

AVID Executive Summary

Who is an AVID student?

AVID students have the potential to succeed in a rigorous course of study and earn a college diploma but lack some fundamental skills and habits of mind necessary to bring these goals to fruition; these students need more formalized support to succeed in a college-preparatory environment and leave high school equipped for the rigors of the university. AVID students have academic potential, as evidenced by their performance in the proficient or advanced range on standardized assessments like the WKCE. As AVID is an elective program, students possess the desire and determination to meet expectations of the AVID elective course as well as of challenging core academic classes.

What is the AVID elective class?

The AVID elective class, which can accommodate approximately 25 students, meets five days a week. Students enroll in the AVID elective in lieu of a study hall. During class sessions, students learn the AVID curriculum from the AVID teacher. That curriculum is based around four primary components: writing to learn, inquiry, collaboration, and reading (WICR). (See Appendix A for details on WICR.)

In addition to learning the AVID curriculum, AVID students deepen their understanding of content taught in core academic classes through the assistance of college-aged AVID-trained tutors. (An AVID site team member is responsible for training these tutors.) Finally, one day per week, AVID students engage in activities that assist them in career investigation, navigating the college selection and application process, and other post-secondary planning. (See Appendix B for a breakdown of a week in the AVID elective.)

What need does AVID meet?

AVID equips students with the intellectual skills and habits of mind necessary for college entrance and success. It targets students “in the middle” who are often overlooked in the educational system and provides them with intensive, structured, and research-based teaching and support to improve their achievement.

While Brookfield East students’ performance on the WKCE-CRT (as measured by the percentage of students who are proficient or advanced) often leads the county and/or the Milwaukee metro area, school leaders have been unable to make significant gains in improving the percentage of students who score in the “advanced” range on any section of the test relative to those who score “proficient.” When implemented successfully, AVID offers a proven approach for maximizing students’ academic potential.

According to the High School to College Success report for Brookfield East published by ACT in 2007, 400 students graduated from BEHS from 2003-2005 and enrolled directly into one of Wisconsin's four-year public universities. Of those students, 186 (47%), met the ACT's College Readiness Benchmark in each of the tested areas (English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science). During their first semester of college, those students earned an average GPA of 3.16. In comparison, 214 students (53%) graduated without having met the ACT's College Readiness Benchmark in one or more of the tested areas. During their first semester of college, those students earned an average GPA of 2.80. (See Appendix C for more detailed information.) AVID helps to ensure that graduates leave high school eligible for college and prepared for success in that environment.

When Brookfield East students graduate from high school, many of them, approximately 87%, enroll in four-year universities directly out of high school, while another approximately 9% enroll in vocational/technical schools. Yet, some graduates, while eligible to attend those four-year institutions, may not be equipped to meet their academic standards. According to the 2006-2007 Waukesha Technical College Annual Report, 9% of the BEHS Class of 2005 enrolled in the Wisconsin Technical College System directly after high school; according to that same report, 27% of graduates from the Class of 2003 enrolled in the WTCS three years after high school graduation. While the reasons for this shift are unknown, it is possible if not likely that some students entered the technical college system after dropping out of the university system due to poor academic performance. AVID prepares students for the realities of college and equips them to meet the academic requirements of that learning environment; further, it helps to guide them into a post-secondary option best-suited for their interests, abilities, and goals.

How are students selected?

AVID provides considerable training for suggested practices related to student selection. The selection process includes reviewing a student's academic record, standardized test scores, and teacher recommendations. AVID candidates must complete a face-to-face interview with the selection committee, members of the AVID site team. Finally, as parental support of AVID is essential to a student's success, parent interviews are also conducted.

How will student progress be tracked?

Data collection and analysis are essential components of an AVID school's efforts to promote students' improved achievement. Annually, each AVID site is required to engage in an extensive self-reflection on its efforts in meeting the objectives of the AVID program; that self-reflection is reviewed by an external evaluator, the regional AVID representative, who provides feedback to the site and helps to guide improvement efforts. (See Appendix D for a segment of this self-assessment tool.)

Regarding individual students, data is collected on their academic achievement as evidenced by class grades; just as importantly, course selections are reviewed for rigor and appropriateness. Performance on college entrance examinations like the ACT is also reviewed. AVID mandates that all graduating seniors complete an AVID-created exit survey that tracks information like college entrance test scores, GPA, college acceptances, and AP classes taken; these senior exit surveys are submitted to the AVID office for review. Finally, as the AVID teacher develops a strong relationship with students in the program, that person is positioned to gather data on those students' success post-high school; typically, this data can be difficult to collect at the individual student level.

How will other (non-AVID) students be affected by the program?

While approximately 25 students per grade level can enroll in the AVID elective course (BEHS hopes to offer a single section in 2008-2009 and another section per year for the following three years, bringing the total number of AVID sections to four.), students across the school will benefit from Brookfield East becoming an AVID site.

During the summer before the initial implementation year, the AVID site team—comprised of an administrator, counselor, science teacher, math teacher, English teacher, social studies teacher, the AVID elective teacher, and an at-large teacher—all receive extensive training during a week-long summer institute. This training equips the six participating teachers to implement the best practice approaches and methodologies that are at the heart of AVID. All students in those teachers' classes will learn in a setting that relies heavily on AVID approaches outlined in the WICR model. Further, teachers on the AVID site team are expected to share these high-impact strategies with fellow teachers through building-level staff development.

Following the first year of AVID implementation, another eight faculty members (either site team members or other teachers) are required to attend the week-long summer institute. New institute attendees return to the school prepared to implement AVID strategies in their classes and to teach these approaches to their colleagues. Following the first two years of AVID implementation, participation in summer institute is encouraged but no longer mandated.

At Brookfield East, many staff members have already begun using some of the AVID-endorsed strategies. Some began doing so after attending a two-day AVID Awareness Session that exposed them to these approaches; others did so following an AVID mini-course in which Socratic discussions were taught and modeled; still others did so following the BEHS Freshman Team's summer curriculum planning time, at which all participants learned and agreed to begin using Cornell notes.

When BEHS becomes an AVID site, professional learning opportunities will be created for larger numbers of teachers, using venues like mini-courses held during early

release days, quarterly meetings of the Freshman Team, and/or district-mandated in-service days. (See Appendix E for AVID's suggested approach to integrating AVID-endorsed best practices school-wide.)

What type of professional development is involved?

As mentioned earlier, all members of the AVID site team—six teachers, an administrator, and a counselor—are required to attend a week-long summer institute before the initial year of AVID implementation; eight faculty members must attend summer institute the following summer. During summer institute, each participant receives training specific to his/her discipline and role in the school. So, a Science Department representative receives training on how to integrate AVID approaches into the existing Elmbrook science curriculum. The AVID elective teacher receives training on the AVID curriculum. After the two required years of staff development through summer institute, the AVID site can choose to send other teachers for AVID training on a voluntary basis.

In addition to the required training of the site team, the AVID fee secures the services of the regional AVID representative, who conducts on-site problem-solving and planning sessions with the site team on an as-requested basis for a contracted number of hours yearly.

Finally, AVID has recently developed a partnership with the College Board. Annually, those organizations host a combined AVID/AP national conference; attendance at this event is voluntary.

Who will be impacted if we implement AVID?

Initially, AVID site team members, their students, and the students in the AVID elective course will be most impacted by Brookfield East becoming an AVID site. But, by using the in-building staff development platforms already in place, AVID strategies will spread across the teaching staff. The school's vision is that all teachers employ AVID-endorsed best practices in their classrooms, allowing all students to receive the benefits of BEHS being an AVID site.

How will costs be covered?

The costs associated with AVID involve staff development, materials, AVID site membership fees, and AVID district fees. The AVID district fee, which exists only for the first two years of AVID implementation within a district, will be funded through Title IIa dollars. The mandated AVID library will be funded through the textbook budget within the Educational Services Department. Unit budget dollars from Brookfield East will pay for the AVID membership fee, which is incurred annually. Required staff development costs will be covered through the school's Title II and V allocations and contributions from the unit budget.

What other schools/districts in Wisconsin and the Midwest are AVID sites?

Currently, two districts in Wisconsin—Nicolet Union and Green Bay Public Schools—are AVID districts. The West Bend School District sent representatives to the Milwaukee AVID Awareness Session held in October of 2007; according to the AVID national office, Elmbrook and West Bend are the two districts in Wisconsin currently giving serious consideration to adopting AVID.

Outside Wisconsin, AVID has taken hold in states across the Midwest. Benchmark districts in Minnesota that have adopted AVID include Hopkins School District (Hopkins High School), Independent School District 196 (Apple Valley Middle and High Schools), and Wayzata Public Schools (Wayzata High School). In total, nine districts and 33 schools in Minnesota participate in AVID. In Illinois, benchmark districts participating in AVID include Evanston Township High School District. In total, 11 districts and 89 schools participate in AVID. In Indiana, 11 districts and 44 schools participate in AVID.