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The Relationship Between Avid Site Team Leadership and Program Capacity: A Qualitative Case

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AVID SITE TEAM LEADERSHIP

AND PROGRAM CAPACITY: A QUALITATIVE CASE

by

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AVID SITE TEAM LEADERSHIP AND PROGRAM CAPACITY: A QUALITATIVE CASE

Kellie A. Mason
Old Dominion University, 2015
Director: Dr. Jay Paredes Scribner

The identification and implementation of programs that create positive academic changes school—wide are greatly needed. The Advancement Via Individual Determination College Readiness System (AVID) is believed to be such a program. The purpose of this study was to evaluate to what extent leadership practices foster leadership development in teachers and how that transfer of leadership influences the academic achievement of students in the AVID program. Program theory evaluation (PTE) was selected as the preferred framework for this summative evaluation to assess the extent to which AVID is meeting its objectives. Findings indicate enhancing instructional capacity, providing scaffold support, building teacher capacity, and providing AVID staff development as necessary components for successful implementation of the AVID program. The results of this evaluative study suggest that leaders who are involved and supportive and who empower teachers in the shared decision-making processes in a school are more successful in implementing successful AVID programs.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me the strength to see this journey to the end. No one said that it would be easy and there were many days and nights that I wanted to quit; however, I was reminded on a daily basis that I could do all things through Christ who is my source of strength. During the experience, I learned the importance of stopping and reflecting on what was happening as well as trusting and believing that everything was going to be all right.

My family has been very supportive of my efforts and I appreciate them for their love and patience. I thank my husband, Rick, my cheerleader, for encouraging me to push forward and keep it moving. I thank my son, Richard III (Tripp), for being understanding when I couldn't be there for every practice or tournament. Patricia Hardy, thank you for filling in for me when I couldn't be Tripp's limo driver and for making sure he was fed when I was in class or writing papers. I would also like to acknowledge my parents, Fred and Patricia Poole, who instilled in me a love for learning, which is why I became an educator. To the rest of my family – I thank you for your love, support, and prayers.

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I can finally shout now – It's finished!

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No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Program Theory Evaluation (PTE)

Small Learning Community (SLC)

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)

Success For All (SFA)

Success For All Foundation (SFAF)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading (WICOR)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

AVID Program Evaluation

Walking through the hallways of various secondary schools throughout the country, one will quickly notice that student populations of school buildings are as diverse as the cities and towns in which they exist. For many of our students who "differ from dominant norms in schools," being a student is like being in the "border lands around us" (Marshall & Oliva, 2010, p. 7). Because many students and parents do not know the exact policies and practices of the school system, "inequitable outcomes" are often a result (Marshall & Oliva, 2010). How do we help all students acquire meaningful academic success, when they do not have the same knowledge or experiences?

The Advancement Via Individual Determination College Readiness System (AVID) is a research-based elementary through postsecondary college-readiness system designed to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society (AVID, 2012). Mary Catherine Swanson started the program in 1980 in an attempt to provide additional support to a group of underrepresented students who had the desire to go to college. She believed that if given the support and opportunity these students would be successful. Of the 30 students who began the program in 1980, 28 of them went to college (Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). AVID is an integral part of approximately 4,800 schools in 44 states and 16 countries (AVID, 2015).

The theory of the AVID program is when implemented effectively students are successful in developing their academic and personal strengths. Every AVID student is expected to sign a contract stating he is making a personal commitment to become

actively involved in his education. Parents, teachers, administrators, and tutors sign an annual contract, as well. Furthermore, schools are expected to incorporate AVID instructional strategies throughout the building, thus influencing the academic success of students' school-wide.

AVID targets students in the academic middle (2.0–3.5 GPA) who have the desire to go to college. Students who have the ability to be successful in completing rigorous courses, yet are not reaching their potential, are ideally suited for the program. The characteristics of AVID students vary, many AVID students will be the first in their family to attend college, some may come from families of low socio-economic status, and others represent underserved minority groups. Students who desire to be a part of the program must apply and participate in an interview. If selected for the program, students are placed in the AVID elective class and college preparatory classes designed to fulfill the requirements necessary for college entry.

As a program that has the potential to lead to whole school reform, factors including the structure of the program, perceptions of the teachers, and academic and personal attitudes have contributed to the success of AVID (Watt, Johnston, Huerta, Mendiola, & Alkan, 2008). Other significant contributions to the success of any program are the essential elements of implementation: "organization change, staffing, and administrative support, a focus on curriculum and instruction, supplies and materials, scheduling and grouping, monitoring of student progress and performance, and family and community support" (Fullan, 2000, p. 17; Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2002).

In order to be considered as a certified AVID site, schools must successfully implement 11 components, which are referred to as "Essentials" (Watt et al., 2008). The

Essentials include various indicators such as "student selection, voluntary program participation, the AVID elective class, rigorous coursework, instruction focused on writing, reading, collaboration, and inquiry, data collection, budgeting for resources, and, an interdisciplinary site team" (2008, p. 19). All of the components are necessary; however, the most instrumental piece of the program is the "strength of the AVID site team and specifically the lead teacher or coordinator who is in charge of coordinating student selection, college preparation curriculum, tutoring, professional development, fundraising, and parent components" (Watt, Powell, Mendiola, & Cossio, 2006, p. 60).

The AVID curriculum relies on the WICOR method, writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading. The programs of study include seminars on lecture and textbook note-taking, time management, test-taking strategies with particular emphasis on the PSAT and SAT tests, Socratic Seminars, and writing development through an assortment of methods. AVID students receive individualized academic counseling and find assistance with the preparation and completion of college applications and financial aid forms. Guest speakers, field trips, and interaction in community and cultural activities are additional enhancements to the AVID curriculum.

Schools that have AVID are expected to go through a yearly evaluation called a Certification Self-Study. Teams also complete an online instrument that "measures the implementation fidelity to the AVID model" (Johnston, Nickel, Popp, & Marcus, 2010). Site teams collect data that documents their implementation of the Eleven Essentials. Each of the Eleven Essentials is defined using between three and seven indicators, rated on a four-point continuum: 0 = Not AVID, 1 = Meets Certification Standards, 2 = Routine Use, and 3 = Institutionalized. The culmination of each indicator results in an

overall *Essential Rating*. A local or regional District Director and the AVID Center then evaluate the certification study. The level a school receives determines its status:

1. Non-certified/Affiliate – sites with one or more of the Eleven Essentials rated as Not AVID (level 0),

2. Certified – sites that ranked Meets Certification Standards (Level 1) or higher on all Eleven Essentials, and

3. Demonstration – sites rated at Routine Use (Level 2) with no indicator at Level 0 on all Eleven Essentials. Schools then participate in an on-site validation visit from AVID Center (Johnston, Nickel, Popp, & Marcus, 2010).

Site teams take the feedback that they are given through the evaluation and make necessary changes to improve their school's ratings so that it can become a demonstration site.

AVID In Practice

Leaders want their students to be successful and therefore search for programs that will increase the achievement levels of their students. The AVID program was producing positive results in neighboring divisions and was started in this particular district during the late 90s. Each year the school division signs a contract with AVID Center. Schools that have the program are required to send teams of teachers (AVID site-teams) to AVID Summer Institute to participate in additional staff development opportunities. Teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors who are a part of the AVID site team must also participate in and conduct staff development opportunities at their schools. Six high schools and six middle schools in this division incorporate AVID.

In this district, AVID is an academic elective taken as part of a student's instructional day. The three primary components of the program are academic instruction, tutorial support, and motivational activities; the goal is for students to become the facilitator of their academic success by improving their organization, study skills, critical thinking and questioning skills. They also participate in enrichment and motivational activities such as college tours, cultural events, and guest speakers. AVID also provides bi-weekly study groups directed by trained college tutors who serve as role models and mentors.

Significance of Study

Legislation was passed by Congress and signed into law by George W. Bush, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002), as a means to hold schools accountable for the academic success of all students by:

> Enhancing state systems of accountability, requiring clearly defined statewide standards for academic proficiency, mandating teacher and paraprofessional quality standards, enacting annual testing in third through eighth grades with results disaggregated by subgroups, and calling for the use of instructional practices based on scientifically based research. (Wong & Nicotera, 2007, p. 8)

The passage of NCLB held leaders responsible for identifying the gaps and determining ways to close them (Wong & Nicotera, 2007). Although intentions were good, all students have not experienced success with the passage of this education statute.

Many argue that educational inequities are closely connected to issues of race and social justice; however, these issues are often "not accepted as legitimate by teachers, teacher educators, and administrators" who educate children (Jost, Whitfield, & Jost,

2005, p. 15). Scheurich and Skrla (2003) further claimed that the achievement gap consists for children of color and low-income students who do not, on average, do as well as their white middle-class counterparts. As a result, children of color and students of low socio-economic statuses are often not "included in institutional practices and processes" (Ryan, 2006, p. 5) because unlike those who have traditionally been on academic tracks, they are not aware of the "hidden curriculum" that exists (Swanson, Mehan, & Hubbard, 1993, p. 15).

The AVID College Readiness System (ACRS) "accelerates student learning, uses research-based methods of effective instruction, provides meaningful and motivational professional learning, and acts as a catalyst for systemic reform and change" (AVID, 2012). The primary outcome of the AVID program is for students to gain entrance into four-year institutions. This summative evaluation adds to the body of research regarding the impact AVID has on the academic achievement of students in the academic middle. School board members, central office staff, and principals will benefit from the findings because they will provide rationale for acquiring funding for materials, training, and allocations for staffing. If more schools adopt AVID because of the findings then four-year institutions, community colleges, the Armed Forces, and local business would also benefit because they are the potential recipients of the students of the school division.

Problem Statement

The United States is challenged regarding how best to prepare all students for post-secondary opportunities and success. How do we close the achievement gaps and prepare students for post-secondary experiences? Programs, such as AVID, try to reshape students to do just that; however, what do successful AVID programs look like?

The AVID teacher or coordinator is crucial to the success of the program (Huerta, Watt, & Alkan, 2008; Watt et al., 2006); however, effective leadership is also vitally important. The connection between the leadership practices of the AVID site team and its mission to "prepare all students for college readiness in a global society" need to be explored (Laughlin, 2011). This evaluation examined the leadership practices of the AVID site team and how these practices influence the academic success of students in schools that have the AVID program.

Purpose Statement

AVID seeks to take students who have the potential to succeed in rigorous courses and the desire to go to college and places them in a supportive environment. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine to what extent leadership influences the academic success of students in schools identified as AVID-certified schools. This evaluation study will: (a) provide insight into the extent to which school leadership fosters teacher leadership and development; (b) describe how implementation of AVID methodologies and strategies ensure student success; and (c) specifically examine the experiences, relationships, and practices of the AVID site team at three high schools in a district in the South Atlantic Region.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the research questions organized by one grand tour (Spradley, 1979) question and two sub-questions:

1. How and in what ways is AVID implemented in three schools in one district that support efforts to ensure that students gain entry into postsecondary schools?

a. How, and in what ways, does school level leadership support (or not) the implementation of the AVID program?

b. How, in what ways, and to what extent do AVID teachers exercise teacher leadership in a manner that lead to the successful implementation of the AVID program?

Overview of Theory

This study was guided by the following theoretical concepts: leadership, culture, and structures. A discussion of these three concepts was necessary because research indicated a connection between the three concepts in schools that have experienced success (Hays, 2013; Schrum & Levin, 2013; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) argue that the concept of leadership and its influence on the success of schools and other institutions has existed as far back as antiquity. Ultimately, leaders take responsibility for what happens in the classroom as well what is expected of schools (Purinton, 2012). There is the belief that effective schools exist and function only if they have effective leadership (Danzig, Borman, Jones, & Wright, 2007).

School Leadership

There are various theories about leadership, and research consistently revealed that it was a necessary component for school improvement (Danzig et al., 2007). Many argued that instructional leadership had an effect on teacher quality, thus an impact on student achievement (Purinton, 2012). Additionally, there are others who contradict this position and do not support the idea that leaders have any effect on student achievement (Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003).

There is no consensus on the definition of leadership (Snowden & Gordon, 1998; Zafar, Umar, Rahmat, & Javed, 2009). Some researchers argue that leadership is the person or people making decisions while others claim actions of the group determine leadership. According to Snowden and Gorden (1998), leadership has evolved from meaning one person getting others to do what he wants, to including all of those involved in the group. As noted by Neumerski (2012), leaders "do not work in isolation" (p. 312) and often turn to others to ensure that the goals of the organization are met (Snowden & Gorden, 1998; Vennebo & Ottesen, E., 2012). Snowden and Gorden (1998) indicated that there are various types of leadership and the type implemented by the leader is often dictated by the needs of the group. Vennebo and Ottesen (2012) argued that leadership is rooted in the actions of the group and develops as the group members work together to get the job done or to make change. Snowden and Gorden (1998) further claimed that "it is not the position that determines whether someone is a leader; it is the nature of that individual's behavior while occupying that position" (p. 65). Zafar et al. (2009) argued that regardless of the definition used, all include the functions of "setting directions and exercising influence" into the meaning (p. 581). For the purpose of this study, leadership will be defined as a group of people whose actions support the goals of the organization.

Although there are various studies about how leadership affects the functioning of a school, there are few studies that reveal how leaders improve achievement in schools (Marazano et al., 2005; Neumerski, 2012). As the push for collaboration among stakeholders in schools grows, Neumerski (2012) argued most of the existing research does not reflect the reality of schools and focuses on who the leader is rather than how the leader leads. Additionally, although the body of research on school leadership has

increased, the body of research addressing the relationship between leadership and academic achievement of students is lacking (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Culture of Academic Excellence

Developing a culture of academic excellence is a second concept necessary for successful schools. There are various definitions and researchers have yet to come to a single explanation (Lumby, 2012). For example, James and Connolly (2009) claimed that culture is "something an organization has rather than something an organization is" (p. 402). Snowden and Gorton (1998) described culture as being complex and continuously changing. Schoen and Teddlie (2008) asserted that current definitions of culture are too general and don't address the complexities of studying culture in different contexts. For the purpose of this study, culture will be defined as the members of the group or community who share the same "values, beliefs, and shared meanings" (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy, & Wirt, 2004, p.135).

Creating a school culture focused on high expectations is vital in order for schools to experience academic success (Marzano et al., 2005). According to Snowden and Gorton (1998), research indicated that previous studies focused on the adverse effects of culture or organizations; however, recent studies point out the "importance of developing and maintaining a positive organizational culture in order for schools to be effective" (p. 110). Moreover, leaders can cultivate change through creating a culture of support, collaboration, and shared beliefs (Snowden & Gorton, 1998). According to Lumby and Foskett (2011), leaders can "use culture to move toward a more equitable distribution of the positive outcomes of education" (p. 447). The researchers argued the importance of understanding the "commonalities" as well as "reflecting on the cultures"

(p. 452) in our schools and how those practices will help leaders understand the features of the groups that they work within schools.

Structures

The last component necessary for successful schools is having structures such as professional learning communities (PLC) in place. Developing professional learning communities allows for teacher collaboration, which in turn leads to the development of trust and relationships. Additionally, changes in teaching practice leads to improvements in the academic achievement of students (Wong & Nicotera, 2007). Sergiovanni et al., (2004) claim that an effective learning community shares mutual interpersonal bonds, identity in a common place, and commitment to values, norms, and beliefs. It is within the PLC that teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and parents can work to establish shared goals for students, change the culture of schools, and develop leaders.

Methodology

This evaluation centered on the impact of AVID leadership on student outcomes; consequently qualitative data consisting of interviews with AVID site team members and observations of site team meetings was collected. Additionally, document analysis included AVID site team plans, site team minutes, and the yearly Certification Self-Study evaluation. The participants of this program evaluation consisted of content teachers, guidance counselors, AVID teachers and administrators in three AVID Certified high schools in a large school district located in the South Atlantic Region. Permission for this study was obtained from both the school division and Old Dominion for approval.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the study. First, the proposal had to be approved by the University and the school division, so there was a chance that the methodology would have to change. A second limitation was the availability of individual school documents. Due to the time that the study took place, requests for site team materials had to be made several times. A third limitation was that many of the participants knew the researcher. The researcher served as the former District Director of AVID for the school division and was responsible for conducting yearly evaluations of each school's AVID program. While the researcher no longer served in that position, it was a concern that their interview responses and behaviors as well as comments during the observations were not honest. As a result, the researcher made every attempt to not express bias towards one school over another and did not discuss findings with the participants.

The evaluation did not consider the process used to implement AVID at the various schools, the differing dynamics of individual buildings, or the number of years AVID has been incorporated into the curriculum of a school. A final limitation was that the evaluation did not take into account the attrition rates and changes that may have occurred in the building due to resignations, retirements, and advancements of AVID site team members.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions that impacted the study. The first assumption was all teachers, counselors, and administrator participating in the AVID program volunteered for the program. With the many administrative and instructional changes that occur in school buildings, it is possible that an assistant principal, guidance

counselor, or teacher could have been assigned AVID as a part of his responsibilities rather than request the opportunity to be involved in the in the program. The second assumption was that all data provided by the schools were accurate and truthful. The third assumption was that AVID success would be evident throughout the schools involved in the study.

Organization of the Dissertation

As a Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program, AVID has the potential to influence the academic achievement of every student in a school. This evaluation explores the leadership practices of AVID site teams. Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study and included the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions that guided the study. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used in the study as well as the study's delimitations, significance, assumptions, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to educational reform and CRS programs. This literature review creates a framework revealing necessary pieces of successful school reform and will also discuss how the AVID College Readiness System aligns with intended results of school reform and student academic achievement. Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of Program Theory Evaluation (PTE) and the justification for its usage as an evaluation framework for the study. The chapter then describes the process used for participant selection, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations.

Chapter 4 describes the findings and provides an analysis of the data. Chapter 5 highlights the purpose of the study and summarizes the data presented in Chapter 4. It

also provides a discussion of the findings and the implications and recommendations for future research.

Definitions of Terms

AVID: Advancement Via Individual Determination - a research-based elementary through postsecondary college-readiness system designed to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society.

AVID Center: Headquarters for the AVID program located in San Diego, California.

AVID Elective: Class held during the instructional day that all AVID students are enrolled.

AVID Participants: For the purpose of this study, AVID participants will be defined as students who have been in the AVID program consecutively for four years.

AVID Essentials: Standards that AVID schools are expected to implement that reflect the values and beliefs of the AVID program.

AVID District Director: Local school personnel responsible for guiding the implementation of the AVID program.

AVID Site Team: Individuals, consisting of teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, tutors and community stakeholders who are responsible for implementing AVID strategies and practices in a school.

AVID Certified School: Schools that have successfully implemented the 11 essentials and have reached a rating of at least 1.

AVID Certification Self-Study: online instrument used to evaluate the implementation of the 11 AVID Essentials.

WICOR: AVID instructional strategies focus on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading/rigor.

School based Leadership: a group of people whose actions support the goals of the organization.

Shared Leadership: decisions made by a group of people whose actions support the goals of the organization.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter provided an introduction to the study and included the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions that guided the study. It also presented an overview of the methodology used in the study as well as the study's delimitations, significance, assumptions, and definitions of terms. The literature review presents and discusses Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) studies that support the idea of AVID as a model of reform for schools wanting to implement school-wide change. This chapter then provides a historical overview of educational reform since 1980 and brings to light some of the forces that have shaped school reform. Next, this section reviews how accountability has become the focus of reform efforts. In addition, it reveals arguments for and against high stakes accountability as a means to ensure academic achievement. Next, the chapter examines Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) as a reform effort and discusses arguments against it. A discussion of several CSR programs will follow. The review then provides a description of characteristics needed in order for a CSR effort to be successful.

AVID College Readiness System

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) began in California by a veteran teacher, Mary Catherine Swanson. She developed it as a method to ensure the success of students who were experiencing educational inequities (AVID, 2012). In 1980, approximately 500 low socio-economic students were bused to the San Diego Unified District to attend Claremont High School in California. Swanson feared that the high expectations and rigor of the school would decline because the new students did not have the advantages or the college-going culture as did former students (Johnston et al.,

2010). Believing that they could be equally successful if placed in the right environment, Swanson and her colleagues attempted to level the playing field by placing them in a high school elective course called AVID. Ultimately, her goal was to prepare low performing and underprivileged students to attend college (Swanson et al., 1993).

The current mission of the AVID program is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college. In addition, it seeks to improve readiness and success in a global society (AVID, 2012). As the program evolved, it became apparent that in order for AVID to be successful, the program needs several key components: administrative support, resources to hire and train tutors, professional development for staff members, and analysis of data to monitor the efficacy of the program and student success (Johnston et al., 2010). As a result, all AVID schools now have to implement what are called the Eleven Essentials. The Eleven Essentials are presented in Figure 1.

AVID Essentials

1. Avid student selection must focus on students in the middle (2.0 to 3.5 G.P.A. as on indicator) with academic potential, who would benefit from AVID support to improve their academic record and begin college preparation.

2. AVID participants, both students and staff, must choose to participate.

3. The school must be committed to full implementation of the AVID program, with students enrolled in the AVID year-long Elective class(es) available within the regular academic school day.

4. AVID students must be enrolled in a rigorous course of study that will enable them to meet requirements for university enrollment.

5. Instructional strategies are taught in the AVID Elective class to develop students' organizational skills that promote academic self-management.

6. A strong, relevant writing and reading curriculum provides a basis for instruction in the AVID Elective class.

7. Inquiry and collaboration are used as a basis for instruction in the AVID Elective class to promote critical thinking.

8. A sufficient number of tutors must be available in the AVID Elective class(es) to facilitate student access to rigorous curriculum. Tutors should be students enrolled in colleges and universities, who can mentor students and facilitate tutorials, and they must be trained to implement the methodologies used in AVID.

9. AVID program implementation and student progress must be monitored through the AVID Center Data System and results must be analyzed to ensure success. Please note that sites will not be certified if General and Senior data (if applicable) are not submitted and approved at the same time the Certification Self Study is being approved.

10. The school or district has identified resources for program costs, has agreed to implement all AVID Essentials and to participate in AVID Certification. It has committed to ongoing participation in AVID professional learning.

11. An active, interdisciplinary AVID Site Team collaborates on issues of student access to and success in rigorous college preparatory courses.

Figure 1. The Eleven AVID Essentials.

The Eleven AVID Essentials provide the framework for the program and schools should implement it with fidelity. AVID Center contends attempting to change the program to fit the school means that the school takes the chance of undermining the beliefs, ideology, and experiences upon which the AVID College Readiness System was founded (AVID, 2012). As a result, teams are expected to monitor themselves and complete an online instrument called the CSS that "measures the implementation fidelity to the AVID model" (Johnston et al., 2010). This process occurs on a yearly basis, and all school site teams are expected to collect data that documents their implementation of the Eleven Essentials.

Each of the Essentials is defined using between three and seven indicators and rated on a four-point continuum: 0 = Not AVID; 1 = Meets Certification Standards, 2 = Routine Use, and 3 = Institutionalized. The culmination of scores produces an overall *Essential Rating*. The certification study must be evaluated by the local or regional District Director and the AVID Center staff. The levels a school receives determine the following:

1. Non-certified/Affiliate – sites with one or more of the Eleven Essentials rated as Not AVID (Level 0),

2. Certified – sites that ranked Meets Certification Standards (Level 1) or higher on all Eleven Essentials, and

3. Demonstration – sites rated at Routine Use (Level 2) with no indicator at Level 0 on all Eleven Essentials. This prestigious ranking is given by a recommendation from the AVID Regional or District Director. Schools then participate in an onsite validation visit from AVID Center (2010).

Over time, it is hoped that a school's ratings will improve so that they can become a demonstration site.

AVID Recruitment

In order to participate in the AVID College Readiness System, students are recruited into the program. Teachers and parents recommend students for the program, or they can also be recruited by peers or nominate themselves. Getting input from stakeholders helps the team of individuals responsible for AVID recruitment because they do not have to search for students. Established criteria used in the selection of participants consist of the following: 2.0–3.5 GPA, middle to high test scores, first generation to go to college, low socio-economic status. Students must also express a desire to be in the program; as a result, those who do not want to be in the program even when recommended, are usually not selected to participate. Potential AVID students undergo an interview where they are asked a series of questions to determine if they would be successful in the program. Although no longer emphasized in the selection process, many of the students continue to be of color (Ford, 2010). As dropout rates for African American males and Hispanic populations continue to remain high throughout the country (Bornsheuer, Polonyi, Andrews, Fore, & Onwuegbuzie, 2011; Laughlin, 2011), the success of many AVID schools has caused it to be viewed as one strategy used to keep students of color and low socio-economic students in school and increasing the number of those students going to college.

The AVID Elective Class

Students accepted into the AVID program enroll in the AVID elective course. This class meets during the instructional day and is a part of the school's master schedule.

Students receive additional support in writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization skills and reading (WICOR). They also receive instruction and support in note-taking, test-taking, study skills, and research skills. Time management, binder organization, and college preparation are also areas where students receive support.

AVID students also participate in inquiry-based tutorials with college student or volunteer tutors at least twice a week. These tutors go through rigorous training in AVID methodologies and strategies. Extra support is an integral part of the program as students are expected to take courses of rigor and Advanced Placement (AP) classes. The inclusion of AVID students in these courses opens up access to other students who do not fit the norms of the school (AVID, 2012). One goal is for AVID to serve as a catalyst for school-wide change.

AVID Instructional Methods

AVID's curriculum foundation consists of WICOR. In the AVID class the focus is on (a) writing as a tool for learning; (b) inquiry method; (c) collaboration every day. Writing is essential to the success of the students, and they are taught and required to take Cornell notes in all classes, which aids in the development of detailed notes that help them prepare for tests. They also practice writing "quick writes" and "learning logs" when reflecting on their experiences in a class on a particular day. Students are also encouraged to review their notes daily in order to develop questions to ask in the next class when seeking clarification on information or points of confusion.

Tutors are used in the AVID tutorial as a means to develop the inquiry skills of students. Schools and districts are encouraged to use current college students who are often former AVID students as tutors. College students make connections with students

that they are working with, can answer questions about college life, and often serve as mentors to the students they are tutoring. If communities do not have college tutors available, districts will also train adults and current students. Tutors are trained in the Socratic Seminar method and facilitate the students in their journey to find the answer. During tutorials, AVID students are expected to bring questions or points of confusion from class work or homework. Rather than receive answers, students participate in academic inquiry whereby tutors or students pose additional questions that guide the student to find the answer himself (Laughlin, 2011). This tutorial process helps AVID students develop listening, thinking, and communication skills.

Collaboration is another component of the AVID College Readiness System. Students collaborate on a daily basis in the AVID classroom and learn to rely on their peers for feedback on papers, presentations, as well as during tutorials. Consistently collaborating with their peers aids students in their development of relationships with each other as well as their written and oral communication skills.

Organizational skills are an integral part of AVID. Participants receive a 3-ring binder where they are expected to keep all of their notes, papers, and assessments and carry to every class. The AVID teacher and tutors provide students guidance on binder organization. Students keep all materials in the binder and receive a weekly grade for organization. Not only does this keep work organized, it also provides easy access to notes and learning logs. Teachers work with students to develop time management skills; students are encouraged to use tools like planners and calendars so they may coordinate completing school work with after school activities, family responsibilities, or employment.

Reading is another essential component of the AVID elective course. Students are taught reading strategies, such as accessing prior knowledge of a subject and marking the text. These literacy interventions help develop comprehension skills and transcend all core subject areas. Interactive note-taking promotes critical thinking whereby students engage directly with the text, generating questions that students may return to answer during class discussions, or that will need clarification for comprehension during a tutorial.

AVID Teacher/AVID Site Team

As noted in Chapter 1, if a school or district decides it wants to become an AVID site, the initial step is to express an interest to AVID Center. Once a school is brought on as an AVID school, an AVID elective teacher is selected to head the efforts of the program. He must sign a "contract" stating that he has chosen to be the AVID teacher and believes in the program's mission and beliefs. This school leader teaches the AVID elective and directs the efforts of the site team.

There is also a contingency of teachers who volunteer to participate on the AVID site team. This group of individuals, including the AVID teacher, attends AVID Summer Institute together to develop a site team plan. This framework will identify goals for the year. The site team has additional responsibilities: conduct staff development on AVID strategies; assist in recruitment and selection of students; host parent workshops on the college application process; and serve as mentors for the program. An ideal site team is inclusive of all stakeholders, including parents, tutors, and students.

AVID Research

Researchers have found increases in academic achievement in students who are provided educational structures that promote student success. Elmore (2009) claims that the only way to increase learning and performance is "by increasing the knowledge and skills of teachers, changing the content, or altering the relationship of the student to the teacher and the content" (Elmore, 2009, n.p.). As a Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) model, the AVID College Readiness System is an academic program that has been viewed as a "catalyst for change" because the methodologies and strategies have the potential to reach every student in the school (Watt, Huerta, & Cossio, 2004). When teachers who are AVID trained share the methods and strategies that they implement in their classrooms with teachers who are not AVID trained, more students are exposed to the strategies and will experience success (Watt, Huerta, & Cossio, 2004).

Watt, Yanez, et al. (2002) examined CSR efforts in Texas, for approximately two years. The districts that participated in the study received school reform grants from the federal government with the intentions of using AVID as a vehicle through which to expand access and make school-wide change (Watt et al., 2002). The study implemented both qualitative and quantitative methods and baseline data included grade point averages, attendance, course enrollment, and test scores for approximately 1,000 students. Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that AVID schools were increasing access; over 90% of AVID students took courses of rigor, and more students were being exposed to AVID strategies.

Examining four AVID CSR schools in Texas, Watt, Huerta, and Cossio (2004) attempted to find which actions, if any, of leaders affected the implementation of AVID

and to identify essentials needed for success. Two schools involved in the study received CSR grants and the other two schools did not. The study included both quantitative and qualitative methods. Findings revealed that sites that had supportive and involved principals were more successful than schools that did not have active principals. Additionally, sites that had principals who shared responsibilities with teachers, selected teacher leaders who wanted to participate as members of the site team, and provided opportunities for site team members to provide staff development, were more likely to be successful sites (Watt et al., 2004).

Watt, Powell, et al. (2006) conducted a study to determine whether or not selected Texas schools and districts had shown any progress in implementing the AVID System as a CSR model. The researchers used state accountability ratings, school-wide graduation and completion rates, enrollment in advanced courses and AP test taking, and percentage of students graduating on advanced graduation plans as variables to measure the school's success in preparing more underrepresented students for college. The researchers conducted a four-year study of 10 schools in five districts that received CSR grant money and implemented AVID. Watt, Powell, et al. (2006) revealed that schools with AVID experienced an improvement in enrollment in advanced courses, participation in AP testing, and graduation completion rates. They found positive effects of AVID on the performance African-American and Latino students, as well as low socio-economic families (Watt, Powell, et al., 2006). Thus, the performance of the school improved supporting the argument that students will experience success when provided with educational support.

In contrast, some studies regarding AVID's effect on academic achievement have not resulted in positive outcomes. Ford (2010) conducted research and used various measures, such as grades, GPAs, and test scores to evaluate AVID's impact on student achievement. Ford's (2010) study revealed that although AVID students gained access to courses of rigor, AVID did not have a significant effect on the academic achievement of students. Connors (2010) also conducted a study to examine whether or not participation in AVID had an impact on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in reading, writing, and mathematics. Although there was a statistically significant difference in tenth grade FCAT writing scores, Connors (2010) found no statistically significant difference between AVID and non-AVID student math and reading scores.

The AVID System attempts to improve the academic performance of students by creating structures and a culture of improvement for students considered a part of the academic middle. The system provides curriculum for students as well as leadership opportunities for teachers and administrators. Students learn strategies in the AVID classroom that leads to success and teachers and administrators develop leadership skills through the opportunities they are given when leading the program. The AVID system also creates an environment that focuses on the development of positive relationships between teachers and students as well as among students. One AVID Structure that exists is AVID leadership.

AVID leadership. A principal must "advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth" (CSSOC, 1996, p. 14). Successful AVID College Readiness System administrators "take ownership of the program" (Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2002) and

recognize the importance of selecting an AVID teacher who others consider as a teacher leader in the building as well as the importance of cultivating the leadership skills of the AVID teacher. Watt, Mills, and Huerta (2010) surveyed middle and high school principals to identify attributes that best represent a teacher leader and characteristics they consider when selecting an AVID teacher. The researchers deemed the study necessary because principals and administrators are instrumental in selecting the teacher leaders and cultivating their leadership skills through building relationships, distributed power and authority, strong professional learning aligned with the school's vision of continuous learning (Watt, Mills, & Huerta, 2010). The researchers' study revealed that administrators viewed teacher leaders as individuals who mentored other teachers and conducted staff development opportunities.

In an attempt to expand on previous research, Watt, Huerta, and Mills (2010) examined the relationship between AVID professional development and teacher leadership. AVID professional development is on-going and encompasses a three-day summer institute and support training from regional and district directors during the school year (Watt, Huerta, & Mills, 2010). During the 2008 AVID Summer Institutes, 3,016 middle school and high school teacher participants completed a questionnaire used to determine if AVID professional development had any relationship to the development of teacher leaders in AVID schools. Findings showed that AVID trainings had a positive impact on teacher leadership, and AVID teachers became agents of change in their building.

AVID culture. Leaders in schools that implement the AVID College Readiness System work to create settings where students experience success. As a learning

community, administrators, teachers, parents, and students work to create a trusting and supportive environment that encompasses the beliefs that all students will graduate with 21st Century Skills and be college-ready. For example, Watt et al. (2008) conducted a study of retention rates of students in selected schools in Texas and California. Multiple case studies were chosen from the two states based on the maturity level of their programs. Findings from the study revealed that students felt the program kept them focused on their classes and prepared them for college (Watt et al., 2008). Participants reported less of a desire to drop out of school while emphasizing the idea of belongingness (Watt et al., 2008; Watt, Yanez, et al., 2002). The researchers reported that the students also attributed their success to the AVID strategies, teacher preparedness, and the additional tutoring the teachers received. Addressing lower retention rates in senior year, the study reported that students were uninterested, did not want to put forth the effort, or were disenrolled because of low grades (Watt et al., 2008).

Watt, Huerta, and Mills (2010) also examined the relationship between AVID implementation and school culture and climate. Elective teachers, who were participants at the 2008 AVID Summer Institute, were surveyed to evaluate their perceptions of the impact of AVID on their school's culture climate. Findings revealed teachers who worked in schools that had implemented AVID with fidelity had higher levels of positive school culture and climate. Results showed that the length of implementation did not have any influence on these perceptions. Moreover, schools that had the status of "Demonstration Site" also had higher levels of climate and culture in contrast to schools that were non-demonstrations sites (Watt, Huerta, & Mills, 2010). The study revealed that teachers who were new to teaching the AVID elective course were more inclined to

express that AVID had a significant impact on the climate and culture of a school than more experienced teachers. Coordinators also felt that AVID had a greater impact than AVID teachers who were not coordinators (Watt, Huerta, & Mills, 2010).

Learning communities. The AVID site team supports the efforts of both Small Learning Communities (SLC) and a Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Just like a SLC, the AVID site team works to nurture and develop long lasting relationships between teachers and students, and promotes community and peer relationships (AVID, 2012). The site team works to "change the structure, culture, and instruction with the hope of creating a school-wide college going culture," (AVID, 2012). At site team meetings, members not only share ideas but also develop a vision of what they want their AVID College Readiness System to be through commonly held values and beliefs (Watt et al., 2010).

As a PLC, a group of teachers reviews data in collaboration with administrators, guidance counselors, parents, community stakeholders, and tutors, in an attempt to make decisions about the students in the AVID program. There is an expectation that the team meets at least once a month to discuss student progress and the progress of the team in meeting its established goals. AVID also improves both the teaching and learning by providing professional development and curriculum, and giving access to courses of rigor (AVID, 2012). Site team members identify and discuss strategies that work and provide learning opportunities for teachers in their schools. They also provide input in the development of learning plans for their AVID students in order to ensure access to honors and AP courses.

School Improvement

Educational Reform

Politicians look to reform as a means to improve schools. The drive for school

reform is not an isolated event and has been a recurring theme throughout the existence

of schools (Linn, 2000; Myers & Murphy, 2007; Timar & Tyack, 1999). The push to

make schools better is linked to continuous changes in the expectations that communities

have regarding what schools are expected to do (Reese, 2007). Moreover, this endless

cycle of reform implies that the created solutions failed to rid schools of the problems

that they were supposed to solve (Cuban, 1990a).

Murphy and Adams (1998) examined educational reform since 1980 and divide

the period into three distinct eras: intensification, restructuring, and reformation.

Murphy and Adams (1998) describe the periods:

- Intensification – This period (1980 – 1987) marks and era when the government

  played a large role in education reform. The publication of *A Nation at Risk*, in

  1983, resulted in the country focusing on the failures of American schools in

  national testing and international rivalry (Wang, Beckett, & Brown, 2006). Test

  scores iterated that schools were not succeeding and became the sole measure of

  success (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Linn, 2000; Tyack, 1990). The assumption

  was that the problems resulted from inadequate workers and tools, low

  expectations, and a lack of effort, which led to prescribed ways to teach as well as

  additional graduation requirements. The government was responsible for getting

  results and mandated top-down policies.

- Restructuring – This era (1986–1995) developed because critics claimed the intensification strategies were not working and did not solve the issues (Murphy & Adams, 1998). Reformers believed teachers needed to be empowered to work more efficiently with students. Schools also increased the number of services provided to students in order to alleviate the existing inequities (Tyack, 1990). Attempts were made to redistribute power and control to all stakeholders in schools. Two changes occurred during this period that had far-reaching effects, site-based management and school choice (Murphy & Adams, 1998).

- Reformation – This era (1992 – present) promotes standards and accountability instruments that strengthen the teaching and learning profession. It advocates more parent participation and choice, including alternates to public schools (privatization) (Murphy & Adams, 1998).

Reforms develop due to disappointment in the limited achievement and sluggish speed of existing reforms, as well as the negative attitudes towards the role of public schools (Boyd, 2000). Further, as schools move from one reform effort to the next, the beliefs and arguments change, as do the factions who control the change, and the mandates and policies that are supported (Cuban, 1990b; Linn, 2000; Reese, 2007). The attempts to change schools can be attributed to the economic, social, and political forces that influence educational settings and reform efforts (Murphy & Adams, 1998).

Forces that have Shaped Reform Efforts

Political. The first large-scale attempt at change was made during the 1960s and was labeled by Michael Fullan as the "adoption era" due to the countries attempt to implement numerous ground-breaking changes into as many schools as possible (Fullan,

2000). The reforms focused on innovations and developed in an effort to maintain the country's "World Leader" status and to compete in the space race. The United States did not have the "capacity to put the reforms into practice" (p.7) and the result of the poorly executed plans was unsuccessful reform (Fullan, 2000). This early effort resulted in the government's push for "someone to assess the success of the reforms" (Tyack, 1990, p. 181).

The 1980s brought about bipartisan support of national education goals that influenced the development of Goal 2000—standards-based education reform—and assessment (Reese, 2007). By the mid-1990s, the public faith in the government's role in education began to wane, and a move towards locally controlled schools started to evolve (Murphy & Adams, 1998). Conflicts over national standards, decision-making, what information was valued, and who was responsible for paying, led to the formation of various coalitions vying for control (Murphy & Adams, 1998).

Economic. During the 1960s, the demand to improve schools grew and resulted in the creation of programs intended to meet those needs. Districts implemented reforms that increased the number of electives offered, created schools within schools, and created alternative settings; these actions resulted in more parental choice as well as greater costs. As a result of federal and state involvement, federal and state laws created programs such as Title I with the purpose of reaching students in need (Tyack, 1990.)

Despite efforts to institute reforms that would improve schools, many continued to attribute the economic woes of the country to the inability of schools to educate children (Murphy & Adams, 1998). For example, in the 1980s the public blamed schools when the Japanese economy rose and America's began to decline (Reese, 2007). Today,

society still looks for schools to solve the financial problems of the country. In order to deal with the problems brought on by changes in the global economy and to keep up with increased economic demands, many policy makers continue to argue that schools need reform (Boyd, 2000; Murphy & Adams, 1998; Tiongson, 2006). Moreover, public schools are faced with educating all students, and not a select few, to a more advanced proficiency level than in the past (Boyd, 2000).

Social. School reform is an initiative used to address the changing social forces of schools (Murphy & Adams, 1998). The 1960s were plagued by growing social discontent. The Brown vs. Board of Education decision spurred a large number of the changes and resulted in groups who had historically been "excluded from the old politics of education" demanding a role in the decisions being made about the schools where their children were being educated (Tyack, 1990, p. 179). The social restlessness of the time and the refusal of those in control to share power resulted in more involvement from state and federal lawmakers and the courts (Tyack, 1990).

Not only have schools been given the charge to educate children so they can compete in a technologically advanced world, they are also expected to prepare students to be able to face and possibly solve issues such as poverty, inequality, and other problems that exist in today's world (Boyd, 2000). Recently, the demographics of schools have changed resulting in schools experiencing increases in minority enrollment, increases in the number of students who do not speak English as their primary language, and increases in the number of children from single parent homes. Schools are also dealing with a rise in incidents of violence, unemployment, and poverty. Regardless of the circumstances that may exist, schools are expected to provide access to students with

disabilities, treat students as equals, and provide rigorous academic standards for all students (Reese, 2007; Ross & Berger, 2009). There is a feeling that schools can work to "confront these social forces and alleviate accompanying problems" (Murphy & Adams, 1998, p. 428).

Despite the continued efforts of schools to make improvements, public schools are accused of being unable to cure the existing problems. Murphy and Adams (1998) claimed that the citizenry is losing its faith in public schools and are removing their children from them and putting them in private schools. As a result, schools need to be reformed in order to rebuild the public's trust in schools. The struggle continues as parents still push to gain more power in the decision making for schools and removing the power from states and placing it back into the hands of localities (Cuban, 1990a).

Political, economic, and social forces have been instrumental in shaping the efforts to reform schools and to hold them accountable for the successes and failures of students. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Statute (NCLB) of 2001 strengthened the need for school accountability and was viewed by many as a means to ensure student achievement. Sergiovanni et al. (2004) argued that the standards and accountability movement that resulted from the creation of NCLB increased the pressure on school principals to provide instructional leadership that would produce substantial increases in student performance.

As stated by Wong and Nicotera (2007), in order to improve student learning and performance, the goals must be clear to everyone involved in the system and be totally focused on "aligning curriculum, instruction, and student assessment to high-quality academic content standards" (p. 27). Time and again we discover that while goals may

be written down, there are different interpretations of what the goals mean and who has the responsibility for determining the goals. Cuban (1990a) asserted that although there is more centralization in public schools, there is also more fragmentation due to the roles that the three levels of government play in public schools. There are various agendas when it comes to schools, and because all involved parties are vying for their interests, things become "disjointed" leading to "contradictory policies across levels" (Cuban, 1990a, p. 267). Cuban further argued that this disconnect prevents the development of programs "to improve teaching to be linked to efforts to improve curriculum," deepening a chasm between the various levels which in turns results in low levels of accountability (Cuban, 1990a, p. 267).

Tyack (1990) asserted "school teachers should be held responsible for what students learn, but should have autonomy to decide how to accomplish the results" (p.187). Teachers are in the trenches on a daily basis attempting to teach students, and change would occur if data were readily available to the teachers so that they can discover and institute other techniques when needed rather than attempting to get new results with the same methods (Wong & Nicotera, 2007). Educators need valid and reliable information about student performance that will allow them to make the right decisions about teaching and learning (Ross & Berger, 2009; Wong & Nicotera, 2007).

In order to bring about large-scale improvements, both pressure and support should be supplied to teachers and schools; this is the fourth assumption made about accountability systems and learning. Pressure must be balanced with support in order to make a difference; focusing on the negative overshadows what is really important such as providing technical support, time, or resources (Fullan, 2000; Wong & Nicotera, 2007).

This same concept applies not only to the pressure applied and support supplied to teachers, but to students as well. Jang, Reeve, and Deci (2010) concluded "teachers seeking engagement-fostering instructional strategies need not choose between providing autonomy support or structure, but instead can focus their instructional energies on provided autonomy support and structure" (p. 597).

School systems continuously grapple with what they need to do to improve student achievement and researchers respond by attempting to identify the cause of student failure. The NCLB Statute mandated schools prepare children to graduate with 21st Century Skills, including critical thinking, effective communication, and global awareness. Further, scholars continue attempting to identify standard dynamics related to student achievement (Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, & McGaughy, 2001).

Efforts to improve schools have led to isolated incidences of improvement. Many school divisions have joined the push for Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) as a method to aid schools in improving student achievement. Regardless of the arguments presented, educators recognize a need to improve the academic achievement of all students. Although the ultimate goal of policymakers, parents, and teachers has been to improve schools, conflict occurs when attempting to answer how will it be done and who will be held responsible.

Comprehensive School Reform

Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) focuses on "reorganizing and revitalizing entire schools" rather than implementing specified school improvement programs (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003). The U.S. Department of Education (2002) defines CSR as school reform that:

- Implements instructional methods that based on scientific research.

- Provides high quality and continuous professional development.

- Uses measurable goals and established benchmarks.

- Is supported throughout the school.

- Uses shared leadership.

- Encourages parent and community involvement in planning, implementing and evaluating.

- Incorporates external support.

- Implements an annual evaluation.

- Identifies potential resources.

- Combines instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management.

- Either has been proven (scientifically based research) to improve the academic achievement of students who participate, or there is evidence that shows that the program will improve the academic achievement of students who participate.

CSR integrates research-based practices that influence the instruction, organization, and culture of a school and intend to improve student achievement (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005). Moreover, CSR programs do not change the governing structures of school but provide professional development, school-based coaching, and support to improve instructional content and practice (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009; Slavin, 2007). Although some school divisions implement reform programs that are well known, some develop their own models having the aforementioned characteristics (Borman et al., 2003). Other divisions elect to implement externally developed reform

systems because of their ability to adapt and address specific areas of concern (Borman et al., 2003).

Although CSR developed during the 1980s it grew larger during the 1990s due to Congressional support and funding for schools to "adopt proven comprehensive reform" (Marzano, 2005; Slavin, 2007). In 1991, the creation of the New American Schools Development Corporation (NAS) by former President George Bush opened the door for new models of reform to be created and implemented in the CSR movement (Borman et al., 2003; Slavin, 2007). NAS provided funding for reformers wanting to aid all students in achieving (Borman et al., 2003). In response to the success of the NAS funding, Congress encouraged schools to develop their own "researched-based strategies for school reform" and created the Comprehensive School Reform Program (CSRP), in 1998 (2003). This program provided qualified schools with grant money to use for implementation of reform programs that benefited all students (Borman et al., 2003). Although Congressional funding ended in 2004, over 5,000 schools continue to implement one of the numerous CSR models (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009; Slavin, 2007).

Proponents of CSR argue that schools implementing CSR strategies have teachers who work towards similar goals, share a vision, and implement strategies to achieve the vision (Slavin, 2007). Supporters also find that divisions are attracted to CSR models because of their ability to replicate and support efforts across several schools (Borman et al., 2003). Additionally, the idea that CSR programs can improve the outcomes of at-risk students and high-poverty schools makes the programs even more appealing to divisions looking for improvements in student achievement (2003).

Kidron and Darwin (2007) conducted a study with the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center (CSRQ) of various whole school reform programs. Researchers examined:

- Various academic outcomes, such as test scores and grade point average.

- Student outcomes, such as attendance and dropout rates.

- Psychological outcomes, such as well-being and appropriate behavior.

- Impact of whole school reform on diverse student populations.

Findings showed evidence of positive effects of whole school improvement models, and revealed that all students, including those from disadvantaged homes and non-English speaking children, could benefit from whole school improvement models. The study also revealed research-based designs and the provision of services and supports that would lead to successful implementation (Kidron & Darwin, 2007).

Leithwood (2010) added to the body of research through his analysis of 31 examples of empirical research and reviews. The researcher identified districts that have been successful in raising the achievement levels of students. Demographically speaking, the majority of the divisions included in his study had large amounts of disadvantaged populations, and families of low socio-economic status; additionally, the majority of their students were minorities. The investigation suggested that districts that experienced some level of success did not attribute it to just one thing. Findings reflected a district-wide focus on student achievement. Second, the beliefs and visions about student achievement were shared throughout the division and guided the focus of the division's strategic plan. There was also an urgency to improve the achievement of disadvantaged and minority students, not just to improve student achievement.

Opponents of CSR argue that although there is existing research, more needs to be conducted to determine how truly effective the major CSR efforts are (Borman et al., 2003). Fleischman and Heppen (2009) studied several comprehensive reform models that attempt to improve low-achieving schools. After reviewing various longitudinal studies, the researchers found no significant difference in student achievement at schools implementing the CSR programs and those that did not. The researchers recommend that schools be more cautious when selecting a CSR program.

Martinez and Klopott (2005) examined predictors of college readiness and initiatives that address the predictors within the current movement for school reform. As a result of the research, they identified practices associated with success:

1. Access to rigorous academic common core curriculum for all students.

2. The prevalence, in structure or climate, of personalized learning environments for students.

3. A balance of academic and social support students in developing social networks and instrumental relationships.

4. Alignment of curriculum between various levels, such as high school and postsecondary and between levels within the K-12 system (Martinez & Klopott, 2005).

The authors assert that in order to have the greatest effect, schools and state agencies should ensure that all students are on an academic track, create a system for early identification of low-achieving students, develop positive and supportive relationships with students, and provide accurate college entrance information to students, parents/guardians, and high school counselors (Martinez & Klopott, 2005).

The common factors in the most successful reform efforts that support success are creating organizational cultures, sharing a set of common values and beliefs, and developing and maintaining effective leadership. Several criteria correlate to poorly performing schools. Some examples include lack of community and parental support, low socio-economic status, and lack of adequate teachers and leadership. The literature provided various theories as to what is needed to ensure that all students are successful in school. The next section synthesizes the literature that discusses components, such as creating and developing organizational structures and cultures, sharing common values and beliefs, and organizational leadership, that are needed in order to make gains in student academic achievement.

Leadership, Culture, and Structures

Effective Leadership

The literature indicates numerous themes about what instructional leaders should do to improve achievement in schools. Effective leaders must center their work on teaching, learning, and school improvement (CSSOC, 1996); however, there is no consensus on the method or model that leadership must use to get its job done. In the book, *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner (2008), identified the following elements as essential practices that every leader must willingly demonstrate to experience success: "model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart" (p. 1). Knab (2009) maintained the need for leaders to put their attention towards instruction in order to have the greatest impact on achievement. Ross and Berger (2009) argued "principals influence achievement indirectly by creating the organizational conditions through which improved teaching and learning occur" (p.

465). Although principals may have to employ many methods in order to improve teacher practice and student outcomes (Waldron, McLeskey, & Redd, 2011), the most recent leadership literature points to the ideas of change, collaboration, and improvement as being the focus of effective school leaders (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009).

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) states that, "Formal leadership in schools and school districts is a complex, multi-faceted task" (CSSOC, 1996, p. 1). Daily decision-making in the areas of vision development, instruction, as well as school and community relations greatly influences the success of students, staff, and the overall school. Effective school leaders are "strong educators, anchoring their work on central issues of learning and teaching and school improvement" (CSSOC, 1996, p. 1). Keeping in mind that educators are there to "promote the success of all students," they must remember to ask themselves why they are doing what they do, and is what they are doing working. Effective leaders must decide if they want to have a value added school, whereby there is a small cause-and-effect relationship between what the school is doing and student achievement, or a value adding school, in which what the school is doing, adds value to the school and students' lives (Sergiovanni et al., 2004). An administrator's ability to provide successful leadership will greatly affect the effectiveness of teachers, students, and the overall school (Smith, 2005).

Research revealed transformational leadership as a model to use to create change, invite collaboration, and increase academic achievement in schools. Bolkan and Goodboy (2009) conducted a study to examine the correlation between transformational classroom leaders and student outcomes. The authors agree with Conger's (1999) suggestion that "transformational leaders are more concerned with empowerment than

with control" (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009, p. 297) and hypothesize that there will be a strong correlation between the components of transformation leadership and student outcomes; their results supported their argument.

Analysis of studies conducted by Ross and Berger (2009) also indicate strong support for institutional practices that demonstrate sharing of leadership responsibilities and instructional issues as an effective method to promote academic achievement of all students. Leadership is more than just telling people what to do; to be an effective leader, one must "give power to get power." Successful leaders take into account the needs of those that they are leading. By including all staff members in the decision-making that affects the school, the principal serves as an agent of change and indirectly affects achievement (Ross & Berger, 2009). Nash (2010) also added to the body of literature that supports transformational leadership as a means to increase the academic achievement of all students. The results of his case-study of selected elementary principals showed a significant correlation between principals that exhibited transformational leadership tendencies and student achievement in particular subject areas (Nash, 2010).

In a four-year study conducted by Leithwood, Jantzi, Earl, Watson, Levin, and Fullan (2004) of England's National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the authors attempted to "illustrate the meaning of 'strategic leadership' writ large, the type of leadership that we [they] believe is called for by large-scale reform" (p. 57). They challenged the claim that managerial and transactional forms of leadership are needed in order to have large-scale reform. The research revealed the presence of transformational

leadership practices in places where large-scale reform was present, in addition to capacity building, high expectations, and reorganization (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Teacher Selection

Teacher leaders have formal and informal roles/activities that take place inside and outside the classroom (Watt, Mills, & Huerta, 2010). Consequently, administrators, parents, and politicians also point to the quality of teaching as being the greatest indicator of student achievement (Williams, 2009; Wong & Nicotera, 2007). Concerning student learning and achievement, high-quality teachers are vital (Watt, Mills, & Huerta, 2010; Fullan, 2009); therefore, school leaders work to make sure that they have the "best teachers possible" in the classrooms teaching their students (Tuytens & Devos, 2011, p. 1). Leaders also model the behaviors and beliefs when visiting classrooms (Ross & Berger, 2009; Wong & Nicotera, 2007).

Teacher Capacity Building

Teacher leadership has changed from isolationism to collaborative efforts (Watt, Mills, & Huerta, 2010). As a result, leaders must also build the leadership capacity of their teachers. Capacity building must be embedded in the school, as well as collaboration, in order to have long lasting improvement and achievement (Fullan, 2009). Fullan (2009) also identified capacity building as essential for academic improvement and emphasizes the importance of "deep instructional practice and corresponding assessment of student learning" (p. 110). Although he does not point to specific strategies, he does refer to Hattie's meta-analysis of instructional practices as a resource for "high-yield instructional practices" (Fullan, 2009). Darling-Hammond (2004) also argued the necessity of building teacher capacity to improve student outcomes.

Principals and administrators play a role in identifying the teacher leaders in their building and cultivating their leadership skills (intentional leadership) through building relationships, distributed power and authority, strong professional learning aligned with the school's vision of continuous learning (Watt et al., 2010). Williams (2009) argued that leaders must use inquiry-based data to aid in decision making and create environments that encourage "collaboration, shared leadership, and professional learning communities" as a method to assist teachers in seeing the big picture (p. 32). Leaders must provide and examine appropriate data when making decisions that affect children and their success.

Organizational Culture

It is vital for a school administrator to have a "learning organization" that promotes a school culture based on rigor in teaching and learning. Effective school leaders must "advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth" (CSSOC, 1996, p.14). These leaders make decisions "acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (CSSOC, 1996, p. 20). This in turn, leads to the development of trusting relationships amongst administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

As the country's demographics have changed, so have the populations being educated in public schools. School leaders must create an environment of learning that is accepting of every culture that is present in their building. In order to shrink the gap, educators must also acknowledge their personal beliefs and focus and build on the experiences that children bring to classrooms (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). If leaders are

honest about their true beliefs, school personnel can address them and move forward with meeting the needs of students (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to Martinez and Klopott (2005), the development of the relationships ensures that students do not slip through the cracks, and they get access to invaluable information. Educators should look at all parts of a student's educational experience when trying to solve the issues that academic deficiencies cause.

The literature also suggested that educators rethink the way in which schools are structured. The research revealed that schools have historically functioned to help mainstream students who speak English (Chu, 2011). Gay (2002) claimed that educators should not only have an awareness of the cultures that are in their classrooms, but must also increase their knowledge of the particular ethnic groups that are in their classes on a daily basis. Ladson-Billings (1994) believed that the longer students of non-English speaking backgrounds stay in school, the larger the gap will be between their academic performance and that of their Caucasian middle-class peers. Chu (2011) asserted that in order to meet the needs of students who are not native speakers of English, school leaders must continue efforts to include various perspectives and continue research efforts in determining what works to improve outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Leaders must provide supports and include perspectives of all people when aiming to close the gaps that language barriers can cause.

Research also suggested that effective leaders demonstrate inclusive practices. Although educators would like to create schools where there are no distinct differences in the academic achievements or treatment of students based on race, culture or ethnicity, that is not a reality in many schools (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Arredondo (2008) argued

"unchecked biases and assumptions, micro-aggressions, and ignorance of others about what it means to be oppressed are communicated on a daily basis" (p. 14). If leaders cannot relate to acts of discrimination and choose to ignore that those acts occur, students who are targets of discrimination believe their feelings, as well as their needs, are ignored.

Another point revealed in the research is that leaders must provide time for reflective dialogue between groups of people. Riehl (2000) encouraged principals to support reflection and to allow conversations in schools "around issues of teaching and learning" (p. 187). Those participating must have a vested interest in the conversation, and they have to want to participate in order for the dialog to be successful (Ryan, 2006). Some examples of topics could be teachers examining their own biases about children and learning, discussing teacher expectations of all students, and developing an appreciation of the cultural knowledge/experiences of students (Riehl, 2000). Leaders must be aware of their biases and assumptions, as well as how to adapt to the "culture-specific communication norms" of the underrepresented group (Arredondo, 2008, p. 16). Ultimately, the goal is that educators will become more apt to examine their practices (Williams, 2009). Unfortunately, leaders tend to find it is easier to ignore, rather than address the biases and do not engage in much-needed conversations.

Additionally, leaders must engage the community in which they exist by collaborating with families and community members (CSSOC, 1996). Educational leaders must be communicators and collaborators with parents and community members, as well as "mobilizers" of community resources. In order to get an accurate snapshot of what people think about a school, leaders should not be afraid to invite parents or their

communities into their buildings. Interacting with parents and community members is the key to an administrator's success in building positive relationships. Moreover, keeping families and communities engaged in schools will have a direct effect on the academic achievement of all students (Constantino, 2007).

Shared Values and Beliefs

A shared set of values and beliefs about learners is also necessary for districts to experience success. According to ISLLC Standard One, it is the educational leader's responsibility to "facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community" (CSSOC, 1996, p. 12). The development of a vision that becomes the driving force of a school takes time and should not be taken lightly. According to Smith, "We need to be concerned about the future, for that is where we will spend the rest of our lives" (Smith, 2005, p. 17). Most school reformers believe that in order to reach educational goals "visioning and planning should be conducted at the school level so that the real needs of students would be properly addressed" (Kowalski, 2005, p. 66). DuFour and Berkey (1995) argue that principals should "create consensus on the school you are trying to become" (p.2). In order to get more buy-in and to change the way teachers view the school and students, principals should allow teachers to help in creating a shared vision of what type of school they want to become and allow them to be instrumental in identifying areas of need. The collaborative effort in developing a vision provides the picture of what the school wants; it reflects what a school cares about and looks towards the future. This vision should be clear and should motivate people.

When developing a vision, there are several things that leaders must do. First, leaders must share authentic data with the stakeholders. Once presented the data, stakeholders will be more likely to accept the changes that may take place because of these decisions being made. Second, leaders must have conversations with parents and students to determine the needs of both groups and use that information to make decisions about how to meet those needs. By engaging in a dialog, school leaders get a better idea of what needs to be done to get both parents and students more involved in the learning process. Third, leaders must also examine the curriculum and make an increased attempt to provide students with authentic learning experiences and real world application. Gay (2002) and Johnson (2007) stressed that curriculum must incorporate the experiences of children of differing ethnicities; Gay (2002) also argued the need for divisions to conduct a critical analysis of media that reflects the lives of minority children in a negative light. Knowing why they are learning what they are learning and seeing how it applies to their everyday life, helps children make connections. Further, leaders need to be prepared for the changes that will occur in their buildings when they begin looking at the data, incorporating parent and teacher voices, and reevaluating the curriculum (Noguera, 2008). Whether the changes are positive or negative, leaders need to know why the changes are occurring and how to respond to changes that happen.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Some districts have found the creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a necessary school structure for improvement of the academic achievement of students. Kennedy (2009) conducted a two-year mixed-methods longitudinal study to identify factors that improved the academic achievement of students in a high-poverty

junior school. The study addressed the interventions used to improve the motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy of students. Kennedy studied a PLC of teachers and support teachers who gathered summative and formative data from the students in order to access their needs. He found that the PLC used the findings to design a balanced literacy framework. These actions aided in building the research expertise of the teachers, as well as their teaching self-efficacy. The PLC also changed the instructional program of the school by allocating more time for literacy. These actions resulted in teachers working to increase the meta-cognitive abilities of their students by modeling and demonstrating strategies used by successful readers and writers; conducting reading and writing workshops where children had choice; by using formative assessments and flexible grouping; supporting word/spelling skills; and, by teaching students how to have productive conversations (Kennedy, 2009). The findings revealed an increased motivation and engagement of students at both school and home, improved problem-solving skills, as well as significant increases in reading, spelling, and writing scores (Kennedy, 2009).

Comprehensive School Reform Programs

Success For All

Started in 1987, Success For All (SFA) developed from an earlier body of research and development centered on cooperative learning strategies (Success For All Foundation, 2012). Positive results from Slavin and Madden's initial efforts to create methods that embedded instructional practices and curriculum resulted in schools in Baltimore, Maryland and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, implementing the SFA programs in the late 1980s. SFA is a whole-school reform model implemented in pre-elementary

through secondary schools. It focuses on early literacy intervention and incorporates five vital strategies to help ensure the success of all students: "leadership for continuous improvement, powerful instruction, school-wide support an intervention tools, research, and professional development and coaching" (SFA, 2012, n.p.). The core beliefs of SFA are that all children can learn, schools make the difference, family and community involvement is essential, research provides solutions, and that researchers must continuously search for what works (SFA, 2012). Approximately 1,000 schools in 47 states participate in the SFA program with the majority at the elementary level (SFA, 2012). The instruction approach incorporates research-based instructional strategies, cooperative learning, and continuous assessment (Park & Datnow, 2008).

Research conducted by Kidron and Darwin (2007) revealed moderately strong evidence of positive effects on student achievement in elementary schools and moderate effects on middle schools implementing Success For All. The data reflected lower retention rates, increased attendance rates, less time spent in special education programs in elementary schools, and positive effects on student promotion in the 10th and 11th grades (Kidron & Darwin, 2007). Finally, the study revealed very strong evidence of the model designed being research-based and that schools received instructional support to ensure effective implementation.

Park and Datnow (2008) examined the professional development program and the relationships building practices of SFA. In their case study, qualitative measures were used to reveal how the SFAF worked to provide support and to impact the practices at two SFA sites. Findings revealed both modeling and "understanding of the theory behind the tools" as valuable to schools implementing SFA; a strong relationship between the

SFA schools and trainers as integral in the development of the school's program; and, collaborative efforts between the schools and SFAF as essential in order to build school capacity and to ensure that SFA schools are knowledgeable of federal and state policies (Park & Datnow, 2008, p. 420).

High Schools that Work

Established in 1987, High Schools That Work (HSTW) is a school improvement initiative created by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). It is this country's first all-encompassing attempt to develop partnerships amongst local and state school leaders and parents, teachers, students, and community to raise student achievement on the secondary level (SREB, 2012). During the 1980s, as the country's economic needs changed so did the demands placed on students who were products of American schools (Miller & Mittleman, 2012). In response to the changes that were occurring, Gene Bottoms, founder of HSTW, decided that it was necessary to make connections between high school coursework and real-world experiences to de-track students and to provide all children, especially the historically underserved, the opportunity to be exposed to academic content and skills (Miller & Mittleman, 2012). Bottoms developed HSTW as a strategy to improve the educational experiences of students in career and technical classes in the Southeast; however, it evolved into a comprehensive school reform effort that blended both rigorous academic studies and career technical skills.

Ultimately, the goal of the HSTW reform initiative is for leaders to build a culture of continuous improvement where schools create environments that are "high-quality and engaging" (Young, Cline, King, Jackson, & Timberlake, 2011). According to the research, HSTW has the potential to improve the graduation rate to 90 percent with 85

percent of those students completing advanced training and or being college and career ready (Young et al., 2011). The HSTW reform effort provides a "framework of goals, key practices, and key conditions" (SREB, 2012) based upon the following all-inclusive practices:

- Student interest.

- Strategies that engage students intellectually, emotionally, socially, and behaviorally, as well as promotes literacy throughout the curriculum.

- Embedded academic content and skills in career/technical studies and project-based learning.

- High expectations that for all students where failure is not an option.

- Extra help and time.

- Every student has a mentor who also serves as an advocate.

- Paving a smooth transition into and out of high school.

- Collaboration of the leadership team and faculty in continuous school improvement (Young et al., 2011).

By measuring the HSTW model's math and science progression, Miller and Mittleman (2012), analyzed ten years of student outcome data to assess whether or not HSTW met its goal to prepare students for college and workforce readiness. The researchers note that there are very few empirical studies conducted on HSTW; as a result, much of the literature that exists calls for further research. They found that many of the existing studies did not include a comparison group, establish baseline data, or only reviewed post-test data (Miller & Mittleman, 2012). Additionally, the researchers found that the longitudinal data did not reflect an effect on the academic progression of average

students, and there was also evidence of an increase in the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Further, although research conducted by Kidron and Darwin (2007) indicated a strong influence of research-based practices in the development of the reform model, it did not reveal evidence of positive effects on the academic progress of students.

Knab's (2009) attempted to strengthen the body of research regarding administrative leadership practices by repeating a previous study conducted in schools implementing the HSTW program. He claimed that teacher effectiveness with regards to student achievement is dependent upon a principal who has transformational leadership tendencies. Consequently, Knab contends leadership practices of administrators in schools that have "highly implemented" the program should be different from principals who experienced little to no progress in increasing the academic achievement levels of students as measured by SREB guidelines (Knab, 2009). Although findings revealed no significant difference in the leadership practices of principals at "highly implemented" schools and those of principals at moderate or low implementer levels, principals of "highly implemented" sites were more likely to involve teachers in decision making. All principals were also making attempts to sustain critical elements needed for principals as established by SREB: focusing your mission and vision, managing the change process, recognizing effective instructional practices, analyzing data and challenging all processes based on the analysis, and learning from new research and best practices continuously (Knab, 2009).

Response to Intervention

As a framework, Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tiered approach in which educators attempt to provide early interventions to all students considered as "at-risk" for failing school (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Center on Response to Intervention, 2012; Sansosti, Noltmeyer, & Goss, 2010). The approach encompasses a variety of techniques including research-based instruction and academic and behavioral interventions (Sansosti et al., 2010). Various factors need to be considered when selecting sub-groups of students to be potential recipients of RTI strategies. Those factors include test scores, attendance, grades, as well as students with learning disabilities. Once selected, participant's grades are monitored, which aids in determining the placement of students into one of the three tiers. If students are non-responsive to the initial intervention, subsequent intensive interventions are selected (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

Proponents of Response To Intervention claim that it is very successful if implemented correctly. RTI is successful because it targets reading problems for children in turn promoting literacy of all children (Center on Response to Intervention, 2012). Likewise, it attempts to provide personalized assessments and interventions for all children, which lead to personalized support. It is also a data driven process of continuous monitoring and adjustments (Sansosti et al., 2010).

Conversely, there are those who argue that RTI is not an effective method to use once students get out of elementary school. Vaughn and Fletcher (2010) argued that schools should reevaluate the practice of using RTI with secondary students. They question the universal screening method used for the identification and screening of at-risk readers in secondary grades. They contend that schools need to use additional data such as reading achievement scores and should conduct additional research to determine

the level of intervention needed (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2010). Moreover, they highlight

the need for more intensive identification and interventions on the elementary level in

order to reduce the number of children needing interventions on the secondary level

(Vaughn & Fletcher, 2010). Research conducted by Miller and Mittleman (2012) could

not assess whether or not the schools had fully implemented the program because they

did not study implementation fidelity. Some researchers question the validity of the

interventions that are implemented because they argue individuals making the

assessments and establishing the interventions should have some clinical expertise (Fuchs

& Fuchs, 2006; Sansosti et al., 2010).

Sansosti et al. (2010) researched high school principals' perceptions of RTI

implementation and question if principals believe RTI strategies are important in

secondary schools and if principals actually implement RTI strategies in their school.

The researchers randomly sampled 2,000 principals who were members of the National

Association of Secondary School Principals. Participant responses reflected concerns

about the complexity of implementing RTI on the secondary level and argued that

implementation would require key changes and most likely would be more successful on

the elementary level. The researchers claim that their findings support their belief that

"limited interventions for secondary students and a lack of evidenced-based

accountability or data-based systems are significant barriers to RTI Implementation" on

the secondary level (Sansosti et al., p. 292).

Tracking

The literature defines tracking as placing students according to their ability into a

sequences of classes linked to a track (Futrell & Gomez, 2008). In the past, tracking was

viewed as an effective method of improving academic achievement for all students; however, many researchers no longer agree with the practice. Chambers (2009) argued that educators should lessen the focus on the gaps revealed through standardized tests, which she refers to as outputs and focus more on the "receivement gap", or inputs, which is what students obtain during their experiences. In an attempt to determine gaps created by tracking students, Chambers (2009) conducted a qualitative case study of African American students in a Mid-Western high school. The researcher found that many of the participants who were on the upper tracks were encouraged to "assimilate to the school culture" (Chambers, 2009, p. 422) through active participations in clubs and sports while those who were on the lower tracks were not; those that needed more received less. Additionally, findings showed that utilizing test scores solely was not sufficient enough for providing a true image of the participants' academic performance and only a few, if any, of the students or their parents had any input into their academic placements.

LaPrade (2011) questioned the intentions of tracking with regards to achievement and describes systems that separate students based on their ability levels as ineffective. The author argued that tracking places value on those who test well and minimizes those individuals who are considered hard working and who progress gradually. LaPrade encouraged schools to "raise the bar and provide support for students to meet those demands" (LaPrade, 2011, p. 743) by implementing de-tracking as a method to dismantle educational arrangements that create ability level grouping. The researcher claimed that de-tracking will lead to safe environments where children will learn. This type of environment lends to children feeling welcomed and being more inclined to take risks because of the support they receive (LaPrade, 2011; Ross & Berger, 2009). The practice

of de-tracking also encouraged equity and improves academic achievement (Chambers, 2009; LaPrade, 2011; Leithwood, 2010).

Summary

A socially just practice should not be exclusive to AIVD students; "socially just practices benefit all students" (Marshall & Oliva, 2010, p. 188). The efforts of schools that embrace AVID's mission could be one of many factors leading to success of all of their students. Marshall and Oliva (2010) state, "whether students experience educational institutions as positively embracing and affirming, or as stunting and handicapping to their sense of selves, is a product of the decisions that leaders make and of the dispositions toward social justice advocacy that they are willing or unwilling to embrace" (p. 285). There is a tremendous amount of learning that could take place for all students in an environment where instruction reflects the AVID instructional methodologies. As a model of reform, all students can reap the benefits of these change-oriented behaviors (Murphy et al., 2001).

This chapter presented a review of the literature and related research. AVID has the potential to reach every student in a school because of the structures and culture of improvement that it creates in a school. Although there is no specific way to improve achievement, the research revealed commonalities in what school based leaders must do to improve schools. This study seeks to reveal how the leadership practices of the AVID site team promote student achievement as well as lead to the successful implementation of the AVID program. The methodology used for this study is reviewed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGNS

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed research literature related to the Advancement Via individual Determination (AVID) College Readiness System as well as literature that situates and frames AVID within the broader context of comprehensive school reform and improvement. This chapter describes the design, procedures and methods used to conduct this study. This chapter describes the research designs, and defines what Program Theory Evaluation (PTE) is and justifies it as an evaluation framework. This chapter also contains detailed information concerning the population and sampling methods used, data collection processes, data analysis, and limitations.

Research Design

Although the emphasis has changed in recent years, historically, evaluation has focused mainly on projects and programs (Patton & Patrizi, 2010). Secret, Abell, and Berlin (2011) argue that program evaluation is an assortment of collected information used to make decisions and recommendations about programming for the program's stakeholders. According to Patton (2002), program evaluation focuses on "program processes, implementation issues, and qualitative data" but has recently become more concerned about "program improvement and gathering really useful information" (p. 149). Flowers (2010) argues that the purpose of evaluation is to assess the efficacy of particular program results for teachers and students and to make suggested changes for upcoming programs. As such, this study used program evaluation as the over-arching approach to studying AVID, which seeks to take students who have the potential to

succeed in rigorous courses and the desire to go to college and places them in a supportive environment.

Program Theory Evaluation

One subset of the field of evaluation is program theory evaluation (PTE). PTE evaluators and researchers make explicit the logic, or theory, of a program to evaluate the extent to which a program is meeting its objectives. According to Sharpe (2011), "the evaluation of the program's theory is an evaluation of the program, not the theory" (p. 72); thus program evaluation will be used to determine how, in what ways, and to what extent the AVID program increases the academic achievement for AVID students and school-wide.

Although there are various types of evaluations, program theory evaluation was selected as the preferred framework for this summative evaluation because of "its strength in examining the program theory implicit in program processes, structures, and outcomes" (Scribner & Heinen, 2009, p. 182). Rogers, Petrosino, Huebner, and Hacsi (2000) define PTE as "an explicit theory or model of how the program causes the intended or observed outcomes and an evaluation that is at least partly guided by this model (p. 5)." Sidani and Sechrest (1999) claim that program theory is composed of statements that describe a program, explain the conditions necessary for the program to have effects, predict program outcomes, and specify what needs to happen in order to get the preferred program results.

Weiss (1997) claims that the ability of theory-based evaluations to explain the features accountable for the achievement or failure of a program to be a central purpose for concern. Arguments for theory-based evaluations consistently make reference to the

connections linking specific variables in the program (Better Evaluation, 2013; Bickman, 2000; Hacsi, 2000; Scribner & Heinen, 2009; Sidani & Sechrest, 1999.) Furthermore, researchers argue that the point of program theory evaluation is to discover what the outcomes can be credited to and to reveal how the relationships can show how and why programs have certain results (Birckmayer & Weiss, 2000; Rogers et al., 2000). While Bickman (2000) argues that that tracking the linkages can be costly, Weiss (1997) adds that the connections may not always be well defined.

Birckmayer and Weiss (2000) claim theory-based evaluations provide a framework that sheds light on expectations of how programs work, makes key results the focal point, and provides structure to interpreting results. Chen and Rossi (1983) argue that theory-based evaluations have the potential to produce even more information about how to improve a program. Additionally, the results may provide insight into why a program is failing as well as ways in which to improve the program (Birckmayer & Weiss, 2000). Chen and Rossi (1983) also argue for the need of theory-based evaluations because "the outcomes of evaluation research often provide narrow and sometimes distorted understanding of programs (p. 284)." They claim that the lack of developing theoretical models has stunted both researchers understanding of social programs as well as the use of efficient evaluation designs used to assess impact (Chen & Rossi, 1983).

Although Sharpe (2011) stresses the importance of developing the theory prior to the assessment taking place, another argument for the use of theory-based evaluation is that the models for program evaluations may develop prior to the program starting. In such instances, it is used for planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The process is suitable for a single or multiple evaluations (Better Evaluation, 2013). The purpose of

this evaluation was to determine to what extent leadership influences the academic success of students in schools identified as AVID-certified schools. Figure 2 represents the program theory of AVID based on the review of the research and identifies program inputs, outputs, and results.

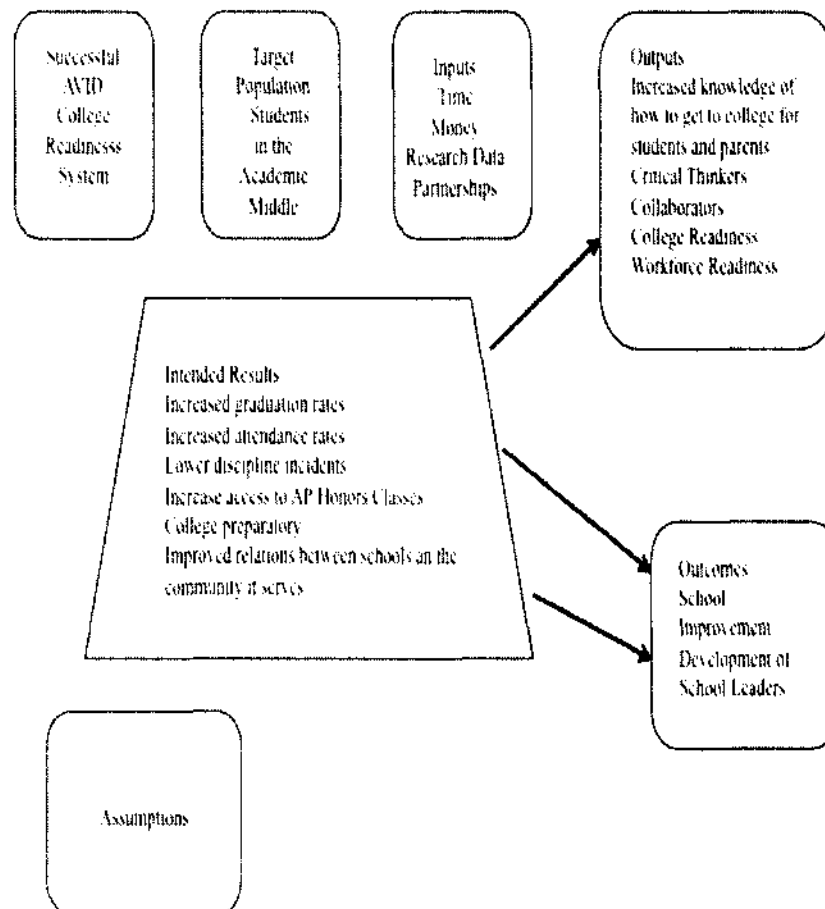Figure 2. Inputs, Outputs, Intended Results, and Outcomes of the AVID program

This PTR study implemented qualitative methods. According to Michael Patton (2002), quantitative methods rely on larger random samples that lead to generalities; while qualitative studies take and communicate the stories of small purposive samples to convey an overall program's story, leading to a more thorough understanding. This study

used multiple data-collection methods (often called triangulation), which added to the "trustworthiness of the data" (Glesne, 2006). The qualitative data may also provide supportive explanations of other quantitative findings (Creswell, 2008) or endorse conclusions from either approach (Hays & Singh, 2012). The qualitative findings may also provide specific information about individual circumstances thus influencing the decision-making about what works and what does not (Erickson, 2012).

The AVID program employs various strategies to reinforce its mission, which is to provide students with academic support, ensuring that they are college and workforce ready (AVID, 2012). Yin (2013) describes research design as "a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusion (answers) about these questions" (p. 26). When seen as comprehensive school reform, AVID has the potential to change the whole system rather than be an isolated occurrence (Yin & Davis, 2007). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the effects that AVID has on academic gains, a multi-case study design was selected as a means to evaluate the success of the program. According to Yin (2013), case study evaluations "frequently use logic models, initially to express the theoretical causal relationships between intervention and its outcomes, and then to guide data collection on these same topics" (p. 324). This multi-case study design will attempt to deepen the knowledge of how leadership practices of the AVID site team influence the academic achievement of students. This case study will show that programs that incorporate shared leadership practices in the AVID site team experience academic gains for students in "the academic middle."

Design and Methods

Participant Selection

A qualitative research design was implemented in order to "understand the perspectives" (Hatch, 2002, p. 48) and to gather data directly from content teachers, AVID teachers, counselors, and administrators involved in the application of the AVID program. Purposeful sampling was used as a means to collect detail-rich information data for this study. The focus was more on the data collection and analysis rather than the initial participant selection (Hays & Singh, 2012). Therefore, participants were selected based on established criteria. Participants included secondary teachers, counselors, and administrators in a high school setting. In order to build trustworthiness of the study, the researcher recruited a sample from a broad range of experience levels and backgrounds. Schools included in the study were high and low achieving schools as well as high and low socio-economic levels. There were no age or ethnicity requirements for participation. Principals were contacted and informed of the study. Once permission to communicate with the participants was granted, each one was contacted electronically and asked to sign an informed consent form and to provide demographic information. Two of the schools had two AVID teachers resulting in fourteen individuals who served on their schools site teams being interviewed.

Those involved in the study came from three high schools in a school division located in the South Atlantic Region of the country. The 2011–2012 school year was the first year all three schools had a graduating class of students who had been enrolled in the program for at least four years. All schools participating in the study began with at least two sections of AVID during their first year and by the third year expanded to at least

five sections. All sites involved in the study are Certified AVID schools; thus, they achieved a school-wide "routine use" or "institutionalized" level of implementation of the Essentials. One building has been certified as a "Demonstration Site" by AVID Center. The schools participating in the study volunteered and research participants are members of the each school's AVID site team.

Data Collection Procedures

The IRB process was also submitted, and the IRB determined the study was not human subject's research (Appendix A). A request was submitted to the school division's Central Office leadership as well as Old Dominion's Human Subjects Committee in the Darden College of Education to conduct research (Appendix B). Further, the names of administrators, teachers, or schools were not used to ensure anonymity. The researcher also did not include the names of schools or the district in the study.

The collection process began March 2014. Data collection included interviews of fourteen site team members, observations of site team meetings, and analysis of documents provided by each site team. These methods were implemented to identify similarities and differences between the leadership practices and methods of implementation used at three high schools that currently have the program. The data collected for this study took approximately three months to collect.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), interviews allow us to "gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 95). Thus, the first method used to gather data for the study was via individual interviews. The AVID administrator, the

AVID site coordinator, guidance counselor, and one additional member of the AVID site team were contacted via email and asked to participate in the interview. Selected individuals were informed that their participation was voluntary, and their interview responses would be confidential.

Each participant received a letter defining the purpose of the research (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D). Once individuals agreed to participate, interview dates were established. Participants were informed that they could elect not to participate at any point during the interview. All interviews were conducted over the phone with the exception of five, which were face to face. An interview protocol was used for all participants and interviewees were assigned a pseudonym for confidentiality of responses.

Interview protocol. The research questions were addressed using qualitative measures. Demographic information was first collected then participants were interviewed once using a semi-structured format (Appendix E & F) and interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted face to face or by telephone. Eight pre-determined questions were asked, and additional probing questions were asked when necessary (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The questions were posed the same way and the order was not changed, "which increased the comparability of the responses" (Reddy, 2012). A contact summary sheet (Appendix G) was filled out by the researcher after each interview. The researcher transcribed each participant interview verbatim; each interview was then coded. Inter-rater reliability was also used to code and categorize the responses of each participant.

The researcher also conducted one observation at each school during a site team meeting with the goals of building relationships (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) and of gaining a better understanding of the AVID site team's setting, members, and actions (Glesne, 2006). Implementing this method allowed for the collection of "open-ended, first-hand information" as well as allowed for the recording of information as it occurred in the school setting (Creswell, 2005, p. 211). Site team meetings occur once a month, and participants consisted of teachers, administrators, and counselors from three high schools. The observations at two schools were conducted after school during one of their regularly scheduled monthly meetings and lasted approximately thirty minutes. The third school's observation took place during the school day during the site team's common planning time. Field notes were used to document the experiences to fill in gaps and to document the researcher's thoughts (2006). The groups were videotaped to generate a more detailed record of the site team meeting and the following questions were considered during the observations (Hatch, 2002):

1. Where does the meeting take place?

2. Who is present?

3. What are the members doing?

4. What do they have at the meeting?

5. What is the sequence of events taking place at the meeting?

6. What are they trying to accomplish?

7. How do they make decisions?

8. What emotions are expressed?

9. What stands out?

Prior permission was granted from the teachers, counselors, and administrators to conduct the observations.

Document collection was the third data-gathering technique. Documents consisted of site team plans, team minutes, Initial Self-Study (ISS) and Certification Self-Study (CSS) evaluations. An advantage of using this public information was that it did not need to be transcribed, and it was the direct words and language of the participants of the study (Creswell, 2005). This data helped the researcher understand the AVID site team's history, answered additional questions that emerged during the analysis, and provided further support to what was revealed during the interviews (Glesne, 2006).

Data Analysis

To begin the interview process, the participants were asked background information about their experience as well as about the economic and achievement levels of their schools. All interviewees except two (86%) had at least five years of work experience in schools and all except four (71%) had served on the AVID site team for at least three years. Eleven of the 14 (79%) interviewees had a Master's degree in areas such as education, administration, or counseling. Table 1 displays the specific demographic information of each interviewee.

Table 1. Demographics of Those Interviewed for the Study.

School	Role	Ethnicity	Gender	Years on Site Team	Years of Experience	Highest Degree Achieved
Atlantic 1	Site Coordinator	Black	Male	13	16	Bachelors
Atlantic 1	AVID Teacher	White	Female	5	16	2 Masters degrees
Atlantic 1	Teacher	Black	Female	2	5	Masters
Atlantic 1	Administrator	White	Female	1	22	Masters + 30
Atlantic 1	Guidance Counselor	Black	Female	3	7	Masters
Atlantic 2	Site Coordinator	White	Female	7	16	Masters
Atlantic 2	AVID Teacher	White	Female	3	4	Bachelors
Atlantic 2	Teacher	White	Male	7	10	Bachelors
Atlantic 2	Administrator	White	Female	7	15	Masters
Atlantic 2	Guidance Counselor	Black	Female	7	15	Masters
Atlantic 3	AVID Coordinator	White	Female	7	15	Masters
Atlantic 3	Teacher	White	Female	5	16	Masters
Atlantic 3	Administrator	White	Female	2	18	Masters
Atlantic 3	Guidance Counselor	White	Female	2	3	Masters

The researcher transcribed and coded each participant interview and created the initial

codebook. This codebook was then reviewed and validated by two additional

researchers. The researcher then organized and coded the semi-structured open-ended interview responses to determine common themes. These themes helped determine the necessary components of successful AVID programs in a particular school district. After each data collection, the researcher used the initial codebook to identify similar or additional codes. The codebook was reviewed and refined after each data collection was analyzed. This process allowed for constant comparison, which in turn allowed for the identification of similarities and differences in the data sets (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Once open coding was completed, the researcher used axial coding to identify codes and categories identified throughout the data sets. Selective coding was then used to identify patterns and core headings. Data sets were compiled until saturation was reached (Hays & Singh, 2012). Member checking was used to ensure trustworthiness; all participants were given the opportunity to review their transcription and provide feedback to the researcher. Clarifying questions were also included with the transcript for answers that were not clear or were inaudible in the recording.

The researcher reviewed the site team meeting videos and site team documents to gain a deeper understanding of how the individual site team worked, of their established goals for their schools, and of their success or lack thereof in reaching the goals that they had set for their particular AVID program. Field notes taken during the site team meetings were also used to fill in gaps and to support information provided during interviews. A document summary form (Appendix H) was used to describe the site team document and its significance, and to briefly summarize the documents contents.

All videos and transcripts were kept on a password-protected computer. Site team documents were housed in individual binders and contained site team plans, ISS, CSS,

meeting agendas and notes, as well as any other documents that schools provided. Each school and participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect privacy.

Limitations

There were several limitations of the study. One limitation was time. The study took place during state-mandated testing and national Advanced Placement (AP) testing. As a result, teacher availability to conduct interviews was very limited. With school closing for summer break, contact with teachers was a second limitation. The availability of individual school documents was another limitation and was a challenge when schools did not have the material readily available. Participants were contacted numerous times in order to get their responses or revisions to the interview transcripts. As a result, it took more time to conduct the study than originally thought.

The researcher served as the District Director for AVID, which was another limitation to the study. As the former District Director, the researcher was responsible for accessing the level of implementation of AVID in twelve schools. Building trust between the participants and researcher was instrumental in gaining authentic data and "capturing perspectives accurately" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, pg. 7). As a result, the participants were reminded that the researcher had no evaluative power; nonetheless, their interview responses and behaviors as well as comments during the observations may not have been authentic. Additionally, no incentives were provided for participation in the study and individual school findings were not discussed. Every attempt to avoid researcher bias was made so as not to produce a conflict between the study and the researcher's position as a current AVID administrator at another secondary site that has

the AVID program. Further, the researcher's current school was not included in the study.

Another limitation was that the evaluation did not consider the process used to implement AVID at the various schools, the differing dynamics of individual buildings, or the number of years AVID has been incorporated into the curriculum of a school. The schools varied in the number of years the program had been implemented. All sites participating in the study had gone through numerous administrative changes, so none had the principal or assistant principal who served on the original implementation team. Additionally, some had teams that consistently collaborated and provided professional learning while others did not.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology used to conduct the study. The purpose statement and research questions were restated. The participants for this study were members of AVID site teams who participated in the AVID program in their school between 2008–2013 school years. This chapter also presented information about the data collection process, data analysis, and implications. Chapter 4 contains the data analysis results.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Chapter Structure

Becoming a successful AVID (Advancement Via individual Determination) program is not an easy process. Changing the mindset and practice of those responsible for educating students can be very challenging and take time. This study was designed to look at the perceptions of teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators regarding elements necessary for the AVID program to be effective in influencing the academic success of students. This study will provide insight into how school leadership fosters teacher leadership and development.

This chapter provides an analysis of findings at three sites in the South Atlantic Region. The first section of the chapter begins with a short description of the schools involved in the study. The section is followed by an analysis of themes revealed across the schools involved in the study. The major themes include enhancing instructional capacity, scaffold support, building teacher capacity, and staff development. Each subsection of the themes discusses the perceptions of those involved in the study concerning the components identified as necessary for successful implementation of AVID. The analysis of themes is followed by a summary of the findings.

Characteristics of Three Schools with the AVID Program

The three schools selected for this study have had the AVID program for at least five years and have consistently maintained their AVID certification status. The following section will provide detailed descriptions of the schools, their demographics, school data, and information describing their AVID team and program.

Demographics

To protect the privacy of the individuals and schools involved in the study, the following pseudonyms were used for the schools: Atlantic 1, Atlantic 2, and Atlantic 3.

Atlantic 1. Atlantic 1 is located in the southwestern region of the city. During the 2013 school year, the school had approximately 2,100 students. The instructional staff was predominately Caucasian (76.0%) and female (68.5%) with 15.2 average years of teaching experience. The student body was majority male (54.2%) and Caucasian (38.4%). In 2013, the school reported a 1.63% drop out rate and a graduation rate of 86.10%. This school has been a Certified AVID site since 2001 and was awarded the title of National Demonstration site in 2010. It has been able to maintain that designation and is presently going through the revalidation process. The current principal and assistant principal assigned to the AVID program are AVID trained.

Atlantic 2. Atlantic 2 is located in the central region of the city. During the 2013 school year, the school had approximately 1,500 students. The instructional staff was predominately Caucasian (73.2%) and female (69.6%) with 14.1 average years of teaching experience. The student body was majority male (52.5%) and African-American (41.0%). In 2013, the school reported a 1.96% drop out rate and a graduation rate of 81.80%. This particular school has been a Certified AVID school since 2007 and was awarded the 2010 College Board Inspiration Award due to an increase in the number of their students taking AP courses. This increase was brought about by the school's decision to make AP classes mandatory for AVID students. The current principal and assistant principal assigned to the AVID program are AVID trained.

Atlantic 3. Atlantic 3 is located in the western region of the city. Atlantic 3 has been a Certified AVID site since 2007. During the 2013 school year, the school had approximately 1,500 students. The instructional staff was predominately Caucasian (86.9%) and female (62.6%). The student body was majority male (52%) and Caucasian (61.0%). In 2013, the school reported a 1.23% drop out rate and a graduation rate of 88.70%. The current principal and assistant principal assigned to the AVID program are AVID trained; however, the school has had numerous changes in their administrative leadership over the last five years.

Table 2 presents a snapshot of AVID demographic information for the three schools participating in the study (AVID, 2014).

Table 2: Demographic Information of AVID Program

School	AVID Enrollment 2013 – 2014	Percentage of School Population in AVID 2013 – 2014	Total Number of AVID Trained Teachers	Percentage of Faculty and Administrators AVID Center Trained
Atlantic 1	168	7.5%	30	16.77%
Atlantic 2	166	10.47%	14	15.00%
Atlantic 3	92	5.92%	9	10.00%

Source: Information gathered from AVID Center online, www.avid.org.

Findings and Discussion

While previous research conducted by Watts, Mills and Huerta (2010) links success of programs to leadership, this study will provide commonalities regarding what leaders do to support AVID site teams that emerged in each of the AVID programs. The purpose of this section is to offer insight as to what leaders in schools that have

successful AVID programs do, to provide awareness of how they create a culture of support in schools with AVID, and to describe essential components of the supportive environment. In this section, there will be a discussion of the three dominant themes present at all three sites: enhancing instructional capacity, scaffolding support, building teacher capacity, and on-going staff development. Each section will examine the findings presented, interpreting the role of leadership as it affects the successful implementation of the AVID program.

Enhancing Instructional Capacity: AVID Influencing Instruction

One theme that emerged from the data regarding successful implementation of AVID was enhancing instructional capacity to grow an AVID program. AVID (2015) claims that the AVID program has the potential to develop "student's critical thinking, literacy, and math skills across all content areas" and when AVID strategies are used throughout an entire school it is referred to as "school-wide AVID." Likewise, all participants in the study expressed a desire for the implementation of AVID methodologies throughout classrooms so every student would reap the benefits of the support. Similar to a study conducted by Watt, Yanez and Cossio (2002), the interviews revealed that some schools were more successful than others in their efforts to take the program school-wide and the process used to make change was not consistent. The interviews revealed that the overall theme of enhancing instructional capacity had several sub-themes including vision building, communicated purpose, and continuous reflection. The following sections of the chapter will reveal what leaders of schools with AVID do to build an AVID culture of continuous improvement.

Vision Building

Research including Slavin (2007) shows having a vision with clear goals as a primary indicator of a successful program. The findings showed that leaders who built a vision incorporating the AVID program and who shared the vision building process with their teachers were more apt to have a faculty and staff that bought into the vision. The following quotes illustrate administrative support of AVID:

> Our current principal told us that he would give us whatever we needed to continue the program. He wants the AVID program to be school wide and is committed to growing the program. He sees the success that our students are experiencing and he is very committed to the professional development that we offer. He wants to see the AVID teachers in front of the staff directing the instructional charge (Administrator, Atlantic 2).

> I think that the administration is supportive of the program. They design things so that all teachers are aware of the program and can use the strategies… I feel the teachers know that they are supported because they have the physical resources they can put into their hands on. The administration supports AVID because they see achievement improving. Achievement goes up because teachers are willing to use the strategies . . . everyone seems excited about it (Teacher, Atlantic 1).

AVID Coordinators and some of the administrators shared that they felt successful when teachers were able to demonstrate an awareness of the initiatives of the program as well as how the AVID program measured its success in the building. Consequently, many of them thought that teachers who were not a part of the AVID team understood the criteria

used to select students for the program and had embraced the strategies utilized in the classroom.

Generally speaking, teachers mentioned the importance of administration having a vision. For example, an AVID teacher at Atlantic 1 speaks of the importance of a leader have a vision:

In our school, the vision for the AVID program starts at the top. Everything starts at the top. Our principal buys into the program, which allows us to do what we need to do and we know that we have the support to do it. He treats us as professionals and that's a major reason why our program is successful. He trusts us to do our job.

One teacher noted that his administration had a clear vision and understanding of the AVID program and its support has allowed them to "implement the things that we need, to create rigor and to give students a chance in taking advanced classes." According to the teacher, the administrative team has communicated that they "want to ensure that AVID students are consistently exposed to AVID strategies." A seasoned teacher at Atlantic 1 indicated that his administrative team has a clear vision and as a result of that vision, allowed the site team to hand schedule AVID students to ensure that they were assigned AVID trained teachers. The research also suggested expansion efforts were sometimes challenged when new division initiatives were introduced; however, many of the interviewees shared that their administrative team never pushed AVID to the side or overlooked it. An Atlantic 1 teacher pointed out that regardless of the initiative, the site team and administrators tried to convey the message to staff that "all students in the building could benefit from the collegiate environment and AVID strategies."

Teachers were not the only participants that mentioned the importance of the leader sharing his vision for the program. A counselor at Atlantic 2 shared that because the administration publicized their vision and expected school-wide usage of AVID strategies, the college-going culture had "spilled over into our general population." The counselor indicated, "We all work together in our building . . . in support of AVID." An administrator at Atlantic 2 also mentioned that due to administrative efforts, all staff members could explain the vision for AVID.

Failure of Building Leadership to Provide a Vision

In contrast, not all interviewees expressed that their school had a clear vision for AVID. At Atlantic 3, a guidance counselor mentioned that she did not think the administrative team had communicated a clear vision of what the AVID program could do. An AVID trained teacher indicated that the administration did not publicly express that all staff members would include Cornell note-taking in their classes or that all staff members were expected to use an AVID strategy. Further, although the administration expressed a desire to expand, the interviewee shared that new teachers had not participated in AVID Summer Institute; as a result, the site team had not experienced growth.

Another interviewee, at the same location, also mentioned the importance of vision-building. This teacher expressed that she was unclear about AVID's role in the principal's vision for the school. Although site team members are on the leadership team for the school, the AVID program had not been featured as an agent of change for the building. The interviewee voiced that implementation of other initiatives in the building

and the administrative team's lack of training and knowledge about AVID had caused the school to have no particular focus, thus no growth for the AVID program.

It is clear that site teams, at schools where the principal made the AVID program a part of the vision for his school, thought their program was more successful. The AVID program was a natural component of the school and expectations were clear to all staff members. When the vision was not clear, the site team struggled to expand the usage of AVID strategies throughout the school, as well as to expand the membership of the AVID site team.

Communicated Purpose of AVID

Based on the findings, administrative teams that espoused the purpose of the AVID program was another subtheme of enhancing instructional capacity. Several teachers that were interviewed connected the success of AVID to the administrative team verbally sharing its purpose with teachers in their building. They indicated that teachers were aware of the expressed message that AVID was a valued program in the building and there was an expectation that AVID strategies would be used in all classes and could potentially touch every student in the building.

It was evident that when school leadership effectively communicated the purpose of AVID in their building, the perceptions of the program changed. A teacher at Atlantic 2 shared that the perception of the program evolved from being a "remedial program for students with behavior problems" to a program for students who have the desire to go to college and the individual determination to get there. Several participants indicated that over time, teachers in their building expressed that the strategies were beneficial to all students including special needs and gifted students and for that reason they were using

them in all of their classes. They suggested that effective communication of the purpose of the program led to increased levels of teacher and student awareness, growth in the program, as well as school-wide support.

Failure to Communicate a Clear Purpose

Although there were some participants who felt that the program's purpose was very clear, there were still some who expressed that they were not sure if the purpose of the program had been effectively communicated with the staff in their building. One interviewee indicated that they were not sure if teachers and/or students knew the exact purpose of the program. Evidenced by the failure to retain students in the program, a major concern for the program was student retention. Although the school has experienced growth in the lower grades, students dropped out of the program as they approached their senior year. An administrator attributed the decline in numbers to the following: students "not seeing AVID as a long term course," the failure to secure graduation requirements, and/or the desire to take other electives. The interviewee stated that there should be more attempts to advertise and communicate how the program can prepare students for college in their school to change the trend.

A school counselor, at the same site, also mentioned the need for more awareness of the program. The counselor was not sure if all of the teachers in the building knew the exact purpose of the program and attributed the lack of growth in the program to the lack of exposure. According to the interviewee, there was very little advertisement about the program in the building so few teachers approached site team members about it and very few students or parents approached the AVID counselor to inquire about the program. A teacher at the same location also mentioned the need for clarity regarding the purpose.

She indicated that they school had staff members who believed that AVID was a remedial program or for students with behavioral and attendance issues, even though this idea had never been publically communicated by the administrative team or the site team.

Generally speaking, site teams that experienced an acceptance of AVID in their building also admitted that it took a while before they felt that teachers and administrators really understood AVID. It took constant efforts on the part of the administration and site team to "put AVID out there." The instructional staff's acknowledgement of AVID was attributed to the team's hard work to develop their site team plans and to consistent review of those plans to determine if they had met their goal(s) or if they needed to reevaluate the appropriateness of the established goal(s). At the same time, there were still those who felt that their efforts to "put AVID out there" were futile because they still had not experienced the acceptance of AVID strategies and their usage in the majority of the classrooms in their building. For example, one interviewee shared that they didn't think that the majority of non-AVID teachers in the building saw the "big impact" of AVID and another wasn't sure if the people knew that it was an AVID school when they walked into the building. As revealed in the data, the evolution of teacher perceptions from negative to positive occurred when the principal effectively communicated his vision as well as the purpose of the AVID program.

Continuous Reflection

Another subtheme of enhancing instructional capacity was continuous reflection of site team plans, AVID data, and feedback from administrators, teachers, and students in order to strengthen the work of the team. A teacher at Atlantic 2 stated the following about the importance of reflection:

At the beginning of our year, we met a lot and discussed the things that we

wanted to accomplish in our AVID site team plan. We looked at the feedback

from our CSS and those were the things that we really wanted to hone in on and

improve . . . or try to solve or resolve by the end of the year.

Reflection on site team plans. Counselors, teachers, and administrators

mentioned how reflecting on the site team plan led to positive changes in their school.

For example, a counselor mentioned that the site team meets to discuss and reflect on

their established goals to determine what they need to do to improve or to see if goals

need to be reevaluated. An AVID teacher shared how their principal often conducted

checks with the AVID team to see if the decisions that were made for the school were

supporting the efforts of the site team or working against them. This school's site team

members continuously asked the teachers what did the site team need to do to support

their efforts in the classroom. Reflecting on site plans allowed the teams to make

adjustments when needed.

Reflection on feedback. Many of the interviewees shared that they also reflected

on the feedback that they received from their teachers, administrators, and students,

which came in the form of exit tickets, emails, and conversations. At Atlantic 1, it was

noted that the administrative teams provided useful feedback after attending AVID

functions and trainings, which was used to tweak staff development sessions to meet the

specific needs of the teachers in their buildings. They also used the feedback that they

received to plan parent workshops, student fieldtrips, and lessons. At Atlantic 2, several

participants mentioned how the feedback revealed that most of their staff members were

comfortable with Cornell notes and interactive notebooks but wanted more assistance

with Socratic seminars and Philosophical Chairs. Participants at Atlantic 2 constantly

took the feedback that they were provided to determine what development opportunities

they would provide and whether it needed to be a one on one session or a school-wide

effort. The participants expressed the importance of using the feedback to make

adjustments that would lead to program improvement.

Nevertheless, some individuals indicated that they had not gotten feedback from

their administrative teams and very little from their teachers. Other participants shared

that although they did get some feedback, it was "not always what they wanted to hear."

Ultimately, the participants who expressed the need of reviewing the data wanted

feedback to make positive changes in their recruitment process or in the professional

development that they offered.

Reflection on data. Previous research, including Riehl (2000) and Ryan (2006),

indicates that reviewing and sharing the data as instrumental in enhancing instructional

capacity. Various participants expressed the importance of looking at and reflecting on

data such as grades, attendance rates, and test scores, to make changes in the recruitment

process, and to reevaluate which class selections for students. The data showed sites had

successes that needed to be celebrated such as seniors being accepted into four-year

schools, students were gaining access into honors and advanced placement courses, and

large number of AVID students were making honor roll and had perfect attendance

records.

Although none of the participants claimed that it has been an easy process,

schools that successfully implemented the AVID program, as defined by AVID Center,

had an administrative team that successfully communicated a vision and purpose to their

staff members. This can be attributed to reflective conversations, the constant sharing of the data, and the willingness to make adjustments when necessary. And lastly, successful sites used the data that they collected to identify the great things that were happening in their buildings and celebrated these achievements.

Scaffold Support: School Leadership Supporting AVID

Previous research indicates that successful implementation of programs is dependent upon the support that is provided; however, the body of research telling what leaders should do to support successful implementation is lacking (Marazano et al., 2005). One central theme that emerged from the interview transcripts regarding leadership and its role in the implementation of AVID was the idea of scaffold support. Although the overarching idea of support permeated many conversations, there were varying opinions on how support was provided, who provided the support, and what type of support was needed. Based on the interviews, forms of support provided to AVID site teams consists of financial, physical presence, stakeholder actions, and administrative actions.

Financial Support

This section will discuss the ways that the participants believed that leaders provided financial support. Stakeholders interviewed divided fiscal support into two categories: monies provided for materials and supplies and access to cultural events, as well as monies provided for adding additional sections of AVID and for adding additional AVID teachers.

Funds for Materials and Student Activities

Curriculum support. The findings indicate that in addition to their administrative teams providing financial support for professional development opportunities, the provision of funds to purchase materials, such as books, binders, and paper for their students was also considered a form of support. Participants expressed that site team members believed that these materials were necessary for the success of their students. Many of the AVID students came from homes where parents did not always have the funds for the "extras" that may be needed for academic success, as a result, AVID teachers and/or coordinators went to their administrative teams or principal to make their requests.

Those who identified financial support in the form of providing access to fundamental supplies also mentioned exposure to educational and cultural experiences as being a necessity for success. One interviewee shared that every year their principal asked the team "What do you need?" As a result, site team members did not believe they were limited in planning activities for AVID students. Participants from Atlantic 2 shared how their administration had also covered the costs for transportation, as well as meals and/or tickets for some of their students to participant in educational and cultural field trips. Moreover, there was an overall feeling that the administrators' actions showed that they believed in the efforts of the team to place students into a supportive environment.

Deficiency in fiscal support. At the same time, there were some interviewees who did not claim the same success when it came to obtaining financial support for purchasing student's supplies or assistance with co-curricular opportunities such as

covering fees for cultural or educational trips. Although their teams were able to get some limited supplies such as paper and binders for their students, their students had been restricted to local college visits and to the standard high school recruitment visits from college representatives during the instructional day.

Staff allocations. Another example of leaders providing financial support was the allocation of funds for additional AVID teachers and sections of AVID (classes) to the master schedule. Atlantic 1 and 2 experienced an overwhelming increase in requests from students wanting to be in the program, resulting in the principal adding both teachers and sections of the class. With district budget cuts, both principals had to come up with creative solutions to fund additional positions. Site team members at both schools expressed that administrative actions such as this sent the message to staff members that AVID was instrumental in making a difference in the lives of students and was going to remain a part of the school.

Lack of growth. In contrast, there were some who felt that the lack of financial support for co-curricular activities and school supplies lead to the shrinkage in the number of students in their school requesting to be in their program as well as to the loss of students remaining in the program as they moved into the upper grade levels. One counselor claimed that additional funding would aid the site team's efforts to "sustain the program," which would allow them to fulfill the requirements to keep their demonstration status. Another shared that if there were an additional allocation for an AVID teacher, her school would be able to have more AVID elective classes so they could recruit more students.

Physical Presence

As mentioned in Chapter 2, previous AVID studies revealed sites that had supportive and involved administrators were more successful. Another subtheme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of support, in the form of physical presence.

Administrative presence. The teachers and guidance counselors shared that an essential form of support provided by their administrative team was their physical presence in the AVID classroom, on field trips, at parent meetings, as well as attending site team meetings. For example, the following quote reinforces the importance of the physical presence of the administration:

> When we have our site team meetings, our principal and our assistant principal show up. So we get direct feedback about what's working and what's not working. They come in and observe the classes so that they understand it and they can continue to promote it. They attend parent meetings and open house, which is great and more exposure for the program (Teacher, Atlantic 1).

A teacher from Atlantic 2 shared how the school's principal made a call to a university after the site team kept experiencing roadblocks when setting up a college tour. The principal secured a guided tour, went with the students on the trip, and shared stories of what it was like when he attended the school. The principal's physical presence showed the teachers and the students that he supported the program. The physical presence of the administrative team was also mentioned at Atlantic 1. Two teachers asserted that their administrator's attendance at the site team meetings was a form of support and his attendance at the many functions of the program showed that the administration "puts

forth 100%" to learn about all of the facets of the AVID program. Nevertheless, the majority of the interviewees mentioned that their administrator attends their site team meetings, only one school's administrator was present during the site team observations.

It was expressed by many of the interviewees that their administrator's presence had led to positive results, including more buy-in from the students and staff. A counselor at Atlantic 2 mentioned that her administrative team supports the mentor program that the AVID team created, and they come to the events and interact with the kids. Their administration's visible support has led to over 100 staff members serving as mentors to the AVID students in the building.

Nonetheless, the level of administrative presence varied at locations. At Atlantic 3, there was a perception that AVID was neglected by the administrative team. Several interviewees shared that although their administrative team had communicated that they wanted the program to be successful, the administrative team's effort to implement other district initiatives in the building had an adverse impact on the AVID program. For example, administrators were not able to attend the site team meetings, parent meetings, or field trips on a consistent basis. For example, a teacher at Atlantic 2 shared,

> I haven't really been present at an AVID meeting where a principal has been
>
> present, so I'm not quite sure what the principal is doing to support the program.
>
> I don't know what they are doing behind the scenes...if they are helping with
>
> scheduling or things like that.

Another teacher indicated that although there had been support from particular administrators in the school, not all of them "have taken a role in it" and attributed the

lack of a physical presence to obligations to the other programs that were being introduced to the building.

Stakeholder Actions

Another subtheme to scaffold support was the concept of stakeholder actions. Some of the participants shared that because the vision of the program had been adequately communicated to staff members; teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators believed that their colleagues willingly participated in the efforts of the AVID site team. Coordinators for Atlantic 1 and 2 shared that staff members were more accepting of the mandatory pre-service week staff development as well as the mandatory development opportunities held during faculty meetings. A math teacher and a social studies teacher reported that they had special requests from their departments to hold additional trainings on staff development days or during department Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Iterated by several stakeholders, interviewed at Atlantic 1, was the support building personnel gave to AVID in the way of mentoring students. All AVID students in their building had staff member mentors who volunteered to participate. At any point during the day, students could go to their mentor, who may not have been an AVID trained teacher, for additional help or guidance. For this reason, the participation as a mentor by instructional and support staff in the building, indicated belief in an initiative of the AVID program from the school community.

Supportive actions. Not only was administrative moral support mentioned, but also how teachers, counselors, and students show support for AVID in their buildings. An AVID teacher at Atlantic 2 shared that non-AVID trained teachers and coaches contacted the site team when a student was not performing well. Many teachers had

mandatory study halls for AVID students to ensure that they were prepared for an upcoming test. Teachers and guidance counselors shared that the identification of potential AVID students by non-AVID site team members was also evidence of teachers supporting their work. A few of those interviewed mentioned club sponsors visiting the AVID classes to solicit AVID students to run for class officers as well as to become members of various organizations. A teacher at Atlantic 2 shared,

> We recently had Student Council Association (SCA) elections and the sponsor asked to speak to the AVID students. The sponsors spoke to every class and we had an AVID takeover. I think all but two of the positions for class officers and SCA were AVID students.

Generally speaking, these actions showed that teachers were finding that AVID students were instrumental pieces of their organizations, and they were leaders in their schools.

Some interviewees discussed their guidance counselor's consistent availability to their AVID students, directing them to scholarship sites, discussing GPAs, and assisting in the "right college for me" searches. For example,

> Right now, I've been working all year with ninth grade AVID students who had one or more failing grades at progress report time, during the first nine weeks. I keep a log of their grades to track their improvement and when they attend tutoring . . . . One thing I do, is write notes of encouragement when they've made improvements. It's just a little something to brighten their day. They know that in addition to their regular counselor, they have an AVID counselor who is checking up on them, too (Guidance Counselor, Atlantic 1).

Furthermore, the interviewees mentioned that AVID students were staunch advocates of the program. Many mentor new AVID students, help non-AVID students in class with note-taking and study strategies, assist with parent nights and help with the recruitment and selection of potential AVID students.

Site team participation. The site coordinators also expressed the effects that enhanced building capacity and scaffold support had an effect on the participation of site team members. They found that site team members became more willing to share AVID responsibilities when their administrators communicated the purpose and became actively involved themselves. Coordinators conveyed that they did not feel as overwhelmed due to the support that they were receiving from their site team members. For example, team members willingly assumed leadership roles and assisted in planning the events, coordinating recruitment/visits with middle schools and assisting with data collection. Although the coordinator at Atlantic 3 shared the site team did assist to complete tasks, individual members helped when the coordinator made a specific request; this disjunctive nature of teamwork left the site coordinator feeling that she was the sole decision-maker. The lack of assistance could possibly be attributed to the failure to assign responsibilities to site team members, as pointed out by another member of the site team.

Student recruitment. Stakeholders also assisted with student recruitment. Participants mentioned that non-AVID teachers and administrators submitted names of potential AVID students, which helped them in their recruitment efforts. A counselor shared,

> Our site team's administrator is putting forth one hundred percent into learning about the AVID program. She wants to know what the students are expected to

do and she checks to make sure we have recruited the right students for the

program (Guidance Counselor, Atlantic 1).

Teachers and the guidance counselor at Atlantic 2 indicated that their administrator

looked for students that fit the AVID profile and presented those names during the AVID

site team meetings. The participants believed that the efforts of the administrators, and

non-AVID teachers, to identify new students for the program were another way to show

support of AVID. This whole group support also ensures that AVID students are gaining

access to classes and opportunities that will lead them to gaining entry into post-

secondary opportunities.

Lack of Supportive Actions by Stakeholders

Active participation of non-AVID teachers was not the norm at each site. A

counselor at Atlantic 2 shared, "It's like pulling teeth to get staff members involved in

AVID." Several participants claimed that teachers were overwhelmed by all of the other

things on their plate and viewed AVID as an extra thing to do. As a result, participants

expressed that teachers were not as willing to attend additional staff development

opportunities provided by the AVID site team because they were not viewed as being a

program to support the efforts of teachers, but as a program that was competing against

the other initiatives in the building. As a result, they did not have teachers or departments

making special requests for training nor received "kudos" from their colleagues after their

staff development opportunities.

There were also participants who expressed that they struggle to get teacher

support of college visits for the AVID students. Teachers did not want their students to

miss instructional time, whereas the AVID teacher believed that exposure to colleges

could inspire the students to excel and establish acceptance to a four-year college or university as a goal. To lessen the animosity towards field trips on instructional days, the sites resorted to taking college visits on teacher workdays or holidays when schools were closed.

Every individual interviewed mentioned active participation as an important indication of success. The staff at successful sites appeared to have bought into the values and beliefs of the AVID program and was more likely to support the work of the team. A guidance counselor shared,

>Non-AVID teachers are actually taking part in the professional development
>
>opportunities that are available when they are able to sign up for them. Non-
>
>AVID teachers are there, and they are learning about AVID weekly, what the
>
>binders are about, and what tutorials are about. They are taking part in trying to
>
>learn as much as they can so that they're on the same page. We're trying to make
>
>this building one hundred percent AVID (Guidance Counselor, Atlantic 1).

Although not every participant claimed that there was involvement of every staff member in their school, all three schools had experienced some level of achievement in getting personnel involved. Each coordinator mentioned that site team members shared the responsibility of completing the site team work. The sites had a developed a culture amongst team members whereby sharing the responsibilities helps the team work more effectively.

Administrative Actions

This section will discuss the ways that the participants believed that administrative actions of leaders support for AVID teams. Administrative actions came

in the form of common planning time and influence over scheduling.

Common Planning Time

A sub-theme of administrative actions revealed through the interviewees was the concept of common planning time. An administrator at Atlantic 2 shared,

> We have made a commitment to AVID by making sure that all of our AVID site team has common planning time. We know that everyone on the site team has third block together so they can use the time to revisit the site team plan, plan AVID activities, meet with students, and plan AVID staff development opportunities.

The study revealed that providing common planning time during the instructional day as essential for the work of the site team. Although all three site teams did not have common planning time, the majority of the interviewees mentioned the importance of being provided time to plan and conduct professional development, student activities, parent nights, fundraising, and hand-schedule classes for AVID students.

Document analysis revealed that the administrative team at one school in the study provided the site team with common planning time; as a result, site team members can meet as a team every day. A veteran teacher indicated that the administrative team allowed the AVID site team to plan professional development and encouraged the team to include students in the training. Common planning time was viewed by all members as beneficial for the successful implementation of their program because the site team members use this time to plan all of their events, meet with students, review their site team plan, and develop interdisciplinary units. Another teacher said, "our administration supports efforts to make AVID school-wide; . . . they give us planning time to support

our community." The team expressed that this particular administrative decision, as well as the administrator's presence at site team meetings, made them feel valued as an instrumental and influential group in their building.

Influence over Student Scheduling

Document analysis at Atlantic 1 revealed that having control over scheduling is a significant factor. The administrator at this site indicated that the administrative team provides support by allowing the AVID program to influence the master schedule and "how class offerings were structured in their building." Other participants at this site also mentioned how their program has an influence on the master schedule. The Atlantic 1 site team places AVID students into courses with AVID trained teachers; and if there is a course that does not have an AVID trained teacher, they make every effort to place students with teachers who use AVID strategies. As a result, the students are placed in classes with teachers who support the efforts of the AVID site team and where they can consistently use AVID strategies and experience success.

Scheduling was also an important factor at Atlantic 2. Although AVID did not dictate when classes would occur in the master schedule, the administrative team also allowed the AVID students to be hand scheduled into their classes. The site team made every effort to ensure that AVID students were taking the courses that will aid them in gaining entry into four-year colleges and universities. They also cluster AVID students with teachers who are AVID trained to expose them to AVID strategies on a daily basis.

Not all participants in the study had experienced the same levels of support through administrative actions. These interviewees attributed the lack of support to insufficient levels of training for the administrative team as well as to numerous changes

in leadership. Unlike the first two sites, the third site had not experienced common planning time and had no influence over scheduling AVID students. The participants at Atlantic 3 voiced frustration over the failure of the administration in offering the team the opportunity to have a say in when particular classes were offered or in determining when AVID students would take particular classes.

Building Teacher Capacity: AVID Teachers Influencing Change

A third theme that developed while reviewing the data was building teacher capacity. As mentioned earlier, leaders build the capacity of their teachers by fostering relationships with and giving power to, teachers and by allowing them to collaborate and share in the decision-making processes in a school. This section discusses how organized staff development opportunities, shared leadership, and the building of collaborative relationships contribute to building teacher capacity. This section will also reveal the barriers that inhibit teacher's growth.

Shared Leadership

A subtheme that emerged from the data was the concept of shared leadership. Numerous studies including Ross and Berger (2009) indicate that the sharing of leadership responsibilities as being instrumental in making academic gains in a building. An administrator at Atlantic 2 expressed,

> Our AVID site team has multiple members who serve on leadership committees in the school. They have leadership roles on those committees and bring the AVID perspective to the leadership meetings. The site team members share in making instructional decisions and planning staff development.

Although many of the interviewees did not express that they viewed themselves as informal leaders in their buildings, all of the interviewees felt that the AVID teacher was given many opportunities to demonstrate leadership through the AVID program.

Development of leaders. The role AVID played in the development of leaders was specifically mentioned; however, the perception of who the AVID leaders were was not consistent throughout the sites. One teacher shared that the AVID elective teachers are leaders in her building due to the nature of their responsibilities for the program; although it was not clear whether site team members were considered leaders even though they served on some of the same committees as the AVID teacher. On numerous occasions it was mentioned who should be responsible for teaching the school's professional development. At Atlantic 1 and 2, site team members were involved in planning and teaching professional development sessions; however, a teacher at Atlantic 3 shared,

> Teachers on the AVID site team share the responsibility in determining what is taught during professional development opportunities. Although they discuss what strategies will work, the AVID elective teacher has the final say on what is presented and conducts the professional development.

Committee membership. The interviews revealed that gaining membership on committees, such as the Principal Advisory Committee (PAC) or the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), which are instrumental in making school based decisions and directing the change that occurs in individual buildings is an essential step to ensure that AVID is implemented well and continues to thrive. Many of the coordinators and teachers who participated in the study reside on committees and leadership teams in their

building where participants are encouraged to provide input and feedback about decisions affecting the school. This administrative decision to place AVID members on relevant committees has aided in the site team's efforts to get building support, including much needed financial support that ensures students gain entry into four-year colleges. Participants also shared that principals indicated the AVID program influenced the classes being taught and who was teaching them. Many principals made a conscious effort to make sure that the decisions made in the school did not have an adverse impact on the AVID program.

Two of the AVID teachers specifically mentioned being placed on the Instructional Leadership Team, which typically consists of department chairs. This committee is instrumental in providing information and influencing decisions that affect the instructional decisions made for a school. Since the AVID teachers were facilitating the training occurring in the building, these teachers believed they should have a say in instructional decisions. Another interviewee shared how she served on the staff development committee was instrumental in developing his school's plan, which was heavy in providing training based on AVID instructional strategies. Regardless of the committee, the participants expressed that their membership on the various committees sent a message to their colleagues that AVID was an instrumental part of the school.

While the AVID teachers and coordinators involved in the study experienced being included on instrumental committees, this was not the claim for all of the site team members. Some of the interviewees' leadership opportunities were limited to the AVID site team's staff development opportunities. One interviewee indicated that he was not sure participation on committees in the school had any influence over the building

decisions. An Atlantic 3 teacher stated that AVID site team members have leadership opportunities and that most of the faculty embraced the goals of AVID because they want the kids to succeed; however, the new initiatives "are overshadowing the AVID program." As a result, the teacher felt that the work of AVID was getting lost in all of the other plans for the school. Further, these participants attributed their absence of involvement to a lack of training for their administrative team.

Building Collaborative Relationships

The interviewees indicated that the building of collaborative relationships as an essential component for the success of the AVID program. The pervading opinion of those interviewed was that a collaborative environment created a successful program. For example, one administrator shared "The members of the AVID site team take ownership in implementing at this particular site. As a result, they are continuously collaborating." Document analysis revealed that the site team collaborated on the development of the site team plan, activities for the AVID students, parent workshops, and the recruitment process. A guidance counselor at Atlantic 2 said,

> The site team collaborates to make decisions about the program. They have collaborated to make changes to the recruitment rubric. They collaborate on what will be presented during staff training. The entire site team is involved in the decision making process.

Regardless of the amount of collaboration, the way in which the collaborative relationships developed and what was considered as an essential component of the relationship varied. A few factors such as time, individuals involved in the collaboration, and resources were also mentioned.

A second area of collaborative relationships was the recruitment process. All sites mentioned the need to collaborate with each other and their feeder schools on the recruitment process. In the instance where the members collaborated on revising their selection rubric, teams felt that they were making a combined effort to improve the process to ensure that the right students were being selected for the program. Collaborating with feeder schools that did not have the AVID program helped to make sure that the middle schools were making the right recommendations for potential AVID students.

Although placement of site team members on influential school committees and leadership teams gave individuals a level of influence, it also provided them with an opportunity to collaborate with groups of people with whom they had not interacted in the past. A teacher at Atlantic 2 shared,

> Our principal is very supportive of our efforts to collaborate with the various
>
> departments. I was able to plan a professional learning opportunity with a history
>
> teacher. I provided the AVID strategies while the history teacher provided the
>
> content and teachers left with models that they could use immediately in their
>
> classrooms.

Participants felt that the interactions that they experienced assisted the team in determining if these were individuals that could be instrumental in pushing AVID school-wide, or if the individuals should be considered when adding members to the AVID site team. The collaboration had also led teams to more resources for their students; whether a tutor, a new club or a new scholarship opportunity. Even so, there were still interviewees who felt the lack of collaborative opportunities indicated there were

individuals who felt AVID was not a viable program in the building and did not want to consider the suggestions made by AVID site team members.

Benefits for AVID students. All participants agreed that collaborative efforts benefitted AVID students. An administrator shared the following regarding collaboration:

> We all work well together as a team by collaborating . . . the support from the school, and the support from the AVID site team is everything . . . I think AVID provides the safety net within the school...a support network consisting of a guidance counselor, an administrator, teachers, fellow AVID students, curriculum, et cetera (Administrator, Atlantic 1).

The teams collaborate with the families to ensure that parents and students are knowledgeable of what needs to be done to get a student into college, of what scholarship opportunities exists for students, or of what needs to be done to ensure success once they reach that level. For example, an administrator stated, "The team continuously collaborates with families to ensure that they have a working knowledge of what their child has to do to get to college and be successful once they get there." Site team members collaborate with AVID students to aid them in developing goals and holding them accountable. Likewise, the skills that AVID students learned about collaboration during tutorials were also witnessed in their other classes. As told by several AVID teachers, AVID students were often the ones asking the questions and assisting non-AVID students in finding the right answers. Additionally, site teams collaborate with community stakeholders to ensure that their students have access to opportunities that will aid them in their development as contributing members of society.

Lack of Collaborative Relationships

Despite all sites expressing that collaboration was instrumental, not all shared that collaborative efforts were successful. It appeared that some of the interviewees felt that their site team lacked consistency in when they met. They also shared that although decisions were discussed and made as a team, that discussion rarely included an administrator. Further, some asserted that regardless of the level of input, the leader still made all the decisions.

As mentioned earlier, participants shared that whereas one site had common planning during a specific block of time, the other sites were limited to doing all of their collaboration after school during their site team meeting. Participants at another site experienced having to consistently reschedule their meeting because of other meetings taking precedent. For example, a teacher at Atlantic 3 claimed,

> A lot of us are spread really thin throughout different programs so it's difficult to find time to get together. Because of other commitments, we have tried having half of the team meet on one day and the other have meeting on another day. I left feeling like I didn't really know what was going on because I wasn't able to be at the other meeting... When we find the time to participate in AVID we do it, but it's difficult to find that time because we have so many other obligations right now.

Regardless of when collaboration occurred, incorporating input from all of the site team members left the majority of the participants feeling as though they were all a vital part of the site team. In addition, the teams were able to present a unified front because each

member was knowledgeable of the decision-making process and could effectively communicate the workings of the site team.

Collaboration amongst members of every department is an essential part of the AVID site team; however all schools could not make the claim. Representation from every department lends itself to getting input from every department regarding their staff development needs, curriculum updates, and student achievement. Schools that did not have representation from every department were still working to make sure that their students were successful and to provide the non-represented departments with some level of support. Participants attributed the lack of departmental representation to the staff members' feeling of "not adding another thing to their plate" and to the promotion of former site team members to administrative positions in other schools.

Staff Development Opportunities: AVID Teachers Exercising Leadership

A final theme that emerged from the research was staff development. The concept of faculty professional development could be seen throughout all of the other themes. As a result, it was given its own section in the chapter. The subthemes of staff development were financial support for AVID Center staff development, growth in leadership, and mandatory time for staff development.

Funds for AVID Staff Development

Providing financial support for sending AVID teachers to training outside the district as well as for site-based training was identified as a way leaders support the program. Strengthening the amount of professional development provided to their team and school was a primary concern for all involved in the study; however, there was a lack

of consistency in the amount of funds given to send individuals to training. A teacher at Atlantic 1 stated,

> Our principal supports us financially as much as possible to get us the training that we need and to get us to workshops. Our administration supports our efforts to make AVID school-wide. They come to us and ask us what we see as being the tools that students need most in our classrooms and then they allow us time and provide resources for us to organize workshops for our faculty to participate in.

Site team members believed the support of the AVID program correlated to the funding provided by their administrative team. For example, one interviewee shared how her school had last minute administrative changes and the principal came up with funds to send the assistant principal to training during the first semester of school rather than waiting until the end of the school year. An assistant principal shared that funding provided by Central Office allowed schools to send one person to training during the summer; however, the principal managed to send two additional teachers to Summer Institute with the coordinator.

Findings also showed inconsistencies in the number of individuals trained. Atlantic 1 and Atlantic 2 had multiple people who had attended Summer Institute and had several members who attended more than once. The site team members at these locations believed that they were more confident in their knowledge of AVID strategies and their ability to provide training to their colleagues, resulting in more buy-in from teachers in the building and more exposure of AVID strategies to students. Further, as a consequence of the training opportunities, several of the AVID teachers and Coordinators

have been afforded the opportunity to join the national AVID staff and provide training at the Summer Institutes. Their experience as a national trainer allowed them to bring their expanded skill set back to their school, resulting in additional training for teachers in their school.

Lack of AVID Professional Development

The fact that professional development was an important finding can also be seen in some negative experiences surrounding professional development. Some participants at Atlantic 3 expressed frustration regarding financial support and access to staff development opportunities. These individuals shared how a lack of funding for AVID professional development resulted in their program not being as successful as it could potentially be. They provided names of site team members who had been to Summer Institute once and others who had not been at all. One teacher discussed how none of the members of the administrative team had attended Summer Institute and, as a result, the administrative team relied heavily on the direction and support that they received from the District Director. The teachers expressed that the lack of consistent training for members of the site team had resulted in site team members feeling as if their efforts to improve the academic performance of the AVID students in their building were "pointless." There was an overwhelming feeling that site team members at this school did not have enough knowledge of AVID to make a genuine difference in their building. Additionally, the perception was the lack of administrative training prevented their program from having optimal success because the administrative team did not fully understand the potential positive academic impact AVID had on the students in their building.

Based on the interviews, sites that had leaders who provided funding for staff development opportunities believed they were supported and were better prepared to provide staff development for their schools. At present, funding issues have resulted in individual AVID schools and the school district developing their own professional learning opportunities in order to ensure that AVID strategies are taught in their schools. Central office is currently scheduling district-wide training for site teams as well as specific training for administrators and AVID teachers. There has also been discussion with neighboring districts about conducting multi-district AVID trainings to safeguard the fidelity of the AVID program in their schools and to cut travel costs.

Growth in Teacher Leadership

As suggested in the literature review, administrators view teachers that provided staff development opportunities to faculty as leaders. The findings revealed staff training developed by members of the site team and that focused on the specific needs of the teachers in the building, resulted in additional avenues for AVID implementation. Further, the capacity of the members of the site team who were responsible for developing the staff development plan increased because of the experience.

The majority of the interviewees in this study conveyed that they felt the AVID program had been instrumental in their growth as a leader in their building. Several had conducted staff development opportunities in their building, which resulted in them being selected to conduct professional development for their school district as well as for AVID Center at Summer Institute. Often, the team conducted staff development for the entire school, and they were given complete autonomy in developing and presenting the plan. The conversations revealed that the majority of these opportunities were offered during

the teacher workweek or faculty meetings. Moreover, there were individuals who mentioned how they were approached by specific departments to provide additional opportunities that catered to their particular content. These sessions took place during common planning time or after school.

There was disparity among the schools regarding staff development opportunities. Individuals at one site shared that there were discussions with their administrative team about their AVID staff development plan, and the site team was allowed to determine what, when, and how they would present it. Numerous participants expressed that teachers were expected to participate in the training and to implement the strategies in their classes. They attributed the high levels of training opportunities to the plan developed by the AVID site team members and to the support of the administrative team. Participants from one school shared that as a result of the administrative expectation that all staff members would participate in AVID training opportunities, the administrative team included AVID strategies on their observation "look-for" forms. This effort held teachers accountable for using AVID strategies and made the collection of data regarding the implementation of AVID strategies easier.

In contrast, participants in the school where training happened haphazardly did not express the same expectation. The schools that had consistently incorporated AVID training into their staff development plan had experienced more student and teacher growth than the site that had not. They also found that teachers came to the AVID site team for instructional support and expressed a desire for the team to provide more training and requested that they visit classrooms.

Mandatory Time for Staff Development

As mentioned in Chapter 2, research conducted by Watt, Mills, and Huerta (2010) revealed that administrators viewed teachers who conducted staff development as leaders. The participants involved in the interviews also mentioned the importance of being given time to conduct the professional development. For example, a teacher said,

> AVID training is a school wide initiative. Our principal asked us to teach AVID
> strategies to our staff and to make the tools accessible to them. He gave us time
> to plan, and the resources that we needed to present literacy strategies that we felt
> fit best with WICOR strategies (Teacher, Atlantic 2).

Although there were some interviewees who stated that their administrators encourage them to provide professional development, a few claimed that their administrative team did not push for school-wide training, and they lacked the training they needed. As a result, the participants felt that staff members in their buildings did not see or understand the impact that AVID could have on the academic success of the students in their building. Conversely, several interviewees shared that AVID training takes place every time there is a faculty meeting; others shared that their site team is given the opportunity to provide professional development during teacher workweek as well as provide it intermittently during the school year. In addition, a couple of the interviewees stated that their site team members provide professional development when asked by individual departments or teachers who approach them or ask for information that is "beneficial to their specific content."

None of the participants involved in the study claimed that they experienced positive reactions to AVID staff development when the program was first introduced.

Many of the respondents shared how the acceptance that they currently received had developed over time. An administrator at Atlantic 2 shared,

> In the beginning, we really had to work hard to educate the teachers at our school. When we first brought AVID here everybody though AVID was a remediation program and it would be just like many other programs in education and phase out. Now our people understand that it's a college-prep program for students who have individual determination.

They attributed the change to the support they received from their school-based leadership and their leader's willingness to allow the site team to share the data and the successes of their students with their schools. Over time, people began to see and acknowledge the impact that AVID and AVID students had in their schools. At the same time, other participants expressed their frustration with teachers in their building who still viewed AVID as something "extra" and felt that they were still struggling to gain support of AVID staff development opportunities.

Based on the interviews, it is apparent that participants who felt that they had successful programs had clear staff development plans that incorporated AVID while others experienced haphazard training. Participants that expressed they had administrative support had administrators with appropriate levels of understanding of the potential that AVID had on the academic success of students in a building. Successful schools had leaders who did not rely solely on those responsible for implementing the program or give them carte blanche control to develop the plan for the program and teach the professional development. Successful schools had leaders who took time to develop a

working knowledge of every piece of the program as well as viewed the AVID site team as leaders and worked with their site team to make sure that the program was successful.

Summary

The conversations revealed that there are some mature sites that continue to struggle to grow due to lack of support, funding, opportunities, and, unfortunately, the perceptions that exist for the students that participate in the program. In light of the financial crises that schools have endured in the last decade, the schools in the study have been resilient and continue to fight to create a supportive learning environment for their students and they have fortunately produced students who are successfully graduating from both high school and college. It is imperative that conversations take place to address the findings so that a program that has the potential to reach every student and lead to success gets the support that is needed.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION OF STUDY

Discussion

The previous chapter presented the findings from the study. The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary and conclusions drawn from the findings in chapter 4. The chapter begins with the problem and methodology. Following an analysis of the findings from the study, implications and a conclusion are presented.

Summary of Problem

School leaders are under pressure to find what works to meet the needs of all students. Leaders are responsible for creating environments and structures that produce teacher leaders to assist in meeting the needs of all students. It was proposed in Chapter 1 that there is a relationship between the leadership practices of the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) site team and the academic achievement of students in the AVID program. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the extent of which leadership practices foster leadership development in teachers and how that transfer of leadership influences the academic achievement of students in the AVID program. The study's aim was to add to the body of empirical research regarding leadership practices and their effect on the implementation of the AVID program and the academic achievement of students in the AVID program.
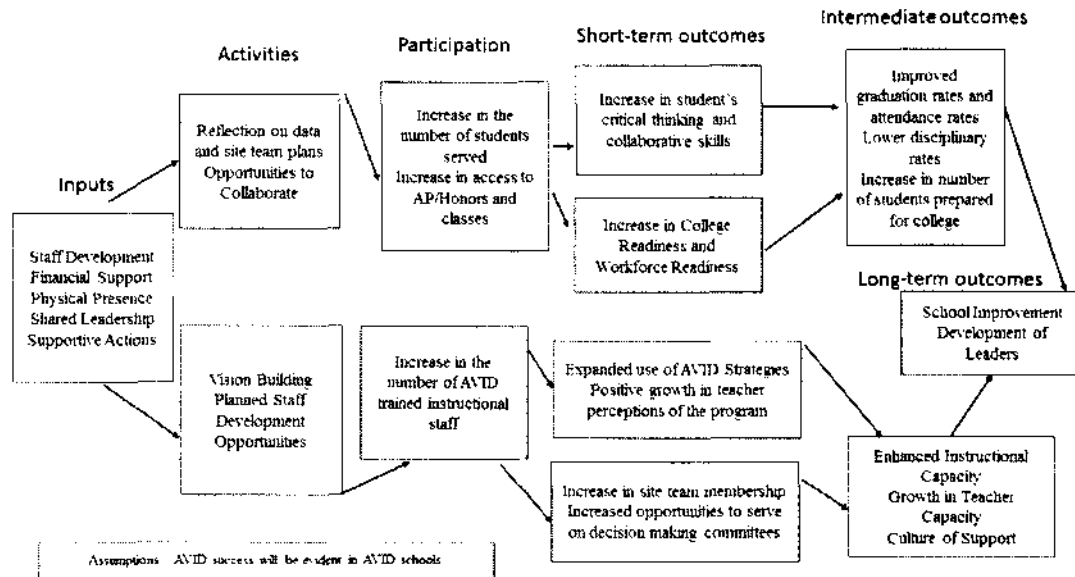
Methodology

This study was guided by the following theoretical concepts: leadership, culture, and structures. Consequently, qualitative data consisting of interviews of AVID site team members, and observations of site team meetings was collected. Fourteen interviews were conducted, and participants were selected based on established criteria. Participants

were interviewed using a semi-structured format and interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interview process took nearly three months, and each interview was transcribed and coded. One site team meeting was observed and videotaped for each school, and document analysis was implemented as the third source of data and included AVID site team plans, site team minutes, and Certification Self-Studies.

Findings

The program theory that evolved from the analysis of the findings can be used to assess the success of AVID site team leadership practices influencing the academic achievement of students. As discussed in Chapter 3, interviews, observations, and site team documents were used to address the three research questions and the findings give direction as to what leaders can do to increase the success of their programs. This study empowers leaders to understand their role in implementing AVID in schools and reveals insight into the assumption that AVID success will be evident in AVID schools. Figure 3 illustrates the theory of the AVID program and identifies the components and connections necessary for the program's success.

Inputs

Staff Development
Financial Support
Physical Presence
Shared Leadership
Supportive Actions

Activities

Reflection on data and site team plans
Opportunities to Collaborate

Vision Building
Planned Staff Development Opportunities

Participation

Increase in the number of students served
Increase in access to AP/Honors and classes

Increase in the number of AVID trained instructional staff

Short-term outcomes

Increase in student's critical thinking and collaborative skills

Increase in College Readiness and Workforce Readiness

Expanded use of AVID Strategies
Positive growth in teacher perceptions of the program

Increase in site team membership
Increased opportunities to serve on decision making committees

Intermediate outcomes

Improved graduation rates and attendance rates
Lower disciplinary rates
Increase in number of students prepared for college

Long-term outcomes

School Improvement
Development of Leaders

Enhanced Instructional Capacity
Growth in Teacher Capacity
Culture of Support

Assumptions AVID success will be evident in AVID schools

Although there were commonalities in what attributed to the success of the programs in the schools involved in the study, there were also distinctions in the role that leadership played in the growth of each program. Whereas the sample consisted of three schools, one cannot assume that the findings that were revealed in the study would be the same had all schools in the district with AVID participated. Nevertheless, while there were differences that were presented, there were also several themes that emerged from the interviews, observations, and document analysis. Those themes were enhancing instructional capacity, scaffold support, building teacher capacity, and staff development.

Enhancing Instructional Capacity

A more recent six-year study funded by the Wallace Foundation set out to identify the what successful educational leadership looks like and to reveal how it can "improve educational practices and student learning" (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Michlin, & Mascall, 2010). According to the researchers, leadership is about direction and influence: establishing mutual directions and doing whatever it takes to move people

in that direction (Louis et al., 2010). One theme that emerged from the study was the concept of leaders enhancing instructional capacity. Although the schools varied in the number of years of AVID implementation, the research revealed that leaders, who had a clear vision and a well-communicated purpose for the AVID program, experienced higher levels of acceptance from NON-AVID teachers. The leaders at two sites had clearly established what direction they were moving in and had included AVID in that vision. The lack of vision is likely a result of numerous changes in leadership at the third site. AVID site team members expressed frustration with the changes in leadership, which resulted in various changes to the school's vision and the path the school was taking to get there. The ability to create an environment of improvement is greatly challenged when schools lack consistency in leadership. This finding may help districts and school administrators see the importance of consistency in leadership when implementing the AVID program.

The participants also mentioned the need for the administration to be knowledgeable about what AVID is and can do. As a method to enhance building capacity, the teachers emphasized the need for principals and assistant principals to be the "cheerleader" for the program. As the leader, with input from other stakeholders, they establish the goals and determine how the school will reach the goal. Leaders must possess a working knowledge of AVID to effectively communicate the role that AVID will play in reaching the established goals.

Another point revealed by the study was that the programs that experienced growth had site teams that continuously reflected on their practice, plans, and data. Reflection allowed site teams to make adjustments to their site team plans, their

instructional practice, as well as the staff development plans. These teams also shared their data with their school resulting in more support from the teachers and administrators in their school as well as school-wide celebrations for the successes that were revealed in reviewing the data.

All three sites have worked to improve the learning that takes place in school; however, Atlantic 3 should consider revisiting what needs to be done during the initial implementation of the AVID program. The teachers from Atlantic 3 indicated that the vision for the school had changed numerous times, as a result of leadership changes. Based on the data, it was clear that a large portion of the staff still thought that it was a program for students with behavior problems and poor attendance and not for students who had the potential and desire to go to college. By exposing the instructional staff to the purpose and goals of AVID again, the school can refocus and get all stakeholders on the same page.

Scaffold Support

Another theme that emerged from an analysis of the data was scaffold support. First, the study revealed that the perceived success of the program hinged on the financial assistance provided by the leadership in the building. Schools that were provided fiscal support from their administrative teams were more likely to have more teachers who were exposed to AVID strategies in addition to more students who benefited from educational and cultural trips as well as extra curriculum supplies. Although all participants identified financial support provided by the administration as an indicator of success, this was an area of concern for the third school. There was the perception by the majority of individuals from that school that the administration was providing funding to

ensure the success of other school initiatives and AVID had been pushed to the side. Resulting in a program that had not experienced growth in site team membership or in the number of students being served by the program.

All site teams mentioned the importance of the presence of their administrators. It was mentioned at two sites that administrators were consistently in classrooms conducting observations or walkthroughs, attending site team meetings, and participating in educational and cultural trips. The presence of the administration at AVID programs lead to AVID site team members feeling validated. As a result, they expressed that their peers viewed the AVID program as a viable piece of the school. It is important to note, that the perceived successful sites also stressed the participation of non-AVID teachers in AVID events and training as a sign of support.

Participants also indicated the importance of creating structures and opportunities for site team members to collaborate during common planning time and/or having influence over the development of the master schedule. Site teams that had these opportunities were instrumental in determining which classes the AVID students would take and which teachers they would have. In the analysis, data showed that all three sites had room for growth in the area of collaboration. Although all three sites had time dedicated to collaboration, there was no consistency across sites. Atlantic 2 had an established time during the instructional day, and the other two sites met after school. Data from Atlantic 3 indicated that collaborative efforts were not structured and did not occur consistently. Atlantic 1 had an established time to meet after school, and it appeared that site team members had more opportunities to collaborate with other individuals in the school than the other two sites.

Building Teacher Capacity

Another theme that evolved during the review of the data was building teacher capacity. Schools, where principals and administrative teams were AVID trained, were more likely to share decision-making power with teachers and give more autonomy to AVID site team members in making instructional and professional development decisions. Participants echoed the importance of leadership developing leaders, building relationships and sharing the decision-making power. Furthermore, many of the site team members were selected to serve on committees and, as a result, AVID teachers believed that non-AVID teachers viewed site team members as leaders in the building. This administrative action aided the AVID site team in expanding their influence in their building as well as exposing more students to AVID strategies. Nevertheless, the data revealed that site team coordinators had more influence than other site team members when conducting staff development and making decisions that affected the program. Building leaders should consider that AVID teachers, who were given the chance to develop collaborative relationships and participate on decision-making committees, were viewed as building leaders by their peers and were more effective in implementing AVID than those who were not given the same opportunities.

Staff Development

Watt, Mills, and Heurta (2010) conducted a study to identify attributes and characteristics needed for teacher leaders. The results of this study indicate the importance of leaders selecting teacher leaders to work on the AVID site team and the importance of cultivating their leadership skills through their mentoring of other teachers and students and conducting staff developing. Interviews of the participants in this study

mimicked the aforementioned results. In addition it supports previous research conducted by Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) that revealed the development of trusting relationships with administrators as important because the experience aided in them feeling confident in developing and providing staff development to their colleagues as well as leading and guiding the program to meet the needs of their students.

Interviewees indicated that their programs were respected because their administrator had communicated a clear vision that included the goals of the AVID program. Sites that had a clear vision were more likely to have additional funds provided for AVID Center training, as well as an organized site plan for staff development, time to conduct the training, and teachers who were more willing to participate in AVID professional development opportunities. They also experience non-AVID teachers asking for specific content-based training. Schools with effective staff development had leaders who were involved and trusted the site team to do AVID work.

Implications for Practice

The pressure to find what works to increase student achievement does not appear to lessen anytime soon. Schools will continue to be held accountable for making choices about programs to meet the needs of students. This evaluation provided insight for districts that plan to implement or make adjustments to AVID.

This study suggests that districts with AVID find funding for all leaders in schools with AVID to attend AVID Summer Institute, as this was the primary reason cited by many participants that believed their success or lack thereof was attributed to the training of the administrative teams in their building. This practice would ensure that administrators have a working knowledge of what AVID is and what it can do in their

buildings regarding academic achievement of students. Well-trained administrative teams would make better educated decisions leading to the successful implementation of a program that has the potential to reach every student in the building. Due to the financial cuts that many school districts are experiencing, efforts should also be made to create division-wide opportunities for entire site team members to participate in training. This would assist in defraying the overall costs and would allow site teams to share best practices, discuss school data, as well as have discussions about what steps to take to change a culture of a school.

Participants in the study suggested that sites were successful because of the AVID Center training that site team members receive; however, not all of the participants were AVID trained. Some of the participants were newly elected into their positions at their schools and had either expressed an interest in working with the AVID program or were given the assignment. Those who expressed an interest in working with the AVID program shared that they had researched AVID on their own time and had voluntarily attended professional development opportunities offered at their school.

Schools with AVID need to include common planning time during the instructional day for site team collaboration. School leaders should consider this as a way to support the work of the AVID site team. Time is needed for teams to plan for curriculum and parent workshops, to look at and reflect on data, and to create staff development opportunities, just to name a few of the teams' responsibilities. Common planning can also be used to select student courses and teachers; however, creating these opportunities can be challenging for schools if they lack teachers with AVID training or

have teachers who are not willing to use AVID strategies. If the right conditions do not exist in a school, efforts to make these types of changes can be ineffective.

Another finding was the potential development of building leadership. Leaders that empowered site team members to make decisions about staff development, finances, and students' learning worked more efficiently as a group. Site team members willingly took on roles to advance the work of the team and to improve their skills. Leaders with AVID need to remember they are more likely to get improved student outcomes when they empower teachers with decision making power (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Conger, 1999; Nash, 2010; Ross & Berger, 2009). Leaders should select teachers who have the potential to be agents of change when selecting teachers to work with the AVID program.

Implications for Research

A review of previous research indicated that successful schools had both supportive and involved principals (Watt, Huerta, & Cossio, 2004). The results of this study support those findings. Based on the interviews and observations, participants shared that the more supportive and involved their principals were, the more successful they felt in implementing AVID in their school. Consequently, the participants linked the opportunities for site team members to be instrumental in the decision-making processes in their buildings to more access to courses of rigor for the AVID students. Additional research should be conducted to determine if there is a correlation between site team member's influence over site-based decisions and AVID students access to Advanced Placement and honors courses.

Future research into the supportive practices of leaders in school with AVID should also be conducted. Although all schools involved in the study have worked hard

at implementing the AVID program, some participants expressed more frustration than others regarding the support and training that they receive and give. Two sites were able to claim additional financial support as well as a consistent physical presence of administrators and non-AVID teachers at AVID functions, while the third site was not. The sample for this study consisted of three locations, as a result, it is not clear if the lack of support was due to the failure of the site team to express what support they needed or if the administrative team did not truly understand what it was that they needed to do to support the team. Because the study was limited to three sites, this study should be expanded to include all high schools in the district that currently have the program. This would allow for additional insight into what leaders do at schools with programs that have experienced success. An evaluation of results including qualitative data consisting of attendance rates, access to AP and honors classes, disciplinary actions, and college acceptance rates of AVID students compared to their non-AVID peers would also be recommended to further determine the extent of the influence of the AVID program and the academic success of AVID students.

Although this study was focused on what leaders do to develop teacher leaders and to build a culture of achievement, the study lacked the voices of the principal. Unfortunately, none of the school principals participated in the interviews or the site team observations. As the leader of a school with AIVD, their input would have been invaluable first-hand information about what leaders with successful AVID programs do.

Conclusion

The research revealed that leaders are important in successfully implementing programs; this study gives insight into what those leaders do to successfully implement

programs. For example, the research revealed that leaders, who had a clear vision and a well-communicated purpose for the AVID program, experienced higher levels of acceptance from NON-AVID teachers. The leaders at two sites had clearly established what direction they were moving in and had included AVID in that vision. Another point revealed by the study was that the programs that experienced growth had site teams that continuously reflected on their practice, plans, and data. This information was shared with both teachers and administration in the building and their transparency lead to more teacher support. Leaders that shared in the decision making process in schools as well as decisions about staff development, developed trusting relationships with their teachers thus resulting in in more buy in from AVID teachers and non-AVID teachers. The schools also created supportive cultures by providing common planning time, additional funds for AVID students and additional sections, and giving time for mandatory AVID staff development.

The AVID program has been instrumental in both the academic success of students as well as in the growth of leadership skills of teachers in the Atlantic District. Regardless of the circumstances, the teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators at all three sites work to ensure that AVID students are successful. Although each school did not experience what they perceived to be the same levels of success, students in all three programs were successful in gaining entry into four-year schools. Teachers were also exposed to staff development thus enhancing instructional capacity and increasing teacher capacity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB PERMISSION

January 10, 2014   Approved Application Number 201401058

Dr. Jay P. Scribner
Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

Dear Dr. Scribner:

Your Application for Exempt Research with Kellie A. Mason entitled "AVID Program Evaluation," has been found to be EXEMPT under Categories 6.1 & 6.2 from IRB review by the Human Subjects Review Committee of the Darden College of Education. A committee member pointed out that you need to inform participants that the link of their names to their responses will be kept in a secure password protected computer file, rather than saying that interview responses will not be linked to respondents' names. You may begin this research project when you are ready.

The determination that this study is EXEMPT from IRB review is for an indefinite period of time provided no significant changes are made to your study. If any significant changes occur, notify me or the chair of this committee at that time and provide complete information regarding such changes.

In the future, if this research project is funded externally, you must submit an application to the University IRB for approval to continue the study.

Best wishes in completing your study.

Sincerely,

Theodore P. Remley, Jr., J.D., Ph.D.
Professor and Batten Endowed Chair in Counseling
Department of Counseling and Human Services
ED 110
Norfolk, VA 23529

Chair
Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee
Old Dominion University

tremley@odu.edu

APPENDIX B: APPROVAL FROM DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING,

INNOVATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

January 30, 2014

Ms. Kellie A. Mason
24 Bexley Lane
Hampton, VA 23666

Dear Ms. Mason:

This letter serves as the Department of Planning, Innovation, and Accountability's approval for your research study entitled "Program Theory Evaluation of the Advancement Via Individual Determination College Readiness System (AVID)." Your request to collect data through interviews, observations, and document reviews regarding the AVID Program has been approved with the understanding that all participation is voluntary, and you will not identify the names of the participants, schools, or the school division in any future reports. As always, the final decision to participate rests with the school principals, and you are expected to discuss your study with them prior to starting your research activities.

Our approval for your study will expire one year from the date of this letter. If there are any changes to your study, you must submit the changes to our office for review prior to proceeding. It is our expectation that you will submit an electronic copy of the final report upon its completion to the Department of Planning, Innovation, and Accountability. Please send the report to   . If you have any questions, please contact me at

Sincerely,

                         , M.S.
Research Specialist

cc: , Assistant Superintendent
        Department of Planning, Innovation, and Accountability

                                        , Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Schools
                                , Director, Middle Schools
        Department of School Leadership

                                        , Chief Academic Officer
        Department of Teaching and Learning

                        , Principal   Principal
        High School   High School

                        Principal   Principal
        , High School   , High School

                        , Principal
        High School

APPENDIX C: EMAIL/PHONE CONTACT

Dear colleague,

My name is Kellie Mason and I am a candidate for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership (K-12) at Old Dominion University. With the approval of VBCPS, I am conducting a study, which aims to assess the impact of leadership on student outcomes for students in the AVID College Readiness System. As a part of the research, I need to interview high school AVID teachers, content teachers, and high school administrators.

The study has two objectives:

1. To determine how and in what ways does school level leadership support (or not) the implementation of the AVID program?
2. To determine how, in what ways, and to what extent do AVID teachers exercise teacher leadership in ways that lead to the successful implement of the AVID program?

The interview should take about thirty minutes, and with your permission, will be audio taped. The interviews will take place in-person unless by phone is more convenient for you. I may need to contact you for a follow-up conversation for clarification of your interview information.

Your name, school, and interview responses will be kept confidential, and I will be the only person with access to them. You may terminate you're the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study will contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between leadership and academic achievement of students in the AVID program. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Kellie A. Mason

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

I am giving consent to be interviewed by Kellie A. Mason (the researcher) on
_____, 2014. I have been asked to participate in this study because I am currently
a teacher or administrator in a high school that has the AVID program. I am aware that
the information gleaned from the interview will be used to aid in research, concerning
teacher attitudes towards the academic achievement of students, in order to fulfill course
requirements for the Dissertation, A Qualitative Study of AVID Site Team Leadership
Practices and Building School Capacity. A Case Study.

I am aware that the purpose of the study is to:
1. Determine how and in what ways does school level leadership support (or not)
   the implementation of the AVID program?
2. Determine how, in what ways, and to what extent do AVID teachers exercise
   teacher leadership in ways that lead to the successful implement of the AVID
   program?

I understand that the interview will last approximately thirty minutes and that the
researcher will record and retain the audio recording of our interview. The interviews
will take place in-person unless a phone interview is more convenient for the participant.
I am aware that the researcher may need to contact me later in order to clarification
information gathered during the interview. I also understand that I may end the interview
at any point without any consequences.

I understand that there are minimal risks involved in this study and efforts will be made
to ensure confidentiality. I understand that the researcher will use the data from the
interview for data analysis and that my responses will be only available to the researcher
and a transcriptionist. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and
recordings will be saved on a computer that is password protected. The recordings will
be erased once the study is completed.

I understand that my interview responses will not be linked to my name; however, they
will be linked to an identification number so that if additional contact is necessary, it can
be made. Due to the size of the sample, the specific criteria used for the study, and/or
something in the data it may be possible that someone determines which schools as well
as which individuals are involved in the study. I also understand that there is the
potential that someone could access my information in the researcher's pass-word
protected computer.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I do not have to
participate if I do not want to. I also understand that I can change my mind at any point
and decide not to participate. I am aware that there are no penalties for not participating.
I understand that I will have the opportunity to review my transcription and that I may
request that it not be included in the study. I also understand that I may ask for a copy of
the document, which will be a result from this interview.

I understand that this study hopes to add to the body of research regarding leadership and its relationship to academic achievement of AVID students. My participation may lend support to increased support of the program resulting in more students graduating with the necessary tools to make them college and workforce ready.

I have been informed that if I have any questions about the study that I can direct them to the researcher or the Old Dominion Institutional Review Board.

_____

Signature   Date

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How long have you been a part of the AVID site team?

What responsibilities do you hold on the AVID site team?

Years of Experience _____ 1-5years _____6-10 years _____11-15 years _____>16 years

Gender _____Male _____Female

Ethnicity _____

Highest Degree achieved _____Bachelors _____Masters _____+30 _____PhD/EdD

Socio Economic Status of your school? _____Low _____Medium _____High

Academic Achievement level of your school? _____Low _____Medium _____High

1. Describe how AVID operates in this school.
   a. Explain how AVID is supposed to work. Take me through beginning to end.
   b. How does it actually work? How close does it come to the idea?
2. How and in what ways does this school support AVID?
   a. Provide examples of how you and other formal leaders support AVID.
   b. How do other non-AVID teachers see this program and how, if at all, do they support or facilitate the goals of AVID.
3. How much autonomy are AVID teachers given in the decision making on your school's site team/in your school?
   a. What opportunities, if any, have they been given for teachers to demonstrate leadership skills?
   b. Describe the impact, if any, that AVID has had on the academic performance of students enrolled in the AVID program.
4. Take me through the process of how your site team makes a decision.
5. If I were present during one of your site team meetings, what would I hear and/or see?
6. Describe the impact, if any, that AVID has had on the academic performance of students enrolled in the AVID program?
   a. Is the impact communicated in the building?
7. To what extent are these achievements the result of the support, or lack thereof, of the actions of the things you have discussed?
8. If you could change anything about AVID in your school and its role in ensuring students are college and work-force ready, what would you change? Why?

APPENDIX F: ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How long have you been a part of the AVID site team?

Years of Experience ____ 1-5years ____6-10 years ____11-15 years
____>16 years

Gender _____Male _____Female

Ethnicity _____

Highest Degree achieved ____Bachelors ____Masters ____+30
____PhD/EdD

Socio Economic Status of your school? ____Low ____Medium
____High

Academic Achievement level of your school? ____Low ____Medium
____High

1. Describe how AVID operates in this school.
   c. Explain how AVID is supposed to work. Take me through beginning to end.
   d. How does it actually work? How close does it come to the idea?
2. How and in what ways does this school support AVID?
   a. Provide examples of how you and other formal leaders support AVID.
   b. How do other non-AVID teachers see this program and how, if at all, do they support or facilitate the goals of AVID.
3. How much autonomy are AVID teachers given in the decision making on your school's site team/in your school?
   a. What opportunities, if any, have they been given for teachers to demonstrate leadership skills?
   b. Describe the impact, if any, that AVID has had on the academic performance of students enrolled in the AVID program.
4. Take me through the process of how your site team makes a decision.
5. If I were present during one of your site team meetings, what would I hear and/or see?
6. Describe the impact, if any, that AVID has had on the academic performance of students enrolled in the AVID program?
   a. Is the impact communicated in the building?
7. To what extent are these achievements the result of the support, or lack thereof, of the actions of the things you have discussed?
8. If you could change anything about AVID in your school and its role in ensuring students are college and work-force ready, what would you change? Why?

APPENDIX G: CONTACT SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewer: KAM   Interviewee:

Contact Date: Today's Date:

1. What were the main issues or themes that stuck out for you in this contact?

2. What discrepancies, if any, did you note in the interviewee's response?

3. Anything else that stuck out as salient, interesting, or important in this contact?

4. How does this compare to other data collections?

APPENDIX H: DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM

Document form

Site:
Document:
Date received or picked up:

Name or description of document:

Event of contact, if any, with which document is associated:

Significance or importance of document:

Brief summary of contents: