



The Mission of AVID

is to ensure that all students, and most especially students in the middle, capable of completing a college preparatory path will;

- Succeed in rigorous curriculum,
- Enter mainstream activities of the school,
- Increase their enrollment in four-year colleges, and
- Become educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society.

2001 Summer Institute Schedule

Northern California Site
July 8-12
Oakland, CA

Southwestern Site
July 15-19
Austin, TX

Eastern Division Site
July 29-August 2
Atlanta, GA

International Site
August 6-10
San Diego, CA

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Summer Institute 2000 Closing Address — Decades of Dreams —

By Mary Catherine Swanson
AVID Founder and Executive Director

It is with a profound sense of awe that I stand before you today – awe for who you are, the work you accomplish, awe for who your students are, their courage, their hope, their determination. On this our 20th anniversary, we have had the privilege this week of seeing the beautiful lives of many of my original students and the determined, dedicated lives of your students.

Jonathan Freedman has written our story Wall of Fame to celebrate our 20th anniversary. I would like to read to you a passage from that book.

“The high schools where I taught were not Disneylands. The dilapidated buildings, armored with steel gates, were guarded by police. Classes were held in scabrous portable classrooms, where poor working conditions lowered teacher morale. As the school district raised stan-

dards, the low-income schools where I taught were put on academic probation and threatened with closure if their principals did not improve test scores. Yet the schools lacked the resources to cope with their students' needs for shelter, nutrition, and stability. Teachers were overwhelmed and felt put down and abandoned. Kids were so anxious about their security that they could not focus on classroom learning.

“Yet two classrooms I visited seemed altogether different: student morale was high, teachers were dynamic, study was rigorous, learning was exciting. In these classrooms, I saw kids take responsibility for completing assignments, tutors help them prepare for tests, students help each other, and the teachers support and

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Dr. Lionel “Skip” Meno: Focusing on Standards and Accountability

In an educational career that has spanned 30 years in the states of New York, Texas, and California, Dr. Lionel “Skip” Meno has observed the performance of students, schools, districts, and states from many different positions. First, as a teacher in an alternative school, Meno found a way to involve 17 and 18 year-old potential dropouts in the process of their own education, so they wouldn't, as he puts it, “rip the school apart.” Then, as a site administrator and superintendent of schools in Syracuse, New York, and then as Deputy Commis-

sioner for the state of New York, Meno developed an approach to standards, accountability, and a system of reporting and analyzing results for continuous improvement.

In 1991, Meno became the Commissioner of Education for the state of Texas, which was then involved in monumental legal, financial, and assessment challenges regarding education. As Commissioner, Meno was able to reconcile diverse groups that had different views of state content standards and account-

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ability. Meno proposed a new system that would make the state responsible for what students would be taught but still allow local schools and districts to determine how students would be taught. In establishing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and its accompanying Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), Meno and his team at the Texas Education Agency, supported the Texas legislature's efforts to improve the financing of Texas schools, which had been declared unconstitutional by the Texas Supreme Court. The 1989 Edgewood decision cited inequities for students from poor communities and threatened a shut down of Texas schools.

The Texas accountability system has become in many ways a national model. Moreover, working with the Texas Education Agency, the legislature, and the courts, Meno developed a system of performance reporting that supported the notion of equitable funding statewide. Legislation then tied schools' funding to the state's accountability system. Thus was created a significant educational movement, one

which has gained as much attention as any the last 20 years and has been adopted by many other states: high stakes accountability.

In trying to create broad consensus for standards and accountability, Meno looked back on his experiences as the first teacher for the Alternative Learning Center Program, which was an attempt to reclaim the educational lives of high school dropouts, in Syracuse, New York over 20 years earlier.

"For our alternative center, we had to find some way to quantify education, other than seat time," recalls Meno. "These students lacked incentives and we needed their buy in. We asked them what it would take to keep them in school. Then we started looking at the skills, knowledge, and attitudes it takes to be successful. Our approach was to look at some standards and work back from those. In Texas, many years later, we took the same approach at the state level."

In the early 90's, Meno says, Texas was faced with a number of issues related to the quality of education. At the center of the debate was the issue of what constituted a first-class education and how it could be funded.

"You had to have a system of standards, assessment, and accountability," he says, "and you had to have equi-

table funding. Without a system that united the two, I don't think you'd have seen the end of Edgewood."

The standards and accountability discussion in Texas taught Meno some lessons that he thinks should inform the work of many states.

"Devising standards sounds simple," he says. "But it is really very complex. When you begin to look at what skills are embedded in the standards and to what depth, and across what areas, then you've got a challenge."

Meno left Texas in 1995 and became superintendent and chief executive officer of one of New York State's Boards of Cooperative Educational Services. In 1999, he joined San Diego State University as Dean, College of Education. He serves on statewide California postsecondary committees and also works closely with local school superintendents and other educational agencies.

Recently, Dr. Meno sat down for an ACCESS interview focusing on standards, accountability, and teacher preparation.

ACCESS: Accountability in connection with state standards is currently a predominant trend in public education. What are some of the most important

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My Future Goals

By Gabriel Tollen, grade 12
Rancho Bernardo High School

"Everyone is an explorer. How could you possibly live your life looking at a door and not open it?" (Robert Ballard). I have always considered myself an explorer. I try to map out my goals just like an explorer, but I never had the tools in which to move myself toward my goals. That is until I joined the AVID program. AVID changed my life by giving me the confidence and strength to touch lives. Through the AVID program, I intend to achieve my goals of going to a university and studying to become a high school counselor.

The AVID program has always instilled the vision of going to a four year university and has made that vision a reality for many. AVID has constantly pushed and motivated me to get involved with my school and my community. I am currently involved in Key Club, the sport of lacrosse, and I am also an academic tutor. Without AVID, I would have neither the confidence nor the motivation to join these activities. Through AVID's guidance, I realize that activities such as these are essential components to getting into universities.

My second goal is to become a high school counselor. Since joining AVID, I have felt that it is not only my job, but also my duty to help and listen to other student's problems and guide them. I get a sense of satisfaction when helping someone through a stressful situation. I feel that it is my way of giving back to a program that has been my "rock" and support group from day one. I also try to help younger AVID students because I feel that they are not only the future of the program but also the leaders of tomorrow.

In conclusion, I feel that AVID has helped me take steps closer to my goals. I often wonder how my life may have turned out without my AVID family. I think of it as two separate roads of the past. As Robert Frost once said, "I took the road less taken and that has made all the difference."



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This is our mission in AVID, and we must not let our goal be compromised, for if we do, we will all become victim to the kind of separation among classes and cross-class and cross-cultural fighting which has historically been the downfall of democracies. We must AVIDize the public to what is real in public education and to what is possible.

We must make sure the public sees the inspired teaching, the courage of both educators and students, achievement against the odds, the successful struggle which occurs daily in AVID. We need to proclaim our enthusiasm and passion about the importance of education and about our students. We must honor the nature of educators' knowledge and the social and moral dimensions of that knowledge; to celebrate the role of teachers as culture brokers and boundary mediators; we need to recognize the intricate mix of

courage, hope, and thoughtfulness among our students.

AVID, as practiced by one teacher in one class, has the power to save schools and transform lives. When multiplied in thousands of classes over decades, AVID has the power to transform millions of lives – and to save our schools. We must honor AVID's tradition and commitments, one student at a time, to prepare youth for college. And so it is on this AVID's 20th anniversary, that I honor you the teachers, those who work with our students day by day. Those who will AVIDize public education in the 21st century. We cannot deny what we have already proved to work. You have met the faces that are our statistics.

Collectively we honor the courage and accomplishments of the AVID students of the last 20 years who have laid the groundwork of expectations for today's students. Today we go forth into the 21st century to honor our students who will meet the challenges of the new millennium, whose names will be added to the wall of fame. We will

create a wall of fame stretching from 1980 to 2020, from the west coast to the east coast, from Europe to Asia, from the middle east to Cuba. This wall does not honor fallen heroes of war. It praises living students who are lifting themselves up and accomplishing the unbelievable.

Let the wall of fame uphold our principles of rigor and support. Let it help a new generation to bridge the great divide. May the wall of fame protect our children, our public schools, our pluralistic democracy.

I look to the 21st century as a time of great hope for us all, for we in the AVID program have laid the groundwork over the past two decades. We have dreamed dreams with our students and they have made the dreams reality.

Our AVID students have become the leaders of our tenuous democracy, and as our wall of fame grows they are creating a world that is better than the one we have known. Indeed, our students are our decades of dreams, and I am so proud to be a part of our journey.



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questions that states aren't considering before initiating their systems?

MENO: The first thing they should ask is, do we have a broad base of understanding and support for what we want the schools to do, and how will we hold them accountable? Also, do we have a broad base of public support? In Texas, as opposed to many states, that support was there. This means that you can move more quickly and overall support for your accountability system is critical. California is a current example of where you don't have a consensus. You need a real commitment to engage in a statewide accountability system. Another critical factor is to be clear on what we want children to learn. It is easy to say that we want all children to read by the third grade, but what does that mean? This is an area of accountability and assessment where California is doing well. Next, once you have standards, you have to decide what your evidence will

be. Equally important, how will you put that evidence into a system that is reported to everybody? Another key question is who will be accountable, including individuals and institutions? Most importantly, how does the accountability process relate to improving the educational system? Accountability should be the subtext for continuous progress. To me, that was one of the positive aspects of our approach in Texas.

ACCESS: What factors prompted the push for increased accountability in states and at the national level?

MENO: It is just a simple reality check, really. At one time, natural resources drove our economy. Now, the gross educational product drives us. If we want to maintain our standard of living, it's the gross educational product that counts. At one time, we were able to have a very few highly educated individuals who could create the technologies and innovations that fueled our economic system. Today, we need many better-educated people. More than economics, though, it's citizenship as well. The world is more complex.

Even without the workplace issues, this complexity requires a high level of education for our democracy.

ACCESS: In addition to focusing on assessment, under your leadership as commissioner, Texas implemented the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), the accountability system that records and publishes a variety of measures. How did you develop this approach to data collection?

MENO: I've always been focused on data. I believe it is important to set an objective, measure, and then monitor, so you can make mid-course corrections. When I was superintendent of schools in Syracuse, we had an attendance system that was reporting each week to everyone involved that compared you to last year and to other schools. As a result, our elementary attendance went from under 90% to above 96%. That's the power of data.

ACCESS: How would you characterize the overall teacher reaction to accountability in Texas and in other states?

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MENO: When I first arrived in Texas, teachers had been beaten up unmercifully. They weren't the problem. It was the system. We tried to emphasize that teachers were not only the first team, they were the only team. We tried to empower them. Initially, we were met with skepticism. Over a period of time, they began to believe they were critical to the success of students and that we valued them. As far as other states, you've got 50 different approaches. Still, one constant I see is that teachers see themselves as undervalued. Unfortunately, some efforts at involving teachers in shared decision making have suffered from a lack of knowledge. One of the good things about AVID is that it does involve teachers in the process and that it gives them the knowledge to make good decisions.

ACCESS: How have parents reacted to accountability? Do they see it as a blessing or a curse?

MENO: With an accountability system, there's a big difference for parents if it's an institutional accountability or individual accountability, which can be perplexing to them. You get confusion and anger from parents when the student has been passing his classes and then gets low scores on state tests. And when you get into promotional or graduation gatekeepers or exit exams, parents are less supportive. In general, I don't think that parents are opposed to their child being held accountable for performance, as long as there has been a consistent message from the beginning of his education.

ACCESS: As the Dean of Education at one of California's largest universities, what connections do you make between accountability and teacher preparation?

MENO: It really goes back to the same overall points about accountability. We have standards for teachers, but we need to be clear about what evidence we'll accept as measurement of those standards. In the short term, this could be more expensive because it will require more time, but in the long term it will be much more effective. It is very expensive to deliver a teacher to the job market who can't or doesn't want to do the job. To address this, I envision more

of a partnership with K-12 and postsecondary. Currently, we have this 'silo' notion that, first students finish K-12, then their undergraduate, then teacher preparation, and so on. A focus on the teaching career must start sooner, and student teaching must be with master teachers. The only way to accomplish this is with the cooperation of K-12. Higher education has an important role to play in making sure that a new teacher's induction to the profession is smooth. California has done an excellent job in this area, with new teacher preparation.

ACCESS: What is the role of Advanced Placement in K-12 accountability?

MENO: The reason I like Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs is that they already have standards and clear evidence in place. They offer rigorous preparation with quality control, and when you get results, they're verifiable. This type of rigorous coursework should be a part of any state's accountability system. For example, if a school has 70% of its graduates completing three or more AP exams or 50% receiving an IB diploma, then there should be a reward. In Texas, we used a percentage of AP or IB exams passed for schools to receive additional credit on their accountability rating.

ACCESS: Will the U.S. ever move to a system of national testing and accountability, the way some other nations have?

MENO: It doesn't look that way to me. There seems to be a strong inclination to keep our accountability at the state level. Of course, this is related to the fact that, under our constitution, education is the states' prerogative. We do have an informal set of national standards, including SAT and ACT testing, and those fill the void.

ACCESS: How well are most state tests linked to state standards?

MENO: It runs on a scale of one to ten. Some are at a point five, while others are at nine. Most states have made a real effort to align their assessment with their standards. But a worrisome thing is the fact that there has been a move nationally to limit assessment, so you're taking only a narrow spectrum of measures. For example, if the arts are important, then we ought to measure the degree to which we've reached our objective. We should not just limit

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our assessment to reading and math. I think it's safe to say that we haven't used the genius of our country to attack problems like these. We're a clever nation and we can do so. I would also add that everything doesn't have to be a paper and pencil test. If you want to assess how well an institution is doing, you don't have to test all students. You can sample. Assessment and accountability is really like the franchise system in private industry. The state licenses a franchise to the district and the district licenses the site. In private industry, quality control isn't done every day, but when it is done, specific factors are measured and consistent evidence is gathered and analyzed, in order for the franchise to be granted. In education, we could look at the same type of process.

ACCESS: How do minority students figure in the accountability picture?

MENO: This should be a critical factor in any accountability system. In my opinion, you really can't have true accountability without measuring the performance of sub-groups. If all you look at is total group performance, you're really getting a blurred picture. You could have an 80% passing rate for example, but the 20% not passing could be poor or minority students. To its credit, California is trying to measure the performance of all groups. Texas was really the first state to measure performance in this way, and it has become accepted practice.

