

MPS TEAM GEAR UP 2016-2017 Evaluation Report

AVID Program

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Table of Contents

About MPS TEAM GEAR UP	iv
Executive Summary	v
Background.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The need for AVID.....	1
What is AVID?	2
Has AVID been previously proven to be effective?.....	3
Methods.....	4
What is the purpose of this evaluation?.....	4
What was been done to explore the AVID program at Marshall?	5
How do schools know they are implementing the AVID program with fidelity?	5
Results.....	7
How has Marshall implemented the AVID curriculum?.....	7
Summary of AVID modifications at Marshall	13
Which students at Marshall were enrolled in the AVID program?	15
How did Marshall students perform in the AVID elective?.....	19
What benefits do students receive from AVID?	19
What school-wide benefits arise from AVID?	22
What recommendations do AVID staff have to improve the implementation of the program?	23
Discussion.....	24
Limitations	26
Recommendations.....	26

About MPS TEAM GEAR UP

In 2011, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) was awarded a 7-year, \$14.87 million federal GEAR UP grant to promote college awareness and readiness. The grant provides outreach to students from the high school classes of 2017 and 2018 through a variety of programming and support systems at 8 high schools, including Audubon, Bay View, Bradley Tech, Hamilton, James Madison, Milwaukee High School of the Arts, Marshall (formerly Morse-Marshall), and Vincent High Schools.

MPS TEAM GEAR UP has two primary objectives: Objective 1 seeks to increase educational expectations for participating students and family knowledge of postsecondary education, options, preparation, and financing. Objective 2 seeks to increase academic performance, high school graduation, and post-secondary readiness and enrollment. Six design principles were followed to achieve these objectives: 1) high academic standards and rigorous course content; 2) tutoring and targeted supports for underperforming students and those at risk of dropout; 3) supports for transitions to high school; 4) parental involvement; 5) access to post-secondary education; and 6) accountability at the student, school, and systems levels.

Executive Summary

This report examines the implementation of AVID in the secondary grades (9-12) at Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). The evaluation was requested by Team GEAR UP to explore the implementation and preliminary outcomes of the AVID program at Milwaukee Marshall High School (Marshall). The evaluation was conducted by staff from the Office of Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee (SREed). A mixed-methods approach including interviews, an observation, and quantitative analyses was implemented to describe the context, program, implementation, and preliminary results of the AVID program at Marshall High School (Marshall).

About AVID at Marshall

The AVID program is designed to complement and support students who are in the middle tier academically at their schools who would benefit from extra supports to enroll and succeed in college. This is done through enrollment in the AVID elective, which builds students' study skills, organizational skills, and critical thinking skills. The elective is further designed to support students as they enroll in rigorous classes (such as honors, AP, or IB courses), which prepare them for success at the post-secondary level.

AVID is in its third year of implementation at Marshall. Information on each cohort is provided below:

- In the first annual cohort, 59 students were enrolled in the AVID class at the end of 10th grade (9th graders in 2014-2015 and 10th graders in 2015-2016).
- The second cohort of AVID students was enrolled as both 9th and 10th graders and contained 60 students in the first year and 46 students in the second year (9th graders in 2015-2016 and 10th graders in 2016-2017).
- The third cohort began as 9th graders in 2016-2017 but data is not available as the class was discontinued due to staff turnover.

African American students and special education students were less likely to be enrolled in AVID. The most pronounced difference was found in the 2015-2016 10th grade class, the second AVID cohort, where African American students comprised 81% of non-AVID students but only 56% of AVID students. Across years of implementation special education students comprised 0% or 7% of students enrolled in AVID, while they represented 31% to 41% of students not enrolled in AVID.

As the program has developed and expanded, the AVID center was created and established quality control guidelines. The center developed a set of 11 AVID Essentials needed for a school to be considered AVID-certified. These guidelines establish a measure of fidelity, and have been shown to maximize student impact. Marshall High School has made adaptations to the implementation of the program to fit the needs and context at their school (See Table 1).

Key Findings

Staff perceive benefits for students that participate in AVID. Interviews suggested benefits to students who take AVID related to individual skill-building and through relationships built through being a part of an AVID cohort. Findings suggest that the AVID curriculum, the use of binders, and Cornell note taking promoted and enhanced organizational skills in AVID students. Building organizational skills provided the foundation to focus on higher-level critical thinking skills related to reading, writing, and classroom discussion. Students were described to be more likely to be self-led or self-advocating from participating in AVID.

AVID students benefit from a sense of community and belonging. All staff members at Marshall who work with the AVID program emphasized that students who have been in the AVID elective for multiple years together benefit from "organic networking." This sense of networking is an important aspect of engaging in positive peer relationships that support student academic success. As AVID students are given the repeated expectation that they will pursue and excel in post-secondary education, it is further believed that this large peer network translates across the school and assists to build a college-bound culture.

The biggest differences in AVID implementation stemmed from the context of the school. Marshall did not implement the AVID program with fidelity to the original AVID model. However, the major differences in program implementation were necessary due to contextual necessities at the school. First, while the AVID population at Marshall was comprised of the highest performing students in the class, program staff indicated that they still needed and benefitted from AVID supports to become college ready. In addition, scheduling challenges have prevented Marshall from offering the AVID elective to upperclassmen.

Table 1. AVID Essentials and Marshall Implementation

AVID Essential	AVID Model	Implementation at Marshall	Context for Modification
1. Student Selection and Recruitment	Select students in the academic middle with academic potential who would benefit from supports to make transition to college	Select highest performing students with academic potential who would benefit from AVID supports	Despite class standing, students at Marshall may resemble AVID students at other schools
2. Participation	Students and staff must elect to participate in the program	Students are recruited, and students and parents must then elect to participate in the program	Next year, staff are exploring the possibility of enrolling all freshmen in AVID
3. Implementation and Scheduling	Schools must offer the AVID elective all year-long, during the school day	Marshall offers the AVID elective all year-long, during the school day. Currently does not offer to upperclassmen	Scheduling difficulties led to the discontinuation of the AVID elective for juniors
4. Rigorous Coursework	AVID students must be enrolled in challenging courses that will help them meet college entrance requirements	AVID students are <i>encouraged</i> to enroll in more challenging classes. They are given priority scheduling to do so	It is unclear if students are “required” to take challenging classes, but many of them do
5. Student Study and Organizational Skills	AVID students learn study strategies and organizational skills in the elective	AVID students learn study strategies and organizational skills in the elective (same)	AVID staff share that these skills are critical for student success
6. Reading and Writing Skills	Reading and writing curriculum are the basis for AVID elective instruction	AVID students learn reading and writing curriculum in their AVID elective class	Marshall staff include relevant topics to engage students
7. Inquiry and Collaborative Instruction	Inquiry and collaborative instruction form basis for critical thinking skills	Students learn the Socratic method and critical thinking skills in class	Some students are able to facilitate discussions after engaging in learning methods
8. Tutoring Component	Tutors must be available and should be college students who are trained in AVID and can facilitate student success with challenging courses	Marshall experienced barriers to hiring college tutors, and were unable to do so	Far proximity of Marshall to colleges, scheduling conflicts, and inability to pay tutors made recruitment difficult
9. Use of Data System to Monitor Performance	Implementation and student progress must be monitored through the AVID data system and results analyzed	In the beginning process of implementation, evaluators did not have access to AVID data and results	Marshall is early in the AVID process; the focus is still on implementation
10. Adequate Funding	School or district has agreed to implement all essentials, and to participate in AVID certification. Commitment to ongoing professional development	Receiving funding from both district and school. Staff has been trained and can participate in additional trainings	More information needed to comment on the adequacy of funding & certification at Marshall
11. Site Team Collaboration	Collaborate on issues of student access and success in college prep classes	From the information gathered it is unclear as to how often the site team collaborates	Staff desire more collaborative efforts and more time to do so

GEAR UP funding provided additional opportunities for AVID students. Since Team GEAR UP works with members of the classes of 2017 and 2018, they provided support to AVID students in the class of 2018. This included financial and staffing support for college tours, as well as assisting with ACT test preparation. This support was not available in following cohorts.

There continues to be a need for programming like AVID at Marshall. Evidence suggests that there is a continued need to build organizational skills, critical thinking skills, and a culture of academic achievement. During the spring of 2016, SREed staff conducted interviews of 38 AP teachers in GEAR UP High Schools. As part of these interviews, teachers were asked to give characteristics of students who were successful in AP classes. Some of the most commonly mentioned themes were the possession of study skills and time management due to the demands of the class. AVID is believed to build these skills and promote a college-bound culture. These beliefs were validated during interviews with AVID staff at Marshall. Recognizing the continued need to build these skills, particularly in students with high academic potential who may lack organizational skills, suggests that a program like AVID is needed at Marshall.

District and school staff may benefit from collaborating to define successful implementation of AVID in MPS. Since there appears to be staff buy-in for AVID, and implementation has occurred despite barriers and challenges, collaborative engagement to define next steps for implementation may provide benefits. Strategically planning for the institutionalization of AVID, working to maintain and improve financial stability, and defining goals and objectives may help with the sustainability of the program and help to achieve desired outcomes for students.

There should be greater integration and collaboration with AVID at the school level. AVID aims to have a schoolwide impact, and staff interviewed agreed that creating a schoolwide, college-bound culture should be an aim of the program. To achieve this goal, the program may benefit from more oversight over implementation, continued and increased training of staff, and the allocation of staff time for AVID site team meetings.

Further evaluation of AVID outcomes is recommended. It is recommended that the perceived qualitative outcomes of the program gathered from this study be operationalized and measured quantitatively to further understand the effects of AVID. In addition to individual student skills, cohort benefits, and school-level effects, an impact analysis could further examine student post-secondary success once cohorts age past graduation.

The need for AVID

A challenge in American education is high school graduates who are not prepared to succeed in post-secondary education.¹ While students are graduating at record high rates—83% for the class of 2015²—simply graduating does not ensure that students are college ready. College readiness is the broad term used to describe high school graduates who enroll and succeed in a credit-bearing class from a two or four-year post-secondary institution.³ There is strong evidence to support the lack of college readiness in our nation’s high school graduates:

- 30% of students drop out of college during their first year⁴
- 35-40% of entering students are placed into remedial or developmental courses by colleges⁵
- More than 75% of students who are required to take remedial classes never graduate
- Nationally, the six-year graduation rate for students from the class of 2010 who started college is 54%

While there are many contributing factors to the discrepancy between high school graduation rates and college readiness, this study focuses on a program that aims to build upon four academic components that students may need to graduate high school and be successful in college:

- study skills
- critical thinking skills
- post-secondary knowledge
- presence of a college-going culture in high school

High school graduation is necessary for students to advance to post-secondary education.

Increasing graduation and on-time graduation at Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) are important to increase college readiness. The four-year graduation rate for the class of 2015 was 58%. Only 37% of these graduates were enrolled in a two or four-year post-secondary educational

¹ Conley, D. T. (2010). *College and career ready: Helping all students succeed beyond high school*. John Wiley & Sons.

² Kamenetz, A. (2016, October 10). *The High School Graduation Rate Reaches a Record High—Again*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/10/17/498246451/the-high-school-graduation-reaches-a-record-high-again>

³ Conley, D. T. (2008). Rethinking college readiness. *New directions for higher education*, 2008(144), 3-13.

⁴<https://www.collegeatlas.org/college-dropout.html>

⁵(Bettinger, E. P., Boatman, A., & Long, B. T. (2013). Student supports: Developmental education and other academic programs. *The Future of Children*, 23(1), 93-115.)

institution the following fall.⁶ While longitudinal data are not yet available to indicate how MPS students perform once entering college, there is an opportunity in MPS to help more students graduate, to assist in post-secondary enrollment, and to set the foundation for their success in post-secondary education.

Involvement in rigorous courses is viewed as being an important predictor of college success, and increasing access and success in this coursework for MPS students may have the potential to increase their college readiness.⁷ However, while students in GEAR UP schools have increased their enrollment in AP classes, nearly half of common AP classes taken by GEAR UP students result in a D or U grade, and very few students earn a three or better on the AP exam.⁸ Earning a three or higher indicates that students have mastery over the material and may allow them to earn college credit at some colleges.

In 2016, GEAR UP evaluators explored why students were not performing well in AP classes and exams. In the course of this study, 38 teachers across eight MPS high schools were interviewed to learn about their perceptions on student AP performance and enrollment. During the interviews, educators were asked for characteristics of students who perform well in AP classes. Frequently mentioned characteristics included the possession of study skills, organizational skills, and strong academic ability, especially in reading and writing. Conversely, the lack of these same skills was discussed as reasons why students struggle in AP classes. Therefore, building study, organizational, and academic skills in MPS students may assist to increase their success in rigorous coursework and increase their college readiness.

In pursuing ways to improve college readiness in the district, MPS provided grant funds to implement the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program at Marshall High School. Details on this program are shared below.

What is AVID?

The AVID program was founded in 1980 in California in a single high school classroom. The program was designed by Mary Catherine Swanson, an English teacher, who aimed to better

⁶ Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard (2016). *Initial postsecondary enrollment by all students 2014-15*. Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved from <http://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov/Dashboard/portalHome.jsp>

⁷ Adelman, C. (1999). *Answers in the Tool Box*. Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment.

⁸ Jones et al (2016). *Educator perceptions of ways to improve the success of students in AP classes*. MPS TEAM GEAR UP 2016 Evaluation Report. Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education. University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee.

serve students in the “academic middle”, or students who perform in the “C (average)” range.⁹ These students were mostly low-income, minority students who were also traditionally underrepresented in colleges and universities. The students would be enrolled in an elective class that would include the following components:

- college preparation support (test-taking preparation, college visits and field trips)
- study and organizational strategies (including Cornell-style note taking)
- critical reading and writing curriculum (called WICOR, which stands for Writing to Learn, Inquiry Collaboration, Organization, and Reading to Learn)
- social supports (including mentoring, tutoring, and peer study groups).

Now known as AVID, the elective is designed to complement and support student enrollment in challenging classes (such as honors, AP, or IB courses), which will help students prepare for enrollment and success in post-secondary education. The target population for the program today remains mostly low-income, minority students who are commonly in the academic middle in their respective schools. These students are identified and recruited to be in the program and take the AVID elective class for at least three years to receive the benefits of maximum program effectiveness.

For more information on the AVID program, please visit www.avid.org

Has AVID been previously proven to be effective?

The program has been in operation for over 35 years, and there are many studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of the program. When implemented with fidelity, research has shown AVID to be effective in the following areas:

- improving student attendance rates¹⁰
- increasing student enrollment in AP and Honors classes^{11, 12}

⁹ AVID History. (2017) Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Center. Retrieved from <http://www.avid.org/history.ashx>

¹⁰ Watt, K. M., Yanez, D., & Cossio, G. (2002). AVID: A comprehensive school reform model for Texas. In *National forum of educational administration and supervision journal* (Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 43-59).

¹¹ Watt, K. M., Huerta, J., & Lozano, A. (2007). A comparison study of AVID and GEAR UP 10th-grade students in two high schools in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. *Journal of education for students placed at risk*, 12(2), 185-212.

¹² Watt, Powell, Mendiola & Cossio, 2006

- improving high school graduation rates¹³¹⁴
- increasing college enrollment rates¹⁵

The studies cited above represent a diverse range of student populations from multiple regions in the United States using different study designs. Most AVID programs still serve the original targeted population, which remains students in the academic middle. Currently, AVID serves nearly 1.5 million students annually in over 5,600 K-12 schools.¹⁶ About two-thirds of AVID students come from low-income backgrounds, and just over three-fourths are students of various minority backgrounds.¹⁷ These findings support the theoretical framework behind AVID, that students prepared for and supported in rigorous coursework are more likely to graduate high school and enroll in college.

Methods

What is the purpose of this evaluation?

This report will focus on the implementation of AVID in the secondary grades (9-12) at MPS. The evaluation of AVID was requested by Team GEAR UP to explore the implementation and preliminary outcomes of the AVID program at Milwaukee Marshall High School (Marshall). This may be of relevance at Marshall, as staff reported perceptions of infrequent follow-up to evaluate programming. For example, in a 2015-16 survey of staff at Marshall High School, most teachers disagreed with the statement: “Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it’s working.”¹⁸ Evaluating this program can provide Marshall with evidence to make informed decisions. Team GEAR UP has previously funded the AVID program and aims to use findings of the study to explore applications of AVID in future GEAR UP programming. Evaluation findings may also inform future implementation of AVID by staff and administrators at the school and district levels.

¹³ Schirmer, E. (2012). *AVID/TOPS 2011-2012 District Findings: Executive Summary*. WISCAPE. Retrieved from https://www.wiscapewisc.edu/wiscapewisc/publications/miscellaneous/avidtops_district_2011-12

¹⁴ Watt, K. M., Powell, C. A., Mendiola, I. D., & Cossio, G. (2006). Schoolwide impact and AVID: How have selected Texas high schools addressed the new accountability measures? *Journal of education for students placed at risk*, 11(1), 57-73.

¹⁵ Mehan, H., Villanueva, I., & Hubbard, L. Lintz, A. (1996). *Constructing school success: The consequences of untracking low-achieving students*.

¹⁶ AVID Homepage. (2017). Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Center. Information retrieved from avid.org

¹⁷ AVID Snapshot. November 2016. Retrieved from http://www.avid.org/_documents/AVID_Snapshot.pdf

¹⁸ Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education. (2016) Essentials of School Culture and Climate. Samuel Morse John Marshall School for the Gifted and Talented 2015-2016 Staff Survey Responses. Effective Leaders Report. Retrieved from <http://www.udisp.com/2016/school/samuel-morse-john-marshall-school-gifted-and-talented>

What was been done to explore the AVID program at Marshall?

The evaluation of AVID was conducted by evaluation staff from the Office of Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee (SREed). A mixed-methods approach including interviews and observations was implemented to describe the context, program, and implementation of AVID at Marshall High School.

Quantitative analyses described the demographics and grades of the students enrolled in AVID. In addition, MPS transcript files and third Friday files (enrollment) were used to describe demographic characteristics of students enrolled in AVID across the various cohorts, and to obtain descriptive statistics of grades in the AVID course by cohort year and semester.

Qualitative methods included semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted with the School/District Director of AVID, two AVID elective teachers (one current and one former), and a high school guidance counselor at Marshall High School. A collaborative process was used with the guidance counselor to create an initial logic model of the program as implemented at Marshall, and revised in meetings with the District Director of AVID. The logic model helped outline AVID activities and define the hypothesized short, midterm, and long-term outcomes of the program. Along with the logic model, notes were taken during meetings and interviews were recorded to describe the program, students, and environment where AVID is implemented. In addition, evaluators observed one classroom session of AVID and took notes on content covered, pace of lessons, and adherence to the AVID essentials. Observations were compiled to describe implementation of the program.

How do schools know they are implementing the AVID program with fidelity?

As the program has developed and expanded, the AVID center was created and established quality control guidelines. The center developed a set of 11 AVID Essentials needed for a school to be considered AVID-certified. These guidelines establish a measure of fidelity, and are also shown to maximize student impact.

1. AVID student selection must focus on students in the middle, with academic potential, who would benefit from AVID support to improve their academic record and begin college preparation.
2. AVID program participants, both students and staff, must choose to participate in AVID.
3. The school must be committed to full implementation of AVID, with students enrolled in the AVID year-long Elective class(es) available within the regular academic school day.

4. AVID students must be enrolled in a rigorous course of study that will enable them to meet requirements for university enrollment.
5. Instructional strategies are taught in the AVID Elective class to develop students' organizational skills that promote academic self-management.
6. A strong, relevant writing and reading curriculum provides a basis for instruction in the AVID Elective class.
7. Inquiry and collaboration are used as a basis for instruction in the AVID Elective class and to promote critical thinking.
8. A sufficient number of tutors must be available in the AVID Elective class(es) to facilitate student access to rigorous curriculum. Tutors should be students enrolled in colleges and universities, who can mentor students and facilitate tutorials, and they must be trained to implement the methodologies used in AVID.
9. AVID program implementation and student progress must be monitored through the AVID Center Data System, and results must be analyzed to ensure success.
10. The school or district has identified resources for program costs, has agreed to implement all AVID Essentials and to participate in AVID Certification. It has committed to ongoing participation in AVID professional learning.
11. An active, interdisciplinary AVID site team collaborates on issues of student access to and success in rigorous college preparatory courses.¹⁹

Adherence to these essentials is important for a school to implement AVID with fidelity. Moreover, these guidelines help maintain an environment where students are encouraged to challenge themselves and expected to increase their ability and knowledge of how to go to college. The AVID theory of change identifies quantifiable characteristics schools can use to indicate whether a school has reached maximum effectiveness at an institutional level.²⁰ This occurs when a school has at least 50% of teachers trained in AVID principles and at least 10% of the student population enrolled in the AVID elective class. Institutionalization of AVID essentials aims to create a college-going culture that grows over time, provided AVID is implemented with fidelity and adequately funded.

¹⁹ Essentials and Quality Assurance. AVID's 11 Essentials. Retrieved from <http://www.avid.org/essentials-and-quality-assurance.ashx>

²⁰ AVID Theory of Change. Retrieved from http://www.avid.org/_documents/AVID%20Theory%20of%20change.docx

Results

How has Marshall implemented the AVID curriculum?

The following section examines themes that were discussed and observed in the implementation of AVID at Marshall.

Planning and Preparation

The AVID program began at Marshall at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. Most of funding for the program was provided by MPS, with a smaller portion provided by Marshall. Funding covered staff training expenses and the license required to operate the AVID program at the school. Marshall created the AVID course code into their master schedule in advance of the school year. Combined with AVID training, this allowed the school to set the stage for program operation. Offering the course as an elective during school hours and allocating funding by the school and district are AVID essentials (numbers 3 and 11 respectively).

Prior to the start of school, Marshall sent several staff members (including the AVID site director, the counselor, an AVID elective teacher, and principal) to Philadelphia for a two-day AVID implementation training. Teachers who possessed strong interpersonal skills were identified to teach AVID. Additionally, the first two AVID elective teachers at Marshall were English-Language Arts (ELA) content instructors. While this is not an AVID requirement, the presence of teachers trained in this content may increase the AVID emphasis on reading and writing. Staff were instructed on how to incorporate the AVID model into the existing school framework, and teachers were trained on leading the AVID elective, including instruction on specific AVID strategies. Since this first training, newer AVID elective teachers at the school have attended similar summer institutes before teaching the elective.

Aside from the intensive introductory training, staff at Marshall could attend additional AVID trainings in the summer, as well as ongoing school-level trainings throughout the year. Some of these trainings are tiered (Levels I, II, III) based on a participant's experience level with AVID, and may focus on a specific area (e.g., reading skills).

Student Recruitment and Enrollment

AVID recruitment and enrollment practices have varied from year-to-year. The first AVID cohort (freshmen in fall 2014) were recruited based on the several criteria: having a high GPA, high standardized test scores, and/or a school staff recommendation (students would also be considered if they had a GPA above at least a 2.0 if they also possessed higher standardized

testing scores). Nationally, most students in AVID tend to be low-income and minority students, which is also true of the students taking the AVID elective at Marshall. The parents of recruited students signed a consent form for student participation in the AVID elective.

At Marshall, the students who enrolled in the elective tended to be the *highest performing students* in their respective grade level. The AVID program typically serves students in the academic middle at their schools (2.0-3.0 GPA). At Marshall, many students enrolled in the elective possess a GPA in this range, but relative to their classmates they are the highest performing students. According to an AVID staff member, many of these students might be selected for AVID if they were in another high school since their GPA falls within the range of the typical AVID student. Even though they tend to be the higher performing students in their grade, according to staff, they still benefit from the program, especially through the building of study and organizational skills.

According to an interview with the AVID site director, the plan for the 2017-18 cohort is to enroll all freshmen students in AVID as a required first semester course since all students could benefit from the skills promoted in AVID. This would deviate from the traditional AVID model, where only students at a certain performance level are selected, and students and parents must consent to participate.

Staffing

The staff responsible for implementation of the AVID program at Marshall are collectively referred to as the AVID site team. This includes the AVID District Director, who is based out of Marshall High School. This position oversees and coordinates AVID programming and implementation. The AVID site team also includes a school counselor, AVID elective teachers (one each in 9th and 10th grades), as well as specific content teachers (Math, Science) who have been trained on how to implement AVID strategies in their classroom settings. Additional support was provided through GEAR UP advisors, who assisted with student recruitment for ACT prep study sessions and college visit field trip planning and outreach. However, this support has ended for the second and third AVID cohorts, as these students no longer overlap with the GEAR UP cohort.

Scheduling

Scheduling the AVID elective at Marshall has varied over the years. While the AVID model recommends a minimum of three years of participation in the elective for maximum

effectiveness, members of the first cohort did not take the AVID elective as juniors in the 2016-17 school year. They did previously receive two full years of AVID with their same cohort and teacher. This may also apply to students who will be juniors in fall 2017 (the second AVID cohort). These students have also remained with their cohort and AVID teacher for two full and consecutive years, but it is unclear whether they will continue the AVID elective in the coming fall. The third AVID cohort (freshmen in 2016-17 school year) had their elective teacher leave the district in November 2016, and a replacement was not yet identified at the time of this report. Per AVID staff, it has been difficult to schedule AVID students into the elective as junior, since there are other electives and classes they are interested in taking. These scheduling challenges led to the discontinuation of the AVID elective for the first cohort. However, the school integrated AVID philosophies for members of the second AVID cohort by rearranging the school schedule so these students to take more classes with teachers who had been trained in AVID principles for certain subject matter (e.g., Math, Science). This change occurred partway through the 2015-16 school year, but did not last into the following school year. AVID staff at Marshall hope to eventually offer AVID to 11th and 12th grade students.

Despite the inability to offer AVID to students past their sophomore year, staff shared that the students who are or were enrolled in the AVID elective are now taking more AP and Honors classes, a primary goal of the program. This rigorous scheduling of students is also an AVID essential. The site coordinator indicated that the school has allowed AVID students “priority scheduling” to accommodate their desire to take more rigorous coursework.

The program has also faced minor challenges in the modification of course content from daily classes to block scheduling. The school-wide change from daily classes with shorter increments to alternating day block scheduling has forced the AVID instructor to combine two days of material into one longer class period every other day, changing the implementation of the lessons as written.

AVID Elective Course Content

The AVID elective stresses a reading and writing curriculum for academic skill building (known as WICOR²¹), the use of tutoring sessions, and an emphasis on study and organizational habits for its students. The discussion of these components are based on teacher interviews and the classroom observation. It is important to note the limitation of conducting only one classroom

²¹ For more information on WICOR, visit http://www.avid.org/dl/hed/hed_reviewofliterature.pdf

observation and a few interviews. These are initial impressions of the program and should be explored further.

Academic Skill Building

Central to the AVID methodology is increasing the capacity of AVID students to successfully take on and succeed in challenging classes, thus increasing college readiness. The AVID essentials introduce a strong writing and reading curriculum and the development of inquiry to build critical thinking skills. During introductory interviews to gather more information about program operations, an AVID elective teacher shared that there were days devoted to building these academic skills, specifically in the shape of the AVID-prescribed WICOR method. Another teacher shared that student knowledge of the WICOR method was also measured on the AVID final exam; different sections of the exam were dedicated to each component of WICOR and graded accordingly.

One of the AVID elective teachers reported that AVID students perform better than some of their high-achieving, non-AVID peers in analyzing literature, overseeing their own learning through inquiry, and using critical thinking skills. The teacher further shared that it took time to develop these skills in students, since much of the early efforts in the class were spent on helping students develop study and organizational skills before analytical thinking skills could be enhanced.

During an AVID elective class, students were observed applying AVID academic skills through working with a central class theme of “initiative.” Students were first asked to read several quotes and explain how they related to the theme of the class. They were then asked to read a passage and give examples of how the main subject demonstrated initiative. There was a component to the class called “chalk talk,” where students examined four quotes around the room, analyzed them, connected them to the central theme, and then wrote a question about the quote (showing inquiry). Evaluators witnessed students processing content and applying understanding through several learning strategies.

AVID Tutoring Sessions

Typically, students in the AVID elective are provided with academic assistance by trained college tutors, or sufficient tutoring resources in another capacity. This is also one of the AVID essentials. One AVID teacher mentioned that having college tutors would be beneficial for the program. Unfortunately, this has been a significant obstacle.

Marshall was unable to provide college tutoring for AVID students despite outreach efforts to local universities and other factors. The lack of college proximity to Marshall made it difficult to bring students to campus to tutor students. This challenge was compounded by difficulty aligning college student schedules with availability to tutor during the school day in a high school.

Additionally, there school could not pay for these services (some AVID schools can pay tutors).

Study and Organizational Skills

AVID teachers emphasized the importance of organizational and study skills, and the explicit instruction of these skills are another AVID essential. One AVID teacher indicated that much of the first semester of the 9th grade AVID elective was spent helping new high school students determine how to organize their work and develop strong study skills. During the classroom observation, students were asked to read a passage for comprehension. The teacher reminded students to use annotation strategies they learned in AVID to identify key words in the passage. Another teacher mentioned that Cornell Notes were an especially important tool utilized with students that helped them learn and remember content in all their classes. Cornell notes are not unique to the program, but this is a specific note taking strategy students can apply across subjects. The teacher thought these notes were one of the biggest benefits for AVID students. AVID students in the second cohort were given binders to track assignments, and organize their work, which was funded through a grant opportunity. The binders were also available for all students across that freshman grade level, and AVID staff indicated that it was beneficial for other teachers to learn AVID principles because all students used the binders.

College Awareness and Knowledge

While not an AVID essential, the increase in knowledge and awareness of college, and how to navigate the steps to make the transition to college, are an important byproduct and adaptation of student immersion in the AVID elective at Marshall. There were examples of AVID increasing student knowledge and familiarity with college.

One AVID teacher indicated preparation for college was one of the biggest benefits to AVID students at Marshall. This included goal setting for college, increasing student familiarity with college, and being more future-focused. This immersion of college-focused planning aligns with building a college-going culture with AVID students.

During an AVID class observation, students were discussing a reading passage about a minority student overcoming barriers to go to college. Students were asked to identify the barriers and

share them with the class during the analysis of the passage. This activity helped build comprehension skills and engaged students in thinking about the challenges they may face in their transition to college. Students were also learning vocabulary words as part of standardized test preparation for college entrance exam.

Lastly, the school counselor shared that she provided presentations and brought in guest speakers to talk to AVID students who emphasized college readiness and preparation. This was offered only for the first cohort, and only possible through GEAR UP funding. This funding also provided college field trip experiences for AVID students. It was clear from the interviews and observations that AVID stresses the importance of college as well as supports for students to think about how they can get there.

Peer Support and Belonging

Since AVID students at Marshall remain in the same class with the same teacher for consecutive years, staff indicated that students develop a strong sense of community from participating in the program. This is also mentioned as an important component of AVID, though it is not discussed as being one of the program essentials.

All staff described the sense of belonging and ability to engage in informal, “organic networking” as important benefits of the AVID experience. AVID staff said the students shared similar experiences, Taking challenging classes together, and remaining with the same cohort for two years. One teacher reported that it is helpful for AVID students to be around other high performing students. According to another staff member, the fact that students respect and value that they have a group is important for survival in college, and an important precursor to making a successful transition to postsecondary education.

Institutionalization of AVID

After three years of AVID implementation, there has been a focus on inclusivity for all students at Marshall to benefit from AVID implementation. This involves the desire to filter all school classes through the AVID lens, allowing all students in the grade level at Marshall to benefit from core AVID principles and philosophies. An AVID staff member indicated during interviews that “it was tricky at first getting it (AVID programming) out into other classes.” Marshall has attempted initiatives to cultivate a more school-wide AVID culture. One example was the usage of a “Donors Choose” grant, which provided binders for all 9th grade students at Marshall in the fall of 2015. The binders were used to organize student work, and provide

consistency from class to class. These organizational skills are a central tenet of the AVID philosophy.

Marshall is exploring the option to enroll all freshmen into an AVID elective course starting in fall 2017. This would rotate on the block schedule with a 9th grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class, further expanding the AVID philosophy across more students. This expansion model is atypical from how AVID is implemented nationally. Lastly, an active interdisciplinary AVID site team that meets regularly is an AVID essential. AVID staff shared that they would like to see more collaborative opportunities across the school and that future programming would benefit from increased teacher and staff collaboration.

Summary of AVID modifications at Marshall

Throughout the implementation of AVID at Marshall, many modifications were made, frequently due to the context of the school environment. These are summarized in Which students at Marshall were enrolled in the AVID program?

At Marshall, two annual cohorts of students received the program through enrolling in the AVID elective course during fall and spring semesters. A third cohort of AVID students enrolled as 9th graders in 2016-2017, but this course ended due to turnover of the AVID instructor. MPS Transcript data is available for one year of the first cohort, two years of the second cohort, and not available for the third cohort. For cohorts with data available, 21% to 28% of students in each grade were enrolled in AVID (See Table 4).

Table 2. Grade and Cohort of AVID by Academic Year

	Academic Year and Grade Level		
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Cohort 1 (GEAR UP)	9 th	10 th	11 th
Cohort 2		9 th	10 th
Cohort 3 (Discontinued)			9 th

In the first annual cohort, 59 students were enrolled in the AVID class at the end of 10th grade (9th graders in 2014-2015 and 10th graders in 2015-2016). These students were not enrolled in the AVID elective in 11th grade due to the discontinuation of the program for this cohort (11th graders in 2016-2017). Qualitative findings suggest this class ended due to scheduling conflicts

and students' interest in other elective courses. This first cohort of AVID was also served by MPS Team GEAR UP as part of the GEAR UP cohort at Marshall.

The second cohort of AVID students was enrolled as both 9th and 10th graders and contained 60 students in the first year and 46 students in the second year (9th graders in 2015-2016 and 10th graders in 2016-2017). This AVID cohort was not served by the GEAR UP program, but the capacity building previously funded and supported by GEAR UP was continued by MPS to provide the AVID program in this second cohort.

Table 3.

Which students at Marshall were enrolled in the AVID program?

At Marshall, two annual cohorts of students received the program through enrolling in the AVID elective course during fall and spring semesters. A third cohort of AVID students enrolled as 9th graders in 2016-2017, but this course ended due to turnover of the AVID instructor. MPS Transcript data is available for one year of the first cohort, two years of the second cohort, and not available for the third cohort. For cohorts with data available, 21% to 28% of students in each grade were enrolled in AVID (See Table 4).

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Table 3. AVID Essentials and Marshall Implementation

AVID Essential	AVID Model	Implementation at Marshall	Context for Modification
1. Student Selection and Recruitment	Select students in the academic middle with academic potential who would benefit from supports to make transition to college	Select highest performing students with academic potential who would benefit from AVID supports	Despite class standing, students at Marshall may resemble AVID students at other schools
2. Participation	Students and staff must elect to participate in the program	Students are recruited, and students and parents must then elect to participate in the program	Next year, staff are exploring the possibility of enrolling all freshmen in AVID
3. Implementation and Scheduling	Schools must offer the AVID elective all year-long, during the school day	Marshall offers the AVID elective all year-long, during the school day. Currently does not offer to upperclassmen	Scheduling difficulties led to the discontinuation of the AVID elective for juniors
4. Rigorous Coursework	AVID students must be enrolled in challenging courses that will help them meet college entrance requirements	AVID students are <i>encouraged</i> to enroll in more challenging classes. They are given priority scheduling to do so	It is unclear if students are “required” to take challenging classes, but many of them do
5. Student Study and Organizational Skills	AVID students learn study strategies and organizational skills in the elective	AVID students learn study strategies and organizational skills in the elective (same)	AVID staff share that these skills are critical for student success
6. Reading and Writing Skills	Reading and writing curriculum are the basis for AVID elective instruction	AVID students learn reading and writing curriculum in their AVID elective class	Marshall staff include relevant topics to engage students
7. Inquiry and Collaborative Instruction	Inquiry and collaborative instruction form basis for critical thinking skills	Students learn the Socratic method and critical thinking skills in class	Some students are able to facilitate discussions after engaging in learning methods
8. Tutoring Component	Tutors must be available and should be college students who are trained in AVID and can facilitate student success with challenging courses	Marshall experienced barriers to hiring college tutors, and were unable to do so	Far proximity of Marshall to colleges, scheduling conflicts, and inability to pay tutors made recruitment difficult
9. Use of Data System to Monitor Performance	Implementation and student progress must be monitored through the AVID data system and results analyzed	In the beginning process of implementation, evaluators did not have access to AVID data and results	Marshall is early in the AVID process; the focus is still on implementation
10. Adequate Funding	School or district has agreed to implement all essentials, and to participate in AVID certification. Commitment to ongoing professional development	Receiving funding from both district and school. Staff has been trained and can participate in additional trainings	More information needed to comment on the adequacy of funding & certification at Marshall
11. Site Team Collaboration	Collaborate on issues of student access and success in college prep classes	From the information gathered it is unclear as to how often the site team collaborates	Staff desire more collaborative efforts and more time to do so

Demographic outcomes of students can be found in Table 4 (page 25), which compare students that took AVID to other students in the same grade and year at Marshall who did not enroll in the AVID program. Statistical tests were not performed to test for significant differences between groups enrolled or not enrolled in AVID by year. While general themes emerged, these should be interpreted with caution due to lower sample sizes as well as missing data.

- In general, African American students appeared less likely to be enrolled in AVID (compared to African American students not being enrolled in AVID). The most pronounced difference was found in the 2015-2016 10th grade class, the second AVID cohort, where African American students comprised 81% of non-AVID students but only 56% of AVID students. In this same grade and course, a greater proportion of White students were enrolled in AVID compared to not being enrolled in AVID, but this trend was not found across other years of the program. Despite lower samples of Asian students at Marshall, it appears that Asian students were more likely to be enrolled in AVID compared to not being enrolled in AVID. The most pronounced difference was found in the 2015-2016 10th grade class, the second AVID cohort, in which Asian students comprised only 3% of non-AVID students but 24% of AVID students. There were low sample sizes of Hispanic students in Marshall making it difficult to draw conclusions about enrollment.
- Few special education students were enrolled in AVID. Special education students comprised 0% or 7% of students enrolled in AVID, while they represented 31% to 41% of students not enrolled in AVID.
- Students of different genders and economic status were represented in higher and lower proportions of the AVID cohort depending on the year of implementation. There were low sample sizes of English Language Learners in Marshall making it difficult to draw conclusions about AVID enrollment.

Table 4. Demographic data for Marshall students who participated and did not participate in AVID by year of the program

	2015-2016 9th					2015-2016 10th					2016-2017 10th				
	AVID		Non-AVID		Total	AVID		Non-AVID		Total	AVID		Non-AVID		Total
	n	%	n	%	N	n	%	n	%	N	n	%	n	%	N
Gender															
Female	30	50%	86	38%	116	20	34%	59	38%	79	25	54%	25	54%	83
Male	28	47%	122	53%	150	38	64%	83	54%	121	21	46%	21	46%	93
Missing	2	3%	21	9%	23	1	2%	12	8%	13	0	0%	0	0%	5
Race															
African-American	42	70%	184	80%	226	33	56%	124	81%	157	34	74%	34	74%	148
Asian	10	17%	5	2%	15	14	24%	4	3%	18	9	20%	9	20%	15
Hispanic	1	2%	4	2%	5	2	3%	5	3%	7	0	0%	0	0%	2
White	5	8%	15	7%	20	9	15%	9	6%	18	3	7%	3	7%	11
Missing	2	3%	21	9%	23	1	2%	12	8%	13	0	0%	0	0%	5
Economic															
Yes	42	70%	157	69%	199	29	49%	100	65%	129	38	83%	38	83%	142
No	16	27%	51	22%	67	29	49%	42	27%	71	8	17%	8	17%	34
Missing	2	3%	21	9%	23	1	2%	12	8%	13	0	0%	0	0%	5
English Language															
Yes	1	2%	5	2%	6	1	2%	2	1%	3	1	2%	1	2%	4
No	57	95%	203	89%	260	57	97%	140	91%	197	45	98%	45	98%	172
Missing	2	3%	21	9%	23	1	2%	12	8%	13	0	0%	0	0%	5
Special Education															
Yes	4	7%	95	41%	99	0	0%	48	31%	48	3	7%	3	7%	49
No	54	90%	113	49%	167	58	98%	94	61%	152	43	93%	43	93%	127
Missing	2	3%	21	9%	23	1	2%	12	8%	13	0	0%	0	0%	5
Total Students	60	21%	229	79%	289	59	28%	154	72%	213	46	25%	46	25%	181

How did Marshall students perform in the AVID elective?

Success in the AVID elective is described quantitatively through AVID course grades from transcript data and qualitatively through teacher and staff interviews.

AVID Elective Course Grades

Using the available transcript data, regardless of the year or semester of AVID taken, most students received a C or higher in the AVID course. The lowest percentage of students receiving a C or higher came from the second semester of AVID in 9th grade in 2015-2016 (the second cohort of AVID); only 59% of students received a C or higher this semester. The semester with the most students achieving a C or higher was the first semester of AVID in 10th grade in 2016-2017 (the second cohort of AVID); 91% of students received a C or higher this semester.

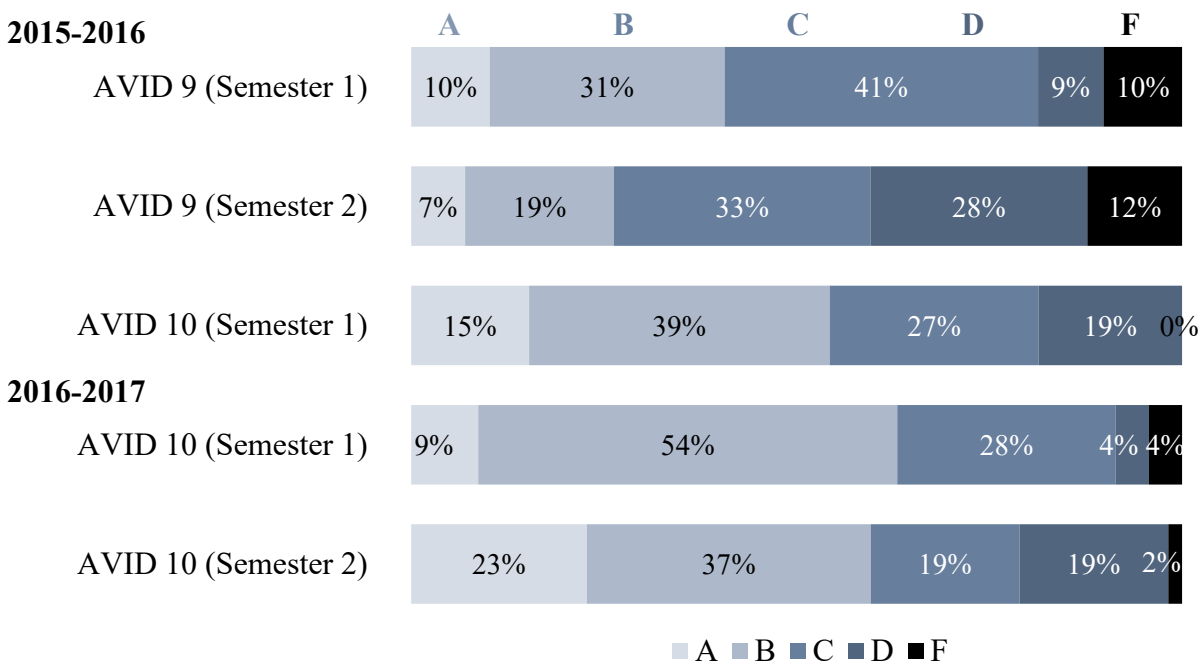


Figure 1. Grade distributions of AVID by year and semester

Cumulative percentages may equal slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.

What benefits do students receive from AVID?

Interviews with the AVID director, AVID teachers, and the school counselor suggested benefits to students who take AVID related to individual skill-building and through relationships built through being a part of an AVID cohort.

At the individual level, staff perceive students in AVID gain organizational skills, critical thinking skills, and leadership/self-advocacy skills. Staff stated that the AVID curriculum, the

use of binders, and Cornell note taking promoted and enhanced organizational skills in AVID students. Organizational skills arose from keeping organized binders, utilizing assignment logs, and engaging in structured notetaking. These organizational skills were deemed as crucial by staff for students to perform at their full potential. As stated by one AVID teacher,

"When they (the AVID cohort) started ninth grade, I just really needed to focus on organization with them. Their grades were suffering because they were so disorganized . . . once we got the organization part down then we could really focus on grades. Because, that was a struggle for the students. Their first semester their grades were not very good, definitely did not reflect their potential . . . and then this year, since they're familiar with a lot of the different structures that we do, I don't need to frontload a lot. If I say we're going to do philosophical chairs, which is like a structured debate, or if we're going to do Socratic seminar, or if I say annotate, I don't need to frontload any of that so we can focus more on depth of ideas."

As suggested, building organizational skills provided the foundation to focus on higher-level critical thinking skills related to reading, writing, and classroom discussion. Both teachers discussed the benefits of the course as an elective, and the ability to individualize the content to the needs of the students to build critical thinking skills. This included moving through the AVID curriculum at an appropriate pace for students and incorporating current events and culturally relevant material for class discussion. Related to pacing, staff stated that there is "time to talk about whatever they're struggling with," and that "resources are contemporary, multi-tiered, with articles and or content that is relevant." Additionally, because of the adaptability options in the curriculum, staff shared that AVID "moves faster than everything else," even more than International Baccalaureate IB programs, since resources and materials can cover current events and use new resources. This promotes engaging, higher level discussion and critical thinking, and is demonstrated in the following example,

"For example, recently, they wanted to talk about the immigration ban. I was like ok, great! I found some different articles with different viewpoints, brought them in, and we were able to discuss them. It was super relevant! They were able to use the AVID strategies with them, like annotating, collaborating, and group(work). . . . (Furthermore), they're all pretty good students. So they knew their constitution up and down, which

helped a whole lot. So there was a whole discussion about the legality in America of the immigration ban."

It is less likely that this higher-level learning would have occurred in a non-AVID class, as students who are not in AVID may not have not been implicitly taught discussion techniques or had the background knowledge to suggest and engage in such an in-depth discussion. Per AVID staff, having the baseline knowledge, the class infrastructure, the same cohort of students over time, and the time to dig deeper into relevant material help build critical thinking skills.

Lastly, students were described to be more likely to be self-led or self-advocating from participating in AVID. The guidance counselor stated that AVID students were more likely to come to the guidance office to request support and follow-up on guidance-related needs compared to other high-achieving students who had not taken AVID. Leadership skills were also evident through AVID students' ability to lead group discussions. As stated by one staff member,

"From what I've seen teaching, when students can be in charge of their own learning, I think that's the highest level of engagement in a class. And not all, but many of the AVID students are capable of leading discussions. Even, we do restorative practice circles in here, I've volunteered them to go sit in to other teacher's classes and lead circles because they do have so many opportunities to practice their speaking skills in front of their peers. I think that gives them that little boost, that little shine."

Beyond individual skill building, staff perceived relationship-oriented benefits for students. These benefits included networking with high-achieving peers and college preparation from being part of a cohort with a strong college-focus and high academic expectations. One staff member stated use the term "organic networking" to describe the friendships made among students in AVID. This staff member stated:

"Students in AVID respect and value the group. That's important for survival in college. That transfers. Developing friendships through common experiences."

These friendships were deemed particularly strong since students are together in class for four consecutive semesters under the leadership and guidance of the same instructor. This fosters an opportunity for high-achieving students to connect both formally in class and informally outside of class. One staff member stated that these benefits appear to extend beyond the AVID elective, stating:

“I do see social benefits, certainly. It seems like the same groups I saw in AVID, the friendships that developed there they still have. You know, a lot of the AVID students still travel in a cohort. Well now instead of AVID this year, the juniors are taking AP and honors classes (together).”

A perceived advantage to this cohort model is students are given the repeated expectation that they will pursue post-secondary education. One staff member stated students are explicitly given the message in every AVID class that they will go to college. Building a cohort of students with these high expectations was perceived to add to the benefit of continued networking and friendships outside of the classroom, as all these students have been provided with motivation and structured opportunities to explore college opportunities and set goals related to college. This is expressed by a staff member below,

“I think another of the biggest benefits is just the whole college prep aspect to (AVID). There was so much we did about goal setting in high school and how it applies to applying to colleges, getting familiar with colleges, going on a lot of college fieldtrips, thinking about careers. I think that was one of the biggest benefits, just familiarizing them . . . I mean, they loved the field trips, but they were really good college fieldtrips, really some of the field trips were great with some specific seminars and classes for them and I just think it got them thinking the whole mode of college, of going to college, like this is a college prep course and the goal is college.”

One staff member taught students who were also served by Team GEAR UP, which coordinated and financially supported the college tours and opportunities. These opportunities were not available to the second cohort of AVID, who was not a recipient of GEAR UP programming. Both AVID teachers stated that this was a limitation for the second cohort of AVID, and that having more college trips for students in future cohorts would be positive in building college-bound expectations.

What school-wide benefits arise from AVID?

In addition to skill-building, staff shared school-level benefits of the AVID program. A specific benefit is that AVID “creates a platform for common best practices.” There was intentional expansion of practices to create a school-level impact of AVID, including the utilization of binders and Cornell notes for all students in a grade level. This is expressed by one staff member when discussing Cornell notes,

“Cornell notes are widely spread throughout the school now. A lot of teachers use these, because I see them in the copy room getting copied, and I know, I know at least the teachers who were trained in AVID all use Cornell notetaking in class. That’s what I use when I have students taking notes, when I teach it to my students, use it. And I’ve seen it pretty widely used at the school. I think that’s definitely impactful.”

Staff shared that the AVID practice of using a binder for organization was disseminated to all freshman and funded through a grant. It was required for all students to use and bring binders to class. However, implementation became harder to regulate outside of the AVID classroom and in the following year funding limitations halted the practice of purchasing school-wide binders for freshmen.

In addition to intentional dissemination of AVID practices, spillover effects were perceived to have come from AVID. This primarily occurred through training for subject matter teachers working with AVID, who would implement AVID practices and principles in classes taught to non-AVID students. Additionally, since approximately a quarter of all students were engaged in the program, it was shared that having this percentage of students participating in AVID helped to build a school-level, college-bound culture.

What recommendations do AVID staff have to improve the implementation of the program?

During AVID staff interviews, participants were asked what they would change about the AVID program. Some of the responses mentioned ideas that could be implemented without additional funding streams.

One staff member wanted to see more grade level collaboration time among teachers, as well as interdisciplinary projects with other teachers trained in AVID. Another staff member mentioned that it would be beneficial to have AVID be team-taught, allowing for a different experience for students in AVID classes. Interest was expressed in increased oversight on implementation of the AVID principles, and the development of a more regular and consistent feedback loop to help teachers gauge their efficacy in adhering to the AVID philosophies.

Several additional comments would require additional funding for AVID. This could allow for more college field trips (replacing since departed GEAR UP funding), an important part of increasing student college awareness. One teacher mentioned that it would be great to have AVID district-wide since the MPS population is so mobile, and students could remain in the

program after transferring schools. Additional thoughts were that funding could provide increased staff training, and that it could allow for paid college tutors to come in and allow the program greater fidelity to the model.

Discussion

AVID students benefit from a sense of community and belonging. All staff members at Marshall who work with the AVID program emphasized that students who have been in the AVID elective for multiple years together benefit from "organic networking." According to an AVID staff member this means that students "respect and value that they have a group", which is viewed as being an important precursor to adjusting to college. Since these students tend to be the higher performing students in the school, they take additional courses together too, thus sharing a broader rigorous academic experience. AVID students also form friendships through these common shared experiences. This sense of networking is an important aspect of developing a college-going culture at Marshall, which is part of the rationale behind bringing the program to the school.

The biggest differences in AVID implementation stemmed from the context of the school.

Marshall did not implement the AVID program with fidelity to the original AVID model. However, the major differences in implementation were necessary due to the context of the school. First, while the AVID population at Marshall was comprised of the highest performing students in the class, program staff indicated that they still needed and benefitted from AVID supports to become college ready. This might not be true of the highest performing students at other AVID high schools. Marshall faces numerous challenges that many other AVID schools do not encounter. In addition, Marshall was unable to recruit college tutors due to the location of the school, and an unavailability of funding. In addition, Marshall does not currently have AVID dissemination across all grade levels. While the curriculum stresses at least three years of the AVID elective, Marshall currently offers two years. There have been difficulties in scheduling older students into the classes while still allowing them to take challenging electives. The integration of block scheduling at the school has also made the scheduling process more difficult, as staff and students adjust to a new organization of all classes. AVID is a new and emerging program at Marshall, modifications and changes are a normal part of implementation. However, deviations from the program may indicate that different outcomes are being achieved than those found in previous research.

GEAR UP funding provided additional opportunities for AVID students. Since Team GEAR UP works with members of the classes of 2017 and 2018, they could provide support to AVID students in the class of 2018 during their freshman and sophomore years in the AVID program. This included financial and staffing support for college tours. According to the AVID site director, having a dedicated GEAR UP staff position to assist in this process was crucial in giving students the chance to take these trips. These opportunities were not available to the second AVID cohort.

Another benefit that an AVID teacher mentioned was that GEAR UP staff also pushed ACT preparation for members of their cohorts. GEAR UP staff assisted in ensuring AVID students were signing up for ACT test preparation. The ACT is an important component of the admissions process at many colleges and universities. GEAR UP shares the AVID focus of increasing college readiness, and AVID staff indicated that having the GEAR UP support was important in helping to allow AVID students more opportunities to increase not only their knowledge of the college-going process, but also their ability to get there.

There continues to be a need for programming like AVID at Marshall. Evidence suggests that there is a continued need to build organizational skills, critical thinking skills, and a culture of academic achievement. In 2016, SREed staff conducted interviews of 38 AP teachers in GEAR UP High Schools. As part of these interviews, teachers were asked to give characteristics of students who were successful in AP classes. Some of the most commonly mentioned themes were the possession of study skills and time management due to the demands of the class. AVID is believed to build these skills and promote a college-bound culture, and these beliefs were validated during interviews with AVID staff and Marshall. Recognizing the continued need to build these skills, particularly in students with high academic potential who may lack organizational skills, suggests that a program like AVID is needed at Marshall. Further, there may be evidence to support that continued efforts should be invested in the AVID program specifically. Staff share positive experiences with the program and continuity may be especially important at Marshall. In a recent staff survey at Marshall, three-fourths of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that “many special programs come and go at this school.”²² With three years of

²² Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education. (2016) Essentials of School Culture and Climate. Samuel Morse John Marshall School for the Gifted and Talented 2015-2016 Staff Survey Responses. Effective Leaders Report. Retrieved from <http://www.udisp.com/2016/school/samuel-morse-john-marshall-school-gifted-and-talented>

implementation, continued and stable programming may be particularly important to institutionalize AVID essentials and build a college-bound culture at Marshall.

Limitations

Limitations were inherent to this study. The study focused primarily on process and implementation evaluation due to the limited data and study designs available to assess academic and social outcomes of the AVID program. The AVID program is not randomized to students, and in the absence of randomization there is no clear comparison group for analysis as all high achieving students are recommended for AVID at Marshall High School. Clear indicators and assessments of social and organizational outcomes were not available for analysis. Additionally, no cohorts of AVID have reached graduation so it is not yet possible to explore post-secondary outcomes.

A limited number of interviews and only one observation were conducted, making it difficult to make conclusions from limited qualitative data. Results should be interpreted with caution.

AVID staff interviewed were paid to implement AVID work, which affords them useful insights into the program and may also influence their responses to evaluation questions.

A final limitation to the study comes from the difficulty in teasing out the effects of AVID from other programming and external factors at Marshall. The school has gone through many structural changes, including the transition from a middle school to a high school, leadership turnover, and changes to block scheduling. Programs implemented simultaneously, such as GEAR UP field trips in the first cohort of AVID, also make it difficult to determine whether perceived benefits of the program can be attributed to AVID.

Recommendations

District, school, and AVID staff may benefit from collaborating to define successful and ideal implementation of AVID in MPS. Since there appears to be staff buy-in for AVID, and implementation has occurred despite barriers and challenges, it may be worthwhile for staff to work together to envision and strive for an agreed upon implementation of AVID. Staff shared various ideas about recruitment, expansion, and dissemination of the program across grade levels, cohorts, and the district. Strategically planning for the institutionalization of AVID, working to maintain and improve financial stability, and defining goals and objectives may help with the sustainability of the program and help to achieve desired outcomes for students and schools.

There should be greater integration and collaboration with AVID at the school level. AVID aims to have a schoolwide impact, and staff interviewed agreed that creating a schoolwide, college-bound culture should be an aim of the program. In fact, staff collaboration on student access to challenging post-secondary preparation work is an AVID essential. To achieve this goal, the program may benefit from more oversight over implementation, continued and increased training of staff, and the allocation of staff time for AVID site team meetings. When fully implemented with fidelity over time, and when a certain amount of teachers are trained in the philosophy, the AVID program can impact the entire school population with the core principles, not just AVID students. It is clear this has not happened at Marshall. Greater staff awareness and collaboration surrounding AVID would be important to deepening the impact at the school.

Further evaluation of AVID outcomes is recommended to better understand the effects of AVID at Marshall. It is recommended that the perceived qualitative outcomes of the program gathered from this study be operationalized and measured quantitatively to further understand the effects of AVID; these outcomes include the building of individual student skills, cohort benefits, and school-level effects. This study was also limited by a small number of interviews and only one observation. Additional interviews with AVID subject matter teachers and students who have taken AVID may provide additional insights to improve and understand the program. Finally, future evaluation could follow existing AVID students beyond graduation to assess post-secondary outcomes of the program.