

# Making College and Career Readiness More Equitable:

The AVID College and Career  
Readiness Framework

Creating learning environments that challenge, support, and honor the contributions of every student are necessary for developing schoolwide and districtwide college and career readiness.

# Introduction

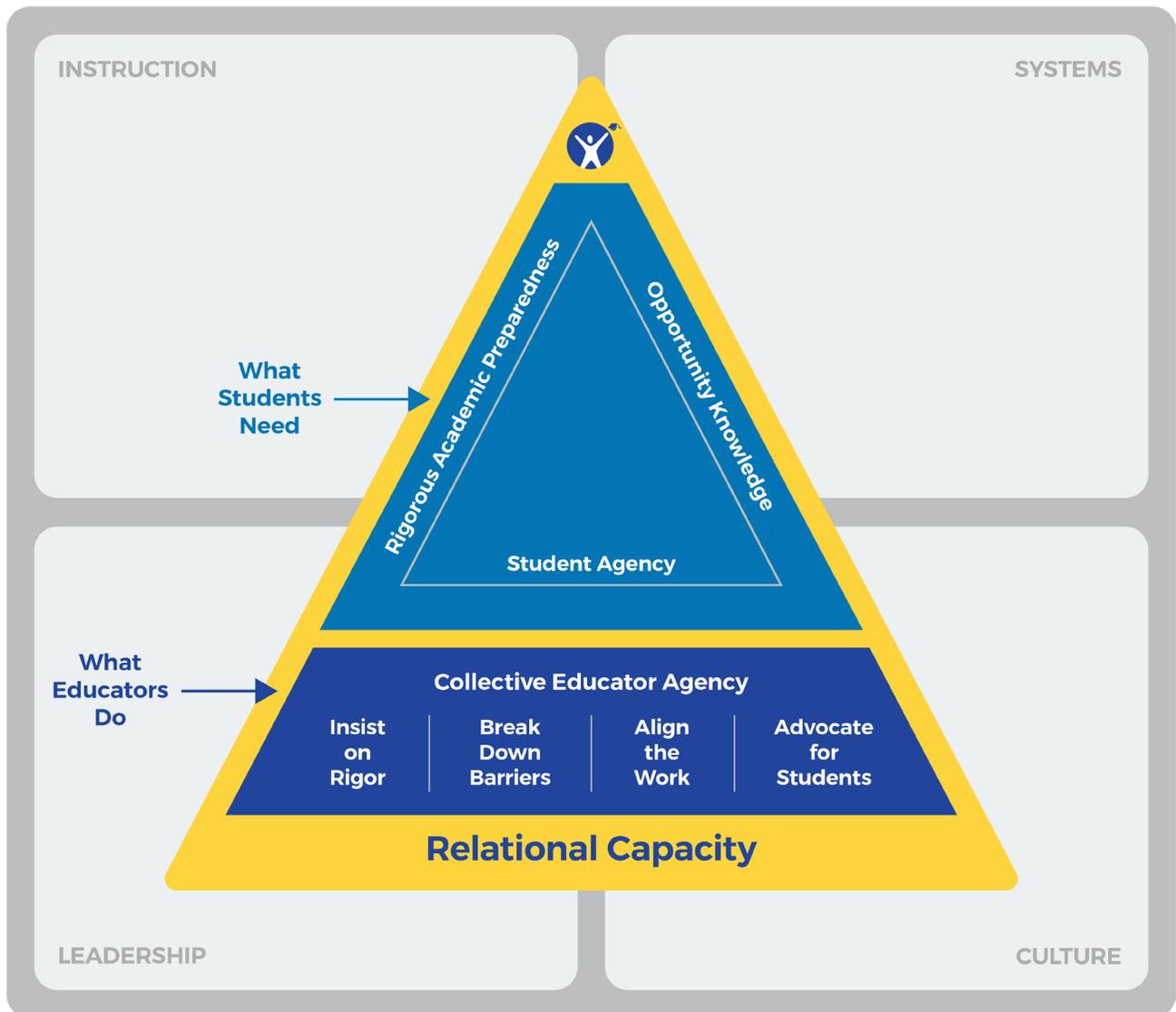
**The AVID College and Career Readiness Framework (the Framework) provides structure and a common language for articulating AVID’s theory of action for establishing equity and access to educational resources and experiences known to accelerate college and career readiness in all students.**

By design, the Framework helps inform district and school leadership in aligning goals and initiatives, identifying opportunity gaps (system inputs), and setting expectations and understanding of what it means to support every student in their community. To that end, the Framework focuses on adult actions, the learning environment, and organizational structures at the school and district levels to increase equity and access to what students need to successfully engage in a future of possibility.

Decades of research<sup>1,2</sup> have done little to impact the persistent gaps in academic achievement and college and career readiness between ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups of students. This is due, in large part, to widely accepted notions that these gaps are primarily a result of student attributes, such as poverty, minority status, lack of familial support, and low educational attainment of parents—few of which are directly impacted by schools. An alternative perspective is to consider subgroup differences as a reflection of system inputs (for example, opportunity and expectation gaps) or how schools go about the business of schooling. Through this lens, gaps in achievement are considered in the context of the learning environment and the structure of schools—all of which are amenable to change informed by current research and effective pedagogical practices.

Research<sup>3,4</sup> shows students often having differential access to college and career readiness curriculum and programs with traditionally underserved students having fewer options and opportunities. It is our contention that by using a broad, system-centric perspective as a backdrop, our theoretically derived and research-based Framework of college and career readiness will empower educators to activate their teaching and leadership in ways that build relational capacity, minimize gaps in opportunity and access, promote collective educator agency, and accelerate efforts to prepare every student for the rigors of college, career, and life’s possibilities.

# The AVID College and Career Readiness Framework



The intent of the AVID College and Career Readiness Framework is to provide educators, community members, parents, and students with a model of what is needed to develop college and career readiness schoolwide.

The Framework provides the education community with a common language and understanding of what the necessary skills, experiences, and attributes are that students need to possess in order to successfully identify and realize their college and/or career aspirations. Moreover, the Framework includes specific adult actions necessary to accelerate student success, as relational capacity strengthens between students and adults and collective educator agency increases schoolwide.

## The AVID College and Career Readiness Framework consists of five main components:

- 1 Domains that drive schools**  
Instruction, Systems, Leadership, and Culture
- 2 Relational Capacity**  
The connection among individuals that develops over time when interactions are built on respect, trust, and authenticity
- 3 Elements defining college and career readiness**  
Rigorous Academic Preparedness, Opportunity Knowledge, and Student Agency
- 4 Adult actions promoting college and career readiness**  
Insist on Rigor, Break Down Barriers, Align the Work, and Advocate for Students
- 5 Collective Educator Agency**  
When educators on a campus take intentional actions based on shared beliefs and trust that, together, they can increase opportunity and measurable success for all students and each other

Districts and schools present similar and unique challenges that are addressed before, during, and after each school year. Schools using the Framework determine their own entry point based on their multiyear strategic plans, school improvement plans, and/or college and career readiness goals. In this way, the Framework affords a nimbleness that allows schools and districts to apply AVID in a targeted way that meets the needs of their students and communities.

Another important attribute of the Framework is its dynamic nature. The Framework is designed such that each of the three elements of college and career readiness (Rigorous Academic Preparedness, Opportunity Knowledge, and Student Agency) and the four adult actions (Insist on Rigor, Break Down Barriers, Align the Work, and Advocate for Students) can be considered within the context of any or all four domains. In doing so, schools and districts can engage in specific, targeted areas of improvement or in schoolwide transformations depending on areas of greatest need.

For example, a principal recognizing the need to ensure *Rigorous Academic Preparedness* for all students would be most successful thinking about this work in the context of the current **culture** on campus, the **systems** needed to monitor student course-taking patterns, the professional learning needed to support **rigorous instruction** in all classrooms, and the **leadership** actions required to accelerate schoolwide efforts.

# Framework Components and Definitions

## 1 Domains That Drive Schools

There are four domains present at every school that, when aligned and attended to with intentionality, accelerate college and career readiness in all students. They include:

### **INSTRUCTION**

AVID is schoolwide when the entire staff utilizes AVID's WICOR® strategies, other best instructional practices, and 21st century tools to develop college and career readiness in all students.

### **SYSTEMS**

AVID is schoolwide when systems are in place that support governance, curriculum, instruction, data collection and analysis, professional learning, and parent engagement to develop college and career readiness in all students.

### **LEADERSHIP**

AVID is schoolwide when leadership sets a vision and tone that promote college and career readiness and high expectations for all students in the school.

### **CULTURE**

AVID is schoolwide when AVID's philosophy progressively shifts adult and student beliefs and behaviors resulting in increased college and career readiness in all students.

## 2 Relational Capacity

Relational capacity is the connection among individuals that develops over time when interactions are built on respect, trust, and authenticity.

Relational capacity is the foundation upon which safe, respectful, engaging relationships are built and maintained. It should exist among students, among educators, and in the interactions and relationships of students with educators. When established, students and educators are more likely to take academic risks, fail without fear, and take advantage of the opportunity to learn in the most teachable moments.

## 3 Elements Defining College and Career Readiness

### What Students Need →

AVID students receive intentional support and mentoring in three major areas that help them become confident individuals who can successfully navigate life and career:

#### Rigorous Academic Preparedness

Students develop academic skills and can successfully complete rigorous college and career preparatory curriculum and experiences.

#### Opportunity Knowledge

Students research opportunities, set goals, make choices that support their long-term aspirations, and successfully navigate transitions to the next level.

#### Student Agency

Students believe in themselves and act intentionally to build relationships, persist through obstacles, and activate their academic, social, emotional, and professional knowledge and skills to reach their potential.

By placing students in a learning environment that engages them in rigor with support, affords opportunities to explore their future pathways, and provides deliberate instruction in self-management and leadership, they develop the agency and skills that will serve them throughout their lives. None of this is possible, however, if trusting relationships aren't first established between adults and students. The development of student agency is particularly challenging unless students feel cared about, supported, and capable to successfully direct and take ownership of their futures. Establishing, nurturing, and maintaining meaningful relationships forms the basis for what is commonly referred to as the AVID family.<sup>5</sup>

## **4 Adult Actions Promoting College and Career Readiness**

### **What Educators Do →**

Teachers and other adults on a school campus play an important role in student success. AVID supports educators and transforms the learning environment into one where students are challenged, supported, and provided the tools needed to succeed. To bring about this transformation, educators must:

#### **Insist on Rigor**

Educators provide learning experiences in which every student is challenged, engaged, and develops a greater ownership of their learning through increasingly complex levels of understanding.

#### **Break Down Barriers**

Educators actively identify and work to eliminate structural and perceptual barriers that limit students' access to relevant and challenging learning opportunities.

#### **Align the Work**

Educators increasingly align policies, practices, and beliefs to the shared vision of all students succeeding in college, career, and life.

#### **Advocate for Students**

Educators extend social, emotional, and academic support to students and challenge policies, practices, or beliefs that limit potential.

## **5 Collective Educator Agency**

Collective educator agency is educators on a campus taking intentional actions based on shared beliefs and trust that, together, they can increase opportunity and measurable success for all students and each other.

The success of every individual is evidence of our capacity to build respectful, trusting, and authentic relationships with each other. Success is not ours alone but a reflection of what is possible when, collectively, we work toward a common goal.

## Conclusion

The AVID College and Career Readiness Framework provides a coherent, research-based, and efficacious model for minimizing opportunity gaps and developing college and career readiness in all students. By using a broad, system-centric perspective as a backdrop, AVID's theoretically derived and research-based Framework empowers educators to act in ways that promote more equitable and accessible learning experiences for students.

Creating learning environments that challenge, support, and honor the contributions of every student are necessary for developing schoolwide and districtwide college and career readiness. But even that is not enough. Building relational capacity among students, between students and teachers, and throughout the school has proven to be the active ingredient necessary to bring the AVID experience together in promoting trust, academic risk-taking, and the belief in oneself that "I too can be successful."

What makes AVID unique among educational frameworks is the intentionality and commitment of AVID educators insisting on rigor, breaking down barriers to success, aligning the work, and advocating for students until they can advocate for themselves—none of which can alone accomplish the intended goal without strong and trusting relationships between students and adults.

Over four decades, we have seen student outcomes improve. In addition to graduating more college-bound and career-ready students, schools are equipping students with the social and emotional faculties that they need to successfully engage in life's possibilities.

## References

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