THE AVID EFFECT

Professional Learning that "Sticks" and Engages Teachers

YAVID® Study on the Impact of AVID Professional Learning on Teacher and Student Behaviors

Essential Questions

How many of your teachers are truly engaged?

A recent Gallup study reported that just **30% of US teachers are "actively engaged"** in their jobs. Gallup defines *engaged teacher* as "involved with, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work."

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What is the impact in your school or district?

Teachers who are "not engaged" or are actively disengaged average twice as many absences, accounting for **an estimated 2.3 million missed workdays every year.** Research suggests that teacher engagement is central to helping students realize their full potential as well as to improving students' own engagement (Gallup, 2014).

> **Lessons and learning in an AVID classroom encourage student-centric problem solving, rather than answers delivered in a lecture format. This strengthens the students' drive and cements understanding through inquiry and collaboration.**

Exploring the Impact of AVID Professional Learning on Teacher and Student Behaviors

Abstract

In today's accountability era, professional development must elicit changes in teachers' practices and ultimately increase students' learning. When such outcomes do not occur, it is often due to deficiencies in the effectiveness of professional development and its ability to engage teachers. This white paper illustrates how Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) professional learning (PL) exhibits characteristics of effectiveness, engages teachers, and fosters positive change in teacher behavior and student learning.

> **AVID PL fosters positive change in teacher behavior and student learning.**

Introduction

Researchers (Gulamhussein, 2013; Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009) are discovering that most professional development is ineffective and not useful for teachers. This may explain why a recent Gallup (2014) study found that nearly 70% of K–12 teachers in the United States are not engaged in their work or their school.

Background

In today's accountability era, PL must be conducted in a way that elicits changes in teachers' practices that in turn lead to increases in students' learning (Jackson & Makarin, 2016; Gulamhussein, 2013; Shumack & Forde, 2011). Gulamhussein (2013) reviewed existing research and concluded that effective PL exhibits five characteristic principles. First, PL must be ongoing to allow teachers to learn, adjust, and implement what they are learning. Second, support must be available to address challenges in the classroom. Third, a teacher should be engaged when exposed to the PL process. Fourth, modeling should be used when introducing new concepts to teachers to aid in the learning process and provide tangible or visual takeaways for use in the classroom. Fifth, content should be grounded in the teacher's discipline and in the context of the learning environment.

Masuda, Ebersole, and Barrett (2013) described specific characteristics teachers reported as necessary for PL to be worthwhile and effective. First, the content had to be applicable and relevant to their teaching contexts. Second, teachers needed to be actively engaged in the content and activities. Lastly, teachers needed something tangible that they could readily use in their classrooms. Masuda, Ebersole, and Barrett (2013) also found that most teachers placed the highest level of importance on being able to interact with colleagues and share ideas. Communication between and among staff is one indicator of engagement, as referenced by a Gallup study of the nation's most successful and engaged schools (Hodges, 2015).

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) professional development exhibits many, if not all, of the above-mentioned characteristics. It is multi-faceted and ongoing, beginning with Summer Institute and continuing throughout the year via ongoing support from trained district directors (Watt, Huerta, & Mills, 2010).

Methodology

Each year, thousands of new and veteran educators and administrators gather for a few days in the summer to learn AVID methodologies and strategies. In 2014, just over 3,000 individuals from schools implementing or planning to implement the AVID program attended an AVID Summer Institute (SI) in San Diego, California. Each completed a brief exit survey to evaluate the training's effectiveness. To examine whether changes in teachers' practices and students' learning were evident a year after SI, a separate pre-post questionnaire was administered to a sample of the teachers who attended this SI. The questionnaire was first administered prior to the San Diego SI in 2014 (pre). The same survey was administered a year later, at the end of the 2014–15 academic year (post). A total of 632 teachers completed both pre- and post-questionnaires.

Findings

According to the research literature, in order for PL to be effective, it must exhibit certain characteristics. Below is a list of some of these characteristics, followed by descriptive statements about AVID PL.

Effective Professional Learning	AVID Professional Learning
PL is an ongoing and supported process *(Gulamhussein, 2013; Guskey & Yoon, 2009).*	Teachers are exposed to AVID's SI training and to local training and support from district directors.
PL is interactive *(Gulamhussein, 2013; Masuda, Ebersole, & Barrett, 2013; Guskey & Yoon, 2009).*	Staff developers at AVID SI engage attendees via modeling and other activities centered around tangible or visual take-aways. This is also evident in the exit survey data, wherein 95% of attendees reported that their staff developer was skilled in engaging them in the training and 98% reported that the instruction was interactive and collaborative.
PL content is explained and discussed in contexts of the teachers' respective learning environments *(Gulamhussein, 2013; Masuda, Ebersole, & Barrett, 2013).*	AVID SI trainings are provided via a number of "strands." The strands differ for middle school and high school teachers, and for various content areas. This is also evident in the exit survey data, wherein 96% of attendees reported that they can apply what they learned at the training in their classroom.
PL is based on instructional practices that are thoroughly researched *(Guskey & Yoon, 2009).*	Most of AVID's curriculum and instruction are centered around strategies related to writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading to learn (WICOR – see http://avid.org/dl/hed/hed_reviewofliterature.pdf), which are research-based.

Previous research suggests that teacher engagement is central to helping students realize their full potential as well as to improving students' own engagement (Gallup, 2014). Given that communication between and among staff is one indicator of engagement, as referenced by a Gallup study of the nation's most successful and engaged schools (Hodges, 2015), it is worth noting that AVID's pre-post data showed a significant increase in the portion of teachers who met with their colleagues to discuss teaching strategies. Prior to the AVID SI training, more than one-fifth of teachers (22%) indicated that they never had such discussions. A year later, that figure dropped to 7%.
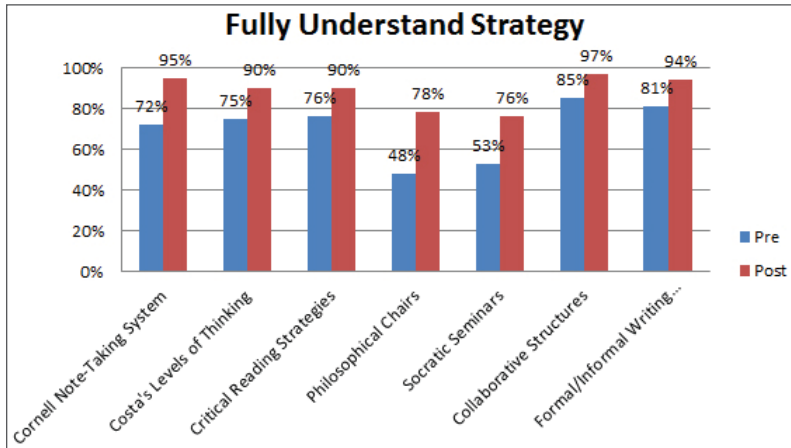
Gallup's research also indicates that "K–12 teachers' average engagement level drops in their first few years on the job" (Gallup, 2014, p. 27). However, this is not the case with AVID-trained educators. Pre-post results showed that novice teachers with 0–5 years of experience as an educator exhibited a significant increase in the reported frequency of meeting with colleagues to discuss teaching strategies.

Pre-post results from teachers indicated a significant increase in the portion of students who:

- were engaged (e.g., come prepared to the classroom with completed homework assignments or readings, actively participate in classroom discussions, and use higher-level thinking skills).

- take responsibility for their learning, as evidenced by a willingness to advocate for their academic needs, taking rigorous/AP classes, and/or aspiring to a more advanced degree.

AVID Training Impacts Strategies

To better understand how AVID training impacts specific teaching strategies, whether they are used in the classroom, and how they may be affecting students, teachers were also asked to address the following three statements for each strategy using a Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree Likert scale:

Fully Understand Strategy

Strategy	Pre	Post
Cornell Note-Taking System	72%	95%
Costa's Levels of Thinking	75%	90%
Critical Reading Strategies	76%	90%
Philosophical Chairs	48%	78%
Socratic Seminars	53%	76%
Collaborative Structures	85%	97%
Formal/Informal Writing…	81%	94%

Fully Integrate Strategies Into Teaching

Strategy	Pre	Post
Cornell Note-Taking System	56%	75%
Costa's Levels of Thinking	59%	75%
Critical Reading Strategies	62%	79%
Philosophical Chairs	26%	48%
Socratic Seminars	33%	50%
Collaborative Structures	75%	90%
Formal/Informal Writing…	72%	86%

See Positive Change in Behavior, How Students Learn

Strategy	Pre	Post
Cornell Note-Taking System	56%	77%
Costa's Levels of Thinking	59%	76%
Critical Reading Strategies	65%	83%
Philosophical Chairs	34%	56%
Socratic Seminars	39%	57%
Collaborative Structures	76%	90%
Formal/Informal Writing…	71%	84%

- Fully understand the strategy.

- Have fully integrated the strategy into the way you teach in the classroom.

- See a positive change in the behavior of your students and how students learn as a result of the strategy.
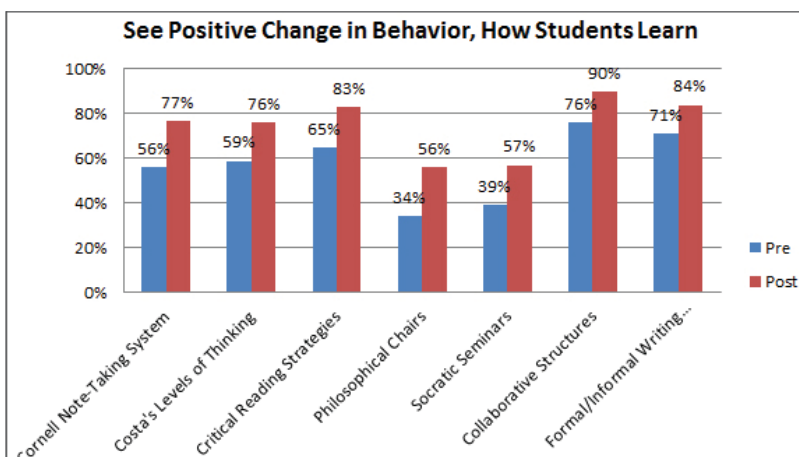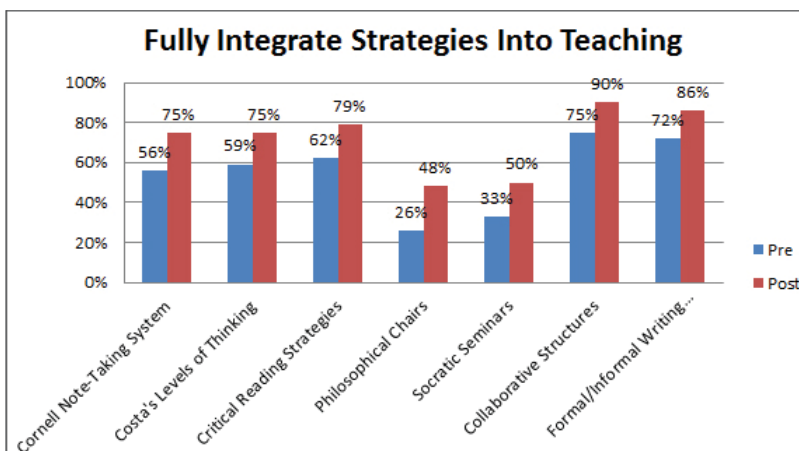
Summary

Pre-post results showed increases in the percentages of teachers who:

- ☑ Fully understood the AVID strategies,

- ☑ Fully integrated the AVID strategies into the way they teach in the classroom,

- ☑ Saw a positive change in the behavior of students and how students learn.

> " AVID professional learning exhibits multiple characteristics of effectiveness and correlates with increases in reported teacher and student engagement, resulting in more effective, dynamic learning experiences for students.

References

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When teachers are engaged, students succeed.

AVID is an educational nonprofit that delivers engaging, professional development to educators, providing them with immediately usable tools to implement across all academic subjects and for all students.