

THE AVID COURSE DESCRIPTION

AVID is offered as an elective course that, like any other regular class, meets five hours per week. Students receive two hours of instruction per week in college entry level skills, two hours per week in tutor led study groups, and one hour per week in motivational activities and academic survival skills. During students' senior year, they may take honors courses or other elective courses such as newspaper or yearbook staff, or Associated Student Body classes for four hours per week and their AVID class one hour per week. The AVID elective may also be offered on an Independent Study option or as the University of California "G" requirement.

College Entry Skills: See the *AVID College and Careers*

Each year begins with all students preparing for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT) so that they are ready to participate in one of these exams in their junior and/or senior year. Freshman, sophomore, and junior students are also encouraged to take the Eleventh Grade Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) or the Tenth Grade Preliminary American College Test (PLAN) as further preparation. This ongoing preparation includes instruction on averages, geometric formulas, and other problems common to college entrance tests. The language arts preparation includes exercises on test analogies, sentence completion, and reading comprehension. Students also study the most common Greek and Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Students become "test wise" by taking mock SAT and ACT exams. Additionally, the AVID teacher teaches a unit on essay exams that introduces students to the concepts of timed writing, teaches them to organize their thoughts quickly, and prepares them to write concisely.

Writing: See the *AVID Writing Curriculum*

AVID uses "writing as a tool of learning" as a basis for all assignments. This preparation revolves around the improvement of writing in all subject areas because writing clarifies thought. Most AVID students have average skills in mathematics but have difficulty with English because it may not be their first language. The AVID writing curriculum utilizes the writing process. Freshman AVID students begin with lessons on lecture and textbook notetaking. They progress through the writing the writing curriculum dealing with autobiography, firsthand biography, and descriptive and explanatory writing. Sophomore and junior AVID students focus on specific writing strategies such as describing processes and comparing and contrasting. The senior AVID students work to improve the skills acquired in the previous years by writing essays in various discourse modes and by applying these skills to timed writings, which prepare them for the college English placement examinations.

Academic Study Skills: See the *AVID Strategies for Success*

AVID also provides students with academic study skills such as time management, notetaking, textbook reading, library research, and maintaining the AVID binders. Class and textbook notes, time management calendars, assignments, and homework are kept in the AVID binders, which organize the students' daily routines. In the front of each binder students keep a tutorial log of their participation in AVID study groups.

One hour per week is devoted to motivational activities such as field trips to local universities and colleges, during which students attend classes, learn to use the libraries and bookstores and tour the campuses. Students take field trips to local businesses and professional offices to learn about various career options. Career and college outreach speakers are also invited to the AVID class to speak to the students, introducing them to the many educational and career opportunities available.

Collaborative Groups: See the *AVID Tutorial*

AVID employs college tutors, many of whom are former AVID students and graduates of the schools in which they work, to work with students two hours per week in all academic areas. Tutors assist students primarily in small groups. Students come to class prepared with questions about their assignments. Students learn a system of notetaking that helps them record, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate course concepts. These notes are the focus of the tutorial study group sessions. The students' obligation to tutors is that they read or study the materials and have accompanying notes. The tutors do not provide answers; rather, they help the students with the process of learning through inquiry. Thus students learn to seek and use help, a skill often underdeveloped in the students whom AVID targets.

Furthermore, study groups emphasizing the Socratic method of inquiry and collaborative learning teach students yet another valuable skill that will assist them in being successful students, since the most successful college students are those who study in groups rather than in isolation.