

The long-term impacts of a high school elective for AVID learners

Can a rigorous high school support and motivation program release the untapped potential of average students? This question was put to the test in the BC AVID Pilot Project.

AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. The program involves a student's commitment to enrol in AVID elective courses in each year of high school, as well as the most rigorous academic courses available at the school. The overarching goal is to increase the proportion of formerly middle-achieving students who go on to postsecondary studies.

BC AVID employed an experimental design to test the impacts of the program on students entering grade nine. The students were randomly assigned to a program group who were offered the AVID elective, a control group who did not receive the offer or a waitlist group who could enrol in AVID if spaces were available. The original study followed each group of students for six years.

[Earlier reports](#) found that offering eligible BC students a place in the AVID class improved their high school engagement, rigorous course taking and standardized test results, but had no immediate impact on their graduation or postsecondary enrollment rates soon after high school.

The [newly released follow-up report](#) makes use of BC university and community college data to extend the study period to 10 years — sufficient time for most of the students to complete undergraduates studies. It found that the impacts of offering BC AVID on university or community college enrolment, persistence, and graduation were too small to be statistically significant over the ten years following the project start.

Focusing only on those students who completed four years of the AVID elective — a non-random subgroup of the original program group — enrolment in a university or community college program increased by 9.8 percentage points and postsecondary continuation for two or more years by 8.2 percentage points compared to estimated outcomes for the control group (suitably re-weighted to match the program sub-group). Impacts also differed according to 7th grade numeracy and literacy scores but not in a consistent manner.

The AVID program features 11 core essentials as defined by the AVID Center, a US non-profit that developed the program and certifies its implementation in participating school boards (<http://www.avid.org>). While core essentials remain fixed, the implementation of the program may vary somewhat across jurisdictions. BC AVID's implementation reflected differences in the province's secondary and postsecondary educations systems compared to US counterparts. More research on the US system is available on the AVID Center website (<http://www.avid.org/research.ashx>).

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