

## ABSTRACT

CARLIN, LORI MAJOR. *Expecting AVID Success: The Teacher Perspective*. (Under the direction of Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli).

This study considers the perceptions of the AVID program of 3 teachers within 3 counties in North Carolina. Although multiple student achievement programs are available to public schools today, the AVID program is the one most commonly adopted because AVID aggressively claims positive results. According to the AVID program, more AVID graduates apply, attend, and graduate from higher education than national and local averages. AVID is designed to assist those students from the “forgotten middle,” characterized by those with high test scores, average-to-low grades, and minority or low-socioeconomic status who will be the first in their family to attend college. Within the program are 11 components that must be followed in order for school districts to receive AVID certification. Several studies of the AVID program have investigated the quantitative claims of the program, but very few have addressed qualitative concerns. This study seeks to provide a cross-case analysis of the teacher’s perspective of AVID in light of teaching practices and teacher expectations. The research was conducted through semi-structured interview questions, observation, and data collection. Study findings demonstrate that the participants are largely satisfied with their experience and training in the AVID program although they acknowledge the initial training is overwhelming. They do not believe that AVID alters the expectations they have for themselves or for their students. They provide several recommendations on how AVID can improve in order to meet their needs as well as those of the AVID students. Finally, this study suggests a number of other questions for future research.

Expecting AVID Success: The Teacher Perspective

by  
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## **DEDICATION**

I would foremost like to thank my Heavenly Father for His guidance and care throughout this overwhelming process in my life. My family has supported and sustained me throughout this journey with their encouragement, prayers, and comfort. Thank you to Jeffrey for your love and support. Thank you to my dear Emily Grace for being my light, my hope, and my joy. My parents have been instrumental to any accomplishments in my life, their unwavering love and support has been a constant presence. I would like to extend a tremendous note of gratitude to Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli. She has guided me through this process with support and encouragement but also provided the kind of challenge and rigor that make this work meaningful to me. Thank you to the rest of my committee, Dr. Serow, Dr. Brinson, and Dr. Van Dyk for your time, your guidance, and your encouragement. No one can possibly do this alone, thank you to all of the friends and colleagues who have provided a listening ear, a word of encouragement, or a good laugh.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Lori Major Carlin was born in Colorado Springs, Colorado to Dennis and Jeannie Major. She and her brother Daniel spent their childhood in Madrid, Spain and Dover, Delaware. Lori received her bachelors in Secondary English Education from Clemson University. Lori lives in Pittsboro, NC with her husband, Jeff, and daughter, Emily Grace. She is currently employed by Chatham County Schools teaching theatre arts at Northwood High School.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
National Educational Crisis .....	2
The AVID Program.....	3
Justification for the Study.....	5
Statement of the Problem .....	6
Purpose/Research Questions.....	7
Limitations of the Study .....	8
Conclusion .....	9
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	11
The Crisis.....	12
Dropout Prevention Programs.....	14
Acceleration Programs.....	15
AVID Program.....	18
Why Study AVID?.....	18
Existing Research on AVID .....	19
Description of AVID.....	20
Overview of AVID.....	25
The AVID Effect.....	31
Traversing the Hidden Curriculum.....	32
Criticisms of AVID.....	34
Research on AVID .....	36
Previous Research Methodology .....	43
The Role of the AVID teacher .....	44
Expectancy Theory.....	47
Summary.....	50
Conclusion .....	51
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....	53
Design of the Study.....	53
Major Objectives.....	53
Participant Selection.....	54
Data Collection .....	55
Instrumentation .....	56
Data Analysis.....	58
Validity and Reliability .....	58
Subjectivity Statement.....	60
Ethical Considerations.....	61
Limitations.....	61
Summary.....	62
Conclusion .....	63

CHAPTER 4: STUDY FINDINGS .....	64
The AVID Program.....	64
AVID in North Carolina.....	73
Providence County .....	75
Brevard County .....	79
Kent County .....	83
Summary .....	87
Research Findings .....	88
Conclusion .....	128
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....	130
Discussion.....	131
Recommendations for AVID.....	143
Continued Professional Development .....	143
Shared Resources.....	144
Role of Site Director.....	145
Revisit Deselection Process .....	145
Implications for Future Research.....	147
Summary.....	149
Conclusion .....	149
REFERENCES .....	155
APPENDICES .....	164
Appendix A.Interview Schedule.....	165
Appendix B.High School Graduation Rates.....	167

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	The AVID essentials.....	21
Table 2	AVID research summary .....	41
Table 3	Expectancy theory .....	49
Table 4	Data sources and research questions .....	56
Table 5	Fundamentals of AVID.....	66
Table 6	AVID sample week .....	67
Table 7	Desirable AVID candidate qualifications .....	108

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Visual Representation of AVID.....	25
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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1980, Mary Catherine Swanson implemented a program she called Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) for underachieving students in her California classroom. Swanson's students experienced academic success as a result of the program with many of the original students going on to college. The program was first taken district-wide, then became a national nonprofit organization that packages the strategies, resources, and training for sale to districts across the globe. Since then, the AVID program has spread to 36 states and 15 countries (AVID Center online, 2005, p. 2).

The mission of the AVID program is to ensure that all students, and most especially the least served students who are in the middle: will succeed in rigorous curriculum; will complete a rigorous college preparatory path, will enter mainstream activities of the school, will increase their enrollment in four-year colleges and; will become educated and responsible participants and learners in a democratic society. (AVID: Decades of College Dreams, 2005)

AVID provides a set of strategies used by school districts to implement the program. One essential component of AVID is that the AVID course teacher must be a voluntary participant willing to learn and utilize the AVID curriculum. This study aims to illuminate the teacher's perspective on how the AVID program impacts individual teachers' teaching practices and expectations for themselves and their students.

The AVID program is just one of many student assistance programs currently available to American schools and students. However, before any meaningful discussion of AVID and its

counterparts can be held, it is important to recognize the educational crisis currently facing America. To that end, the reason student assistance programs are necessary will be discussed in the following section.

### National Educational Crisis

The American educational system is not currently meeting the needs of many students enrolled in the public school (Smith-Maddock, & Wheelock, 1995). Currently 68.6% of high school graduates go on to attend higher education; however, according to the Rand Corporation, over 90% of the jobs created in the 1990s require a college degree (Shaughnessy, 2005).

America's school systems are producing far fewer graduates who are capable of and interested in attending and graduating from college than will be necessary to fulfill the positions in business and industry that will be important components of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To meet the demands of business and industry, public schools and higher education must work together to ensure an adequate number of individuals will exist who are qualified to fill these professional positions.

Moreover, significant differences exist in lifetime economic and satisfaction levels between those who obtain a high school diploma and those who graduate with a bachelor's or graduate degree. While it is evident that many career fields are not open to those without post-high school education, the tremendous disparity between potential income levels for various levels of education is less recognized. Baum and Payea (2004) found that an individual with a bachelor's degree earns an average of \$20,000 more per year than someone with only a high school diploma. Income also frequently correlates to health care, life satisfaction, stability, and many other factors that contribute to a quality standard of living. The higher level of education

earned, the higher standard of living can be achieved.

Beyond the economic benefits to the individual, there are certain advantages to society to higher college completion rates. Some of those benefits include: greater human capital with which to enhance the economy, greater social mobility, reduced dependence on welfare systems, and fewer defaulted loans (Kahlenberg, 2005a). The Truman Commission called higher education:

(A)n investment in social welfare, better living standards, better health, and less crime...It is an investment in a bulwark against garbled information, half truths, and untruths; against ignorance and intolerance. It is an investment in human talent, better human relationships, democracy and peace. (Truman Commission, as cited in Bowen, 2004, p. 35)

Given the benefits of higher education, measures must be taken to combat low high school graduation rates and to help students reach their highest educational potential. To achieve these goals, programs were created to supplement the high school curriculum. A specific educational program designed to identify, recruit, and support students from “the forgotten majority” (Swanson, 2005, p. 1) was developed by Mary Catherine Swanson. The students who are neither high achievers nor the lowest performers are often the ones who sit unnoticed and unmotivated in American classrooms. The AVID program was developed especially for this kind of student.

### The AVID Program

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) was created in 1980 by Mary

Catharine Swanson, an English teacher in San Diego. Swanson was born in 1944 in California. In her 20 years of teaching English before founding the AVID program, she held the position of Department Chairperson and AP English teacher (Shaughnessy, 2005). She established the AVID program in response to a change in the school's student demographics because of forced busing from an area of low income, mostly minority students to the upper middle class, high-achieving school where Swanson taught. Specifically, when Clairmont High School in the San Diego Unified School District was ordered by the federal court to integrate, half of the student body, which was largely made up of white upper-middle class students, were transferred to another school while low-income minority students were transferred to Clairmont. Swanson created AVID to reach out to some of these disadvantaged students who she believed were capable of achieving academic excellence. Her philosophy for the program was, "Hold students accountable to the highest standards, provide academic and social support, and they will rise to the challenge" (AVID Center Online, 2005, p. 1).

Today the program serves primarily low income and minority students in grades five through twelve, functioning as a method for "leveling the playing field for minority, rural, low-income and other students without a college going tradition in their families" (AVID Center Online, 2007, p. 1). AVID assists average students by helping them learn to take specialized notes, encouraging them to enroll in advanced classes, guiding them in the college admissions process, and providing several other essential educational skills.

When implemented correctly, the AVID program claims to have demonstrated remarkable success, with current matriculation to college rate for AVID students at 95% (AVID

Center Online, 2007). Other sources list the college-going rate of AVID students at 93% (Watt, Powell, & Mendiola, 2002, p. 245). Although the program does have implementation costs and requires the commitment of an entire school district, research has shown benefits for students (Cunningham, Redmond, & Meriotis, 2003; Gandara & Bail, 2001; Guthrie, 2001; Guthrie, 2002; Mehan, 1996; Watt, 2004; Watt, 2004). Districts determined to implement AVID do so because the program claims a history of positive results for students. Certification within the AVID program allows a school district to have access to the AVID curriculum, practices, methods, and training in one simple package.

Swanson designed a curriculum in which select students are placed in challenging classes and provided with academic and social supports. AVID has a number of “essentials” that have helped to establish it as a successful college preparatory program for underserved youth. One of these essentials is an AVID teacher/coordinator who functions as a teacher, coach, and family leader. Some other essentials are a small class environment with the AVID curriculum, peer tutoring, and college preparation activities. The essential element at the heart of this study, the AVID teacher, will be covered in detail in chapter 2.

#### Justification for the Study

AVID is currently being implemented in 3,500 schools in 48 states and in 15 countries (AVID Center online, 2007). AVID is gaining national attention as a successful college preparatory program. Recently several studies regarding the quantitative measures of the program have been released, including the *Longitudinal Study of AVID* by Guthrie and Guthrie (2000), the *Best Practices Model* also by Guthrie and Guthrie (2002), *Investing Early* by

Cunningham et al. (2003), and *Implications of One Comprehensive School Reform Model for Secondary School Students Underrepresented in Higher Education* by Watt, Powell, and Mendiola (2002). These studies compared quantitative measurements of AVID students, such as school attendance rates, SAT scores, and cumulative GPA to similar measurements of general population students. The studies found that AVID students outperform their general population peers to a significant degree.

However, while all of these studies claim that the role of the AVID teacher is essential to the success of the program, none explores the teacher perspective. This study seeks to contribute to the research of AVID in reference to the AVID teacher. Specifically, the study will address how three teachers perceive the AVID program has impacted their role as educators.

The theoretical framework for this study utilizes Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. The use of qualitative methodology using individual case study and then cross-case analysis serves to provide rich descriptions of the AVID teacher's perceptions of the AVID program. The researcher conducted data analysis throughout the data collection process with member checking, triangulation, and multiple data sources ensuring validity.

#### Statement of the Problem

I became aware of the AVID program while doing research on the low rates of higher education attendance of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in Summer 2005. After attending an AVID program awareness seminar in Fall 2005, a fellow teacher and I were charged with introducing the AVID program to the staff at Trifaro High School in Pittsboro, NC. The presentation was done with a skit interspersed with an informational slide show presentation.

The skit was funny and engaged teachers in a way that made the program seem like less of a directive and more of a positive addition to the school programs.

However, in developing the presentation, we had difficulty identifying what would be required of the general education teachers. With the help of some AVID resources, we were able to piece together the general requirements of faculty not directly involved in the program. This work made me think about the actual qualifications of the AVID teacher, as I assumed it would be either me or the other teacher who would go to the training and would be instituting the program in the following school year. At one point in the implementation of the AVID program at Trifaro High School, it was assumed that I would participate in the program. However, due to my research interests, I asked that I be excluded from consideration as an AVID teacher or coordinator. I did not want to be affiliated with AVID because I knew I wanted instead to conduct a study of the program. I then began looking for data that described what qualities defined an effective AVID teacher. When I found very little information, I formed this study. Although there is much discussion within AVID to support the value of a strong leader and coach, there is little formal research that examines AVID from the teacher's perspective.

#### Purpose of the Study/Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine perceptions of the AVID program by viewing AVID through the lens of three teachers from three counties in North Carolina. The AVID program is being implemented all over the country with North Carolina being third behind only California and Texas in its number of AVID sites (AVID Center online, 2007). With the recent surge of growth in AVID programs around the country and internationally, this is a timely study

that explores the perceptions of AVID teachers as to the way AVID impacts them as educators. The study also identifies areas of support desired by AVID teachers. Additionally, this study demonstrates differences in the AVID program based on location, as the three teachers were from different school districts. Overall, this study focuses on the AVID teacher and the teacher's practices, experiences, and beliefs about the AVID teaching role. Specific research questions to be addressed were:

- 1) Do the AVID teachers in this study believe they are provided with the appropriate training, support, and instruction necessary to effectively implement AVID?
- 2) Do AVID teachers' perceptions about the AVID program change over time?
- 3) What roles do AVID teachers experience in their work and professional practice with the AVID program?
- 4) Did teacher expectations for their students change? In what ways and why did they change?

These research questions provide the framework for a cross-case analysis of the teaching practices of instructors within different school settings.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study was primarily limited by sample size and generalizability. The participants were volunteers from schools in counties within central North Carolina. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with three AVID teachers who provided dialogue regarding their role. The researcher also used observations, data analysis, and member checking strategies in data collection. Although they may not represent a national sample of AVID teachers, these

participants help provide a deeper understanding of the role of practitioner within the AVID classroom. Validity was addressed through triangulation, member checking, and cross-case study analysis.

Within qualitative research, generalizability is not the primary goal, as the purpose is instead to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Yin (2003) claims that qualitative methodology is appropriate for determining the reasons behind a particular phenomenon. The phenomenon being studied in this dissertation is the AVID teacher, specifically the teacher's perceptions of the AVID program. One limitation of qualitative research is that generally only one perspective is reported. The additional perspectives of AVID students, administrators, or families would surely shape findings.

Another potential limitation for the study was that data collection took place when the school year began when many teachers were busy with planning and preparing for classes and the year ahead. Thus AVID teachers were interviewed during a time when they were under pressure. On the one hand, the timing of the interviews may have resulted in revelation of more candid information than if teachers were out of school or on a summer break and had time for reflection. On the other hand, it limited the study because the AVID teachers had less time to devote to interviews and document collection.

### Conclusion

The AVID program is a means of attracting, supporting, challenging, and encouraging a number of young people to achieve their highest academic potential. The AVID program has research to support its structure, implementation, methods, and general functions, but an

important piece is still missing. As the AVID teacher is the primary instrument of delivery for the AVID program, it is important to recognize the challenges and benefits teachers identify within the AVID program. This study aims to add to the existing research on AVID by providing the teacher's perspective on the impact of the AVID program on teaching practices and expectations.

The next chapter will present a review of the literature pertaining to the AVID program.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The AVID program was selected for this study due to my familiarity with the program, the rising popularity of AVID programs in North Carolina, and my basic agreement with the core beliefs and practices of AVID. This literature review will focus primarily on national education issues, programs developed to increase student achievement including the AVID program specifically, major research on the AVID program, absence of research on teacher perspective of AVID, and expectancy theory.

AVID has received national acclaim as an acceleration program geared to fit the needs of participating students. In November 2005, the U.S. House of Representatives recognized the AVID program with Resolution 576 which congratulates AVID “students and their teachers on increasing college eligibility and attendance; and celebrates Advancement Via Individual Determination’s 25 years of success” (H. Res. 576, 2005, p. 2). The relatively recent popularity of AVID has led to a number of quantitative studies that overall claim successes for the program. However, still absent from the research is qualitative data on the way AVID teachers believe the program has impacted their teaching practices outside of the AVID curriculum. AVID and other acceleration programs are made available to more and more struggling students each year. However, there remains a crisis in that many students in America fail to achieve academically.

The AVID program strives to reach those students identified as the “forgotten middle.” These students have low-to-average GPAs but high test scores, and they are usually the first in their families to have the potential to attend college. The ethnic breakdown of AVID students is 49% Hispanic, 21.4% White, 18.9% Black, and 10.6% Other. According to the AVID

program, across the nation 99% of AVID high school students graduate as compared to 82% of non-AVID high school students, 83% of AVID students apply to 4-year colleges, and 75% are accepted. This is a significant increase over the national average of 42% of high school students being accepted to 4-year colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 2003; AVID Center online, 2008).

### The Crisis

Currently, business leaders are advising higher education systems to produce twice as many graduates from the fields of science and engineering. In his January 31, 2006 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush called for “encouraging children to take more math and science, and to make sure those courses are rigorous enough to compete with other nations” (Bush, 2006, p. 14). One of the chief problems within the American educational system is that large numbers of average-performing students are ignored and thus are neither supported nor challenged to meet their academic potential (R. L. Colvin, 2003). Often students capable of success in college never even apply because they have not been provided with an adequate support system and thus lack skills that would enable them to succeed academically. To address the shortage of qualified student candidates for higher education, the system must look beyond the highest achievers and focus on the students who have the intellectual capacity to complete college, yet lack the skills necessary to achieve to their highest ability.

What’s needed is an untracking program that makes college-readiness for all students, including the forgotten middle, a paramount goal and a strategy for improvement. We must start by abandoning the mind-set that labels so many students as not being college

material. (Swanson, 2005, p. 1)

The “forgotten middle” students, who often demonstrate no behavior problems in the classroom, are simply overlooked as teachers focus on working with the gifted and talented students or remediating the lowest-performing students. Specifically, the No Child Left Behind legislation requires schools to enhance the educational performance of the lowest-performing students to close the achievement gap and meet national standards. In doing so, many capable students are being taught in classrooms where instruction is aimed at the lowest performers; which means they themselves are not being challenged or provided with the academic rigor that could enable them to be qualified for higher education or even perform as expected in the workforce:

Not everyone will get a college degree, but having acquired essential skills and knowledge, students will be better off, whether they go to college, receive other training, or go right into the workforce. Employers, after all, are demanding the same critical thinking, math, and communications skills required by college-admissions officers.

(Swanson, 2005, p. 2)

Obviously there is a national educational crisis that affects much more than the intellectual capital of America. There is a broad consensus that American society has failed to meet the needs of low income and minority students (Toppo, 2006). There are also tremendous differences in life opportunities for an individual based on the acquisition of a college degree (Baum & Payea, 2004). Some of the most obvious disparities are in the employment rates, as “the unemployment rate among college graduates is about half the rate for high school

graduates,” and earnings potential, as “the lifetime earnings of a typical college graduate are close to \$1 million more than those of someone with only a high school diploma” (Swanson, 2005, p. 1). Clearly then, the American educational system needs to find ways to reach, support, and challenge the “forgotten middle” students.

### Supplemental Programs to Address the Crisis

In an attempt to provide a more equitable opportunity for all students, some schools have adopted supplemental programs, with the two most common types being either dropout prevention or acceleration. These two methods aim for largely the same student demographic, yet their ultimate goals are notably different.

#### *Dropout Prevention Programs*

Dropout prevention programs are designed to identify and recruit those students most likely to drop out of school. They use various methods to reach and help ensure the eventual attainment of a high school diploma for identified students. “One approach is primary prevention, providing students with high-quality elementary and middle school experiences to deal with the key precursors to dropout, low achievement, retention in grade, dislike of school, and related outcomes” (Fashola & Slavin, 1998, p. 161). Dropout prevention programs use techniques such as small group tutoring, mentoring, personalizing education, and linking academic success to job placement and career advancement (Fashola & Slavin).

Two dropout prevention programs with demonstrated success rates are the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (VYP) and Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS). Both programs have been extensively studied to identify the common factors that can

assist low-socioeconomic students with achieving a high school diploma (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). The VYP approach identifies students and matches them with elementary students for tutoring. The VYP students have to take a tutoring class and commit to 4 hours per week to providing tutoring to younger students. This arrangement allows the VYP students to identify study techniques that can help their own schoolwork while fostering in them a sense of academic responsibility and pride. By helping younger students learn, they discover more about their own learning styles and are able to strengthen their own academic pursuits.

While the VYP program focuses on cross-age tutoring, the ALAS program focuses “on youth with learning and emotional or behavioral disabilities. It uses a collaborative approach across multiple spheres of influence: home, school, and community” (Fashola & Slavin, 1998, p. 166). ALAS had a number of different strategies such as group counseling and peer mentoring for each focus area and uses joint efforts to ensure success.

These two programs serve as examples of the numerous dropout prevention programs and strategies available to students. The methods employed by dropout prevention programs are often the same as those employed by acceleration programs.

### *Acceleration Programs*

Acceleration programs also focus on basic remediation methods such as mentoring, tutoring, and individual attention. Yet there are some key differences that cause them to be classified as acceleration rather than remediation programs. To enable marginal students to become college ready, acceleration programs include career counseling, motivational techniques, family/parent involvement, summer academic opportunities, and, most notably, more

challenging coursework.

Acceleration programs are not a new concept. In response to data demonstrating the tremendous differences in educational preparation between low and high income children, the federal government initiated acceleration programs such as Head Start in 1965. The primary goal of acceleration programs is to level the playing field for students who lack opportunities due to socioeconomic status or poor family support. Specifically, Head Start is an acceleration program for low income children that “today provides over 909,201 economically disadvantaged children with pre-primary nutrition and educational programs” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2007). However:

Since its inception, there has been controversy over Head Start’s effectiveness.

Early research from the Westinghouse Learning Corporation in 1969 showed cognitive gains of the program’s participants faded away within a few grades, at which point the cognitive abilities of Head Start participants are indistinguishable from their nonparticipating peers. (Kafer, 2004, p. 54)

The problem with Head Start is that although children may begin schooling on more equal footing with their higher income peers, the Head Start students are unable to maintain their competitiveness. While Head Start has arguably not been a tremendous success, it has been at least marginally beneficial to poor and minority students in that they are able to begin schooling better prepared to learn. What is needed is a way to sustain the intervention throughout the students’ educational career.

Evidence shows that many students benefit from sustained educational intervention

(Merwin, 2002). Supplementary programs such as AVID, the Boston COACH programs, and Sponsor-A-Student (SAS) provide a crucial network of support, challenge, and encouragement for disadvantaged yet capable students. There are many such programs in addition to AVID that have demonstrated some success such as Upward Bound and Project Graduation Really Achieves Dreams (GRAD).

Started in 1967, Upward Bound is one of the longest-running acceleration programs. In 2006 it had an operating budget of \$266,623,737 million and served 56,430 students (Ed.gov, 2007). Initiated and administered by the US. Department of Education, Upward Bound targets students age 13-19 from low-socioeconomic families with no college-going tradition. Upward Bound students are provided with tutoring in the core subject areas, mentoring and counseling opportunities, and assistance for college applications and financial aid. In return, they are expected to attend a 6-week summer program on a college campus.

Of 13,100 Upward Bound high school graduates in 2000, 92% enrolled in college but only 40% of those enrolled earned a degree. However, “Upward Bound had no effect on enrollment at postsecondary institutions or postsecondary credits earned by students overall” (Ed.gov, 2007, p. 4). Thus conclusion is that Upward Bound has a positive impact on student attendance and graduation rates, but has very little impact on students’ college readiness.

Project GRAD is an acceleration program specific to a small school in Texas. James Ketelsen with the University of Houston developed Project GRAD in 1989. The program provides students with opportunities for paid internships, tutoring, mentoring, and family involvement. The goal for Project GRAD students is to graduate with a GPA of 2.5 or above and

attend a 4-year college. If a student achieves these goals, the student is given a \$1,000-per-year scholarship. Although Project GRAD exists at only one site at present, this type of initiative may have promise.

Much of the research on acceleration programs draws the same conclusions as to what interventions are successful for students (Ellis & Jones, 2000; Fashola & Slavin, 1998,). Personalization of educational delivery, small student groupings, mentoring, appealing membership, academic assistance, career counseling, and connecting students to what they see as an attainable future are the mainstays of any quality acceleration program (Ellis & Jones). These types of programs are imperative if America hopes to educate the workforce of the future. If the American public educational system wants to address the needs of all students, “It is essential that we adopt definitions and programs that center on potential and talent development so that we can change the demographics of higher education and open doors that have historically been closed” (Ford & Harmon, 2001, p. 4). In doing so, America’s economic viability in the future may be preserved.

The AVID program is also an example of a quality acceleration program that claims success in the areas of college attendance rates, graduation, and development of academic potential.

### AVID Program

#### *Why Study AVID?*

AVID is just one of myriad enhancement programs available to students in many public schools. However:

At the core of AVID's program is a commitment to helping students develop the skills that will allow them to pursue educational opportunities successfully into their postsecondary years. While students enroll in courses at the highest levels, they are also provided with intensive support services that focus on study skills, tutoring, and motivational activities. (Smith-Maddock, 1995, p. 7)

Additionally, the implementation of AVID within my school system makes the study of the program and its components even more timely, useful, and interesting to me as an investigator.

#### *Existing Research on AVID*

“AVID is a school wide program in more than 2,200 schools in 36 states and 15 countries which sets a college going culture for almost all students” (Shaughnessy, 2005, p. 1). According to a recent study, 93% of graduates of AVID programs attend 4-year universities, with 85% on track to graduate on time; the mean GPA of AVID students in college is 2.94 (Guthrie, 2002).

This is particularly meaningful as other research indicates:

Many average kids who make it to college are so poorly prepared that they drop out after less than a year. Only about half of those high school graduates who attend four-year colleges complete a degree within five years, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and about 60 percent of those who attend two-year schools either drop out or don't complete their degrees within five years. (Bushweller, 1998, p. 3)

The rates of college attendance of AVID students are notable when broken down

according to minority and socioeconomic status. According to AVID Online, the high school graduation rates for AVID students are 99.1% versus 82% for their non-AVID peers (AVID Center online, 2007, p. 3). According to some researchers, AVID students enter college at higher rates than students in the general population, do better while they are there, and graduate at higher rates (Freedman, 2000).

### *Description of AVID*

AVID is a structured acceleration program run by the nonprofit AVID Center in San Diego. What began as a single classroom program has grown to national prominence. In order to become an AVID-certified school, certain standards or “essentials” must be evident within the school. These essentials were a part of the original curriculum and remain mandatory to fully implement AVID. Schools that do fully implement all 11 of the components of AVID can become AVID-certified schools. However, while many schools are willing to implement one or two of the AVID essentials, they resist the more costly or labor-intensive ones. Table 1 details these essential program elements:

Table 1

*The AVID Essentials*

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AVID Essential	Description
1. AVID Student selection	Focus on students in the middle according to GPA (2.0-3.5 is the ideal) with academic potential who would benefit from AVID support to improve their academic record and begin college preparation.
2. Participation	AVID participants, both students and staff, must choose to participate.
3. Scheduling	The school must be committed to full implementation of the AVID program, with the AVID elective class available during the regular academic day.
4. Rigor	AVID students are enrolled in a rigorous course of study that will enable them to meet requirements for university enrollment; preferably this will include one or more Advanced Placement (AP) classes.
5. Writing	A strong, relevant writing curriculum

Table 1 (continued).

AVID Essential	Description
6. Inquiry	provides the basis for instruction in the AVID elective class. Inquiry is used as a basis for instruction in the AVID elective.
7. Collaboration	Collaboration is used as the basis for instruction in the AVID classroom.
8. Tutors	A sufficient number of tutors must be available in the AVID class to facilitate student access to the rigorous curriculum.
9. Data	AVID program implementation and student progress are monitored through the AVID data system, with the results analyzed to ensure success.
10. Resources	The school or district has identified resources for program costs, has agreed to implement AVID Program Implementation Essentials and to

Table 1 (continued)

AVID Essential	Description
11. Site team	<p>participate in AVID certification, and has committed to ongoing participation in AVID staff development.</p> <p>An active interdisciplinary site team collaborates on issues of student access to and success in rigorous college preparatory courses.</p>

*Note.* Adapted from Oswald (2002), Guthrie (2002), and AVID Center Online (2007).

These essential components are constructed to maximize the success of the AVID student within the AVID-certified school. As not all schools are willing to implement all 11 essentials, they therefore choose to forego AVID certification.

Certification from the AVID program allows the school to use the AVID name for publicity and public relations. The AVID name is sometimes used as a status symbol within school districts. In theory, a family with a child suited for the AVID program may choose a school district based on the presence of AVID. Additionally, AVID serves many students who are identified as entitled to a free or reduced cost lunch. The AVID certification indicates that a

school district is willing to expend time, money, and effort to address members of their student population. If a school district is unwilling or unable to implement the 11 essentials within a 2-year time period, they lose the opportunity to become AVID certified and can no longer claim to use the program or send individuals for training.

Just as AVID may not be appropriate for every school; it is not for every student either. Students and their families must commit to certain guidelines and criteria because the demands of the AVID program necessitate family, school, and student communication. Additionally, once an AVID program is established, it becomes competitive to get into (Swanson, 1993, p. 19):

Getting into the program isn't easy. Teachers and counselors first identify students who fit the typical AVID profile—C average, no behavior problems, and parents who did not graduate from college. The students must show a desire to want to do better, and their parents must agree to help the school push their kids. Once accepted, the students are placed in an AVID class, an elective that meets regularly. There, the kids are taught, among other things, how to take better notes, and how to organize a binder that holds all their schoolwork. They're also given special academic tutoring, and they take field trips to college campuses to get a slice of college life. (Bushweller, 1998, p. 3)

Thus while the success rates demonstrated by AVID students make it an appealing program for many schools and students, the student selection process demanded by AVID and the elements of the program rewards those schools and students willing to put forth the most effort.

## Overview of AVID

Figure 1 provides an overview of AVID:

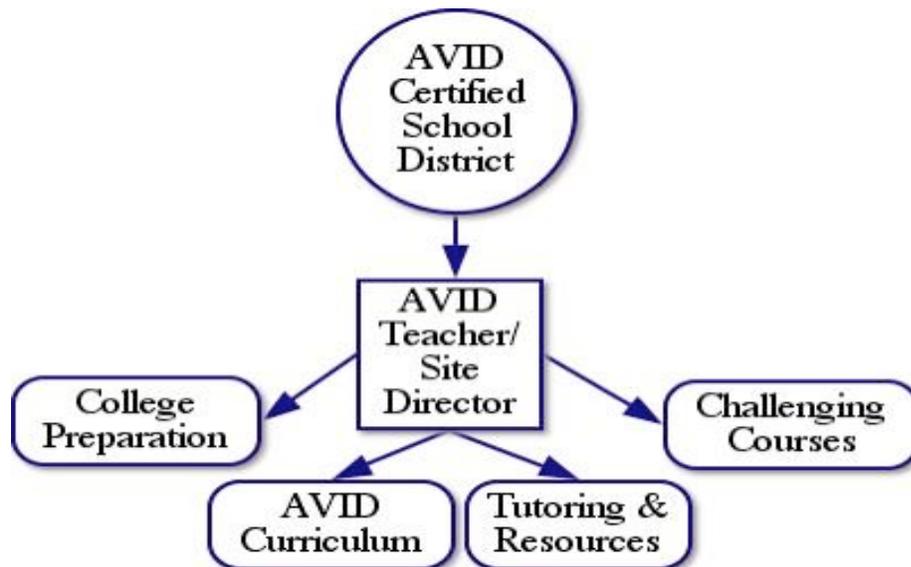


Figure 1: Visual Representation of AVID.

Founded in 1980 at Clairmont High School in San Diego by Mary Catharine Swanson, AVID began with 32 students and currently serves over 300,000 students. Since the inception of her AVID program, designed to assist low-income and minority students in achieving academic success, Swanson has gone on to achieve national recognition. In 1991, she was the first (and to date only) public school teacher to receive the Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Secondary Education. Additionally, she was CNN and *TIME* magazine's 2001 recipient of the America's Best Teacher distinction (AVID Center online, 2007). Swanson retired from the AVID program in 2006 but continues to serve as a speaker and advisor. Under her

leadership, AVID evolved from a one-classroom experiment to a nationally recognized and acclaimed organization.

Implementation of the AVID program in a school system usually begins with teachers and school administrators attending an AVID Awareness Seminar. Usually a school district will send several teachers and administrators to learn about AVID, including how to fund it and other implementation issues. The AVID Awareness Seminars are held throughout the school year in various locations across the United States; they usually last 2–3 days.

After attending an informational seminar, the school or district must decide if AVID is appropriate for them. Once a district determines to proceed with AVID implementation, the first step is to select a district coordinator, then AVID teachers and/or site directors. Those individuals work in conjunction with school administrators to choose a group of interdisciplinary teachers to serve on the site team.

Once all of these individuals are selected, they are sent to the AVID Summer Institute, which is a weeklong training held for administrators, counselors, site team members, and AVID teachers. Usually each group has specific strategy sessions to attend during the day, then they meet together in the evening to share information. The training opportunities encompass everything from funding and implementation to student selection strategies and tutoring advice.

Another training resource for teachers is The Write Path training which focuses on specific AVID content areas. “AVID elective curriculum workshops are designed to promote, train, and implement new elective curriculum developed in the last two years (AVID Center online, 2007). In addition to these professional development opportunities, workshops are held

for district leaders, administrators, and various site team members.

After the initial training, the AVID teachers/site administrators go back to their individual schools and begin the student selection process. This process begins with identification of students who fit the AVID profile (low-to-average GPA, high test scores, first to attend college). The selection process continues with interviews and teacher nominations. Once the AVID cohort is selected, the AVID teacher/site director begins planning for the curriculum and other AVID essentials. The site team and administrators may provide assistance, but generally the preparation work is left to the AVID teacher.

One of the main criticisms of the AVID program is that it is expensive. While specific costs for school implementation are difficult to calculate, there are other funding requirements that can be reported. The AVID library is a resource provided in book or disk format that details AVID lesson plans, calendar suggestions, worksheets, and various other resources; it has an initial cost of \$4,500. After purchasing this library, a mandatory qualification for AVID certification, schools may need or want to purchase additional resources as they become available from the AVID program. Additionally, the training sessions can cost anywhere from \$300 to \$600 per participant, not including costs for travel and hotel accommodations. Usually the AVID teacher/site director, an administrator, a counselor, and four or five site team members attend a training session for a full week.

The AVID program also has hidden costs, including the loss of a regular content teacher to the AVID class elective. This can often result in increased student numbers in other classes and heavier workloads for fellow teachers. In addition to the AVID elective, per the AVID

organization, AVID teachers are supposed to have an additional planning period for AVID-related planning and organization. This effectively removes the AVID teacher from class at a time when class size and overcrowding is an issue.

Once the AVID program is implemented in a school system, there are specific curriculum goals and requirements. The 11 AVID essentials required to achieve certification as an AVID site include a voluntary AVID teacher, tutors, and specific learning strategies. The AVID teacher will be discussed later in this chapter.

Tutors for the AVID program are ideally college students or young professionals who can connect with AVID students on both a personal and professional basis. The site director provides training to the tutors to enhance their understanding of higher order questions and other tutoring techniques.

Some of the specific learning strategies used by AVID include Cornell notes, Socratic seminars, and philosophical chairs. Cornell notes were developed in 1949 at Cornell University by Walter Pauk to provide students with a more effective means of note taking. Cornell notes require students to take detailed notes from class lectures and texts in the right margin and develop headings or questions about the notes on the left hand side of the page. Socratic seminars are usually held with all students in a circle formation to discuss a piece of text or reading. The goal for a Socratic seminar is for students to listen respectfully to one another's thoughts of the text so as to shape and form their own perceptions. Philosophical chairs are a similar strategy in which students sit according to their view on a particular topic or unit of study. They may change their position after learning more information or finding a new way to

view the subject. These strategies are utilized to teach the AVID curriculum, which spans everything from time management to interview skills and college application procedures.

The AVID teacher is an essential component of the AVID program. This individual is charged with recruiting, selecting, and educating a group of underachieving students. The AVID teacher is responsible for learning the AVID strategies and applying them to the classroom. Additionally, teachers are called upon to be informal counselors, college guides, parents in absentia, and in many cases the site directors, a responsibility that includes planning all AVID activities from field trips to awards nights, recruiting quality tutors, making parent contacts, and selecting and deselecting students for the AVID program.

Cunningham et al. (2003) conducted comparative research on various programs throughout the country including AVID. They identified four factors as being most indicative of student achievement: strong teacher/student relationship, community support, peer identity, and mentoring. Each of the factors found to be the most indicative of student achievement are identifiable within the AVID program.

First, Cunningham et al. (2003) found imperative sustained personal involvement of the student with a teacher who acts as a mentor and coach. AVID does this by preparing educators to build strong relationships with students. This essential factor will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

The second vital factor Cunningham et al. (2003) identified is a community of support. AVID students have a site team of interdisciplinary teachers who are all charged with challenging the students while also advocating for them. AVID students are monitored closely,

so generally they do not get behind in their coursework. The AVID program also calls for the support of the family, 2 hours of homework a night, Cornell note taking, and maintenance of a binder for each subject. The idea is to raise the the students's' expectations of themselves, and in doing so, open the doors for them to succeed.

The third element identified by Cunningham et al. (2003) is peer identity. In AVID, students are placed within a class with similar students, who are challenged by the same lack of social supports and who also face rigorous courses. These students are provided with a place to struggle and work together to find the understanding they seek within a community of peers.

Finally, the fourth element is mentoring. Mentoring can be found in the AVID program in the tutors who work with the AVID students as well as the AVID teachers.

The AVID curriculum also requires an AVID elective class to be offered throughout the school year to AVID students. The AVID class is used as a foundation for all of the challenging coursework expected of AVID students. Within this course, students are provided with instruction from their AVID teacher for two periods per week. The lessons presented by AVID teachers deal primarily with the AVID-created curriculum called WICR, which stands for (W)riting as a learning tool, (I)nquiry method, (C)ollaborative learning groups, and (R)eadng as a learning tool (AVID Decades of College Dreams, 2005). During this class, students are also provided access to tutors 2 days a week. The tutors, who are usually college students, have extensive training so they can facilitate learning beyond just providing answers. Typically, 1 day a week (usually Fridays), the class will have a guest lecturer, take a field trip, or go on a college visit.

Teamwork is an important aspect of the AVID program. One of the essential AVID elements is that “AVID participants, both students and staff, must choose to participate” (Oswald, 2002, p. 1). Once the AVID coordinator is selected, the school administration must work in conjunction with that person to select a site team comprised of teachers of core academic subjects, then provide them with staff development and training to help ensure the success of AVID participants:

Typically, an interdisciplinary AVID site team composed of the principal, AVID coordinator, lead counselor, and teachers meets monthly to set goals that enhance teacher effectiveness. The team also helps all teachers use the instructional methods of writing-to-learn, collaborative grouping, and inquiry. (Ed.gov, 2005, p. 2)

Coordinators and site team members are expected to attend numerous staff development opportunities, specifically the AVID Summer Institute. The result of the dedication put forth by the site team and AVID students is that an entire school can benefit from aspects of the program.

*The AVID effect.* The AVID program has been known to have an “AVID effect” on an entire school system. “‘*The AVID Effect*,’ a term derived from previous AVID studies in California, refers to the positive impact AVID has on improving the performance of even non-AVID students” (Watt, 2006).

AVID students reported that their friends who were not in AVID were jealous. They wanted to be in AVID for the camaraderie to be sure, but also because. (Swanson, 1993, p. 21)

This effect can be seen in the increase in AP enrollments within AVID site schools, the pride the AVID students take in their program participation and activities, and the school-wide implementation of a specific format of note taking known as Cornell notes (Swanson, 1993). Often, the level of rigor of an entire school will shift according to the demands of the program, as other students want to take advantage of the resources the AVID program makes available to its students, such as information about scholarships, college entrance exams, and visits to colleges.

In several schools, AVID has helped improve school wide student outcomes and raise expectations for all students. Partly as a result of AVID students' successful performance in Advanced Placement and honors classes, access to those courses has opened up for non-traditional students, and the number of courses and sections has increased. (Guthrie, 2002, p. 12)

While the AVID program has been known to have a school-wide effect, the teachers and program strive in particular to overcome the years of schooling in which the AVID students were overlooked. One of the largest challenges faced by the program is educating the students about tacit schooling practices. Students who are unaware of these schooling practices are often those who meet the AVID profile: low-to-average academic performance, high test scores, first generation to attend higher education; and minority or low socioeconomic background (Mehan, 1992).

### *Traversing the Hidden Curriculum*

One of the most valuable aspects of AVID is its ability to transcend the hidden curriculum, or those schooling practices that are routine for privileged students but remain

unknown for others.

By isolating AVID students in special groups, marking their academic identity and dispensing academic tricks, AVID is giving students explicit instruction in the implicit, or hidden, curriculum of the school. Included in the hidden curriculum are the special ways of talking, writing, thinking and acting that are demanded by the school but seldom discussed openly by the school. (Swanson, 1993, p. 22)

Research indicates that students from higher socioeconomic and majority backgrounds come to school equipped with a certain set of skills that improve their chances of being successful in school, as “certain ways of talking, thinking, and acting are demanded by the conventions of schooling” (Mehan, 1992, p. 18). Because the divide between those who understand the implicit practices and those who do not relates directly to the qualifications for the AVID program, it is a concern the program addresses overtly. Furthermore:

The College Board reports that middle-level students from low-income families (rural as well as urban) are less likely than their more advantaged peers to have access to appropriate guidance for course selection in high school and that the less access to counseling students have, the more likely they are to be placed in nonacademic curricular tracks. (Smith-Maddock, 1995, p. 1)

In addition to course selection, there are the unspoken rules in education that many students do not understand. An example is the college application process. Many minority and low-socioeconomic students are unaware of the procedures and deadlines for college applications simply because there is not a college-going tradition in the family. Without

advocates and a support group, many of these students miss deadlines and fail to go on to higher education. This is troubling in that “students from low-income linguistic and ethnic minority backgrounds are expected to compose an increasing percentage of the U.S. population through the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Hubbard & Mehan, 1999, p. 1), but these students are not being supported so as to meet their academic potential.

### *Criticisms of AVID*

As with any educational initiative, AVID has both its supporters and its detractors. There is no doubt the AVID program requires a tremendous commitment from a school community. Many practitioners may feel the benefits of AVID do not outweigh the costs, financial and otherwise. It is up to the local educational agency to determine whether the benefits of the program are worth the additional demands placed on the school system.

The first and most common criticism of AVID is that of program costs; for example, the Charlotte-Mecklenberg School District in North Carolina reports AVID costs of \$250,000 or more (Bushweller, 1998, p. 3). Although AVID training sessions provide information to administrators and principals on how to locate funding and support, a financial burden is still placed on each individual school, especially as AVID guidelines make two of the most expensive aspects of the AVID program (tutors and field trips) not an option that may be cut:

Generally, once a program is in place in grades six to 12, the price tag is about \$1.25 per student, per day. That money pays for teachers who run the classes, local college students who serve as tutors, expenses for special teacher training,

classroom supplies, and field trips. (Bushweller, 1998, p. 9)

Schools can apply for grants and other support to help offset the costs. In 1998, Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools received a \$100,000 grant from the North Carolina state legislature to assist with funding for the program (Bushweller, 1998, p. 9). However, one problem with this approach is that special interest funding has become incredibly competitive and cannot consistently be relied upon.

Another problem with the implementation of AVID in the public schools is the issue of scheduling. By AVID Center mandate, a school must provide at least one section of AVID for students throughout the school year. As AVID students are also on the college track, they may be required to take any number of foreign language and math courses. The difficulty arises when many AVID students must neglect their interests in other elective classes because they cannot fit them into their schedules. This is a particular problem for arts education and vocational courses that for the most part rely on student registration numbers for the classes to remain viable. It is also a concern that students are not able to pursue their nonacademic interests within the public education environment.

Because of these difficulties, many systems find the constraints of following the AVID program essentials to be overwhelming and not worth the sacrifices. They are unwilling to earmark funds or expend the time and effort necessary to facilitate the program. Further criticisms about the program include the difficulty many schools have in getting and keeping the college tutors who are considered such a vital part of it. In many locations, it is simply not feasible for a college student to travel to tutor for an hour or more for minimal pay. A final

concern is the almost cultish fanaticism displayed by many of the AVID promoters. For some, it would seem the AVID program is the single answer to all the ills of public education.

Thus while the AVID program has certainly been established as a viable and successful acceleration program, it is not without detractors. Accordingly, as soon as the AVID program began rising to national prominence, educational researchers became interested in investigating and questioning the claims made by AVID practitioners.

### *Research on AVID*

As with any program vying for competitive government funds and other resources, AVID needs to demonstrate sustained success. The AVID Center provides several examples of longitudinal and in-depth studies of the AVID program and the way it has been implemented, including its sustained and demonstrated success in numerous educational environments. As AVID is a relatively new program, there have not been a tremendous number of studies on it; therefore, all of them were considered for this review.

The largest studies of AVID have been conducted by the team of Larry F. Guthrie and Grace Pung Guthrie of the Center for Research, Evaluation, and Training in Education (CREATE), which was hired by the AVID Center to conduct research. This organization has produced several of the most definitive evaluations of the AVID program. However, as these studies were funded by the AVID Center, a certain level of scrutiny is required in their evaluation.

One of the first studies conducted by Guthrie and Guthrie is the June 2000 *Longitudinal Research on AVID 1999-2000: Final Report*. This research explored the relationship between

participation in AVID in middle school and a student's high school performance; it also detailed the post-secondary experiences of high school graduates who had been involved in the AVID program. The study found that participation in AVID in middle school greatly enhanced a student's performance in high school, and that AVID participation in high school led to a more successful college experience. According to Guthrie (2000), AVID graduates reported a mean GPA of 2.94, with 85% on track to graduate in 4 years and with over 77.1% being enrolled in a 4-year university (p. 14). "There is strong evidence that AVID graduates are well-prepared for the challenges of college" (Guthrie, p. 21). Guthrie also offers recommendations for the AVID program such as recognizing the importance of AVID in the middle school, encouraging students to take Algebra I in middle school, and providing additional instruction in time management techniques to high school students.

Another major study of AVID by Guthrie and Guthrie (2002), *The Magnificent Eight: AVID Best Practices Study—Final Report*, detailed the best practices of eight local educational agencies and the strategies they used to facilitate implementation of the program and enhance sustainability. The structure of this study was to identify eight high-performing AVID schools and conduct qualitative research on their best practices to determine the value of the 11 essentials and provide recommendations for change (Guthrie, 2002, p. 1). Findings include confirming that the 11 established essentials are necessary to success and noting that each of the high-performing schools follows them very closely. The study recommends three additional essentials, the second being "AVID teachers participate in on-going, high quality staff development through the regional coordinator workshops and the AVID summer institute" (Guthrie, p. 9). The eight

schools in this study have adopted the culture of AVID, which can be seen in an increase in enrollment in AP courses, higher graduation rates, and school-wide effects of AVID.

Success breeds more success, and AVID's visible, data-driven success has helped foster a culture of academic excellence, high expectations, and going-to-college within the schools. The culture of the AVID classroom is the scaffolding upon which students develop life-long habits of mind, such as responsibility, accountability, discipline, collaboration, continuous inquiry, and determination.

(Guthrie, 2002, p. 13)

This particular study provided the foundation for my own research interests in that its objective was to discover the qualitative information behind the numbers. However, all of these studies potentially suffer from the Hawthorne effect in which the tool used to analyze a phenomenon actually changes its characteristics (i.e., the very fact that research was being conducted may have impacted study results). Student selection and deselection taints the outcomes of research as well. The strongest critique that may be made of these studies questions whether the positive results are due to the AVID program, as claimed, or rather to the techniques, such as small class size and test taking strategies provided for AVID students. If the former is the case, why are these strategies not implemented for all public school students as theoretically all could benefit?

Beyond the research funded by the AVID program, there have been a number of studies from independent organizations and individuals. In *Constructing School Success*, Mehan et al (1996), Villanueva, Hubbard, and Lintz (1996) found that AVID's claims to recruit from underrepresented populations were accurate, and that the AVID students enrolled in college in

numbers exceeding the local and national averages. This study also supported the report that AVID graduates enroll and graduate at higher rates than their peers. Finally, this study finds that “among the most visible social supports in AVID classrooms is the teaching of test taking strategies, note-taking, and studying strategies” (Mehan et al., p. 4).

Two of the researchers went on to conduct an AVID study specific to Kentucky schools. In *Scaling Up an Untracking Program: A Co-Constructed Process*, authors Hubbard and Mehan (1996) noted that certain sites struggle to achieve AVID certification status. Funding issues were a primary concern and greatly influence the success or failure of the program.

Another study of AVID is *Implications of One Comprehensive School Reform Model for Secondary Students Underrepresented in Higher Education* by Watt et al. (2002). The researchers investigated 10 low-performing schools with AVID certification. The study found that AVID students outperformed their peers on standardized tests and had better attendance rates. AP course enrollments increased with the implementation of AVID while more underrepresented students were going to college prepared for the academic rigors demanded of them. It was also evidenced that the 10 schools increased their performance ratings within the first 3 years of AVID implementation (Watt et al.). However, these findings, while supportive of AVID, are not surprising in light of the fact that these students are directly taught test taking strategies and given the individualized attention that should translate into higher school attendance.

In addition to these studies, several smaller-scale research articles have been published discussing the positives and negatives of the AVID program; these studies are summarized in

Table 2. Several of these studies found the majority of AVID students come from underrepresented populations, and that these students are enrolling in college in numbers exceeding national and local averages. These findings are valuable in that they provide support for the claims of AVID. However, the findings would be expected in a study of a program that targets underrepresented students for college preparation and enrollment.

AVID students stay in college once enrolled and are better prepared than their non-AVID peers for the rigors of college academics (Guthrie, 2000). According to the research, the most commonly mentioned downside of the AVID program is funding, as finding funding for the relatively expensive AVID program continues to be an issue. Table 2 provides a brief summary of the previously discussed AVID studies and their key findings.

Table 2

*AVID Research Summary*

Research Article	Key Findings
<p><i>What it Takes: Pre-K-12 Design Principles to Broaden Participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics</i> (April, 2004) By: BEST Building Engineering and Science Talent</p>	<p>-Majority of AVID students come from underrepresented populations -AVID students take more college preparatory courses</p>
<p><i>Investing Early: Intervention Programs in Selected U.S. States</i> (February 2003) by: Alisa Cunningham, Christina Redmond, and Jamie Merisotis of the Institute for Higher Education Policy</p>	<p>-Provided a comparative look at various programs in several states -Description of AVID -Supportive Statistics</p>
<p><i>The AVID Program in AISD: Program Evaluation Report, 2000-2001</i> (March 2003) by Kim Johnson Oswald</p>	<p>-Notes the success of AVID students in the Austin Independent School District -Offers suggestions such as: increased collaboration between AVID schools, modeling of AVID practices for non-AVID schools, and</p>

Table 2 (continued).

Research Article	Key Findings
<p data-bbox="191 730 662 768"><i>Untracking and College Enrollment:</i></p> <p data-bbox="209 806 451 844"><i>Research Report 4</i></p> <p data-bbox="209 879 302 917">(1992)</p> <p data-bbox="209 953 654 991">by Hugh Mehan and others for the</p> <p data-bbox="209 1026 862 1064">National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity</p> <p data-bbox="209 1100 834 1138">and Second Language Learning, Santa Cruz, CA</p>	<p data-bbox="951 514 1279 552">increased efficacy for the</p> <p data-bbox="951 588 1252 625">AVID teams within the</p> <p data-bbox="951 661 1052 699">District</p> <p data-bbox="938 735 1334 1207">-“AVID gives low-income students the cultural capital at school that is equivalent to the cultural capital that more economically advantaged parents given to their children at home.”</p> <p data-bbox="938 1243 1312 1577">-Demonstrates the power of academically-oriented programs for the academic improvement for previously underachieving students.</p>

*Note.* Source: Cunningham, 2003; Guthrie, 2002; Hubbard a, 1999; Mehan, 1992; Oswald, 2002; Watt et al, 2002.

Some large-scale studies of AVID are currently being conducted whose results may shed more light on AVID and its effectiveness: *Multi-year Longitudinal Study in British Columbia*, tracking 1100 students to determine the effectiveness of the AVID program (Fall 2005–Fall 2012); *Upper Elementary AVID*, sites in CA and CO observed to determine the impact, implementation, and sustainability of AVID in elementary schools (2005–2006); *School-wide/District-wide AVID*, schools invited to participate in a study of “spill-over effects” of the AVID program (Fall 2005–Spring 2006)(as cited in Guthrie, 2002, p. 61).

#### *Previous Research Methodology*

With only one exception, previous AVID research was conducted as quantitative studies. The Guthrie (2000) and Watt et al. (2002) studies were longitudinal as they followed selected AVID students from middle or high school through college. Most of the studies report quantitative data because funding sources largely rely on statistical proof of success to initiate and continue funding. Some of the researchers, such as Cunningham et al. (2003) and Mehan et al. (1996), conducted research comparing AVID to alternative acceleration programs.

The only study that conveyed qualitative information was *The Magnificent Eight: AVID Best Practices Study–Final Report* by Guthrie (2000). This study used observations, interviews, and document collection techniques to compare eight high-performing AVID sites and the best practices evident within each site. Mehan (1992) discusses the need for more qualitative research: “We need firsthand observations in order to understand how instructional practices interact with selection practices and students’ choices” (p. 14).

In the current study, my interest was in investigating the perceptions of AVID teachers

and how they translated into daily practices and expectations. This type of inquiry is best addressed through a qualitative approach. The following section of the literature review explores the role and function of the AVID teacher.

### *The Role of the AVID Teacher*

The AVID teacher is the most vital factor in motivating student success in the AVID program. Swanson claims:

The academic life of AVID students in school is supported by dedicated teachers who enter the lives of their students and serve as mediators between them, their high schools and the college system. By expanding the definition of their teaching role to include the sponsorship of students, AVID coordinators encourage success and help remove impediments to students' academic achievement. (Swanson, 1993, p. 22)

One of the first responsibilities of any administrator implementing the AVID program is to select a coordinator and/or teacher(s) capable of meeting the demands of the AVID program.

Appropriate selection of the AVID lead teacher is critical to developing a strong program. Experience has taught us that the teacher needs to be academically strong and to understand "academic press" in order to prepare students adequately. The teacher must be a coach to the students, working with every aspect of the student's life that affects academic performance. The teacher must be a respected instructional leader who can lead colleagues to teach more effectively. Finally, the teacher must have enough experience in the educational

system to know how to manipulate it so that students receive the best education possible. These teachers must assume a new role—hiring and training paraprofessionals to work in classrooms. Many AVID teachers become fundraisers to cope with the plight of inadequate funding, or expert field trip coordinators and parent facilitators. Every campus has one such teacher. Most are carrying heavy loads of ‘extra responsibilities.’ Nevertheless, these are the very professionals who can implement a successful program. (Swanson, 1993, pp. 11-12)

As Swanson (1993) notes, those teachers who are most qualified to teach the AVID program are often the ones who already have the most responsibilities. However, the AVID program can provide a different type of reward than many other teaching duties. “Research on school effectiveness has consistently suggested that long-term teacher/student relationships improve both student performance and job satisfaction for teachers” (Burke, 1996, p. 1). In much of the research on AVID and on good teaching in general, the presence of a caring teacher is shown to greatly affect student success in the educational environment (Mehan, 1992; Murray, 2002; Oswald, 2002 Swanson, 1993). Within the AVID program, the teacher is responsible for creating an atmosphere of encouragement and support. This is especially vital for the population that AVID aims to reach, as many times students from the forgotten middle have been overlooked by their teachers. AVID attempts to counter the effects of going unnoticed with caring, challenging, and supportive relationships between teachers and students.

Connectedness is part of the support system that most students need to succeed in

education. Of all the riches denied to disadvantaged children, perhaps the most important is a network that would allow them to thrive in school and give them a sense of belonging. The lack of this support and of the norms and values that underpin it places their education at risk from the day they walk into a classroom. More than that, their minds and hearts are not filled with the hopes, dreams, and aspirations from which to fashion academic success. They know neither what they are missing nor where to turn to get it, an affliction apt to continue throughout the duration of their schooling. They have been denied the experiences that form the foundation on which a formal education is constructed. (Maeroff, 1998, p. 1)

When students feel they are cared for and supported, and that their needs will be met, they “can prosper as students [when] they have emotional and physical underpinnings that provide for their sense of well-being and keep them from being overwhelmed by their environments” (Maeroff, 1998, p. 2). Within the AVID program, it is the teacher’s responsibility to foster a sense of community and connectedness. However no specific strategies are presented or taught to new or future AVID teachers on how to effectively initiate this significant factor in the AVID program. The teacher selection aspect of AVID may account for choosing a teacher with a history of forming positive student/teacher relationships. Yet the problem with this approach is that there is no way to effectively determine if a teacher is right for the AVID approach to teacher/student relationships. Expectancy theory is useful in this study because it can be applied to teachers and students alike. Because of the impact the AVID program may have on teachers and their beliefs, teaching practices, and their expectations of students, the theoretical

framework for this study is expectancy theory.

### Expectancy Theory

In his 1964 book *Work and Motivation*, Victor Vroom proposed a new theory of motivation known as expectancy theory. Though developed to investigate motivation in the workplace, expectancy theory is applicable to the educational workplace as to the way teachers view themselves and their students.

Student motivation has long been considered an important factor in the determination of academic performance. The nature and extent of the link between motivation and performance has been explored on many fronts. According to expectancy theory, motivation to act is a combination of the perceived attractiveness of future outcomes and the likelihood one's actions will lead to these outcomes. Thus, motivation of students to put forth academic effort depends on student perceptions of the benefit of academic performance and their belief that exerting effort will actually lead to higher performance (Geiger & Cooper, 1995). The AVID essentials are designed to provide structure, support, and challenge for the AVID student, with the AVID teacher being the facilitator of these elements. When the AVID teacher helps to identify, select, and instruct the AVID student, the teacher effectively alters expectancy for that student.

This study explored the relationship between teacher strategies in the AVID classroom and the teacher's perceived shift in expectancy for themselves and the AVID students.

Expectancy theory views people as purposeful beings who behave in accordance with their expectations that their efforts will result in outcomes they value. The theory suggests that the amount of effort (i.e. motivation) an individual will exert ultimately

depends on three perceptual relationships: 1) expectancy – a person’s subjective estimation of the likelihood of successfully performing a particular behavior; 2) instrumentality – a person’s subjective estimation of the likelihood that a particular behavior will result in certain outcomes; and 3) valence – the positive or negative value that a person places on each of those outcomes. (Hancock, 1995, p. 173)

This can be applied to the interactions that occur between teachers and students within the AVID program. Table 3 demonstrates ways by which the expectancy theory of AVID students may be identified:

Table 3

*Expectancy Theory*

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Factor	Definition	Student Interpretation
Expectancy Probability	The expectancy that one's effort will lead to the desired performance; it is based on past experience, self-confidence, and the perceived difficulty of the performance goal.	If I study after school, will it improve my grade on the test tomorrow?
Instrumentality Probability	The instrumentality is the belief that if one does meet performance expectations, one will be rewarded.	If I get a better grade on the science test tomorrow, will I get an "A" in science?
Valence	The value the individual personally places on the rewards. This is a function of needs, goals, and values.	How much do I really want an "A" in science?

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*Note.* Adapted from Quick MBA Management 1999 & Scholl, 2002.

Teachers can increase a student's expectancy in several ways. Some of these include exposing the student to rigorous academic texts and providing the support to learn from them, raising expectations of students, providing additional instruction time and guided learning, enhancing beliefs about the student's own abilities, and altering a student's learning environment (Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, Shevitz & Weinfeld, 2003; Burke, 1996; Hancock, 1995).

All of the aforementioned techniques are encouraged within the AVID program, yet no explicit recommendations are made available in the research on AVID. Other research suggests additional methods to enhance student motivation. Hootstein (2002) recommends that teachers "stimulate curiosity by asking thought-provoking questions," "provide challenges" through various tasks," give students a sense of control," and "help students connect learning to their needs and interests" (pp. 1-3). In connecting teacher perceptions of AVID students to expectancy theory, this study sought to identify ways that teachers can work to positively impact the expectations of their students.

### Summary

If America hopes to continue as an intellectual, economic, and social leader on a global scale, the academic success of all students must be a priority. The segments of the population that must be addressed to enhance our competitive edge are those students who have the intellectual ability, yet lack the social and academic supports to be successful. The AVID program seems to provide a means for reaching underrepresented youth and providing them with the sustained support and academic encouragement they need for success. The AVID program

claims to have increased the college-going rates of underrepresented youth. Additionally, studies find that AVID students who attend higher education are more prepared and better equipped to deal with the pressures of college than students who did not experience AVID.

One of the most vital components of the AVID program is the AVID teacher. Many studies support the call for a strong leader and coach (Guthrie, 2000; Guthrie, 2002; Swanson, 1993; Watt, 2002). The AVID teacher bears the responsibility of conveying the AVID curriculum while promoting a sense of connectedness within the classroom and AVID community. One way the AVID teacher can promote student achievement is through expectancy theory, which is the idea that one's achievement is a direct result of what one believes one has the capability to accomplish. Although there are many ways in which a teacher can utilize expectancy theory, little research exists on this topic. "Educational researchers are urged to further examine how specific features of the classroom environment might affect a variety of aspects of students' motivation" (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002, p. 9). By altering their own expectations of students, the teachers may enable the students to achieve their highest academic potential. Thus one goal of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions of their AVID students and of themselves as AVID teachers.

### Conclusion

This study aims to identify if and in what ways the AVID program impacts the teaching practices of instructors within various school districts in North Carolina. As Mehan (1992) suggests, extensive descriptions about the practices and expectations of AVID teachers will be examined through qualitative research. By linking and understanding teaching practices and

expectancy theory, this dissertation study attempts to contribute to the research base and provide insight for novice AVID teachers. The next chapter will discuss the methodology for this study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will identify the methodology used to investigate whether the AVID program has an impact on teaching practices and expectancy of educators within three different school systems in North Carolina.

### Design of the Study

This dissertation uses a case study format to discover qualitative data that may be used to supplement the knowledge base of AVID and perhaps enhance the teaching and learning experience for AVID teachers and students.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory frames this study. Qualitative methods such as interviews, participant observations, and document analysis were used to collect data. The use of constant comparative technique in addition to case study analysis drew on the qualitative tradition to investigate conditions as perceived by practitioners.

### Major Objectives

The research questions for this study resulted in a rich description of AVID teachers. Research questions were developed by the investigator in response to the absence of literature about AVID teachers. This study focused on the AVID teacher, including that person's practices, experiences, and beliefs about the role of an AVID teacher. Specific research questions that were addressed included:

- 1) Do the AVID teachers in this study believe they are provided with the appropriate training, support, and instruction necessary to effectively implement AVID?
- 2) Do AVID teachers' perceptions about the AVID program change over time?

3) What roles do AVID teachers experience in their work and professional practice with the AVID program?

4) Did teacher expectations for their students change? In what ways and why did they change?

Qualitative methodology was the best approach for these research questions because it allowed participants to construct their own meanings from their experiences as AVID teachers. By conducting semi-structured interviews, I was able to provide the participants with an opportunity to prescribe their own values and beliefs about teaching AVID and the impact the program has had on their teaching practices. Observations provided the opportunity to see if the participants' interviews matched with their daily practices. Cross-case analysis allowed for comparison based on school district location and determination whether the teachers have similar experiences and perspectives.

#### Participant Selection

In a qualitative study, the goal is to have depth of data rather than breadth. To conduct a deep analysis of the teacher's perspective of the AVID program, I decided to use a case study of three teachers from three different counties and include a cross-case analysis. Criteria for case selection included convenience sampling and networking. The early stages of AVID implementation within my own school system provided convenient access to a first-year AVID teacher. Additional selection took place through networking with a high level AVID official in North Carolina, William Greenfield. Mr. Greenfield is the individual credited with bringing the AVID program to North Carolina 12 years ago and is considered an AVID expert by many

within the state. I contacted the AVID teachers he recommended via email to solicit their participation.

Once the participants were identified, a schedule for observations and interviews was established. This schedule had to be convenient for both the researcher and participants. As no assumptions were made about race or gender as a factor in effective practices, race and gender were not determining indicators of participation in the study. Data was recorded in case study format; it included interview data, participant observations, and document analysis.

#### Data Collection

According to Merriam (1998), data begins as ordinary information until a researcher discovers a phenomenon to which it applies:

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 in confirmation. (p. 19)

To identify data that was useful in establishing a link between the AVID program and teaching practices as perceived by the AVID teacher, I used a variety of data collection methods. The primary data collection methods were interviews, observations, and document analysis. For each research question, the most potentially productive method of data collection was employed.

Table 4 demonstrates how each research question was addressed:

Table 4

*Data Sources for Research Questions*

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Research Question	Data Source
Do the AVID teachers in this study believe they are provided with the appropriate training, support, and instruction to effectively implement AVID?	Document review, participant interviews,  Participant observation
Do AVID teachers' perceptions of the AVID program change over time?	Participant interviews
What roles do AVID teachers experience in their work and professional practice with the AVID program?	Participant interviews, document analysis
Did teacher expectations for their students change? In what ways and why did they change?	Participant interviews, participant  Observations

---

Through triangulation, the use of multiple data sources also served to enhance the validity and reliability of the study.

Instrumentation

Participant interviews functioning as the primary data collection source took place in Spring 2007. In order to obtain both an initial perspective and provide an opportunity for follow-

up questions and member checking, I conducted two interviews with each participant. Each interview was conducted one-on-one with my using a series of semi-structured interview questions. Interviews took place at a site convenient to the interviewee, usually the participant's school and classroom. I requested approximately 90 minutes for the interview process, which was extended or shortened according to participant schedules. The length of interviews provided the interviewee enough time to answer the semi-structured interview questions while also allowing for expansion according to the interests of the participant.

The first interview established a general knowledge base, while the second was used for follow-up questions, clarification, and member checking. Interviewees were encouraged to expand on their answers and share their stories of their role as AVID teachers. I tape-recorded the interviews and transcribed them verbatim. See Appendix A for the interview schedule.

Additional data collection methods included classroom observation and document reviews, which were conducted of any available AVID training information for AVID teachers, lesson plans, and teacher evaluations made available by participants. The AVID program has not only developed an entire curriculum for the AVID class, but provides summer training for AVID teachers as well as those teachers who will work closely with AVID students. The training manuals and subsequent publications and articles relating to the training of AVID elective teachers were reviewed for trends and important contributions.

Classroom observations occurred on days selected for participant interviews, and included videotaping if permitted by the participant. Six observations were used in conjunction with field notes to provide an extensive description of the classroom environment developed by

the AVID teachers. This information provided useful observations of AVID students and the way their expectancy was established within the AVID classroom.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted throughout the course of the research. A dissertation/research log was used during the process that became a vital means of reflection. Once the data was collected in the forms of interviews, observations, surveys, and document review, a case for each teacher was constructed and then cross-case analysis was employed. To conduct a cross-case analysis, it was important to establish a case management approach (Merriam, 1998). To this end, each case was initially treated as an independent phenomenon. Once this strategy was completed, data was compared from each case to establish a cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

After the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, I used the constant comparative technique to code information. Data management also employed the use of charts and tables to compare interview, observation, and document analysis. Once this was done, I was able to identify themes and ideas that exist for most or all participants. When this process neared completion, I sought the feedback of participants to ensure that I was reporting their perspectives accurately rather than imposing my own beliefs and ideas on the information collected. Additionally, I used triangulation to overcome any personal bias or assumptions. This strategy also helped in the identification of any areas necessary for additional research.

### Validity and Reliability

According to Merriam (1995), one of the chief concerns about qualitative research is the

issue of maintaining validity and reliability. While qualitative research is designed to understand phenomena, it must still meet standards for reliability and validity. Cuba and Lincoln (1981) modified the terms to fit more appropriately with qualitative research, using the terms *credibility*, *dependability*, and *transferability* in place of *validity* and *reliability*. When conducting research with human subjects, this exchange of terms makes sense, as the study is highly unlikely to yield the exact same results with different participants or even the same participants at another time. As qualitative data is often constructed from the participants' own interpretations, feelings, and present conditions, it is subject to change.

In order to address credibility, dependability, and transferability, and thus validity and reliability of research, a number of methods were used in data collection and analysis. One of the chief recommendations for ensuring internal validity is triangulation, which is the use of multiple sources of data to analyze findings (Merriam, 1995, Patton, 2002). Triangulation was achieved through use of member checking, multiple data sources, and identification of researcher bias. "Triangulation prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions; it enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the course of the investigation" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 48). For member checking, participants were presented with transcribed interviews and study findings to verify their contributions and determine if interpretations were accurate. Another safeguard for ensuring validity and reliability is identification of researcher bias. A subjectivity statement is included in this chapter to detail the researcher's association with the data being addressed. Additionally, the use of multiple data sources permitted findings to be compared across interviews, observations, and document review

sources.

External validity is the extent to which data can be generalized and therefore applied to another study (Merriam, 1995). Some of the techniques utilized to ensure external validity were use of an audit trail; thick, rich descriptions; and multi-site design. Each step of the research was recorded in a research journal so that any step may be replicated by the researcher or other investigators. The interviews, observations, and document reviews yielded thick, rich descriptions of the AVID program and teacher perspectives. Finally, through the use of multi-site design, I aimed to investigate perspectives as they differ from school district and from different teachers. Thus these methods helped ensure validity and reliability for this research study.

#### Subjectivity Statement

Early in the proposal process, the possibility existed that I would serve as an AVID teacher for Trifaro High School; however, this issue was addressed, and I have no professional association with the AVID program. I became interested in the AVID program through previous research and was encouraged to continue my examination of the program when a friend became a member of a site team in another county. When the opportunity arose to attend an AVID conference in Fall 2005, I was delighted to learn more about it. I knew from my initial research that AVID was an interesting program that could perhaps become the focus of my doctoral dissertation.

Throughout the process of developing a research study, I have been an advocate of the techniques used by the AVID program. I am pleased to find a program that addresses a population that until recently had not been adequately served by the public education system.

However, I acknowledge the question raised by critics as to whether the AVID program itself is what makes the difference for students or if the methods utilized by the AVID program are more responsible for student success. My final impressions of AVID have yet to be determined in that I find the need for additional research on teacher perspective. This study perhaps opens the door for future investigations of the teacher perspective within the AVID program.

#### Ethical Considerations

Once the doctoral committee accepted this study, I met with the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research to determine requirements for approval. All of the information collected and analyzed was treated with the utmost respect for participants' emotional, financial, and personal needs. Case studies were kept confidential with identifying details changed.

All participants were required to complete an informed consent form. Within this document, participants were notified of the goal of the study and potential uses of the findings, as well as benefits and risks to the individual participant. Potential risks to participants could involve repercussions for negative perceptions of the AVID program. To that end, all participants were assured of confidentiality. Participants also had the right at any point in time to withdraw from the study. The benefits to study participants include a greater understanding of their role as AVID teachers and perhaps the opportunity to make suggestions to the AVID program regarding how best to meet teacher needs.

#### Limitations

As in any qualitative research, this study had potential limitations. The methodology for

this study was structured so that cases could both be viewed as independent cases and as a cross-case analysis. The primary limitation is that only three individual cases were studied. Each participant had a variety of life experiences affecting that person's perceptions of the AVID program. Although these cases may not serve as a generalized sample, as Patton (2002) argues, the study should "provide perspective rather than truth, empirical assessment of local decision makers' theories of action rather than generation and verification of universal theories, and context-bound extrapolations rather than generalizations" (p. 491). It was my goal as a researcher to provide a rich description of how teachers from varying locations perceive the AVID program and its impact on their expectations and teaching practices.

#### Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology that was applied to this study. This is a qualitative study of teacher perspective of the impact the AVID program has on the teaching practices of teachers within three different school systems in North Carolina. Primary data collection methods utilized were semi-structured interviews, observation, and document review. The data analysis was conducted using constant comparative coding for within-case and cross-case analysis techniques (Merriam, 1998). Participants were selected through purposeful sampling with the primary goal of obtaining participant perspectives from diverse counties in North Carolina. Validity and reliability were addressed through triangulation, member checking, and acknowledgement of researcher bias. Limitations of the study included generalizability. Ethical considerations were addressed through informed consent, confidentiality, and study design. The findings of this study will contribute to the larger knowledge base of the

AVID program and, indeed, of acceleration programs in general.

### Conclusion

This study aims to expand the existing research on the AVID program by using qualitative techniques to compare the perspectives and experiences of three AVID teachers from different counties within North Carolina. Findings from this study will be identified in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: STUDY FINDINGS

Findings from the qualitative research conducted throughout this study will be presented in this chapter. By utilizing interviews, observation, and document analysis, I was able to obtain rich descriptions of teacher perceptions of their role in AVID and of the program in general. This chapter begins with a history of the AVID program followed by a description of the AVID program in North Carolina. The chapter then provides a description of the school site selections, following which the study participants themselves are introduced and their educational backgrounds presented. Finally, the research questions developed for this study are addressed according to the interview data provided by study participants, observation, and document analysis.

### The AVID Program

In 1954, the Supreme Court ordered that schools in America could no longer tolerate segregation. Twenty-three years later, San Diego Unified School District followed suit as the result of *Carlin v. Board of Education*. This ruling stated that 23 inner-city schools had to desegregate (Moran, 2004). The court ordered Clairmont School District in San Diego to bus students from low-income areas into the largely white, upper-middle class school.

Their English department chairperson and AP English teacher Mary Catherine Swanson decided that she would hold the incoming students to the same high standards set for her privileged students. However, while Swanson believed the new students were capable of academic achievement, she also recognized that they would probably require additional supports. Thus, Swanson created the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program.

The initial class experienced success in academic achievement and college acceptance, and the program began to gain popularity in the San Diego region. Once area districts began to replicate the program, Swanson ended her teaching career to develop and share the AVID program. By the early 1990s the program had expanded to several states and many school districts. In 1992, AVID obtained nonprofit status. The AVID organization currently serves over 300,000 students. For the 2007-2008 school year, AVID is present in 3,500 schools, including all Department of Defense schools. The program is on track to be in 4,369 schools by the year 2010 (AVID Center online, 2007).

The AVID organization provides a clear description of the purpose for the program, The mission of AVID is to ensure that all students, and most especially the least served students who are in the middle: will succeed in rigorous curriculum, will complete a rigorous college preparatory path, will enter mainstream activities of the school, will increase their enrollment in four-year colleges, and will become better educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society. (AVID: Decades of College Dreams, 2005)

The program is designed to accomplish this mission by providing educators with professional development and students with support specific to their needs. Table 5 demonstrates the fundamentals of AVID with corresponding actions to explain how AVID works.

Table 5

*Fundamentals of AVID*

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What is AVID?	Why AVID works
A structured, college preparatory program working directly with schools and districts.	Focuses on academic success of low-achieving students as a school-wide issue, with significant portions of the school culture mobilized toward their success.
A direct support structure for first-generation college goers, grades 5-12.	Places low-achieving students in rigorous curriculum and gives them the support to achieve therein.  Provides a team of students for positive peer identification.
A schoolwide approach to curriculum and rigor working in over 2,200 middle schools and high schools in 36 states and 16 countries.	Provides the explicit “Hidden Curriculum” of schools.
A professional development program providing training throughout the U.S.	Redefines teacher’s role as that of student advocate.

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*Note.* Source: AVID: Decades of College Dreams (2005) and Mehan et al. (1996).

The typical AVID student has a GPA between 2.0 to 3.5 and average-to-high test scores, but lackluster classroom performance, college potential, or desire to achieve academic success (AVID Center online, 2007). The school and teachers are charged with supporting these students through the use of specific curriculum strategies and supports. The AVID elective class provides the bulk of these supports by placing the AVID students together in one classroom so that they may work together to identify strengths, learn to decipher the hidden curriculum, prepare for college applications, and acquire good study skills. The AVID program supports a weekly AVID classroom agenda as described in Table 6:

*Table 6*

A Sample Week in the AVID Elective

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AVID Curriculum	Tutorials	AVID Curriculum	Tutorials	Binder Evaluation
				Field Trips
				Media Center
				Speakers
				Motivational Activities

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*Note:* Source: AVID: Decades of College Dreams (2005).

In addition to this weekly schedule, there is the AVID curriculum known as WICR, which stands for Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, and Reading. Within this

curriculum strategies are provided to assist with student comprehension and academic advancement.

John Dewey pioneered the exploration of schools teaching more than the approved curriculum. His idea was that schools and social institutions perpetuate social class distinctions by socializing students through implicit academic expectations. The term describing this practice, *hidden curriculum*, was developed by Phillip Jackson in 1968. AVID aims to make the implicit explicit by breaking down schooling expectations and practices for AVID students. Many students who meet the AVID profile have poorly developed study habits and very little understanding of the complex college readiness and application procedures. With the AVID course, study skills are repeatedly practiced so that students can use them to further comprehension of rigorous coursework. Additionally, AVID calls for a focus on SAT preparation, college essays, and application completion within the classroom setting.

When school district personnel develop an interest in the AVID program, the first step is usually to send school representatives to an AVID Awareness Seminar. These seminars are held throughout the country at various times during the year. Representatives learn about the general program, implementation, costs, and procedures. The representatives then take this information back to school districts to determine whether they want to proceed. As the AVID program is an expensive endeavor, district stakeholders must take a number of factors into consideration such as financial strain, implementation procedures, teacher availability, and community support before deciding to move forward with implementation.

Once the decision is made to adopt the AVID program, the school or district must make an initial investment of \$4,500 to purchase the AVID library, which consists of a collection of curriculum resources including a curriculum calendar, strategies for success set, colleges and careers set, writing set, and implementation set. The library set is available in text or disc form..

The AVID products catalog states:

The AVID High School Library is designed to improve the academic performance of AVID students and to support the work of AVID coordinators and their site teams. The library sets are instrumental in developing a program that helps students prepare for college as well as making the transition from high school to college. In addition, they help expand the resources available to students and parents making college an attainable goal for all AVID students. High schools implementing AVID for the first time are required to purchase the entire library.

(AVID: Decades of College Dreams, 2005, p. 11)

Specific costs for initial overall program fees were not available from the AVID organization or from individual school districts. However, documents indicate that the cost varies according to school and district size. In 1998, the Charlotte-Mecklenberg School District in North Carolina reported AVID costs of \$250,000 or more (Bushweller, 1998).

The AVID program provides school administrators with training on how and where to locate funding for the program. The AVID organization recommends using federal funding from No Child Left Behind initiatives including GEAR UP, Title I and II, Professional Development, Title V, Innovative Programs, Smaller Learning Communities, and API Initiatives. They also

recommend using state funds from migrant education, advance placement funding, and compensatory education. District funds that may also be used include those from Gifted and Talented programs as well as funds for staff development.

Along with the library and implementation fees, the schools must select a district coordinator and a teacher and/or site coordinator to administer the AVID program. Once a teacher is selected, a site team composed of core teachers from each discipline must be established and students selected for the program. The site team is responsible for providing additional in-class supports for AVID students and reporting AVID students' progress to the AVID teacher. The AVID teacher, site team, and an administrator then attend the summer institute held for AVID training. This is a weeklong, intensive training session designed to provide practitioners with the tools necessary to effectively implement the AVID program. Additionally, PATH (not an acronym, but rather the AVID name for curriculum alignment) programs are held throughout the year in each state for curriculum-specific training.

The AVID program is designed to promote a number of specific strategies within the classroom. The AVID curriculum provides precise recommendations for classroom activities. Perhaps tutors are both the most challenging and beneficial of the suggested strategies. They are challenging because AVID teachers/site coordinators have a very difficult time finding, training, and paying tutors in the way that the AVID organization recommends. One of the AVID program essentials is, "A sufficient number of tutors must be available in the AVID class to facilitate student access to rigorous curriculum. Tutors should be students from colleges and universities, and they must be trained to implement the methodologies used in AVID" (AVID:

Decades of College Dreams, 2005). According to data from this study, this is the area where many AVID teachers experience the most frustration and failure. Tutors are difficult to find, hire, and train. However, when available, AVID materials claim tutors have a profound impact on AVID students:

It is very effective for AVID students to work with college students who actively embrace the philosophy of the program and daily use of the learning and study techniques being taught. In addition to providing academic support, the college students are powerful role models who promote the development of an academic identity among AVID students. (AVID: Decades of College Dreams, 2005)

Tutors are provided with training from the AVID program on higher level questioning and various other strategies to effectively assist AVID students. Either the AVID coordinator for the district or the AVID teacher at a particular school can conduct the tutor training. Tutors are paid or volunteer depending on the school district and available funds.

The AVID program also promotes the taking of Cornell-style notes. Cornell notes were developed in 1949 at Cornell University by Walter Pauk to provide students with more effective test study guides. Cornell notes are now recognized by most major law schools as the preferred way of taking lecture notes (AVID: Decades of College Dreams, 2005). This strategy requires students to take detailed notes from class lectures and texts in the right margin of a page and develop questions or headings about the notes on the left hand side of the page. These notes from both AVID classes and other academic subjects are kept in a large binder that is regularly checked by the AVID teacher. The binder is also organized with the most recent document on

top so that students are able to identify the most recent information and develop study questions or strategies to prepare for exams.

Other AVID strategies include Socratic seminars, philosophical chairs, field trips, and guest speakers. The Socratic seminars are based on open-ended questions being posed relating to a piece of text or reading. Within a group atmosphere, students are then encouraged to listen respectfully to one another's thoughts regarding their reading and come to their own understanding rather than having the answers provided by a teacher. Similarly, the philosophical chairs strategy requires students to take a position on a topic and to change or maintain that position; in a seating arrangement indicating agreement, disagreement, or neutrality, students move among seats during discussions with peers.

Learning logs are also used on a daily basis by AVID students. These logs are notebooks with summaries of class activities and/or questions about the learning objectives for each academic class during the school day. The AVID program also encourages field trips to local universities and guest speakers from various professions and organizations to expand the horizons of AVID students. The AVID curriculum spans everything from time management and study skills to interviewing strategies and college application procedures. In addition, students are provided with time within the AVID elective to work on homework for their other classes that they often use to collaborate with peers so as to enhance their understanding of challenging coursework.

This study finds that these strategies are used to different degrees according to individual AVID teachers. School districts also vary in the way that AVID is operated. Although some

schools employ different individuals to coordinate AVID and teach the AVID course, many use the same individual. Thus in many schools the AVID teacher carries the additional responsibilities of also being the site director. These responsibilities include all planning activities, recruiting of tutors, making parent contacts, and selecting and deselecting students for the program.

The program is now offered in 45 states and 15 countries (AVID Center Online, 2007). North Carolina is ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> in the national rankings of state education. School districts in the state of North Carolina are identified and operated within individual counties. The AVID program is currently active in 34 counties in North Carolina. The focus of this study will be teacher perceptions of AVID in North Carolina using study participants from three counties within a close geographical area. However, with a program as widespread as AVID, there are bound to be variances in operation, expectation, and perception.

#### AVID in North Carolina

In the same manner that the AVID program began in California with one teacher, Mary Catharine Swanson, the implementation of AVID in North Carolina began with William Greenfield. Mr. Greenfield worked for 25 years with students in the Providence County school system. During that time, he was particularly drawn to the plight of African-American males within public schools and became involved in the education of several.

Although he worked in and supported public education, Greenfield became a benefactor to several young men and worked in conjunction with their families to pay for them to attend boarding school and then college. He felt that the boarding school structure was more conducive

to success for African-American males. In boarding school, the boys were provided with a sense of community. The boarding school students had a common goal of attending higher education and were held to high academic standards. However, although he was confident that the young men he sponsored would achieve their goals, he remained concerned about the other students in Providence County Schools.

As the Director of the Academically and Intellectually Gifted programs, Greenfield attended a conference in 1994 at which the new AVID program was presented. In many ways, the AVID program mimicked the educational experience he had found to be successful for the students he sponsored. After his initial investigation into the program, Greenfield believed that AVID could benefit the Providence County Schools. He began the planning process, including presenting the idea to the superintendent and school board. In 1996, the AVID program was implemented at both high schools in the district.

In order to provide the necessary funding for the program, Greenfield placed it within the confines of the AIG program. At that time, funding within the AIG program was available and AVID fit the general requirements for enhancing student support. The AVID organization continues to recommend placing AVID within the confines of AIG so that the program will receive adequate funding.

While the implementation of the AVID program in North Carolina began in one school, it has expanded to include 222 programs in 34 counties (M. Bennett, personal communication, August 16, 2007). For this study, three schools were selected. The three counties are close in proximity, yet demonstrate a number of differences in the ways that their schools chose to

implement the AVID program. The counties chosen for this study were Providence, Brevard, and Kent. Consistent with qualitative techniques the names of all counties are pseudonyms.

### *Providence County*

Providence County is renowned for information technology, pharmaceutical research, and higher education. A major research university is located in the county. In 2006, the population of Providence county was estimated to be 120,100, consisting of 75% Caucasian, 13% African-American, 5% Asian, 5% Hispanic, and Multi-Racial 1.5%. The median income is \$46,621 while the state average is only \$40,863. Providence County is marketed as one of the most highly educated communities in the nation with 87% of all adults over 25 having high school diplomas and 51% having bachelor's degrees (North Carolina Department of Revenue, 2007).

The Providence School District (PSD) is one of two districts in Providence County. Within this system there are two high schools, four middle schools, nine elementary schools, and over 10,000 students. SAT scores in PSD are the highest in the state with an average score of 1757. The school district employs the highest percentage of faculty with masters or doctoral degrees of any school district in the state. Eighty-one percent of the district's students go on to 4-year universities while nine percent attend community colleges. In 2006, PSD also boasted the lowest dropout rate in the state at 1.25% and the highest per pupil expenditure at \$9170.49 (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2007).

As previously discussed, PSD was the first district in the state to implement the AVID program. Greenfield was responsible for investigating, finding support, and implementing the

program in PSD. The AVID program began in the two high schools in 1996 and expanded to include the middle school level in 1999. According to the interviewee, funding for the AVID program is a school, district, and county initiative. When Greenfield functioned as the district coordinator, one of his primary goals was to establish sufficient funding to sustain the program. Since that time the county has supported the AVID program through funding of teacher and coordinator salaries, an outside tutorial program, and various field trips and guest speakers.

The AVID program is currently in place in all of the Providence School District high schools and middle schools. Coleman Middle School was selected for this study because the AVID teacher was willing and available to participate in this research.

Coleman is located on the outskirts of a major research university campus. The area surrounding the school consists of upper-middle class homes, parks, athletic fields, and high-end retail boutiques. The school was constructed in 1960 and educates over 700 students in grades 6 through 8. The student body is made up of mostly white, middle-class students. On the days of observation, the hallways are decorated with student artwork and notices from various clubs and organizations. I found the classrooms spacious, clean, and inviting.

AVID began in Coleman in 1999 with one AVID class and teacher. In 2004, the AVID teacher had the opportunity to become an assistant principal in Kent County and vacated the position. The principal determined that a successor had to be found who could be a strong advocate for the program and for the AVID students. He hired Hank Smith to run AVID.

Smith has been an educator for 23 years. He was in private industry before he decided that he wanted to work with young people. He was hired by Providence County Schools in 1999

to teach 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies. In 2005, Smith was asked to be on the site team for the AVID program. Due to unexpected staff turnover that same year, he became the AVID teacher and site coordinator before he could attend his first year of training. Smith has taught the AVID program for 3 years. During the school day, he teaches one elective class for each of the grade levels, sixth through eighth.

Smith is an African-American man in his early 40s. He is muscular with a clean-shaven head. For this study, I spent two full days observing Smith in the classroom, which was decorated with pictures of current and former students, books, a fish tank, and college flags hanging from the ceiling. Smith's workspace was overflowing with student journals, papers, and various resource materials. The lesson plan on the day of observation appeared on the chalkboard written in even, clear script. Smith appeared to be enthusiastic and in control of his classroom, and it was evident from the students' rapt attention and eagerness to raise their hands that they craved the attention and respect of their teacher.

Smith's peers mentioned in casual conversation that he possesses tools that provide him with a perceived advantage in relating with the AVID student population. First, he is African-American, as is 60% of the AVID population at Coleman. According to his peers, he is an intimidating presence with a booming voice and charismatic personality. Smith is known for his seemingly hard exterior while having what fellow teachers describe as a "heart of gold."

I observed the students file into the classroom where they were seated with their identical binders out and open by the time the bell rang. The desks were in neat rows with the students storing their book bags and personal belongings in baskets under their seats. They each began

working on a warm-up exercise posted on the board as Smith took attendance. No explanation was provided for the students to begin working, which seems to indicate this is a common activity. Once the students finished with the warm-up exercise, there was slight banter between them and Smith, and then the lesson began.

I observed a lesson involving the book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Smith asked questions and the students raised their hands to answer. There was very little discussion not directly related to the topic with all students appearing to remain on task for the entire class period.

Smith reported that his classroom practices have relaxed considerably since he began teaching AVID. “There are a lot of intangibles that you can’t control and you can’t look at and fix. I’ve only got them [the students] for an hour and a half a day and a part of me has realized that I can’t be that hard.” He has realized that his role as the AVID teacher is to be supportive rather than authoritative, explaining that his grading policy is the thing that has changed the most. Smith noted:

I know I’m not going to give anything less than a 60% because there is no way for him to dig himself out and I have been, after eighteen years of teaching, strongly entrenched into this on time 100%, one day late you could have copied a C, two days late you just didn’t care you get a 50%. I’ve moved it up to a 60% and that has been a challenge for me. And the reason for it is, again, if you put that kid too far behind the eight ball—he can’t do anything to get out.

He claims that as the AVID teacher, it is his responsibility to “reach out and grab those kids who

might not get through otherwise.” Additionally, he noted that the students are now capable of taking care of their basic needs, such as using the restroom or sharpening a pencil, without disrupting the class. He claims to hold them to high expectations and teaches them not to abuse the privileges he affords them.

Smith reported:

I fussed at a class this morning cause I was getting a little from them and I had to pull a kid aside and I told the class—fire, blood, vomit, those are my three emergencies and the only three things that I should hear about. So again it is that high expectation and so that we get in there.

On a typical day for Smith, he will teach three AVID elective classes and spend the remainder of his day on site administrator tasks such as making parent contacts, planning field trips, or checking in with other teachers. Overall Smith claims he is a better teacher because of AVID and that the structure and expectations in his classroom have changed in a dramatically positive way due to the program. He explains that his grading policies, classroom activities, and personal relationships with students have become more relaxed and “student friendly” since he began teaching the AVID program.

### *Brevard County*

Once a thriving tobacco center, Brevard County has been reestablished as a center for research, business, and banking. It is also the home to one major research university and several smaller universities. The population of Brevard County was estimated in 2006 to be 246,896 with 46% Caucasian, 38% African-American, 11% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 1.4% Multi-racial.

The median household income is \$44,048, well above the state average of \$40,863. Education levels in Brevard are reported as 85% of people over 25 having high school diplomas and 43.3 % having bachelor's degrees or higher (North Carolina Department of Revenue, 2007). Brevard is engaged in a massive revitalization program to restore its historic downtown area with its population growing as a result.

Brevard County School District is the seventh largest school district in the state. Brevard County Public Schools (BPS) provides public education for 31,981 students. The average expenditure per pupil for the 2004-2005 school year was \$8,107. BPS has 28 elementary schools, nine middle schools, seven high schools, one alternative school for disruptive students, and one hospital school for students requiring medical or psychiatric treatment on a daily basis. The average SAT score in Brevard County Public Schools is 1456 and the dropout rate is 3.6% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2007). Sixty-one percent of high school graduates attend 4-year universities while 20.8% attend community colleges.

The AVID program began in Brevard in 2003 at both the middle and high school level. BPS determined that AVID would be helpful in preparing students for the Early College high school which opened in 2004. District personnel began AVID implementation mostly at the middle school level, starting with five middle schools and one high school. The initial program was so successful that BPS now hosts 19 AVID-certified schools.

The AVID program is also part of a regional partnership for high school excellence in Brevard County that is a joint effort between local industry and the schools to provide academic and social supports to Brevard County students. The initiative recommends funding and support

for the AVID program through 2013. In addition to the regional program, the Rotary Club partners with the AVID program to provide tutors and financial support. The district does not specify precise funding for the AVID program, but claims to be expanding the program every year. The district, individual schools, and community partnerships share the cost of the AVID program.

AVID is typically funded at the school-site level by school district, state, federal, or grant monies. The program coordinator required by AVID comes from the existing staff; tutors are recruited from local colleges and universities and paid for their services. Schools pay for staff development and curriculum materials. The cost for one classroom of 30 students is usually less than \$10,000 per year. (Tools for Schools, 2007, p. 17)

There are 19 schools with AVID programs in BPS, with AVID serving 2,700 students in the Brevard County Schools. The first graduating class of AVID students from Brevard County had a 100% acceptance and enrollment rate at institutions of higher education. In 2003, Harriger Middle School, the site chosen for this study, began with an informal version of AVID in four classrooms. Teachers used AVID strategies such as Cornell notes and philosophical chairs to promote learning within their classrooms. In 2004, Jessica Jones began formal implementation of AVID at Harriger Middle School, and the next year it became a certified AVID site.

Jones was picked by the principal to teach AVID. She was an unusual choice because she had never expected to become a teacher at all as 2 years into medical school, she decided she no longer had a desire to practice medicine. After taking some time off, Jones attended a Brevard County job fair at which she was interviewed and offered the position of dance teacher for

Harriger Middle School. Although she enjoyed teaching dance, Jones had difficulty in obtaining certification. As a last resort, she intended to take classes for certification in middle grades science because her undergraduate degree had been in biology.

At that time, her principal was looking for a teacher for the AVID program to begin the formal implementation process. He reports that he approached her because he had witnessed the interactions she had with students in the hallways and noted that they seemed to respond to her despite her reputation for being strict in the classroom. Jones currently teaches one AVID elective class and one yearbook class.

Jones wears her hair very short, and despite her tall stature, wears very high-heeled shoes. In her classroom the paint was peeling, the chairs were mismatched, and a door to the outside was broken allowing the winter air to steal whatever warmth the old radiators might have provided on the day that I observed her class. The students filed in wearing heavy coats and immediately got their materials together for the day's lesson, which was posted on the blackboard. She walked around the room and occasionally removed a hat or hood and asked the students various questions. They appeared at ease and comfortable with her.

While she circulated among the students, Jones glanced at their AVID binders and learning logs. As the lesson began, the students were called into a circle with their chairs. There was commotion as the students assembled in a circle, but then they began actively sharing in the Socratic seminar. The lesson called for all to participate by stating rumors about their school. The students were active participants and seemed to revel in this opportunity to tell an adult

some of the unsavory activities of which they had been accused. Later in the lesson, Jones used a small plush toy owl tossed around the room to designate whose turn it was to speak. When it was time to switch to a writing exercise, the students did so without complaint.

Jones describes her daily classroom activities as:

A typical day in an AVID class, the students come in and there will usually be a warm up on the overhead—usually something that gets them thinking critically and typically a writing assignment. I love sharing, and I love student input so I always do something that they can contribute to with their opinions and feelings. I also love collaborative efforts. And they do a fair amount of independent work. Again, there is usually some wrap-up with a reflection or a learning log, or just sharing what we've learned.

On a normal day, Jones will teach two AVID classes and one yearbook class. She also reports spending a great deal of time on the site coordinator tasks. Jones claims she learns as much from her AVID students as they do from her. She reports that AVID is an effective strategy for reaching the students at Harriger Middle school and that she hopes it continues to be supported by the school district.

### *Kent County*

Kent County is located in the heart of North Carolina. Within a 30-minute commute of major metropolitan areas, Kent is largely a bedroom community with the school system listed as the single largest employer in the county. In 2006, the total population of Kent County was estimated to be over 57,023 with 72% Caucasian, 17% African-American, and 11% Hispanic.

The median income is \$42,850, slightly above the median state income of \$40,863. Kent County reports 28% of adults over 25 have a high school diploma, 15.3% have a bachelor's degree, and 7.2% have a masters or a doctorate (North Carolina Department of Revenue, 2007).

Kent County School District provides public education for a total of 7,521 students with nine elementary, two middle schools, three high schools, and one alternative school. The total per pupil expenditure in Kent County is \$8344.84. In 2006, the average SAT score was 1436 and the dropout rate was 4.5%. Forty-nine percent of CCS seniors plan to attend 4-year universities, and 33% plan to attend community college (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2006).

In 2005, the AVID program was introduced by Dr. Amy Kuykendal, Superintendent of Kent County Schools. Dr. Kuykendal became involved in the AVID program while previously employed in Providence County Schools. At the start of her employment within Kent County Schools, Kuykendal initiated the development of a district-wide Strategic Plan which was to be a district and community initiative for improving the county's schools. Part of this plan was intended to address the vast discrepancy in achievement levels between students of high and low socioeconomic status.

In the fall of 2005, the district sent high school administrators and school representatives to the AVID Awareness conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The superintendent determined that AVID would meet many of the objectives of the county's strategic plan, and the school board agreed to support the AVID program. It was implemented in the 10th grade in the three high schools during the fall of 2006, with one teacher and program at each school. The district hired William Greenfield, who came out of retirement to act as district coordinator.

Trifaro High School was the site selection for this study. The school currently educates just over 1000 students. Finn Daniels teaches one AVID class and one Civics/Government class per day.

Daniels is compact, bearded, and seems to grin perpetually. He has been an educator for 13 years after previously working in private industry until he was provided with an early retirement opportunity at the age of 35. He always wanted to be a teacher, and while working at a small private school, Daniels finished his masters in teaching. He was hired to work at Trifaro High School in 1999 as a Civics and Social Studies teacher.

In 2001, with the counsel of an assistant principal, Daniels devised the S.K.I.P.S. (Sharing Knowledge Improves Performance) course that was designed to identify those students coming from the feeder schools who were most likely to drop out. Daniels and the counselors identified 15 students and then recruited eight high-performing seniors to provide peer tutoring during one class period a day. The class was a success and only ended when numbers and overcrowded classrooms became a school-wide problem.

In 2006, Daniels was elected as Teacher of the Year by his fellow teachers. Daniels serves as the Senior Class Advisor and is responsible for all aspects of the graduation ceremony. He is also credited with organizing the school's Ultimate Frisbee Club that won a state championship in its first year of competition.

In the fall of 2005, Daniels was asked to attend an AVID awareness seminar in Atlanta. Later that spring, he was approached about becoming the AVID teacher and coordinator for Trifaro High School. He agreed because AVID seemed to align with many of Daniels's own

beliefs about education and he liked the idea of having students who volunteered for extra work, parents who had to be active participants, and an extra planning period. Daniels received his initial training at the Summer Institute in 2006 in Atlanta. During the summer of 2007, he attended the second portion of the Summer Institute.

The students seem to love Daniels. I observed him for 2 days for this study, during which time the students appeared to be drawn to his humor and apparent good nature. The environment of his classroom was rowdy, slightly paternal, and very energetic. His classroom is located at a main junction in the school, and his door is open so that he and his students were often interrupted during the course of the observation to wave or say hello to passersby.

Daniels's classroom had high ceilings with walls covered in political advertisements from the 2006 and 2007 elections. It was colorful with posters and pictures with motivational sayings placed throughout. The room was square and the chairs were arranged in rows within a horseshoe. The center of the room had a few tables and a podium. The daily agenda, including a reminder to complete learning logs, was written on the dry-erase board along with various quotes and random notes from students to Daniels. The students clambered in the room noisily calling greetings to one another and to Daniels. They eventually took their seats and pulled out their materials. The lesson was on time management, and Daniels kept the students on task as they called out information for him to write in various categories on the board.

Daniels described his typical AVID classroom as:

Usually pretty chaotic. It usually takes me a while to settle them down and well, I have them first period too so that might be, you know, part of it. Once we get

settled down there is no real typical day. Because each day is very different. On Thursdays I've got 'em set up in groups and the AP Bio kids come in for tutoring. Lots of Fridays I have guest speakers like students coming in from [the university] who are working on legal curriculum. When we are doing a regular AVID day, like today, the university has some really good stuff on time management and this is the kind of stuff that college kids do. So they really just try to keep them going on that stuff for half the class and then they work together on things and as I walk around I'll ask them questions. It changes daily.

Daniels reports that on an average day he will teach one AVID class followed by a Civics class. The remainder of his day is spent planning for class activities, making parent contacts, checking grades for AVID students, and meeting with the site team counselor. The apparent lack of structure in Daniels's AVID class seems to work well for him, and both he and the students seem to thrive in this environment.

### *Summary*

The AVID program has achieved national recognition and is expanding at a rapid pace. AVID data suggest the program is an effective method of enhancing student achievement (Bushweller, 2003, Guthrie, 2000, Guthrie, 2002). The number of AVID programs within North Carolina continues to grow as school district personnel attempt to find the strategies necessary to promote student success. The educators who took part in this study came into the program in different ways, but have identified strategies to take ownership and individualize the program. Each teacher has a unique experience and perspective of the AVID program. Each of the

educators in this study also fits Swanson’s version of the ideal AVID teacher.

### Research Findings

The research questions for this study were developed to address the overarching question of teacher perceptions of the AVID program. The research questions examine individual experience with AVID, impressions of the program, and recommendations for improvements to the program. The research questions for this study are:

1. Do the AVID teachers in this study believe they are provided with the appropriate training, support, and instruction necessary to effectively implement AVID?
2. Do AVID teacher’s perceptions about the AVID program change over time?
3. What roles do AVID teachers experience in their work and professional practice with the AVID program?
4. Did teacher expectations for their students change? In what ways and why did they change?

The questions were addressed in a series of interviews and observations with AVID teachers, as well as from analysis of pertinent documents.

Research Question #1: Do the AVID teachers in this study believe they are provided with the appropriate training, support, and instruction necessary to effectively implement AVID?

In Guthrie (2000) in *Strategies for Dissemination*, the features of a successful AVID program include “access to quality professional development” (p. 54). The AVID program provides a Summer Institute held in various geographic regions throughout the United States

each summer. The 1-week Institute features presentations, meetings, and strategizing sessions. The Summer Institute provides the bulk of training for all AVID practitioners, both new and veteran. In addition to the Summer Institute, there are opportunities for local PATH (not an acronym, as it is the name given to AVID curriculum training sessions) training. The sessions are held several times throughout the school year and serve as smaller versions of the intense Summer Institute. PATH training often provides strategies for a specific AVID essential or implementation suggestion. In addition to these formal offerings from the AVID Center, there are informal meetings held by AVID district coordinators and sometimes meetings of the AVID teachers themselves. Each of these events provides opportunities for training, consultation, and recommendations for achieving success within the AVID program. However, the study participants found the formal training sessions to often be overwhelming. Though they report enjoying them and receiving quality instruction ideas, they also claim there is simply too much information to effectively absorb in one session per year.

*Hank Smith*

*Training.* Smith reported that he was overwhelmed by the AVID Atlanta Summer Institute his first year. He describes an intense environment with 4 hours of training in the morning and 4 hours of training in the afternoon followed by 2 hours of strategizing with the site team. During that training he felt [the AVID program] “threw all of these chips of knowledge at us and some of them hit me and some of them went away.” Smith has now attended two of the Summer Institutes and one PATH training. He describes his second year as “the most valuable year. ’Cause you then understand the things they are talking about because you’ve already had

the practice and, frankly, you've already failed." Smith indicated the most important aspect of the training was:

If we are doing AVID the way that we are supposed to, it is kind of Cornell notish, you kind of go back and write down the questions you are going to have the next time you go through training, the next time you talk to your sage, the next time you have a PATH training you ask those questions then because someone else has already done this and they've made the mistakes for you.

Smith reports that a single year of training in the AVID program is insufficient. He states that school districts wishing to sustain AVID certification should send teachers to training every year.

*Support.* Support for a teacher or program can be demonstrated in myriad ways. To promote and sustain an educational program, foremost there must be financial support. Beyond that, educators may be provided with encouragement from peers, administrators, and community members. These stakeholders must also display a willingness to assist the teacher or program when necessary.

According to Smith, if a teacher needs something in Providence County Schools, it will become available. Various district publications confirm his assessment. Providence County Schools publicize their commitment to supporting and encouraging teachers in the 2002-2008 Strategic Plan which states, "Resources will be identified, strategies implemented, and community support marshaled to retain high quality administrators, teachers, and support staff in a supportive and professional working environment" (Providence County, 2001, p. 29). With regard to supporting the AVID program, Smith states that it is both a site and a district initiative:

Everybody is on the same page, the administration and our county office, our principals, and our administrators here are just great and the best part about it is that the teachers here in the building are supportive and the teacher's who aren't don't dare rub up against it.

Smith claims that he has the strong support of his school administration, the faculty, and the parents involved in his program. "One of the best parts of working with AVID is that the people have been real helpful." Smith's encounters with the AVID staff at training sessions and in individual contacts have been professional and helpful. He reports that people from the AVID organization as well as his local coordinator have been responsive to his needs. For example, at one point, Smith had a difficult time locating a specific lesson plan in his files. He called the AVID organization and they were able to fax him a copy immediately.

*Instruction.* Smith states that "if we as professionals take the tools that have already been invented and roll with those then they give us everything we need and all we need to do is follow the calendar." He reports that he follows the AVID curriculum very closely. He frequently uses the AVID library and finds much of the information available on the discs to be helpful. "It has been two years now and I'm still going through stuff and still finding things that are usable. And I'm finding things that I have to modify to make work but that is the beauty of the program." Data from the observation indicated that Smith's instruction was in alignment with the AVID curriculum for that calendar week. He asserts that the AVID materials provided at the training opportunities and the AVID library are a vital resource for him, noting:

I keep my Holy Bible in the back of my car and my Holy Grail in my bag. This is the disc that I can put in the computer and change if I need to, this is the implementation book that has taken me through so much of what I need, and this is the calendaring book that has saved my neck. It takes you through and everything is in there. There are things I've come to in there that I've looked at and thought what the heck? So you leave it altogether or you leave it and come back to it later because when you go back to training the second year, that is when you ask about it.

Smith sees his professional growth as a work in progress "God isn't finished with me yet," and claims there is still much for him to learn about the AVID program.

*Financial.* Smith is fortunate to work in a wealthy school district and more so to benefit from the initial fundraising put in place by William Greenfield when he served as the district coordinator. Smith stated:

William did so much fundraising when we first started and now we need to get back to that. When he first came through, he raised so much money that we were able to live off that for a while. Now we are back in the fundraising stage, even with that in mind, I'm in [Providence]. After 15 years of teaching administration, I went ahead and make a decision to come here to [Providence] because I knew that the funds would be available. Here we get pretty much what we need and so, like I said, it is a district initiative and it's a site initiative, and with both of those in mind if we need it, it is there.

Providence County Schools AVID programs also benefit from an allocation from the county commissioners of \$6000 per year for the services of a company called Treasure Tutorials. They also pay a small stipend to the university students who provide tutoring several times a week. (Specific funding information was not available from the Providence County School District at the time of this study.) Overall, the Providence County School District offers the most financial support of any county studied.

*Jessica Jones*

*Training.* The principal's decision to ask Jones to teach AVID occurred too late for her to have the opportunity to attend the AVID Summer Institute. As she had no formal training, Jones claims she was very nervous about teaching an entirely new curriculum. She commented:

I didn't get to Atlanta for the regional training, like everyone else who was involved in the program did. So I was like, okay, I don't know exactly what I am supposed to be doing, but I had spoken with some people who went down for training, I'd looked through the manuals and stuff to try to get it and just got a lot of guidance and support from those who did go down to training and it ended up being a really good fit for me.

When she was finally able to attend a Summer Institute in 2006, Jones reports that her district coordinator explained to her that she had met her goals as a first-year AVID teacher so the district coordinator sent her to the second year training (known as refining). Jones stated:

To have those experiences and share things that work.... I came away with so many great lesson plans and some of the strategies for helping to monitor students

and helping to stay on top of things. It was a really good experience. I think sometimes we overlook those opportunities to share when we go to trainings we are looking for someone to teach us and I think the most rewarding thing about the AVID training was that it wasn't just about teaching, but it was also about sharing. Each day they would take a strategy and approach an essential and give you suggestions but then each day there was some time built into the training for sharing things you'd done that had worked or things you had done that hadn't worked so you can prevent someone else from having to go down that path.

For Jones, the sharing aspect of the training sessions is the most valuable.

Like the other participants, Jones reports feeling overwhelmed by the volume of information presented at the training session, yet she also stated:

The training is good, I've been in quite a few workshops in education and elsewhere where I've twiddled my thumbs and wondered why am I here, what is the purpose, and ugh, they've spent money on this. For AVID I went there and came back feeling refreshed, and empowered with all kinds of ideas and feeling like, I am so glad I went to this. I feel like it is money well worth the cost.

Jones reports that she felt empowered by the training sessions and yet desired more opportunity for collaboration and support throughout the school year.

*Support.* Although Jones claims that she has the support of her school administrators, she says that it is not perfect and that compromises often have to be made. During an observation it was necessary for Jones to interact with the school principal regarding an AVID student. The

encounter appeared cordial and the principal deferred to her suggestion. She reports having the support of a very strong site team composed of teachers from all subject areas who also teach the AVID students and assist her in dealing with some of the administrative details. While she claims to have the support of the parents, Jones would also like to see their more active participation in the AVID program and in school in general. She stated, “You have to have a relationship with parents since you are partners in this [AVID] and in the student’s success.” Jones indicated throughout the interview that she continues to work on developing her relationships with administrators and parents.

*Instruction.* Though Jones indicated she would like more effective modes through the AVID program to share strategies, she claims that her AVID instruction was valuable. Flexibility within the program is one of her favorite aspects of AVID. She commented:

The fact that as long as I am teaching certain components, as long as I am addressing the curriculum with the WICR and the essentials I can approach it in so many different ways and it leads to a lot of creativity as a teacher and kids enjoy it, my students come in and are like what are we doing today?

Jones maintains that her love of creativity works well within the AVID program. Although the AVID program provides specific tools for instruction, much of the planning and implementation is left to the creativity of the teacher. Jones reports that she would like to continue attending the Summer Institutes as they are a valuable resource for her own practice.

*Financial.* Finances are an issue for Jones’ AVID program. While the district publicizes that the AVID program is funded partially through partnerships with the High Five Initiative and

the Brevard Rotary Club, no specific budget information was available at the time of this study. The district provides no funding for tutors, and volunteer tutors are virtually impossible to come by due to Harriger Middle School's isolated location. According to Jones:

I think that the problem with schools is that, and it isn't always a problem, is that we are always looking for what can benefit the kids and so we're always quick to jump for whatever program is working at the time. So we find that the programs that were new and exciting immediately beforehand start to lose the funding and shifting it to other places. I think that is what happens to AVID in several places. We've seen that it can work, we've seen it be successful, we owe it in huge part to the dedication of the teachers and the students and so we see that those are the two things that matter most. We start pulling the money away from it and saying that we can put the money somewhere else, and that is where we suffer and where we lost funding. That is a good way to put it that the new and exciting thing gets the money.

In the interview, Jessica expressed frustration with the lack of funding provided to the AVID program. She reports that AVID essentials such as tutors, field trips, and guest speakers would "do wonders" for her AVID students, and yet they are simply not feasible for Harriger Middle School.

*Finn Daniels*

*Training.* After Daniels attended the initial AVID Awareness Seminar in Fall 2005, he was skeptical about the need for additional training. He liked some of the strategies of the AVID

program but mostly felt that he could handle the material on his own without the need for further training. However, after his first summer institute, Daniels reports feeling differently:

I've never been to anything where I worked so hard. Those five days we were in meetings all day and William Greenfield had us meeting every night. I felt like I was learning a whole new subject. It was like they were teaching me French and I was going to have to go home and teach French. It was all so brand new, and all of this curriculum and they go through and it is all spelled out. Like week one you should be doing this, this, and this, then week two you do this and this. And I don't really like to do that so, um, I really learned a ton and felt like I had enough to get started when I got back.

For his second year of training, Daniels was especially looking forward to learning from the mistakes he had made. He noted:

I am just looking forward to this year because last year it was so much that was thrown at me. I was totally overwhelmed, it was 12 hours a day of this stuff. I was like not really able to absorb it all, so now that I have a year of this under my belt I really think that I am going to get a lot more out of it this year. I told William that the other day, that I can't wait to go back to Atlanta and actually learn some stuff rather than just being overwhelmed and I really did feel overwhelmed last year. So I don't know if it is some additional training but retraining, I know I am going to get a lot more out of it this year. I am really looking forward to it.

Daniels reports that the opportunity to learn from others at the training sessions is one of the

most valuable resources.

*Support.* Because AVID is still in the implementation phase in Kent County Schools, Daniels asserts he has the unwavering support of both the school and county office administration. In addition to the support he receives from them, William Greenfield who now works as the Kent County District Coordinator is a frequent visitor and collaborator who provides extensive recommendations and support. According to Daniels, his collaboration with Greenfield is one of the most beneficial elements of his AVID practice. Daniels reports that Greenfield regularly serves as a sounding board, administrator, and confidant.

*Instruction.* While Daniels maintains that the AVID curriculum is solid and adaptable, he finds that his interpretations of lessons and planning calendars are more effective for his program. He utilizes some of the AVID-provided curriculum but supplements it with other sources and his own imagination:

So it is not really throwing all of their stuff away but it is finding how it meets up with it.

I do it with almost everything. I've taken my own things and added them to it. Some of them not related all to what they [AVID] are asking.

In the observation conducted for this study, Daniels was using a Socratic seminar structure for an original AVID lesson plan on time management supplemented with resources from various universities. More than any other of the participants, Daniels adapts the AVID program to his own teaching practices and strategies.

*Financial.* One of the hidden costs of the AVID program is the reassignment of a teacher from a regular education classroom. The social studies program at Trifaro High School has

been affected by the reassignment of Daniels to AVID for two periods a day, one as a teacher and one for AVID planning. His availability for only one Civics class per semester has placed a strain on the workloads of his departmental peers. Each of the high schools in Kent County was provided with an additional half-time position to accommodate the AVID program.

According to documentation, the 2006-2007 district budget allocated \$760,538 for special instructional programs, including AVID. Daniels reports that he regularly applies for grants from the local educational foundation and PTSA organization.

The AVID program at Trifaro High School was able to take several school-funded field trips to area colleges and universities. Daniels says, "I haven't noticed a finance problem but maybe because we are new and it has so much support from [central office administration] but I haven't noticed a finance problem." While finances have not seemed to be an issue for the AVID program in Kent County, making a stipend available for tutors continues to be a challenge. Daniels struggles to find community and college volunteers to come to Trifaro High School during the school day to provide the kind of tutoring stipulated by the AVID program.

### *Summary*

In general, each of the participants seemed to indicate that the training sessions, especially the second year, are valuable and imperative for success of an AVID program. All three interviewees discussed their feelings of being overwhelmed at the initial training and their thoughts that the second year provided more concrete instruction after they had had a year of experience. All participants commented that one of their favorite aspects of the training sessions, the opportunity to share stories and strategies with other AVID teachers, was

something they desired more of within the formal structure of the training and informally with fellow teachers.

Support, financial and otherwise, appears to be present to varying degrees from each school district, set of administrators, and fellow teachers. Jones' observation that the new and exciting programs draw the most financial support spoke to her frustrations that the district did not fund tutors and field trips. Though Daniels claims to have support, he fears that with a change in administration this support for the AVID program might waver. Smith fears that with the amount of funds raised by William Greenfield dwindling and county commissioners threatening to discontinue financial support, he may be forced to apply for various grants to supplement the funds provided by Providence County Schools. The financial support available to these teachers correlates closely to the district-advertised per-pupil expenditure. The school with the highest per-pupil expenditure provides the most financial support whereas the district with the lowest per-pupil expenditure does not provide much in the way of financial support. Providence, with the highest expenditure, provides funding for field trips and stipends for tutors. Kent County, with a new AVID program in place, provides funding for various speakers and field trips. However, Brevard County struggles to provide school-sponsored field trips and does not have resources to pay tutors.

Research Question #2: Do AVID teacher's perceptions about their local AVID programs change over time?

This research question is framed around the teacher's initial observations about the AVID program and the way they have constructed new meanings about the program after having the

opportunity to teach it.

*Hank Smith*

Smith was unfamiliar with the AVID program when he was initially asked to teach and coordinate. He reported that he actually thought he was being punished by being assigned to AVID. He states that he went to his principal and said, “I got a confession to make, I thought I was getting the AVID classroom ’cause I’d been bad.” According to Hank, the principal’s response was that he already exhibited many of the AVID strategies in his classroom and that it was a “natural fit because you have to love them but you have to be really tough at the same time.” Once he attended AVID training, he recognized that it was indeed a good fit for him. When asked about how he feels about AVID today, Smith responded, “I’ve fallen in love with it. I’ve fallen completely in love with it.”

Throughout the interviews, Smith was consistently positive about the AVID program and how he has made his place in the program. When asked about his favorite aspect of the AVID program, Smith responded that he enjoys the moments when he is able to turn to the students and say “when you gonna learn to trust me.” He claims to feel that he has come a long way in the AVID program even though he reports that initially:

I didn’t know what I was doing, now as the elective teacher and the site coordinator I know what I am supposed to be doing and I know what I need to improve upon and in many cases, I actually know how to improve upon it. During that first year it was just like, boy, I hope I am doing this right. So, it was just like pick up the book, follow the calendar, follow the PATH training, just do what

they say do—and even if you fail miserably, as I have done in tutorials, Socratic seminars, philosophical chairs, what you do is you find out what it takes not to do it right.

Smith indicates that he began the program with skepticism and even some reluctance.

The training process and the experience he has had teaching the AVID program have provided him with a new understanding of why he was selected to lead the AVID program at Coleman Middle School. He concluded our final interview by stating:

The program is strong. It is an expensive program. I am still learning AVID and they've done all this great work and if I can just get a good handle on what is going through and later on I might have recommendations, but for right now I am still amazed at the ah-ha moments that I have.

Throughout the data collection process, Smith appeared to enjoy his position. Each time I observed or interviewed him, he was busy preparing for a field trip or an AVID Awards Banquet. He seemed to work very hard for the AVID program and for the students in particular.

#### *Jessica Jones*

Like Smith, Jones was asked to teach AVID before she could receive formal training. She reported being nervous going into the first school year, but that a support structure was in place to help her and her students to be successful. Jones claims that one of the things that helped her was that AVID strategies had been utilized in her school for 2 years prior to the introduction of a formal AVID curriculum.

Jones reports that her favorite aspect of the program is flexibility. She stated:

The fact that as long as I am teaching certain components, as long as I am addressing the curriculum with the WICR and the essentials, I can approach it in so many different ways and it leads to a lot of creativity as a teacher and the kids enjoy it. My students come in and are like, what are we doing today? It is always something different and something new and I try to make it fun but at the same time, I push my students to work and to think and that I can push them in so many different ways.

In her previous position, Jones had been a dance teacher. She enjoyed teaching dance, but had problems meeting the requirements for certification. She noted:

I had one of my students to ask me the other day, which I liked teaching better, AVID or dance? And I told them that I couldn't honestly say that I liked one better than the other, they were both things that I liked and what I liked best about them was that I got to work with the students in ways that I wouldn't necessarily in the regular classroom and it allows me to get to know my students in ways that other teachers do not in a regular classroom because of the curriculum and testing. Because that is such a focus, it limits how core teachers can get involved with their students. But because in this classroom we can talk about a variety of things and use it to help students with improving their writing skills, improving their inquiry and thinking skills, becoming better readers, I can provide them with reading materials that really gets them to thinking and what they are interested in and collaboration is huge and I love doing group projects and that just allows me

to get to know the students so much better and so, I love it. I am really glad that I had the opportunity to become part of the AVID program. So every chance I get now I tell people about the program.

Jones reports that despite her initial nervousness about teaching a program with which she was unfamiliar, she believes it has been a perfect fit. During observation it was apparent that she enjoyed the relationships she had developed with her students. She was able to address them on a level that made them appear comfortable and open with her regarding subjects that may have been taboo for other teachers in the educational environment. Jones reports that she is now a strong advocate for the AVID program.

*Finn Daniels*

Daniels was and perhaps remains the most skeptical of the research participants. As he claims, he was a natural choice for the AVID teacher especially as he was so willing to take on similar challenges in the past. “It’s kind of like Mikey from the cereal commercials—you know, call Finn down he’ll do it, he’ll do anything.” Daniels first attended an AVID Awareness Seminar in Fall 2004. He reported:

I came away from that first one with kind of mixed feelings because I thought, wow, this sounds like a great idea, why don’t we do this for everybody? And, I wondered about their statistical stuff because not everyone is staying in the program but they dismiss kids from the program and we are going to be dismissing kids from our program. So of course their statistics always look good. So you know that kind of bothered me a little bit about it. You know its

something that the school has to spend a great deal of money on, for the materials and stuff, so that made me feel a little funny. You know I just felt like, I could do this without all the money. The training was good, but, I don't know, I almost felt like I could have done it on my own.

After teaching AVID for a year, Daniels asserts that he has taken ownership of the program and adapted it to his and his students' needs. While some of general skepticism remains, Daniels is strongly positive about the program. During observed interactions with faculty from Trifaro High School, Daniels raved about the program and the effect it has had on his students. When asked about how he feels about the AVID program now, Daniels responded:

When you teach high school, like I teach Civics mostly 'cause I have them for that class and then I have them again as a senior advisor, but other than that I have them for one little bit as they go on through. But that is it, your impact is limited to 90 minutes a day for 90 days. You can do a lot but it is not the same as being able to be with these kids for three solid years and having a real live impact on them. You know, for real. I don't even know if you could put a number on the level of impact in relation to just being a regular teacher. So I think that is the best part is that you learn these kids you know them so well, you know their parents. I just came from the National Honor Society inductions and I have five inducted and I have all these parents hugging me. I haven't done anything and yet they all hug me and love me. Every one of those successes I am going to share with them, I am going to cry like a baby when they graduate.

Finn reports that although some of his skepticism about the program remains, he loves being the AVID teacher. However, he expresses regret that a program like AVID cannot be made available for the entire student body of Trifaro High School.

### *Summary*

The study participants all report to having begun the AVID program with some degree of doubt, nervousness, or skepticism. Two of the participants were asked to teach the program before they received formal training and thus could not understand its full scope. After teaching in the AVID program, each of the participants reports positive experiences. The interviewees each discussed some aspect of the AVID program that they believe has enhanced their experience as educators. As Smith claims, the opportunity to ask “when you gonna trust me” provides satisfaction. Jones’ favorite part of the AVID program is the opportunity to use her creativity with lesson plans, and Daniels reports that the relationships he develops with students through AVID make the practice, training, and effort worthwhile. However, while the AVID program has provided training and support, the teachers’ perceptions about the program seem to have more to do with their daily interactions with students.

Research Question #3: What roles do AVID teachers experience in their work and professional practice with the AVID program?

According to the AVID program, a “strong, committed AVID teacher remains the cornerstone of a successful AVID program” (AVID: Decades of College Dreams, 2005). Teachers across the profession report that their jobs encompass much more than conveying educational information to students. Some of the many responsibilities identified by teachers

include: mentor, coach, parental figure, motivator, and disciplinarian (Imig & Imig, 2007). As reported in the AVID literature, the parameters for an AVID teacher also include being someone who shares the individual determination and desire expected of AVID students. Table 7 is derived from the benchmarks set by the AVID program to determine viable AVID teaching candidates.

Table 7

Desirable AVID Candidate Qualification

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Desirable Candidate Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-A veteran teacher – minimum 3 years</li><li>-Collaborative workplace experience</li><li>-Credentialed expertise in a “college preparatory” subject area</li><li>-Effective classroom management style and organizational skills</li></ul>
Desirable Personal Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Commitment to personal and professional growth</li><li>-Creative problem solver</li><li>-Perseveres through long-term projects</li><li>-Builds relationships with staff and community</li><li>-Enjoys multitasking</li></ul>
Desirable Collegial Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Respected by faculty &amp; staff</li><li>-Communicates well</li><li>-Proponent of equal access to rigorous curriculum</li><li>-Has or can develop a leadership role</li></ul>

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Note. Source: AVID: Decades of College Dreams (2005).

In addition, the AVID program states that “as with AVID students, the teacher should commit to the program voluntarily, with a full understanding of the expectations and goals of AVID” (AVID: Decades of College Dreams, 2005). From this information, it might be determined that the AVID program can provide a checklist of the qualities needed to be a successful AVID teacher.

However, the question remains: how do the AVID teachers see themselves? Most of the data from this study points to the teachers being highly satisfied. Specifically, they report liking the program, the flexibility, and the ability to develop relationships with their students. The study participants were quick to state that the program is not for every teacher and that careful consideration should be made as to who becomes an AVID teacher. Each met, or at least seemed to meet, AVID’s recommendations for the qualifications of a good AVID teacher. Their own perceptions of their role provide insight and texture as to how they view the AVID program as a whole.

*Hank Smith*

Smith describes his initial years of team teaching at Coleman as an us-versus-them or his-team-of-teachers-versus-the-rest-of-the-school mentality. He reports that he has changed as an individual and as a professional since becoming an AVID teacher. He states that AVID has made him care about the entire school to ensure that the strategies and research that help his students can also help those not involved in the AVID program.

Smith admits that at times he can be perceived as abrasive and that this may have been one of the reasons he was chosen to advocate for the AVID students. He stated:

It was easier when I was a team teacher because then I had 100 kids and I stayed in my own section of the building and I didn't have to be nice to people. You know, and now not only do I have to speak, but now I have to have conversations with [other teachers]. Those courageous conversations, 'cause sometimes you have to tell people things you know they don't want to hear.

He reports that he is much more of a team player now, especially since going through the AVID training seminar entitled "Being Nice to Other People in the Building." Smith states, "I am older than most of our teachers so I have a tendency to be patronizing and very arrogant." The AVID program has however taught him new strategies for dealing with his colleagues: "At one time I didn't care, but with this program has come a great deal of humility. Because I have to ask people for things so I have to be nice now, and I'm not used to that." Data from observations indicated that Smith has a strong personality and that the way he believes he is perceived by his peers may be accurate.

Smith also enjoys his role as the Site Director for the AVID program at Coleman. The site director responsibilities include event planning for banquets, award ceremonies, and trips, and personal communications with tutors, parents, guest speakers, and school stakeholders. He reports that being the site director allows him to see the program as a whole along with the needs of each individual class and student. He noted:

It [site director] allows me control of everything. I am busy right now, if I stay busy I stay out of trouble. But at the same time I get a chance to see where the strengths of the program are and I get a chance to see what we really need to work

on and I get a good big perspective to work on the whole program. So, when I am doing certain things, I understand why they need to be done and it makes it a lot easier.

As the site director, Smith is also responsible for leading the site team. He claims that he is fortunate with his site team and that they “keep him on the ground.” Smith states that they all support him and the students and that each member “brings a little something different to the table.” During one observation a site team member interrupted the class to bring Smith some recent testing results. The results were not yet public knowledge, but the teacher indicated she wanted him to know about his students’ performance. Smith says he believes that any one of his site team members could become an AVID teacher and that they would be effective with the program.

Overall Smith appears to enjoy his role as an AVID teacher. He reports that he particularly likes being able to serve as a surrogate parent and coach.

#### *Jessica Jones*

Jones identifies her personal role in AVID as one where she must practice the flexibility she celebrates in the program. As she is simultaneously the AVID teacher, site director, and teacher liaison, she must be able and willing to address her audience on any level. She reports one of the most difficult aspects of the AVID program as being the daily dealings with her fellow teachers. Although she is in charge of a program, Jones is not considered an administrator and therefore people question her authority. She commented:

The role is definitely one where I feel like I am wearing many hats sometimes. It

can be overwhelming, I will say that, especially when you are also the coordinator it can be really hard sometimes walking that line because I'm not an administrator but I am in charge of a team. Sometimes telling someone what they need to do when you are getting paid the same amount, and I don't have anything over you to say that I should be telling you what to do, but at the same time it is my job and my position. So that part can be kind of difficult for me sometimes.

One of the most significant challenges she has as the AVID teacher at Harriger Middle School is knowing when and where she needs to switch roles to effectively address her audience. However, she claims the program is worth the extra effort:

I would say that it is hard, the many roles that you have to play makes it very difficult at times when you are trying to be so many different things to different people from your students to your team members, to your administrators. It is very difficult but at the same time, it can be very worthwhile.

Jones asserts that her additional role as site director is a natural fit and that the additional responsibilities of site director enable her to see the big picture. She noted:

I would say [the position of site coordinator] makes me much more aware of what I am supposed to be doing as the AVID teacher because I am responsible for making sure that our AVID program is aligned with the essentials and is on task and on track with what our goals are year to year. I think I am better able to work with my students to make sure we are meeting them.

Like the other teachers in this study, Jones has an extra planning period during which to focus on her site director activities. She feels that this is a necessary element, but fears that with the addition of more AVID elective classes, this extra period may be taken away.

The site team, composed of a group of core teachers, a counselor, and an administrator, is an intricate part of the AVID program at Jones' school. The AVID students are kept with the same team of teachers throughout the school year. Jones describes the site team that she leads as "one big family with aunts and uncles." She claims that the site team structure allows the teachers to effectively monitor the AVID students because the teachers all know and practice the AVID strategies.

The program at Jones's school may be expanding in the near future, and she has been a part of the decision-making process regarding potential AVID teacher candidates. She reports that it becomes challenging when teachers assume that teaching the AVID program is a "cake walk" for teachers because of the high student expectations and low student numbers. Jones commented:

You have to find that teacher who really is a go-getter and is looking for new ways to reach kids or new ways to teach and help students learn and push them even more. Someone who wants to push them and not settle while still understanding the students' strengths and weaknesses and helping them to do better. It is definitely a struggle to find that perfect fit. You know, sometimes even good teachers aren't even the perfect fit with the AVID program, I think they truly have to believe in what it stands for. And you have to be flexible, and I think

that is probably the biggest challenge, and it doesn't mean you are a good person or a bad person or a good teacher or bad, it is just some people like things done a certain way and I think you have to be a lot more flexible to be with the AVID program, you have to be able to change gears midstream.

Jones reports believing that she is a natural for the AVID program because of her flexibility and desire to help students using whatever strategies best fit their needs. She reports that she is at her best when switching roles among disciplinarian, counselor, and parental figure. She also asserts that the AVID program provides her with special incentive as an educator:

I think that it makes me a better teacher because I have the opportunity to have these kids for a whole year and I get to know them personally and I get to know what goes on with them inside and outside of school. They expect me to come to their ballgames. I think it makes me more aware of the impact I have on them. I do have such a personal relationship with my students, they expect me to be there for them, and I expect it too. It is a pride thing; it makes me feel good that they want me there.

Jones claims that the role of AVID teacher is a good fit for her. She likes practicing her creativity and flexibility to fit the many aspects of teaching the AVID program at Harriger Middle School. Data from the observation I conducted indicates that Jones is able to think on her feet and change topics quickly to maintain the focus of her middle school students. She reports viewing the role of AVID teacher as being required to "wear many hats" and to "change at a moment's notice." She claims to relish this and

the other challenges she associates with teaching the AVID program.

*Finn Daniels*

Daniels claims that he has the best job in the world. He appears completely comfortable both in his classroom and when interacting with students in the halls. Throughout the observation, the students responded to him enthusiastically and Daniels reports that the AVID students have been known to call him on Christmas morning. He indicates that he loves his role in the classroom, but has difficulty with the administrative side of his position.

Daniels reports that the AVID program requires him to be much more than a “teacher in the front.” He claims he plays a variety of roles as the AVID teacher: “When they tell you in Atlanta that you are going to be their teacher, guidance counselor, their social worker, parent in absentia, and cheerleader, you don’t believe them but it really is true.” AVID documents support this idea of the AVID teacher playing many parts in the lives of their students. He reports some difficulty in the “tough love” aspect of AVID:

You know, that is just how I teach, I want them to look at me and laugh at my jokes 'cause otherwise I lose them. So I've always tried to get kids to like me, and these kids, I think some of them really do. But you have to be tough with them too cause they are slackers.

Daniels reports being much more comfortable with the roles of cheerleader, father figure, and counselor.

Unlike the other interviewees in this study, Daniels does not like the added responsibility of being site director as he claims it detracts from the time he could be spending planning for his

classes and interacting with his students:

It [being site director] impacts me in an entirely negative way. I don't like it at all; I don't like the details, the administration of it. I was reluctant to do it to begin with, and I never really wanted to; it is way too much like being an administrator. It isn't that I don't like administrators, some of them are my best friends, but I don't want to be one. I don't like it at all.

He fears that the role of site director is the aspect of AVID that he needs to improve upon even though it does not enhance his practice in the classroom.

As the leader of the site team, Daniels reports difficulty in determining team responsibilities: "For most of the year, the site team was essentially me and [the counselor], I had no idea what to do with a site team so maybe that is something I should pick up when I am in Atlanta." He also stated, "There doesn't seem to be a day to day function of the site team." He reports the responsibilities of being site director and leader of the site team detract from his role as the AVID teacher.

The plan for AVID implementation in Kent County schools is to phase in an AVID elective class for each grade level in the high school within 4 years. The program began with 10th grade, and as they were promoted to 11th grade, a second group of students was selected for the following school year. The second group of AVID students was interviewed in Spring 2007 and another teacher was selected to teach AVID. Daniels held a great deal of responsibility for choosing the new AVID teacher, as that person would have a very close working relationship with him. In selecting the new teacher, Daniels had to reflect on the ways that his practice has

evolved since taking on the AVID program. According to him, the task of selecting a peer to teach AVID felt very much like an administrative one. Daniels noted:

This wouldn't work for everyone. You know, not mentioning any names but this really wouldn't work for some. They could not do this, there is no way and they are really good teachers. I'm not dumping on anybody, but people who are really rigid about their style and their classroom management, and that is why I think they picked me. Do I think it has changed me at all? Definitely not—I'll change AVID more than it will change me.

Overall, Daniels reports feeling satisfied playing the roles of parent, cheerleader, and guidance counselor to his AVID students. When school administration provided him with the opportunity to select the next AVID teacher, he reflected on his own practice to determine what qualities might be most effective in an AVID teacher. He claims to enjoy working with the AVID students, but resents the responsibilities of being a site director.

### *Summary*

The study participants all seemed to enjoy their role as an AVID teacher. They claim to like the ability to form lasting relationships with their students as well as the flexibility and creativity involved in teaching the program. Two of the participants also stated that their role as the site director served to enhance their experience by allowing them more oversight of the program, while the other participant claimed the responsibilities detracted from the time and effort he was able to expend on the students. Similarly, the function of the site team was an active and engaged one for the first two participants, but less so for the third. Though the

participant experiences are as varied as the students they teach, they all seem to relish being AVID teachers.

Research Question #4: Did teacher expectations for their students change? In what ways and why did they change?

The AVID program claims it was established to provide structure and support along with a challenging curriculum for the AVID student. In *Constructing School Success: The Consequences of Untracking Low Achieving Students*, Mehan et al. (1996) claim that AVID works because:

It places low-achieving students in rigorous curriculum and gives them the support to achieve therein, it provides the explicit 'hidden curriculum' of schools, it provides a team of students for positive peer identification, it redefines teacher's role as that of student advocate, and it focuses on academic success of low-achieving students as a school-wide issue, with significant portions of the school culture mobilized toward their success (p. 24).

The AVID teacher is charged with implementing strategies to raise expectations for AVID students and, in doing so, enhance their self-expectancy. The AVID teachers in this study report the AVID program has a significant impact on raising their own expectations of students, and in turn raising the expectations of AVID students themselves. Data on teacher responsibility and student deselection are included in this section because they are related to the expectations that the AVID teachers have for their students and how responsible they feel for helping students reach those high expectations.

*Hank Smith*

Smith maintains that he has always understood the achievement gap between students of various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. He states he is aware of the ways he perpetuates stereotypical expectations and mourns some of his decisions as an educator. As an AVID instructor, however, he has come to recognize:

We have to expect the best out of every single student that we have. They are going to give it to us a good part of the time and along the way we are going to teach them a life lesson that may stick and we never know it. But those expectations, the high ones, that is where it is. Every year I do journals on the most caring teacher and the teacher who expects the most out of you. What children see as caring and high expectations are not far apart at all.

Even within AVID, Smith reports he has made some assumptions about students based on their race. He tells the story of a girl he taught a few years ago and how his expectations for her would have changed had he been aware of her family's socioeconomic status. He commented:

At one point in time, I had a cute black girl, she was a cheerleader, she was a [Providence]-California girl. She was making A's on homework and B's on tests; she was getting a B in my class. I didn't realize till later that her father was one of the biggest real estate moguls in this area. Had I known that, I would have called home and said, this girl is not studying at home for tests. But before I knew that, I thought B's were going to be good enough.

Smith believes the American education system is ripe for change, especially in the way

that educators view certain students and the work from students that is deemed acceptable. He states that as long as schools provide a caring and challenging environment based on the needs of the students, every student can be successful. Observation data indicated that he made connections with every student in the class, whether through calling on them or individual contact. He stated:

The expectation piece, the caring piece to the student is a direct. So really the relationship and rigor are two catch words right now. If we maintain our relationships with our kids and if we maintain that high expectation for rigor that that is going to be the key to high success.

When asked about how responsible he felt for the success of his students, Smith had a ready response. It was apparent he had thought about this factor in his teaching and had perhaps shared this information before:

I feel one third responsible for them. That is the good number. If I have a child to fail I feel 90% responsible for them. If I have a child to succeed immensely then I feel 10% responsible for them. I should carry about a third and that is partially me, and another third from the family, and the other third is the other teachers. And I put the child in with the family because they often come to you as one. And at the same time, I also realize that where the wheels don't squeak, then I don't need to put any oil so that success is totally the family's. But where the wheels do squeak, that is where I do have to step in and be a whole lot more proactive, and that is when I have to work.

However, Smith indicates that his personal responsibility to students did not begin with AVID, as he has always believed teachers are responsible for giving their very best to students.

Deselection is the AVID process through which students are removed from the program due to poor grades, lack of motivation, behavioral issues, or attendance problems. When students are selected for the AVID program, they and their parents must sign a contract stating that they agree to the standards and terms set forth for their participation. Smith, like the other study participants, has a hard time with the deselection process. He commented:

I am having mixed emotions. A lot of times my job is to love the unlovable child. So, I have three students right now who've been with me for a year and a half. As much as I don't like making excuses for students, what I don't like more is throwing them out there to the wolves. So there are a few students that if I pull back, I take the only support system they have and they are not going to have one. I should have deselected three of mine but I kept them, it is going to cause my numbers to go down—I'll get over it. In addition, as far as deselections are concerned, I let my students deselect themselves. They can choose to come back or not to come back with their parent's permission.

One of the issues, however, is that the AVID program only has a certain number of student positions available. Smith recognizes this limitation:

I've had kids that for several straight quarters they haven't passed anything and then I see that nothing I am doing to help them is working. Then I realize that I am holding up that slot for someone else that probably needs to be in the program.

Smith contends that the AVID program enables him to raise his expectations of students and then to provide the resources necessary to raise the students' own expectations. In the event of a deselection, he feels far more responsible and hesitates to remove students from what may be their only source of support.

*Jessica Jones*

Although her classroom is in disrepair, the furniture is mismatched, and the educational tools available leave much to be desired, Jones dresses professionally and displays the thoughtful presence of someone who believes strongly in her role as an educator. This belief is evident in her expectations of students. Data from observations conducted for this study confirm that she does not accept excuses from students and demands that they complete their class and homework. She commented:

I would say that I expect a lot of my students. I think, especially as you heard today, they don't necessarily think society expects a lot of them. For many of them it is almost as if society expects them to fail. And when they are trying to match that with my expectations, what I hope it does is give them a higher expectation for themselves and go outside of what society expects of them.

She contends the AVID program has a significant impact on the way that students come to think of themselves and what they can look forward to in the future. Though it is sometimes a struggle, Jones reports feeling that the AVID program provides a path and a vehicle for achievement:

I think that because AVID targets students that are in the academic middle that are often overlooked then they are not used to people having high expectations of

them. It can be a shocker for them, especially at the beginning of the year when we are going through and laying out some of the things we are going to do in the program some of the assignments they are going to have to do and the expectations for homework and the quality of work. Sometimes students can feel overwhelmed and they can say well I am not ready for this and I don't think I am smart enough for this but I think as you give them the tools to achieve those expectations they come to have higher expectations for themselves.

Jones states that she believes she is very responsible for her students' success. She keeps track of her students once they leave the middle school and often visits the high school to check up on them as her high expectations of her AVID students do not end when they leave Harriger Middle School. Some of them remain in the AVID program in Brevard County until graduation, while others are deselected or choose to leave the program. She commented:

I feel very responsible. I am very invested in their success, I tell them all the time that I am their biggest fan, but I am also one of their truest critics. I am going to tell them when they are messing up and tell them when they are doing right because I want them to stay on track. It definitely reflects on me as far as how I am doing with the program. I take a lot of pride and it is not all my success. It is definitely a team approach, the teachers I have on my team are wonderful and they are truly caring about students. I think that makes all the difference in the world.

Jones maintains that the deselection process has a lot to do with the ideas of individual

responsibility promoted in the AVID program. Though her students are often excused from taking responsibility for their actions because they are “only in middle school,” Jones contends that this is the ideal time for students to begin feeling the weight of their decisions:

I wholeheartedly believe that we all have to get to that point in our lives where we take responsibility for what it is that we want and what we are doing, and I think that middle school is as good a time as any because it is a turning point in your life. It is that bridge between childhood and adulthood.

However, at the same time she states that students should take responsibility for their actions, she acknowledges the deselection process is tremendously difficult:

Deselection is a hard process, but it is hard because no parent wants to say that ‘no, I don’t want my child in this program,’ and no teacher wants to be the one to say that ‘I just don’t think this child is right for the program.’ But I do think you have to be honest and say whether or not you think a child is right for the program and it doesn’t make them a good or a bad kid it just means they are a fit or not. Maybe there is something better for them.

Jones has not had to deselect any students from the program thus far, but says she believes it is much easier when the students determine for themselves whether they are right for AVID:

The students who say I don’t want it, that makes it easier and it doesn’t mean that you are a bad student or that I won’t help you or if you need anything from me, tutoring, strategies, and so on but if you know the program is not for you then the best thing is for you to just not be a part of it.

Jones also continues to pursue her own education including current enrollment in a master's degree program. Her desire for personal success comes across in the way that she presents herself to her peers and students. This example helps to set a tone for her AVID students that enables them to understand the high expectations she sets for them. She also uses the AVID strategies to provide the students with ways to meet her expectations with her hope being that they all excel academically.

*Finn Daniels*

Daniels reports feeling slightly skeptical about the role of the AVID program in raising the expectations for students. He claims to believe in the program and the tools, but also feels that the increased achievement can be questioned: "Has AVID changed them, or have they improved because we've provided some tutoring and some time in class?" Daniels also reports that there is a gender gap with females becoming much more vested in the program than males. This is apparent in the observation that the female students are alert and involved in the lesson, often talking over one another, while the male students remain silent, with one keeping his head down on his desk. He stated:

We have high expectations, but we also hold their hand to try to get those results.

The thing about it is that it doesn't really work the way that I wanted it to is that we are really trying to change a whole mindset. So if I can jump up and down and stand on my head and whatever but to get them to get in their brain that they are going to do more, that they are going to do extra, that they are not going to slack.

Daniels suggests the program would be much more effective if it started in the ninth

grade before students develop poor study habits in high school. He says he is frustrated with the fact that it is taking his students a long time to come to terms with the expectations he and the program hold for them:

And some get it, but most of the kids in that group, that is how they've gone through school, they did the minimum. So this is a totally different concept for them that they don't, they aren't really grasping. So I wanted to see something happen right away, you know, all of a sudden they were going to be really excited to go to school and get good grades and....whoa!

As far as his responsibility for helping them to reach their potential, Daniels contends that he would have made the effort with or without the AVID program. In some cases, Daniels reports feeling that the AVID program provides a crutch:

They often look to me to bail them out sometimes. And it is okay sometimes, but then you become an enabler and it is a fine line. I would do some things differently in that regard. But I know I feel more responsible for some of their things than they do.

One of the primary aspects of the AVID program that Daniels has questioned is the deselection process. From his initial exposure to the program, Daniels wondered where the accountability was for students who had dropped out of the program:

So the survivors had a great acceptance rate to college but what about the kids who were dropped along the way? But that is why they have a very specific deselection process because they don't want the numbers to look bad.

Daniels reports “intentionally dropping the ball on getting things moving with a couple of them.” He asserts that the deselection process is an excruciating part of the AVID program made even more so by the strong personal relationships he forges with the AVID students. Daniels commented:

I’m giving them the business, I should have put you on probation so that I could get rid of you, but you know I won’t because I love you. And you get this attachment with these kids that you would feel like you were deserting them. I will have a rough time when I have to do that.

Daniels maintains that with or without the AVID program, he has been charged with providing students with the tools to meet high expectations. He questions the deselection process as it relates to the data presented by the AVID program to prove the enhanced academic potential of participants. Finally he reported that he hesitates to begin the deselection process with students who qualify simply because he has developed such a personal relationship with them and cannot bear to let them down.

### *Summary*

All three participants claim to hold their students to high expectations, and with the help of the AVID program, to provide them with the tools to achieve. They reported it is an uphill battle due to ingrained behaviors and societal expectations, and yet they truly believe that their students are capable of success. One of the primary recommendations of the teachers was that AVID strategies begin by middle school at the latest. They stated that by the time students get to the high school they have already established the foundation for their study habits and learning

objectives. They also claim that within the AVID program, there was a fair amount of enabling that occurred from teacher to student. The deselection process was a great source of conflict with the AVID program. Although the AVID program is lauded for the achievement data they are able to report about AVID students, there is no acknowledgement of the deselection of students who might skew numbers negatively. The study participants all report feeling that the deselection process is the least favorable aspect of the AVID program. None of the participants contends that the expectations they have of students have been altered exclusively due to the AVID program. They each conclude that the conditions provided by AVID have more to do with academic achievement than the program itself.

### Conclusion

The purpose for this study was to establish an understanding about the way that AVID teachers perceive themselves, the AVID program, and the expectations they have for their students. Using the rich descriptions provided in a series of interviews with each study participant and comparing those with participant observations and document analysis, I obtained a basic understanding of teacher perceptions. Framed around the research questions established for this study, the participants detailed their thoughts and views about their role in the AVID program.

The participants claim that AVID adequately prepares them for teaching the curriculum and running the program, but that the first training session is overwhelming. They all stressed the value of the second year of training in determining what works best for their individual practice. The study participants reported that their perceptions about the AVID program changed much

less than their own comfort level with the curriculum and program expectations. The AVID teachers all discussed how much they treasured the enhanced relationships with students provided by the AVID structure. Two of the participants reported that the additional role of site director enhanced their practice, while the other participant claimed that the responsibility negatively impacted his experience. Other than the agenda written on the board in each classroom, participant observations revealed vastly different classrooms and AVID practices. Finally, the study participants all reported a tremendous sense of responsibility for the success of their students.

While they contend that the AVID program does provide the necessary tools to achieve academic success, they also state that there is a fair amount of “hand holding” involved in the program. They all concurred that the deselection part of the AVID process was the hardest aspect and one that they did not necessarily adhere to the AVID program’s advice. The next chapter presents these findings in a discussion and interpretation about what this data indicates about the perceptions AVID teachers have about themselves and the program.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

There have been countless calls for reform in the American educational system over the last decade. The current focus on No Child Left Behind legislation shines a light on the discrepancy between the academic performance of students from varied ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, within that achievement gap fall a large number of students who are performing well enough to get by in school, but fail to reach their full academic potential. The AVID program aims to find and convert those students in the academic middle to high achieving and college bound.

AVID is a voluntary program for both student and teacher. In fact, one of the essential elements for AVID success states, “AVID participants, both students and staff, must choose to participate” (Oswald, 2002). The AVID program presents a myriad of studies regarding the quantitative success of the program in raising student scores on achievement tests, college acceptance rates, college graduation rates, and a variety of other indicators (Cunningham et al., 2003; Mehan et al., 1996; Guthrie, 2000).

However, missing from these studies is a qualitative perspective of the AVID experience. This study was designed to investigate the teacher’s perspective of the AVID program and to provide suggestions for the AVID program on how to enhance the teacher experience and practice. To accomplish this, the researcher selected 3 teachers from three diverse counties in North Carolina to participate in the study. These teachers came from schools with wide-ranging student demographics, district wealth, and geographical locations. To facilitate the goals of this study, each participant agreed to a series of semi-structured interviews, class observations, and

member checking. The researcher conducted document analysis of AVID materials, explored previous research studies, and analyzed individual participant materials. The study findings demonstrate that the teachers are satisfied with the AVID program, but that they have some concerns and desires that if addressed would positively impact their daily practice.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of teacher perceptions of the AVID program on teaching practices of AVID teachers from three different counties in North Carolina. Research methodology was selected in response to the lack of current qualitative research about the AVID program. The research questions for this study were framed around the idea that in understanding the daily experiences and perceptions of the AVID program, suggestions might be made to strengthen those experiences and perceptions. The questions begin with the instruction and support provided by the AVID program and then deal with perceptions of the program and the teacher's personal role. The questions were also developed in an effort to determine what impact, if any, the AVID program had on teacher expectancy for AVID students.

The first research question was designed to inquire about the training, instruction, and support made available by the AVID program and the teacher's individual districts. This idea of support ranged from adequate teacher instruction regarding the AVID curriculum to district financial provisions for field trips and tutors, an essential element as determined by the AVID program.

The findings demonstrate that the volume of information set forth by the AVID program initially overwhelmed all of the study participants. They were expected to learn an entirely new

curriculum, new strategies, and new approaches to student success within a weeklong summer institute. One teacher described it as learning to speak French in a week and then being expected to teach it when he returned. One of the participants was unable to attend the first training session and had to rely on the assistance of others to get her program running for the first year. According to Hank Smith, one year of training was insufficient to cover all of the new information presented by the program.

All of the participants agreed that the personal and academic supports available from the AVID program are valuable and that the people involved have been extremely positive. They each believed very strongly that the second year of training, or refinement, was imperative to their understanding and practice of the AVID essentials. They thought that they were better able to absorb the information provided at summer training after they had had experience with the program and knew their own strengths and weaknesses.

The documentation designed to support instruction and implementation of the AVID program is extensive and comprehensive. The AVID program provides calendars for daily planning with suggested objectives and strategies as well as a variety of sources to support those objectives. A computer software series is adaptable to the individual teacher's needs and includes worksheets and documentation to support daily instruction. As Hank Smith reported, "It has been two years now and I'm still going through stuff and still finding things that are useable." Some of the teachers reflected that they would never have the time to go through all of the AVID documents and wished there were a more effective way to catalogue documents for easy access to the ones they found most useful.

The teachers in this study each believed that they more or less had adequate support from their county and local administrators. The AVID program in Providence is a county initiative supported by the school system as well as the county commissioners. In Kent County, the program is still in the initial implementation phase and receives financial and material support from all administrators, teachers, and community members. Brevard County exhibits the least identifiable support, and Jessica Jones fears that ongoing support may not be there for the AVID program in that county. This may be tied in with the concerns she conveyed that the “new and exciting” programs receive the financial support and enthusiasm. As the program becomes less new and exciting, she fears the support for it will diminish.

The amount of financial support for the AVID program was found to be consistent with the level of wealth of each district. Providence provided by far the most generous support. The Providence teacher identified over \$6,000 in local funding for tutors, funding for field trips, and adequate funding for guest speakers. However, he expressed concerns that the money might be taken away or reallocated as he felt this would have a profoundly negative impact on the AVID practice in Providence County. In Brevard County, there was no funding for tutors, only limited funding for field trips, and no funding available for guest speakers. In many ways, it appeared the AVID program at Harriger was left to fend for itself financially although the district director provided strong peer and motivational support. In Kent County, while the program is a significant part of the county’s strategic plan, there does not appear to be an abundance of financial support. No funding was available for tutors, and only limited funding was available for field trips and guest speakers. Finn Daniels reported spending a great deal of time applying for

grants, and yet he also claimed that if he needed something, all he had to do was ask and it would somehow be provided.

The AVID essentials require that a school district must be prepared to find funding sources for the full implementation of AVID. Included in the implementation are the ongoing training of practitioners, instructional support, and financial support. While teachers felt that the first year of training was intense and often overwhelming, they also felt very strongly that the second year of training was necessary. Study findings also demonstrate that teachers feel supported by their administrators, county and local, but that they fear support may be taken away or diverted at any time. The participants claim that this support exists, but it could be that they only see this support (financial and otherwise) because they have a personal stake in seeing the program continued. It appeared that the financial support for the AVID program was waning in each of the counties studied. Finally, the financial component of the AVID program extends beyond the initial purchase of the site license and AVID library. School districts must commit to providing adequate funding for all of the AVID essentials, including tutors, field trips, guest speakers, and additional classroom teachers to fill the positions vacated due to AVID electives. Yet the funding for these ongoing expenses, such as training and tutors, did not appear to be an ongoing priority in any of the counties studied.

The second research question addressed teacher perceptions of the AVID program and whether those perceptions had changed over time. From my own experience, I knew the AVID program had the statistics, video, and testimonials to present itself as an excellent option for finding and transforming students in the forgotten middle.

The study findings reveal that the participants, while enthusiastic, each acknowledged some hesitation about the program initially. Hank Smith questioned whether he was being punished by being asked to take over the AVID position at his school. Jessica Jones was unable to attend first year training and so found herself trying to catch up to the program before she even got started. Finn Daniels displayed the most initial and continuing skepticism about the program. He expressed concern about the numbers that AVID presents to stakeholders and whether they are a valid representation of the students who begin the AVID program. It was also observed that Daniels, while using the AVID curriculum in general, supplemented it with other resources.

Daniels would also like to see some accountability for the deselected students within the AVID structure. The deselection process serves to remove students who could potentially skew numbers negatively as those who are not meeting their goals, grades, and attendance as determined by AVID are not counted. The removal of these students from the database used to show AVID's outcomes renders the results questionable. To validate AVID findings, there should be a way to account for those students who either remove themselves or are deselected from the program. Perhaps this question could provide the foundation for another AVID study.

The study participants also demonstrate consensus in regard to their familiarity with the WICR curriculum and AVID essentials. While they all began with only a limited understanding and hesitant practice, after they had used the materials and strategies, they became comfortable with the curriculum. The study participants are also in agreement about the quality of the materials available and feel that they are generally useful. While they claim that the AVID curriculum and lessons are valuable, I noticed each of them using supplemental resources during

observation. Smith used a book, Jones used a lesson plan she had created to facilitate collaborative learning, and Daniels used time management resources from the University of Michigan. So, although each of the participants declares the AVID curriculum to be sufficient, they each found it necessary to utilize outside resources to supplement activities.

The third research question asked study participants how they perceived their personal role in the AVID program. Swanson (2002) states:

The academic life of AVID students in school is supported by dedicated teachers who enter the lives of their students and serve as mediators between them, their schools, and the college system. By expanding the definition of their teaching role to include the sponsorship of students, AVID coordinators encourage success and help remove impediments to students' academic achievement. (p. 22)

Each of the participants enjoyed the enhanced personal bonds with students made possible by the AVID elective course and the long-term working relationship. The teachers claimed to be vested in their students' lives in and out of school. Each teacher told stories of students who called them at home, came to them for lunch money, or requested their presence at ball games. The observations revealed students who appeared comfortable and, in some cases, informal with their AVID teachers. These relationships serve as a source of pride for the AVID teachers who report that this aspect of their positions provides the most job satisfaction. This claim would be in keeping with position that "school effectiveness has consistently suggested that long-term teacher/student relationships improve both student performance and job satisfaction for teachers" (Burke, 1996, p. 362).

Within the role of AVID teacher on a school level, each of the study participants also worked as the school site director. While the teachers from Providence and Brevard counties felt that this additional responsibility supplemented their teaching practice, the teacher from Kent County felt it detracted from what he was able to accomplish for the students. Both Smith and Jones believed that the site director role enabled them to have a big picture view of the AVID program at their schools, which provided them with deeper understanding of how to meet the goals set forth by the AVID program. They believed that they were better prepared to undertake the effort to achieve or retain AVID certification due to their dual roles in the classroom and as site administrators.

However, Jones thought that the role of site administrator sometimes produced conflict with her peer teachers when she had to ask for or correct something in their practice. The concern was primarily due to the lack of respect afforded her because although she directs a program, she remains on the same responsibility and pay level as other teachers in the building. Daniels's dislike of the site director position was due to the administrative tasks that absorbed his time and energy. He believed that he spent far too much time trying to find tutors, facilitate field trips, and secure guest speakers to focus on the classroom activities in the way he would have liked.

It is evident from the study findings that the AVID teachers studied enjoyed their roles as AVID instructors. They believed the program allowed them more time to establish and nurture relationships with their students and that these relationships, in turn, fostered better working conditions for the teachers and increased opportunities for the students. However, only two of the

three teachers believed strongly in the positive impacts of the site director position.

The study findings reveal that while the AVID program provides a calendar of daily learning objectives, there really is no such thing as a typical AVID classroom. The three teachers had extremely different ones. Smith's classroom was representative of opportunities in higher education with flags from prominent schools hung from the ceiling. Jones' classroom, while run down and bare, represented a space to foster learning and group activities due to the arrangement of the furniture. Daniels's classroom was bright with high ceilings and election posters hung throughout. The teachers in this study used the materials available to them to develop a classroom space that they thought was conducive to the educational, and specifically the AVID, process. From the decorations to classroom management, all three teachers worked within their own styles to craft a space and environment for their students.

One of the most significant findings of this study involves the practice of the AVID curriculum. The classroom observations and interviews demonstrated wide variances in adherence to the prescribed WICR curriculum. The teachers revealed how closely they followed the AVID calendar and lesson plans. Smith followed the curriculum precisely and referred to the calendar as his "Holy Grail." He made it very clear that there was very little adaptation of the AVID curriculum and that he was comfortable with the materials and documents provided by AVID. Jones indicated that the Brevard County AVID educators worked together to determine a common timeline and series of goals. She also stated that the creative and flexible nature of the AVID program was something she really liked as it allowed her to frame lessons around topics such as music that would interest and motivate her students. In contrast, Daniels followed the

AVID curriculum very loosely. He used strategies and some of the general lesson ideas, but supplemented them with resources found on college websites, LEARN NC, and his own ideas. All three teachers were entirely comfortable with the level at which they were following the curriculum, and each believed that however the information was delivered, the needs of the AVID students were being met.

The degree to which each teacher followed the AVID essentials raises the question whether AVID was the difference for students or whether it was simply the increased attention of a caring teacher. Initially, Daniels believed that he could teach all of the AVID ideals without “buying in” to the entire program. Yet after his first year of training, he thought differently. The teachers in this study reported that the AVID curriculum and structure make a big difference to the students selected for the AVID program. However, the question remains whether AVID itself makes the difference or whether it is the increased attention and test-taking strategies that help the students. The answer to this could help shape future educational policy regarding whether AVID is the answer or if training and resources should be provided to make small groups, tutoring, and test-taking strategies available to all American public school students. This question also lends itself to further research regarding the AVID program.

The final research question involved the teachers’ expectations for AVID students once they commit to the program. According to Vroom (1964), expectancy theory states that individuals in an organization will be more motivated when they believe that: putting in more effort will yield better results, better results will lead to rewards, and those rewards are valuable to the individual. The way that expectancy theory translates to this study is whether the teachers

perceive their increased efforts on behalf of their students will in turn increase student expectations, whether those higher student expectations might lead to academic success, and whether academic success for their students is a motivating factor for the teachers. Teachers reported that they do not believe that the AVID program is entirely responsible for the shift in expectancy, but if instead the environment established by the individual teacher bore that responsibility. The teachers did not feel empowered to make a difference because of the AVID program, instead they stated that their strengths were enhanced by the conditions made available through the AVID program.

The teachers concluded that they held high expectations for the AVID students, but were not sure whether the AVID program had any bearing on those expectations. The teachers in this study believed the AVID program lived up to the claim of representing the forgotten middle. Each of the teachers had participated in student selection and interviews and felt that the goals of the program were adequately represented in the students chosen for their classes. The teachers also divulged that they carried a tremendous sense of responsibility for the success of each individual student. However, while they were willing to go to great lengths to support their students, they also felt that there was a certain element of coddling within the AVID program. Daniels stated that the AVID program and teachers have high expectations for students, but that “we also hold their hands to get results.” He believes that at times, the AVID structure can be a crutch, and that the AVID students, knowing that the teacher cares about their success, will depend on the teacher to cover or make allowances for them.

While the participants indicate that they believe AVID has some impact on student

expectancy, they attribute much of the students' achievement to their own expectations and sense of responsibility toward the students and program. The teachers point to students who may not have achieved academic success without the supports of the AVID structure, yet question whether the impetus to achieve came from the AVID structure or from the increased involvement of caring, challenging, and engaged mentors such as the AVID site team. Additionally, the AVID students are segregated from the rest of the student body in their own virtual tracking program. This structure lends itself to positive group identification and specifically to positive schooling practices. This would perhaps be a strategy for all students, not just AVID students if:

We were to treat student agency as the single most important ingredient in the educational brew, we would have to acknowledge the power of the social forces each student must contend with. We would also begin to recognize the potential of having small groups of students work closely with supportive teachers to take substantial charge of their learning and play active roles in constructing their own success. (Jackson, 2003)

The AVID teachers in this study report that AVID has not had a significant impact on their expectations of students; however, the teachers do believe that their expectations of AVID students correlate to students' expectations of themselves. Smith discusses how his expectations of one student changed drastically when he learned that her parents were wealthy. He states that there is a direct relationship between high expectations/supportive environment and student success. Jones states that she maintains very high expectations for her students despite the fact the rest of society may not. Daniels continued to demonstrate skepticism about whether AVID

changes teacher and student expectations or whether it is the small groupings, tutoring, and test-taking strategies that makes the difference. As an alternative view to AVID increasing the teacher's expectations of students, perhaps it could be argued that the kinds of teachers chosen to teach AVID (those with strong academic backgrounds who are willing to take on additional responsibilities) are those who would believe the best about their students and have high expectations for them regardless.

The findings revealed that each of the participants selected for this study represented caring and reflective teachers willing to go out of their way for any student. The participants themselves provided concrete examples of incidents where they felt an increased sense of responsibility for the AVID students. Smith spoke about providing rides home and lunch money to students, Jones discussed following students to the high school and to their ball games, and Daniels was emotional as he described his Christmas morning phone calls from AVID students.

Yet while they appeared happy to be there for the students, there was the recognition of "hand-holding" and excuse making for various ingrained behaviors. Daniels expressed concern that AVID should begin well before the high school years so that good study habits, a strong work ethic, and the desire for academic achievement can be practiced before students have the chance to learn to "slack."

Deselection is perhaps the ugly side of AVID. None of the study participants was comfortable with the process or even followed the AVID recommendations for deselection. As Daniels mentioned in two interviews, the students deselected from AVID would potentially be the ones to alter the overwhelmingly positive quantitative data. His recommendation was that the

AVID program bear some accountability for deselected students. Each of the study participants was able to identify more than one instance in which a student should have been placed on probation or dismissed from the program according to the AVID guidelines, yet was retained because they did not want to “throw them to the wolves.” The teachers identified that for some students, AVID was the only support system in place, and to remove it would have been to let down the very students they had learned to care about through the AVID program. The teachers also felt comfortable with the fact that in keeping some of these students in their programs, they were lowering their own quantitative results. They seemed willing to take the chance that the students might eventually benefit from the AVID instruction and structure.

#### Recommendations for AVID

One purpose of this study was to examine any impact of the AVID program on the teaching practices and personal perceptions of AVID teachers. The study findings revealed many aspects of the AVID program that are beneficial to the study participants. The participants also had some recommendations for the program that would help them to better their own practice. The following recommendations are directly linked to the data from this study, specifically from the interviews with the AVID teachers.

##### *Continued Professional Development*

The first and perhaps strongest recommendation from the teachers was that they be provided with the opportunities to continue training with the AVID program in the Summer Institute. However, district budgets are often stretched tight, and staff development is an expensive endeavor. Sending representatives to Atlanta, Georgia for weeklong training,

including a hotel stay, airfare, and meals, can quickly use up precious staff development funds. For this reason, two of the districts have proposed sending only new practitioners and leaving veterans to rely on their initial training. However, the teachers in this study all believed that the second and subsequent years of training are imperative for continuing and improving their instruction. For this reason, they thought making the second year of training mandatory would be highly beneficial. This recommendation would perhaps have to come from the AVID program as a required element of continuing certification for AVID. The program offers continuing staff development as one of the 11 essentials and could add a required element of summer AVID training.

#### *Shared Resources*

For all teachers in this study, the aspect of summer training they liked the most was the opportunity to share their best practices and failures with other AVID teachers. One of the teachers stated that she would love to have access to an online resource for sharing lesson plan and strategy ideas with fellow AVID teachers. It was noted that because the program is so self-contained, there might be difficulty in approving the lesson plans available to make sure that they are AVID-appropriate.

The purpose of the AVID program might be taken into account in determining whether this is a feasible idea. The AVID organization would need to evaluate its purpose and decide if it was more important to reach those “forgotten middle” students or to keep the program exclusive and expensive. If the purpose was to reach as many students as possible, the AVID program could make teacher resources available online along with the AVID library and curriculum.

School districts could still pay for the AVID training, but the resources would be available to all. Though this would provide a challenge to the program, the benefits of increased sharing opportunities would be appreciated by all of the teachers in this study.

#### *Role of Site Director*

The third recommendation stems from the role of site director. As noted in this discussion, two of the three teachers believed that this added responsibility increased their understanding and practice. Yet all of the teachers thought that, at times, this role could be overwhelming. It was suggested that district coordinators take on some of the responsibilities usually handled by the teachers themselves. For example, having a district coordinator handle the identification, training, and retention of quality tutors for the program would alleviate a tremendous source of stress from the AVID teachers. They admit that this is the area of AVID they most frequently “fail” because they simply do not have the time or resources to find tutors. They all acknowledge that tutors are a very important part of the AVID program and wish that they had more resources to enhance this part of their programs. If within the AVID structure, district coordinators could be charged with the task of finding, training, and retaining quality tutors, the teachers believed that they would have more job satisfaction and would be better practitioners.

#### *Revisit Deselection Process*

As the study findings show, deselection is not a popular process with the participants. None of the teachers studied follow the recommendations for probation and deselection as provided by the AVID program; instead, they take matters into their own hands to try to alter the

behaviors and grades that lead to the deselection process. At the same time, the teachers recognize that there is the potential for a student to not fit with the program and that by occupying that position, the student is taking the place of another perhaps more qualified student. The teachers requested that there be a different process set forth by the AVID program for identifying and working with students who may be candidates for deselection. The teachers believed that by removing students from the program according to the AVID guidelines, they were setting the students up for certain failure and eliminating what might be their only source of support.

One teacher would also like the AVID program to identify these students in publications promoting AVID success. In order to accurately portray the success of the AVID program, all students selected must be taken into account. Those students who are deselected or deselect themselves have reasons for doing so, and these should be identified and acknowledged. Without those students being included in the database for the AVID program, the results are not entirely accurate. Overall, the teachers in this study believed they had a responsibility to each student selected for the AVID program whether the student was meeting AVID objectives or not. They believe that AVID as a whole must be accountable for every student who enters and exits the program.

These recommendations are based on the findings of this research study. The participants in this study felt that the AVID program was a strong and positive organization and appreciated being a part of it. The recommendations that they offered would enhance their practice and their own perceptions of the AVID program.

## Implications for Future Research

Each of the studies reviewed for this research provided suggestions for further or expanded research opportunities. Similarly, this study also suggests areas of needed future research. Limited by time, resources, and location, this study identified several aspects of the AVID program that should be explored. In personal communication with a leading AVID researcher, it was mentioned that an AVID teacher survey was being completed and evaluated. This survey touches on demographic information, experience, and a few other factors, but does not request any narrative on the part of the practitioners themselves. An expanded narrative study of the teachers would be appropriate and beneficial to the AVID program to continue providing positive results for students. Specifically, it would be interesting and beneficial to explore the educational experiences of AVID teachers themselves. Much of that information could shape the way that AVID teachers approach learning in their own classrooms. Additionally, it would be interesting to find how their peers judge AVID teachers.

It would also be interesting to hear the perspectives of administrators and school districts as a whole. Their beliefs about the funding utilized by the AVID program and whether or not they viewed the AVID program as a valuable part of the school and district initiatives. Beyond those perspectives, I believe that the student voice is an incredibly valuable research tool and one that would provide excellent information for the AVID program and for acceleration programs in general. A further exploration of the differences between the practice of AVID in the middle school versus the high school would be useful.

Another potential area for research deals with the depth of responsibility felt by AVID

teachers in relation to non-AVID teachers. Research demonstrates that teacher satisfaction is directly related to relationships with students (Burke, 1996). Understanding the dynamic nature of the relationship between AVID teachers and their students could impact the strategies, methods, and structure of the program. Specifically, future studies could explore the nature of the relationship between the AVID teacher and student versus the non-AVID teacher and student. The fact that AVID teachers are supposed to have sustained, multi-year relationships with their AVID students could have profound effects on student and teacher expectations.

Another major area for potential research is the question: if AVID strategies produce positive academic results for AVID students, why are they not used in public education for all students? Why is so much of the training “brand new” to AVID teachers, and why are they so overwhelmed by the completely new “language” of the AVID program? Research has demonstrated that a part of the academic success obtained by AVID students is attributable to small group learning and identification, yet AVID strategies such as Cornell notes, Socratic seminars, and philosophical chairs are not new to education. If these are consistently found to produce positive results for students, why are they not taught and practiced by new teachers in the profession? What strategies are promoted in teacher education programs that might achieve similar results?

Additionally, I found it very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain data on the cost of the AVID program. This information is not widely accessible to taxpayers and the public even though the schools are public institutions. Why is this information hard to obtain? What really are the fundamental costs of the AVID program, including personnel, training, time, travel,

materials, and opportunity costs? Future research might explore whether the financial costs are justifiable for school systems, and if so, why they are not made accessible to the public.

Finally, as proposed by the teachers in this study, there needs to be some study of the students who are deselected from the AVID program. Their test scores, demographic information, and stories could fill a void within the program and provide accountability for every AVID student. This information would complete the AVID package for researchers, funding sources, and practitioners so that questionable or skewed data is no longer a problem.

### Summary

In summary, this qualitative study of perceptions of the AVID program created a number of additional research questions. From determining the various levels of responsibility for student success felt by AVID versus non-AVID teachers, the reasons AVID is not available for all public education students, and the reasons financial information is not available to the public, there remains a significant amount of research possible regarding the AVID program. Perhaps the most important research lies in the area of deselection from the AVID program, including who, why, and how that process takes place. The AVID program is a rich, interesting, and pervasive program in the American public education system. Continued research regarding this program will enhance understanding of AVID and perhaps shape the way all American children are educated.

### Conclusion

This study considers the AVID teacher's perception of the impact of the AVID program on teaching practices and teacher expectations. Although multiple acceleration programs are

available to public schools today, the AVID program claims to produce consistently positive results. According to research by Watt (2006) and Ralph (2006), more AVID graduates apply, attend, and graduate from higher education than the national and local averages. The program is designed to assist those students from the “forgotten middle,” characterized by those students with high test scores, average-to-low grades, and minority or low-socioeconomic status who will be the first in their family to attend college. These students must be acknowledged and reached for public education to continue feeding the intellectual and global potential of America. Within the program are 11 essentials that must be followed to receive AVID certification. However, although one of the most frequently mentioned factors, the value of a caring teacher, is stressed, no previous research had addressed this topic, even though the AVID teacher is the best representation on a local level of the AVID program and its mission to provide assistance to disadvantaged students.

Several studies of the AVID program investigated the quantitative claims of the program, but very few addressed qualitative concerns. This study provided a cross-case analysis of teacher perceptions of the AVID program. Study findings indicate that the participants view the AVID program as a positive initiative for both their students and themselves. The teachers in this study perceive the structure, curriculum, materials, and training provided by the AVID program are valuable. The counties chosen for this study demonstrate financial and personal support in accordance with their perceived wealth and reported educational results. The AVID teachers in this study identified a number of various roles they inhabit as AVID educators and felt the most satisfaction from the increased personal relationships they were able to maintain with their AVID

students.

However, while the teachers acknowledged that their own expectations of students had increased due to the high standards set by the AVID program, the role of the AVID program in increasing academic expectancy for students remains dubious. Academic achievement for AVID students might just as easily be attributed to the increased investment in student success from several adult mentors.

A number of recommendations for the AVID program were developed from study findings. The recommendations are: continued professional development at the Summer Institute becoming a mandatory aspect of AVID certification, the AVID program investigating new and productive ways to share and disseminate ideas and lesson plans, some of the site director responsibilities being taken away from the classroom teacher and perhaps redirected to the district coordinator, and the deselection process being investigated and made a part of all quantitative research dealing with AVID success.

Finally, additional research questions emerged that could not be addressed in this study, but that might suggest areas for future research. These questions include the various levels of responsibility for student success carried by AVID teachers versus non-AVID teachers, deselection, justification of AVID costs, and finally, the question why the AVID structure is not available for all students and AVID strategies are not being taught by teacher education programs on a regular basis.

AVID is an interesting program that is gaining in popularity and implementation. While data from this study suggests that the AVID teachers perceive AVID as having a positive impact

on their teaching practice, more research is needed to gain a complete picture of the AVID program and AVID teachers.

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*Valley Daily Bulletin*.

## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (FIRST AND SECOND INTERVIEWS)**

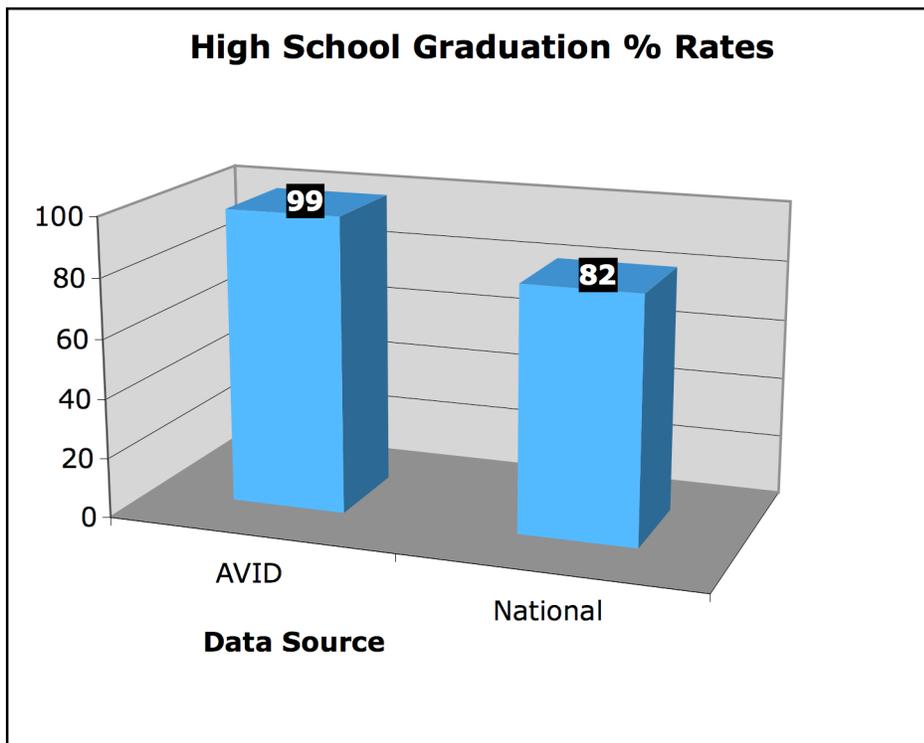
### *Semi-Structured Questions for AVID Teachers*

1. Could you describe in as much detail as possible how you became an AVID teacher?
2. Please tell me about your initial AVID training sessions.
3. Have you received support as an AVID teacher? In what ways?
4. Can you tell me how you feel about the AVID program today?
5. Some people feel the AVID program takes away from a student's extracurricular involvements. How do you respond to that statement?
6. Describe your role as the AVID teacher, including relationships with administrators, peers, parents, and students.
7. Take me through a typical day in your AVID class.
8. Discuss whether or not your teaching practices have changed as a result of AVID.
9. Discuss how you think AVID impacts the students in your classroom.
10. Discuss whether or not your expectations of students have changed since you began teaching AVID.
11. Is there anything you would like to see changed within the AVID program? How do you feel these changes would impact the program?
12. How long do you see yourself as being an AVID teacher? Why?

## Second Interview

1. How closely do you adhere to the AVID curriculum and calendar and can you provide me with an example of an adaptation of an AVID lesson?
2. If you could have a class on one specific thing or a few specific things while at training in Atlanta, what would you want training on?
3. As the Site Director, how do you think that position impacts your experience as the AVID teacher?
4. How would you estimate that the role of site director impacts your workload?
5. How responsible do you feel, personally, for your AVID student's success?
6. Do you feel that it puts more pressure on you as the AVID teacher, developing such personal relationships with your students?
7. How do you utilize your site team? Ideally, how would you utilize your site team?
8. How are new AVID teachers selected at your school?
9. What are your favorite and least favorite aspects of the AVID program?
10. Do you have any advice for prospective AVID teachers?
11. Discuss your views of the de-selection process.
12. Do you have any advice for the AVID program?

## APPENDIX B: HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES AVID VS. NATIONAL



High School Graduation Rates - AVID vs. National. AVID 99%, National 82%. AVID General Data Collection 2005-2006. n = 8,982. National Center for Education Statistics. Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey", 2004-05 (Preliminary) v.0f-preliminary. Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2004-05 v.1c. n = 3,089,852.