





## AVID Eighth Grade Writing Project

### PROJECT NARRATIVE – Introduction

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a program that seeks to prepare first generation college students to succeed in rigorous high school courses and gain admission to and be successful in college. AVID does this by providing both academic and social/emotional support to students in the AVID elective class which meets every day during the regular school day. AVID's mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society.

AVID was implemented in Green Bay Area Public Schools (hereafter designated as the District) in 2006 in two middle schools (Franklin and Washington) to address District strategic goal 4.2.2: Increase the percentage of students of color in AP (Advanced Placement) courses. Although at the time about 25% of our high school students were students of color, only 8% of our high school students enrolled in AP classes were students of color. The larger goal of AVID is to give young students of color hope and a future: to show them that they CAN attend college and that the District will provide both the academic and social/emotional support they need to do so. Both East and West High Schools also now offer AVID.

The typical AVID student has a GPA from 2.0 to 3.5, average to high standardized test scores, and most importantly, the desire to go to college. The majority of AVID students are students of color or from poverty. At the present time, about 63% of AVID students are students of color and about 72% are LSES (Low Socioeconomic Status) as defined by enrollment in the free and reduced lunch program.

#### A - Statement of Need/Problem

Two academic needs were identified early in our implementation of AVID: algebra readiness skills and writing skills. This proposal addresses the second of these needs.

Although writing is part of the curriculum K-12, we discovered that many AVID students have not mastered the basic skill of writing a solid academic (expository) paragraph. This is in part because many of them are English Language Learners. In 2009, to address this need we designed a three-week project with the help of fUWGB. delivered a lecture to each eighth grade AVID class on a short story that they had read and provided writing prompts based on his lecture and the story. AVID students then participated in Socratic Seminars to discuss the story and to develop their ideas for their essays. They worked with their AVID teachers and AVID tutors on their essays for about three weeks. When we graded their essays, we were disappointed to learn that most of the AVID students, while having fairly good control of sentence boundaries, were not able to write solid academic paragraphs to support their ideas. We repeated this three-week project a second time this year with not much better results. We determined that we needed to focus on writing over a longer period of time – a year rather than just a few weeks. This proposal seeks funding to do so.

The need for college bound students to master academic writing is supported by research and the experience of teachers of Advanced Placement (AP) and college writing. According to the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (2011) by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project, “The ability to write well is basic to student success in college and beyond.” The importance of writing well in order to succeed in college is evidenced by the fact that both the SAT and ACT have added writing assessments in recent years. In a 2009 study of the redesigned SAT conducted by the Office of the Vice President for Research at the University of Georgia – Athens, researchers concluded that writing well is one of the best predictors of college success: “For each 100-point increase in SAT writing scores, first-year students earn[ed] GPAs that [were] on average, .07 points higher; earn[ed] .18 points higher in freshman English classes; and earn[ed] .54 more credit hours.” District AP U.S. History teacher, in a letter of

support for this proposal (see attached), writes that students who have developed the essential skill of writing “are much more prepared for AP level coursework, success on their essays, and overall success on the AP exam.” I goes on to write that these students “tend to have highly developed critical thinking skills...” which enables them to... “interpret, analyze, and synthesize information into a complex piece of writing.” Surely this is what we want for all of our students, but for first generation college students of color and from poverty (who have so many other barriers to overcome that are outside the power of schools to affect), the ability to write well is even more crucial to their success. As you can see from letters of support from two UWGB staff, they also recognize the need for students to enter college with strong writing skills.

### B – Objectives and Research Question

The research question that this project seeks to answer is, “Will specially trained and supported college tutors, working once a week from October through April, increase the number of eighth grade AVID students who are proficient in writing an academic essay?”

Objective 1 - To provide a sustained program of writing skill development based on the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy and needs identified through a pre assessment impromptu.

Objective 2 - To increase the number of eighth grade AVID students who score proficient or advanced in a post assessment impromptu as compared to the pre assessment.

Objective 3 – To provide college students experience in assessing student needs in writing, creating activities/interventions to address those needs, evaluating the effectiveness of those interventions, and leading a team of tutors.

Objective 4 – To share the pre and post assessments, rubrics, and activities/interventions with other middle school teachers.

### C – Project Description

*June – July 2011* – Members of the AVID Writing Project Team will be selected. Members will include at least one UWGB or SNC writing teacher, at least one District language arts teacher, the AVID Tutor Coordinator, the AVID District Director, and college tutors who will serve as AVID Writing Project Co-Captains for their AVID classes. Since there will be four sections of eighth grade AVID (two at Washington and two at Franklin), there will be eight co-captains.

*August 2011* – The AVID Writing Project Team will meet to review the Common Core Standards for writing, determine end of the year learning targets (proficiency), create a prompt to be used to pre and post assess student progress in reaching the learning targets, create a rubric to assess the writing, create a pre and post attitude student survey, and preview possible materials to be used. The team will also set dates for monthly planning and support meetings. AVID elective teachers will attend part of the meeting in order for them to understand the project and be able to support it.

*September 2011* – The AVID District Director will visit all four classes and explain the project and administer a pre-project attitude survey. AVID teachers will administer the pre assessment impromptu. The AVID Writing Project Team will meet to assess the pre assessment impromptu and plan activities for the first month.

*October 2011* – AVID Writing Project Co-Captains will meet with their teams of tutors to provide overview of activities. AVID Writing Project Tutorials will begin.

*October 2011 – April 2012* – AVID Writing Project Team will meet monthly to debrief activities used, monitor student progress and adjust accordingly, and plan activities. After each planning meeting, co-captains will work with their teams to prepare for the activities for the weekly writing tutorials.

*January 2012* – will be invited to deliver his lecture as in the past. AVID student will write an essay. The purpose of this will be to provide them with a taste of college lecture and for us to see whether or not what we have done so far results in better essays than in the last two

years. While this is not the major focus of this new AVID Writing Project, it will serve as one measure of success.

*Late April – early May 2012* – AVID teachers will administer the post assessment and the post project attitude survey. The AVID Writing Project Team will assess both the pre and post impromptus. The team will debrief the project and analyze results. One or two co-captains will assemble and edit the activities used throughout the year and prepare them to be shared with middle school language arts teachers.

D – Evaluation Evaluation of the project will take several forms. The most important measure of the effectiveness of the project will be a comparison of student achievement on the pre and post assessment impromptu. The mid-year writing in response to lecture will also be used. The student pre and post project attitude surveys will be compared.

E – Dissemination The AVID District Director will work with the English/Language Arts Specialist in the District's Curriculum Department to determine the best way to share the results of the project and assessments and activities used with middle school language arts teachers.

#### **BUDGET NARRATIVE**

The bulk of the funds will be used to pay the tutors. This will include a planning/training day in late August, seven monthly planning meetings, and time to assess the pre and post assessments for eight co-captains (two for each of the four sections of eighth grade AVID). In addition, four more tutors per class will be paid for one hour of writing tutoring per week for approximately twenty weeks for four classes. Two co-captains will be paid for four additional hours to compile the lessons/activities. A small stipend will be paid to one UWGB writing teacher and one District language arts teacher for serving on the AVID Writing Project Team. Finally, we are requesting \$300 per class for materials. The total amount we are requesting is \$6728.