

ADVANCEMENT VIA INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION:
THE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

A Research Proposal Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
for EDMA 5683.

Sheryl Staudacher
Northwest University
Masters in Teaching Program
July 2012

Abstract

Advancement via Individual Determination The Middle School Student Experience

The problem faced in many middle schools throughout the country is that the students with disadvantages get left behind. The goal of the national AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) program is to assist students in preparing for a prolific future; giving the students tools to excel in advanced classes, instilling effective study habits, educating them on potential college opportunities, supporting them throughout their schooling, etc. Most research focuses on administrations view of the program, whereas this research uncovers the students' perspective based on their experience in the program. Key components reviewed are the AVID program in general, students and further education aspirations/college readiness, collaborative learning, and student motivation and success. Using a qualitative research approach, several students were surveyed and interviewed. Results show that most students find AVID helpful in areas of their academic classes, collaborative learning, and college readiness and that the teacher actually does make a difference in the outcome of their AVID experience. In conclusion, the AVID experience is one that all disadvantaged students should have the opportunity to partake in. The middle school students' AVID experience should be based on the traditional model that has seen national success as well as include a strong focus on collaborative learning, college readiness and motivational strategies. According to students' opinions, the teacher also plays a pivotal role in the students' motivation and success in their AVID experience.

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Introduction

Look around the classroom and what do you see? A variety of cultures, an assortment of ethnic backgrounds and students with diverse educational experiences. Look around the classroom and see not just one, but a classroom full of underprivileged students striving to achieve what other students expect: AP classes, 4.0 grade point averages and college prep paths that will eventually lead to college admission. In the ‘melting-pot’ of a Seattle suburb city, students from low, middle and upper class families are joined together in this classroom. Some of these students don’t know what it’s like for a family member to attend college or even graduate from high school. Some of these students may or may not be likely to attend college, perhaps because of their grades or lack of advanced classes or awareness of educational opportunities. However, these eager students do know what it is they want: a successful education. These students want to exceed in their academic classes. These students dream of making it to college. These students choose AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination. These disadvantaged students who tend to fall through the cracks in the educational system want more for themselves and their futures. They want the AVID experience.

Not all students are fortunate enough to have the opportunity or support of continuing their education past high school. Some children do get left behind regardless of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act’s (NCLB) promise of, “closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers” (No Child Left Behind). Some students settle for mediocrity and are unaware of the limitless possibilities of education and learning. The

AVID experience allows students to explore and prepare for opportunities in education whether it be enrolling in advanced classes in high school or submitting a college application, earning acceptance. This experience is instrumental in preparing these students' lives for success in their education, not only at the middle school level, but beyond.

Throughout this research project, I critically observed the middle-school AVID classroom and students. I scrutinized these students stuck in the middle whom have chosen to participate in the AVID program. I learned how these students are shaped by the AVID program and how their AVID teachers inspired them. I learned what the AVID experience is like for these middle school students.

Students, regardless of where they fit in society, privileged or underprivileged are deserving of dreams. Some students need extra assistance in defining those dreams pertaining to accelerating their education. The AVID program and teachers encourage these students to achieve their educational dreams and take advantage of the endless educational opportunities that lie ahead. Imagine a classroom of diverse, underprivileged kids who don't actually get left behind.

Literature Review

In order to fully comprehend the AVID experience for middle school students, it is imperative to understand several key concepts prior to delving into the research findings. The literature review will define key terms, explain AVID and then summarize the findings of previous AVID research studies. The literature review will also concentrate on student college awareness and readiness, collaborative learning, as well as introduce perceptions of student success.

AVID and other key terms

At the outset, it's important to know several definitions. Since my research is based on the AVID experience, it's critical to understand the basics of the AVID program. According to AVID's website the program is defined as,

AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, is an elementary through postsecondary college readiness system that is designed to increase schoolwide learning and performance. The AVID system accelerates student learning, uses research based methods of effective instruction, provides meaningful and motivational professional development, and acts as a catalyst for systemic reform and change. Although AVID serves all students, it focuses on the least served students in the academic middle (AVID, 2011, para. 1).

Mary Swanson founded AVID in the early eighties and in an article published in 1996, she elaborates on the research based essentials of a successful AVID program. These essentials include the following, "a skilled and committed AVID teacher/coordinator, school site leadership, an effective AVID site team, adequate funding, access to quality professional development, access to effective tutors and support beyond the school" (para. 31).

In calculating the characteristics and perceptions of the selected middle school students' AVID experience, I'd like to define success as it is a critical component of the overall AVID program. Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (2011) defines success as, "degree or measure of succeeding, favorable or desired outcome, the attainment of wealth, favor or eminence."

Additionally, in an AVID best practices study by Guthrie that focused on eight schools and the eleven program essentials, Guthrie formulates valuable claims about the AVID program and its success as demonstrated by specific schools. In addition to the eleven program essentials which equate to a successful program, Guthrie also suggests that three essentials be added; “emphasizing staff development and a qualified coordinator who instills a sense of membership and belonging in relation to the classroom and the other students” (2002, p. 12). After Guthrie summarizes how the essentials and proposed essentials are evident in the eight sample schools, he further examines the effect of AVID school wide. Guthrie claims that the program has, “a ripple effect on the school and student culture within their respective schools. Success breeds more success, and AVID’s visible, data-driven success has helped foster a culture of academic excellence, high expectations, and going-to-college within the schools” (p. 12). Research declares success and exposure to others’ successes is a key component to the AVID experience.

Further Education Aspirations

A driving factor of the AVID program is preparing students to dream and achieve success in their futures, ultimately attending college. The program aims to give students the preparation tools allowing them to start thinking about college opportunities and the importance of taking AP classes prior to college. For some students, their first introduction to the idea of further education begins in their AVID classroom. In “The AVID Classroom: A System of Academic and Social Supports for Low-Achieving Students” (1993), researchers Swanson and Mehan focus a section of their study on college readiness and awareness. In their research, they include this quote from a student, “Field trips were great. I didn’t even know what a college looked like until Mrs. Lincoln

took us. It's like eating a cookie. It really tempts us to eat another one. You've smelled it and seen it and you want to buy it really bad" (Swanson, 1993, p. 19). Part of the AVID program fundamentals is college preparation and the curriculum includes a college campus visit. Concluding his argument, Mehan argues,

Kids can't go to college if they don't take the appropriate classes. By insisting that previously underachieving students enroll in college prep classes, AVID is increasing the possibility that students from backgrounds which are underrepresented in universities will have the preparation necessary to enroll in them. (p. 22)

In a report produced by ACT titled, 'The Forgotten Middle,' based on their research, their findings regarding students attending college were as follows,

Three out of five eighth-grade students in our study whose annual family income was less than \$30,000 and whose parents did not attend college were not on target to be ready for college-level reading by the time they graduated from high school. But among those eighth-graders whose annual family income was greater than \$100,000 and whose parents both attended college, this figure was still nearly one in four. (2008, p. 5)

ACT's research highlights the problem with the students stuck in the middle and their college attendance trends. Some research provides that AVID provides a solution in assisting those students with college readiness.

Opposing arguments regarding AVID as a proven college readiness solution, include work by Meyers who claims, "The most recent study found that these programs were less effective, if at all" (2010, p. 302). Meyers' research centers on her ideal at-risk

student college readiness program; Washington State Achievers (WSA) Program. In supporting her claim, she also asserts, “The lack of consistently positive effects of intervention programs on college enrollment may be a result of the activities promoted by the program” (p. 302). Varying opinions of schools and their college prep programs such as AVID, WSA and Gear-Up are all intriguing and valid. However, at the core of varying arguments, is the fundamental idea of importance placed on college preparedness and transition.

Collaborative Learning

There are several effective learning strategies, but one essential to the AVID model includes collaborative learning/small group work, or as AVID students know it; peer study groups (PSGs). According to Fisher, in his book outlining the framework for the gradual release of responsibility through instruction, he states, “that regardless of the subject matter or content area, students learn more, and retain information longer, when they work in small groups” (2008, p. 62). PSGs, formerly known as tutorials, ideally involve one coach/tutor (ideally an adult volunteer or college student) and four to six students with questions on a similar academic core class: language arts, social studies, math or science. Students come to class with an essential question and entrance form filled out stating what they know and/or don’t know already about their specific question. They are then assigned groups based on their question, as well as a coach, a white board and group table. One student begins the collaboration process by writing their essential question on the board, presenting to the group what they know, don’t know and want to know. Other students in the group ask the presenter higher level questions, encouraging the presenter to deepen their level of thinking and hopefully understand on their own the

answer to their essential questioning. Students in the group are not to give away the answer, but use critical thinking skills in asking the presenter questions. With the support gleaned from the peer study group, students tend to engage in their core classes as well as improve on homework completed: “Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes, complete more assignments, and generally like school better” (Fisher, p. 62).

While improving performance is an important factor in student work, in slight contrast to Fisher’s thoughts on collaborative learning, Charles’ list of tactics to stimulate students to behave responsibly includes using collaboration, “allow students to work together cooperatively. Generally speaking, cooperation is a much better teaching tactic than is competition, which is a great motivator for improving performance, but not for learning” (2008, p. 215). Additionally Charles mentions other important tactics which are highlighted in AVID’s PSG model: “emphasize the reflective process, control conversation by asking questions, create desire to know, encourage students, avoid telling students what to do, tutor a few students every day” (2008, p. 215-217). Collaboration encourages positive student behavior and vice versa. Students thrive with adults/teachers who encourage collaborative behavior. “They need adults who can identify those lagging skills and unsolved problems and know how to solve those problems (collaboratively) so that the solutions are durable, the skills are taught, and the likelihood of challenging behavior is significantly reduced” (2008, Greene, p. 35). Collaborative learning practiced through PSGs results in better behavior and improved level of academic performance.

Success

There are various perceptions of student success. Washington State may measure a student's success based on their test scores or whether or not they're meeting grade level expectations. Teachers may gauge student success by improvement, emotional or academic growth. Students may measure their success by popularity, achievement, confidence, etc. McQuown's research focuses on student motivation, linking it to self-efficacy, "The component of motivation that I found most interesting was the concept of self-efficacy which means that students are more motivated to achieve at something they have a strong interest in" (2011, p. 6). She also claims that "Self-efficacy has been linked to academic success and higher levels of achievement" (6). In summary, according to one researcher, success is based on individual student motivation. Success is achieved when the student displays a particular curiosity or interest in such topic.

A contradictory perception to that of success being student owned, argues that success correlates directly with the teacher's credentials. In a Public Education Network (PEN) report, the author argues, "Research confirms that teachers with higher academic credentials, and who attend more competitive colleges, have more academically successful students" (PEN, 2007, p. 7). In a report from the United States Department of Education (USDE), President Barack Obama promotes that parent involvement in their child's education is a vital component to student success. In regards to President Obama's vision, research summarizes, "He is calling on parents to take responsibility for their child's success. His vision includes the belief that all children can and will succeed, and that parents are the bridge to this success" (USDE, 2010, p. 5). Pertaining to the middle school years specifically, the USDE suggests,

The middle school years are a time of transition: emotional, physical, social and academic. Parent support and involvement are essential at this stage of their child's growth. Research shows that pre-teens do better in school when their parents are involved in their lives. (p. 7)

Definitions and theories of success are wide spread. Perceptions vary amongst researchers, teachers, administrators and state standards and awareness of all is ideal.

This literature review summarized the foundation of the AVID program as well as positive and negative perceptions of the program as a whole, including the essentials of a successful AVID program and additions that need to be made. There is a clear understanding of the importance of college awareness and readiness, effectiveness of collaborative learning or PSGs and the value it adds to the AVID model. Lastly several sources captured diverse perceptions on student motivation and success at the middle school level.

Research Question

In light of the literature review, curiosity still lies in what middle school AVID students' experiences. The primary question is: what is the students' perception of the AVID experience and how does AVID contribute to their successes? Secondary questions include the following: why do students choose to enroll in AVID? What they believe is the most influential component of their AVID experience? Does the AVID teacher make a difference? Through observation and the eyes and words of middle school students, I will explore their entire AVID experience in search of further clarification.

Methodology

Method and Rationale

I used a qualitative research methodology for my project. In order to fully comprehend the middle school student's AVID experience I immersed myself in their environment as well as learned from them directly their definition of the AVID experience. According to Hendricks, "the general purpose in qualitative research is to understand and interpret phenomena as they occur in natural setting" (2009, p. 2). My method of sample selection is outlined in detail in the following section, however Hendricks also advises, "Those who are studied are chosen purposively rather than randomly. Also, the context is examined, rather than controlled" (p. 3). With the help of the AVID instructors, I deliberately chose students based on their academic success, improvement, attitude, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc. In conjunction with Hendricks findings, the most appropriate methodology for me to use in my exploration of the middle school student's AVID experience was the qualitative methodology.

Sample

The sample for this project included approximately forty-five students from a middle school representing various socio-economic status and ethnic diverse male and female students. I surveyed two AVID classrooms including a seventh and an eighth grade class. Each classroom has approximately thirty students and contains ethnically diverse male and female students. In narrowing my research, I selected three students from seventh grade and two students from eighth grade and conducted individual interviews with each of those students. It was important for my research to have a broad range of feedback from students and their AVID experience. I captured the good, bad, and even the ugly from each of these students. In trying to understand the middle school student's AVID experience, valuable information was gained from the selected sample.

Instrumentation

Preliminary data was gathered from the regional office's research database where I evaluated current statistics and feedback from the sample school. I also discussed at length my research paper and process with the students, the teachers and administrators. After reviewing the data, I then conducted my research via observation, surveys and individual interviews. A sampling of survey questions that were completed during a class period is listed below:

Grade:

1. How did you first learn about AVID?
2. How many years have you been in AVID? (circle one)
1 2
3. What is your current grade point average (GPA)?
4. Has your GPA improved since you started AVID? (circle one)
Yes No
5. Rate your experience in AVID. (circle one)
1 Not helpful
2 Indifferent/unsure
3 somewhat helpful
4 very helpful
6. Would you recommend AVID to a friend or incoming 7th / 8th grader? (circle one)
Yes No
7. Will you sign up for AVID next year? (circle one)
Yes No

Explain why or why not?

8. What is the most helpful aspect of AVID?
9. What is the least helpful aspect of AVID?
10. Is there anything that could improve your AVID experience? If so, what?
11. What is your definition of success?

Student surveys were collected and analyzed by the researcher. Based on their responses as well as teacher consultation, I selected several diverse students from each class to participate in individual interviews. The following questions were asked during the interview process:

1. How/When did you first learn about AVID?
2. Why did you choose to take AVID?
3. Compare how AVID might give you an advantage over your peers who are not in AVID?
4. How has AVID changed you?
5. What's the most valuable piece of information you've learned in AVID?
6. How can your AVID experience be better/improved?
7. What are some of your goals beyond middle school? High school?
8. What is your definition of success?
9. How has AVID helped you be more successful?
10. What motivates you as a student?
11. Has anyone in your family attended college?
12. Do you want to go to college? Why or why not?
13. Explain how you think AVID helps prepare you for your future.

14. Will you take AVID again? Why or why not?

The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. To protect the identity of the students involved in the research coding measures were used in capturing data from students so their identity remains anonymous. For example, seventh grade student one will be represented as S1, eighth grade student two will be represented as E2, etc. The list of students and their corresponding codes were kept confidential ensuring their identities remained anonymous.

Analysis and Validity

In analyzing the data I looked for trends resembling positive and negative experiences. Originally, I was hoping for my final research to be weighted with more positive feedback than negative, which was the case. However, I do think the contrasting perceptions are valuable and are included in the data analysis at my discretion. Based on a discussion with the regional coordinator and in considering AVID's mission – I'm emphasizing the findings that are related to the actual middle school students' experience, improvements made by the student, motivational factors, successes and forecasting of their future. Data gathered during the collection process is unique, reliable and has provided valuable insight into the middle school student's AVID experience. Student perception and feedback was documented accurately based on voice recordings. The information gathered is valid and reliable.

As the researcher for this project I am somewhat biased in that I have volunteered as an AVID coach in these classrooms prior to the beginning of the research period. I am a strong supporter of the AVID mission and program and am hoping to continue my AVID involvement and research in the future. I've already observed the AVID teachers

and students that I will be collecting data from so some opinions have been already formed. In my data collection and final written analysis, I will remain unbiased and only act as a channel for these students' voices to be heard regarding their AVID experience.

Data

The following information was gathered from survey responses from two separate classes taught by two different teachers; a seventh and eighth grade class. Generalizations are made based on survey feedback and student responses are designated in quotes. Responses follow the order of the survey questions outlined previously in the instrumentation section.

Students first learned about AVID from their 6th grade teacher or from a family member or friends that took the class. Some students also remember listening to the presentations given to them while in elementary school from the middle school AVID teachers and students. There are a couple students who were recommended for enrollment by their elementary teacher. One student recalls, "I learned about AVID through my cousin. She had terrible organization skills and it was amazing how much they improved with AVID." (E2)

In regards to an improved grade point average (GPA): 8 out of 16 eighth grade students' GPAs improved since they've been enrolled in AVID and 15 out of 17 seventh grade students' GPAs improved since they've been enrolled in AVID.

The majority of students rated their AVID experience as somewhat helpful or very helpful. Only 4 of 16 eighth grade students rated their AVID experience as not helpful or indifferent/unsure. There were no 7th grade students that rated their experience as not helpful or indifferent/unsure.

Student responses varied in regards to whether or not they plan to enroll in AVID again: “Yes, the teacher in high school is amazing and AVID is helpful with the right teacher.” (E5) “Yes, because it does help me to prepare for college and I think it will make it easier.” (S3) “I will take AVID next year because I want to succeed.” (S9) “Yes, because AVID helps me stay on task and I feel like AVID is my motivation.” (S10) “Yes, because the PSG helps me with math.” (S11) “I would because it helps me understand and I get a lot of things now that we have PSGs, last, my grade has improved.” (S13)

The majority of students responded to the question of the most helpful aspect AVID with valuable information. Of all the seventh and eighth grade responses, 15 out of 33 students mentioned that peer study groups (PSGs) were the most helpful aspect of AVID. College awareness, note-taking and sense of belonging were amongst the other responses. “AVID helps you a lot in getting scholarships and leading you the good path to college. I am the first one to go to college in my family and I don’t know how to get there and I thought this (AVID) would help.” (E2) “Having a family in school to fall back on.” (E5) “PSGs” (E7) “PSGs” (E9) “PSGs” (E10) “The PSGs, I’ve learned a lot in those.” (E13) “There’s PSGs and when I have a question about a new topic, or anything in one of my classes, AVID helps me with my question.” (E15) “There are PSGs and taking Cornell notes.” (E3) “PSGs because I could ask something that I am having trouble with and they (classmates) will help.” (S4) “The most helpful aspect of AVID is learning about colleges and what they expect from you.” (S5) “The most helpful aspect is PSGs.” (S6) “Learning about our future/PSGs.” (S7) “The most helpful aspect is PSG because it helps me learn how to do something from (other) classes.” (S8) “PSGs because

every time I have a question that always helps me.” (S10) “I think is the PSGs” (S11) “Doing PSGs, so if I don’t understand something and I ask the question they (classmates) help me figure it out ☺!” (S13) “The most helpful aspect of AVID is doing PSGs because when I need help on a question, I can get help from my friends or teachers.” (S14) “PSGs and Cornell Notes” (S16)

To summarize the students’ lack of comments regarding the least helpful aspect of AVID, this student says it the best with their response, “For me there’s nothing from AVID that has been least helpful, because learning these things took me to new academic and social levels with me and those around me.” (S5)

The eighth graders had more to say in regards to improvements to their AVID experience, commonly mentioning the following: “Get a more helpful and encouraging teacher.” (E4) “A better 8th grade AVID teacher.” (E5) “Getting a better AVID teacher.” (E6) “Different teacher would help.” (E8) One student brought up a valid suggestion, not relating to the instructor of the class, “Less homework; how can we be able to concentrate on our own classes and succeed in them if we have to do homework for this (AVID) class?” (E13)

Lastly, students’ definitions of success include the following: “Success is attaining things that satisfy you; achieving your goals, and getting things you’ve worked hard for.” (E3) “Success is what you set yourself up to do. It is the feeling of accomplishment.” (E2) “Success is a word that means work hard, try not to fail, never give up, believe.” (E7) “To fill your dream and not to give up when it gets harder and to always remember to make a possible out of an impossible. I 100% want to go to college

because I want to be successful and I be the first in my family ever to go. I don't mean in my house family, I mean my whole entire family." (S13)

Interviews were conducted with several seventh and eighth grade AVID students. The interviewees' responses echo that of the survey responses. However, one student did share in more detail their thoughts on AVID. In response to learning about AVID and attending an information night with her parents, student I1 responds, "Oh that sounds cool, I can't wait to do that until I'm in 7th grade. I thought it was cool because they told us about field trips we would take to colleges and universities and I've always been interested in learning and I want to be something in life. My parents always motivate me to do something, they're like, "I don't want you to have my life." Student I1's parents never went to college and barely graduated high school. Student I1 continues, "I'm learning strategies like Cornell Notes - The most important thing is being organized - something general but has a lot of things in it - like taking Cornell Notes, it has helped me a lot. Some people say Cornell Notes are annoying, but it's worth it, because later on it will help you. I don't want to stop learning. I want to get as much education as I can. My definition of success is achieving your goals. AVID got me more mature; you hear college and college and college a lot, it's helped me be more prepared for my classes and what comes along later in life."

Analysis

Looking back on the data gathered I'd like to focus my analysis of students' responses of their AVID experience as it relates to college readiness, collaborative learning and the most/least helpful aspects of the program.

AVID awareness is important in building a successful class. As mentioned in the data section, students begin learning about the AVID elective class while still in elementary school and there is almost a recruiting process that takes place: referrals, open-houses, presentations, sixth grade teacher recommendation. Overall, the majorities of students enrolled in AVID saw an increase in their GPA and consider the class to be helpful. Many students plan to enroll in the future because of the success experienced.

College readiness is a motivating factor for students' future enrollment in AVID, with students saying things like, "it does help me to prepare for college and I think it will make it easier." (S3) and "I want to succeed." (S9) Student I1 shares their passion for learning and further education aspirations, "I thought it was cool because they told us about field trips we would take to colleges and universities and I've always been interested in learning and I want to be something in my life." (I1) This is the "cookie" that Swanson talks about in her research tempting students to seek higher education. Another student says that the most helpful aspect of AVID is that, "AVID helps you a lot in getting scholarships and leading you the good path to college." (E2)

A popular trend in education includes collaborative learning which AVID excels at with their PSGs. Nearly half of the students surveyed believe that PSGs are the most helpful aspect of the class, saying things like, "if I don't understand something and I ask the question they (classmates) help me figure it out ☺!" (S13) and "because when I need help on a question, I can get help from my friends or teachers." (S14) Another helpful learning strategy which some students find annoying, but some appreciate is learning the Cornell notes-taking strategy and mentioned it in their survey results. These learning

strategies not only help students in their immediate academic classes, but in preparation for higher levels of learning.

Some students were opinionated in that the teacher has a direct relationship with the students' successful experience in their AVID class and would like to have a better, more encouraging and helpful teacher. Student observations and responses are parallel to that of Swanson's essential recommendations for a successful program; a skilled and committed AVID teacher is needed.

Implications/Recommendations

Based on data gathered and analyzed, several recommendations should be considered when creating a successful AVID experience for middle school students.

Beginning with the AVID awareness process, I believe it is imperative to educate students and families about the program and the opportunities for further education based on participation and dedication to the program, ensuring that no student is left behind. The AVID experience should continue to focus on the importance of collaborative learning as well as focus on helpful learning strategies such as Cornell Notes, college readiness and student success which was echoed in the students' responses. Based on their survey responses, some students believe their experiences could be improved with a different teacher. This feedback leads me to additional questions.

While this research focuses on the middle school students' experiences which have been highlighted in the data and analysis section, I am now curious as to the perception of AVID teachers. I am interested in uncovering the teacher's opinion, challenges and accomplishments, overall experience, in teaching the underprivileged students in an AVID classroom.

Conclusion

Remember all those underprivileged students sitting in that classroom? Some are skating by at the bare minimum, and some are soaking up the experience as you read this. Some are determined to make their dreams a reality. In researching AVID, further education aspirations and perceptions on success, I'm pleased to learn that most students consider their AVID experience a success, or a beginning to a successful education. captured the thoughts, feelings and real-life experiences of those students stuck in the middle who've chosen AVID. In their words, "success is what you set yourself up to do," (E2) and "means work hard, try not to fail, never give up, believe." (E7). These middle school students are embracing their experience and setting themselves up for success by choosing Advancement via Individual Determination.

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