RESEARCH ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Impacts of Instructional Time Reduction on Student Experiences in the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) College Readiness System

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Abstract

This phenomenological study investigated student experiences in the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) college readiness system at Central High School (CHS). The three interview series model of interviewing was employed to conduct interviews of 20 students in the spring of 2012 and 2013. Categorizing strategies were used to code, reduce, and thematically connect the data. Connecting strategies were executed to facilitate contextual meaning, and examine relationships between portions of interviews. Findings indicated that participants acquired skills they believed would help them to both gain entry into college and use throughout their lives. Additionally, instructional time was reduced in the 2012-2013 academic year. AVID students at CHS reported that the AVID program benefitted them, but did not have a favorable view of the reduction in instructional time. This has the potential to reduce the impact of an important program, which serves the needs of underrepresented students seeking to matriculate into college.

1. Introduction

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program is a college readiness system that seeks to reduce the achievement gap among traditionally underserved students by identifying students in the academic middle – those with the potential to achieve at high levels with support (AVID Center Online, 2013) – and enrolling them in a rigorous curriculum that focuses on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading (WICOR). Vazquez (2010) and Holubrik (2012) qualitatively investigated student experiences in the AVID program. Using ethnography, Vazquez (2010) conducted eight, 45-minute interviews of 10thgrade Hispanic students in Texas in order to represent their experiences in the AVID program. Additionally, Holubrik (2012) employed naturalistic inquiry to develop a case study on the perspectives of nine AVID high school alumni – three Hispanic and six African American - who succeeded in enrolling in college. Seven of these nine alumni attended colleges and universities in Texas. However, this study sought to address the current dearth of in-depth qualitative research on the student experience in the AVID college readiness system in Georgia by expanding the participant pool to include students from multiple grade levels, using a phenomenological approach, and providing detailed descriptions in the words of the participants.

By understanding the students' perspective of their experience with the AVID program, AVID administrators, coordinators, and teachers may not only improve practices in the AVID elective, but also

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better determine the suitability of the AVID program for students in their schools and in particular how the amount of instructional time changes the AVID experience. During the academic year in which data gathering occurred there was a reduction in daily instructional time allotted to AVID from 90 minutes to 25 minutes. It was this change in the AVID program that was found to change the nature of the student experience in AVID. Due to the reductions in instructional time for the AVID classes at Central High School (pseudonym: CHS, which at the time had 62.6% of its student body eligible for free or reduced lunch), this study has the added potential to further advance our understandings of the AVID student experience and its relationship to the unanticipated time changes. In tough fiscal times other school leaders will have to decide whether, or how best, to fund programs and this study informs decision makers of student-generated issues related to making decisions about AVID programs. It is particularly important to be aware of the current dropout situation and the potential for AVID to contribute positively to the situation and better prepare students for life after graduation.

2. Literature Review

Graduation rates continue to be of concern in the United States (The College Board, 2008a). These are particularly impacted by dropout rates which, though in decline (U. S. Department of Education, 2013a), are still high among poor and minority students (Delpit, 2006; Howard, 2010). Several scholars have called for increased support for programs aimed at reducing this trend, particularly in low-income and underrepresented minority students (Howard, 2010; Lee & Ransom, 2011). Numerous programs exist, which aim to reduce the school dropout rate (Watt, Huerta, & Lozano, 2007). AVID is one of several programs developed to address this problem by not only helping students to successfully complete high school, but also preparing them for the academic rigors of college (AVID Center Online, 2013).

While the national graduation rate has improved to its current rate of 78% - the nation's highest since 1974 (U. S. Department of Education, 2013b) - Georgia is one of only three states whose rate currently remains at or below 67% (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). More specifically, the dropout rate of students between the ninth and tenth grades has increased threefold since 1980 (Haney, Madaus, Abrams, Wheelock, Miao, &Gruia, 2004), so much so that the national freshman graduation rate now stands at 75% (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). With estimates of 20% of future jobs requiring a college degree, researchers predict that current high school dropout rates will result in a significant shortage of qualified workers by 2025 (The College Board, 2008b).

With low percentages of students graduating from public high schools in general, even fewer students are being sufficiently prepared to matriculate into 4-year colleges (Greene & Forster, 2003). By helping to ensure that underrepresented students acquire the skills that will enable them to matriculate into and succeed in college, the AVID college readiness system ultimately helps to facilitate improved access to college for traditionally marginalized students.

- **College Access and Race**

With more and more jobs requiring some form of post-secondary education, college attainment has become increasingly important as we seek to develop a more educated workforce. However, African American, Hispanic, and Native American students demonstrated lower rates of achievement than their European American and Asian American classmates on several measures including grades and test scores (Lee & Ransom, 2011). African American and Latino students also exhibited lower rates of college matriculation and completion than their European American counterparts (Maio & Haney, 2004; Watt, Huerta, & Alkan, 2011). At the same time, minority population growth rates are increasing, particularly among Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). If this trend continues, there will be increasing numbers of low-educated individuals comprising the future workforce, or they might not be able to get jobs altogether. One strategy that has been implemented in high schools and can change the trend is to offer college preparatory programs to students who need help with study skills (Howard, 2010), test-taking techniques (Swanson, Mehan, & Hubbard, 1993), and or reading comprehension (Swanson, 1989). One such program

that is unique because of its attention to individual needs is AVID. One of the groups targeted by the AVID college readiness system is minorities. Those students eligible for participation in this study included African Americans, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, and European Americans. As such, most of these students represent the very populations around which concerns have been expressed about lack of a sufficiently educated workforce, with serious implications for the future prosperity of the United States (Howard, 2010).

It has been well established that minority (with the exception of some Asian American minorities) and low socioeconomic students in the United States are achieving at levels well below that of their European American counterparts (Delpit, 2006; Howard, 2010). Boykin and Noguera (2011) noted that race is significantly connected to the dropout rates observed today. According to a 2011 College Board report, almost 50% of minority males between the ages of 15 and 24 that complete high school will end up jobless, incarcerated, or deceased. Moreover, Georgia was one of only seven states that did not achieve the national average of a 45% graduation rate for Black males. Such dismal statistics make clear the need for immediate interventions, which address the lack of achievement evidenced by students of color - and African American and Latino students in particular (Howard, 2010). Howard (2010) called for the identification and replication of programs, which effectively reduce the underachievement of African Americans and Latinos. AVID is one such program that seeks to increase the achievement of traditionally underserved students.

- **College Support Programs**

Programs, which support the matriculation of traditionally underrepresented students, have become more numerous in recent years. These pre-college programs aim to minimize the effect of negative school experiences for minorities and students of low socioeconomic status (Martinez &Klopott, 2003). While numerous early intervention programs exist, there remains some uncertainty as to what makes these programs effective (Cabrera, Deil-Amen, Prahbu, Terenzini, & Lee, 2006). Several scholars have posited that students obtain social capital from participation in early intervention programs (Howard, 2010; Jarrett, Sullivan & Watkins 2005). Such programs include Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Preparation (GEAR UP), Upward Bound, Success in a rich CORE curriculum for everyone (SCORE), Graduation Really Achieves Dreams (Project GRAD) (Watt et al., 2007), and the AVID college readiness system. In particular, the AVID program was developed to reduce national and local patterns of minority student dropout and underrepresentation in 4-year colleges and universities (Swanson, 2005).

- **AVID**

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program is a college readiness system that seeks to reduce the achievement gap among traditionally underserved students. The program identifies students in the academic middle – those with the potential to achieve at high levels with support (AVID Center Online, 2013). Without academic and social support, some of these students may not achieve their goals of college attendance, or may even drop out of school. Students continue to drop out of school at alarming rates (The College Board, 2012). As noted earlier, there are numerous college support programs, which seek to reverse this trend (The College Board, 2012).

AVID is one such program that is designed to meet the needs of an underserved group, namely minority and generally low socioeconomic students. As such, the program needs to be investigated so that policy makers and leaders can assess the program's suitability in addressing the needs of their minority students. In order to accomplish its goals, the AVID curriculum emphasizes writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading (AVID Center Online, 2013).

Today, the AVID college readiness system is available at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and there is now an initiative called AVID for Higher Education geared toward meeting the needs of students already enrolled in a college or university (AVID Center Online, 2013). Certification as an AVID school requires the implementation of 11 essentials, which include student selection; voluntary participation; full implementation; academic rigor; a strong, relevant writing and reading program; inquiry as a basis for instruction; collaboration as a basis for instruction; tutorials led by AVID-trained tutors; use of the AVID

Center Data System; available site and district resources; and an active interdisciplinary site team (AVID Center Online, 2013).

3. The Study

This study was done at one of 11 comprehensive high schools in a district in southeast Georgia and will be referred to as Central High School (CHS). It was one of the two high schools in the district that had an AVID program at the time.

- **Setting for the Study**

The district serves approximately 35,000 students. CHS was established in 1956 and has a long-standing reputation for providing students with a challenging academic curriculum that successfully prepares them for college. For the 2012-2013 academic year, the school had an enrollment of 1,071 students, which was comprised of 23% European American, 69% African American, 3% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 2% Multiracial. There are 80 full-time teachers. The school has a special education department for mild to moderate special education students. There is also a growing Engineering Program, which is unique in the district. Central High School failed to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress for the past three years. However, CHS has a committed and hard working faculty. Parents are somewhat supportive as evidenced by good attendance at Open Houses, but low participation in the school's PTA. The city's economy is tourism-based with supporting small businesses.

The high school has a successful AVID program, which has been in existence for seven years, with 46 students dispersed throughout three classes: one class for each grade level except grade 9. The majority of students are enrolled in a college preparatory curriculum. Students interested in participating in the AVID program are invited to attend a general meeting with their parents, be interviewed, and sign an academic contract before being allowed entry into the program. AVID students are challenged by their teachers, tutors, and advisors to pursue a challenging curriculum.

When one of the researchers was employed at CHS, he was asked to volunteer and serve on the AVID site team. Since then, he has worked at CHS for 7 years, taught AVID for 6 years, and attended two AVID Summer Institutes. Out of his service in the AVID classroom, the idea of this study was born. As an AVID teacher, he observed that, while the AVID program had good intentions, students seemed to be wearied by its requirements and decided that if he was going to spend career time teaching this class, then he wanted to help ensure that the curriculum was well-received by students. Therefore, this study was conducted to understand how students experience the AVID program, so that practices in the AVID elective could be improved. Given that the AVID college readiness system could help to reduce the achievement gap among students traditionally underrepresented in higher education, it could potentially be an important part of the solution to a nationally recognized problem. Hence, the story of how one school effectively implemented and subsequently reduced class time, and how the students experienced this change, is an important piece of research.

- **Framework**

This was a phenomenological study (Seidman, 2006) of Central High School's implementation of the AVID program, which served approximately 45 students in grades 10-12. All of the student participants were enrolled in AVID for at least 2 years. Seidman's (2006) three interview series model of phenomenological interviewing was employed to understand and make meaning of the students' "lived experience" (p. 9).

This study elicited the nature of student AVID experiences as they related to the following research questions: (1) what are students' perceptions of their experiences in the AVID elective at CHS? (2) How do students' perceptions of their experiences in the 90 minute AVID program differ from their experiences in the AVID elective for shorter periods of time at CHS?

- **Data Sources and Evidence**

Individual student interviews were conducted in order to obtain study data. Employing the three interview series model of interviewing (Seidman, 2006), each student participated in a series of three separate, private, 90-minute interviews, spaced 3-7 days apart. The first interview was used to focus on the context of the students' experience. The second interview enabled students to reconstruct concrete AVID classroom experiences in the context in which they occurred. The third and final interview had students reflect on the meaning of those classroom experiences. In order to protect both the students and the researcher, the private and precise location of the interviews was indicated on parental information, as well as permission, consent, and assent forms. Moreover, school administrators were provided with weekly lists indicating the participant and the day of all interviews to be conducted throughout the duration of the study.

Data collection occurred in two phases. Phase I data was obtained from seven participants (PS1-PS7) interviewed one spring, while Phase II data was obtained from 13 participants (DS8-DS20) interviewed the next spring. In both cases, in order to protect the interest of participants, students in the researcher's AVID class were not permitted to participate in the study. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis was immediate after interview completion, and was performed on an on-going basis during the data collection process. Coding, categorizing, and connecting strategies were used to analyze data. With the use of bracketing (Seidman, 2006), codes were developed and used to create organizational categories (Maxwell, 2013). From these, thematic connections were established. Connecting analyses (Maxwell, 2013) were also performed to tie into prior categorizing analyses and develop a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

4. Findings

Themes are presented in the words of the participants, who are characterized in Table 1. Individual quotations were assigned two letters and three reference numbers separated by two colons, for example DS2:3:12. PS refers to Phase I and DS refers to Phase II. The numbering system used where the first number indicates the participant interviewed, while the second number between the two colons indicates the interview number, and the final number refers to the page number within the primary transcript was used in the article for the benefit of the reader. Findings from each phase of the study are chronologically presented and comparatively discussed.

Themes generated from the research that are addressed in this article were those specifically related to reductions in instructional time.

- **Phase I**

Participants in phase I of the study saw themselves as having academic potential, experienced the AVID class as a *family*, and derived satisfaction with the way in which the program prepared them for college. Angelo described his own academic potential, indicating that, "after 9th grade, um (pause) I kinda got lazy to 10th grade, but I picked myself back up after 10th grade (pause) started getting my grades back up (pause) now I'm maintaining a 3.0" (PS4:1:3).

A different classmate, Maria, explained the family theme when she noted that,

I think AVID makes sense because it's a mix between homeroom and a gifted program. In homeroom you know, you know you're kinda like a family. You don't see them all the time like in school. It's like your school family. That's why it's homeroom, you know? And um, AVID has that (pause) it gives you a place that you go to everyday (pause) the same people that you see every day (PS2:3:2).

As Vanessa expressed, "[To be an AVID student is to be] a student ready for college . . . I'm preparing for college"(PS5:3:1).

Table 1: Characteristics of Research Participants in the AVID Study

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

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

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

Moreover, six of these seven participants reported increased levels of maturity having participated in the AVID program. Maria explained it this way:

I guess it's helped me mature as a person, and taught me things about myself, um (pause) before I started AVID I was young and . . . I had ridiculously poor time management um (pause) what else? As a person over all, I probably (pause) probably wouldn't be as (pause) ah (pause) forthcoming and outright as I am now. AVID's helped with that. It's helped me too (pause) and my comfort level, when I walk into a room (pause) I'm not, I don't get this anxiety attack you know . . . it's just helped me mature, and learn (pause) learn who I am better (pause) learn things about myself that I didn't know, or improve on things that maybe were good, and things that weren't so good. It's made me a better person all around I think. (PS2:3:1)

In addition to this, participants also reported that AVID provided collegial support. This is demonstrated in the following quote from Jason:

What I like about AVID is that uh (pause) you can uh (pause) you can have an atmosphere where you can act yourself and you don't have to be pretty much someone that is trying to be mature, and uh, just act or put a face on. You don't have to do that in AVID that's one thing. And you can be yourself. And people will like you and love you for who you are, and not have to worry about people putting you down and saying things about you for how you look [or] how you dress or anything. They'd be there for you during your hard times as I said earlier, and even the good times and cheer you up and be there for you…just to make you happy (PS3:2:8).

In contrast, one of the five participants – Vanessa – had a negative view of the program, and indicated that [AVID is] "boring...besides getting your mindset ready for college…that's it" (PS5:2:1).

- **Phase II**

Data from phase II revealed that while AVID seeks to prepare students to gain entry into college, AVID also gives participants skills they can use throughout their lives. In addition, data from Phase II showed that reductions in instructional time adversely affected student experiences.Themes emergent from the Phase II interviews are described below in the words of participants with a few Phase I comments included as appropriate.

o **AVID gives Participants Skills they can use Throughout their Lives**

One of the stated goals of the AVID program is to prepare students for college. The program uses various techniques to enhance students' academic skills. For instance, Joy affirmed that "…I would still take Cornell notes and keep up those habits though because that kind a stuck on me" (PS6:3:2). In addition, she described her AVID binder in this way:

...We had to have sections for each thing and not just sections.The sections were divided into sections and at first, after I got used to that, it was okay. I mean I was all right with that. That actually helped me I would say. It really did, because I think that's how I'm gonna do that when I get to college too . . . I mean once I get adjusted to like (pause) the way (pause) things are being done, I mean (pause) it's (pause) I guess it's something that I'll probably form into a habit later in life. (PS6:2:1)

However, participants were quick to assert that AVID prepared them for life beyond the college classroom as well. Maria alluded to this concept in this way:

I use it as a learning tool that teaches life lessons. Um (pause) that can be used throughout my life, you know? It's not just something like (pause) learning calculus in high school (pause) something that I think I'll never use again you know? (participant chuckles) It's (pause) I think (pause) I know I'll use whatever I learn in AVID in the rest of my life as well . . . . (PS2:3:1)

Jason articulated the skills he acquired through his experiences in the AVID program:

Fishbowl speeches we studied in 9th grade. That was pretty fun. In ah, 1-2 minutes, we had to get a random topic and we would talk about that topic in ah 1-2 minutes timing, and we could not have (pause) a

couple like 1-2 minutes as I said that we could pretty much think of things to say. It was just right off the top of our head. And this is how we worked on our speaking abilities in front of a group. And it was something that really did help. I really didn't recognize it at first, but if you're in an interview, like it requires you to talk off the top of your head, and say something you're not prepared for, and ah that's how a fishbowl helped you work on that, to get prepared like real fast kinda saying something in front of an audience (pause) like if someone's interviewing one on one or as a group and uh, then you would have to know what to say coming off the top of your head and not just somethin' that you had prepared ahead of time. That's what a fishbowl was and we did that. It worked on our public speaking skills throughout 9th grade and pretty much helped in getting us prepared for college and being able to speak in front of an audience. So whenever we had the final end of the year event where we had to speak in front of the whole AVID group or a few different groups of classes with regular teachers or our AVID teachers, we learned about speeches but it was preparing us for speaking in general too. (PS3:2:3)

He continued, "I could say the purpose of AVID (pause) it's preparing you for life after high school and not just in college but in general, to become more mature (pause) to grow up as an adult" (PS3:3:1). In his view, "to be an AVID student (pause) you're doing something that most people don't do, and it's something different that's good for you. It's good for your resume for college and just in general to help you and overall in everything (pause) with your life" (PS3:3:3). Jason concluded,

[If I could no longer be in AVID], I'd still have a smart direction in where to go, even after being in AVID class cause I've already had a strong (pause) pretty much in depth, everything's already been implanted in my mind (pause) that I've been learned and taught in AVID and ah (pause) I can just apply it and just keep moving forward and not have to worry. (3:3:4) . . . [I would] apply my communicating skills, which is very important, something that I have really helped me in AVID and something that probably no matter what will probably be using throughout my whole lifetime, and help me be more mature with my speaking abilities. (PS3:3:5)

Evelyn commented that

It's just something that's always gonna be a part of me. I'm gonna always take what I've learned in those classes and incorporate it into my everyday classes or (pause) and just everyday life lessons. It's just never gonna leave. It's just something' (pause) it's a way of life. (DS11:3:1)

She continued:

AVID (pause) it's not pointless and it's not a waste of time. It's something that'll actually help you in the long run, and prepare you for everything. It's not just a school class or a college prep class. It's more of a life class basically, because everything that you learn in AVID, you're gonna need it and you're gonna apply it in something that you do in life. It's not just something that you just do to get a credit for. (DS11:3:1)

Carla detailed her experience, noting that

Public speaking helps you a lot. It's just more informing on things you'll need after you graduate high school than just focusing on what you need in high school (pause) rather than other classes that just give you your work and you learn it, but AVID teaches you stuff you could use out of college and in college (pause) just your people skills (DS16:2:1) . . . It helps me (pause) it just helps me stay focused on more than what I'm just learning (pause) to like how can I apply it in real world situations (pause) well what I want to be (DS16:3:1).

Dave, at first uncertain about the impact of the AVID program, explained it this way:

…I don't directly see how it correlates with my everyday life other than school….but I mean um…AVID enlightens you to some traits that are necessary for the workplace…I haven't started a job but…um…different um….cultures and stuff like that ...um …having an open outlook….um…being organized…um…being productive and on time…especially on time…I can see where that would be um… very important starting any job or internship or anything like that…um…yeah those are just some great traits

to have…and those are what is enforced in AVID…self discipline…yeah that is a big one…um….restraint…knowing when to not do something…um…prioritizing time… time management…golly! This is all coming back now…I can….um…time management um…that is very important…knowing uh…work time and then recreation time…and the …the differences …when to have fun…. when to be working…um…those are all things that enforced….endorsed by AVID, and you can most definitely see the effects of that in uh…um… individual (DS8:3:1).

o **Reductions in Instructional Time Adversely Affect Student Experiences**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, challenges resulted in the reduction of instructional time from 25 to 90 minutes. When asked to compare what students did in AVID this year compared to what they had done in previous years, Janet mused that "this year I do less than what I did the years before due to not as much time" (DS10:2:1). Concerning AVID this year, Dave offered that

It doesn't feel like it all. I (pause) it's (pause) like (pause) nothing this year in AVID. We (pause) it is (pause) it is very relaxed (pause) very relaxed (pause) um, we do tutorials logs. We did one today, but it's (pause) it's not the same at all because there's no real um (pause) supervision of the AVID tutorials (pause) so we write our question on the board and show him the question to get credit but we don't (pause) it's not tutorial. I believe because the time has been shortened a lot, it is not as in-depth, so we don't cover as much (pause) the quality, it sucks. (DS8:2:1,2)

In addition, Veronica perceived that

It's less work than before. We used to have um, the binder checks like every week or every other week before, but now we don't. We don't do binders, since it's just too much of a hassle, and we used to always get work every day and talk about AVID, since class periods were longer. But now, it's more like (pause) chill. (DS9:2:1)

With a different point of view, Sharnell recounted,

. . . like in AVID this year, we kinda just (pause) we kinda just get like (pause) okay (pause) you (pause) you know what college you're already going to so you should be looking up information on it. We do a lot of like (pause) information on certain colleges (pause) specific colleges (pause) whereas in earlier experiences, we were searching for colleges and figuring out which ones we wanted to go to, and figuring out what we wanted to do with our lives but now, we're more certain" (DS13:2:1).

Maria reflected on several different aspects of the class, explaining that

We do a lot less in AVID this year. In previous years we actually talked about college, and this year we haven't really talked about college at all. We talked about it for probably a week or two and then stopped doing (pause) doing anything really. We don't do tutorials anymore. We did 'em for a while and then (pause) we stopped. We don't have binder checks anymore. We don't (pause) do Cornell notes anymore. In previous years we did more binder checks more Cornell notes. We were more focused on (pause) on college than this year (DS14:2:1).

Carla also remarked that,

This year, AVID hasn't been as effective as it was the previous years. I guess (pause) the previous years it was more to (pause) learning more about our colleges and stuff, but this year it's like we still have more stuff to learn, but it's less because we're doing the same college and stuff over and we don't do as much work as we used to, helping us prepare, but we still prepared by (pause) still doing tutorials and taking notes, but it's not the same. It's less work. (DS16:2:1)

Samera revealed the differences between AVID last year and this year in this way:

I would compare this year as one of the (pause) not one of the worst but it (pause) it's a (pause) not (pause) where it's supposed to be (pause) for where it could have been better (pause) because in between 9th and 11th grade, we actually learned more on leadership skills and what actually does prepare us for college,

to when we get to 12th grade, we have to actually get everything done, and (pause) we have to be doing everything on our own because we're not in our AVID class. We're just in a class that's set for 25 minutes. (DS17:2:1,2)

Finally,Vania, uncertain as to the reason for the differences between AVID this year and previous years, speculated, "Um this year, we don't really do that much as I did my first year in AVID. Um, I wish that we did as much as we did last year, but I guess it's different now since I have a new AVID teacher" (DS19:2:1).

However, all comments on this subject were not negative. For example,Christin stated that

This year is very, very different from um, my other years in AVID because this year it's helping me to prepare myself for college, and in the previous years it helped me prepare for college but now it all boils down to making sure everything is together and um, me making sure that I'm prepared and it's like reality is starting to hit. (DS15:2:1)

Similarly, Candice underscored that ". . . this year, it's actually (pause) I'm actually see in' things done like all before we was do in' the steps (pause) like to get up to this point (pause) so like now I actually see everything coming together, like college applications and stuff like that" (DS18:2:1).

5. Discussion

Considering the two research questions posed in this study, it was evident that the AVID college readiness system enhanced the organizational skills of the participants, and equipped students with strategies which empowered them to focus on college and embrace their futures. Not only did students acquire skills for college, but described feeling prepared for life. Moreover, students at CHS found in AVID an environment where they felt like part of a family. However, while a majority of CHS students reported that the AVID program has benefitted them, not all students were of the same view. Some students strongly advocated for AVID, reflecting on its positive influence in their lives. Others seemed confused or disenfranchised. This disenfranchisement might have been due, in part, to the close time period of the implementation of the new time change. That is, if the students were in the program for several years at 25 minutes, they may have exhibited lower levels of disenfranchisement. Why this might be so may be worth further investigation.

The second research question addressed student engagement related to scheduling AVID for the traditional full 90 minutes at CHS. This is how Janet explained it:

It's less work than before. We used to have um, the binder checks like every week or every other week before, but now we don't. We don't do binders, since it's just too much of a hassle, and we used to always get work every day, and talk about AVID, since class periods were longer. But now, it's more like (pause) chill. (DS9:2:1)

Finding the time too regularly check and refine Cornell notes, complete binder checks, and have tutorials, were the biggest challenges declared by the participants. Several participants ascribed these shortcomings to their AVID teacher rather than scheduling challenges. As Vania put it, "Um this year (pause) we don't really do that much as I did my first year in AVID. Um, I wish that we did as much as we did last year, but I guess it's different now since I have a new AVID teacher" (DS19:2:1). The assumption here is that, in spite of the time restrictions, the AVID teacher is expected to create an AVID environment in the class. Regardless, student engagement with the AVID program was not the same as it was before the reduction in instructional time. It would have been interesting to obtain the teachers' perspectives on the changes in the AVID program. This would provide some insight into the challenges faced by teachers expected to deliver the AVID curriculum with less time.

This study provides a structure for schools with scheduling challenges similar to those of Central High School to safeguard the academic potential of underprepared and historically underrepresented students. AVID is well-documented in previous studies on secondary schools. Several findings of this study were parallel to findings from other AVID studies of middle and high schools. AVID as family (Watt, Huerta, &

Alkan, 2012; Watt, Johnston, Huerta, Mendiola & Alkan, 2008) and preparation for college (Martinez & Kloppott, 2003; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996) are two examples. Continued study of the AVID program is needed to clarify answers to the research questions posed in this study, particularly with regard to the question addressing reductions in instructional time. The requirement is that AVID be taught as a regular class during a normal school day. Given this requirement, it would be difficult to study the effects of reduced instructional time because it would be considered unethical to artificially impose such conditions on a class.

Be that as it may, curricular decisions concerning instructional time must be carefully considered in view of their potential impacts on student experience and performance in the AVID class. In this study, participants reported dissatisfaction with reductions in instructional time in the AVID elective. In situations where instructional time is altered, it may be useful to elicit student perceptions in order to reduce the negative impact of such changes. By discussing program changes with students, they are given a voice, and are afforded the opportunity to help improve their classroom instruction. It is therefore incumbent upon AVID teachers to engage students in addressing program changes such that they achieve student buy-in when confronted with less than desirable program changes. In this way, the potential positive educational outcomes derived from the AVID college readiness system may be maximized despite reductions in instructional time.

Acknowledgements

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