

The Effects of AVID on Student Achievement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program's use of culturally responsive teaching methods on the achievement of grade seven middle school students. The study compared the mean English Language Arts (ELA) Quarterly Assessment scores of AVID and non-AVID student groups. The measurement tool was the second quarter ELA Quarterly assessment. An independent *t*-test was run to determine whether there were significant differences in the ELA assessment scores between the AVID students and the non-AVID students. Analysis of the data revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in the ELA Quarterly Assessment between the AVID students. Further research is required to determine whether there is a relationship between AVID program enrollment and student performance. This research should include a larger sample size, a different implementation strategy (non-virtual learning vs virtual learning), additional instructional days, and a different assessment.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

As classrooms around the United States evolve and become more diverse, the way in which teachers deliver content to their students must continue to change as well. Approaches to meeting the needs of students differ, depending on a child's background and culture. Now, more than ever, teachers must build relationships with their students and become familiar with their culture in order to encourage them to value their school experience and motivate them to achieve. A student's achievement motivation can be related to his/her culture as individuals choose ways in which they spend their time and energy. The need for students to experience motivation to achieve poses a challenge for teachers in ensuring that their instruction is both relatable and engaging for all their students. According to Schmeichel (2012), the use of culturally relevant teaching validates cultural differences, using them as valuable resources that can be accessed by children of color to become as successful as their white counterparts.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2014) reports that there is a significant gap in proficiency levels among minority students and their non-minority peers. The data revealed that 47% of White students achieved at or above proficient levels in reading their senior year while that number dropped to 26% for American Indian Alaskan Natives, 23% for Hispanic students, and 16% for Black students. Culturally responsive teaching is essential for minority student success in school and is the key to providing educational opportunities for all students.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), is a program that incorporates culturally responsive teaching to meet the needs of historically underrepresented student populations (AVID, 2020). The enrollment in college preparatory programs such as AVID have

contributed to the success of minority students both in school and in the workforce. AVID is student centered program that has shifted the role of a teacher from one who delivers content to the facilitator of learning, thus providing the foundation for an inquiry based, student centered classroom. The program incorporates relationship building, high expectations, collaboration, inquiry, and organization to support student learning in all content areas. With AVID, teachers inspire students to take control of their own learning.

The AVID program encourages teachers to recognize the unique circumstances that each student brings to the classroom. Teachers spend time to intentionally build relationships with their students using a scaffolded low risk to higher risk activity approach. This approach enables the teacher to learn about his/her students and the knowledge and experience that each student brings to the classroom. The success of the AVID program is measured by helping students who are historically underrepresented in higher education become college and career ready. First generation AVID alumni are graduating with a four-year degree within six years at a rate of 42% versus 11% of their national peers graduating within the same timeframe (AVID, 2020). AVID gives teachers the tools to connect with and help students succeed.

As a middle school teacher of AVID for the past six years, this researcher has observed the positive impact that the AVID program has had on many students. The AVID program is designed to assist academically average students, who are often first-generation minority students, learn and apply strategies that help lead to academic success. The researcher wished to learn more about the effects of the AVID program's use of culturally responsive teaching methods with a group of seventh grade students taught by the researcher.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of the AVID program's use of culturally responsive teaching methods on the achievement of grade seven middle school students.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant differences between the achievement of seventh grade AVID students and a control group of similar students on the second quarter Anne Arundel County Public Schools' Maryland English Language Arts Quarterly Assessment (ELAQA).

Operational Definitions

For purposes of this study, the independent variable was whether students were or were not enrolled in the AVID program. Two groups of students participated in the study: AVID students and non-AVID students. The dependent variable for the study was the student success as measured by their score on the second quarter ELAQA.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID): The students in the AVID program have access to a college preparatory curriculum that incorporates writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading strategies along with social supports that recognize the importance of incorporating considerations relating to cultural differences within daily instruction.

Student achievement: Achievement was measured via the second quarter English Language Arts (ELA) quarterly assessment.

Culturally Responsive Teaching: a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.

Restorative Practices: a strategy that seeks to repair damaged relationships by restoring trust and forgiving.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature explores the differences in school achievement of students receiving culturally responsive instruction versus those students who are not. Section one examines the importance of high academic achievement in minority students. Section two provides reasons for low academic achievement. Section three discusses the importance of culturally responsive teaching regarding student achievement as well as strategies to help close the achievement gap between historically underrepresented minority students and white students. The summary is provided in section four.

The Importance of High Academic Achievement in Minority Students

Academic achievement of high school students is one of the major factors considered during the college admissions process. While not all students who graduate from high school will go on to pursue a college education, the nation continues to need its citizens to have specific skills and talents. Individuals can develop their skills and talents in many ways, including college degrees, certifications, and acquiring other types of high-quality credentials. The need for individuals to obtain these credentials beyond high school stems from a global shift from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy wherein most available jobs require post high school education (Lumina Foundation, 2018). To date, approximately 51.4% of Americans hold some sort of credential beyond high school. These credentials include certifications, associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees. This number falls to 43.2% for all races when considering only degrees earned. When race and ethnicity are considered, the numbers vary greatly. In 2018, 47.9% of White Americans earned a degree while that number fell to 31.6% for Black Americans, 24.6% for Native Americans, and 24.5% for Hispanic Americans (Lumina

Foundation, 2018). Currently, opportunities for career success in the United States most often depend on learning that occurs after high school, while such learning generally depends on a student's academic achievements while in high school.

Educational opportunity for minority students is essential in reducing both economic and social inequalities within the United States. The current, steady increase in the number of minority students enrolled in colleges suggests that high schools are giving priority to efforts designed to prepare all students for a post-secondary education (AVID, 2020). However, high attrition rates for minority students overshadow these successes (Cowan) discourse is a unique subset of the English language that may not be familiar to minority students (White & Ali-Khan, 2013). The researchers in this study suggest that secondary educators should work with these students to teach them strategies related to using hidden rules or code switching to help with the transition to academic discourse. The research suggests that educators who help students implement the strategies described above will help students who have culturally based linguistic differences improve their academic performance. As well, such instruction is likely to assist minority students gain acceptance among their peers, thus making them better prepared and ultimately more successful with their post-secondary education.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2014), the largest national assessment of student progress, there is a consistent, significant gap in proficiency levels among minority students. Data indicate that in 2013, 47% of White students achieved at or above proficient levels in reading in their senior year. That number fell to 16% for Black students, 23% for Hispanic students, and 26% for American Indian Alaskan Natives (Pitre, 2014). Unfortunately, these statistics have remained stagnant over the years despite the best efforts of programs created for the sole purpose of closing the achievement gap between minority students

and their white counterparts. Working to address achievement issues faced by low income, minority students is vital in ensuring that all students are provided the same opportunity to pursue a quality post-secondary education. Participation in college preparatory programs has contributed to the academic achievement and success of minority students as they pursue a college education and eventually apply their talents and skills in the workforce.

Reasons for Low Academic Achievement

Lack of student motivation can lead to disengagement in school which can have a significant, negative impact on student achievement. Learning how to motivate students to achieve at high levels academically can be very challenging since there are so many different motivating factors for students. For example, differences in achievement motivation can relate to cultural expectations. Different cultures and ethnic groups can differ vastly in matters such as where individuals choose to spend their motivated energy because of what they value. For example, individuals in some ethnic groups may choose to value athletics over academics, thus spending more time and energy in the athletic setting rather than in the classroom. When considering values of students from different ethnic groups through a peer nomination process, Urdan and Bruchmann (2018) concluded that girls and white boys admired and respected high-achieving boys but minority boys least admired high-achieving boys. And while students of all ethnic and cultural groups self-report that they value academic achievement, the peer-report suggested quite the opposite finding (Urdan & Bruchman). With such a wide range of motivating factors to consider, it becomes more challenging for teachers to make the content of their instruction engaging and relatable for their students.

There are many contributing factors to the under-representation of minority students pursuing a post-secondary education. According to Perna and Titus (2005), one of the major

reasons for the under representation of minority students is the low level of education of many minority parents. Perna and Titus report that students who have parents who volunteer and initiate contact with the school regarding academic issues were more likely to attend a two-year or four-year college. In contrast, the researchers found that students of low socioeconomic status who were preparing for college reported rarely receiving help from an adult with their preparation. Perna and Titus explain that this occurs not because low-income first-generation parents do not want their children to go to college, but that they simply lack the knowledge regarding how to offer guidance.

Over the past 20 years there have been numerous pieces of legislation from the federal government and local school systems designed to close the achievement gap for minority and economically disadvantaged students. In 2001, the George W. Bush Administration adopted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which was an update of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1965 created by the Lyndon Johnson Administration. NCLB was the first education-related law to issue consequences to the nation's public schools based on standardized test scores. The purpose of the act was to create more accountability for schools regarding academic improvement and reduction of achievement gaps (Adler-Green, 2009). Performance data were disaggregated by socio economic status as well as ethnicity. In 2009 the Barack Obama Administration created the Race to the Top grant for states that focused on reform strategies designed to increase achievement of all students and close the gap in student achievement among groups of students. The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) was put into effect by the Obama Administration and now replaces NCLB (Adler-Green, 2009). This act requires that schools provide a quality education for all students including students receiving special education services and those with limited English language skills. Under ESSA, states

can decide on an education plan and parents are given an opportunity to provide input as well. (Lumina Foundation, 2018). As the demographics of the United States continue to evolve, so do the laws that govern education of the nation's students, thus increasing accountability for school systems.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

When teachers use culturally responsive teaching methods, they are demonstrating to their students that they value their students' culture, including the unique features, or differences, that characterize their culture. Teachers then use these differences as a resource to help children of color become as successful as their white counterparts (Schmeichel, 2012). Acknowledging cultural differences in education and delivering instruction in order to meet the needs of these groups is a driving force in the educational plans established by states under ESSA. Many of the curriculums being taught in classrooms around the world are now more intentional with efforts to include opportunities for teachers to make meaningful connections between what the students are learning in school and their culture and life experiences. Making these connections supports students with academic skill development along with helping them recognize the relevance between what they are learning in school and their daily lives. According to a study conducted by Byrd (2016) the first step in implementing culturally responsive teaching is for teachers to get to know their students' backgrounds and use what they learn to help personalize instruction. By acknowledging a student's culture, teachers build better relationships and encourage students to see value in school.

In 2013, educational author and researcher Hammond created the Ready for Rigor framework for educators to help promote authentic engagement for diverse learners. The goal of the framework is to support teachers as they make learning more comprehensible for students. It

emphasizes ways in which educators can help their students use their natural, culturally grounded resources. Hammond's framework believes that when connections are made to student's cultural experiences, both past and present, they can learn new content by using familiarities in their life (Johnson-Smith, 2020). The framework brings into focus the connection between and among culture, schooling, and how dynamics such as race, class, and language shape the educational experiences of both students of color and their non-minority peers. Hammond's framework has teachers tap into students' culture to promote academic growth and achievement. The framework follows the four interdependent practices of culturally responsive teaching: awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, and community building. When teachers respect and embrace the cultural differences of their students, they are demonstrating that they believe that all students are capable at learning at high levels thus promoting high academic achievement.

When teachers take the time to get to know the cultural backgrounds of their students, it allows them to personalize their instruction and encourage students to value school. Byrd (2016) describes a study that examined the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching from the students' perspective. Byrd explained that these methods had a positive impact on students' academic achievement. Students in the study indicated that when teachers use real-life examples to attempt to connect with their student's interests, the students are more engaged and feel a stronger connection to their school. Byrd further suggested that when teachers incorporate relationship building into their classrooms there are improved outcomes for students. Incorporating relationship or team building activities into a classroom promotes trust and requires collaboration amongst students, thereby giving students mutual ownership in the expectations for learning and again leading to improved academic achievement.

As schools in the United States become increasingly more diverse both culturally and linguistically, educators must be prepared to meet the educational needs of the ever-changing student populations in their classrooms. Children learn and develop within cultural, linguistic, familial, and community context (Minkos et al., 2017). There are many methods used by educators to ensure that they are relating to their students with some found to be more effective than others. Ultimately, if teachers want to make the learning in their classroom relevant, they need to ensure that they know their students. Minkos et al., explain that one of the most effective ways to learn about students is to encourage parent involvement. Building relationships with families can be very useful in increasing student performance. Families can provide educators with important information regarding a child's strengths and challenges, educational history, exposure to language, and even provide insight into culturally appropriate behaviors. Once teachers know about a student's culture, they can make cultural connections with their students. Encouraging students to share information about their ethnic background during class discussions fosters trusting relationships between students and their peers, thus creating a culture of acceptance.

Another way that educators can ensure that they are being culturally responsive is by creating meaningful learning experiences for their students. Cruz (2020) explains that linking the learning that is taking place to real-life experiences helps make the learning more relatable while promoting critical thinking. Taking a student-centered approach in the classroom also creates more meaningful learning. When students are involved in designing their learning experience, they have a better grasp on the goal of the lesson.

Restorative practices offer an effective approach to help eliminate the racial discipline gap (Gregory et al., 2016). The goal of restorative practices is to resolve disagreements by

requiring the students to take ownership for their actions, thus reducing discipline referrals. Participating in restorative practices helps promote healthy student teacher relationships which then can help improve student achievement.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), 2020, is a college preparatory program for low-income average performing students who have the potential to achieve at higher levels with additional support. Instruction in the AVID classroom is centered around writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading. The program encourages students to take control of their own learning while providing support and guidance along the way. AVID uses relational capacity to create a classroom of inclusion, acceptance, and support from both teachers and peers alike (AVID). Relational capacity refers to the degree of trust and level of safety between members of a group. In a classroom, this specifically refers to the level of trust between teacher and student as well student to student. The AVID program incorporates culturally responsive teaching to help teachers relate to their students and promote high academic achievement.

Summary

Culturally responsive teaching is a model for teachers to use when designing and implementing instruction in their classrooms. Through culturally responsive teaching, students are likely to experience improvement in their academic performance, thus better preparing them for success in college. Preparing students for college is a major challenge for educators, but it is one that must be mastered. Students need to be prepared for positive opportunities after high school to be productive members of society.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This quasi-experimental study examined whether the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program's use of culturally responsive teaching methods was effective in improving the achievement of grade seven middle school students. AVID is a rigorous program that encourages students to think critically, ask questions, and problem-solve. AVID students take the most rigorous courses appropriate for preparing them to be college and career ready upon graduating high school (AVID, 2021).

The independent variable in this study was whether or not students were enrolled in the AVID program. AVID was provided for one group for one and a half years. The other group did not participate in AVID during this time period. The dependent variable for the study was the students' success as measured by their score on the second quarter Anne Arundel County Public Schools' English Language Arts Quarterly Assessment (ELAQA).

Participants

This study used a convenience sample of 39 seventh grade students from the 2020-2021 school year. Seventeen of the students were a part of the AVID program, and the other 22 students were not enrolled in the AVID program. Out of the 17 AVID students selected, nine were female and eight were male between the ages of 12 and 13. Of the non-AVID students, there were 10 females and 12 males, also between the ages of 12 and 13. All students came from similar demographic backgrounds as many students in the area are from families of lower socioeconomic status. Two students, one AVID and one non-AVID, have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

Instrument

The English Language Arts Quarterly Assessment (ELA QA) was developed by Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Maryland, to evaluate student understanding of concepts covered during the second marking period of their enrollment in seventh grade English Language Arts (ELA). The assessment for the 2020-2021 school year was modified due to the decrease in instructional time from five hours to two hours per week during virtual instruction. Due to decreased instructional time, the school system revised the curriculum to accommodate the time constraints. The modification for the assessment included the removal of the written portion of the quarterly assessment. Since the quarterly assessment included only selected response questions, the teachers used a program called Performance Matters to score each assessment. The quarterly assessment provided a score out of 100. Students who received a score at or above 70 demonstrated mastery of the content.

The ELA Grade Seven Quarter Two Quarterly Assessment consisted of 13 multiple choice questions and one student response essay. Each question was based upon College and Career Readiness Standards developed by the state of Maryland. The standards for ELA on the assessment included a) citing several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis, b) determining theme or central idea, c) analyzing elements of a story, d) determining the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, and e) introducing and supporting claims with textual support and reasoning (MSDE, 2021).

Procedure

Participants in the experimental group, those students enrolled in AVID, all had been enrolled in the AVID program since they were in sixth grade. The students in the non- AVID group were enrolled in their school's standard Language Arts and Mathematics courses. The

students in the AVID group were recruited for the AVID program as fifth graders. The fifth-grade teachers recommended students for the program based on a set of criteria. These students were then interviewed by the middle school AVID site coordinator in the spring of their fifth-grade year to determine whether they were appropriate candidates for AVID. Upon entering the AVID program as sixth graders, the accepted students were enrolled in an elective class that teaches the AVID curriculum. The AVID curriculum-incorporates Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading (WICOR) into daily instruction. In addition, the AVID course uses Relational Capacity to help the teachers and students relate to and trust one another despite cultural and linguistical differences. This component of the program is designed to help develop a level of trust and ownership among the students. Students in the AVID program were taught the importance of self-advocacy by utilizing time management, self-reflection, and organizational strategies (AVID, 2021). Lastly, AVID students were required to participate in weekly tutorial sessions. These sessions were led by college aged tutors trained to facilitate groups of students using inquiry and higher-level thinking to help one another grapple with difficult concepts.

Both groups of students took the ELA quarterly assessment with their seventh grade ELA teacher during their regularly scheduled class time. The school system provided a two-week window for the teachers to administer the assessment at the end of second quarter. The ELA teachers were able to choose a date within the given window to administer the test with their classes. The assessment took one class period which was approximately 45 minutes.

CHAPTER IV

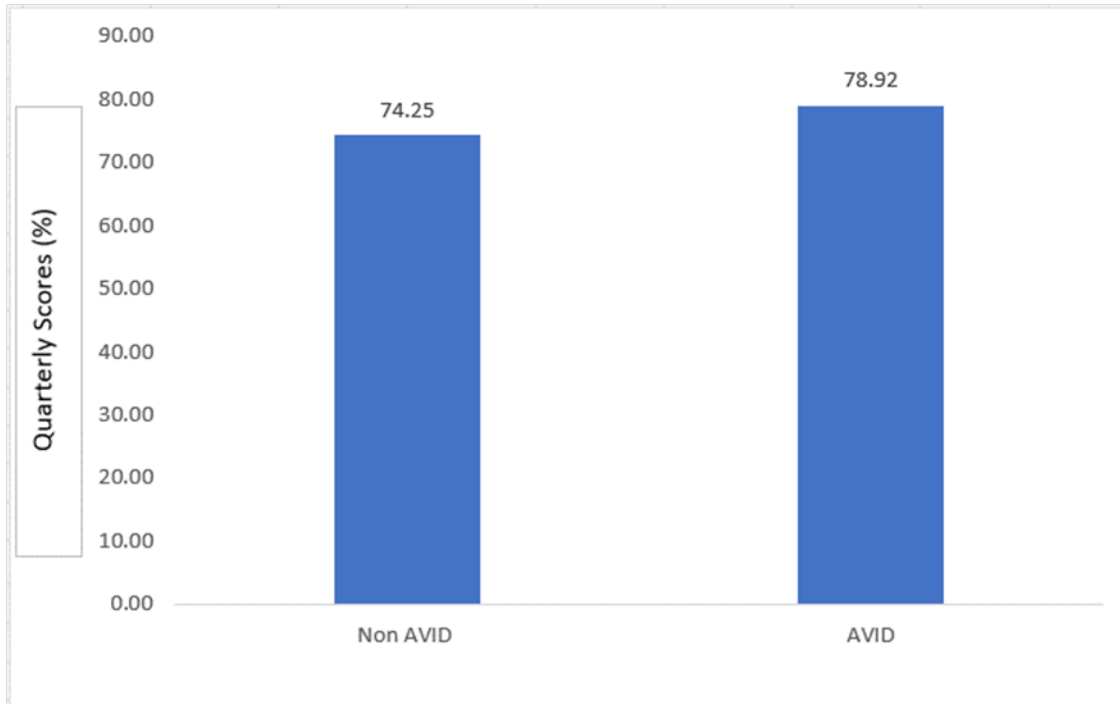
RESULTS

The null hypothesis for this study was that there would be no significant differences between the achievement of seventh grade AVID students as compared to the achievement of a control group of similar students on the second quarter English Language Arts (ELA) Quarterly Assessment. An independent *t*-test was run to determine whether there were significant differences in the ELA assessment scores between the AVID students and the non-AVID students.

The predominant focus of this study was to determine whether or not there was an achievement difference in ELA assessment scores between all students in each group. Figure one displays the ELA scores of the AVID and non-AVID groups. An independent groups *t* test revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in the ELA Quarterly Assessment between the AVID students ($M = 78.92, SD = 14.48, n = 17$), as compared to the non-AVID students ($M = 74.25, SD = 19.21, n = 22$), with weak effect size, $t(37) = .83, p > .05, d = .27$.

Figure 1

Mean Quarterly Scores of AVID & non-AVID Students



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program's use of culturally responsive teaching methods on the achievement of grade seven middle school students. The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant differences between the achievement of seventh grade AVID students and a control group of similar students on the second quarter English Language Arts Quarterly Assessment.

Implications

In this study, a small purposive sample was used which implies that the results may be subject to bias by the researcher. The study may indicate that there is a connection between culturally responsive teaching and student achievement, but it would require further research using a larger sample size such as including students from the entire AVID program. The larger the sample, the more likely the results would be representative of the entire population.

Theoretical Consequences

The AVID program is based on the premise that "average" students whose parents did not attend college and who do not consider themselves as a student who is college bound will be more likely to attend college and be successful when they are provided appropriate academic and social supports in middle and high school. Even though the results from this study did not reveal a significant difference in the achievement of AVID and non-AVID students, there is evidence that the AVID program's use of culturally responsive teaching methods does make a difference in the achievement of students enrolled in the program.

In this study, a middle school AVID teacher considered her own seventh grade students who had been in the AVID program for two years, comparing their achievement to that of non-AVID seventh grade students to learn if there were differences in achievement of the two groups on a school system administered Language Arts Quarterly Assessment. The hypothesis that student achievement would improve as a result of participation in the AVID programs was not supported. It is difficult to determine if AVID support leads to improved student achievement scores with a sample size as small as the one that was included in this study.

Threats to Validity

Due to the limitations of this study, there are several threats to its' validity. First, the researcher examined student achievement only on the grade seven Language Arts Quarterly Assessment. Second, the researcher considered just student academic performance, and while this is an important consideration, there are many other social factors that could have been analyzed to determine whether AVID's teaching methods impact student performance. Lastly, this study used a Causal Comparative Methodology, therefore meaning that the researcher had no control over the instructional delivery because the study had already occurred. Furthermore, two major weaknesses of the current study were that there was a lack of randomization and the inability to manipulate the independent variable. Other threats to the internal validity of this study may have included testing threats, history, and maturation. Threats to external validity consist of factors related to program implementation from one school to another. This includes teacher adaptations to curriculum, AVID teacher consistency, and school-wide use of AVID methodologies by AVID trained educators in the school.

Success of an AVID program can differ vastly from one school to another and one teacher to another. AVID teachers have flexibility in the AVID classroom with the curriculum

that they are implementing, with teachers choosing to spend more time on some topics than others. Furthermore, during the year that this study was conducted, the students attended school virtually due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Due to constraints with the virtual schedule, the researcher only had the AVID students in class once a week compared to two to three days in a normal school year.

Connections to Previous Studies/Existing Literature

A similar study conducted by researchers at the University of Texas (Huerta, Watt, Butcher, 2013) examined the impact AVID instruction in middle school has on middle school course rigor and students' high school performance and college readiness. This study compared the achievement of students who were enrolled in the AVID program in middle and high school to that of students who were enrolled in AVID only during high school. The Huerta, Watt, and Butcher study also analyzed the changes in the middle school course rigor for schools implementing the AVID program. The researchers found that implementation of the AVID college readiness system at the middle school level was beneficial in two distinct ways. The first benefit was that when AVID was implemented, the number of rigorous courses offered was expanded. Second, the longer that the student was engaged in college preparation activities, specifically AVID, the more prepared that the student was for high school rigor and college.

Implications for Future Research

The specific purpose of this study was to examine the impact that AVID enrollment had on student performance on an English Language Arts Quarterly Assessment to determine whether the AVID program's use of culturally responsive teaching methods assisted with students' understanding and mastery of academic concepts. Further research is required to determine whether there is a connection between AVID program enrollment and student

performance. This research should include a larger sample size, a different implementation strategy (non-virtual learning vs virtual learning), additional instructional days, and a different assessment.

The AVID website contains substantial research on this topic as well as a plethora of resources for teachers to use with their students regardless of the student's enrollment in the AVID course. It is recommended that teachers implement specific AVID strategies and culturally responsive teaching methods to help meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms.

Conclusions/Summary

Results from this study revealed that there was no significant difference in students' achievement scores on an English Language Arts Quarterly Assessment for Quarter Two between grade seven AVID students as compared to a group of grade seven non-AVID students. However, it also can be concluded that a growing body of research is being compiled that offers evidence of the positive impact of AVID program enrollment on student achievement. It can be concluded that AVID and culturally responsive teaching methods will continue to be a growing topic of much interest and focus as it is implemented within school systems.

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