

**Berkner, TX** Teamwork, enthusiasm and passion enabled the first L.V.Berkner Site Team (2005-2006) to lay the foundation for what has become a National Demonstration Site (March 2009). Prior to the implementation of AVID at BHS in 2005, the four elective teachers along with the newly formed site team participated in the Summer Institute in Austin, Texas. At the institute team members attended appropriate strands to enhance their knowledge and understanding of AVID. The team prepared the first site plan and readied themselves to be leaders in the catalyst for campus change. Berkner High School has quickly and successfully implemented the AVID program in the largest and most diverse high school in our district. We are a four year high school with an enrollment of approximately 2760 students and are located in a northern suburb of Dallas. We began the 2005-2006 school year with 100 students in two 9th grade and two 10th grade elective classes. Currently we serve over 10 per cent of our student population in 11 sections. The 2010-2011 school year will be our fourth year to have seniors.

Our AVID student population is 42% African American, 30% Hispanic, 20% Asian, and 8% White. The overall campus student population is 29% African American, 21% Hispanic, 17% Asian, and 33% White. In addition 68% of our AVID students are economically disadvantaged, 1% are English Language Learners, and 5% require Special Education Services. Berkner High School's overall student population is currently 34% economically disadvantaged, 8% are English Language Learners and 12% require special education services.

**TAKS Passing Data – AVID vs. Non-AVID students**

For the second year in a row Berkner High School is a TEA Recognized campus.

**ELA**

- Non-AVID: 9th grade: 95.4%, 10<sup>th</sup>: 89.9%, 11<sup>th</sup>: 94.9%
- AVID: 9<sup>th</sup>: 100%, 10<sup>th</sup>: 100%, 11<sup>th</sup>: 96%

**Social Studies**

- Non-AVID: 10<sup>th</sup>: 94.7%, 11<sup>th</sup>: 97.1%
- AVID: 10<sup>th</sup>: 100%, 11<sup>th</sup>: 100%

**Science**

- Non-AVID: 10<sup>th</sup>: 79.4%, 11<sup>th</sup>: 90%
- AVID: 10<sup>th</sup>: 90.9%, 11<sup>th</sup>: 97.4%

## Math

- Non-AVID 9<sup>th</sup>: 77%, 10<sup>th</sup>: 81.4%, 11<sup>th</sup>: 91.6%
- AVID: 9<sup>th</sup>: 94.7%, 10<sup>th</sup>: 93.9%, 11<sup>th</sup>: 96.1%

AVID student GPA's are consistently higher than the overall Berkner population.

This will be the sixth year of AVID on our campus. Since the beginning of the implementation year, the majority of our AVID students is minority and come from low income households. Our AVID program committed to supporting students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Many of our AVID students will be the first in their families to attend college. Students in the program commit themselves to improvement and preparation for college. Through weekly academic instruction, tutorial support, and motivational activities AVID students prepare for college admission, acceptance, and success. Our students leave Berkner High School with the necessary skills to become productive members of the global society.

Berkner's AVID program is committed to continuous improvement and expansion. AVID is an integral part of our Campus Improvement Plan. We have learned that in order to retain students who will successfully graduate and succeed in college, we need to intervene early. We have also learned that the 9th grade year is critical to the success of our AVID students. Students must start in the right AP and Pre-AP courses in this year in order to maintain a rigorous curriculum throughout high school. We challenge students with a rigorous high school curriculum, bring relevance into every classroom, and developing relationships that lead to meeting the individual needs of students.

We continue to address college readiness during the sophomore, junior and senior years in high school by requiring all students to enroll and complete advanced placement courses. Each student enrolled in an AP course is required to take the corresponding exam for college credit in May. Our AVID students began focused preparation for postsecondary education as early as 9th grade by taking the PSAT. The site team utilizes the AP Potential Report to increase enrollment in appropriate courses of rigor. Native Spanish speakers take the Verification of Credit exam in order to advance into AP language courses. Elective students prepare for standardized tests with district provided SAT/ACT online resources. Our junior students participate in the Princeton Review Assessment in the fall in order prepare for the SAT and ACT. This assessment helps students determine their potential success with the ACT and SAT which includes information on which test is more appropriate for the student and strategies for success. All junior and senior students are required to take the SAT and/or ACT by November of the senior year. AVID students apply for and received district scholarships to attend summer school. This allows them to have additional room in their schedule for the AVID elective and additional AP courses. Each winter the sophomore students participated in the Accuplacer, a test that aligns with the SAT, at nearby Richland College (Richland is part of our local community college district). Accuplacer

results designate sophomores who are ready for dual credit courses in the summer following the 10th grade. This gives students the opportunity to earn college credit for free during the 11th and 12th grade year. This creates room in the schedule for the AVID elective. This is especially important with new graduation requirements. We increase academic support for our students through additional tutorials during all lunches. These tutorials also serve as a tool to recruit additional AVID students.

One of the keys to success in our program has been the strength of our site team. It really is impossible to do this program well without the shared efforts of our site team members. We are strong due to collaborative AVID leadership: AVID coordinator, elective teachers, site team members, and administration. From the start the Berkner team consisted of faculty members who were not only well credentialed, but had a desire to do “whatever it takes” for students to achieve success. The makeup of our AVID site team shows our commitment to utilizing AVID as a mechanism to improve our school climate and culture in order to prepare students for college success. The site team truly is the foundation of Berkner AVID because it represents all departments and is composed of supportive administrators, AVID savvy counselors, AP teachers, department chairs, instructional specialists, parents, tutors, students and a coordinator. Site team members demonstrate the need for cohesiveness and constant communication within the site team and school faculty in order to implement and expand AVID. Our site team, which numbers approximately 30 people, is high functioning and aware of the impact of AVID on our campus. One of our site team members joined as a result of the interaction with one our outstanding students. Our students serve as ambassadors to the program. The early perception of our program on campus was one of being an “at-risk” or “remedial” program. The pride students have in being an AVID student has helped to transform the image among students and faculty.

College students tutor biweekly to enhance students’ academic performance. Initially, these college tutors are trained by the district staff and throughout the year receive further instruction onsite. The college tutors utilize the Socratic method in tutorials (facilitating high level inquiry) and bring real life examples of young adults who, through higher education, are creating their path to success. We do teambuilding exercises which are at times facilitated by our tutors and district student services personnel which strengthens the relationships. Teambuilding also assists with students social adaptability needed for college success. During the course of the year, students seek advice from the tutors on college entrance requirements and skills necessary for college success.

Our site coordinator serves as a staff developer for AVID Summer Institutes and PATH training. In the years that followed the implementation of AVID, the site team trained the faculty on taking Cornell notes, anchoring instruction with reading and writing, bringing critical thinking into classroom discussions, reaching before teaching, collaborating through teamwork and dialogue in the Socratic Method. Site team members also conduct district wide training and participated in regional AVID conference. In addition, we are a featured program in the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Best Practices Clearinghouse. Site team members have also attended

the Up Where We Belong and Juntos conferences in order to gain insight on closing the achievement gap by improving minority performance in high school.

The college going mentality spread from the site team's classrooms into the hallways, trophy cases, and common areas of Berkner. Displays of college memorabilia are located in teacher classrooms and other widely viewed places in our school. Our faculty members have door signs with their degree and university which stimulates college talk on campus. We have also made poster sized copies of college acceptance letters and put them in strategic locations. This helps to increase awareness of the different colleges students have available to them. Posters with information about SAT and ACT, the value of a college education, and income levels of the college educated are also placed around the school. Overall, the AVID program has brought a college-bound focus to our campus culture. We currently have non-AVID students asking permission to attend college visits. We provide college visits for our AVID students in each grade level. Visits include trips to Baylor University, the University of Oklahoma, Texas A&M University, Louisiana Tech, Grambling State, University of North Texas, Texas Christian University, University of Texas at Arlington, the University of Texas at Dallas, the Art Institute, Richland College, and Stephen F. Austin. With funding from the Exemplar grant we received in 2009, 40 juniors and seniors were able to attend an overnight trip to four universities including Baylor, the University of Texas, University of Texas at San Antonio, and Texas State University.

Additionally, we have increased college awareness schoolwide through the use of planners. By making planners available to all, non-AVID students have learned valuable organizational skills for college through education on the use of a planner.

AVID students receive additional support through the mentoring program. Each student has a faculty mentor who routinely meets with them throughout the school year. AVID sponsors two mentor breakfasts during the year which is an additional way our faculty builds personal relationships with our students. Our program has made several successful partnerships with area organizations. We work with Communities in Schools to assist at risk students at a nearby elementary school. The Berkner Exchange Club supports the AVID community by providing financial support for our cookout in the fall. They also provide scholarships and awards to outstanding members of the BHS student body and more frequently these are AVID students. We also work with the Richardson Central Rotary to involve our students in the Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA). Students also represent AVID in Berkner Presents Berkner and Multicultural Night. In January 2010 the AVID Club sponsored a schoolwide after school study session where AP/Pre-AP teachers, AVID tutors and astute AVID students tutored for semester exams. In April of 2010 AVID seniors organized the first AVID Family Field Day. Students in AVID are also active participants in the Career Summit, Spirit Week, financial aid seminars, and the Comet Connection where admissions representative from a local college come to campus and assist with college applications. We partner with local elementary schools to provide tutoring. Upper classmen speak to elementary and junior high classes about the AVID program and its impact on their lives. We also conduct a junior high visit where all incoming freshmen spend the

morning at Berkner engaged in information sessions about the importance of high school, Advanced Placement classes, and extra-curricular activities.

Berkner AVID students are involved in their campus. They take pride in improving the culture of our campus by being involved in band, orchestra, athletics, choir, Mu Alpha Theta, drill team, National Honor Society, Berkner Girls Service Society, French Club, Robotics, Superintendent's Advisory Council, Mock Trial, Debate, theatre, career and technology programs, Student Council, Peer Mediators, Key Club, Peer Helpers, Professional Internship Program, cheerleading, Local School Council, and of course AVID Club. AVID students, take ownership for the school climate by checking ID badges, leading the morning pledges, and morning announcements. Berkner also houses the T-STEM program for science, technology, engineering and math. We are the only school in the district with the program which makes wide use of AVID strategies. Through AVID, our community partnerships and club involvement, our students have multiple ways in which they learn that giving back to the community is an important aspect of giving back to society. They grow from simply completing required hours to true service learning.

Our vision for the future includes improving our diversity in Advanced Placement courses. We also want to build a network of support through grade 16. We also wish to improve character building, an aspect of education that is often missing at the high school level. This class incorporates activities that emphasize treating others with respect, making good decisions, and developing leadership skills. We also want to improve our intervention plan in order to better support our most struggling students. As we host more local and regional visitors we would continue to demonstrate AVID methodologies. During the 2009-2010 we hosted district leadership groups and over 100 additional visitors to our campus. In addition, during our College and Career Week, we had an additional 30 visitors to our AVID classrooms. In May we hosted the AVID National Board and Executive team. Educators from around the country travel to observe the best practices of AVID and share our vision of doing whatever it takes to make students successful. The Berkner AVID program has gained national recognition because of the unrelenting support of school, district, state, and national officials.

A cornerstone of the program is our excellent retention rate. Recruitment is at an all time high. As our program has grown, our students have been able to receive more nationally recognized scholarships such as the Dell and Gates Millennium Scholarships. Students quite simply are the strength of our program. They are able to show their pride in the program and articulate their future goals. When asked about AVID the students sum it up in different words. "Life-Changing... Faith... It is something you have to experience to appreciate...AVID is a lifestyle...AVID is my life and my family."