and were teaching the program when the principal came to that site. They both teach one section of AVID. One of the teachers is a part-time foreign language teacher and who has been permitted by the principal to extend her part-time contract in order to teach one section of AVID in addition to foreign language. Mr. Brown indicated that he was able to secure funding for that extra class, but offered no more specific information regarding the source of that funding. The second AVID teacher is an ESOL Department Chair who voluntarily uses the additional planning period offered to department chairs to teach one section of AVID.

Implementation of AVID Essentials

Research sub-question a. posed a question about the ways that the selected schools differ in their implementation of leadership-based essentials, focusing

specifically on the Leadership Based Essentials and Implementation Essentials not specifically set forth by AVID. Some of AVID’s 11 essentials are instructionally based, such as Cornell Notes and WICR, which directly impact what occurs within the walls of the classroom. Others are more leadership-based, such as staffing and policies for student selection. Yet a third set consists of things which are not actually essentials or may be less tangible, but still have a great impact on AVID , such as the perception of AVID students by peers, the perception of AVID students by the school community in general, and the understanding and oversight of the program within the building. This study intends to focus on the essentials that are leadership based as well as those which are less tangible. It is essential to know what factors in a school make AVID implementation meet with the greatest success. The categories for those essentials are in Table 10 found below.

Table 10
AVID Essentials

Leadership Based Essentials	Instructionally Based Essentials	Other Implementation Essentials not specifically set forth by AVID
Student Selection	Rigorous Coursework and Study	Communication of AVID Mission to Staff and Students
Voluntary Participation by students and staff	Reading and Writing Curriculum	Staff Development offered to staff
AVID elective offered during school day	Inquiry to promote critical reading	Communication with receiving high school
Trained tutors		Promotion of program to community
Collaboration		
Opportunities offered to staff		
Data analyzed and shared with staff		
Oversight of Program Implementation		

Tables 11 and 12 are brief comparisons of the schools based on responses given by the principal and AVID administrator of schools A and B. Each of the essentials above is listed, along with responses from leaders in both school sites.

Table 11
Comparison of Interview Responses

Leadership Based Essentials	School A	School B
Student Selection	Students are recommended by teachers, are interviewed to ensure they meet criteria. (Anderson interview)	One section is made up of ESOL students (Brown interview), the second section identified through interview process.
Voluntary Participation by students and staff	All students apply for admission into program. AVID teacher/coordinator has previous experience with AVID program and accepted the position voluntarily. (Anderson and Allen interview) AVID Administrator volunteered to learn more about the program; school divides duties. (Allen interview)	ESOL class is designated as AVID, second section composed of students who applied for and were accepted into program. ESOL department chair voluntarily uses release time to teach AVID elective to ESOL class; additional section taught by foreign language teacher. (Brown interview) AVID Administrator “kind of moved into it” when hired at this school. (Boyle interview)
AVID elective offered during school day	Yes (Anderson interview)	Yes (Allen interview)
Trained tutors	Yes (provided by school district central funding)	Yes (provided by school district central funding)
Collaboration Opportunities offered to staff	Site team meets regularly to plan future steps. AVID administrator and teacher/coordinator attend teacher meetings to discuss students. Teacher/coordinator has no duties in addition to AVID in order to attend conferences and meetings.	‘Lunch and Learn’ to allow teachers time to collaborate with AVID teacher/coordinator. AVID instructional tips communicated through newsletter. Site team members attend meetings to discuss AVID with teachers.

Leadership Based Essentials	School A	School B
Data analyzed and shared with staff	Yes; AVID teacher/coordinator gathers data and shares it with teachers. (Allen interview)	Yes; students get progress reports and review it with mentor and grades posted on school data website. (Brown interview)
Oversight of Program Implementation	AVID administrator oversees program, attends site team meetings, and meets with teacher/coordinator. Teacher/coordinator is part of teacher evaluation process so performance is overseen closely. Principal and administrator monitor student progress.	AVID administrator oversees program, provides support and data as needed. Principal monitors student performance.

Table 12

Responses to Questions Regarding Other AVID Essentials

	School A	School B
Communication of AVID Mission to Staff and Students	AVID not advertised to entire student body since it is designed for specific student populations. Student recommendations requested from staff. Principal meets with site team to discuss future program steps and growth. (Anderson interview)	Communicated by students to teachers and peers. 'Lunch and Learn' offered to staff where AVID mission and how it relates to the students. School celebrates achievements through newsletter. (Brown interview)
Staff Development offered to staff	No extensive training outside of what is offered on-site. Site team attends school district training. Teacher/coordinator demonstrated program during faculty meeting. (Anderson interview)	Optional 'Lunch and Learn' session offered to teachers. Principal of receiving high school brought students to present to teachers and participate in a work session. (Brown interview)

	School A	School B
Communicate with receiving high school	Inconsistent; majority is between program coordinators. (Allen interview)	High school principal helped principal advocate for professional development. (Brown interview) Administrator has existing relationship which eases communication. (Boyle interview)
Promotion of program to community	School web page and at Parent Community Center meetings. (Anderson interview)	AVID students are visible because they serve as ambassadors at school events. School Web Page PTA provides funds for events. (Brown interview)

Upon examination of the table above, some differences in implementation became apparent. Looking at Leadership Based Essentials, differences were found in the areas of student selection, voluntary participation, and collaboration opportunities offered to staff.

When discussing student selection and voluntary participation, School A followed the process set forth by AVID, including teacher recommendation and student interviews. The AVID teacher/coordinator in that site has previous experience in AVID and volunteered to serve in the role. School B opted to offer AVID to a section of students designated as English Speakers of Other Languages taught by their ESOL Department Chair. The second section of AVID in that site was comprised of students who followed the interview process and taught by a part-time foreign language teacher whose AVID assignment was an add-on to the part-time contract.

Both schools offer opportunities for collaboration, but those opportunities differ. School A's site team meets regularly and is not required to attend grade level meetings, however the teacher/coordinator does communicate with teachers regarding the progress

of AVID students. In School B, there are opportunities for teachers to attend informal sessions to learn about AVID, AVID instructional tips are offered through a staff newsletter, and site team members attend grade level meetings to discuss AVID with teachers.

Data on all students is collected in both School A and B which is placed in a centralized data tracker listing AVID as a support resource for students. School A's teacher/coordinator gathers data but has no formalized process for sharing that data with teachers. School B's teacher/coordinator provides the data to student mentors so that the mentors can provide support, and the AVID site team members attend team meetings where teachers discuss students and instructional strategies.

When examining the section of the table illustrating Implementation Essentials not specifically set forth by AVID, several discrepancies are noted. Communication of the AVID mission to students and staff does not occur building wide in School A. The principal believes that, since AVID is designed for specific populations, it need not be advertised to everyone. This principal, Mr. Anderson, meets with the site team to discuss future steps and growth plans for his AVID program. Mr. Brown stated that AVID's mission is communicated to the entire staff and student body through AVID students, informal discussion and staff development opportunities, and opportunities to highlight AVID successes.

Staff development in School A was limited to a faculty meeting presentation by the site team, but additional staff development was offered only to those individuals on the site team. School B provided informal informational sessions as stated above, and the

principal and AVID Administrator invited high school students to model an AVID class for staff members to observe and participate in AVID instructional strategies.

Mr. Anderson does not communicate consistently with the principal of the high school receiving his AVID students and stated that the majority of the vertical articulation occurs between the teacher/coordinators. The principal of the high school receiving Mr. Brown's students advocated for staff development; an existing relationship between School B's AVID Administrator and the high school facilitates articulation between the schools. Mr. Brown stated:

I can tell you that from my level, it is a topic of conversation between me and the high school principal that he actually just helped me recently advocate for professional development for folks interested to learn more in AVID because he joins me in the ideal that it's good for our kids and important for our community to have. We recently brought some of the AVID students to a whole-staff work session to share their experiences in AVID with my entire staff which was pretty phenomenal, so we do take a lot of pride in knowing that we are a stepping stone to the high school program and my teacher/leader and director of student services can probably give you more details.

Both principals advertise AVID on their school web pages. School A offers weekly Community Center meetings and uses that forum to present AVID to community members who attend. Mr. Brown's AVID students serve as ambassadors for school events where they wear AVID shirts and respond to questions about the program. In addition, the PTA, which is comprised of community members, often provides funding to underwrite costs related to AVID activities.

Issues Related to AVID Leadership

Research sub-question b. investigated the principal's understanding of the AVID program, his or her commitment to AVID, and his or her involvement in AVID implementation in the building. Sub question c. asked the same questions of the AVID administrator in each of the selected schools. This section discusses the data related to these issues.

What is the Leadership's Understanding of the AVID Program?

Principals' understanding of the AVID program, as well as that of the administrator overseeing program implementation, was a question that guided this study. Principals and AVID administrators demonstrated their understanding responding to questions asking them to describe the AVID program in their buildings, the informed communication between their school and the high school that will receive their AVID students, hiring of an AVID teacher, and the steps taken to share their vision of AVID. The interview data indicated that leadership had some understanding of the program, but that their understanding differed somewhat from each other.

The Purpose of AVID

The principals of both schools described AVID in their building. Mr. Anderson, the principal of school A, stated that the AVID program in his school focuses on preparing minority and economically disadvantaged students with the goal of getting them into some form of post-high school education. He stated that enrolling AVID students in higher level coursework is important to get them into college, "... or any type of extension of their learning beyond high school so, it doesn't mean that they necessarily have to go to college but our goal is to get them into higher level learning."

AVID in Mr. Anderson's school follows a tutorial-type format. He hopes that students enrolled in AVID for more than a single year benefit from the consistency of the support and structure provided. Students learn to problem solve and research on their own in an effort to find answers using various resources. He also stated that it is important that the AVID students know where to get a solution or to seek help.

Mr. Anderson indicated that AVID is an elective offered during the school day and that students go through a recommendation and interview process. He also stated that the AVID teacher changed several times and this lack of consistency was detrimental to their program.

Mr. Brown, the principal of School B, described the program as one with an active site team and a strong mentoring component. AVID students work as school ambassadors in an effort to engage them in the whole school environment. This principal opted to have students identified as English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) be one section of his AVID program to help ensure that they learn the strategies and themes of AVID. This method of student choice is not the system outlined in AVID program materials. The principal also stated that their program is headed in a positive direction and is looking forward to greater program articulation between the middle and high school. In School B, the teacher/coordinator is the individual responsible for ensuring that AVID implementation is true to the fundamentals and purpose of the program.

When describing the AVID program in their buildings, Ms. Allen stated that the AVID program in School A had changed dramatically, beginning with one teacher on one team and expanding to all grade levels and instructional teams. She was unable to state with certainty how many AVID sections were at each grade level.

Ms. Boyle also indicated that their program was growing and expanding. She stated that there are currently more people trained to be on the site team. She added, “We have more people trained on our site team than we have in the past so it is definitely an up and coming program in our building. A lot of our staff uses the AVID strategies. It’s a very positive program in our building.”

Student Selection Process

The AVID program materials outline the method for selecting students to take the AVID elective. This process involves recommendations from teachers, interviews by the AVID teacher, and a signed commitment from students and parents.

Mr. Anderson described the process of selecting students for the AVID elective as one where teachers recommended students who then go through an interview process to ensure they fit the criteria. He stated that selected students are monitored throughout their time at his school and as they progress through high school. He followed up by stating that the student’s counselor is also involved in the process. Ms. Allen confirmed the conversation with parents about all decisions made regarding a student’s course selection. She added no further details about AVID student selection.

As stated above, Mr. Brown opted to have an ESOL section designated as an AVID class. This decision was an attempt to offer second language learners the opportunity to benefit from AVID instructional and organizational strategies. In spite of the fact that the decision was made to designate an ESOL class as AVID, he stated that the teacher/coordinator is responsible for student selection. According to Mr. Brown:

My teacher coordinator is the main point of contact, she is the main one to advocate for the needs of the program, to work to identify the right kids, to select

the right kids, to make sure the program true to the fundamentals and the purpose, to be sure the rigor is there, and to ensure that in our community it's well known and established and an ongoing learning opportunity for our community and understanding its purpose and intent. She is really given the full range of leadership and responsibility in the AVID program of our school.

Voluntary Participation and AVID Roles

AVID implementation materials state that all AVID participants should volunteer to be part of program implementation. Building leaders should understand rationale behind this program essential because it would demonstrate the need for voluntary participation on the part of every individual involved with the program.

When questioned about the process leading to their becoming the AVID administrator, Ms. Allen stated that the administrative team meets to decide which individual will oversee programs in the school. She stated that she had a choice as to whether or not she would oversee the program and the opportunity to gather information about the program before agreeing to oversee AVID. She stated:

We divide all of the responsibilities among all of the administrators and we share the different programs. We want to be sure that everyone gets a chance to learn about all of the programs in our school. So, as I learned an awful lot about (school name), but didn't know as much about AVID, I shifted into becoming more involved with the AVID Program so that I can learn about the AVID program.

Ms. Boyle also had a choice about becoming the AVID administrator and was permitted to gather information about the program before making that decision. She stated that she served as the AVID counselor on the site team at another school prior to

coming to School B, so the transition to AVID administrator was something she, “kind of just moved into it versus somebody actually asking me whether or not I wanted to do it.”

When responding to a question about the principals’ understanding of various roles held by individuals involved with the AVID program, Mr. Anderson stated that the teacher/coordinator serves a coach-like role in the program. The teacher/coordinator should set the stage for what the students need and should be a communicator with teachers and peers. The teacher/coordinator should teach the students to advocate for themselves, remind them of what they need to say or do to be successful, and counsel them on what they need to do to be prepared for classes. Also, Mr. Anderson feels that the AVID teacher/coordinator should help shy students become more confident.

Mr. Brown’s understanding of the AVID roles in his building is slightly different from Mr. Anderson’s. This principal sees the teacher/coordinator as the main point of contact, as the individual who advocates for the program, works to identify students who are best suited for the program, ensures that the program is true to the fundamental and purpose of AVID, and publicizes it as an ongoing opportunity for the community. In this school, the teacher/coordinator is given the full range of leadership and responsibility for the AVID program.

Mr. Anderson sees the AVID site team as analogous to the leadership team of a school. The team should examine the program to determine the strengths, the weaknesses, how the program can use its strengths to overcome weaknesses, and to provide outside support to the students. The site team should also serve as a connector between the student and teachers so that when students have something negative or positive happening, the members of the team have the connections with the students in an

effort to keep the student and the AVID teacher in communication with each other. He added the following:

So, if I am on the site team and I am the math teacher or I am an English teacher and I identify some of my students that are in my honors class, again, making sure they are following that AVID model and making sure they are going prepared to get the support they need in AVID. The site team could be a great cross-connector with the teacher and the student whereas if I see something positive or something negative happening with that child in a classroom, I can help make connections to support the AVID teacher or the AVID student so that the student doesn't get lost.

Mr. Brown stated that, in his opinion, the site team is has several facets. The first facet is promote the principles and values of AVID, the second is serve as mentors to the students, and the third is to advise him about what the needs of the program might be. The site team's efforts should be directed towards making AVID a seamless part of the whole school vision. The site team should also build the vision to include ways to make AVID good for the entire student body and staff, not just for those students specifically involved in AVID. He sees the role of the site team as:

I guess, would be to build the vision of taking AVID from what it is and it's next steps; what it can be for the good of our entire student body and for the good of our entire staff in using best practice research in ongoing ways for all students and not just for students who get identified for AVID.

Mr. Anderson sees the role of the student as one where the student should grow, gain confidence, and take an active role in his or her education. The student should use

the relationship with the teacher/coordinator and the site team to make connections and learn to be a self-advocate. The self-advocacy developed by the student will then allow open communication and problem solving with teachers and AVID classmates. Students should bring all materials and if they begin to see in themselves a weakness, bring the concern to the AVID class and tutorial to get assistance. Mr. Anderson sees the student's role as one where they should become more organized use those organizational skills in a broader context. "The AVID program is not merely designed to have the students do well in higher level classes, or even to go to college, but to teach the student to problem solve and seek out solutions for problems they are unable to solve for themselves."

The AVID students in Mr. Brown's school are seen as the third prong of what makes AVID, the other two being the teacher and the site team. The students should believe in AVID and see the positive impact it is having on them. Students should be able to articulate that AVID is a support for them which serves as a push to make them work harder and broaden their opportunities. Mr. Brown stated that if the student feels that the rigor of AVID is too difficult, or that it is of no value to them, the principal and teacher/coordinator should have a conversation with the student to determine if the program is a fit, if they see value in it, and emphasize that they were selected especially to be a part of the program. He feels that every AVID student should value the fact that the opportunity to take AVID is not open to everyone and that it's a process, and remaining in AVID will teach them perseverance and fortitude. Mr. Brown's AVID students have opportunities to meet with their assigned mentor during school hours at mentor/mentee afternoons. Also, this principal believes that AVID students should participate in weekend and school events.

Ms. Allen and Ms. Boyle responded to questions about roles of individuals involved in AVID and the way that they envision these roles. Ms. Allen feels that the teacher/coordinator has all of the responsibility for organizing the site team, for taking the lead, and stated:

...with communicating with both administration and the rest of the staff so that we can share knowledge about the AVID program. She follows the kids and communicates with their teachers about how they're doing, she communicates with the high school, shares selection process and does the interviews for the selection process and, um, invites the kids to participate in the class, and teaches the class.

Ms. Boyle agrees with Ms. Allen regarding the crucial role of the AVID teacher/coordinator. According to Ms. Boyle:

I think that she is essential, or the coordinator is an essential role. It can make or break the site team because the coordinator kind of determines whether or not, often times, people even want to be on the site team. Our coordinator has done a great job of getting people actively involved. Our coordinator is also our AVID teacher, one of our AVID teachers I should say. She just does a phenomenal job.

When Ms. Allen discussed the role of the site team, she stated that she would like to see the site team grow in her building. She feels that increased involvement would make it easier to communicate with staff members about the AVID program and ways that teachers can be using AVID methodologies in their classrooms. Ms. Boyle sees the site team as a support system for the teacher/coordinator because one individual cannot possibly do everything needed to support the AVID students.

When describing the role of AVID students in their buildings, they agreed that students should model AVID strategies to their teachers and peers. Ms. Allen stated that AVID students need to assume responsibility for their own learning, they are learning things using different strategies than their peers, and that they should become advocates not merely for themselves, but for their classmates as well.

Ms. Boyle had a slightly different sense of the students' role. She stated that they can, "make or break the program." She stated that it would not be good for non-AVID students or the community to have a negative vision of AVID students. When discussing the perception of AVID students, she said:

...a negative vision in the community or a negative vision in the [School B] teachers won't want to recommend kids for the AVID program. You want to see kids that are doing well. I think it's also good to see kids who are truly in the middle doing so well, or just being able to from being in the middle to going up top to prove that the AVID program really does work.

AVID as an Elective Offered During the School Day

The AVID program requires that each AVID student take a minimum of one honors class and choose to take AVID as an elective. Principals responded to questions regarding the AVID elective and the requirements regarding the honors class that AVID students take.

In School A, Mr. Anderson stated that the AVID teacher/coordinator works directly with the Director of Student Services to determine which honors class each AVID student intends to take. The AVID teacher/coordinator looks through the course selection guide to see if the student is a fit for the honors class they chose. Mr. Anderson

stated that if they see a particular student “is signing up for geometry and we don’t feel math is a strength, we would look at his or her background of test scores, work habits, report cards, interests, and then we make the determination.”

School A requires a minimum of one honors class for AVID students, but the actual number is decided on an individual basis. The honors class must be in the core curriculum. Some of the AVID students take two or three honors classes, and if able, may take a full load of honors classes. There is no limit, but it is on a case-by-case basis. Guidance counselors and the AVID teacher/coordinator meet with the students when they sign up for their classes. Initially, it is the counselor who helps the student make course selection choices, and then the AVID teacher/coordinator meets with the student to discuss the course selections. The final step is a meeting between Mr. Anderson and the Director of Student Services to make certain that there is a match between the student’s strengths and his or her choices.

Mr. Brown stated that AVID students might take either an honors level math or a foreign language class. Mr. Brown did not directly respond to the inquiry regarding the number of honors classes his students are required to take, and was unsure whether it needed be a core class, or could be an elective. While not sure of specific details, he stated that he believes that one grade level has to take an honors level core class, and the other students have to take an honors math or foreign language. He stated that he believes that course selection decisions are made with input from the teacher/coordinator, the Director of Student Services, the child, and the parents. Individuals making the decision examine the student’s past academic records to determine what is most appropriate.

AVID administrators were asked the same question as their principals regarding course selection requirements for AVID students. Ms. Allen stated that School A requires the students take a minimum of one honors class and it must be in a core subject. The student in conjunction with parents, the AVID teacher/coordinator, prior teachers, and the administrator, who has worked with him or her, makes the course selections. She added the following:

First we try to be sure that we are matching the honors class with the student's strength. Many of them are already planning to take honors classes when they sign up for AVID, but if they aren't a student who is taking an honors class, we try pretty hard here at (school name) to make sure to look at where they have been the most successful and then start there.

Ms. Boyle stated that, for AVID students in lower grade levels, staff members consult student records to examine Standards of Learning scores, previous class selections, and grades to assist the student with selection an honors class. The eighth graders are required to take a high school credit course, such as math or foreign language. They prefer it be algebra, "but knowing that not all kids are algebra-ready, we do have some in a foreign language. We try to make it algebra but if we know a kid has just not done well historically, we don't force them to take algebra." According to Ms. Boyle, the AVID teacher/coordinator meets with rising eighth grade students to discuss honors classes. She did not discuss the process for other grade level students.

What is the Leadership's Commitment to the AVID program?

The principal's commitment to the AVID program was another area that guided this study. Principals demonstrated their commitment or lack of commitment to AVID

through their responses regarding staffing of the AVID teacher/coordinator position, staff development opportunities, decisions about course selection, support provided when identifying students, and articulation between the middle school and receiving high school.

School A has a full time instructional position dedicated strictly to AVID, while School B has the English for Speakers of Other Languages department chair teach a section of AVID and another is taught by a part-time foreign language teacher. School A's teacher/coordinator was previously an AVID tutor and welcomed the opportunity to assume the role. School B's ESOL Department Chair agreed to serve as teacher/coordinator and volunteered to teach one section of AVID.

Mr. Anderson is determined to keep the AVID teacher/coordinator position, "because that is one of our top priority positions to help our students who don't have that support at home." If he had no choice other than to cut the position, he had several ideas about ways to provide AVID-like opportunities in his school. He suggested that it could be accomplished through an after-school program, during their homeroom period, and by requiring AVID strategies such as Cornell Notes and organizational skills throughout the school. Due to the fact that Mr. Anderson's AVID teacher's instructional load is dedicated to AVID, he is able to offer five sections to his students.

Eventually, Mr. Brown would like to have one teaching position dedicated to AVID, but stated that it easier to pay a part-time teacher for an additional instructional position at this time. Therefore, he has opted to have the part-time foreign language teacher instruct one section of AVID. The ESOL department chair teaches the other section of AVID at his school. Department chairs are:

...staffed so that they have one fewer teaching period as compared to other teachers. In other words, they teach four classes in order to be the ESOL department chair instead of the five classes of every other teacher in the school building. Because of this, the teacher volunteered to use that additional planning period as one of her classes to teach AVID, um, and in addition she has reimaged some of her level three/four ESOL literature classes as AVID classes in order to build up our program.

Communication with Receiving High School

Mr. Anderson stated that, in the past, there had been little communication between his school and the high school that would receive his students; he has little impact on the students when they leave his building. He also stated that the Directors of Student Services of the sites do communicate with each other about identified students and the transition into the high school AVID program.

Mr. Brown indicated that he feels that communication between the schools is strong. He stated:

While I don't know all the intricacies, all the ins and outs that my leader could tell you, I can tell you that from my level, it is a topic of conversation between me and the high school principal. He actually just helped me recently advocate for professional development for folks interested to learn more in AVID because he joins me in the ideal that it's good for our kids and important for our community to have.

Mr. Brown stated that his AVID administrator and Director of Student Services would be better able to answer the interview question on this topic, but that he does, “take a lot of pride in knowing that we are a stepping stone to the high school program.”

When questioned about communication between the middle and high school, both AVID administrators stated that there is articulation between the two levels, but the type of communication differs. Ms. Allen stated that the majority of the communication is between the program coordinators on the various levels and it tends to be geared toward program details. Ms. Boyle has a different situation in her building because their coordinator was previously a department chair at their receiving high school, so she has a relationship that facilitates the communication between the two school levels. She stated that, at the time of the interview, they were currently in the midst of recruiting students for the high school program, as well as for their own program.

Staff Development

Mr. Anderson and Mr. Brown responded to queries about staff development opportunities offered to teachers. Mr. Anderson stated that, with the exception of site team members, there has not been any extensive staff development offered to teachers in his building. The teacher/coordinator did an AVID presentation during a faculty meeting and some teachers use Cornell Notes. All students use AVID organizational binders throughout Mr. Anderson’s building.

Mr. Brown stated that his AVID site team offers an optional lunch, termed a ‘Lunch and Learn’, during the first week of school. During this lunch, staff members were, “shown examples of student work, they learned about the AVID mission and how it relates to our overall school.” The site team has the opportunity to attend a summer

institute offered by the school district. All members of the eighth grade English department use Cornell Notes and he sees that the use of AVID strategies in classrooms increases as more teachers learn about AVID. He stated that he has overheard discussions regarding the use of AVID binders. Mr. Brown stated that he wasn't sure that these strategies were always identified as AVID strategies or merely best instructional practices. "Whether or not it's indicated that this is an AVID strategy versus a best practice really is not an important point in all of it but it's interesting to see the thing spread in the school."

Data Analyzed and Shared with Staff

The school district collects data on all AVID program and schools at the end of each academic year. Schools also collect data during the year, in the form of grades and assessment results, and schools differ in what they do with the formative data.

Principals responded to questions about potential adjustments made based in student achievement data collected during the year. Mr. Anderson stated that the AVID teacher/coordinator gathers the data and shares it with teachers. He feels that this is not done as effectively as it could and should be, but that he sees it as a wonderful way to identify students for remediation or enrichment. He stated that this data could spur valuable conversations to meet the needs of the students.

Mr. Brown stated the following when responding to the question about sharing information:

Information is collected on our AVID students, specifically with student performance, tracked and monitored by teachers of the AVID program to continue to have the students. Students ask teachers for progress reports and they work

with their teachers to analyze their success and talk about plans of action to keep getting better.

Mr. Brown's school has a spreadsheet tracking the progress of all students and teachers have access to the information. On the spreadsheet, information is available about Standards of Learning scores, assessments, and whether the student gets any type of support, including AVID. When discussing the spreadsheet, Mr. Brown said, "One tool in the school overall school data analysis piece is looking at the success of students and looking at the correlation between their enrollment in the AVID program with their achievement."

The AVID teacher/coordinator in School A collects and shares data in an attempt to support students and guide instruction. According to Ms. Allen:

She shares that information with the grade level administrator as well as the student's teachers. I know she uses that to plan for what the students are doing in her class and she communicates with the other teachers so that can make plans according to that information.

School B's process of data sharing involves the sharing of progress reports with each AVID student and their mentor. The student and mentor meet to discuss the progress report. Ms. Brown, when queried further about any action that may be taken as a result of that conversation, stated:

They don't use it as much to change the way that they teach; they use it more so to help the kids, like, you know, if a kid has a C in math, the mentor might say, 'OK, How can we get you up?' They don't use it so much to change their

instruction, but they use those progress reports to get the kids where they need to be by report card time.

Communication of AVID Mission to Staff and Students

The principal's commitment to any program can be demonstrated when they share their personal vision with members of their staff and community. This communication could be in the form of newsletters, web page links and information, or providing necessary human and financial resources to the program.

Mr. Anderson participated in discussions with the site team regarding program growth. He stated that he never had a sit-down conversation with his AVID administrator because she assumed the role based on her own personal interest in the program. The AVID administrator oversees the teacher/coordinator and is the person who is the liaison between the principal and the teacher/coordinator. He stated that the AVID administrator oversees the site team and that she relays information to him. During the current teacher/coordinator's first year in the role, she spent much time with him, discussing the status of the program and the ways it could grow. The teacher/coordinator's discussions evolved from approval seeking to sharing decisions made about the program and requests for support and staff development. He stated, "And to me, that's just a sure sign of her going in the right direction of more maturity and that she can be more independent about what she's doing and doesn't need that reassurance all the time from me."

Mr. Brown stated that he shared his vision with the AVID administrator by permitting the existing program to continue upon his arrival. He approves supply orders and supports events featuring AVID students. He has included AVID in his school improvement plan and has shared with the administrator that in order for the support to

continue, the AVID program has to be part of the plan that drives the school. The teacher/coordinator was already in that role when Mr. Brown arrived at the school, and has shared his vision by endorsing suggestions to expand the program to other grade levels. He stated:

I believe that she knows the program best because she's in it. She works with the kids in the most intimate ways so it is really my vision is to empower her to help steer the decisions that need to be made to continue to make it a strong program and to build it for the future as well.

Mr. Brown shares his vision with the site team by celebrating their achievements. He does this through a weekly newsletter to the staff and promotes his vision by thanking the site team for events that they have sponsored, their hard work and contributions, and their commitment to the program. "Again, they're the ones who also know what's in the best interest for the program and what the program needs, so by saying yes and by valuing the time and effort they are putting to it, I feel that it's communicating my vision by supporting what they're doing and moving it forward from behind and entrusting them to be the experts on it versus my thinking that I know where it needs to go and how it needs to keep moving forward."

The AVID administrators had very different responses to the question regarding the sharing of administration's vision with AVID students. Ms. Allen stated, "I think we are constantly communicating to the kids that we have very high expectations of them, that we expect them to do their very best, to be successful, that they will be going to college." She stated that she does not believe that the administration directly communicates their vision of AVID with the students. When asked whether the vision

has been communicated to the staff of School A, she stated that AVID was featured at a faculty meeting to be sure that the whole staff had a basic understanding of AVID, as well as the mission and vision of the program. She stated that the administrative team felt it important that the entire staff have some foundational knowledge of AVID.

Ms. Boyle stated that the leadership's vision of AVID is mostly communicated to the student body by word-of-mouth through the students themselves. "I would say that's more so done through the kids versus building leadership communicating." She added:

I mean, we communicate it to the AVID students, but I can't think of how we might communicate it to the whole student body outside of just the kids wearing their t-shirts. The kids will say, "What is AVID?" or like they are always leaders in our building so when we have a rising student orientations, they go around and they show the kids around and say, "OK, we're AVID." But, that's more so the kids.

Ms. Boyle also discussed that they shared their vision of AVID with the staff through AVID 'Lunch and Learns' sessions which provide optional opportunities for staff to learn about the program. She stated:

We have AVID 'Lunch and Learns' at school where it is an opportunity for you to come out and learn about the AVID program. A lot of people on the site team and in their PLCs will talk, their department PLCs will talk to the rest of their department about AVID, what AVID is, so it has definitely been well communicated to our staff.

An additional way to demonstrate commitment to AVID is through the sharing of an individual's vision with those who are involved in and impacted by the program. Ms.

Allen stated that she has been working hard to learn more about AVID so that her vision is better informed and aligned with what the teacher/coordinator is trying to accomplish. She demonstrates her vision to the teacher/coordinator by staying in communication with her about things related to students and the program. She actively participates in site team meetings, demonstrating her vision to them. Ms. Boyle's responses were not dissimilar to Ms. Allen's; communication with the teacher/coordinator, through meetings or discussions, as they work together to expand the program and share common ideas and goals, and attendance and participation in site team meetings to show commitment to offer support are ways that Ms. Boyle's vision and commitment are demonstrated. School programs affect students, teachers, and community members; clear communication offers information to understand programs and the resources they offer to the school population. When Mr. Anderson and Mr. Brown responded to the question about how leadership communicates the mission of AVID to their respective student bodies, the responses again differed. Mr. Anderson stated that AVID is not advertised to the entire student body, but general information is available on the school's website. He stated that since it is a program for only selected students, it is not shared with everybody. "We do send it out as, 'Here's what AVID's about, please make recommendations,' but that we don't have an entire AVID school, so we don't send that out to everybody."

Mr. Brown feels that it is the AVID students who communicate the AVID mission to their peers. They host, "AVID specific events where the kids will teach their parents what they do in AVID, how AVID works, what the tutorials look like, and also share this information with the staff."

Mr. Anderson stated that he does not feel that this communication has ever been done consistently. He stated that e-mails go out to staff, describing the characteristics of an AVID student, but that, "I really don't believe that we've ever really put out an extensive training of how to identify an AVID kid." Mr. Brown also stated that this communication is inconsistent, but that the teacher/coordinator adds a feature on AVID in the school's electronic newsletter.

Mr. Brown chose not to discuss AVID implementation for the upcoming school year with the instructors because he was concerned that he would not have the available positions. He stated that AVID was not included in his school's course selection options for the 2010-2011 school year. He stated that he:

...put the kibosh and I said that we needed to wait until June to do it, the interviews and the recruiting. I did not ask for lists from the elementary schools in February or March. I didn't even ask for lists of possible candidates for AVID at that time because, again, I was unclear as to whether or not we would have it for the next school year. What I didn't want to do was send the message to the community, to my staff, and to teachers and feeder schools that it was definitely a go, you know, not knowing what would happen.

When questioned about meeting the needs of students who would have been in AVID should the program be cut, he said that he would need to meet with his Director of Student Services and AVID teachers to determine what steps would need to be taken. At the time of the interview, he didn't have a good answer about what could be done, but that would make a decision based on conversations with other staff members.

Both AVID administrators answered questions about whether or not they think their principal is committed to keeping the AVID program should the funding for tutors be eliminated. Ms. Allen stated that she believes her principal is committed to keeping the program, as did Ms. Boyle. When asked about what plans may be in place to meet the needs of AVID eligible students if the program was eliminated, Ms. Allen stated, “Fortunately, we haven’t had to think that far ahead yet because we have been committed to keeping AVID. We’ve seen a huge benefit to our students and so we know this is a valuable program for our school and for our students.” Ms. Boyle stated:

I think that because we have so much of the school that is AVID trained, we at (school name) would still be able to keep the AVID ideals in place. You know, the WICR, the Cornell Notes, and everything that they do through AVID because (the principal) has allowed for so many people to be trained throughout our school.

The final question asked of Mr. Anderson and Mr. Brown was about how AVID is shared with the community. Mr. Anderson stated, “Well, the recommendations that go home, it’s on our website, and I believe, that she does go to our Parent Community Center, but again, we don’t do a whole community base, we don’t do a whole school-base.”

Mr. Brown takes several steps to share AVID with the community. AVID students serve as ambassadors in school/community events and AVID activities are featured in a weekly newsletter that goes to parents. The local Parent Teacher’s Association is aware of AVID because they occasionally provide funding for AVID events. He stated that he feels it important to recognize the program, show the

community what AVID is and what it can do for students. AVID is shared with both communities via the school web page. Ms. Allen's school also has parent information meetings and open houses. Ms. Boyle's school distributes newsletters and offers AVID students the opportunity to serve as ambassadors at various school events. When serving in that capacity, they wear their AVID shirt, which spurs interest in the program.

What is the Leadership's Level of Involvement with the AVID program?

Principals are involved with their programs to varying degrees. They demonstrate their involvement in several ways, such as direct supervision of program implementation and staff, and communicating with staff and the community about the program for example.

When questioned about steps Mr. Anderson has in place should it be discovered that the program is not being properly implemented, he stated that his approach is more proactive than reactive. He gives the teacher full staffing, with no supplemental duties. Also, the teacher is encouraged to attend any staff development made available, and monitor the teachers' response when she requests student data. Mr. Anderson stated, "The biggest thing is that we do have the administrator who has been properly trained. We have the site team that is properly trained that could come in and support her." Also, he stated that we can work directly with district officials if it's not being properly implemented. "Currently, it is going very well so we have not had to do that. Last year our steps were we just had to be available to her so that she could walk herself through and we were more of a support structure for her."

Mr. Brown agreed with Mr. Anderson when discussing program implementation. Neither principal shared any concerns about AVID implementation or staff performance.

He stated:

At this point in time, the way I am monitoring its effectiveness is by looking at student grades. I think that the greatest indicator of an ineffective program is that the students are not performing well, not only in the rigorous course or courses, but in their other core areas and electives. At this point in time I have had no data to indicate that it's not serving its purpose in helping these kids' academic success in the school, so I think that in that situation that lack of the evidence of not being effective is one way I am monitoring the effectiveness of it.

Proper AVID program implementation includes weekly Socratic Seminar sessions. The purpose of Socratic Seminars and dialogue in AVID is to help students develop their ability to think critically and implement high-level cognitive skills.

Socratic dialogue is routinely used to help students engage in all levels of critical thinking, pursue understanding with mutual respect and be willing to be persuaded by arguments and/or evidence more powerful than their own. In AVID, inquiry is a tool for learning" (AVID Awareness Materials, 2007, p. 11).

One AVID class in each school was observed. The session was compared to the Socratic Seminar Rubric provided by AVID which is Appendix B in this document. The observation of School A's AVID class involved a group of students implementing various AVID strategies to prepare for an upcoming test in science. The students had different science teachers, but they were all the same grade level, so the content and assessment were common. The students were observed using Level Two and Level

Three questions of Costa's model of intellectual functioning. "Level One questions focus on gathering and recalling information; level two, on making sense of gathered information and; level three, on applying and evaluating information" (AVID Awareness Materials, 2007, p. 5). The students were accessing resources as they proceeded to prepare for the upcoming assessment. When questioned about what they were doing, the students were able to articulate their goal of doing well on the test, the ways in which this particular studying strategy would be helpful, and what the Costa levels meant. The students were seen building on each other's comments, analyzing information, comparing and contrasting, and drawing inferences.

All of the students indicated that they intended to stay in AVID for the upcoming year. They also shared that one student had been asked to leave the class because he or she was not coming to class prepared and was disruptive to the other students. One student went so far as to say that the class was more beneficial since that student had changed to an alternative elective class.

The observation at School B was also a single grade level. This class was taught by the English for Speakers of Other Languages Department Chair and was composed of students receiving those services. It was unclear whether these students enrolled in AVID using the procedures outlined by the AVID program. When I questioned the students, none of them remembered an interview about enrolling in the AVID elective class. When asked how many of them planned to take AVID in high school, seven of the twenty students indicated that they wanted to take AVID in high school. When questioned further, some stated that they felt they had benefitted from the strategies taught in AVID, but that they could manage on their own to implement them. Others

were not sure why they were choosing not to take AVID in the future. During the observation, the high school AVID counselor was on site to interview candidates for the high school program; however the principal indicated in his interview that AVID was not listed on the course selection sheet. The teacher stated to me that there had been some confusion about the program for the upcoming year in School B.

The students at School B were creating an informational chart for upcoming AVID classes regarding the things they needed to do to be successful in the AVID class. Most of them indicated that it was important to use Costa's questioning levels, and that it was important to make the teacher happy. They were participating in conversations using AVID terminology, such as WICR, Socratic Seminars, and Cornell Notes.

Communication has been a consistent theme threading through much of what both principals and AVID administrators shared. When asked about the communication between the AVID administrator and the building principal, Ms. Allen stated that they have weekly administrative team meetings, and each administrator provides an update for all programs that they supervise. She stated:

There's a lot of open communication where we are checking in consistently about all of our different programs and different grade level students on a regular basis. So we do talk about all of the teachers, including the AVID teacher/coordinator, where they are in their progress and different goals they set for themselves and what's happening with the students, how successful they are, what they need to be more successful, and what we need to do as an administrative team that whatever needs to be done.

Ms. Boyle stated:

We communicate probably bi-weekly about AVID at [School B] and probably more so recently because right now we are trying to figure out next year you know. How many AVID classes will we have, what will AVID look like?

[Teacher name] how can we 'AVIDize' the school, how can we get, you know, without kids being in the AVID class, how can we be sure we have those AVID strategies in place.

She followed up by sharing that they discuss the AVID teacher/coordinator in an effort to ensure that she continues to be the best person to be in that role. They also discuss the progress of the students, why they are or are not progressing, and they often discuss the fact that the AVID students consider themselves to be members of a family.

Administrators answered questions about their perception of the principal's level of involvement with student selection and programmatic decisions. They both responded by stating that their principal is very involved. Ms. Allen stated that her principal is particularly involved when making decisions about all programs and students in the building, and that all members of the administrative team participate in these conversations since they occur during administrative team meetings. Ms. Boyle stated that Mr. Brown is very active in decisions about events and opportunities for AVID students. Ms. Boyle feels that her principal is, "a great advocate for our program."

Ms. Allen shared that their administrative team works together to discuss programs in their building, the ways in which those programs are staffed, and the long-term vision of their school. Ms. Boyle stated that she had a major role in programmatic decisions because she was in place as the AVID administrator when the Mr. Brown

assumed the role of principal. She did not have authority to make the decisions on her own, but she served as an advisor to the principal because she knew the program and staff.

Assistant principals and administrators other than the principal often have contact that is more direct with teachers since they have a small group of staff that they directly supervise. Support of the AVID teacher, as well as steps in place should problems be observed, was the gist of the next interview question. Ms. Allen stated that their AVID teacher is new and is therefore participating in the formal evaluation process. She shared:

Our AVID teacher is actually new, so as with all new teachers, is in the teacher performance evaluation process. That provides a certain level of support because for the first three years of her career here at (school name), she has had direct supervision that is very supportive so if she needs any help with anything she is being monitored in a very positive way and then she can get that support. We also utilize the (district's name) AVID program director to bring in whatever supports are needed for our staff that we don't have here in the building.

Ms. Boyle stated that her level of support is more along the lines of being a listener. The teacher/coordinator will also ask for data support, such as gathering progress data, but that there is little else needed in the form of direct support. As far as steps in place should program implementation problems be detected, she responded:

I can't even say I have anything in place if it isn't properly implemented because she's been doing it and does such a great job of it. If there was somebody new I might be more concerned about following up if things weren't being implemented properly, but she just does such a phenomenal job.

The final question asked of the AVID administrators of School A and School B was about AVID strategies they have observed in their buildings. Both administrators shared that they see Cornell Notes utilized in classes other than the AVID elective. Ms. Allen's response to this question was:

The things I see most frequently in our building are related to organization. We had the whole school learn to organize their materials using the AVID strategy and how the AVID students organize their binders. We had our AVID teacher write a lesson that was taught to the entire school on how to organize their binder and what they should be doing to keep it organized and to use it as a learning tool, not just a place to stuff things. I also see others using Cornell notes and there are more strategies that I would like to see and I think we actually have a plan for doing that now.

Ms. Boyle stated that, in addition to Cornell Notes, she sees an occasional Socratic Seminar, but that the strategy she sees most often is Cornell Notes.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the research questions were presented, along with summaries of interviews and observations. When summarizing interviews, inductive reasoning was used to determine what elements were germane to the purpose of the study (Seidman, 2006). Due to the enormous volume of material, "most important is that reducing the data be done inductively rather than deductively...the researcher must come to the manuscripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text," (Seidman, 2006, p. 117).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes an analysis of the findings as presented in Chapter IV. It analyzes two schools, School A and School B, chosen based on the academic success of their AVID students. School A's AVID students showed a decrease in grade point averages, while School B's AVID students showed an increase. Also included are conclusions drawn based on those findings and recommendations for future study.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the principal and administrator's understanding of, commitment to, and involvement of AVID accounts for the difference in student achievement between a school with a successful AVID program and one whose AVID program is not successful. This study utilized a comparative case study methodology to examine the differences between the building leaders' and AVID coordinator/teachers' understanding of the program, their commitment to the program, their level of involvement in monitoring program success at the two schools.

Research Questions

Looking at the academic success of the AVID middle school students in the highest and the lowest performing AVID schools in a district, what aspects regarding program implementation explain some portion of that difference?

The following sub-questions will also be answered in the study:

- a. How did the implementation of leadership based essentials differ between the two sites?

b. How did the two sites differ with regard to

1. The principal's understanding of the AVID program?
2. The principal's commitment to the AVID program?
3. The principal's level of involvement with the AVID program?

c. How did the two sites differ with regard to

1. The AVID administrator's understanding of the AVID program?
2. The AVID administrator's commitment to the AVID program?
3. The AVID administrator's level of involvement of involvement to the AVID program?

Findings

AVID Program Implementation Essentials

This section analyzes the fidelity of the AVID program implementation essentials between the two schools. This section focuses on the noteworthy points related to the essentials, so not every essential is discussed below.

1. AVID student selection criteria are set forth in program materials. AVID students have academic potential and would benefit from AVID support in order to be academically successful and begin college preparation.

School A adhered to AVID student selection procedures. Teachers provided student recommendations, candidates interviewed with the AVID teacher/coordinator, and signed contracts demonstrating their commitment to the program.

School B offered AVID to a class designated for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). These students were eighth grade students who fell at the highest end of the ESOL student qualification categories and who were nearly proficient in

English. There was no indication that student selection in School B followed the student selection procedures outlined by AVID. Mr. Brown outlined his student selection by saying:

Our lead coordinator is an ESOL teacher and ESOL teachers in [School B] are staffed so that they have one fewer teaching periods as compared to other teachers. In other words, they teach four classes in order to be the ESOL department chair instead of the five classes of every other teacher in the school building. Because of this, the teacher volunteered to use that additional planning period as one of her classes to teach AVID, and in addition she has reimaged some of her level three and four ESOL literature classes as AVID classes in order to build up our program, as I mentioned earlier. In addition, we have one of our part-time foreign language teachers, specifically she teaches Spanish, I was able to find funding to provide her with one additional period to teach the seventh grade section of AVID. As a school with budgeting, funding, and staffing, it is easier to find one period added onto the contract of a part time teacher than it is to hire a full-time teachers, and then you have to pay for, basically two additional periods for their planning, so I was able to find the resources to do that.

2. AVID participants, both students and adults, should be voluntary participants in AVID.

School A's students demonstrated a desire to be in AVID by following the process for becoming a student. The teacher/coordinator was a novice teacher who was previously an AVID tutor. She willingly accepted the position when offered. She had experience with AVID when accepting the position, but her training was tailored to the

role of tutor, not teacher/coordinator. The AVID administrator volunteered in an attempt to become familiar with a broader range of programs in the building.

School B's student participants consisted of one section of ESOL students taught using AVID strategies, and the second was an AVID class assigned to the foreign language teacher. The ESOL teacher who serves as the teacher/coordinator volunteered to use release time to teach the ESOL section. The foreign language teacher accepted an additional section added to her part time contract. School B's current AVID administrator was the AVID counselor in a previous school assignment and voluntarily transitioned into the role.

“AVID Awareness Materials (2007) state that the AVID core teacher, ‘should be recruited to the position, rather than assigned.’ As with AVID students, the teachers should commit to the program voluntarily, with full understanding of the expectations and goals of AVID” (p.6).

4. AVID students are expected to enroll in a rigorous course of study, including enrollment in a minimum of one honors-level class. Essential 5 emphasizes the necessity of a structured reading and writing curriculum and Essential 6, inquiry to promote learning, includes tutorials and Socratic Seminars as strategies.

School A's AVID students are required to take a minimum of one honors-level core academic course, but may take more if the student, administrator, parent and counselor feel that the student can be successful. School B's eighth grade students are required to take an honors or high-school credit course, but they do not require that it be a core course. It is conceivable that a student in the section taught by the foreign language

teacher could also have that teacher for AVID. The lower grade level AVID honors class selection was not discussed in the principal's or AVID Administrator's interview.

Rigor in AVID program implementation includes weekly Socratic Seminar sessions. The purpose of Socratic Seminars and dialogue in AVID is to help students develop their ability to think critically and implement high-level cognitive skills. AVID students are also taught to craft questions using Costa's model of intellectual functioning. Costa's model consists of three questioning levels; level one asks questions designed to focus on content and recall, level two encourages students to make sense of gathered information, and level three focuses on analyzing and evaluating information.

One AVID class in each school was observed. The observation of School A's AVID class involved a group of students implementing various AVID strategies to prepare for an upcoming test in science. The students had different science teachers, but they were all the same grade level, so the content and assessment were common. Student conversations contained Level Two and Level Three questions of Costa's model of intellectual functioning. The students were accessing resources as they proceeded to prepare for the upcoming assessment. When questioned about what they were doing, the students were able to articulate their goal of doing well on the test, the ways in which this particular studying strategy would be helpful, and what the Costa levels meant. The students were seen building on each other's comments, analyzing information, comparing and contrasting, and drawing inferences.

The observation at School B was also a single grade level. This was the class taught by the English for Speakers of Other Languages Department Chair and was composed of students receiving those services. The students at School B were creating

an informational chart for upcoming AVID classes regarding the things they needed to do to be successful in the AVID elective. Most of them indicated that it was important to use Costa's questioning levels, and that it was important to make the teacher happy, however I did not observe any students actually using Costa's questioning model. They were participating in conversations using AVID terminology, such as WICR, Socratic Seminars, and Cornell Notes.

AVID instruction is based on a five day rotation with the assumption that the AVID class meets on a daily basis. The weekly rotation includes two of five days teaching the AVID curriculum of support and assistance, two days of tutorials, and a day set aside for binder evaluations, guest speakers, field trips, and motivational activities (AVID Awareness Center, 2007). The AVID class in School A was utilizing the rotation schedule since the observation showed students using AVID to understand science concept in preparation for an upcoming assessment.

The class session in School B did not seem to fall in this rotation schedule. During the observation, the students were creating posters relating to AVID, but were not doing activities designed to provide support in content classes, were not participating in a Socratic Seminar as outlined in AVID materials, and not checking binders or hosting a guest speaker.

7. Collaboration between teachers, as a basis to guide instruction, was recognized as crucial when Mary Catherine Swanson first visualized AVID as a way to facilitate learning for students who were not being challenged or given educational opportunities that could lead to college. As AVID was growing and developing, core content teachers tended to tell Ms. Swanson that the AVID students were 'her problem,' making such

statements as “this student is your responsibility; he does not belong in this school much less in my college preparatory class” (Swanson et al., 1993, p.5). Swanson responded to these comments by refusing to eat lunch in the faculty cafeteria, “because the talk around the lunch table was constantly focused on the troubles these bussed students caused” (Swanson et al., 1993, p.5).

School A’s site team meets regularly to discuss AVID students, but the teacher/coordinator is not required to collaborate with classroom teachers during instructionally based grade-level meetings. The teacher/coordinator gathers data from grade reports to assist students to be successful, but does not take the information to teachers using a formalized process.

In School B, site team members attend teacher meeting to discuss students and AVID instructional strategies. Mr. Brown added:

In our school we have struggled to make AYP each year. Last year was the first year we did make it and we wanted to continue though to move forward with best practice and one of the things we did for this school year, again coming on the heels of making AYP, is that we created a collaborative team that we call our AYP PLC. I affectionately refer to it as my Million Dollar Classes, in other words, if I had a million dollars, what would I do for the kids to help them be more successful? Would I put them in certain classes? Those certain classes include Power Math, Action Literacy, Algebra Readiness, Basic Skills Resource Class, which is only open for students with IEPs, the level 3/4 literature class, and AVID. What we’ve done each month is we meet after school and we allow these

professionals to share strategies with each other, to share about how they keep informed as adults about student progress in their classes, how they monitor student achievement data and then respond to it through the support of their classes, and it's been real effective professional learning class and collaborative team with the AVID teachers as part of this team sharing strategies and resources for all of the teachers that work with students who have past experiences of struggling in school to help build the confidence of kids as we recognize that that's the underpinning of why potentially why these kids have risen to the top priority for us as potentially their confidence in school and we realize the power that we have in classes such as AVID to build student confidence, to allow them to take risks, and also to support individual learning strands and needs of kids in reading, writing, and mathematics. So, I wanted to just make sure that AVID is noted as part of our comprehensive school program and that the knowledge and skills sets of the AVID teachers is used to help other folks who also work with targeted populations.

9. Data collection and analysis is valuable to success of all students, not just those enrolled in AVID, particularly in the age of increased school accountability. School A and B gather student achievement data, analyze the data, and share the data analysis with teachers. School A's data are gathered by the teacher/coordinator and School B's data are posted on a centralized data tracker created for all students.

School B's student data are shared with mentors to spur conversations about student successes and strategies for improvement. School B's use of a data tracker and

the fact that this information is available to all teachers is a valuable piece of the collaboration process. Swanson held that positive relationships with adults is one of the keys to student success and School B's practice of assigning mentors to AVID students and sharing data with all teachers opens the opportunity for these relationships and conversations.

10. School districts offering AVID make a commitment to the program and its tenets. The school district in this study employs a director who oversees the program in all sites, pays for trained tutors, and offers staff development for teachers, coordinators, and site team members. It is possible to attain some funding for out-of-district training, but recently, only local training opportunities are available to staff members unless individuals are willing to assume the additional cost on their own.

School A has availed themselves of local training opportunities, and the teacher/coordinator provided staff development at a school meeting. Mr. Anderson stated, "With the exception of training of the AVID site team we have, and the professional development that specific teachers have gone to that we have not done a huge AVID professional development in the school. Beyond the presentation that (school name) does at the faculty meeting, we do use Cornell notes, not all teachers use them though, but for the most part English classes, they do use Cornell notes and that we did go whole-school big binder."

School B's principal did not indicate that any individuals have taken training other than that offered by the school district or in the building, however School B has offered training at a building staff meeting, and site team members enrolled in school district training. According to Mr. Brown:

At the beginning of the school year, the AVID site team offered an optional lunch, actually it was a lunch and learn, the first week back that any of our staff could attend where they got lunch and then they were educated about the AVID program, shown examples of student work, they learned about the AVID mission and how it relates to our overall school. Members of the AVID site team were afforded opportunities to go to the summer institute the past few summers and to be a part of that. Also, we look forward, the opportunity has been put out on the table again for them to continue to grow, specifically in their AVID understanding and opportunities.

11. Schools need an active, interdisciplinary site team to meet the needs of AVID students and facilitate conversations about students and strategies. School A has a small site team consisting of an administrator, counselor, and a few teachers representing various grades and content areas. School B has a similar situation. Both principals indicated that they would like to see their site team and program grow in order to serve the needs of more eligible students.

When Swanson's original site team met, they talked about Socratic questioning. Instead of instructing the students to solve a binomial equation, the rhetoric was, "Tell me everything you know about binomial equations" (Freedman, 2000, p.123). The site team was constantly looking for ways to improve their craft, to provide better opportunities and strategies for the AVID students, and to determine what steps they could take to move these students toward college acceptance. In the 2007 AVID Awareness Materials (AVID Center, 2007), an effective AVID Site Team shares a common mission, function

as a collaborative, interdisciplinary team, are organized to encourage best instructional practices, and examine results to determine effectiveness.

When comparing the principals' responses regarding the site team, both principals described a team that closely resembles what Swanson had in mind. Mr. Anderson stated:

The site team is kind of like the leadership team of the whole school and what they should be doing is overseeing the entire program, it's strengths, its weaknesses, what strengths can we build on to overcome some of our weaknesses in our own program, our individual program, and to provide outside support to the students. So, if I am on the site team and I am the math teacher or I am an English teacher and I identify some of my students that are in my honors class, again, making sure they are following that AVID model and making sure they are going prepared to get the support they need in AVID. It also is, the site team could be a great cross-connector with the teacher and the student whereas if I see something positive or something negative happening with that child in a classroom, I can help make connections to support the AVID teacher or the AVID student so that the student doesn't get lost.

Mr. Brown's description of his team's role was:

The role of the site team is one, to continue to promote the principles and values of AVID, two, to serve as mentors for the students, three, to truly advise on one, what the specific students in the program need and two, what the whole school efforts need in order to make AVID a seamless part of our whole school vision and three, I guess, would be to build the vision of taking AVID from what it is

and it's next steps; what it can be for the good of our entire student body and for the good of our entire staff in using best practice research in ongoing ways for all students and not just for students who get identified for AVID.

Findings and the Research Questions

The Grade Point Average data used to determine the schools to study showed that student progress in School B is greater than in School A. Based on the interview data, several conclusions regarding AVID implementation in the two middle schools studied which may explain this difference in student progress are possible.

Research questions in this study focused on differences in program implementation and whether or not those differences may explain some portion of the discrepancy in AVID students' academic success. The leadership in School A and School B responded to questions designed to show their understanding of AVID, commitment to AVID, and level of involvement in AVID program implementation.

Leaders' Understanding of AVID

AVID was created by Swanson in 1980 as a reform which would provide support to low-income and low-achieving minority students, designed to help them do well academically, and ultimately be successful in four-year colleges. This program took students from general education classes, put them in more rigorous classes, and provided them with a set of mechanisms to enable them to be academically successful (Hubbard & Ottoson, 1997).

When analyzing data regarding leaders' understanding of the AVID program, several interesting points were discovered. Both principals had some knowledge of the AVID program, but the AVID administrator was the person who was more

knowledgeable about AVID at each school. Principals hire staff members; and determine the best person for a given role, but depend on their AVID administrator to directly supervise the program and have a deeper understanding of the program. If a principal does not possess a basic understanding of the AVID program, he or she may not totally understand the connection between relationships and student success.

This highlights the fact that it is essential that the administrator overseeing the AVID program be fully trained in all aspects of the program. The principal needs be aware of and have a basic understanding of AVID, but the AVID administrator's knowledge is crucial to proper program implementation.

Student selection in School A followed AVID guidelines, while at School B it did not. The AVID Administrator and Teacher/Coordinator in School B have greater experience in AVID than those in School A. Data showed that School B's students had a greater level of academic success. This would indicate that the experience of the adults involved with AVID is just as, if not more, important than the student selection.

Several studies cited in this project reinforce the importance of the relationship between the AVID teacher and the students. Hubbard and Ottoson's (1997) study showed that AVID students consider the AVID classroom a safe haven to learn and where they feel a sense of success. Black et al.'s study (2008) further demonstrated the value of consistency in the teacher's role. AVID students in this study had essentially two first-year experiences because of a personnel change. Possibly the study that provides the strongest evidence was that done by Guthrie & Guthrie (2000) where one of the strongest elements of the AVID program is the relationships developed between teacher and students. Their four-year longitudinal study found that 74% of AVID

graduates were still in touch with each other at the end of the study, and over half of them stayed in contact with the AVID teacher.

The principal has the responsibility of hiring a staff member that will create the environment of a safe haven and interdependence. The AVID administrator oversees program implementation in the school building, but the principal must understand what is needed to ensure student success in order to put the appropriate people in the positions while appreciating the importance of voluntary participation in the part of staff.

Leaders' Commitment to AVID

An additional research question in the study provided data about the leadership's commitment to AVID. Principals make the decisions regarding building resource allocation to meet the needs of the AVID program, opportunities for staff development, and communication with principals who will receive AVID students in high school.

Both principals stated that they are committed to the program, but Mr. Anderson demonstrated a greater level of commitment with regard to staffing the teacher/coordinator position. While Mr. Anderson dedicated a teacher's entire schedule to AVID, Mr. Brown offered to pay for only one additional teaching period for his foreign language teacher. This indicates that, in spite of the fact that Mr. Brown's AVID students were more successful, Mr. Anderson is more willing to commit financial and human resources to the AVID program and its proper implementation.

Mr. Anderson's school had many personnel changes in their AVID program staff. In the course of four years, they had three teacher/coordinators and two administrators overseeing the program. With the exception of the AVID administrator, none of the individuals who had previously been involved in AVID were available to maintain their

roles; these individuals left AVID due to promotions, changes in assignment, or change in role within the school. School B had a teacher/coordinator and an administrator who were already in those roles when the principal began as the school leader. The AVID teacher/coordinator in School A was a novice teacher whose experience with AVID was limited to the role of tutor. Black et al. (2008) examined results of a cohort of students who had one teacher for the first year and another for the second. This study demonstrated that these students really experienced two first-year AVID experiences as a result of the staffing change.

Course selection guides are documents developed in the winter of any academic year and shared with students in the spring. These guides include a list of required courses for each grade level, as well as a list of available elective offerings. Guidance counselors meet with students in the spring to choose courses for the following fall, allowing school personnel to develop schedules over the summer.

Mr. Anderson's course selection guide included AVID and the student selection process had already taken place for the upcoming year, yet he does not follow up on his AVID students when they go to high school. Mr. Anderson leaves communication about his students to others.

At the time of the interviews and observations, AVID had not yet been offered as an elective to Mr. Brown's students for the upcoming school year. Since the student selection process had not begun by a time in the year when course selections are typically complete, this seems inconsistent with the fact that he communicates freely with the principal of the students who will be receiving his students.

Communication of AVID mission to students and staff does not occur building wide in School A. The principal believes that, since AVID is designed for specific populations, it need not be advertised to everyone. This principal, Mr. Anderson, meets with the site team to discuss future steps and growth plans for his AVID program. Mr. Brown stated that AVID's mission is communicated to the entire staff and student body through AVID students, through informal discussion and staff development opportunities, and through opportunities to highlight AVID successes.

Leaders' Involvement in AVID

Both principals entrusted program oversight to their AVID administrator, and neither the principal nor the AVID administrators had a plan should the program be improperly implemented. In spite of the greater experience in School B's instructional staff, the observation showed that the AVID class in School A much more closely followed instructional guidelines set forth by AVID. The class that I observed in School B was not implementing AVID instructional strategies.

The data show that the key player in program implementation is the AVID administrator. The principal dedicates the proper people to the roles, but the administrator oversees the program directly. It is the administrator's responsibility to be sure that student selection is done correctly, the AVID curriculum is followed, and collaboration takes place. If there is not fidelity to these, then the data provided by the school district may not be accurate. This school district makes decisions based on data, so if the data doesn't reflect what it is designed to show, decisions are based on flawed information.

Unexpected Findings

The principal of School A committed a full time teaching position to AVID to increase student achievement. Yet, Mr. Anderson did not effectively communicate with the principal of the high school receiving his students and opts not to advertise the program to the community in general. This lack of communication and advertisement were unexpected when taking into consideration Mr. Anderson's commitment to fiscally support AVID and the success of his AVID students.

I did not expect to find that AVID implementation would vary so much within a single school site. I was not surprised that there would be some differences between buildings, but expected that the program would be uniformly implemented within a single school site.

Suggestions for Future Study

School A appears to be working diligently to build their AVID program. A follow-up of this school after the teacher/coordinator has gained more experience with teaching may well show that progress in that school has improved. The principal of School A stated outright that the inconsistency in AVID staff, particularly the teacher/coordinator, has been detrimental to the AVID program at his school.

It is interesting to reflect on whether the greater success of School B's AVID students is truly a result of greater experience on the part of adults, or because the students taking AVID might not truly meet student selection criteria.

School B's data tracker makes student information available to all teachers, counselors, and building administrators. It would be valuable to investigate how often staff members access this data tracker and what instructional decisions come as a result.

This school district is undertaking an initiative requiring formalized data trackers in all or most of the schools, and is creating a template for schools to use which is quite similar to the one currently being used in School B. The principal and assistant principal of school A have communicated with those creating the tracker about ways to take note of how often the information is accessed and by whom. That idea is under consideration, but not yet available.

In addition, this study was limited to only two schools in this district. The differences in program implementation were substantial. A deeper examination of all of this district's middle schools would offer information that may well be very beneficial to AVID eligible students.

Finally, a research study that teases out each of the AVID program essentials and examines them each in depth, using multiple school sites, would offer an explanation regarding which essentials are key and which are less so.

Practical Recommendations for School Districts Offering AVID

1. Any administrator tasked with AVID oversight must be fully trained in all elements of the program. In order for the district to get accurate information and data about the success of AVID, uniform implementation must be assured. The only way to ensure this to any degree is to be sure that those overseeing the program clearly understand all of the elements so they completely understand how an appropriately implemented program appears.

2. When a department chair is using a release period to teach an AVID class, or any class for that matter, the principal must ask what undesirable consequences may arise from that decision? There are duties involved with the role of department chair, and

are these duties being compromised to allow the teacher the opportunity to teach AVID. This should be taken into consideration.

3. School B appeared to be using AVID-like strategies to teach their upper level ESOL students. Only 35% of these students stated that they desired to stay in AVID during their high school years. This is substantially lower than any other data found. Other data showed that typically 80% or greater of AVID students wanted to stay in AVID. This indicated that these students had not truly understood the value of AVID, possibly because they were not truly AVID eligible students. Also, if the ESOL students, who get additional supports as a result of being in the ESOL program, are in AVID, is there a group of AVID-eligible students who are missing out on this valuable opportunity?

Personal Reflections

As a novice researcher taking my first attempt at qualitative research, I thought that I would look at the interview data and everything I learned would fit nicely into a preconceived idea that I had created. This was not the case at all. I found that program implementation, as well as the evaluation of program implementation, is an extremely complicated process. As I answered one question, another emerged. I began to see the process to be like an onion; each layer has its own integrity, but there always seems to be another and getting to the heart of the matter is a real challenge. AVID is a program proven to offer success to students who may not otherwise have that opportunity. Any information that can allow AVID to be more effectively implemented is valuable. I had to come to terms with the fact that my research was not going to resolve all of the AVID

implementation inconsistencies, but be satisfied with the fact that I could provide some insight that had not previously been offered.

I suspect that School A's AVID program will strengthen as time passes. This school appears to be on the right path to implementing AVID in the way it was meant to be. Data show that AVID is very effective, and this school is taking some very positive steps to offer the best possible AVID experience to its students.

Conclusions

This study looked at two schools chosen based on Grade Point Averages reported to school district central personnel who oversee the program on a district-wide basis. School A's selection process appeared to follow guidelines set forth by AVID. However, in School B, this may not have been the case. It appeared that, instead of being an AVID class, it was a class being taught using AVID strategies. As a result, the Grade Point Average comparison reported to the district may not have accurately represented the progress of AVID students in comparison to other schools with AVID.

Assessment of program implementation is a multi-level process. In order to get an accurate picture of a program implemented in multiple schools, it is essential to first be sure that implementation is uniform within a specific building. Schools that have more than one teacher implementing a program must be monitored to be sure that there is a uniform practice within the building. Those involved with program oversight need to start there, especially if grades are being used as a basis of comparison.

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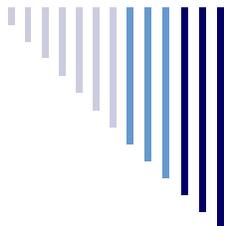
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APPENDIX A
INTROUCTORY LETTER TO PRINCIPALS



Colleen Callahan Noone
2899 Chalet Court
Woodbridge, VA 22192

Date
Principal's Name
Principal's School Name
Principal's School Address

Dear (Principal)_____,

My name is Colleen Noone and I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech. My dissertation project involves studying the implementation of the AVID program in various schools and understanding the factors that have an impact on the success of the AVID students.

I have identified your school as one that I would like to examine more closely. This would require very little of you; I would like to conduct an approximately 45 - 60 minute interview with you, which I will audio tape. At that time, I would like to arrange similar interviews with your AVID building administrator. Finally, I would like to arrange a brief observation with your AVID teacher, approximately fifteen minutes, where I will observe a Socratic Seminar.

The interviews will be transcribed and an analysis included in my work, as will a description of the observation. The identity of your school, the names of the interviewees, and FCPS will not be included in the study. I will be the only individual transcribing or managing the information in any manner, and the data and coding system will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home. The results of my study will be included in my dissertation which I will gladly share with you if you desire.

I will be contacting you shortly to arrange a convenient time for me to conduct my interview with you and to arrange times to conduct the other interviews and the observation. Thank you in advance for assisting me with this study.

Sincerely,

Colleen Noone
703-380-8395

APPENDIX B
SOCRATIC SEMINAR RUBRIC

	4	3	2	1
Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has prepared several high level questions based on the text • Asks several higher level questions during seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has prepared questions, mostly lower level • Asks some questions during seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has very few questions, if any • Asks very few questions, if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not prepared questions • Does not ask questions
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves the conversation forward • Speaks to all participants • Thinks before answering • Refers directly to the text • Make connections to other speakers • Considers all opinions • Offers insightful contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments often, but does not lead others • Addresses only the teacher • Refers to text, but not to subtle points • Responds to questions • Considers some opinions • Offers interesting ideas, not necessarily connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes only own ideas • Addresses only the teacher • Tends toward debate, not dialogue • Ideas do not always connect • Comments neglect details of text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive, argumentative • Mumbles or is silent • No connection to previous comment
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates effective listening skills (eye contact, nods, takes notes) • Writes down thoughts and questions • Builds on others' comments • Asks for clarification when needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have some eye contact with speaker • Takes some notes • Ignores others' comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely demonstrates effective listening skills (eye contact, nods, takes notes) • Loses track of conversation • Judges others' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No effective listening skills demonstrated • Attempts to dominate • Interrupts speakers in middle of sentence • Repeats same ideas
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies/highlights key words and phrases • Has notes of main ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies/highlights some key words and phrases • Has some notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No highlighting ^a Skims the text • Very few notes, if any. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unprepared, unfamiliar with text

APPENDIX C
PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please describe the AVID program in your building.

2. AVID on the middle school level is designed to prepare students to take the AVID elective in high school with the ultimate goal of college enrollment and completion. Describe the communication between you and the high schools who will be receiving your AVID students?

3. Do you have a teacher whose position is dedicated strictly to AVID?
 - a. Since the AVID teacher/coordinator position is not directly funded by the school district, how have you chosen to staff your AVID teacher/coordinator's position?
 - b. As budgets are reworked, and funding to schools is lessened, do you foresee eliminating the AVID teacher/coordinator position?
 - c. If so, what plans do you have for encouraging students who would otherwise be in the program to take a rigorous course of study?

4. How do you, as building leader, envision the role of the following individuals with regard to AVID:
 - a. teacher/coordinator
 - b. site team
 - c. students

5. What steps have you taken to share your vision of the AVID program with the following individuals:
 - a. the AVID administrator?
 - b. the AVID teacher/coordinator?
 - c. the AVID site team?

6. How do you support the AVID teachers with program implementation?
 - a. What steps do you have in place if you find that the program is not being properly implemented?

7. The AVID program requires that each AVID student take a minimum of one honors class. What requirements do you have regarding the honors class that your AVID students take?
 - a. How many honors classes do you require your AVID students to take?
 - b. Do you require that it be a core class, or may it be an elective?
 - c. Who meets with the student to choose what honors class or classes opt for?

8. Is information collected on your AVID students, how do you share the information, and how is it used to inform instruction?

9. How does the building leadership communicate the mission of AVID to your student body?

10. Has the mission of AVID been communicated to your entire staff?
 - a. If so, how was that done?

11. What professional development opportunities have been offered to your staff regarding AVID?

12. Do you see AVID strategies used by other teachers or students in your building?
 - a. If so, what strategies do you see?
 - b. If so, do you have steps in place to share this with the rest of your staff?

13. How is information about your AVID program shared with your community?

APPENDIX D
AVID ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please describe the AVID program in your building.

2. AVID on the middle school level is designed to prepare students to take the AVID elective in high school with the ultimate goal of college enrollment and completion. Describe the communication between you and the high schools who will be receiving your AVID students?

3. What was the process leading to your becoming the AVID administrator?
 - a. Were you given a choice?
 - b. Were you permitted to gather information regarding the program before a decision was made to have you become the administrator in charge of overseeing the program in your school?

4. How involved were you with the decisions regarding funding and hiring of your AVID coordinator/teacher?
 - a. What role, if any, did you play in these decisions?

5. As your principal looks at budget shortfalls and the decision to keep or eliminate the AVID teacher/coordinator, do you feel that the principal is committed to keeping the AVID teacher/coordinator position?
 - a. If the position is cut, how do you foresee meeting the needs of AVID-eligible students and preparing them to take the AVID elective when they get into high school?

6. How do you envision the role of the following individuals with regard to AVID?
 - a. coordinator
 - b. site team
 - c. students

7. What steps have you taken to share your vision of the AVID program with the following individuals
 - a. the AVID teacher/coordinator?
 - b. the AVID site team?

8. How do you support the AVID teachers with program implementation?
 - a. What steps do you have in place if you find that the program is not being properly implemented?

9. The AVID program requires that each AVID student take a minimum of one honors class. What requirements do you have regarding the honors class that your AVID students take?
 - a. How many honors classes do you require your AVID students to take?
 - b. Do you require that it be a core class, or may it be an elective?
 - c. Who meets with the student to choose the honors class or classes?

10. Is information collected on your AVID students, how do you share the information, and how is it used to inform instruction?

11. How does the building leadership communicate the mission of AVID to your student body?

12. Has the mission of AVID been communicated to your entire staff?
 - a. If so, how was that done?

13. Do you see AVID strategies used by other teachers or students in your building?
 - a. If so, what strategies do you see?
 - b. If so, what steps are in place to share these strategies with the rest of the staff?

14. How often do you communicate with your principal about the AVID program and students in your building?

a. What types of things do you discuss?

1.) Assessment of AVID teacher/coordinator?

2.) Decisions regarding the rigorous course of study?

15. How involved is the principal with the decisions regarding your AVID program and students?

16. How is information about your AVID program shared with your community?

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS OF INVESTIGATIVE PROJECTS

Project Title: The Role of Leaders in AVID Schools and the Impact on Student Achievement

Principle Investigators: William J. Glenn, Ph.D. and Colleen C. Noone

I. PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program implementation varies between sites. The AVID program is designed to provide underrepresented minority students the opportunity to attend college, and this project is designed to demonstrate program implementation aspects which prove most successful. The study involves two middle school sites, the names of which will be confidential. Your participation is voluntary.

II. PROCEDURES

You are asked to participate in a tape-recorded interview when you will be asked a series of questions. This interview will be conducted at your school site, if convenient. If not, an alternative site will be chosen. Your interview will be transcribed and responses compared to other individuals participating in the study. Individual interviews will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. A brief follow-up interview may be requested if found necessary to clarify responses or gather additional information.

III. RISKS

There are no risks involved in this study.

IV. BENEFITS OF THIS PROJECT

Your participation in the project will provide information about AVID program implementation in selected schools. This information can be valuable to schools as they implement AVID and work to make the program as effective as possible for eligible students. When research is completed and results compiled, you are welcome to contact the investigator for the results.

V. EXTENT OF ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The results of the study and the participants will be kept strictly confidential. Schools will be given a code which will be used during the entire research process and Colleen Noone, the researcher, and Dr. William Glenn, faculty advisor, are the only individuals who will have access to the code. Notes, transcripts, and codes will be secured in the home of the researcher. All transcriptions and analysis will be conducted by Colleen Noone, and reviewed by Dr. William Glenn. All data will be destroyed after a period of five years.

VI. COMPENSATION

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

VII. FREEDOM TO WITHDRAW

You are free to withdraw from the project at any time. You reserve the right to refuse to answer any question during the interview.

VIII. APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

This project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Researching Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic and State University as well as the Institutional Review Board for Fairfax County Public Schools.

IX. SUBJECT’S RESPONSIBILITIES

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the responsibility of participating in one interview and a brief follow-up interview if necessary.

X. SUBJECT’S PERMISSION

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project and have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project. If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I agree to abide by the rules of this project.

X

Signature of Study Participant

X

Date