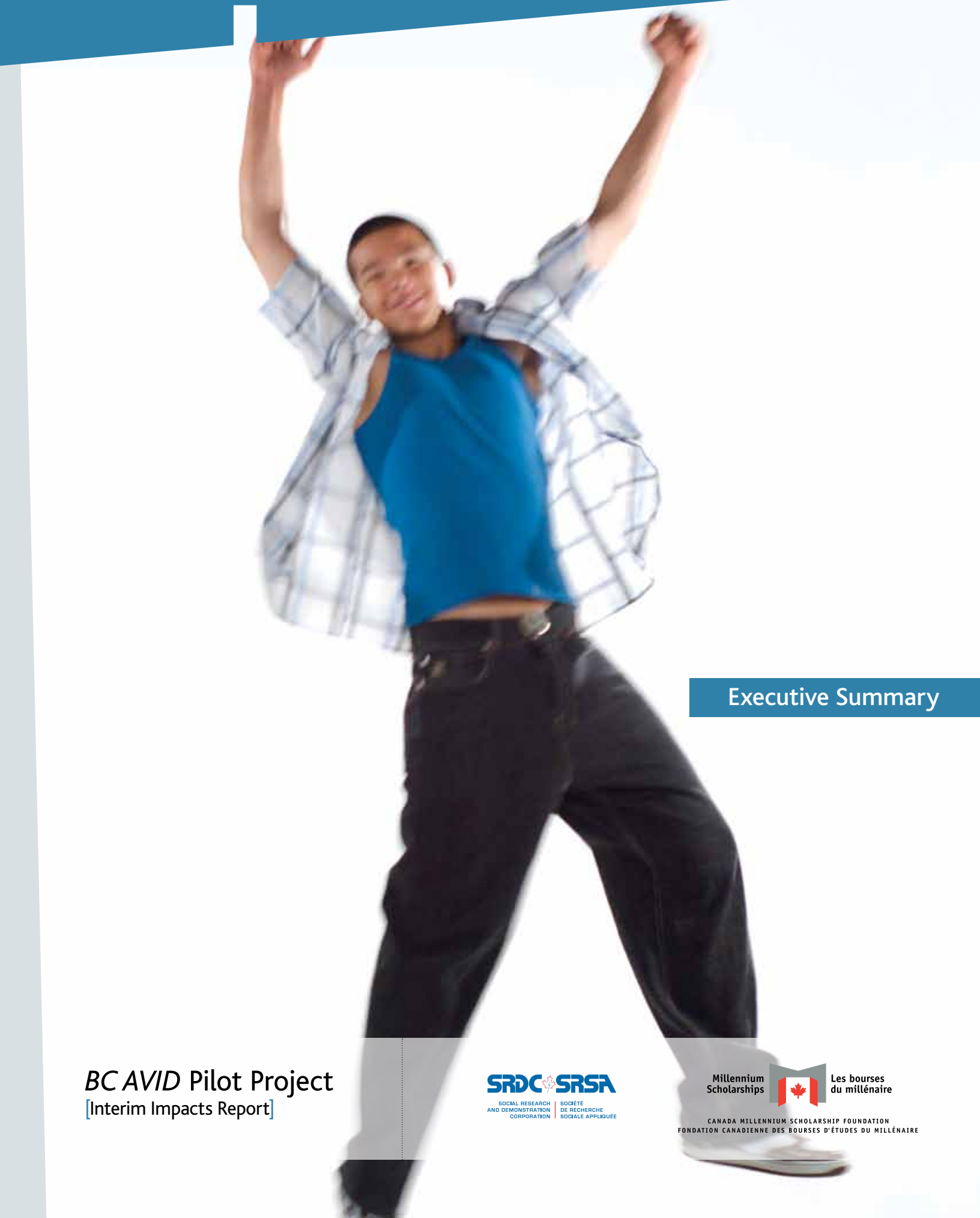

Executive Summary

BC AVID Pilot Project
[Interim Impacts Report]

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Interim Impacts Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report describes the interim results of the BC AVID Pilot Project, which tests a new way to tackle one of the important educational challenges Canada faces in meeting the needs of today's knowledge-based economy: engaging enough young people in post-secondary education.[1] Post-secondary education plays an increasingly important role in helping individuals attain social and economic success. Promotion of high school students' access to post-secondary education is a major goal of both federal and provincial governments, yet not all students make the transition. Finnie and Mueller (2008) found less than two-thirds of Canadian students aged 15 years in 2000 had entered post-secondary education by age 19, and in British Columbia just half of high school students entered the province's post-secondary system in the year following their high school graduation (BC Ministry of Education, 2006).

To help find ways to increase post-secondary access, the BC AVID Pilot Project was established in 2003 as a partnership between the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (the Foundation) and the British Columbia Ministry of Education (the Ministry). It is one of several experiments established by the Foundation with the goal of identifying new policies and programs that could increase young people's participation in post-secondary education. The project was developed to test one approach—a version of the U.S. Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program—that may alleviate possible academic barriers that students face in furthering their education.

For example, one in twelve students who do not attend post-secondary education cite low marks as their main reason (Foley, 2001). The AVID program aims to improve access to post-secondary education for "students academically in the middle" by supporting them to engage in more rigorous coursework and improve their academic achievement. Other common barriers such as financial barriers and career indecision are the focus of different experiments (Smith Fowler *et al.*, 2009).

The project is not complete, but results are available on interim impacts observed up to the point when students completed Grade 11. Students offered AVID in British Columbia high schools took more difficult courses than were chosen by equivalent students not offered the program. By Grade 11, they were achieving grades in those more difficult courses at or above the level they would have normally achieved in less-demanding courses. Despite several implementation challenges, the students experienced significantly more exposure to, and adopted more often, the learning strategies and techniques promoted by the AVID program, including tutorials, note taking, and higher order questioning. These results are convincing because the program was tested using a rigorous randomized trial in 14 different school sites across the province. The project's final report, due in 2012, will tell a more complete story as students' outcomes are tracked to graduation and post-secondary enrolment and will include a benefit-cost analysis for the program.

1 This is the second report from the BC AVID Pilot Project. *The Early Implementation Report* was published in 2008 (Dunn *et al.*, 2008) and the third and final report is due in late 2012.

What Is AVID?

AVID, an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination, is an American program that attempts to improve post-secondary access for "students academically in the middle" (Dunn *et al.*, 2008, p. 2). The basic idea behind AVID is to change the high school experience of those students believed to have as-yet-untapped potential to succeed in post-secondary education by increasing the rigour of their coursework and providing, in the context of an elective class, several different kinds of support for their learning. The selected students are expected to commit to full enrolment in the AVID elective class (in the case of BC AVID that spans four years in high school) and also to enrol in the most rigorous courses in their school.[2] The U.S. non-profit AVID Center develops the AVID curriculum, trains educators to deliver the program, and certifies sites on their delivery of AVID. The AVID elective class is the primary vehicle for the delivery of these supports, often called AVID strategies or techniques. The elective class is supposed to meet daily during the regular school day and offers a program of instruction in academic "survival skills." The course is structured into three main components: the curriculum class, tutorials, and motivational activities.

The curriculum class teaches the students how to study, read for content, take notes, work collaboratively, and manage time. Tutorials are led ideally by tutors who are currently post-secondary students. Tutors are trained to use skilful questioning to raise students' understanding of their course work. AVID students' elective class time is devoted 40 per cent to curriculum class activities, 40 per cent to tutorials, and 20 per cent to motivational activities. This last category includes guest speakers, team-building activities, and field trips to post-secondary campuses, all intended to promote the idea that post-secondary study is attainable. These are all part of the ideal vision of AVID that may or may not exist in most implementations of the program.[3]

Text Box 1: Hypotheses About How AVID Achieves Its Effects

The BC AVID Pilot Project began by hypothesizing four different theoretical mechanisms through which participation in the AVID elective might affect students' preparedness for post-secondary enrolment (Dunn *et al.*, 2008). These four mechanisms are not mutually exclusive.

- **AVID as an academic upgrading program:** AVID assumes that the middle-achieving students who volunteer for AVID lack certain academic skills that would allow them to be better prepared for post-secondary education. Since the AVID curriculum involves instruction in well-known study skills, the elective class could be a powerful path through which AVID positively affects students.

- **AVID as an "untracking" program:** To the extent that "tracking"—the practice of assigning students to different courses based on an assessment of their academic ability—is in operation, the AVID elective may provide academic support that allows AVID students who are newly enrolled in more advanced high school courses to catch up with their university-bound peers. Since students of average achievement would not usually be assigned to the university-bound "track," the "untracking" (or "retracking") process of AVID may affect AVID students' access to post-secondary education. This interpretation was promoted in an evaluation of AVID by Mehan *et al.* (1996). Note that tracking is less common in Canada than it is in the United States and, consequently, there is less scope for AVID to "untrack" students in British Columbia.

- **AVID as a mentoring program:** AVID may work by focusing attention on middle-achieving students, connecting them through an active support network to the school's services, and helping them to better coordinate their paths through high school. The AVID elective teacher may play the role of an adult mentor for the students. A committed AVID teacher and site team may thus affect student achievement.

- **AVID as a peer group program:** Students may form close bonds not only with the AVID elective teacher but also with their fellow AVID students because of their active and frequent participation in the AVID elective class. This may create a peer group of students who have similar achievement experiences and expectations. The mutual support and validation provided by the peer group could have a positive effect on the success of AVID students.

Evidence to support the first three of these four hypothesized mechanisms is reported in the text. Peer group effects are explored in survey data collected during Grade 12 and so do not appear in the current report.

2 Note that implementing AVID as a four-year program starting in Grade 9 represents a particular version of AVID since some AVID programs start earlier and some later than Grade 9.
3 This ideal vision of AVID is the principal standard against which BC AVID, as implemented, will be compared over the period covered by this report.

The main features of AVID are summarized in 11 AVID "Essentials" developed by the AVID Center and provided to all BC AVID Pilot Project sites. The Essentials function as a general blueprint that all AVID programs should follow. Each is briefly described below:

- **Resources:** The school or district must identify resources to meet program costs, agree to implement AVID Program Implementation Essentials, and work toward participation in annual AVID certification.[4] Commitment to ongoing participation in AVID staff development is also required. The staff trained should include an AVID district director, school administrator, one or more teachers of the AVID elective class, a school-based coordinator of the AVID program, other subject area teachers, and one or more counsellors. Among these staff responsible for implementation of the program, those based at each AVID school constitute the *AVID school site team*.

- **School site team:** The AVID school site team should be active and collaborate on issues of student access to, and success in, rigorous university preparation courses.

- **Selection:** AVID student selection must focus on students in the middle (with a GPA of 2.0 to 3.5 as one indicator), who have untapped academic potential and would benefit from AVID support to improve their achievement and post-secondary preparation.

- **Full implementation:** The school must be committed to full implementation of the AVID Program, with the AVID elective class available within the regular academic school day.

- **Rigour:** AVID students must enrol in a rigorous course of study that will enable them to meet requirements for post-secondary enrolment.

- **Data:** AVID schools/districts must provide program implementation and student progress data. These data will be monitored through the AVID Data System, with results analyzed to inform the AVID certification process.

- **Participation:** AVID program participants, both students and staff, must choose to participate.

- **Writing:** A strong, relevant writing curriculum must provide the basis for instruction in the AVID elective class.

- **Inquiry:** Inquiry must be used as a basis for instruction in the AVID classroom.

- **Collaboration:** Collaboration must be used as a basis for instruction in the AVID classroom.

- **Tutorials:** A sufficient number of trained tutors must be available in the AVID class to facilitate student access to a rigorous curriculum.

The importance of providing each of the Essentials is incorporated into the AVID professional development and guides to its implementation, as well as into agreements between the BC Ministry of Education and the school districts, and the Pilot Project's Operations Manual, which was issued to sites that took part in the BC AVID Pilot Project. In principle, the Essentials form a coherent whole that should not be adopted piecemeal. They include numerous non-teaching tasks: recruiting and selecting students; organizing motivational activities inside and outside school; recruiting, training, and coordinating the activities of AVID tutors; and ensuring that AVID students have support as they enrol in rigorous high school courses, tackle the course work in those classes, and navigate the post-secondary application and financial aid systems.

How Does the BC AVID Pilot Project Test the AVID Program?

Although AVID began in 1980 and is now delivered in nearly 4,500 schools worldwide, the BC AVID Pilot Project is the first large-scale evaluation of the AVID program using a rigorous random assignment design. This approach was chosen to avoid the many challenges that non-experimental evaluations of educational programs face, such as their weakness in separating outcomes due to participant selection from outcomes of the program. Participant selection is a fundamental feature of AVID (1 of the 11 AVID Essentials), which means that drawing conclusions from non-randomized evaluations of AVID is very risky. The Foundation has funded the implementation and evaluation of the AVID program at 18 pilot sites in British Columbia as a four-year program for up to two consecutive cohorts of students in grades 9–12.

4 Since 1996, the AVID Center has orchestrated an annual certification process to recognize the implementation level of the AVID program that sites have achieved. To use the AVID curriculum, trade name, trademark, and logo, each site must agree to annual participation in the online certification process.

The project has involved the recruitment of 1,522 students identified as eligible for the program in 2005 and 2006, when they were in Grade 8. At 14 of these sites, the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) randomly assigned the eligible students into program, waitlist, and comparison groups. Those assigned to the program group were offered a place in the AVID elective class; those assigned to the comparison group were not offered a place in the AVID class and therefore had to choose a different high school elective. The random assignment ensures that the average characteristics of the groups offered AVID and not offered AVID are identical at the program outset. Any subsequently emerging differences between the groups can be attributed to the offer of the program, eliminating competing explanations (like student selection). SRDC is collecting data from multiple sources on both groups for six years to determine the program's impacts on secondary and post-secondary outcomes. At four smaller "case study" sites, local educators assigned eligible students to program and waitlist groups. SRDC is tracking the implementation of the program at these sites without calculating impacts.

What Difference Did AVID Make...

Comparisons of the experience of those assigned to the program group with those assigned to the comparison group allow the estimation of the impact of the *offer* of BC AVID. One AVID Essential requires that the program be voluntary, so not all students will take up the offer and not all who take up the offer will stay in the class for four years. In fact, half of all the students assigned to BC AVID had left the elective class by the end of Grade 11. Given the policy aim to learn what works to change post-secondary outcomes for "middle-achieving" students and the delivery approach of offering AVID as a voluntary program in high schools, the evaluation of BC AVID was designed to measure the effect of *offering* a place in the AVID elective to AVID-eligible students. All experimental impacts included in this report are thus impacts of the *offer* of BC AVID and *do not* represent the impact of being in BC AVID for four years.

...to Students' Educational Experiences?

Although schools did not comprehensively and consistently implement all program features (see later discussion on how AVID was implemented in BC), program group members did report high levels of exposure to AVID techniques. The project's survey of Grade 11 students' experience of educational strategies and techniques at the 18 participating AVID schools and at 7 otherwise similar non-AVID schools revealed that those techniques associated with AVID were concentrated among the project's program group. Figure ES1 shows that 64 per cent of the program group reported frequent exposure to 8 or more of the 17 techniques commonly associated with AVID.[5] Less than 3 per cent of the comparison group reported similar exposure, yielding an impact on this level of exposure arising from the offer of AVID of just over 61 percentage points. On average, program group members had frequent exposure to approximately 9 of these techniques, while comparison group exposure was limited to an average of 3. This substantial impact or "treatment differential" generated by the offer of AVID is important because it allows the program to demonstrate its potential impact, whether small or large, on the current and future educational outcomes of the program group. Figure ES2 shows the impacts of offering AVID on Grade 11 students' reports of instruction in, and use of, several *specific* strategies and techniques used in AVID. These impacts are all calculated by subtracting the proportion of the comparison group reporting exposure to a technique from the proportion of the program group reporting this exposure.

5 Since the beginning of Grade 9, exposure to the 17 AVID strategies is counted for Figure ES1 as follows: (1) attending the AVID elective class often or very often; (2) doing collaborative work all together in small groups often or very often; (3) attending tutorials often or very often; (4) being taught Cornell Notes often or very often; (5) being taught Costa's Levels of Questions often or very often; (6) being expected to bring questions to tutorials often or very often; (7) working in small groups to help each other in tutorials often or very often; (8) writing Learning Logs often or very often; (9) putting notes in a single binder often or very often; (10) being graded on binders and how they were organized often or very often; (11) having guest speakers often or very often; (12) putting important dates in a calendar or planner often or very often; (13) doing Socratic Seminars three or more times; (14) writing long-term plans three or more times; (15) having teachers advise the class to take challenging courses three or more times; (16) visiting post-secondary institutions two or more times; and (17) taking part in Philosophical Chairs at least once.

Figure ES1: Frequent Experience of 17 AVID Strategies or Techniques During Grades 9 Through 11 (Grade 11 Survey Recall)

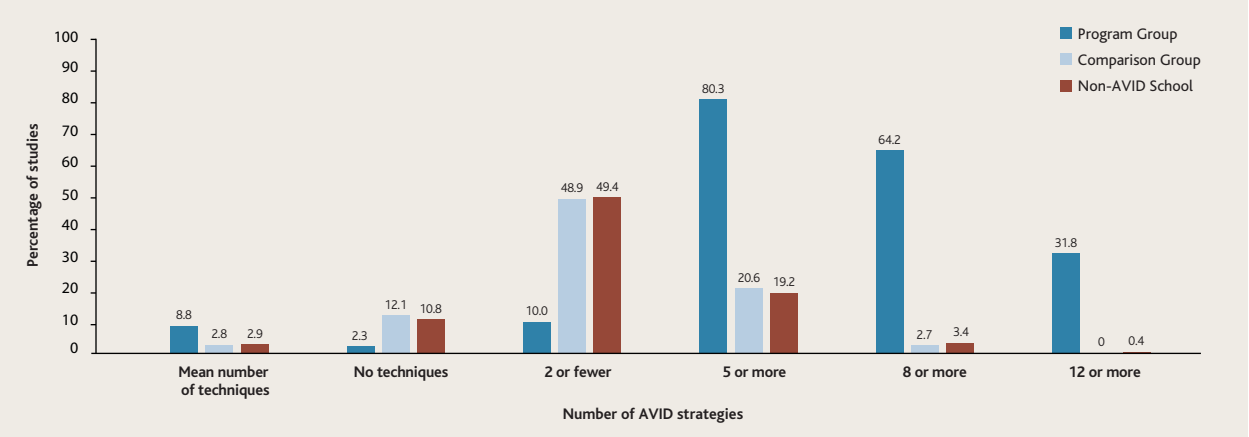
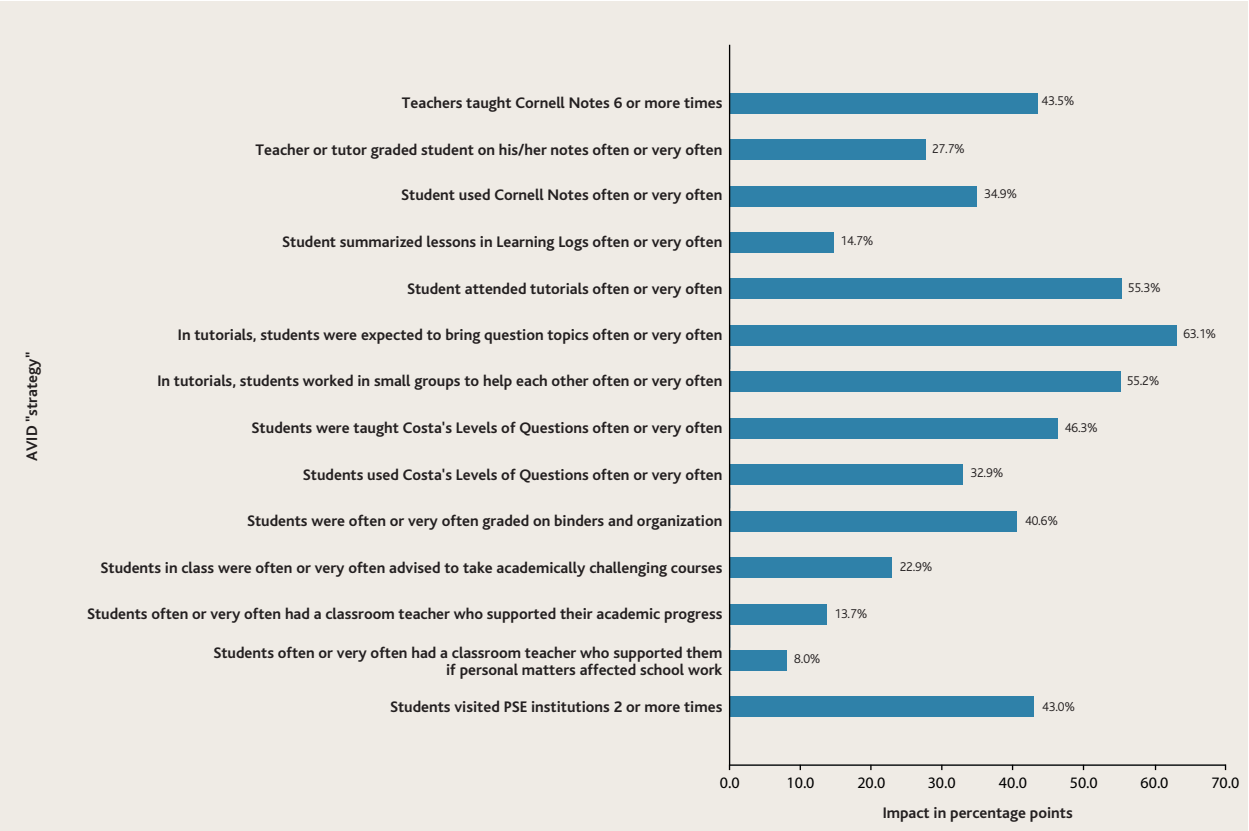


Figure ES2: Impacts on Program Group's Experience of AVID Strategies and Techniques by Grade 11



There were significant impacts on students' frequent use of Costa's Levels of Questions, Cornell Notes, and Learning Logs. Program group students were significantly more likely to report frequent support from a classroom teacher for their academic progress and for personal matters that could affect their school work. These impacts provide some evidence to support the first and third of the four hypothesized mechanisms by which AVID may increase post-secondary access (academic skills upgrading and mentoring) presented in Text Box 1.

There was exposure to some AVID techniques among the comparison group; however, as shown in Figure ES1 this was, for the most part, similar to that reported by students at non-AVID schools. Because many AVID techniques are educational "best practices" they are in common use outside of AVID programs. The similarity in exposure between the BC AVID comparison group and students in non-AVID schools implies that the exposure to AVID techniques among comparison group members was likely due to the pre-existing use of some AVID techniques in BC high schools rather than due to spillover of the techniques outside the AVID elective class caused by the project itself.

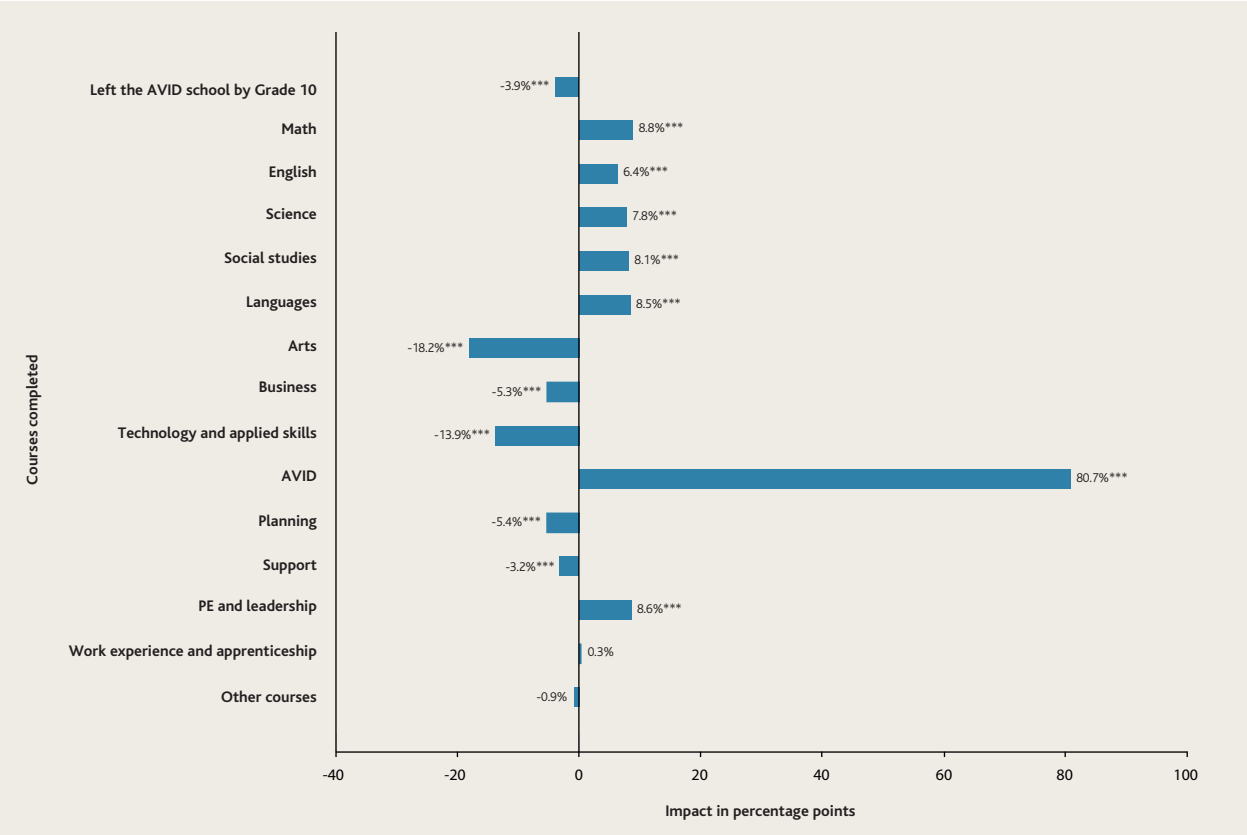
...to Students' Course Choices and Achievement?

The program offer brought about significant changes in the courses students took, in the examinations they sat, and the marks they received. The program offer also led to more students staying in the school where AVID was offered. Because comparison group students were more likely to leave the AVID school, they were more often missing in some of the data on course choices and marks. Thus all the charts for which their departures affected data availability include this impact of the offer of AVID on retention within the AVID school. The implied loss of observation of their outcomes needs to be considered when assessing the magnitude of reported impacts.

In Grade 9, program group students took the AVID elective class in lieu of other elective courses, primarily in fine arts and technology and applied skills. Enrolment in fine arts courses by AVID program group students decreased by 18 percentage points and in technology and applied skills courses by 14 percentage points (Figure ES3).

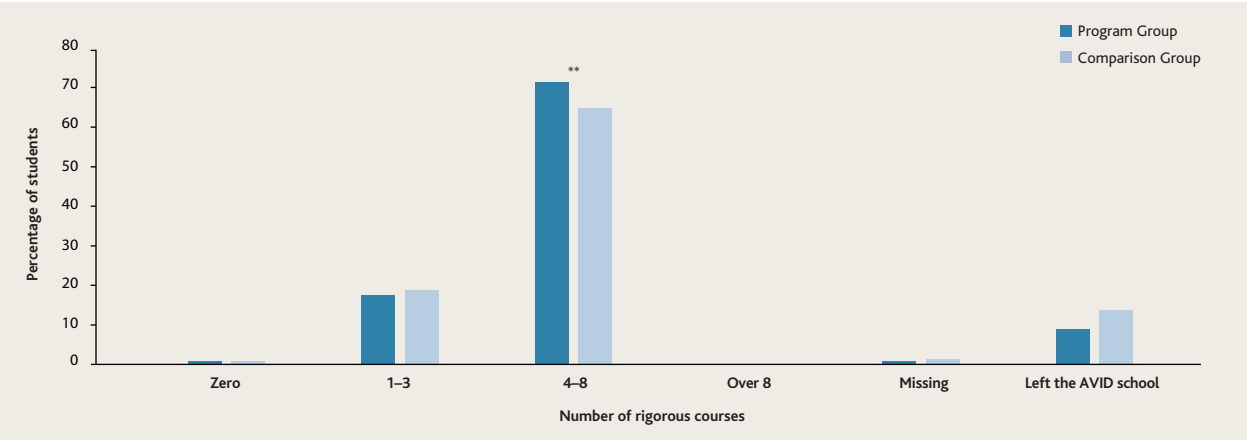
Similarly during Grade 10 (not shown), students offered AVID had higher enrolment in all but one type of course meeting the interpretation of "rigorous" adopted by the researchers—courses identified as requirements or prerequisites for entry into undergraduate programs at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Enrolment increased in Principles of Mathematics 10 by 9 percentage points, English 10 by 5 percentage points, Science 10 by 5 percentage points, and in Social Studies 10 by 5 percentage points. There was also a positive impact on the proportion taking between four to eight rigorous courses (Figure ES4). By Grade 11, the offer of AVID influenced enrolment in Planning, English 11, and Social Studies 11 (Figure ES5).

Figure ES3: Impacts on Courses Completed in Grade 9



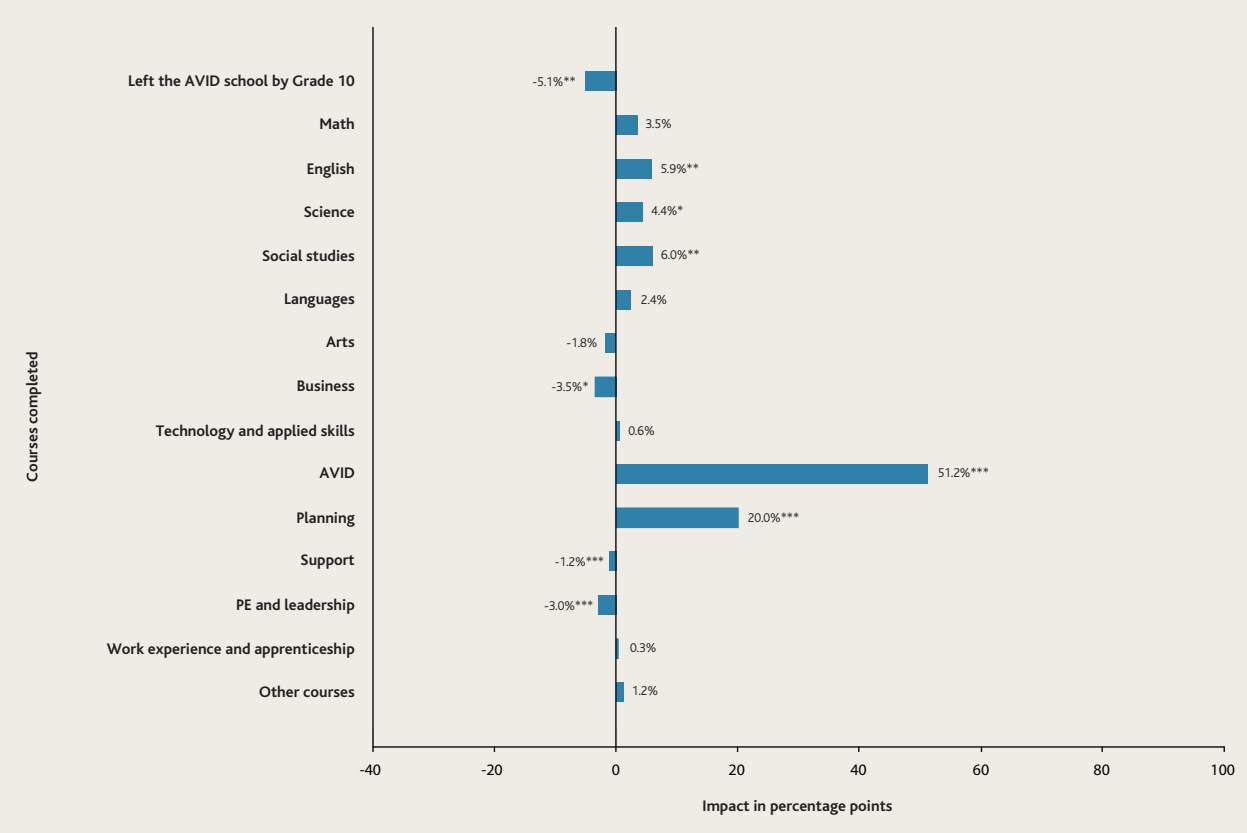
Statistical tests of the difference in courses taken between program and comparison groups indicated significant differences as follows: * = significant at 10 per cent level of confidence; ** = significant at 5 per cent level; *** = significant at 1 per cent level.

Figure ES4: Number of UBC Entry Requirements or Prerequisite Courses Taken in Grade 10



Statistical tests of the difference in courses taken between program and comparison groups indicated significant differences as follows: * = significant at 10 per cent level of confidence; ** = significant at 5 per cent level; *** = significant at 1 per cent level.

Figure ES5: Impacts on Courses Completed in Grade 11



Statistical tests of the difference between program and comparison groups indicated significant differences as follows: * = significant at 10 per cent level of confidence; ** = significant at 5 per cent level; *** = significant at 1 per cent level.

Text Box 2: An Implementation Dip?

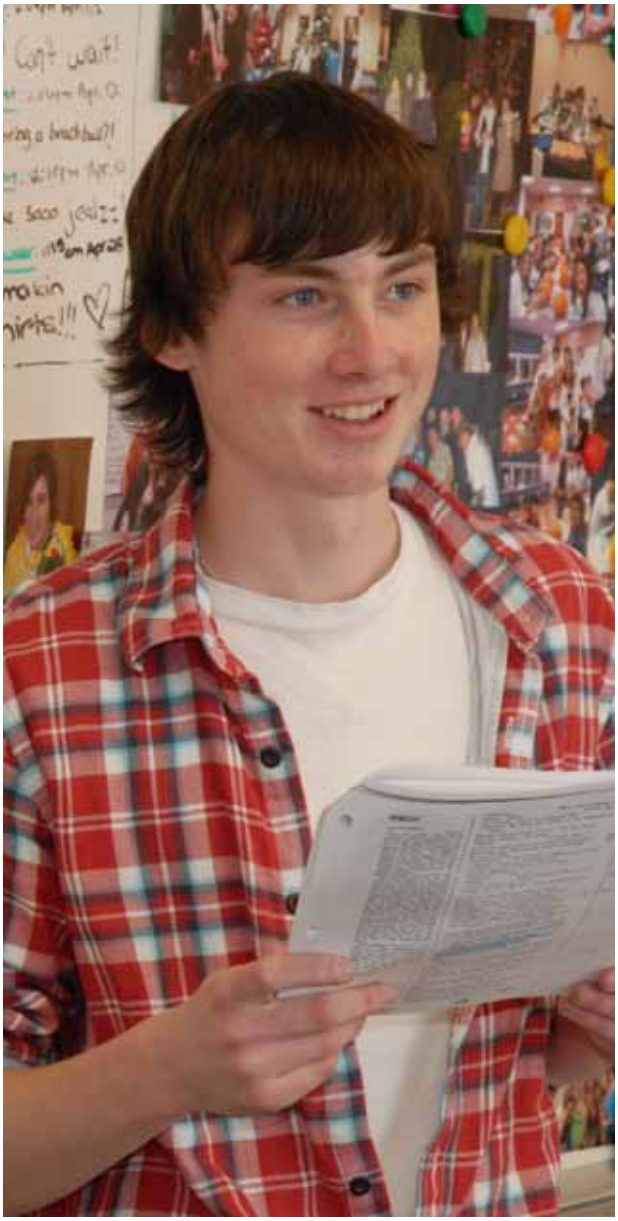
In earlier research on the implementation of AVID (cited in Dunn *et al*., 2008) teachers identified a so-called "implementation dip" that could be experienced by AVID students. When students change their method of learning and switch to a more rigorous curriculum, they can initially experience lower grades and frustration and can require extra encouragement, time, and guidance before they see improvement. In the "dip," grades initially become worse, causing some (possibly misplaced) concerns from students, parents, and staff that the program is not working. The pilot project analyzed participants' course marks and found some evidence of such a dip in grades 9 and 10 and, by Grade 11, also some evidence of recovery.

Initially, in Grade 9, the program group had somewhat lower grades than the comparison group. Eight percentage points more (37 versus 29 per cent) had no As, for example, and more had Cs (81 versus 73 per cent). But these differences had disappeared by Grade 11, suggesting recovery from the "dip" and also implying that AVID students were getting as good or better marks than the comparison group while pursuing more rigorous coursework.

The "dip" lowered initial grades but did not lead to more course failures. The course marks of program group students indicated, in general, that fewer of them were receiving failing grades in their courses.

- In Grade 9, 80 per cent of program group members had no Fs (failing grades), compared to 74 per cent of the comparison group.
- In Grade 11, 60 per cent of the program group had no Fs, compared to 53 per cent of the comparison group.

Evidence of recovery from the "dip"—combined with evidence that it was not severe enough to lead to students recording more Fs—is important. The pattern or impacts on marks suggest that the struggle program group students experience when introduced to more rigorous coursework is relatively short-lived.

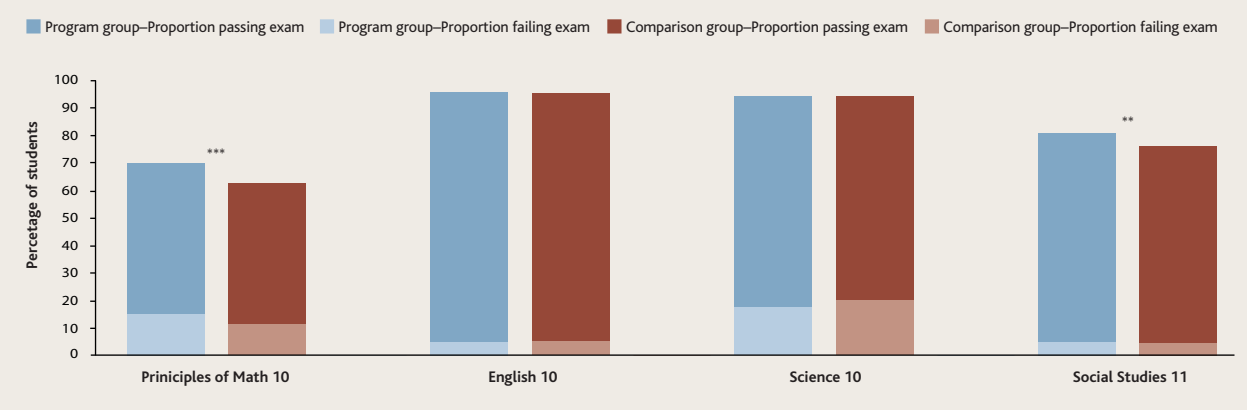


The positive effect on the rigorous course choices of program group students was reflected in provincial examination data (Figure ES6). Provincially examined course data are available for students in all high schools in the province and thus not subject to missing data when students transfer to schools not participating in the project. By the end of Grade 11, BC AVID students were more likely to have taken the provincially examined courses of Principles of Mathematics 10 and Social Studies 11—both courses necessary to meet UBC entrance requirements. These findings provide evidence to support the "untracking" hypothesis that AVID may increase access to post-secondary education (Text Box 1).

The offer of AVID brought about a 7-percentage-point increase in the proportion of students who took the provincial examinations in Principles of Mathematics 10 (possibly one of the most rigorous Grade 10 courses), and corresponding reductions in the proportions taking Essentials of Mathematics and Applications of Mathematics exams. There was a statistically non-significant 3.2-percentage-point increase in the proportion passing the Principles exam and a marginally significant 3.8-percentage-point increase in the proportion failing the exam. At the same time though, students offered AVID were significantly more likely —by 8 percentage points—to pass the Principles of Mathematics 10 course, based on a grade that takes into account their exam mark *and* work in class.

The AVID offer unambiguously raised participation and success in the Social Studies 11 examination and course. It produced statistically significant impacts of five percentage points on taking the course and exam, of five percentage points on passing the exam (Figure ES6), of six percentage points on passing the course (taking into account the exam mark and work in class), and had no effect on the proportion of students failing. There were no significant differences in the proportion taking the English 10 or Science 10 examinations.

Figure ES6: Participation in Provincial Examinations in Grades 10 and 11: Proportions Passing and Failing



Statistical tests of the difference in participation between program and comparison groups indicated significant differences as follows: * = significant at 10 per cent level of confidence; ** = significant at 5 per cent level; *** = significant at 1 per cent level.

Text Box 3: Benefits of BC AVID for Students—Qualitative Evidence

Implementation researchers collected qualitative evidence on the benefits of BC AVID from interviews with BC AVID staff. Findings from these data cover a broader range of outcomes than the quantitative results on impacts presented elsewhere in the report, but with a perspective that is restricted to changes over time among a subset of students. This is because BC AVID teachers would most often observe those students who had persisted with the program and because they could not compare systematically AVID students to any equivalent comparison group. Yet, some of the reports do coincide with quantitative impacts, especially those for enrolment in rigorous courses and reduced chances of failing courses.

BC AVID staff felt that many of their AVID students benefitted from aspects of the AVID program: in particular, they mentioned tutorials, field trips, guest speakers, collaboration with other students, the support students received, and the sense of "family" in the class. Staff described some of the positive changes and strengths they had observed in their students as they participated in the program. Even though there was attrition from the program, staff often said that they believed students had received some benefit from being in the AVID class. This text box describes some of these benefits of the AVID program from the perspective of BC AVID staff.

Some staff noted the support provided by AVID had improved students' sense of belonging and friendships. Many staff commented that AVID had helped students to be more organized, which affected their ability to perform well in school. Staff believed AVID had helped students to engage in discussions with more confidence and take more rigorous courses than they would have taken without AVID: some staff thought that many students would have been failing courses without the help of AVID. They predicted that some students would now graduate from Grade 12 who would not have done so without this kind of support. Other staff commented that they believed AVID students to be much better prepared for post-secondary education, to think about their future more, to plan more for their post-secondary lives, and to foresee studying on a campus where previously this was doubtful.[6] A counsellor and a district director commented on their AVID students:

> *When I talk to the AVID students, I am very aware that they are much better versed than the average student in what they're planning to do in the future, what the requirements are for various programs, and so on. So that knowledge that they have acquired in class is really… helping them make better decisions…*
>
> *I think they feel better about themselves. I think they're more confident. I think they feel that they are supported… those particular kids are better integrated into the school. And more importantly, I think that they feel better prepared to handle whatever it is that comes next.*

Some staff described students at the start of the program as being "fearful" or anticipating academic failure. They felt that this changed with increased exposure to the AVID program, after students had experienced some academic success. In some cases, staff reported that these students had moved to an expectation of success. A district director explained:

> *It's the increased self-confidence that these kids have experienced as being part of the program… That's a very common theme in… what they speak of… they start to believe in themselves… when they go into a math test, there's no longer that expectation of failure, there's that expectation of success. And for a lot of these kids, that's a huge difference for them.*

6 Teachers were commenting on the types of outcomes that students are asked about in the project's Grade 12 survey. The impact of offering AVID to students on these types of outcomes will be reported—along with other results from the Grade 12 survey—in the Final Impacts Report.

How Was AVID Implemented in BC?

The version of AVID being delivered in British Columbia to project students during grades 9 to 11 differed in several important ways from the AVID model as defined and portrayed by the AVID Center. Some of the differences were either unavoidable or intentional, created by those who funded, designed, and implemented the BC AVID Pilot Project. Other differences emerged as staff tried to implement the program in their own classrooms. An important question therefore—to be answered in the final report once four years of AVID delivery have been observed—is whether the program being tested is being delivered sufficiently according to the Essentials to legitimately carry the AVID label. In other words, has the program been given a "fair test"? If it has not, then the impacts observed above may not be attributable to AVID, but rather to a version of the program specific to this project.

The intended and unintended differences from the AVID model are reviewed below, followed by an assessment of some of the strengths of the BC implementation. It is important to note that AVID programs implemented elsewhere have had very few systematic and detailed observations similar to those observed for this project. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain how unusual BC AVID is in having local adaptations and departures from its planned implementation, relative to other programs that carry the "AVID" label.

INTENDED DIFFERENCES FROM THE AVID MODEL

AVID was intentionally or unavoidably different from the version of AVID promoted in the AVID Center's program materials and professional development in five main areas.

1. BC AVID Did Not Select "Typical" AVID Students

Even though programs on both sides of the border select "students in the middle" who have academic potential, high school students in British Columbia have different characteristics from those in the United States. The recruitment process for BC AVID applied criteria as equivalent as possible to those set out by the AVID Center. However, those criteria do not guarantee that the resulting characteristics of the recruited participants in British Columbia will be the same as in the United States due to differences in school populations and existing programs. For example, one of the recruitment recommendations from the AVID Center is that AVID programs seek out students who are eligible for subsidized school lunch programs, a criterion that is often used to identify low-income students in U.S. schools. However, British Columbia lacks this convenient way of identifying low-income students. Perhaps as a result, and as documented in the Early Implementation Report for BC AVID, "[s]tudents from minorities under-represented in [university] and economically disadvantaged groups, such as single-parent families, were not over-represented in the project sample (p. 52)." The implications of having "students in the middle" who were not as economically disadvantaged and not as likely to belong to ethnic minorities as U.S. AVID students are not clear.

2. BC AVID Rarely Focused Only on University Programming

The AVID Center focuses on preparing students for university enrolment, but the outcome of interest in BC AVID is whether the program increases enrolment in any form of post-secondary education, including college, university, or apprenticeship programs. This may have altered the emphasis placed on preparation for university enrolment in British Columbia. However, BC AVID did encourage students to take courses that provide them with the academic eligibility requirements for attendance at a university should they decide to pursue that option.

3. In Grades 10 and 11, BC AVID Was Often Integrated with Planning

The BC Ministry of Education requires that all high school students take a Grade 10 course known as Planning 10. The curriculum of Planning 10 overlaps, to a significant extent, with the curriculum in the AVID elective class. BC AVID schools therefore arranged to combine the curriculum of Planning 10 with the Grade 10 and 11 AVID elective class curricula. While mixing the curricula represented a viable solution to enable BC AVID students to meet the requirements of Planning 10, the extent to which the mixture altered the focus or intensity of the AVID curriculum is unclear.

4. AVID Students Could Not Always Access Advance Placement Courses

A central aspect of AVID-as-designed is the enrolment of all AVID high school students in courses defined as "rigorous." In the United States, the system of Advanced Placement (AP) courses is well-established and allows for an easy definition of a "rigorous" course. AP courses are university-level courses taught to high school students and, as such, the course curricula cover material that is more difficult (more "rigorous") than that covered by general high school courses. Because Canada's system of AP courses is less developed than in the United States, defining what courses qualify as "rigorous" is more challenging. By design, staff in BC AVID schools were allowed to define a "rigorous" course as they thought best fit the objectives of BC AVID.

5. BC Has Few Standardized Tests

Standardized testing plays an important role in the selection of incoming students by U.S. universities, and AVID seeks increased participation of AVID students in standardized testing. British Columbia, however, does not have similar "high stakes" testing that influences the post-secondary careers of high school students. British Columbia administers provincial examinations in various high school subjects, but these tests are not intended as a method of "gate keeping" or student selection for universities. The absence of such high stakes testing makes it difficult to assess how far BC AVID meets AVID objectives associated with such tests.

UNINTENDED DIFFERENCES FROM THE AVID MODEL

Beyond the intentional differences listed above, SRDC's implementation research documented staff experiences delivering and students' experiences receiving the AVID elective course. This research found that AVID classes broadly conformed to expectations for the BC AVID program, but there were challenges with meeting all expectations, especially in the four areas of scheduling, tutorials, access to rigorous courses, and student/staff turnover.

1. Schools Found Scheduling and Balancing BC AVID Challenging

Even though the typical structure of BC high school schedules made it difficult to schedule the duration of the AVID elective class to meet program expectations, other aspects were scheduled appropriately.[7] In all 18 pilot project schools, AVID classes in grades 9, 10, and 11 ran year long and nearly always within the regular school timetable. However, while the AVID Center recommends that the AVID elective class includes approximately 40 per cent curriculum, 40 per cent tutorial, and 20 per cent motivational activities, BC AVID class activities included a considerably higher proportion of curricular activities and a considerably lower proportion of tutorial time than recommended. The proportion of AVID elective class time devoted to tutorials for BC AVID students was 24 per cent, far below the desired 40 per cent.

2. A Minority of Tutorials Conformed to the AVID Model

Tutorials were generally difficult to implement with wide variation in the number, duration, and frequency of tutorials among the 18 sites. Overall, AVID students in project schools received only half the recommended hours of tutoring. AVID also recommends using local university students as tutors, while making allowances for the use of older high school students and adults if necessary. Those implementing the program in British Columbia had difficulty both in recruiting sufficient numbers of tutors for the AVID elective classes and in scheduling a sufficient number of tutoring hours. As a result, BC AVID tutors were usually high school students who were, by Grade 11, only slightly older than those they were tutoring. A lack of tutors also meant that only 38 per cent of tutorials had the recommended ratio of at least one tutor per seven students. It is not clear what the effect the relatively low adherence to program expectations for tutorial time had on students' overall AVID experience.

3. The Definition of Rigorous Courses Varied

Although more than two-thirds of BC AVID sites enrolled their AVID students in a rigorous curriculum, some BC staff reported that difficulties arose in implementing this requirement because, for them, the level of "rigour" required for BC AVID was not clearly defined. Some staff indicated that certain aspects of AVID's requirement for rigour were not applicable to the broad definition of post-secondary education used in the BC education system and in the pilot project's plans for measuring "successful" student outcomes. This broad definition includes community college, trade/technical, and apprenticeship programs—in addition to the four-year university programs promoted by the AVID Center. As a result, different BC school staff interpreted "rigour" in different ways and struggled to find a balance between encouraging individual students to take rigorous courses and meeting what were perceived as their career needs. Another challenge for AVID school staff occurred when their colleagues were reluctant to accept AVID students into a rigorous course if they did not believe that the student had sufficient ability to succeed in the course. In addition, some schools also faced difficulties in scheduling rigorous courses for AVID students, particularly by Grade 11.

7 The AVID Center expects about 150 hours of AVID instruction per student per year. Because of the nature of scheduling practices in British Columbia, BC AVID elective classes were scheduled for 65–85 minutes, but only on every other day of the school year. The overall time spent per student per year in the AVID elective class amounted to about 110 hours.

4. Student and Staff Turnover Was High

Approximately half of all students who were ever assigned to the AVID elective had left the class by the end of their Grade 11 year. Just over one-third had departed by the end of Grade 10. Of those who left the class, 48 per cent did so to pursue a different elective, while 29 per cent moved to a different school. Although class departures were expected, a considerable proportion of eligible students were, at the end of Grade 11, no longer on track to receive the four years of AVID programming they were offered. Moreover, approximately two-thirds of the project's AVID elective classes experienced turnover of the teacher between grades 9 and 11.

Neither student nor teacher turnover is likely to be unique to AVID in British Columbia, but such turnover is an important consideration if a program requires extended exposure—and continuous presence of the same AVID teacher—to be effective. If so, such turnover levels may have serious implications for the measured impact of the program. If large numbers of the program group did not participate in BC AVID throughout their high school years, then the program is unable to exert its full effect on them. If continuing in BC AVID would have been more effective for these students than the classes they chose instead of the AVID elective, then their departures from the elective class will reduce the overall impacts observed for the program.

STRENGTHS IN THE BC IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of curriculum and motivational components of the program, accounting as they did for three-quarters of AVID students' time in the elective class, corresponded well to program expectations. BC AVID elective teachers implemented AVID's WIC-R (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, and Reading) methodology extensively and with a high degree of diligence. Participating schools offered a variety of motivational activities to their AVID students in grades 9–11, including team-building activities, guest speakers, field trips, and general encouragement for leadership, community building, and enrolment in post-secondary education.

The implementation research to the end of Grade 11 concluded that AVID staff devoted themselves to implementing and maintaining the program as planned and they were sufficiently trained to do so. The resulting delivery of the program—despite challenges—resulted in students engaging in activities that were "recognizably AVID" with respect to program content, although there were departures with respect to tutorials. Program organization met the requirements of the AVID Essentials concerned with administrative aspects of the program. Students "academically in the middle" were appropriately selected for the program and most were enrolled in advanced high school courses. Funding appeared quite adequate for the maintenance of the program, while enthusiastic site teams worked very hard to implement it according to program expectations.

As earlier results indicated, program group students experienced markedly more exposure to, and adopted more often, the learning strategies and techniques promoted by the AVID program—including tutorials, note taking and higher order questioning. There were detectable impacts on course choices, course completion, and achievement.

Complete Story by 2012

Results to date support the idea that AVID may be a promising program for enhancing BC students' achievement in high school and their chances of meeting post-secondary program eligibility requirements. Significant impacts on the students' educational experiences, course choices, and achievement were recorded, despite the challenges that the program sites had in meeting the AVID program expectations. The next report will assess the impact of BC AVID on participants' engagement in their senior year at high school, and on their enrolment in and completion of the first year of a post-secondary education program. It will also include a benefit-cost analysis of BC AVID.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