



Derivation of Benefits from Dislikes in the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) College Readiness System

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Abstract: This phenomenological study employed a sequence of three interviews per student to explore the experiences of 20 students in the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) college readiness program. Data from recorded interviews was analyzed using categorizing and connecting strategies. Responses indicated that students varied most in their perceptions of the utility of various AVID strategies, but that students recognized they acquired skills that would serve them in the future. Some participants indicated that they disliked specific strategies of the AVID program. Nevertheless, findings showed that students benefitted from strategies, which they stated that they did not enjoy.

Keywords: College Readiness, Advancement Via Individual Determination, High School, Secondary Education

AVID is an acronym with multiple facets, but underlying each facet is the philosophy that by raising the expectations of students and providing them the necessary tools, they will rise to the occasion and succeed in an educational arena in a way that will benefit them in their daily lives. The acronym for Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) is attached to initiatives that address curriculum design, equity in learning, leadership, and college readiness (AVID Center Online, 2013). With over 1000 schools in the southeast offering some form of AVID's initiatives and almost 5,000 sites nationally (AVID Center Online, 2013), the AVID approach is a valid focus for an investigation that exposes the students' perceptions of the program.

Since the inception of the AVID program to establish practices build on her educational philosophy by Mary Catherine Swanson in 1980 at a newly integrated high school in San Diego, California (Freedman, 2000), several scholars have concentrated their research efforts on examining different aspects of AVID. Swanson, Watt, and a variety of her colleagues have compared AVID to other college preparatory approaches (Hooker & Brand, 2009; Watt, Huerta, & Lozano, 2007), the AVID organization and its Board of Directors maintain related research studies on their Website and in their journal *ACCESS* dealing with concepts that relate to African American male academic performance (AVID Center Online, 2013), potential for leadership (Huerta, Watt, & Alkan, 2008; Watt, Huerta, & Mills, 2010), and preparation for college (Mendiola, Watt, & Huerta, 2010; Watt, Huerta, & Alkan, 2011). Other journals that include discussions of AVID regularly are *American Secondary Education* and *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*. There have, however, been no studies that I have been able to locate that used Seidman's (2006) phenomenological interview approach to gain insight into the experiences that students describe having during their time in learning environments where teachers have been trained to follow the AVID curriculum; maintain the AVID disposition of belief in the students; and provide opportunities for students to practice

organizational, learning, and time management strategies that are core to the success of students in schools.

With 5 years of experience teaching in an AVID-based classroom and positioned in a high school where other Georgia-based teachers were using AVID to assist students who recognized their need for assistance with preparation for college, the opportunity to complete just such a research project was seized. Details of the research methods, themes from the participants' stories in their words, and findings that can inform practice follow.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (1) What are students' perceptions of their experiences in the AVID elective at CHS? (2) What do students' perceptions of their experiences in the AVID program tell us about student engagement with the program?

Research Methods

Focus was placed on discovering the experiences of all 26 AVID students in the school in an AVID class taught by an instructor other than me, so as to alleviate the concern of student manipulation of their comments to avoid potential negative reactions from a researcher who was also their teacher. The school in which the research was accomplished was a mid-sized, suburban public high school in a city in the southeast United States. Participants in the study were in grades 10 - 12 with 3 to 4 years experience with the program.

A series of three interviews following Seidman's (2006) suggestions of approximately 90 minutes for each interview with 3 - 10 days between interviews was used. Interview one was used to establish the context of the students' experience in the AVID class. Next, interview two allowed students to reconstruct specific experiences in the AVID classroom giving particular attention to the context in which they occurred. Finally, interview three enabled students to reflect on the meaning of their experiences

in AVID. In order to protect both students and the researcher, information regarding the private nature and exact location of the interviews was provided on parental information, participant assent, and consent forms. Moreover, weekly lists were given to school administrators indicating who and when all interviews would be conducted throughout the length of the study.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the primary researcher. Two phases of data collection were conducted. Phase I involved interviews (PS1-7) conducted in the spring of 2012, while Phase II data came from interviews which occurred in the spring of 2013. One measure taken to protect the interests of students was the prohibition of students in my own classes from participation in the study.

Once interviews were completed, data analysis immediately began. Data were analyzed by using coding, categorizing, and connecting strategies. Brackets (Seidman, 2006) were used to develop codes and determine organizational categories (Maxwell, 2013). From these analyses, thematic connections were established, and used in conjunction with connecting analyses to develop a thorough understanding of the student experience in the AVID elective.

Throughout the data analysis process, I made an effort to be aware of my personal subjectivities (Peshkin, 1991) with regard to the value of education. Since I deeply valued the educational process and all the potential it held, I had to keep in mind that my view may not be shared by the young people in my study. I attempted to not allow my personal valuation of the educational process to affect my analysis of student responses. It was important that student experiences be independently analyzed. Hence, I attempted to carefully harness my own personal views about the educational process so that I could be more objective in determining the nature of the student experience in the AVID college readiness system.

Moreover, the study's trustworthiness was facilitated by member checking (Maxwell, 2013), and participant feedback regarding interpretations were solicited to help ensure both the accuracy and the intent of transcripts, in addition to assisting with the identification of potentially flawed logic (Maxwell, 2013). Further still, an auditor (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) who is an AVID district leadership trainer helped to in the verification of themes identified through data analysis. Finally, in order to protect participant, school, and district identities (Patton, 2002), pseudonyms were utilized throughout the study.

Findings

By using the three interview series model of interviewing, depth was enhanced across the interviews with each person. For example, in the first interview Jennifer mentioned that "In my 9th year, all the people in that class was like family" (PS1:1:4). By the second interview she seemed more comfortable so I was able to probe the topic and she added

Um AVID classmates...they're not classmates...they're family... The students in there they're there for you. They help you through everything. Whenever something's hurting you, whenever something pains you, they're there to help you through it. Most classes there's people that just don't care...they're arrogant and conceited and they're just the kind of people I just don't like...but in AVID, there's people there...yeah, y'all might have your little bickers and fights. That's what families do. But we're always there to help each other through everything. (1:2:4)

In our concluding interview we were able to discuss AVID as *family* and its implications for the future. Her insight was,

To me it's like the AVID (pause) I call them AVID parents (pause) the AVID teachers are the other parents of my life. They already think as though they are. Other teachers they could care less about the decisions you make, so my AVID

teachers really do mean a lot to me. My AVID family means a lot to me, so losing them would be like losing a whole part of me because they are my family. It would be as if I walked home one day and all of a sudden all my family's disappeared and I'm the only one there. (1:3:2)

Knowing that the limited number of participants in the study will limit the applicability of the results (Maxwell, 2013), the following chart (see Table 1) is included to introduce the reader to the participants and provide reference information related to the students from whom you will hear in the upcoming discussions.

As a result of the conversations with students and reading, re-reading, and re-visiting the stories they shared about their experiences with AVID, two particular areas of interest surfaced that provide insight into the complexity of learning experiences (Cornelius-White, 2007) when considered in light of the cultural context of the classroom (Clevenger-Schmertzling, 2000) and the unique nature of individuals. The following discussion provides comments and descriptions from students that demonstrate students' two-pronged experiences with AVID: what they disliked, but how they benefitted from it.

Table 1

Characteristics of Research Participants in the AVID Study

Participant	Race	Grade	Years in AVID	Age	Self-Characterization Related to personality	Self-Characterization Related to Study Habits	Self-Characterization Related to Ambition or College Readiness
Jennifer	EA	12	4	-	Sweet	Unorganized, I actually pay attention to my work now	To study history and become a teacher
Maria	AA	12	3	18	Bubbly and energetic	Studious, I'm a high "B", low "A" student	To study English, journalism and minor in legal studies
Jason	EA	12	4	18	I'm a Christian, I like to influence others	I try hard in school, but I really don't enjoy studying	To join the air force
Angelo	AA	12	4	18	I like to draw, sing, and play basketball	People might see me as lazy, I try my hardest to the best I can	Early admission to study business administration and computer information systems
Vanessa	AA	12	4	-	Opinionated, down to earth, sassy	intelligent	To study medicine
Joy	AA	12	4	18	Artsy, quiet and shy	Intelligent but quiet in class	To study graphic design
Antonio	AA	12	4	-	Well-disciplined, easy to get along with	Quiet in class	To study auto mechanics
Dave	AA	11	3	16	I like music, sports, video games, and nature, I am a hedonist	smart	undecided
Veronica	PI	11	3	17	Quiet and shy	I like to read	Go to college to study art
Janet	AA	12	4	18	Outgoing and goofy	I don't apply myself as I should be doing, I do just enough to get what I need	Go to a 4-year college to study special education and one day work with autistic children
Table Continued	1						
Evelyn	AA	11	3	-	Fun, crazy emotional, sweet	I have very good grades	To study pediatrics
Matt	AA	11	4	-	I play football and like to hang out with my friends	I don't get in trouble	Going to college, having a successful business, designing jets, tanks, and cars

Sharnell	AA	11	4	16	Hard-working, I like to be the best at what I do	I think I'm a pretty good student, intelligent	To become a forensic scientist
Helena	H	11	3	16	I'm quiet, I will be the first person in my mom's family to go to college	I'm a good student but I don't try hard enough sometimes	To study nursing
Christin	AA	12	5	-	Very outgoing	I'm willing to do things for others before I do for myself	Go to college, but not sure yet what I want to study
Carla	M	11	3	-	Fun to be around and outgoing	I can do some of the hard and challenging stuff, some say I'm crazy for taking hard classes	To study chemistry, go to medical school, and become a pediatrician and work with abused children
Samera	AA	12	4	-	Outgoing, I like to be very active	I'm a very positive influence	Will attend college in the fall to study psychology and business
Candice	AA	12	5	17	Real goofy, I'm genuine, I have a temper problem	I keep up my grades	Go to a 4-year college to major in business and marketing, I want to be a stock broker
Vania	AA	11	3	17	Nice, silly, I like to laugh	Intelligent	Going to college, I plan to graduate <i>summa cum laude</i>
Steven	AA	12	4	18	I'm into athletics, outgoing, and easy to talk to	I get my work done, I was never a fan of honors and AP classes	I see myself as a business owner, teacher, or counselor

Note. African American = AA; European American = EA; Hispanic = HS; Multi-racial = MR; PI = Pacific Islander

Themes from the Participants' Stories in Their Words

Phase I

Participants in phase I viewed themselves as having academic potential, viewed the AVID class as a *family*, and were satisfied with the way the program prepared them for college. Academic potential was described by Maria, who reported concerning an AVID classmate, "Ryan's smart enough. He could get scholarships if he applied himself (pause) but he doesn't anymore and I've been with him since middle school you know. He was in like the only Algebra class, but (pause) he's smart and he doesn't use that anymore. I find that irritating....cause it's like you can do better (pause) you know you can do better" (PS2:2:8).

A different classmate, Jennifer, explained the *family* theme when she noted that “In my 9th year....all the people in that class was like family. AVID kept me away from the things that were bad influences on me...I love how it brings a family together” (PS1:2:4).

Again, Jennifer articulated the theme that AVID prepared students for college, and expressed it this way, “AVID has helped me discover the schools in which I want to go to (pause) helped me discover what exactly what I wanna do (pause) what I need to do to get there (pause) like if I wanna study History (pause) I have to have this, this, this and this. It helps me to stabilize into what I want to study. It helps prepare you for whatever you want to do. It helps to prepare you for whatever your dreams are” (PS1:3:2).

Moreover, six of these seven participants reported increased levels of maturity having participated in the AVID program. To illustrate, Jason put it this way:

I was starting to slowly come a lot more mature (pause) the way I spoke and the way I would be more serious with life (pause) and then they said that after starting in AVID that I was starting to already think about college really fast and instead of just going to school (pause) um (pause) thinking ability has really improved a lot...they noticed that I’m acting more mature (pause) and with vocabulary (pause) my family (pause) they always notice that I was a lot more happy and I had a lot more things to say about school that was good and it was always from AVID. (PS3:3:1)

In addition to this, participants also reported that AVID provided collegial support. This is reflected in the following quote from Angelo, “AVID teachers (pause) they have taught me a lot and they know me pretty well so if they um (pause) if like I’m feelin’ under the weather or somethin’ (pause) if they notice something wrong, they’d come and help me or advise me on the situation” (PS4:2:4). However, one of the five participants – Vanessa - did not have a favorable view of the program, and reported

that [AVID is] “boring...besides getting your mindset ready for college...that’s it” (PS5:2:1).

Phase II

Data from phase II of the study revealed that students exhibited both positive and negative perceptions of the AVID program, and that even though there were negative aspects of the program for students, they still benefitted by assimilating the AVID strategies in order to pursue their academic dreams. These themes are described below in the words of participants. The data collected for these themes came solely from the interviews.

Positive and Negative Perceptions of the AVID Program. Participant experiences in the AVID program were not universal. Rather, participants described a wide variety of perspectives concerning what it was like to be in AVID. Participants varied in their positive perceptions of their experience in the AVID class. For instance, Jason noted that “. . . AVID is a lot more fun [than] the other class[es]. I enjoy coming to AVID. That’s one thing that I never complained about I, when I have an academic class going on and I come in sometimes it’s just so crowded but (pause) I’ve never really complained about coming to AVID, cause it’s fun and we’re close and enjoying and (pause) we do things that are abnormal that most people in high school won’t do and it’s more unique, and I’m not just saying this stuff cause I have too. I’m sayin’ it cause it’s true. It’s not just something that (pause) it’s something that is true” (PS3:2:12). Antonio also recalled that “. . . doing work in AVID is different from being in a regular class. I would say (pause) it’s a (pause) it’s more comfortable to think (pause) in an environment of peace and quiet. It’s what you usually get in an AVID class (pause) is you can focus on your work (pause) get all your ah (pause) thoughts out (pause) and ideas, knowledge to ah (pause) really dig into the work (PS7:2:1). . . .It gave me (pause) ah (pause) an idea that that’s what everyone should experience (pause) that everyone should (pause) you know (pause) focus on they work (pause) try to do their best at their

work (pause) through school” (PS7:3:1). Evelyn hesitatingly reported similar sentiments, acknowledging the personal improvements in her life, stating, “. . . if anyone could see how I was (pause) before AVID. They can see that I improved a lot more in my work ethic and (pause) in my (pause) life. It helps (pause) and it’s (pause) it’s (pause) it’s very beneficial” (DS11:3:1). Jennifer had a mixed response to the AVID program at first, reporting that “I love the fact that it kept my mind into high school. I felt because (pause) at first that I wasn’t going to like it (pause) that it wasn’t meant for me. I wasn’t gonna be able to do it. I’m just gonna be like my family and just (pause) fail at it. AVID kept me away from the things that were bad influences on me” (PS1:2:4). Similarly, in talking about her experience in the AVID program, Maria verbalized mixed feelings when she said, “AVID has its moments. Sometimes it’s like I don’t want to be here you know. People seem to break off into their own little groups (pause) and times like that I feel like I’m on the outside (pause) just because I don’t really have like any particular allegiance to this group or that group (pause) you know? I can stand by myself, and be fine. (PS2:2:6) . . . I more so like what we do now (pause) and the work, as opposed to the social environment. The social environment I mean (pause) it’s pleasant enough (pause) you know? Like I said it has its moments when (pause) sometimes it’s good (pause) sometimes it’s not so good um (pause) but, it’s always tolerable. Rarely is it (pause) overbearing to me (pause) um (pause) but (pause) yeah. I like the work. I sound like a nerd but I like the work” (PS2:2:6).

In sum, Maria underscored, “I’m a supporter of it you know? I wouldn’t (pause) I would not recommend it to everyone because I don’t think everyone has (pause) um (pause) the mindset to be in AVID. I don’t think everyone (pause) ah (pause) I guess you could say would blend with it - not the work that has to go into it (pause) because (pause) because it is work. People thought it was a class (pause) some people thought that it was a class (pause) some people thought that it was a class for kids that were slow, but because I was in it I was like, “Oh I know that’s not true” (participant

chuckles). But it takes work. It's not an easy pushover class (pause) or (pause) easy "A" class you know?" (PS2:1:14).

Comparable sentiments were expressed by the following statement from Dave who, when prompted about what it was like to be in AVID, remarked, "Yeah, so what's it like to do AVID? Honestly sometimes it can get very annoying, cause you know it's coming. You do (pause) I've done it from my 9th grade year, and after a while doing the same thing over and over again it gets very annoying but honestly I love it, because it helps me. I understand why we're there. I understand why we do it" (DS8:2:3). Dave also revealed that "... it (doing what I did in AVID) was tedious...it was annoying to me actually...it wasn't all that fun at all." (DS8:2:1) He further recounted that "you don't (pause) you don't really get it when you're in (pause) in the program. It just seems like some tedious (pause) oh just another just another worksheet to turn in, just another something else to do, just one more way I could have my binder more organized or, get up there and speak cause I understand that some people are terrified of that but um (pause) it's beneficial. It's productive. It helps in the long run" (DS8:3:2). In a similar way, Veronica offered, "I used to think AVID was useless in the beginning (pause) kinda wanted to get out of it (pause) but now, if I think back, AVID was really useful like (pause) I probably wouldn't get this far in high school with the grades I have now, probably wouldn't be going to class (pause) it's actually turned me into a better student because before, I was not a good student. . . . Last year there was rumor going around that AVID was gonna end, and I was soooo angry because I really want to stick with it to the end, and I probably would be really lost without AVID (pause) be so disorganized, fail some classes maybe, cause like AVID is a rock. You're not in it alone (pause) with AVID" (DS9:3:1).

Candice, when asked about her dislikes, maintained, "I don't dislike anything now, but when I first got in, I disliked everything: the tutorials, the Cornell notes, the binder checks, Lord! I used to get 50's, and then I got tired of failing them (pause) so I

finally got it together. I used to hate everything about AVID” (DS18:2:2). On the other hand, when asked what it was like to do what you do in AVID, Vanessa put it more bluntly by declaring, “boring. Besides getting your mindset ready for college...” (PS5:2:1)

Furthermore, when prompted about how she would feel if she could no longer be in AVID, Janet noted that “It really wouldn’t make a difference with me because...I would still come to those teachers or those students that I did work with ...I would still come to them for advice and help” (DS10:3:1). Similarly, Steven reported that “If I could no longer be in AVID um (pause) I wouldn’t be upset because they’ve already gave me enough (pause) enough knowledge that I need to know about um (pause) bein’ successful and furthering my education, so I would just take what I have gotten (pause) gotten from it, and just try to make myself better at bein’ successful at the next level of education. (DS20:3:2)

Some students had a much more negative view of particular AVID methodologies. Interestingly, Jennifer coupled what she did not like with a way in which she benefitted, commenting, “Socratic seminars (pause) I just really don’t like ‘em. They annoy me. It’s no fun. You cannot really have a debate. You just have a discussion. So I really don’t like Socratic seminars. Um, public speaking of course is my worst enemy. It was my worst enemy, but now (pause) it’s not hard anymore” (PS1:2:3).

Conversely, Maria articulated that “Socratic seminars are cool...they’re a more organized form of philosophical chairs...in my opinion...and they end up being more...peaceful and more agreeable” (2:2:4). With regard to learning logs, Jason added, “The learning logs are something I really didn’t like doing, cause I didn’t really notice it was that critical to AVID. Learning logs are something that I could say no one really understood the reason that we did it for. We never understood why we did learning logs, because we never looked back at ‘em to learn anything. We just wrote ‘em down

for a grade. That's what most of the people were like – we only did this because we wanted a grade. we really didn't do it for anything besides a grade because we didn't see any use for it, but the Cornell notes we did because we were looking through our notes and understanding clearly everything we did that day" (PS3:2:4). Also with regard to things she disliked, Joy started aggressively negative, but the more she talked about it, she backed off the weight of her concern, noting about learning logs, "the fact that I had to have like certain like, specific things about that particular day, rather than to just write about what I did that day (pause) but that I had to do this and that and that or I'd get points taken off (pause) it's like okay (pause) it became a little strenuous (pause) to me on top of other homework. It's like okay, not so much strenuous (pause) just a little irritating" (PS6:2:2).

Despite Negative Aspects of the Program, Students Still Benefitted by Assimilating the AVID Strategies in Pursuit of their Academic Dreams. AVID's curriculum emphasizes writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading (WICOR). Various strategies are employed to accomplish these curricular goals. These strategies include: tutorials, Cornell notes, philosophical chairs, Socratic seminars, binders, and learning logs. However, some students failed to assimilate the AVID strategies into their daily academic lives. One student asserted, "I was extremely unorganized....and I still am ...I just don't ever feel like carrying around that 3-inch binder" (PS1:2:3). While there were strategies that were not assimilated by some, other students like Jason applied the strategies learned in AVID in all his classes. He characterized it this way with reference to tutorials, "how tutorial was... we'd get in little groups and talk about our own subjects and ah ... we're learning about other classes while we're doing that and that [was] pretty...interesting...and unique" (PS3:3:2,3). Moreover, students revealed that the skills obtained in AVID class would assist them in their futures. Dave commented, "AVID just gives you a lot ...a lot of....a lot more options than I would say being without it...strengthens you where you can do what you want to do and

what...what you really want to do and not something you must do because you don't have certain skills...so um...yeah I'm goin' somewhere" (DS8:3:2). Christin also continued, "...I may have thought at first that it didn't have anything to do with what I was gonna do in life or it may not help me...but the little things did count up...it helps me with like time management and....organization and.... just stuff that I thought didn't matter...it does matter a lot...now that I'ma senior andgoing to be on my own soon...it ...it's really helped me" (DS15:3:1). Jennifer, a twelfth grader, contributed this way: "I love how it really helps me prepare for my future. Honestly, I did not think it would. When I first got in AVID, I thought, 'Why am in this class?' 'What is it gonna do for me?' I'm not gonna do anything. I mean it's just a class to have fun in. But now I look at it, and it's really helped me over the years – helped me prepare myself for college...really understand what's going on around me...instead of just not caring and being nonchalant about everything...so AVID really is one of my favorite things about high school. When I do get older there's gonna be one thing I always wanna tell me family and it's that AVID really did help me. I'm gonna want to put my kids in AVID. I'm gonna want...to do all those things for my family. AVID's been the best thing that's happened to me since I was in high school" (PS1:2:4). Moreover, Jennifer also emphasized that, "It helped enlighten me on how school really is something that is necessary for you to go further in life....you must at least graduate high school in order to even get a job nowadays....AVID's helped me honestly stay grounded and stay into school...it's made me wanna be here...made me honestly realize I wasn't a failure...(1:3:2) AVID has helped me discover the schools in which I want to go to ...helped me discover what exactly what I wanna do...what I need to do to get there...like if I wanna study history...I have to have this, this, this and this...it helps me to stabilize into what I want to study. It helps prepare you for whatever you want to do. It helps to prepare you for whatever your dreams are" (PS1:3:2). Joy's remarks mirrored Jennifer's statement, indicating, "it's helped me... become like...a better person...like

that I'm thinking more about my future rather just living for the moment....(PS6:3:1) with the focus of today's society being on like ...music and drugs.... I don't think a lot of them would be thinking about...what college they would be going to and um...like what major...or what they want to do.... without AVID....I certainly wouldn't be thinking about um... what college I would be going to... like specifically in depth...and I guess it sparked a little bit of ambition (PS6:3:1)....it means that ...I know where I'm headed.....I have a plan laid out for my future..." (PS6:3:1).

Dave too explained, "I know ah....where would I be if I wasn't in AVID? I know that I wouldn't have figured out what I want to be in life...that's one thing....and another, I wouldn't have known what college to go to and what I needed to do ...to um...qualify for that college..." (DS8:3:2). Veronica found that, "It actually got me thinking about what I want to do in the future and college...like...if I didn't have AVID, I probably wouldn't be going to college after high school...I'd probably just get a job...like any other person and never go to college...but now I see that college can really get you somewhere so...I've been looking at colleges because AVID has helped me to...and I'm making choices... (DS9:3:1).... I.... know what I want now...and because of AVID, I probably.... wouldn't have...and I'm more on point with everything I do ...even though I'm still lacking in some stuff but... eventually I'm...I'm gonna get to it..." (DS9:3:1). Janet also heralded that, "It's making me see things differently than what I saw before...like coming...when I wake up in the morning and I'm like...yeah I'm going to school...when I come to school...I learn, and I see things that will help me in the future...and what I can do to improve myself to do better..." (DS10:3:1). Sharnell described how AVID helped her develop future plans, noting that "...I like how it...it helps you decide what college you want to go to...and what you want to do with your future ...rather than just...having to decide at that one moment...you'll be thinking about it since freshman year" (DS13:2:2).

However, AVID assisted students both in determining the best college for them, and helping them be prepared for their futures. Sharnell continued, putting it this way: "...it's like...everything you learn in AVID, you can take with you anywhere...like...it's just not something that you learn ...for one year and then forget it...it's stuff that you can use in everyday life ...and the...and the rest of your life (DS13:3:1)....for me to be an AVID student, I think it means thatyou ...always know what you.... know what you're doing ...and like... you always know whatwhat you're preparing for...and... because AVID teaches you.....things that you'll see in real life...you won't really be...you won't really be surprised when it comes up on you" (DS13:3:1).

In addition, students also indicated that their experience in AVID enabled them to help others embrace their own futures as well. For instance, Maria mused that "I also feel that as I get older...um...or...as I ...as I've moved up in grade levels...in AVID...I think it means that...I teach those that come after me or try to teach those that come after me to know ...things that I've learned from...help them not make some of the same mistakes...or show them maybe better ways the things that I've learned afterwards...how to deal with um...like a freshman coming in...I might try and tell them things from a senior's perspective ...like saying okay...you need to start now on your grades...you know...not finding out as some people do in 10th grade or in 11th grade ...and that's when you start focusing on your grades you know...because colleges look at 9th, 10th, and 11th...don't slack off your 9th grade year...um...I might tell some...some of them I might actually tell...don't try and take straight AP classes...like...I took an AP class when...I first came in as a freshman ...which I handled it well, but some people don't have... that individual determination...their 9th grade year...to be able to be ...to handle something as ...um... rigorous as...an AP class. They're not ready for it – and don't try and overwork yourself...you know...I would... try and just...help other people better themselves ...but...looking out for these things before they become a

senior leaving AVID...you know...that way you get more out of it maybe...from 9th grade to 10th grade to 11th grade to 12th grade...instead of learning in 10th grade what your flaws are, and then trying to start working on those at the end of your high school career...instead of...start working on it from the very beginning...you know?...cause you can always get better once you know ...um...what the problems are...cause knowing them is half the battle...so...as an AVID student it's my responsibility...I feel...not an obligation but a responsibility" (PS2:2:3).

Jason expressed a similar sentiment about helping others, relating it this way: That's [tutorials] something I never really thought of but that....also if you look at it now, that's something that you probably will do later on in college when you're having your study time with your peers and ya'll get together in your little areas... and this is something that you could bring up and teach them and somethin' that maybe they weren't in AVID learning this and something maybe we could teach our peers when we do our study groups after high school and college" (PS3:3:2,3).

Discussion

With specific reference to the two research questions posed in this study, it was evident that, as a result of the organizational skills and other AVID strategies acquired, students were more focused on college and felt prepared to embrace their futures. In addition, not only did students acquire skills for college, but reported feeling prepared for life. Moreover, students at CHS found in AVID an environment where they felt like part of a family (Watt, Huerta, & Alkan, 2012). However, while a majority of CHS students reported that the AVID program benefitted them, not all students were of the same opinion. Some students strongly advocated for the AVID college readiness system, reflecting on its positive influence in their lives. Others seemed confused or indifferent about the program's ultimate utility.

In the pilot study conducted in the 2011-2012 school year, study findings demonstrated that participants viewed themselves as having academic potential,

regarded the AVID class as a family, and derived satisfaction from the way the program prepared them for college. Most participants saw AVID as a source, which facilitated the development of personal maturity and provided collegial support. The findings that were observed at CHS during the 2012-2013 academic year, which paralleled those found of the previous year were *AVID as a family*, and *students are more focused on college* as a result of their participation in the AVID program. It is unclear if the other findings reflected differences due to teachers, or other un-described phenomena. This may be worth investigation through further study.

Educational Implications

For schools with scheduling challenges similar to Central High School, this study provides a framework to safeguard the academic potential of underprepared and historically underrepresented students. Certain elements, such as *AVID as family* (Watt et. al, 2012; Watt, Johnston, Huerta, Mendiola & Alkan, 2008) and *preparation for college* (Martinez & Kloppott, 2003; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996) are often cited in the literature as associated with the AVID college readiness system. Both of these were found in the current study to characterize the student experience in the AVID program. However, new to the current study were the positive and negative perceptions with regard to how students experienced AVID. Further examination of the AVID program is needed to clarify answers to the research questions posed in this study, in particular, the question addressing how student perceptions influence student engagement with the program. These findings indicate varying levels of engagement. Surveys or focus groups could help to refine and reveal the nature of the dissatisfaction experienced by students.

Certification as an AVID school requires that the AVID curriculum be followed during the normal school day. Given this requirement, students will continue to be exposed to these strategies, and it will therefore, be possible to study the effects of student perceptions on student engagement with the AVID program. However,

program integrity should not be sacrificed for the sake of a study. Should a unique opportunity to study an event of this nature present itself, then the opportunity should be grasped.

Be that as it may, curricular decisions concerning instructional strategies must be carefully considered in view of their potential impacts on student experience and performance in the AVID class. In this study, participants reported dissatisfaction the use of specific strategies in the AVID elective such as learning logs. Ultimately, the AVID program has the potential to effect significant positive educational outcomes given the right conditions.

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