



Application to Submit a Case Study:
 Our Journey to Schoolwide AVID (School name, city and state)
 An AVID National Demonstration School

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Our Journey to Schoolwide AVID:

Ramona High School
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Success in making Ramona a schoolwide AVID program has been a love affair from the beginning. The romantic journey begins in 1988 with Wanda Schneider, Ramona’s first coordinator, bringing AVID out of San Diego and into a burgeoning world of possibilities. This case study will target three specific areas—leadership to move AVID schoolwide; strategies that have made our site team exceptional; and experience we have shared with other AVID programs throughout the country.

Wanda gave breath to the program when we started with one class of AVID in 1988; Sally Griffin gave discipline to the program when she took over seven years later in 1995; and Scott Lockman gave vision to the program when he took command in 2002. In 21 years of AVID exploration, Ramona has had only one AVID elective teacher step down—all the teachers have remained in the program or have moved on to higher positions in the AVID family. The consistency in leadership has remained not only at the school site, but at the district and administrative levels. Our school board, downtown and school site administrators have faithfully supported AVID throughout the district from day one.

“I grew up in a very difficult circumstance as a young woman in a Mexican family. My college goals weren’t supported at home—AVID provided me with the support and the family environment that encouraged me to follow college dreams,” said Lucia Arteaga, a 1996 Ramona graduate. An AVID coordinator at Wilson High School in Los Angeles, Lucia graduated from Cal Poly Pomona in 2000 with a degree in English and earned a masters in education from UCLA. In 2008, her school site became the first AVID Demonstration School in the Los Angeles Unified School District. *“AVID really helped build my self-esteem, confidence, and my leadership skills. I’m a proud product of AVID.”*

Flash back to the year 1988 at Ramona—325 students graduate and less than 10 enroll at a four-year university. Ramona's ethnicity is 68% white, 19% Hispanic, 9% African American and 4% Asian. We are an upper middle class population with only 9% of the students on Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The number of English Learners is only 5% of the population. However, we offer only one Advanced Placement class to 25 students, and the number of seniors who complete the A-F requirements is only 17%. Fast forward to the year 2007/2008 at Ramona—dramatic changes have occurred. Nineteen years later, our ethnicity stands at 30% white, 60% Hispanic, 7% African American, and 2% Asian. The number of students on Free or Reduced lunch (AFDC before) has climbed from 9% to 69%. The number of English Learners has increased from 5% to 16%. However, our number of Advanced Placement classes also increases from one to 12, servicing 288 students instead of just 25, and the number of seniors who complete the A-G requirements increases from 17% to 46%. Despite the population change, Ramona raises the education bar through its AVID program.

"AVID benefited mostly in how to study in future course work—it forces you to take notes—which is a good thing. Organization and time management I learned in AVID is pretty important—it has helped me these last two years," said Mark Torres, a 2002 Ramona AVID graduate. In 2006, Mark graduated from the Naval Academy in Annapolis and recently finished a two-year tour as an engineering officer on the USS Oscar Austin, a guided missile destroyer. *"The Ramona teachers were great, the kind who were always involved, especially in focusing on getting the students into college."*

AVID has been instrumental in Ramona's success, especially in the last 10 years—between 25% and 28% of the school's population has been in AVID with a current high of 585 out of 2,100 in AVID for the 2008-09 school year. In 2008, out of 95 AVID seniors, all but one were accepted at a four-year university, totaling 498 acceptances in all, receiving 1.4 million dollars in financial aid, most in the form of grants and scholarships. In 2005, our school ranking was a ten (the highest) when compared to similar schools. In *Newsweek* magazine, our school ranked among the top 800 high schools in the nation—No. 1 in the Inland Empire. Ramona was also honored as a California Distinguished high school.

"I got the majority of my college knowledge from AVID—it opened my eyes to different colleges—a whole new world—I just knew I needed to get to college; but, I didn't know how—AVID showed me the steps," said Staton Gibson IV, a 2003 Ramona graduate. Staton earned a full-ride scholarship to UC Riverside and was the captain of its track & field team his senior year. He graduated with a degree in sociology in 2008 and is currently entering the sheriff's academy. *"When I got to college, I didn't go in with a blind eye—AVID made me a student, teaching me to understand and maneuver through college."*

Leadership segues into strategies for student success in achieving college acceptance and completion. Scott, Ramona's current coordinator, continues the leadership reins handed to him by Sally. In addition to emphasizing note taking, tutorials and inquiry, reading and writing, collaborative strategies, and a rigorous course load, Ramona's AVID program has taken quality time to make all of these aspects work from top to bottom. For the last three years, Scott (who was voted Ramona's Teacher of the Year in 2007, along with District and County honors) leads department and staff meetings, working with the staff in identifying problems and recognizing achievements. Six of the ten AVID elective teachers teach at least one Advanced Placement class, and seven of the AVID teachers present at summer institutes and at AVID Path Training. Every Tuesday, Ramona's AVID elective teachers and counselors (we have two) faithfully meet to discuss concerns and coordinate activities—parents, students, college tutors, and non-AVID elective teachers are invited. Strategically, quality and dedicated teachers were chosen from the beginning. Nearly all are veteran teachers, with credentials in math, English, history, and science.

“Confidence and the willingness to work to succeed are necessary to complete your goals. Without the structure AVID set, my individual determination may not have been focused enough to make the difference,” said Kelly Schulte, a 2008 Ramona graduate and four-year AVID student. Kelly is currently working on her degree in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. *“Now I am sitting in my dorm room at MIT working on physics problems with the knowledge that I have the individual determination to push through this challenge and keep working towards the completion of my education.”*

Ramona—and not just AVID—has a vision of student success with both eyes towards a college degree. Our students are involved in athletics, performing arts, clubs, and volunteer projects. Our program seeks to progress in a quality manner—85% of all students in AP classes at our school are AVID students. We get 4-5 application per week from students interested in joining AVID, and we place a heavy emphasis on working with our middle school feeders. We spend countless hours checking on student grades, preparing students for SAT and ACT tests, and helping students fill out college paperwork. This year we improved our tutorials by spending the summer and the first month of school training our 35 college and high school tutors to perfect the AVID methods of student learning.

Our vision is to continue the progress we have made in turning Ramona into a college-going culture and to share our success throughout the nation and the world. An AVID Demonstration School for the last 13 years, our site team has hosted countless visits from administrators and teachers throughout the nation. We work with the College by Design team to share about our AVID experiences, leading to ongoing communication and support for school districts in the Boston, Texas, and California areas. AVID is in our blood and in the veins of our students—it pumps life into our dreams of creating better lives for everyone around us—we just love it!