

**Teachers' Perceptions of Advancement Via Individual Determination Professional  
Learning at the Elementary Level**

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## **Abstract**

The implementation of professional learning also known as professional development within school districts is a key task taken on each year overseen by district and building administration. Each decision for content focus and style of professional learning invested in by the district typically aligns with district beliefs, visions, and missions. Investing in professional learning that is research based and effective becomes an important task for leaders. As noted by Mizell (2010), effective professional development enables educators to develop needed knowledge and skills to address students' learning challenges. The purpose of this research study was to examine the perceptions of the professional learning experience of elementary teachers within an established Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) site school. Research on AVID professional learning at the elementary level is limited. Within district XYZ, the investment of the AVID program has moved to a district wide approach, showing a need to examine the effectiveness of this investment at the elementary grade levels. The participants for this study were teachers varying in years taught, years at the AVID site school, grade levels taught and exposure to prior AVID professional learning. Within the study originally 12 participants were identified as not having been on the AVID leadership team within the building and selected to participate. Out of the 12 selected, 11 were able to interview with an outside proctor. This qualitative study was guided by a central question and 3 supporting research questions. An analysis of responses from the participants resulted in 3 findings and 16 themes. This researcher found that AVID professional learning at the elementary level in the AVID site school was overall perceived as beneficial and having an impact on most participants. When teachers'

perceptions were more closely examined the majority stated that they were overall adequately prepared from the professional learning experience received through the AVID elementary approach. When reviewing the research, grade level taught and years at the AVID site school appear to be affected by lack of preparedness. Obtained from the research was also the offering of suggestions from participants related to how the professional learning approach is carried out in year three or a request to adjust, support and clarify specific AVID writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading (WICOR) strategies being implemented in future years of implementation and professional learning planning.

## **Dedication**

First and foremost, this work is dedicated to my family. My husband, Dave, and son, Josh, who have both been patient throughout my journey. Each time one of them has checked on me to give me a pep talk or chat it has renewed my drive to continue in the process and reach the final goal. These two men have been my stronghold and footing throughout this journey. Lastly, to my mother and sister for always giving me a chance to talk things out and review my goals as I pushed to carry on with the process of my dissertation. It has been in the little moments each person has kept my sails unfurled to carry on in a journey that has taken time and dedication.

This work is also dedicated to my district and building community. Each have been a constant ray of encouragement. Within this group the educational leadership from Dr. Merri Beth Means, Dr. Christina Courtney, and Dr. Jasmine Briedwell providing guidance and support throughout this journey has been the foundation for my work.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

According to Guidetti, Viotti, Bruno, and Converso (2018) the design of self-efficacy in reference to the teaching profession has raised growing attention linked back to teachers' professional behaviors and students' learning outcomes. To better understand the implications and effect size teacher self-efficacy has overall on achievement, examining what the occurrence itself is first is needed. Guskey (1998) stated in his research on the topic that Rand researchers defined efficacy for teachers to be, "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student learning" (p. 3). The question for many is how to cultivate an environment for teachers that sparks true teacher efficacy. What is also questioned is how to sustain a culture of true teacher efficacy to positively affect student achievement over time. Research conducted by Guidetti et al. (2018), on teacher's work ability and the correlation between self and collective efficacy, showed that teachers' self-efficacy could affect their perception and how they evaluate their work ability. These results from Guidetti et al. (2018) indicate that teachers' belief in their own professional capabilities in turn bring about the likelihood of the creation of self and collective efficacy, teachers may be more likely to provide students with significant learning experiences.

In general, when looking at the factors that have a meaningful impact on creating self-efficacy in teachers several efforts in school settings have been studied. Research was conducted by Prelli (2016) on the correlation of transformational leadership strategies utilized within a school setting impacting teacher efficacy. Prelli (2016) cited research by Hill and Lindquist (2008), that indicated gains made in a rural educational

setting of the Southwestern United States specific to efficacy when teacher leadership teams were developed and utilized. A transformational leader, according to Prelli (2016), exhibits in his or her leadership, key factors such as creating cultural norms and commitment to the group's overall mission and beliefs. According to Prelli (2016), a transformational leader creates empowerment in teachers to achieve common goals with needed resources cultivating a professional learning culture and unified leadership team. Findings from Hill and Lindquist (2008) were reported in research conducted by Kurtz and Knight (2004), examining relationships among teacher self-efficacy, collective teacher efficacy, and goal setting. In their research goal setting as a learning community had a positive outcome on teacher efficacy and overall collective efficacy. While one aspect of creating efficacy in teachers relates back to a specific leadership style, the overall idea of creating goals and consensus among the members of the learning community that has resources to support the work is similar between both studies and seen as vital in the process to create the effect of teacher efficacy. Prelli (2016) also cited in his research, a study conducted by Ross and Gray (2006) indicating teacher efficacy alone promoted teachers' commitment to goals that in turn strengthened commitment to the school's mission inciting professional learning. Based on the studies mentioned prior, the ability at the school setting to create efficacy and support this with common work as a professional learning community resulting in a desire to grow professionally adds to the importance of finding the best form of professional learning and development for teachers.

A program that claims to have professional learning that "sticks" is Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID, n.d.). As stated in one study conducted by the

AVID organization, the AVID effect on teacher behaviors in relation to professional learning tied to the AVID program is due to the characteristics that elicit changes in teachers' practices which then bring about changes in student learning. (AVID, n.d.) The professional learning and resources provided by the AVID program have five characteristics that are noted to make the work effective. These characteristics are:

- ongoing professional learning that allows teachers to learn, adjust and implement;
- support available to address challenges in the classroom in real time;
- engaged teachers when professional learning occurs;
- modeling provided with visuals and takeaways to be implemented;
- and content grounded in the teachers' specialty or area of study (AVID, n.d., p. 3).

The overall design of AVID professional learning includes the use of teacher training the teacher approach through a leadership site team. A Summer Institute is held each year, where teacher teams for the site attend to take the learning back to the building for the school year (AVID, n.d.). The AVID study used pre- and post-surveys to examine the effect of the program on teacher behaviors specifically from Summer Institute participants in 2014. The pre-survey examined the participants immediate understanding and professional learning that occurred at the 2014 AVID Summer Institute after the training prior to implementation at the school setting and continued supported professional learning that school year. Then following 2014-2015 school year, the same attendees were given the post survey to address perceptions of the teachers regarding the effectiveness of the training related to their understanding after time in the classroom and integration of the strategies addressed in the program summer development, as well as their impressions of changes in student learning. In the study, results showed growth

between pre-and post-survey data. The overall findings from AVID (n.d.) found increases in the percentages of teachers who:

- fully understood the AVID strategies;
- fully integrated the AVID strategies into the way they teach in the classroom;
- saw a positive change in the behavior of students, and how students learn (p. 5).

In another study, relating to AVID professional development and teacher leadership, Huerta, Watt, and Alkan (2008), noted that a key factor to be cited as one of the main components of the program's effectiveness is the comprehensive approach that is sustained through professional development driven by the site team of eight other professionals attending the Summer Institute training. This style of embedded and ongoing professional learning relates back to the research from Prelli (2016), and Kurt and Knight (2003) that supports creating a culture of ongoing professional learning that empowers teachers with goal setting and a unified leadership team. The AVID program boasts to have a format that creates an engaged teacher who has ongoing support and is a led within a team approach creating professional learning that has a stronger lasting effect on teacher actions in turn changing student actions (AVID, n.d.). This approach is overseen by a direct leader and site team together, which cultivates a sense of shared leadership and a team approach.

In a quantitative study by Huerta et al. (2008), the impact of AVID professional learning on the sense of teacher leadership was examined. The study was designed to investigate if AVID professional learning increased teacher leadership, relating to empowering teachers, regardless of age or experience. Huerta et al. (2008) stated that they found that, "as the amount of AVID professional development increased, so too did

the level of teacher leadership” (p. 6). Later in the findings, Huerta et al. (2008) concluded, AVID professional development in relation to the number of AVID Summer Institutes attended was a significant predictor of teacher leadership. Furthermore, the authors pointed out that this is not only necessary information for district leaders involved with AVID, but for all who are interested in school reform (Huerta et al., 2008). This recommendation from the authors, would be pertinent to heed, especially when acquiring an embedded resource that has positive impacts on teacher self-efficacy, effectiveness, leadership and in turn student achievement.

### **Background**

The origins of AVID, came about due to a secondary educational reform in the state of California in 1980, developed out of the single classroom of founder Mary Catherine Swanson (AVID, n.d.). Later, AVID Summer Institute was first introduced to educators in 1989 as the core of AVID professional learning (AVID, n.d.). The format was set to meet teachers where they were in the AVID process to impact the students with strategies that engaged and enveloped culturally responsive practices in the classroom setting. In 2007 the program expanded nationwide into the elementary level (AVID, n.d.). The intent with the expansion was to set younger learners up for success at an early age to develop strong academic habits and a foundation that would lead to the likelihood of a readiness for college and career. AVID professional learning uses researched best practices to embed skills and strategies applicable to all curriculum teachers implement within the classroom (AVID, n.d.). The professional learning itself is also carried out in a continuous, supportive process from year to year under the AVID leadership site team to the elementary teachers within the school. As stated in the

research from Huerta et al. (2008), the approach AVID uses for developing the program for teachers supports the idea of training teacher leaders and increasing leadership skills as the professional learning continues. Hill and Lindquist (2008) also shared research supporting the thought that with increased leadership among teachers as professionals their self-efficacy also increases.

John Hattie (2018) first published research that indicated teacher self-efficacy has a strong effect on student achievement. Hattie (as cited by Demonstrated Success, 2021) reported that the collective effect of teacher self-efficacy is 15% more impactful on student success than a student self-reporting their own expected achievement outcome, which stood as the second most influential effect in Hattie's research overall. Also noted in the work from Demonstrated Success (2021), which was based on Hattie's research collective teacher self-efficacy is 67% more impactful on student success than socio-economic status. When taking into consideration the prior research showing connections between strong professional learning, leadership, and teacher efficacy which in turn impact effectiveness in teachers, the approach that AVID uses for professional learning is worth examining further.

As noted, by Danskey (2017), there is a need for more research to be conducted around AVID at the elementary level. Danskey (2017) reviewed the overall program effectiveness of AVID at the elementary level. In the researcher's qualitative study of academic efficacy, examined from the students' point of view, an overall increase related to organization, note taking, and tools taught through the AVID approach was seen (Danskey, 2017). Later Danskey (2017) made recommendations for further research noting this study as the first conducted at the elementary level. The researcher

specifically recommended more research of long-term impacts and similar studies related to student achievement, as well as long-term impact and teachers' perceptions of students' overall improvement (Danskey, 2017). While Danskey's study focused on the student perceptions, the fact that the amount of AVID research at the elementary level is limited, gives way to the importance of a study from the teachers' point of view. Again, referencing back to Hattie (2018) and his research related to the level of impact a teacher has on overall student achievement when their level of self-efficacy is increased with meaningful professional learning, it is worthwhile to examine the impact of AVID professional learning at the elementary level from the perceptions of the teachers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

With the increasing need for educators to develop strategies and supports to close the achievement gap for learners, one of the largest effect sizes, according to Hattie (2018), is the impact of professional learning on self-efficacy in teachers, which in turn has a direct correlation with student achievement. This relationship is described in a report about the organization's own professional learning program featured on AVID's website. The problem when relating this research back to the elementary setting is that the studies conducted by the AVID organization and others are often based primarily at the secondary level. In the secondary setting AVID is implemented with specific students and teachers, and then taken to a school-wide approach by designated AVID coaches and counselors. At the secondary level this approach of having only specific classrooms as AVID instructors, then building the momentum of understanding for all teachers to use these strategies with support from AVID coaches and counselors is different than the elementary approach. The school-wide approach that AVID takes in



the elementary setting applies to all classrooms and students within a broader context at the school setting. The study mentioned prior by Huerta et al. (2008) is one of only a few resources that ties back to the elementary level.

A variety of studies conducted at the elementary level within the AVID program and from resources outside of the AVID organization is vital for educators and school districts to gauge the true impact of the program. Furthermore, research from a variety of sources over time is the only way that a true picture can be formed from the educators' point of view of the effectiveness of AVID at the elementary level. When reviewing the history and origination of AVID related to the secondary level, there is a lack of information examining how professional learning at the elementary level is approached differently to bring the framework of the program to meet the needs of the elementary setting. The limited nature of said research shows a need for this topic to be examined more closely for districts that allot funding for AVID as a large component of their comprehensive school improvement plan, such as the district in this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to gain an understanding of the impact of AVID professional learning on teacher effectiveness within the elementary school setting by analyzing the perceptions of elementary teachers at varying levels of years of experience at the site school and AVID professional learning. This study takes an approach to look at the professional learning experience in an urban district within Kansas City, Missouri at one of 11 elementary schools that has launched AVID district wide. The district has elementary schools at varying levels within the program, the site school for the study was within year three of AVID professional learning in a school-

wide approach at the K-5 level. The study explored the AVID approach to professional learning within the elementary schoolwide approach and how this transfers over to teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness to implement the strategies in their elementary classrooms. This study also looked to find comparisons between research based on professional learning and what the AVID program houses within their claim of professional learning that 'sticks' for educators that is limited at this time (AVID, n.d.). By gathering and analyzing elementary teachers' perceptions of the impact of AVID professional learning on their effectiveness the researcher hoped to gain a better understanding of AVID elementary professional learning and how to better support AVID professional learning within the elementary setting in turn having a greater impact on teacher efficacy and effective professional learning.

### **Significance of the Study**

This qualitative study contributed to research that informs elementary schools and districts, specifically District XYZ, on the impact and effectiveness of AVID professional learning at the elementary level. The findings from this study will allow for educators and administrators to gain insight into the perceptions of elementary teachers that have participated in AVID professional learning over time. The site school being one that is beyond year one allows for the research to be conducted in a setting where teachers would have participated in the professional learning longer than one year allowing for descriptors of years at the site school and experience with AVID professional learning to be examined within the research.

**Delimitations**

As defined by Lunenberg and Irby (2008), delimitations are self-imposed by the researcher in connection with the scope and sequence of the study. In this study the delimitations included the one AVID site at the third phase of implementation within the study of the teachers' perceptions within a district focused to a set time spanning one school year. A second delimitation is that the researcher chose to limit the study to one public school district, limiting input from possible AVID parochial or charter-based schools at the elementary level. Lastly, the study was limited to the teachers' perceptions of AVID professional learning in relation to effectiveness and their ability to implement thoroughly in their classroom settings after attending AVID professional learning.

**Assumptions**

Assumptions that influenced the researcher's study included, an assumption that participants understood AVID implementation and terms used within the data collection process. Also influencing the research was the assumption that the participants accurately, and truthfully responded to the interviewers' questions. Lastly, the assumption was made that the perceptions of the elementary teachers who participated within the study are a representative sample of elementary teachers participating in AVID site schools.

**Research Questions**

This qualitative, phenomenological research study was focused on a central question with supporting sub questions based around the perceptions of elementary teachers participating in AVID professional learning over time. The central question guiding this study was, "What are teachers' perceptions of AVID professional learning at

the elementary level?” The sub questions were used to expand on the understanding of AVID professional learning and frameworks within this study in relation to the teachers’ perceptions over time.

**RQ1.** What are elementary teachers’ perceptions of the AVID professional learning approach at the elementary level, and the impact that it has had on them overall as an educator?

**RQ2.** How have elementary teachers’ perceptions of their own effectiveness in implementing AVID strategies changed over time from year one of implementation to year three as an AVID site school?

**RQ3.** What are the perceptions of the elementary teachers’ effectiveness when specifically implementing AVID writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading (WICOR) strategies in year three of implementation?

### **Definition of Terms**

The researcher chose to provide clarity and a common understanding of terms and phrases used within this study, by defining those for the reader. The necessity of defining these terms and phrases for the reader is due to the use of language used exclusively used in the AVID program that could cause some misconceptions unless defined for those unfamiliar with AVID.

**Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).** According to the AVID website, AVID is a nonprofit organization that focuses on an equitable, student-centered approach that assists in training educators in methods to close the opportunity gap to prepare all students for college, career, and life (AVID, n.d.).

**Control theory.** Solomon et al. (2018) authored AVID resources that referenced the influence of Glasser's work from his text, *Control Theory in the Classroom* (1986), supporting the use of collaboration within the classroom setting among students. Glasser (1986) recommended for student groups to work together to achieve a common goal satisfying basic needs of belonging, power, freedom, and fun (as cited by Solomon et al., 2018).

**Costa's levels of thinking.** Arthur Costa influenced the AVID concepts of critical thinking and instructional practices (Solomon et al., 2018). His levels of thinking are centered under the realm of inquiry within the AVID framework with each level building off the other moving from gathering, applying to processing.

**Teacher self-efficacy.** Guskey (1998), stated in his research on the topic that Rand researchers defined self-efficacy for teachers to be, "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student learning" (p.3).

**WICOR.** Based on information from AVID resources, WICOR instructional strategies in classrooms develop skills that are grown upon each year for learners (see Appendix B). These strategies within WICOR focus on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading (Drumright, Pengra, & Potts, 2016).

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 consisted of an introduction to AVID, a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, definition of terms, and an overview of methodology used within this qualitative study. The second chapter included a review of the history of AVID as well as a comprehensive overview of components specific to the AVID program, current research on AVID elementary, and research related to successful professional learning traits in relation to AVID

professional learning. Chapter 3 discussed the research design of this qualitative study. Chapter 4 included a report of the findings from the collected data based on interviews with teacher participants from an AVID site school in year three of implementation. Finally, followed by Chapter 5 which consisted of an analysis of the findings of this study and further recommendations in relation to the study of AVID elementary.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to first provide a clear understanding of the history, philosophy, implementation frameworks, as well as clarity about AVID elementary in comparison to AVID at the secondary level. Within the second section of this chapter and essential to an understanding of this study is the examination of the AVID WICOR framework used by teachers within the schoolwide implementation model for AVID elementary. In the third section, the chapter examines varying research about the overall effectiveness of AVID elementary. Finally, the fourth section of this chapter, addresses professional learning and correlations to teacher effectiveness in comparison to AVID professional learning practices.

#### **AVID History and Philosophy**

Provided to each district working with AVID are a variety of resources in hard copy and in digital format on the AVID website platform. When examining the resource, *AVID College and Careers: A Schoolwide Approach*, the authors clarified how the program grew from a 1980 federal court order in the San Diego Unified School District to what it is currently (Solomon et al., 2018). In the beginning, the federal court order called the California district to integrate students from their low-income, largely ethnically diverse demographic regions seen as racially isolated to higher performing schools. According to Solomon et al. (2018), the result of this federally mandated integration was a shift in educators and students in the suburban middle-class school, Clairemont High School, leave and transfer to the new high school within the district. According to Solomon et al. (2018), an English teacher at this school, Mary Catherine

Swanson, saw the possibility in the new students when focusing on their individual determination to succeed with the correct rigor and expectations in place. Swanson, department chair at Clairmont High, began her career in 1966 and centered her master's thesis around the concept that specific practices supporting student acceleration, while non-traditional in theory, was successful (Solomon et al., 2018). The theory within Swanson's thesis later became the foundation of AVID's philosophy centered around the following components (Solomon et al., 2018):

A non-traditional classroom setting meeting the academic and emotional needs of individual students; the teacher as advisor/counselor/student advocate; emphasis on objective data; students at the center of decision making regarding educational goals; student contracts outlining a willingness to work and setting learning goals; student support from teacher and skilled, trained tutors; a rigorous curriculum emphasizing academic reading and writing; and reliance on the Socratic process.  
(pp. VI-VII)

The early days of Swanson's work, with what is now known as AVID, were supported by her colleague and mentor, Jim Grove. The team worked with 32 low-income, diverse high school students who were academically mid centered and less likely to show academic achievement as compared to peers within the academic setting. After putting her theory in place, Swanson saw 30 of the original students graduate with all enrolling in either four- or two-year college programs (Solomon et al., 2018). Swanson had doubters and did face accusations from a colleague that the students cheated on an exam, but this was quickly put to rest when the students retook the exam and passed a second time (Solomon et al., 2018).



Solomon et al. (2018) stated, from this experience, Swanson went on to develop a systematic way to educate the teachers at Clairmont High School about AVID to clarify the practices and avoid future issues involving doubt about student achievement and growth. She implemented a site team with testimonials from her students as to the practices and strategies used within the process. This evolved into the team creating methods and lessons based on their work and collaboration together along with input from college level professors. This work rooted in content specific materials used for the first California statewide direct assessment of writing exams expanded into the focus of academic reading and writing related to all content areas housed within AVID's approach (Solomon et al., 2018). The results from this early work that moved to a school-wide approach within the secondary model, showed improvement overall for Clairmont High School. Noting in 1986, the standardized test scores from the school improved by 46% in language arts and 35% in mathematics surpassing all other high schools within the district (Solomon et al., 2018).

Swanson's work at Clairmont High was supported later by funding from the California Department of Education in 1986 (Solomon et al., 2018). This funding allowed for the AVID program to be taken to the entire county of San Diego. This work then moved in 1991 to a national platform when Swanson was recognized by The Charles A. Dana Foundation in New York City with an award of \$50,000 for the Dana Award for Pioneering in Education (Solomon et al., 2018). The publicity received allowed AVID to become more widely recognized and sought after by other states and departments across the nation with the AVID Center being established in 1992 (Solomon et al, 2018).

With the expansion of the AVID philosophy and program, Swanson looked for ways to maintain the fidelity and quality of the program. According to Solomon et al. (2018), professional learning was a monthly focus at California sites guided by AVID coordinators. In 1986, the work focused on at the sites was research that supported AVID, collaboration of classroom strategies and issues that educators were facing. Later in 1989, after funding was no longer available, Swanson initiated the first AVID Summer Institute for educators to attend. The AVID Summer Institute started in 1989 by Swanson with 260 educators in attendance and grew to more than 40,000 educators attending each summer according to Solomon et al. (2018). According to Solomon et al. (2018) Swanson also created in 1987 a certification and coaching instrument for site schools assessing the school's phase of implementation annually through checks and balances related to criteria specific to AVID (see Appendix A). Each site uses a tool specific to what is known as essentials for implementation of AVID with fidelity (Solomon et al., 2018). The relative efficacy of the 11 AVID program essentials was assessed in a report from Guthrie and Guthrie (2002) describing each as follows:

1. student selection focuses on students in the middle;
2. staff and students must choose to participate;
3. AVID elective class available within the regular academic school day;
4. AVID students must be enrolled in rigorous courses of study;
5. a strong writing curriculum is the basis of the AVID elective course;
6. inquiry used for a basis of instruction in the AVID elective course;
7. collaboration is used for a basis of instruction in the AVID elective course;
8. sufficient tutors available in the AVID class;

9. all progress of students is monitored and analyzed with the AVID Data System;
10. resources identified and set aside for the costs of the program and all needed training; and
11. an active interdisciplinary AVID site team. (pp. 5-10)

As well as the fidelity checks and balances of the 11 AVID essentials, data gathered for the secondary schools focused on increasing college preparatory enrollment and college enrollment post-graduation (Solomon et al., 2018).

According to Solomon et al. (2018), Swanson considers AVID not a program, but a philosophy. Solomon et al., (2018) stated, “at the core of AVID’s mission is the belief that all students can successfully achieve when they are held to high expectations and properly supported (p. IX).” AVID has been influenced over the years by research from other experts. Solomon et al. (2018) stated that early on Swanson’s work embraced William Glasser’s and Phillip Uri Tresiman’s theories. AVID resources state that Glasser’s work from his text, *Control Theory in the Classroom*, (1986) supports the use of collaboration among students within the classroom setting (Solomon et al., 2018). Glasser’s theory supports student groups working together to achieve a common goal, and satisfying the basic needs of belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Glasser, 1986). Solomon et al. (2018) also noted that the work of Uri Tresiman supports the thought of working collaboratively. The mathematics professor from the University of California, Berkley researched why he was seeing success in certain ethnicities in his calculus courses compared to others. The work uncovered that his Chinese calculus students studied in groups whereas his African American calculus students worked often in

isolation. Uri Tresiman was one of the founding board members for the AVID Center later in 1992 (Solomon et al., 2018).

In later years, research from Arthur Costa and Robert Marzano influenced AVID (Solomon et al., 2018). Specifically, Arthur Costa's levels of thinking are focused on within the AVID framework under the realm of inquiry. Under inquiry within the AVID WICOR framework, this area is known as the "question" that moves the learner to action, whether it be explicit or implicit questions (Solomon et al., 2018). "Costa's Levels of Thinking range from lower order thinking skills (Level 1: gathering information) to higher order thinking skills (Level 2: processing information and Level 3: applying information)" (Solomon et al., 2018, p.X). Costa (2001) stated that meaning making is not a spectator sport, but rather an engagement sport that transforms the mind and constructs knowledge rather than a finding (as cited by Solomon et al., 2018).

Swanson also embedded within the framework strategies that align with research from *What Works in Classroom Instruction* by Marzano, Gaddy, and Dean (2000). Taking from Marzano, Gaddy et al. (2000) these strategies have the highest probability for student success in all subject areas at all levels of learning. Solomon et al. (2018) specifically notes the nine categories of effective instructional strategies from this text are embedded and incorporated across the AVID curriculum and system:

- identifying similarities and differences
- summarizing and note-taking
- reinforcing effort and providing recognition
- homework and practice
- nonlinguistic representations

- cooperative learning
- setting goals and providing feedback
- generating and testing hypotheses
- activating prior knowledge (Solomon et al., 2018, p. XI)

Lastly, influences most recently from researcher Carol Dweck within the framework of the AVID program was mentioned (Solomon et al., 2018). Dweck's work in the field of growth and fixed mindset influencing student achievement aids in supporting AVID's philosophy that all students no matter background can achieve.

### **AVID By Grade Level**

The AVID website was examined to better understand the differences between the implementation of the program and/or philosophy at each grade level, the explanation is found in the "About AVID" section of the site (AVID, n.d.). In that section AVID implementation is described at the elementary and secondary levels. AVID (n.d.) described AVID elementary, originally launched in 2007, the practice of academic behaviors and higher-level thinking at a young age that in turn has a lasting effect in later grades. As noted in a study conducted by Danskey (2017), the philosophy behind AVID elementary is strongly rooted in the growth mindset work of Carol Dweck (2000) and Albert Bandura's (1977) social cognitive learning theory. The learning is applicable as claimed by AVID at all stages of academic life but must be taught in an age-appropriate way in the early years (AVID, n.d.). Also introduced during the early years within the AVID program is a "college going culture" that is embraced on campus with displays and overall school culture (AVID, n.d.).

In contrast, the secondary approach is offered as an elective course allowing for specific students to be enrolled in the elective courses and time allotted for focus of specific AVID strategies each day (AVID, n.d.). Also noted by AVID (n.d.) is that the district is given the ability to decide at what age in middle or high school the AVID elective courses are implemented. As noted in the explanation of the 11 AVID program essentials, the elective course is one that is in place each day for one period focusing the students on “additional academic, social and emotional support that will help them succeed in their school’s most rigorous courses” (AVID, n.d.). AVID (n.d.) also has claimed that the academic strategies can be implemented in any setting and carry over to all content curricular areas to provide success for all students. While AVID structures differ at elementary and secondary levels, the program approach allows for districts to have a choice in how they implement when starting the AVID program training with a specific handful of teachers at a time or building wide (AVID, n.d.).

### **AVID Schoolwide Foundations**

While Swanson began AVID within a one classroom setting, her success and expansion of the AVID program allowed for the program to move to a schoolwide approach. Early on during this work AVID Schoolwide was defined and frameworks developed. As noted in *The AVID Heritage Story* (AVID, 2018) a new certification report and self-study continuum with 11 essentials were implemented in 2005, guiding certification and fidelity needs for each AVID site school. Another resource from AVID that is utilized at elementary site schools is the text, *AVID Elementary Foundations: A Schoolwide Implementation Resource* which consists of a focus at the elementary level around the domains of instruction, systems, leadership, and culture (Drumright, et al.,

2016). The AVID philosophy and methodologies become engrained in the setting and are widely experienced, with the text explicitly developed to (Drumright et al., 2016):

help teachers, counselors, administrators, and district directors integrate high-engagement AVID strategies across the entire campus. The tools within this book will support educators as they implement, refine, and assess WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading) schoolwide. (p. IV)

First examined in the text is the domain of instruction that houses the foundational framework of AVID's WICOR practices. AVID WICOR encompasses strategies that teachers implement in the classroom to build upon and develop independent learners. This work brings together the professional learning of the teachers and implementation of WICOR instructional strategies in classrooms to develop skills that are grown upon each year for learners. Drumright et al. (2016) stated:

When teachers participate in professional learning opportunities, implement WICOR strategies in their classrooms, and commit to success, they produce a learning environment where all students are equipped to tackle complex issues, problems, and texts. (p. XII)

When looking at the second domain within AVID schoolwide, systems is the focus. This work ties directly into systems for gathering and analyzing data as well as systems for scheduling, parent outreach, and teacher's improvement of pedagogical practices (Drumright, et al.2016). The focus within the second domain naturally goes hand and hand with the work done by the AVID site and Leadership teams. The third domain for the schoolwide approach is leadership (Drumright et al., 2016). The AVID program requires a leadership team that consists of members of the staff and AVID site team who

attend training each year. The reasoning behind this necessity, according to Drumright, et al. (2016) is that the two teams work together to ensure that the school's vision and mission calibrate to the overall goals and philosophies of AVID. Within AVID the common goals are open and equal access to rigorous coursework with resources that promote high expectations and college readiness for all students in the school setting (Drumright et al., 2016). The final domain seen as a cornerstone of the AVID schoolwide approach described by Drumright et al. (2016) in the text is culture. This domain speaks to the shift in beliefs and behaviors when taking on the AVID schoolwide approach embracing the thought that all students can benefit from rigorous coursework and opportunities (Drumright et al., 2016). In the text the authors noted that when these key domains are implemented with fidelity and intentionally the outcomes in short- and long-term give way to a high-quality and equitable education for all students (Drumright et al., 2016). The short-term outcomes primarily seen were an increase in attendance data and teachers implementing more rigorous coursework due to the influence of AVID strategies. While the long-term outcomes explicitly show an increase in graduation rates and post-graduation higher education enrollments for students.

### **AVID WICOR Framework**

Essential to the program is the AVID WICOR framework that has been developed and expanded upon since the beginning to provide success for students (Drumright et al., 2016). This framework encompasses the following components:

- writing to learn;
- inquiry;
- collaboration;



- organization;
- and reading to learn (Drumright et al., 2016, p. XIII).

The use of this framework aligns with the program's goal, allowing students to become independent learners by "wrestling" with new information to build onto their schema and create new neural pathways (Drumright et al., 2016, p. XIII). The researchers stated when students are engaged learners using higher level thinking skills that students are more likely to develop long-term learning through active, critical thinking (Drumright et al., 2016). The WICOR framework uses a combination of many skills such as: focusing on organization, writing, and reading for a variety of purposes, purposeful and reflective notetaking, collaboration of peer groups, engagement with choice and voice, combined with goal setting for the learner at each phase of their school year in the elementary setting to build capacity in the learners as the progress toward the secondary level (AVID, n.d.).

The AVID WICOR framework defines and explicitly describes each strategy as well as how those are supported by AVID in multiple learning opportunities (see Appendix B). In essence the framework becomes a recipe for the implementation of the strategies. In WICOR the framework the first area of focus is writing. Writing is defined as a tool for communication that can be used to reflect, learn, create inquiry, show organization of thought all done with authentic audiences. Second in the WICOR framework is the strategy of inquiry. This strategy is defined as engaging thinking that solves problems, creates innovation, and reaches levels of critical thinking. Third in the framework is the strategy of collaboration, defined as the sharing of ideas and teamwork with shared responsibilities. Fourth with the AVID WICOR framework is the strategy of

organization. This strategy is taught to students as a foundational skill allowing them to not only show organization in their desk, backpacks, and planners, but also through planning academically, goal setting, focused notetaking. The final strategy defined in the WICOR framework is reading. Reading within is the act of the learner making connections, comprehending, synthesizing information with a variety of texts and formats.

While WICOR focuses on different strategies for students to use under each focus area of the framework, one common through line noted by this reader is the importance of writing is highly regarded. Drumright et al. (2016) stated that Swanson's background as an English teacher comes through with the emphasis of learning through writing placed strategically throughout the AVID instructional strategies. Drumright et al. (2016) went on to state that Swanson, "firmly believed that writing was essential to help students to process and retain their learning . . . if students couldn't explain something in writing, they didn't know it well enough" (p. XIII). In another resource, *AVID Writing for Disciplinary Literacy: A Schoolwide Approach*, the concept of learning through writing is addressed:

Learning through writing is a completely different kind of writing with a vastly different purpose. Think of this type of writing as 'low-stakes' writing. Low stakes writing is a powerful learning tool in that it allows learners the ability to build, explore, and process content knowledge free from the burden of worrying about their writing being evaluated based on conventions or formatting....

Learning through writing presents students with the chance to make invisible thinking tangible, to record their thinking so there is record of their learning to go

back into, reflect on, build on, and connect to new learning. (McKinney, Glazebrook, Sanders, & Shapiro, 2018, p. 14)

### **Research on AVID Elementary Effectiveness**

Studies on AVID elementary were limited when looking for research specific to the elementary level. AVID only recently had published recent studies within the last two years. In contrast several studies were available focused on the components of the AVID program itself and AVID effectiveness. The earliest mention of AVID elementary was in a study, *Evaluation of AVID Effectiveness*, conducted in 2015 by the Multnomah County Partnership for Education Research between the University of Portland and the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) (University of Portland, & NWEA, 2015). In this study the impact of AVID was addressed through information received from an outside public school district in Florida and prepared for Portland Public Schools (University of Portland & NWEA, 2015). When looking specifically at what was reported regarding AVID elementary, stated it is rare for AVID to be fully implemented at the elementary level at that time (University of Portland & NWEA 2015). Later information gathered by the University of Portland and NWEA (as cited in Valero, 2015) indicated the district, located in Florida, due to success at the secondary level were moving to implement AVID elementary at Avon Elementary the following school year. The district was starting that year with fifth grade and would add additional grade levels up to third grade in consecutive following years. Unfortunately, no specific data were provided in connection with AVID elementary, other than the district at that time was beginning the program (University of Portland & NWEA, 2015).

The second study obtained in reference to AVID implemented at the elementary level was in correlation to looking at AVID implementation through a technology-based lens. The study conducted by Molly Large (2017), titled *Implementation of an AVID Elementary Program in a Technology-Rich Environment*, the author stated that when searching for research around the theme of AVID elementary or integration of technology within AVID strategies, little was to be found:

A search of the literature through the university library revealed dozens of studies done at the secondary and post-secondary levels on AVID programs, along with a small number that studied middle school student success. The majority of studies have examined underserved high school student populations, particularly in California and Texas. A review of dissertations published in the ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis database found 1,049 dissertations that studied various components of the AVID program since 1991. Based on author keyword choices, none of the dissertations specifically addressed the AVID Elementary program or the role of technology in any AVID program. (p. 6)

Large (2017) went on to share that in her qualitative study it was found that teachers early in the journey had concerns they shared based on personal experiences of their own secondary students in the district and how AVID would be compatible at the elementary level with the current site culture of technology integration. Also noted in the study by the author was that the implementation of AVID elementary during the first year required extensive teacher time and effort for adaptations of AVID based strategies to fit the needs of a technology rich environment (Large, 2017).

The final study obtained for this work, mentioned prior, was done in 2017 by Janelle Danskey and titled *AVID Elementary: A Case Study of Program Effectiveness*. Danskey (2107) noted her qualitative study involved the use of student pre and post surveys and interviews with teachers, administrators, and students within three AVID site elementary schools beginning implementation in comparison to two other elementary schools within the same district not implementing the AVID program. Within this study the interviews with the students, teachers and administrators centered around perceptions of the AVID program whereas surveys measured the following topics relating to general education initiatives that are also integrated specifically within AVID elementary as well as the original AVID programs:

- growth mindset;
- goal orientation;
- and academic self-efficacy. (Danskey, 2017, p. iii)

Concluded from this study was that while positive outcomes were noted by students and teachers alike relating to academic self-efficacy, goal orientation, and growth mindset when specific AVID strategies were taught to students, no statistically significant differences were noted between the AVID and non-AVID site schools (Danskey, 2017). The researcher did go on to conclude in their findings that AVID elementary has prudent, researched educational theories housed within the program (Danskey, 2017). Specifically important to note from the researcher was that when AVID philosophies were introduced with fidelity in a supportive way early in elementary it, “could help close the gap for students and give them skills they need to be resilient as they encounter rigorous academic tasks” (Danskey, 2017, p. 103-104). The researcher recommended more

specific research be done on varying components of AVID elementary due to Danskey's work being one of few done at that time (Danskey, 2017).

The AVID program recently added within the last year to their online site research hub two articles relating to effectiveness of the AVID elementary program (AVID, n.d.). The first of these pieces of literature found on the site is a qualitative study done by AVID. The document, *Research Recap: A Qualitative Study of Sites Successfully Implementing AVID Elementary*, addressed the question of how AVID elementary impacts students and schools (AVID, 2020c). The information was taken from interviews with principals and teachers at site schools. Within the study three key findings were reported that showed success for AVID elementary. The first was that the impact from AVID at the elementary level was wide and deep referring to a ripple effect that is long lasting for students at later grades (AVID, 2020c). The second key finding was that a rigorous learning environment is provided that also supports in a positive fashion the social emotional development and well-being of all students (AVID, 2020c). Lastly the third key finding in the study from AVID (2020c) was that the AVID elementary schoolwide approach provides a common language that allows impactful conversations and collaboration among students and teachers.

The second piece of literature provided on the AVID site within the AVID data report site (2020a) was titled, *New Evidence of AVID Elementary Effectiveness*, done in 2020 gathering feedback from 1,615 site schools (AVID, 2020b). The document addressed that the AVID Center recommended specific criteria be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of AVID elementary, based on feedback of surveyed schools. The criteria recommended from the center were that educators found students' actions,

behaviors, and skills to be a more reliable gauge of effectiveness versus achievement tests (AVID, 2020b). Within these skills the overall increase in the students' abilities to be better organized and preparedness stood out most; with the overall student behavior and culture of the schools standing out secondly; lastly was the evidence of increased engagement in learning and active use of AVID strategies of students overall (AVID, 2020b). The AVID study also shared that while the predominant improvements were overall in organization, evidence was given in responses from the 1, 615 site schools to show increases in all areas of WICOR for students when AVID elementary is implemented successfully (AVID, 2020b).

The evidence from the two studies conducted by AVID does have common findings that are like the research done by Danskey (2017). While no significant differences were noted in Danskey's data between the AVID sites and other schools, the overall thought was that the strategies taught explicitly within the WICOR framework was solid instructional practices having a positive impact within the format provided by AVID (Danskey, 2017). The key takeaway again is that there is a lack of evidence overall in other studies that look at specific components of AVID thoroughly. One being the professional learning and implementation at the elementary level when done in a schoolwide manner versus the secondary approach of offering elective courses. The question remaining is, what are the perceptions of the teachers implementing AVID in relation to the overall effectiveness and experience after participating in AVID professional learning, like Large's study from 2017. The study showed from the teachers' perceptions, when going through the implementation of AVID elementary and

training within the technology rich environment extensive time and efforts of adaption were required from the teachers (Large, 2017).

### **Teacher Effectiveness in Relation to Professional Learning**

As described in Chapter 1 regarding the definition of teacher self-efficacy and examining what teacher effectiveness and efficacy in general is and how this relates to the sense of feeling an educator can make a difference in student achievement, Guidetti et al. (2018) noted a direct correlation between perceptions and ability. Teachers' effectiveness and the correlation between self-and-collective efficacy, showed that teachers' self-efficacy could affect their perception and how they evaluate their work ability, essentially their effectiveness. Also, noted earlier from Guidetti et al. (2018) is with an increase in teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness more efforts on their part are in turn dedicated to professional learning opportunities and resources. Furthermore, Bray-Clark and Bates (2003) cited evidence that suggests positive self-efficacy in educators increases the willingness with which they implement skills learned from in-service trainings into their current classroom setting. When this phenomenon occurs it is fair to state that characteristics of professional learning that is seen more impactful than others would be valid to be examined and offered to educators.

Bray-Clark and Bates (2003) tackled the criticisms related to professional learning when examining teacher self-efficacy and effectiveness noting the lack of continuity across time with districts approaches to professional learning. Darling-Hammond (as cited in Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003) described professional learning or in-services portrayed as, "mass-marketed, flavor-of-the-month experiences that are disconnected from one another and fail to build on previous learning (p. 14)." Bray-Clark and Bates



(2003) went on to emphasize that what educators need for professional learning are real world, practical opportunities that address classroom needs, better them and improve student outcomes.

### **Key Traits of Effective Professional Learning**

Examining evidence of what constitutes effective professional learning is only natural when checking the validity of any program or research within that program. AVID (n.d.) has advertised to house a program with professional learning that exhibits key traits that create an effective professional learning experience that is engaging and brings about change in teaching methods that impacts teacher behavior and student learning. In the realm of education, varying views have been offered regarding the impact of professional learning on teacher effectiveness and ultimately improving student learning and achievement.

The results of one study done by the Regional Educational Laboratory at Edvance Research, Incorporated for the Institute of Education Sciences examined how teacher professional development affects student achievement (Suk Yoon et al., 2007, Scarloss, Shapely, 2007). Suk Yoon et al. (2007) indicated, “the connection seemed intuitive, but demonstrating it was difficult (p. iii).” Suk Yoon et al. (2007) also went on to report after examining over 1,300 studies teachers who received what is considered substantial professional development could boost student achievement by about 21 percentile points overall showing a connection between research based professional learning and student achievement.

In another report published by Learning Forward, known prior as the National Staff Development Council, an organization of K-12 educators dedicated to professional

development to improve teaching and learning, went on to clarify effective professional learning in a report titled, *Why Professional Development Matters* (Mizell, 2010). Within this report the author reporting for the organization, Mizell (2010), addressed the need for effective professional learning in an approach for all stakeholders answering questions from varying points of view for educators, administrators, school boards and parents.

Even experienced teachers confront great challenges each year, including changes in subject content, new instructional methods, advances in technology, changed laws and procedures, and student learning needs. Educators who do not experience effective professional development do not improve their skills, and student learning suffers. (p. 9)

Mizell (2010) went on to share the why, when, what, and how of professional learning for teachers and school districts within the report. Mizell (2010) also shared an understanding of effective professional learning within the section of the report titled *Ensure Quality Learning*. According to Mizell (2010), educators who experience effective professional learning are given tools to address current student learning challenges that is done intentionally and allows for educator feedback. In a nutshell, Mizell (2010) described this type of learning as one that moves educators and leaders to become better within their skill sets for their roles. Within the report conducted by Mizell (2010) for Learning Forward, the author expanded upon learning teams and the use of data to make sure the impact is immediate and useful to current learning needs and struggles having a direct impact on student achievement.

Holloway (2006), in an article published in *Science Educator*, included research from Thomas Guskey when reporting the phenomenon of professional learning

increasing student learning. Holloway (2006) stated that not all experiences of professional learning by educators are effective in bringing out student learning gains, but more studies show a correlation between the two with targeted, research based professional learning that is intentionally and concisely implemented. Guskey (as cited in Holloway, 2006):

found that powerful professional development will help the educator inquire the instructional procedures and scientifically research-based strategies they need to help all students reach the articulated learning goals.... True educational reform does not take place at the state or district level. Unless it occurs at the school building and classroom levels, student improvement is unlikely because improvement in education is defined by more students learning better, and that only occurs in the classroom. (p. 38)

Holloway (2006) also included research from Susan Murphy within the article that aligns with Guskey's views on increasing teacher's pedagogical content and teaching skills. Murphy (as cited in Holloway, 2006) stated she believes that professional learning programs are being held to a higher standard with the increased needs for teachers to prepare students for more rigorous curriculum. Important to note from Murphy (as cited by Holloway, 2006) the focus schools are taking to analyze student data to find the best fit for their professional learning mirroring a continuous improvement cycle has allowed districts using these approaches to better measure the return of their professional development dollars.

Adding to prior research relating to professional learning and the impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning, Guskey (2016) addressed his five levels of

standards when evaluating professional learning for educators. The five levels are adapted from an evaluation model used in the business world when judging supervisory training programs developed by Kirkpatrick (as cited by Guskey, 2016). In the article featured in *Learning Forward* by Guskey (2016) the author specifically examined the use of data in a systematic fashion to evaluate effective professional learning using the following levels that build on one another as success is seen:

- Level 1: Participant's reactions
- Level 2: Participant's learning
- Level 3: Organizational support and change
- Level 4: Participant's use of new knowledge and skills
- Level 5: Student learning outcomes (pp. 32-35)

While Guskey (2016) stated successes at levels can vary and do build upon one another this is not enough to gauge overall effectiveness of professional learning. What Guskey (2016) noted is essential is the need to reverse the levels, otherwise known as backward planning, when planning professional learning:

The most effective professional learning planning begins with clear specifications of the student learning outcomes to be achieved and the sources of data that best reflect those outcomes. With those goals articulated, school leaders and teachers then work backward.... It also provides a format for addressing the issues most critical to evaluation. As a result, it makes evaluation a natural part of the planning process and offers a basis for accountability. (p. 36)

Seeing common themes among the research from Guskey (2016) and Holloway (2006) is evident for this reader, when looking at effective professional learning. The use

of rigorous professional learning allowing for ongoing educator feedback is a key component. As well as professional learning that addresses real world student learning issues pertinent to the school or district taking place over time that is vetted aligns to a variety of research reviewed. Again, this format is one that would not fit the characteristics of a sit and get, one size fits all approach that is noted previously as a downfall in professional learning approaches noted from Darling-Hammond (as cited in Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003). When the phenomenon of seeing the ability to have an impact on student learning moves educators to implement the given resources as noted prior by Guidetti et al. (2018). It is only natural to examine the components of AVID's professional learning to see if this same phenomenon is created within the program that advertises professional learning that is effective and impacts the teacher and students (AVID, n.d.).

### **AVID Professional Learning Style**

When examining the AVID professional learning style, this reader chose to first look at key elements the program houses for participants within the trainings. According to the white paper from AVID (n.d.) as first referenced in this research, *The AVID Effect-Professional Learning that "Sticks" and Engages Teachers*, AVID professional learning is an ongoing and multi-faceted approach that starts with the Summer Institute training and continues throughout the year. The professional learning that takes place during the school year gives continuous support and training from AVID leadership site team that add to its success. As stated, prior, methodologies are addressed in (AVID, n.d.) and are cross referenced with research based effective professional learning showing optimal correlations between the two.

Key elements housed within the AVID professional learning pointed out in (AVID, n.d.) cited to align with effective professional learning characteristics are as follows:

- teachers are exposed to AVID’s Summer Institute training and to local training and support from district directors;
- staff developers at AVID engage attendees via modeling and other activities centered around tangible or visual takeaways;
- AVID Summer Institute trainings are provided via a number of “strands.” The strands differ for middle school and high school teachers, and for various content areas;
- Most of AVID’s curriculum and instruction are centered around strategies related to writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading to learn (WICOR), which are research based. (p. 4)

Also noted in the publication from AVID (n.d.), specific taught AVID strategies and how the professional learning impacts the strategies is addressed. Research taken from surveys given by AVID to participants represented in a Likert scale focused around three themes to gauge the impact of AVID professional learning on full understanding of the strategy, integration of the strategy into everyday instruction, and overall change seen in student behavior and learning (AVID, n.d.). In each case an increase was seen between pre, and post survey results included within the publication from AVID (n.d.).

Secondly, as mentioned prior the connection between AVID professional learning and overall teacher leadership has been examined as a positive outcome taken away for educators by Huerta et al., (2008). As noted, before within this dissertation, the strength

of the shared leadership approach interwoven within the format of the program gives way to naturally forming teacher leadership. Huerta et al. (2008) expanded on this by stating, “A crucial aspect of each AVID program is in the strength of the AVID site team and specifically the lead elective teacher or coordinator who is responsible for facilitating the successful implementation of AVID” (p. 3).

Within the approach of AVID professional learning there is evidence of optimal key elements that add to the experience for educators. While teacher leadership is a key element that can create effectiveness within the AVID professional learning approach, there has also been research suggesting some areas of struggle.

In Mills et al. (2014) research gathered from teachers and administrators from 42 different states examining the impact of teacher leadership within schools planning to or actively implementing AVID, showed a discrepancy in results between the viewpoint of teacher and administrator perceptions. According to Mills et al. (2014), results from the study show while administrators are seeking to build capacity in teacher leaders extending beyond the classroom environment for the schoolwide reach of AVID, teachers do not view their role in the same light. This difference in perceptions generated additional questions for the work of AVID, within the research of Mills et al. (2014):

The significance of this study is its continued support of the body of knowledge concerning AVID and those who work diligently to promote its success. This study created additional questions for the research team: How can administrators build trust with their teacher leaders effectively? What are the next steps for AVID teacher leaders to begin developing a stronger role in the leadership of their schools? (p. 16)

Giving way to question the effectiveness of the site team and teacher leadership when dependent upon the perceptions from administration within the schools, and how these roles are carried out and supported when using the AVID model of professional learning.

Lastly, another concern with AVID professional learning associated with how the site team of teacher leaders and school administration choose to roll out implementation of AVID elementary. Danskey (2017) focused research on AVID elementary diving into perceptions of school personnel specifically linked to training and implementation models chosen by varying sites. Danskey (2017) found that while the summer institute trainings were seen in a positive light to prepare the team for implementation schools varied in perceptions of the struggles with their mode of AVID implementation. In the study each site had a consistent leadership team, with school one and two in their beginning year of implementation and school three was in year two. One consistency noted by Danskey (2017) was, while teachers at each site felt AVID was worth their time and was not a radical change in practices, they wished for more time to put the strategies to use within their classrooms. Further findings from Danskey (2017) showed struggles were found when rolling out the professional learning in different phases for varying grade levels making it difficult to plan professional development days with all grades being in different stages of implementation. Another site noted struggles in planning continued professional learning when each grade level was in varying stages of implementation at year two (Danskey, 2017). These decisions vary for each district or school implementing AVID and are not restricted by AVID when a district is beginning the work. It would be worthwhile to note that further examination of implementation in a



school wide approach versus one grade level at a time may be worth considering when reviewing Danskey's findings (Danskey, 2017).

### **Summary**

After reviewing the literature focused on key elements of effective professional learning in comparison to what the AVID program utilizes, it is evident that AVID professional learning holds key elements that correlate back to researched practices of effective professional learning. Most apparent when looking at the work from Hureta et al. (2008) and AVID (n.d.) is the use of ongoing support from a trained site leadership team that allows for teacher feedback and input, as well as practical, hands-on, and real-world skills pertinent to student learning and needs. While key components of effective professional learning are found in AVID, a mixed review is worth examining related to leadership teams and the chosen avenue to roll out implementation of AVID at the elementary level as seen in the research from Mills et al. (2014), and Danskey (2017). Specifically, within AVID the impact of perceptions, being positive or negative could take away from the professional learning experience promoted by AVID. This direct impact whether it be positive or negative, could influence teacher's perceptions of their effectiveness and preparedness which in turn could directly tie to student learning outcomes.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

This study was based on the need for research related specifically to AVID professional learning at the elementary level. After reviewing what constitutes effective professional learning and examining research from AVID (n.d.) that claims to have a style of professional learning that is sustained or “sticks” over time the direction for this study was determined. Taking the point of view from the teachers’ perspectives to best understand the impact and effectiveness was deemed as the best approach by the researcher. Within this chapter a description of the research design, instruments, reliability and trustworthiness, data analysis and synthesis, sampling procedures, data collection procedures, researcher’s role, and limitations are provided for the reader. Overall, Chapter 3 of this study provides an explanation of the methods used in this qualitative study.

#### **Research Design**

To achieve the purpose of analyzing the perceptions of elementary educators a qualitative phenomenological research design was chosen for this study. The researcher chose qualitative interviews to explore the perceptions of the elementary educators’ experiences at the specific AVID site school, in year three of implementation, within District XYZ. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), “These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants” (p. 187). The choice of phenomenological research allowed for the researcher to focus on the true perceptions of the participants experiencing the AVID professional learning and tasked with replicating

across all settings to achieve common goals for the students. As stated by Lunenburg and Irby (2008), the researcher using phenomenological research design, “is concerned with clarifying the specific and recognizing phenomena through the eyes of the participants” (p. 90). The choice of qualitative design allowed for themes to be developed and uncovered by the researcher to gain a better understanding about the lived experiences of the educators ultimately resulting in forming the educators’ perceptions of self-efficacy and overall effectiveness in relation to the professional learning received through AVID and the leadership site team.

### **Setting**

The setting for this study was an AVID elementary site school in District XYZ, in year three of implementation, in the Midwest. This opportunity allowed the site to host national AVID trainers, and model for potential districts within the Midwest interested in the program. Within District XYZ, the elementary school based for the study is one of 11 elementary schools. At the start of the 2020 school year all elementary schools were expected to begin implementing the AVID program. The chosen site school for this study is one that had been implementing the AVID framework and professional learning the longest. Due to the length of time the school within the study had been implementing AVID, this allowed for perceptions to be examined from educators saturated in exposure to AVID with varying years of experience and grade levels. With District XYZ expanding their investment in the AVID program for district wide implementation from secondary to elementary sites, the researcher saw a need for the qualitative study to expand on the limited AVID research at the elementary level.

## **Sampling Procedures**

When considering participants for the study the researcher wanted to allow for a variety of experiences to be captured within the data regarding AVID professional learning at the elementary level. Therefore, teachers at the selected elementary site ranging in gender, years of experience, grade level taught, and who had not served on the AVID leadership team was the primary goal for the researcher. The researcher sought out guidance from the site school principal and program director to review past roles of teachers in the year three AVID site school. This method was used to ensure purposive criterion sampling was used in the selection of participants. In purposive sampling, “Clear criteria provide a basis for describing and defending purposive samples” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 175).

The researcher chose this method of purposive sampling for the purpose of securing an unbiased understanding of the teachers’ perceptions of the AVID professional development in relation to their own self-efficacy and effectiveness in implementing AVID strategies within the classroom setting. Both male and female participants with varying degrees of experience in education, and grade levels taught were selected to have a balanced proportion within the study. The researcher’s desire when using this approach was to capture a comprehensive understanding of a variety of elementary teachers’ perceptions for this qualitative study.

Of the 21 teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms in the site school, 12 had not held roles on the AVID leadership team at the site school. This information was accessed through communication with the site principal and current program director for the district. Of these 12, a variety per grade level ranging from

kindergarten to fifth grade were available to be considered as participants fitting the criteria. These chosen 12 teachers, allowed for there to be an equal number of perceptions to be gathered at primary and upper levels during the interview process. When years of experience as tenured and non-tenured teachers was considered, of the 12 participants, eight were non-tenured teachers, and four tenured. The researcher did take into consideration that non-tenured did not count years of teaching experience outside of District XYZ. When reviewing criteria for representation of gender, the possible participants consisted of two males and 10 females. While the participants had a larger female representation to male, the researcher was able to pull in the viewpoint for the study from the two participating male teachers. The critical need for a variety of grade levels to be evenly represented when understanding perceptions of AVID professional learning in correlation with teacher efficacy and effectiveness, and no prior experience on a leadership site team were ultimately able to be met for the purpose of this qualitative study.

### **Instruments**

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) defined qualitative research as a method that, “emphasizes understanding by closely examining people’s words, actions, and records” (p. 89). Furthermore, the role of the researcher is defined by Lunenburg and Irby (2008), as one who does not make, “broad generalizations; rather, your job is to contextualize the findings” (p. 89). To capture commonalities among words and winnow themes from the responses, this researcher chose an interview protocol for this study that would ensure a safe and secure environment that allowed participants to answer honestly without hesitation about their experiences with AVID professional development in the school

setting. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), an interview protocol should begin with prepared questions in advance that number between 5 and 10 in total. This researcher chose five base rapport questions regarding the participant's role and experience in the school setting, along with seven interview questions aligned with the research questions. Prior to administering the interview questions, the researcher shared the overall interview protocol and questions to the program director in District XYZ at the time. The step was done to address the quality of the interview questions in relation to AVID professional learning processes within District XYZ.

The base rapport questions addressing the participants role and experience in the phase three school site:

1. What year of teaching is this for you?
2. What grade or specialty area do you teach?
3. What are your past teaching experiences, if any that are different from this school year?
4. How many years have you taught at this AVID site school?
5. Prior to your time in District XYZ, what understanding, or knowledge do you have regarding AVID?

The research questions and semi-structured interview questions included the following:

**RQ1.** What are elementary teachers' perceptions of the AVID professional learning approach at the elementary level, and the impact that it has had on them overall as an educator?

**IQ1a.** What components of the AVID professional learning approach best prepared you as an elementary teacher in an AVID site school?

***IQ1b.*** What components of the AVID professional learning approach were lacking in preparing you as an elementary teacher in an AVID site school?

***IQ1c.*** How has AVID professional learning impacted you as an educator?

***FUIQ1.*** Any other professional peers within the school site have a similar experience with AVID professional learning as yourself?

***FU2Q1.*** How have these experiences changed your thoughts and perceptions of AVID professional learning at the elementary level?

***RQ2.*** How have elementary teachers' perceptions of their own effectiveness in implementing AVID strategies changed over time from year one of implementation to year three as an AVID site school?

***IQ2a.*** How has your effectiveness to implement AVID strategies evolved since participating in AVID professional learning at a site school in year three of implementation?

***IQ2b.*** Since participating in AVID professional learning, what do you see as an area of need for you to effectively implement AVID strategies?

***FUIQ2.*** What would other teachers see as strengths or weaknesses overall in implementing AVID strategies in year three?

***FU2Q2.*** Do you see a connection between a teacher's effectiveness to implement AVID strategies related to the number of years teachers participate in the AVID professional learning?

***RQ3.*** What are the perceptions of the elementary teachers' effectiveness when specifically implementing AVID Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading (WICOR) strategies in year three of implementation?

***IQ3a.*** When implementing AVID WICOR strategies, what specific strategies are you most effectively implementing within your classroom setting?

***IQ3b.*** When implementing AVID WICOR strategies, what specific strategies are you less effectively implementing within your classroom setting?

***FU1Q3.*** What bearing does the grade level you teach have on your effectiveness to implement AVID WICOR strategies?

***FU2Q3.*** Do you feel that the site school's year of implementation have any bearing on effectiveness on any specific AVID WICOR strategies?

### **Data Collection Procedures**

As the researcher considered a study within District XYZ, communication and rapport were established between the researcher and the district programs director for guidance regarding needs specific to District XYZ. This rapport and open communication also allowed for discussion of data that would be valuable overall in the needs of District XYZ. These original discussions and communication started during the summer of 2020.

After considering needs pertinent to District XYZ, the researcher determined the qualitative study centered around the AVID program, which is invested in by District XYZ, would be valuable to the researcher's role as well as district stakeholders. The researcher continued to communicate with the program director and the principal of the year three AVID site elementary school, to ensure trust and common understanding that allowed for needs of the study to be seen through, during all phases of preparation and data collection.



Initial preparation steps and protocol were followed by the researcher prior to data collection including the formal request submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on March 30, 2022. Approval to conduct the study was received from the Baker University IRB on April 6, 2022 (see Appendix C). The approval from District XYZ, submitted on February 24, 2022, was included within the original request sent to Baker University in March of 2022 (see Appendix D). Emails were then sent to the 12 selected teacher participants. The overall intent of the email sent was to establish acknowledgement to participate and schedule the interview by accepting the invite (see Appendix E). Attached to the email sent to each possible participant, a consent form was included with information about the purpose of the study, research questions and measures taken to protect the participant's identity and confidentiality (see Appendix F). Participants acknowledged willingness to be a part of the study when accepting the scheduled Zoom interview and digitally sending back the signed consent form to the third-party interviewer.

The use of a third-party interviewer ensured that the educators were not feeling swayed to adjust their answers due to the nature of the researcher's position within the school setting chosen for this study. This safeguard is expanded and identified further in the sections that explains reliability. Each participant was assigned an identification code, from 1 to 12, to protect anonymity. This identification code was used to label each participant's recording and transcript. The identification code was also used during data analysis, the presentation of findings, and summary of results.

All interviews were conducted by a third-party interviewer via Zoom in a digital format. This allowed for the interviews to be recorded and not only verbal responses, but

body actions to also be noted and taken into consideration. To allow for flexibility the digital interviews were conducted during a time that best met the schedule of the participants, whether that be at home or work.

### **Data Analysis and Synthesis**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended it is essential for researchers using qualitative data analysis to follow a sequential process. The process that Creswell and Creswell (2018) expanded upon followed steps that ranged from specific to general having multiple levels of analysis. Within the process recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018) five specific steps were outlined: (1) organizing and preparing data, (2) read and look at all data, (3) coding all data, (4) generate a description and themes, and (5) represent the description and themes (p. 193-195). Further guidance was also given for coding the qualitative research data in Creswell and Creswell (2018) by *Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process*. Tesch's steps were followed during this researcher's analysis of the data.

Upon completion of the interviews, in step one to organize and prepare the data, the recordings were labeled digitally by the researcher with a numeric identifier, from 1 to 12, to allow for anonymity. Next, the researcher transcribed the interviews using the online program, Trint, to prepare for analysis. In the second step of reading the data the process allowed for the use of the online tool to give the researcher the ability to check the accuracy of the interview transcripts or any noted differences. Annotations added by the research included descriptions characterizing the participants demeanor and engagement during the interview provided by the third party. After the researcher had transcribed the interviews including all transition words, such as and, um, etc. a transcript

was provided to each participant. The step of providing each participant with the transcript to allow for any adjustments to be made to inaccuracies in the transcripts, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), is known as member-checking, which is further explained in the reliability and trustworthiness section of this study.

The completed transcripts were then uploaded by the researcher into the Dedoose Research Analysis cross-platform app, and online software program, accessible to only the researcher under a protected password (Dedoose, n.d.). The online software program, Dedoose, was used to examine the content of the transcripts to first analyze and code each response. Then, Dedoose was used to sort, and organize the coded responses to assist in find varying categories and themes related to the data taken from the original interview transcripts. It was the goal of this researcher by using the support of the digital platform, Dedoose, to quickly and accurately visualize themes that arose across RQs in an organized way to best report findings. The findings were then narrated in written form by the researcher. All documents related to the study and research were finally secured and stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home residence.

### **Reliability and Trustworthiness**

When defining qualitative validity, Creswell and Creswell (2018, as cited in Gibbs, 2007) stated:

Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, whereas qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and among different projects. (p. 199)

Seeking to create reliability and trustworthiness, the researcher sought to incorporate validity strategies, recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Of these eight primary strategies the researcher used qualitative reliability by documenting the procedures of this study in detail, as well as asking participants to check transcripts for accuracy prior to coding and finally using a rich description to convey the findings.

The researcher also utilized purposive sampling to obtain teacher participants with varying backgrounds to allow for a better understanding of the impact of the research on them as educators. While the sample was from the same site school, attempts to gain perceptions from a variety of teachers across the elementary setting was utilized keeping in mind each should have varying exposure to AVID professional learning, but none should be a current or past AVID leadership team site member. As the researcher kept this in mind as a specific need for participant criteria the research conducted would be secure from any form of bias from a past or current member of the site school's AVID leadership team. To diminish the possibility of any personal bias of the researcher impacting the results of the study, an interview protocol was utilized. The interview protocol assisted in ensuring consistency in the data collection process. Each interview was conducted by a third-party interviewer and recorded into an audio file, the researcher first reviewed each recording noting and writing memos to reflect or highlight information obtained during the interview process to assist in the transcription process and later data analysis phase.

The researcher then used Trint to accurately transcribe interviews. Once transcribed the researcher took steps through the interview third-party interviewer to provide all participants with transcriptions of their interviews. Each participant was

asked to review the transcription and provide feedback about omissions or corrections within one week. This step assisted in the trustworthiness of the results through participant transcript checks.

Once the transcripts were verified as accurate, the researcher used Dedoose Research Analysis online software to compare responses from participants in relation to the interview questions and determine themes related back to the overall RQ's. Dedoose being a web-based software application that allows for data in any form to be uploaded, organized, and analyzed for research purposes. During the data analysis phase, the researcher wrote notes to document the coding process and refer to when she was reporting the findings. The use of Dedoose allowed for each transcribed interview and participants' perspectives to be sorted and organized into varying categories and themes, which added to the trustworthiness of the study.

### **Researcher's Role**

As noted by Creswell and Creswell (2018), "Particularly in qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study" (p. 205). The researcher conducting this qualitative study took into consideration her role within District XYZ, and year three AVID site school as an assistant principal. The researcher recognized how this background and experience in her role could potentially lead to bias if she was a key instrument of data collection through the interview process. Maintaining credibility in all phases of the qualitative study was sought by the researcher for the research to be a viable resource for the district, when reflecting on the investment of the AVID program at the elementary level in District XYZ.

The researcher also took steps in the creation of the interview questions to funnel out any unintended leading questions or ambiguity in answers by the participants. This was undertaken by review of the interview questions with the Bakery University dissertation advisor and research analyst for feedback, and after seeking out expertise in the related topic of AVID. The step by the researcher of seeking out expert guidance was accomplished by submitting the interview questions to the District XYZ program director. The intention of seeking expert guidance was for feedback in effectiveness to carry out the original intent of the qualitative study under the context of AVID professional learning at the elementary level. Prior communication established before the study between the researcher and program director allowed for conciseness and focus to be understood when interview questions were reviewed by the director as to the direction and focus of the research being conducted around AVID elementary professional learning. The researcher intended her role to remain impartial and professional for data collection, analysis, and findings to be of value and further usefulness in a research topic that has little to none at this present time.

### **Limitations**

Limitations, as defined by Lunenburg and Irby (2008), are, “factors that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings” (p. 133). Within this study, the limitations were:

1. The ability to have the desired balance of representation of the participants in this study in the context of gender and years of experience. These factors were outside of the researcher’s control due to the availability of participants in grades kindergarten through fifth grade at the site school.

2. The additional variables that may have impacted the participants' memory and experience of past AVID professional learning leading up to year three within the implementation process was also noted as a limitation. The site school was in its third year of AVID, and prior years recalled participants to call their memory of past AVID professional learning experiences.
3. The onset of COVID-19 causing the implementation of AVID professional learning and implementation to look modified during the years of implementation from 2020 to 2022, was also a limitation that could affect the participants' experiences and memories of AVID professional learning and self-efficacy.
4. The interviews conducted in this study were done digitally. The interpretations of the responses and body language of the recorded interviews could lead to varied understanding by the researcher.

### **Summary**

Within Chapter 3, the detailed research approach used for this study was narrated including the design of the research, setting, and the researcher's role. Explained in detail within this chapter were the sampling procedures that gave insight into the selection of participants for the study. The instrument used for research, including the interview, and follow up questions were outlined in this chapter, along with data collection, analysis, and synthesis procedures. Next, the role of the researcher, and measures to ensure reliability and validity was expanded upon. Measures for qualitative validity were explained, specifically the strategies of member checking and triangulation. Details were given regarding the online software, Dedoose, that assisted in the process of

analyzing and coding data adding to the validity of the study. Finally, the limitations were explained at the end of Chapter 3.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

This qualitative research study examined teachers' perceptions of AVID professional learning and the impact the learning had on their effectiveness implementing AVID WICOR strategies at the elementary grade levels in their current roles. The original group of participants selected to be a part of this study consisted of twelve elementary teachers at varying grade levels and experience from District XYZ at an AVID site school in year three of implementation. The participants were grade level teachers ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade who had never served as an AVID site leadership team member. Ultimately, due to one participant's extended maternity leave, only 11 of the 12 solicited were able to participate in the study. The qualitative study was conducted by using interviews with the 11 participants.

All interviews took place in the spring 2022 by an outside third-party interviewer via Zoom. The interviews were recorded by the third-party interviewer and then transcribed by the researcher using Trint transcription application. Member checking took place for each participant within a week of their interviews through the third-party interviewer. Any changes were then reshared to the researcher at which point, the Dedoose computer program was used for coding by the researcher. Utilizing the codes, the researcher identified common and recurring themes that were presented from the analysis of the interviews. Within this chapter, the findings of the study in relation to the central question and three research questions pertaining to the teachers' perceptions of AVID professional learning at the elementary level related to the recurring and common themes are reported. The overall findings from the interviews are presented within this

chapter using an assigned numerical identifier for each participant to allow for protection of the participants' privacy and anonymity.

Within this study the researcher sought to examine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of AVID professional learning at the elementary level. When examining the impact of the professional learning the researcher desired to understand if AVID professional learning created self-efficacy within the teachers to best implement the AVID WICOR strategies and frameworks within their current role in an AVID site school. The viewpoint of teachers at the elementary level was important due to the limited amount of research around this topic and the variations in how AVID, originally a secondary program, has been implemented between elementary and secondary levels. The site school was in District XYZ, was moving to have AVID implemented districtwide at the K-12 levels within coming years. Due to the growth of AVID and the use of the professional learning approach in District XYZ, it was useful for the researcher to share the findings of this study with her current district as a source of feedback on the investment with the AVID program.

### **Overview of Findings**

When examining the transcripts, the researcher noted themes that arose often within each research question that centered around two descriptors of the participants. The themes that emerged varied when examining perceptions depending most often on the grade level taught, specifically if the teacher was lower elementary or upper elementary. Lower elementary within this study were teachers at the kindergarten to second grade level. While the upper elementary consisted of teachers from third to fifth grade within the study. The second noted descriptor of participants that frequently

emerged within themes was the years of the teachers at the site school. Based on this descriptor, the break down was often a difference in perceptions depending upon if the teacher was newer to the site school, one to five years, or if they had been at the site school longer than five years. While each of the areas of focus arose within the research questions and themes, each were not dependent on the other or present each time. During the analysis of the transcripts when coding into parent and child themes the researcher used these descriptors to clarify for the reader findings related to participants' perceptions within each research question addressed. As the researcher began to look at perceptions of the participants, there was evidence that while AVID overall was seen as a benefit and prepared them in general to implement within the classroom, when it came to specific AVID higher-level strategies many felt unprepared. This was specifically noted for those that were at the lower elementary levels as teachers. What also formed was a definite desire from participants to have the professional learning approach that had been carried out by the site team in prior years differentiated and more clarity provided from grade to grade. While this perception was dependent on the grade level taught, a different noted perception was that participants that had been at the site school for five or more years also saw redundancy in professional learning up to year three. Participants expressed a desire to adjust the professional learning and vary offerings between those that had been at the site school since the first implementation and those that are newer to the site school.

### **Finding 1**

The results shared in this section are related to the first research question, "What are elementary teachers' perceptions of the AVID professional learning approach at the

elementary level, and the impact that it has had on them overall as an educator?” Based on the responses from the participants it is best to communicate the findings in this section categorized into two parent themes. First, the overall perceptions and experiences of the educators regarding the approach of AVID professional learning at the site school that is a train the trainer model within the AVID program are explained. The second focus is the impact of the AVID professional learning as an educator and if teachers’ experiences with professional learning at the site school had changed their perceptions.

First noticed by the researcher in Finding 1 was the parent theme related to *AVID Professional Learning Approach* with four emerging child themes. These child themes under research question one being *Benefits and Preparedness*, *Time with Curriculum and Students*, *Adjustments to AVID Professional Learning*, and *Clarity and Alignment Needs*. Under Finding one the second parent theme that emerged was *Impact and Experiences* with two child themes: *Years in AVID Versus Years in Teaching*, and *Shared Experiences with Colleagues*. Each theme that emerged while positive regarding the overall AVID program had some negative aspects that evolved through discussions tied to AVID components and how the professional learning was carried out at the site school. What also emerged under research question one under the second parent theme focused on the impact from AVID professional learning was the greater sense of impact in experiences were present and shared with colleagues for those with one to five years at the AVID site school.

**AVID professional learning approach.** When examining how AVID professional learning operates within the elementary level at an AVID site school, it is important to recall that the AVID leadership team utilizes training from a summer

institute to then implement needed professional learning within the site school for the current year related to their AVID building goals. The AVID goals are related back to the focus area for the school's year of implementation falling under the WICOR framework (AVID, n.d.). This work and goal setting is typically also a part of the buildings or site school's current building school improvement plan for the year.

Under this first parent theme, *AVID Professional Learning Approach*, related to research question one, the child theme *Benefits and Preparedness* evolved through participants responses when discussing AVID professional learning. Of the 11 participants, responses indicated that teachers' perceptions saw AVID professional learning overall as something all 11 teachers found beneficial. Participant 2 referred to AVID professional learning as validation for strong pedagogy:

I think it's good practice. I think for those of us who have done this for a very long time, it's a reminder that some things cycle in and out and some things stay, and good practice just stays, sometimes with different terminology. I think for new teachers to learn this from the beginning and see its value is good.

This statement comes from Participant 2, who is the single participant with 20 plus years of teaching and some prior experience with AVID at the secondary level before coming to the AVID site school. Participant 11 stated, "Professional learning at our site school is good stuff. It's just something more, something extra to really dig deeper." Participant 8 said, "I don't think in retrospect looking back that I was as prepared as I thought I was, and AVID has really given me a set of directions, if you will, for how to guide students taking them from what they've acquired... Not just doing this for fun but doing this with intent and with a goal in mind." Participant 10 added, "It's gotten progressively to the

point where it's just become, like I said, embedded into your practice, which is awesome." When relating these responses back to the overall perception of AVID professional learning it is noted that each participant interviewed was able to attribute a benefit to the experience in connection to the varying degrees of time spent in the site school with exposure to AVID.

When the researcher examined the components of AVID professional learning approach that best prepared the teachers, most of the participants mentioned examples of preparedness that was gained from the professional learning. The specific example given by these participants spoke to continuous support all year with a central AVID focus. Participant 1 shared, "I would say there are no components lacking. I feel like I was given support that I needed to start implementing AVID in my teaching." This participant went on later to mention professional learning done at the start of the year focused on AVID and each month has continuously touched on AVID strategies throughout the year as a further support for the site school. Participant 3 spoke to the view of being a primary teacher and initially struggling with buy in when first coming to the site school and how that had changed over time with the AVID professional learning approach and support of her site team:

I think when I came in, it seemed silly to me because I'm teaching kindergarten. So, I hear college and career readiness program or even the big advancement via individual determination. I'm like, what does this even mean? I teach five-year-olds and I'm teaching them their letters. And so, my mindset was, this is so silly and I'm checking boxes. And really, that's just not it. And so being able to buy in and have the experience from around the school has been helpful because I realize

how important it is. Because these are lifelong skills that these kids get to take with them. So yes, they're learning to read, yes, they're doing this, but I'm teaching them organization that they're going to use when they're married someday. And helpful ways to do notes when they're in fifth grade and 12th grade, they're having all these note-taking skills in their brain. So, I think I just really had to buy in and realize it's actually worth it and that these kids deserve to have these skills.

Participant 9 discussed preparedness in relation to the approach the site school has used with AVID professional learning:

I feel like the site school's approach matches what AVID teaches. I mean if you go look into AVID, which when I first came here, I did. That's what they suggest doing. They suggest a slow release. They give you time to practice. You focus on one area of WICOR and then build on that and scaffold for the staff as well, just like you would for the kiddos. So, I feel like that there wasn't anything lacking in the how they presented it to us professionally.

Participant 6 equated preparedness to the approach of having an AVID site team member at the grade level:

I'm very lucky just because one of my teammates is one of the trainers and was one of the very first ones to kind of go into that. So, I feel like I got a lot of direction from her, even just like through collaboration. So not necessarily like in the official trainings that we've done, but more in just the collaboration within the team and trying to work at it in that way.

Through follow up questions when participants were asked about having an AVID site team member at their grade level, 10 of the 11 participants spoke to having collaboration with a teammate, a current AVID site leadership team member. Participant 3 reaffirmed the consistency of having an AVID site team member in relation to preparedness and having accessibility to the teammate to ask questions:

We have a colleague of 10 years... Well, that's extremely helpful because she like, lives and breathes AVID. I think being able to ask questions really broke it down further for me. I think I was given an umbrella and an overview of what it looks like. And then by asking questions, I've been able to fill in all these blanks on what is WICOR and what does that actually look like in a classroom? So, I was told this is what WICOR is. Here's what writing looks like. And then here I am, using my kindergarten knowledge of tying it all together.

One participant shared that her grade level had team members on the AVID site team in the past, but this had changed during the 2021-2022 school year. Of importance is that this fact showed a connection later to the participant's response regarding preparedness and AVID professional learning.

Also, important was the mention of the use of the site's yearly fidelity checks completed by the teachers in a collaborative process being seen as most beneficial by many of the participants. In the interviews, six out of the 11 participants referred to the AVID fidelity checks that allowed time for collaboration with a different group of educators in a positive way seeing it as a benefit and allowing needed collaboration across different grade levels. The only preference that was related by the participants who mentioned the fidelity process was unanimously an increase in time for more



collaboration in this fashion vertically and horizontally across grade levels or AVID site schools. Participant 8 shared, “We had fidelity checks with our buddy classrooms and held each other accountable by encouraging each other to continue to implement the strategies and structures we had in place.” Participant 3 stated that the checks were a source of accountability, but it did not feel as anything that would be punitive or judge a teacher when experiencing the process:

It was accountability and also kindness. Like, you have this, but you don't have this. So, what do you need to do to get there? Or here's your strengths, and here's maybe the things that you're lacking. What's your one next step? So, it was rooted in kindness. So, it wasn't you haven't done all of these things because I am new and it's of course, a lot to try to take on. And so, it was just here, are your next steps. And here's an easy next step for you from someone who's been implementing it for seven years.

Participant 11, spoke specifically to the positive of the collaboration and vertical, site visit emphasis as a preference:

We just did a fidelity check last week and I do like what other teachers are doing. Yeah, just seeing it in another setting. Going to another site school and actually watching it in a lesson. Experiencing it really helps me, hands on rather than just kind of like, talking about it.

Under research question one, when participants were directly asked if they felt any components of AVID professional learning were lacking in preparing them within their role at the AVID site school, three child themes emerged around *Time with Curriculum and Students*, *Adjustments to AVID Professional Learning*, and *Clarity and*

*Alignment Needs.* When addressing the child theme of time, all expressed a need for more time to collaborate with their grade level and vertical teams regarding AVID and implementation within their current curriculum. Out of the 11 participants, six expressed a need related to time in one way or another. Participant 8 stated:

I think we're doing a good job overall as a school with the professional development.... I just know teachers want the time to implement, not before or after school and at the time during our meetings to have the chance to work together and implement the strategies we learn about and talk so much about.

Participant 8 went on to mention in several responses the aspect of needing time due to AVID being a lot to implement, "I remember feeling that there was a lot to start when I first started. It just is a lot to implement at one time. It seemed like a lot was put on our plate to do well the first year."

Participant 6 affirmed this need regarding time to embed AVID strategies learned from professional learning into curriculum:

I think reading and writing, we still need to work on in elementary because a lot of times with elementary teachers, we have a curriculum that we follow. In our district, specifically, we have very clear lessons and ideas built out for us. So, trying to find where we can find that part in writing in the reading and fit them into lessons that maybe they weren't already in. It's kind of an area we can work on.

When examining the teachers' perceptions at the upper elementary, teachers responded that the professional learning received was beneficial but could be overwhelming and time to go back with their teams to implement and plan was lacking

for teachers to best carry out the strategies and be prepared as a part of their professional learning experiences throughout the school site years. Participant 11 shared that support with actual lesson planning was needed:

We talk a lot about AVID strategies and what they are like levels of questioning.

We talk about that a lot, but maybe just some time to actually lesson plan with those kinds of experts to really put it into practice.

Participant 1 did offer the reasoning through discussion that the site was continuing their work on the writing and reading pieces of WICOR, and it is naturally where there is a lack of preparedness but attributed this to the time lost from the COVID-19 pandemic, “We’re still working on the writing and reading part of WICOR. That’s kind of been the last tail end of our implementation that we’ve done each year. And I think COVID probably had a big impact on that.” Although while this reasoning is related to loss of time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the child theme of time is centered more so around time to make sure that the strategies are best implemented in the sense of planning purposes as well as with the students with an already perceived full curriculum load.

The second child theme, *Adjustments to AVID Professional Learning*, centered around the AVID professional learning approach emerged through discussions with teachers noting a desire in change of how in the professional learning is carried out by the AVID site team. Participant 4 mentioned struggling with AVID’s approach to professional learning carried out within the district and site school:

I feel like, District XYZ, is all about, you know, let’s train this team of teachers and then we’re all in. This is AVID, we’re going to do this and then it just kind of fizzles down. These people are responsible for teaching everyone else. I think it

is different when you hear it from the source, you know, and from someone who is trained versus someone who's just attended a training and is there to kind of relay information. There's not much buy-in in that.... I've never been trained on AVID from an AVID person, and so I feel like that the components of AVID outside of WICOR and inquiry and all of those things I don't think have been relayed very well, to be honest with you.

Under the second child theme, related to *Adjustments to AVID Professional Learning*, the perception is related to the methods AVID uses to implement the professional learning and not the schoolwide implementation choice of the site school or District XYZ.

Aligning to this response around how AVID professional learning is implemented, the mention of redundancy at year 3 was also a common occurrence. Participants 2, 7 and 8 had similar responses from their perspective of having been at the site school for longer than one year. Participant 2 stated “But if we could have collaborative time on professional learning days where they set aside that time instead of always watching a slideshow or always giving it, just sit and get.” Participant 7 attributed the slow pace to being what was needed at the beginning for the foundational components of AVID but seeing a need for the pace to pick up moving forward to avoid repetition:

I also think it's been a little bit challenging in the aspect of some of our professional development. It can feel a little bit repetitive and that's not necessarily AVID's fault or anyone.... We had to take that pause for a little bit with COVID and also get some others caught up. So, it has felt a little repetitive.

I'm hoping that next year we're going to be gathering a few more tools to add to our toolbox.

Participant 8 also reaffirmed a desire for change within the implementation of professional learning for AVID:

I wish there was a great way to differentiate. You know, teachers that have been in the program for two to three years versus a brand-new teacher ... we don't need the same things and sometimes it feels a bit redundant to sit and hear some of the same strategies over and over again. Whereas, if I'm looking for something like Socratic seminar or philosophical chairs or even advanced note taking, you know a first-grade teacher wouldn't need that same kind of training that I would. And same for, you know, kindergarten, lower grades may need a different style of training that has a different focus.

Finally, within these findings under the parent theme *AVID Professional Learning Approach*, the child theme of *Clarity and Alignment* was noticed by the researcher emerging from discussions of participants related back specifically to their grade level taught. This occurrence was noticed when the components teachers perceived as lacking were examined. The pattern that emerged from the participants spoke to a need for clarification in how AVID strategies are expected to be carried out at each grade level within the WICOR framework and a need for this to be aligned in a vertical fashion as a resource for teachers. The mention of developmental appropriateness often occurred from discussions with many of the participants teaching the lower elementary grades. The researcher chose to again examine how this pattern related not only to grade level

taught, but also years in teaching and years at the AVID site school to see if any further patterns emerged.

Represented in the study 54% of the participants taught lower elementary grade levels kindergarten to second grade. Each reported varying years of teaching experience. All had no prior experience with AVID prior to their time at this site school in district XYZ. Within the participants, the recurrence of developmental appropriateness was mentioned by five of the six primary teachers in relation to AVID strategies under the umbrella of inquiry, reading and writing. Participant 9 shared a need for AVID professional learning to support and align practices around the strategies of inquiry and writing specifically for the lower elementary grades:

I need to see a differentiation between K-two and three through five.... I feel like those are two specific bands, and I understand that AVID has grade by grade. I get that, but I feel it's a separate system. Like even AVID junior because they have AVID high school, right? They have AVID elementary. But in my mind... even though it's in one building, there are separate developmental levels. K through two can go in one group and I need more strategies that I can implement that my kids are actually able to understand and grasp. Especially with inquiry, especially with writing.... Socratic seminar, I do not see how I can implement that. I do not think it's developmentally appropriate. So that's what I need. I need a separation of K-2.

A fellow lower elementary teacher, Participant 4, weighed in as well regarding AVID and professional learning at the primary level in terms of age appropriateness for their current grade level:

I struggle to buy-in with all the parts of AVID. My students are six, turning seven in first grade. And while I think it is important to develop critical thinkers and be problem solvers, there are parts of AVID that I am just not sure it's appropriate for K-2 or K-1 classroom.

Participant 4 went on and spoke specifically to what was beneficial and lacking for the primary grade level in relation to WICOR, "I think there are parts of it, like when you think about WICOR and you think about organization ... inquiry in the writing piece, I think is a little bit more of a stretch for them." Participant 4 elaborated further on the struggle in first grade to ask students to make two-column notes independently and often takes time. When looking at how to accomplish these needs and bridge for the grade level this participant shared it is often easier to skip the writing piece and have a discussion with modeling of how to accomplish the strategy as a whole group.

Participant 10, also added as a kindergarten teacher, the struggle faced with aligning inquiry AVID strategies received from AVID professional learning:

I think the trainings have been really positive. I think sometimes it's hard to align to practice, it does feel overwhelming. You are trying to do Socratic seminars in kind of your own way to make things more kindergarten friendly. And I think it would be great to have more things that were more packaged for the lower primary level.

Participant 10 later went on to share, "We have a ton of examples of Depth of Knowledge levels and Costa's levels of thinking, but sometimes it's hard to dial it down and focus just on kindergarten." When focusing on participants having similar experiences during their time with AVID professional learning the distinct difference

between the responses of the primary teachers and upper elementary teachers showed while the overall perceptions were positive, the lower grade levels had more mention of age appropriateness of AVID related lacking in preparedness.

Overall participants saw a benefit and general preparedness from the AVID professional learning. This was evident when the researcher examined the code occurrence within Dedoose related to the comparison of participants mentioning AVID professional learning preparedness in comparison to lacking preparedness. What was reported in was a greater total of occurrences for preparedness expressed by participants (See Appendix G). Showing that when soliciting participants through the interview questions overall each could mention one or more examples of how AVID professional learning allowed them to be prepared to implement the AVID framework within their current roles. While specific variations in teachers' perceptions of AVID professional learning emerged through later discussions revealing themes dependent upon the grade level taught or years at the site school. The perceptions that emerged through discussions allowed for needs and weaknesses to be expressed in relation to future professional learning as the AVID site moves on from year three.

**Impact and experiences.** Findings associated with the teachers' perceptions under research question one related to the overall impact AVID professional learning has had on them as an educator and perceived changes from participants' experiences were examined next. These questions allowed for the researcher to examine if the teachers felt impacted as an educator and if their thoughts about this professional learning experience had changed based on their experiences at the site school. The second parent theme emerged centered around *Impact and Experiences*. Under the second parent theme two



child themes emerged: *Years in Teaching Versus Years in AVID* and *Shared Experiences with Colleagues*. This specific site school in district XYZ now in year three of implementation chose a schoolwide approach versus one grade or smaller scaled approach. When analyzing the perceptions of the participants taking this schoolwide approach into consideration assists in the reader understanding what the experiences perceived by these participants entail.

When examining the teachers' perceptions of the impact AVID professional learning has had on them as an educator the researcher again looked to see if there was a correlation between years of teaching at the site school and grade level taught as seen in Finding 1, parent theme one, *AVID Professional Learning Approach*. The correlation consistently emerged between a positive experience occurring in relation to AVID professional learning for those within one to five years at the AVID site school. What was also noted was that the correlation to years at the AVID site school was not dependent upon years in teaching. Participant 2 for example, who had 20 plus years of teaching experience and had been at the site school within one to five years, stated:

It's just good practice with a name on it. I've always very much had a belief that elementary children are very capable. I believe they are leaders. I believe they are more capable than they've historically been given credit for and so in AVID that just helped me. It helps impact me in just knowing that they can handle these things that just benefit them in the future.

Participant 9, who also fell into the range of one to five years at the AVID site school, shared that the impact as an educator aligned with being more intentional in areas such as organization, modeling with writing, note-taking strategies and the environment

of the classroom being more in sync with an AVID approach for visual schedules and daily goals for first graders. Participant 9 summarized the impact when stating, “I’m modeling. I’m being more intentional. I’m organizing my schedule and then reflecting at the end of the day.” Participant 1, a teacher falling within the one to five years at the AVID site school, also shared “I would say it’s just impacted me as an educator, because now I’m aware why I would be teaching organization, or I’d say it is the main way it’s impacted me is bringing awareness to my own teaching.”

Participants with six to 10 years reported less examples of how AVID professional learning impacted them as an educator when examining the impact of AVID professional learning by years at the site school. It is also important to note that in the study there were no participants in the 16 to 20 years of teaching range.

Finally, examining impact from AVID professional learning in relation to the grade level taught, the most significant notice was that kindergarten participants responded with the most examples of impact than any other grade level. Participant 5, a kindergarten teacher, shared how AVID professional learning impacted them as an educator:

I feel like it’s made me a better educator. A lot of strategies, I find myself using daily and it’s super helpful for the kids too. Staying organized, critical thinking, all of those things I feel like have made me a better teacher and have made my students better because of it.

In summary, participants that were in the first five years at the AVID site school expressed more often the specific impact AVID professional learning had on them as an educator as well as those teachers that were at the kindergarten level. With a total of five

participants that fell under the one to five years at the AVID site school and three of the participants from the study teaching at the kindergarten grade level. Within these findings the impact mentioned for participants related to a positive experience that allowed them to be more intentional in their teaching as well as validating best practice that is not necessarily new to them.

These findings also followed the same trend when examining responses from participants related to the follow up questions under research question one allowing for the child theme *Shared Experiences with Colleagues* to emerge. Specifically looking at commonalities among colleagues with similar experiences with AVID professional learning and if the professional learning has changed participants' view of the AVID approach to this style of training at the elementary level. A commonality in responses showed that participants falling in one to five years at the AVID site school at varying grade levels along with impact showed the most change in perception and shared experiences with colleagues. As teachers being newer to the AVID experience, it could be said that these changes and experiences are fresh on their mind and more relatable as compared to teachers that have been embedded in the AVID professional learning over a longer period.

## **Finding 2**

When examining Finding 2, which is related to research question two, the researcher chose to review where the site school was within the implementation of AVID in year three. This review allowed for the reader to have a clearer understanding of the themes that were reported. The professional learning approach under the AVID framework gradually adds on each year to the site school's area of focus under the

WICOR framework. This approach from AVID allows for a continuous spiral of review while introducing new strategies or focus areas each year. Also used to gauge the goals and direction of the AVID professional learning approach is a system of fidelity checks and the AVID Elementary Coaching and Certification Instrument (see Appendix A).

Research question two and the associated interview questions centered around the participants' perceptions of their own effectiveness changing over time as a result of professional learning in year three. Also examined were the participants' perceptions of needs related to AVID professional learning in year three. Lastly, colleagues' perceptions of strengths and weaknesses related to year three of professional learning and implementation were examined. From the interview questions, under research question 2, the development of parent themes occurred. These parent themes being, *Perceptions that Effectiveness Changed Over Time*, *Needs for Effective Implementation in Year Three*, and *Colleagues' Perceptions of Strengths and Weaknesses in Year Three*.

Under the first parent theme, *Perceptions that Effectiveness Changed Over Time*, what came to light was that the perception of an increase in effectiveness over time was significantly present for those participants that were within one to five years at the AVID site school. The second parent theme, *Needs for Effective Implementation in Year Three*, revealed through interview and follow up questions three child themes. These three child themes were: *Time Needs in Year Three*, *Professional Learning Needs in Year Three*, and *Clarity and Vertical Alignment Needs in Year Three*. Findings when analyzed revealed that again needs related back to perceptions based on grade level taught or time spent within the AVID site school related to similar themes noted in finding one. Finally, under finding two when examining the final parent theme, *Colleagues' Perceptions of*

*Strengths and Weaknesses in Year Three*, the perceived strengths and weaknesses were best reported by grade level taught to see any connections. Two noted child themes under the parent theme, *Colleagues' Perceptions of Strengths and Weaknesses in Year Three*, were: *Perceived Strengths in Year Three* and *Perceived Weaknesses in Year Three*.

AVID professional learning in year three revealed strength in specific WICOR strategies that have been implemented fully and repeated each year, these being collaboration, and organization. While perceived weaknesses tied to professional learning in year three were present within grade specific needs in kindergarten and first grade. While second through fifth grade expressed a perception of weaknesses in their present need to have new learning occur with higher levels of thinking related to inquiry. It was evident through discussions the continual emergence of noted needs or weaknesses were tied specifically to participants' grade levels taught. Showing that perceptions of the participants varied from grade to grade with perceived weaknesses of AVID professional learning.

The phases and style of implementation used by the site school was mentioned by Participant 7 regarding the approach to AVID professional learning, "We took a slower approach each year focusing on a different component of WICOR. Starting out with organization." This statement illustrates that the decision made by the site school was to focus on a particular part of WICOR each year. In year one, organization was the focus at all grade levels slowly building up to collaboration, reading, writing and inquiry in year two. Then in year three inquiry was the focus allowing for a review. This repetitive nature chosen was due to better support implementation that was not as succinct at times

due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Participant 9 expanded on this thought in relation to how the professional learning was adjusted during year two and three, “We started with organization as a staff and then the next year we focused on inquiry. COVID hit so we kind of hit the brakes and have continued to focus on inquiry with our students.”

Participant 11 also mentioned that during the year three of implementation of AVID professional learning the site had done more trainings on specific AVID WICOR strategies, for example this year inquiry. This information allows the researcher to see that during year three while prior WICOR strategies were reviewed and the learning continual as well as the support, inquiry was the primary area of focus for the site.

**Perceptions that effectiveness changed over time.** Within the data set connected to teachers’ perceptions of how their effectiveness has evolved at year three of implementation, the researcher first looked at the range of years at the AVID site school set as a descriptor for participants. The data revealed again that those participants with one to five years at the AVID site school mentioned more frequently within the interviews evolution of effectiveness related to time. Interestingly, the data did not progress chronologically in the other sets related to time at the site school. The participants with 11-15 years descriptor emerged next related to change in effectiveness over time. With the participants that fell within the six-to-10-year group mentioning the least change over time when examining their effectiveness in AVID implementation in the classroom. Participant 6, a teacher with one-to-five years at the site school, stood out as the participant that mentioned the greatest change in effectiveness over time.

The researcher chose to again examine the perceptions related to grade level taught in terms of a change in effectiveness over time from AVID professional learning.

What was noticed was that third and fourth grade had the greatest mention of change in effectiveness. Whereas kindergarten had the least noted mention in change in effectiveness over time. What was interesting to the researcher was that under research question one, kindergarten reported the greatest impact from professional learning within the AVID program. Yet, when examining change in their effectiveness over time, within research question two, little is mentioned. The researcher then chose to look at the three participants from the kindergarten level and noted that each fell within the one to five years at the AVID site school. This correlation could explain that the participants being newer to the site school possibly would see more of a change in effectiveness as they experience more AVID training in additional years. Also noted was that kindergarten participants mentioned the least number of times through discussions the evolution of their effectiveness related to perceptions at year three primarily focused on professional learning around inquiry within the WICOR model.

**Needs for effective implementation in year three.** Within these findings under the parent theme, three significant recurring child themes emerged among the participants as areas of need in year three relating to how effectively teachers can implement AVID strategies. The first child theme that emerged was *Time Needs in Year Three*. A total of nine of the 11 participants mentioned an area of need being time in in year three of implementation. Two defining differences emerged through discussions in relation to areas of need associated with time. One need was time with the curriculum or lessons as a cohort to better integrate in the AVID WICOR strategies more intentionally after professional learning. The other occurrence was time in the day with students to effectively teach and put into practice with intention AVID strategies.

When examining the specific need for time with the curriculum, lessons, and their colleagues, seven of the 11 participants mentioned these needs as part of the professional learning experience. Participant 8 stated thoughts specific to this need:

I think giving a strategy or professional time a limit then gives the teachers time to go, collaborate and plan together how we can put this in our lesson plan tomorrow or the next week. A lot of times we have a training session, and we think, these are great ideas. We need to remember to do this, but then the kids walk in tomorrow and we're hit with whatever else the school day brings and don't fully implement how we want them to. So, my suggestion would be a short training session and then time, now go implement this somewhere or go plan to implement this soon and then report back how it goes.

Participant 4 also mentioned in relation to time, the idea of giving curriculum writers time to create AVID resources. The creation of an AVID curriculum team was shared by the participant to create a bank of ideas or ways to incorporate AVID strategies into current lessons to allow teachers time and assist with effective implementation.

The other occurrence related to time as an area of need that came to light was time in the day with students. While this occurrence was less significant, of the nine participants, only two mentioned time relating to needs of the day and school setting. The researcher chose to report this finding due to the similar mention occurring under research question one when discussions from participants revealed time as a need and lacking. Participant 4 went on to describe this in general just as a time constraint piece in the day. With this participant, being a first-grade teacher, the time constraint is related to AVID structures that take younger students longer to do independently when teachers



often feel a need to get through the curriculum. Participant 1, a fourth-grade teacher, added when speaking to time as an area of need in year three, “Time, I would say, is the biggest one because there is so much that goes on in the day. So, I think that’s not an easy answer because time is limited in teaching in general.” Participant 1 went on to answer how they deal with this area of need in year three, “I would just say making sure that I take and find the time to give them time to organize their desk or to organize their space is the biggest area of need or the biggest area that I need to be conscious about is creating that time.” When looking at time as a need in year three the nine participants each offered ways to improve for this area of need showing flexibility which directly relates back to the fact that all participants were able to see AVID as beneficial for them as teachers.

The second child theme that emerged under research question two and the second parent theme was *Professional Learning Needs in Year Three*. This theme came to light as an area of need in year three of implementation related to professional learning needs. Under this theme the occurrence of the mention of two different needs was revealed through examination of the transcripts. One area of need being a desire to have adjustments made to how the professional learning is being given to the teachers at the site school. The second that emerged was the need for an opportunity to see the strategies learned in association with professional learning in action and modeled in current grade like classroom settings.

Of the 11 participants, seven expressed through discussions the common occurrence of desires to have adjustments made to how professional learning is being done at the AVID site school in year three of implementation. Of those seven, it is

pertinent to mention that only two participants had been at the AVID site school longer than one to five years. What came out as a possible need is the issue with the repetition of training when focused on specific AVID WICOR strategies. The word used that had an increase in frequency among all six participants in this finding was repetitive. While some found value in the repetition others relayed a desire to push themselves more with implementation and vary training to allow those not ready more support with differentiation in professional learning. Participants 3, 11, and 8 mentioned the benefits of repetition. Participant 3, being within the one to five years at the AVID site school, stated:

I will always take more professional development around AVID because I think there are so many different ways to implement Socratic seminars and all of that. The note-taking columns and all the things that AVID incorporates. I think the well is deep and so just doing a little at a time is what I hope to do.

Participant 11, also within the one to five years at the AVID site school, spoke to how having the repetition embedded in all parts of the day and the central focus being AVID helps with understanding:

Experiencing it really helps me when we're in any kind of professional development and one of my principals incorporates an AVID strategy just into the professional development. And she's like, this is an AVID strategy you can use in your classroom. I file that away, like that's how you do that and that is, so it definitely helps me.

While these two participants saw the repetition as a benefit only, Participant 8, falling within 11-15 years at the AVID site school, saw it as a benefit and area of need:

Kind of how I have been speaking to it, the more basic things feel just routine now and I do think part of it is because we have had so much training on it. So, hearing the same message over and over can feel at times redundant on some things. Other times it's beneficial. So, the continuous professional development has helped a lot of ways to just keep things fresh in the mind.

Participant 8 went on to offer ways to vary professional learning to allow for both needs to be met moving forward in year three and beyond.

Participants 2, 6, 7 and 8 saw a need in varying the professional learning, specifically within year three of implementation. Out of this group, four of the seven participants gave specific feedback. Participant 8, who saw benefits and redundancy in repetition of AVID strategies, shared the allowance for differentiation was a need to best support varying needs for teachers:

I wish there was a way to differentiate. You know, teachers who have been in the program for two to three years versus a brand-new teacher who's maybe in their first year of teaching or first year in the district, or with AVID.

Participant 2 echoed this desire as well when seeing a need in change of delivery in year three of professional learning, "I think for people who have been here for a while, too much repetition, I don't know that they're seeing a lot of difference in from year one to year two to year three." Participants 6 and 7 spoke to a desire to move forward in implementation related to professional learning. Participant 6, falling in years 1 to 5 at the AVID site school, stated, "Sometimes I feel like as an educator whose done it and is in year three, we could push ourselves a little bit more with what we do."

Participant 7, falling under the six to 10 years at the AVID site school, relayed the perception that some of the repetition is due to the COVID 19 pandemic:

I also think it's been a little bit challenging in the aspect of some of our professional development. It can feel a little bit repetitive and that's not necessarily AVID's fault or anyone's. As we said, we had to take that pause for a little bit with COVID. So, it has felt a little repetitive.

Participant 7 went on to share a hope would be that now teachers understand AVID foundationally and a tool kit with strategies the pace picks up in implementation and professional learning focus in the future. The researcher noted again that this is a similar use of the phrase redundancy in relation to research question two that was also shared by participants through discussions related to research question one and AVID professional learning effectiveness.

Looking at the other occurrence associated with trainings or professional learning with AVID exposed the perception of a need for teachers to see modeling of strategies within a similar grade level classroom in real time. Four of the 11 participants specifically mentioned this area of need within the study. Out of the six grade levels within the study, those ranging from kindergarten to second grade were represented. Of the four participants ranging from kindergarten to second grade, each spoke to the idea of adjusting training by providing opportunities for teachers to go to colleagues' classrooms on and off site in other AVID elementary schools to see strategies implemented. When asked further as to what specific strategies within the WICOR framework that teachers saw as the greatest need to have direct modeling of in similar grade level classrooms,

inquiry was often mentioned. Participant 4 shared their biggest desire as a first-grade teacher:

I would love nothing more than to be able to visit another first grade AVID classroom, specifically in District XYZ. I think just so that I can see or hear how they include some of the strategies and things into their day. I think it would be beneficial.

The third child theme that emerged under the parent theme, *Professional Needs in Year Three*, was *Clarity and Vertical Alignment Needs in Year Three*. Six out of the 11 participants mentioned a need for clarity or vertical alignment, specifically mentioning this need were Participants, 2, 3, 4 5, 9, 11. When examining these discussions, the grade level taught was connected to the teachers' perceptions of three specific WICOR strategies where a need was seen. Participants 3 and 5, kindergarten teachers, mentioned an area of need related back to writing, reading and inquiry strategies. Participant 3 stated that it is often easier to implement these strategies within science and math at the kindergarten level. Participant 3 went on to state that with specific AVID strategies for reading, writing and inquiry when they are implemented along with the current kindergarten English language arts curriculum, depth is lacking at times with the resources used at the kindergarten level. Also related to implementation at the lower grade levels, Participant 9 stated when implementing Socratic seminar or philosophical chairs, "I feel like I'm forcing something that they're not ready for and I'm trying to test something on them that I don't need to test on them." From a higher grade level, Participant 11 also discussed a need for clarity related to inquiry, "I just feel like with

Costa's levels of questioning, I just still don't feel super confident with that I understand how to really implement it."

One common descriptor with the group was that the majority expressing this need fell under the range of one to five years at the AVID site school. Each of these participants either expressed a desire for a clearer picture of what their colleagues are implementing or to what extent is the expectation for the AVID strategies at each grade level. It is important to mention that this desire or need fits more under resources or time spent as a staff to clarify and develop a guide regarding implementation. Participant 9 shared a comment that effectively resounded the need noticed by the participants:

I don't feel that we have properly streamlined it. I do not feel that it is fluid from grade to grade. For example, I am currently having kiddos write two bullet points in their planner. We put one academic piece in their planner and then they jump to second grade and are writing six. That is a huge jump and we have not properly had those conversations between grades within our professional development to really talk about what is the jump. Is it matched to what AVID has asked us to do or are we doing more than AVID has asked us to do?

These findings show again benefits are seen within the AVID professional learning by participants. How the professional learning is carried out in year three at the site school revealed the perception of needs among educators with varying years and grade levels that are like findings and occurrences in research question one as well.

**Colleagues' perceptions of strengths and weaknesses in year three.** As stated before, all 11 participants saw benefits from AVID professional learning. To gain insight into perceptions of fellow colleagues related to strengths and weaknesses in year three

discussions occurred creating the third parent theme, *Colleagues' Perceptions of Strength and Weaknesses in Year Three*. Each participant was able to share either a strength or weakness related back to what they perceive as thoughts of colleagues based on grade level time devoted to collaboration and AVID implementation or vertical teaming when using the AVID fidelity checks. To clearly examine each participant's perceptions, it was best to look at responses under strengths and weaknesses associated with the grade level taught at the AVID site school.

When examining strengths, nine of the 11 participants commented specifically about their colleagues' perceptions of strengths. Participants 3, 5 and 10 expressed thoughts related to their grade level when sharing colleagues' perceptions. Under specific strengths shared, the idea that building wide the site school is strong within the use of organization and collaboration at year three because of the professional learning. Participant 3 also shared that as a newer staff member at the site school, the overall buy-in of the teachers building wide is evident and the use of fidelity checks assists in them seeing this across multiple grade levels when vertically having the opportunity to complete and collaborate using the fidelity checks. Another aspect brought up from the kindergarten grade level by Participant 5, was that as a grade level team, kindergarten has done a lot of training with writing and how to teach note taking.

Regarding the responses of first grade teachers related to perceptions of strengths, Participant 9 was able to share the perceptions of colleagues' thoughts. This participant's responses related back to the overall culture of the site school being AVID and over time it is how things are done and are taught by the teachers. Seeing, hearing, and learning from being a part of that culture and receiving students from the prior grade level with

pieces taught it becomes a part of routine allowing the time in AVID to be a benefit.

Important to note here is that this perception also ties back to what the kindergarten grade level mentioned as the buy in for the AVID site school being evident through actions and conversations as colleagues.

Next regarding second grade teacher responses, Participant 7 was the single teacher within the study at this grade level. Participant 7 shared common perceptions from the second-grade level related to buy in and culture at the site school being seen as a strength:

But even trying to stretch ourselves beyond to the collaboration pieces, writing and reading, I really do think that our staff has bought into it. It can feel like a lot and even our new teachers have taken off with it and run with it. I think that says a lot just about our staff too.

Participant 7 also shared that as a site the staff has done a good job implementing organization and inquiry in year three as a focus and this being a strength seen within the grade level based on conversations and time with colleagues.

Moving on to the upper elementary grade levels, third through fifth grade, Participants 11, 1, 8 and 2 shared perceptions of strengths from colleagues. In each participant's comment a common theme arose related again to perceptions of the school being positive because participants had observed consistency, focus and value in AVID strategies the overall premise of the program. All four participants from the upper elementary spoke to the buy in to AVID overall and how it assists in creating independent learners within their students. Participant 2 stated:



The strategies are life skills. They're leadership skills. They are ownership skills for children and their own learning. I mean, every single thing that WICOR stands for you can do in every subject. It's only going to make you a better learner, a better person. So, I'm not sure that anyone could argue with the premise of what AVID is.

At each grade level, responses shared by nine participants, related to perceptions of strengths seen from their colleagues' viewpoint all nine participants mentioned the strength in buy in as a site and how this has become consistent within the culture of the building in year three of implementation. Participant 9 stated, "Strength is over time it's gotten easier because it's the way, the culture." Participant 1 from the upper elementary shared, "A strength seen is definitely consistency through the school." Finally, a lower elementary teacher, Participant 3, shared that not only the perception is the observed consistency and buy in, but also the procedures used within AVID to keep fidelity intact, "Strengths shared often are that everyone has bought in on it and that there are fidelity checks."

Next the researcher examined the participants discussions that reported any weaknesses from colleagues' perceptions shared during common grade level time or vertical teaming time for AVID fidelity checks. It was again best to look at each comment under the descriptor of grade level taught at the site school. This approach was chosen by the researcher to find connections to grade level or building wide perceptions of weaknesses in year three under the child theme of *Perceived Weaknesses in Year Three*. Regarding perceived weaknesses from their colleagues' point of view in year three, out of the 11 participants eight shared specific perceptions. Of these eight

participants, five were from the lower elementary and three were from the upper elementary.

At the kindergarten grade level, Participants 3 and 5 shared perceptions of weaknesses that were specific to their grade level versus building wide. Participant 5 specifically commented on reading within the AVID framework for kindergarten as being a difficult aspect from the grade level perspective. Participant 3 mentioned, a prior theme noted, a weakness being the need for vertical alignment within the grade levels specific to what it looks like to teach pieces of WICOR at each grade. Participant 3 added that the perception of their grade level is that this would be a good next step for the site school to take on to improve and provide clarify for teachers.

At the first-grade level, Participants 4 and 9 offered comments relating specifically to the grade level taught perceptions for lower elementary teachers. Participant 4 stated that regarding weaknesses their perception is many K-1 teachers feel the same at the site school. Additionally, Participant 4 expanded commenting that at times the buy in is difficult at their grade level due to how the original roll out was done building wide and some inconsistencies that have occurred within grade level representation. Participant 9 shared perceptions of weaknesses at first their grade level, revolve around having AVID streamlined from grade to grade consistently:

We have not properly put those conversations between grades within our professional learning to really talk about what is the jump that we're making from grade to grade. So, I feel like grade to grade we need a little more fluidity.

At the final lower elementary grade level, second grade, Participant 7 commented that the team is looking forward to the future and adding new strategies to their toolbox,

moving on from some repetition in the professional learning experience they have been a part of up to year three. This comment allowed the researcher to see a definite difference between kindergarten, first and second grade level perceptions regarding weaknesses in year three.

K-1 show a need for some clarity and grade level specific support, whereas second grade shows a stronger sense of buy in and feel secure in moving forward with new strategies under the AVID professional learning experience. This is different than some prior perceptions related to developmental appropriateness that emerged based on grade level taught descriptors related to preparedness and effectiveness in year three. This also could allude to the fact that the professional learning within AVID is different for each participant having to do with their own philosophies of grade level appropriateness.

At the upper elementary level, grade three through five being represented, Participants 11, 6 and 2 shared comments related to colleagues' perceptions of weaknesses in year three of implementation. Each comment at these grade levels, when relating to weaknesses in year three, gravitated back to perceptions of specific weaknesses related to professional learning. Participants 11 and 6 commented on components of professional learning shared from their point of view common among colleagues that were not grade level specific. Participant 11 stated that weaknesses with specific WICOR strategies and participants perceiving a need for clarity have consistently emerged when conversations have occurred during vertical collaboration and fidelity checks. Of these WICOR strategies, Participant 11, speaks to inquiry as being

the largest conversation as an area of weakness by colleagues during AVID fidelity checks:

Levels of questioning because that came up in our fidelity check. Several of us were like, I still just don't really feel comfortable with that, or I don't think I'm doing it right. That came up, that has come up in each fidelity check that I've done.

Participant 6 shared the perception of weakness from colleagues relates back to how the AVID professional learning is carried out with the train the trainer model stating:

Naturally you're thinking about your own experiences and your own needs when you're training. So, sometimes you're not hearing or not catching all parts that may be beneficial to others who you are training.

Participant 6 went on to state that perceptions of weakness are due to the style of training that is done for the AVID leadership team, who then in turn carry out all professional learning. The weakness expressed is that takeaways could differ changing what is received at the site school when trained by the AVID site leadership team versus if the site was to be trained by AVID staff members.

At the fifth-grade level, Participant 2 related perceptions of weakness at year three back to a common recurring discussion addressing repetition being a weakness within professional learning in year three at the AVID site school. This perception was similar to Participant 7's comment about second-grade colleagues' views of weaknesses in year three.

Overall, when looking at perceptions of weakness related to year three of implementation from colleagues' viewpoints there is a definite divide between K-1 and

the other grade levels where a need for clarity and support to strengthen buy in at the lower elementary grade levels. The other grade levels from second grade and up more so shared that colleagues' perceptions at the building and grade level specific gravitated around how professional learning is being carried out in approach at the AVID site school in year three.

### **Finding 3**

Associated with research question three, finding three emerged focused around the perceptions of the participants' own effectiveness when implementing WICOR strategies in year three. The parent theme that emerged was *WICOR Effectiveness in Year Three*. Within this parent theme some connections did emerge between the grade level taught and the participants' perceptions. These perceptions varied based on the WICOR strategy being mentioned as it related to the child theme, *Most and Least Effective Implemented WICOR Strategy*. What was frequently noted by participants through discussions was that organization was mentioned often when analyzing most effective WICOR strategies being implemented across grade levels. While collaboration was mentioned by participants prior under research question two as a strength, not all grade levels discussed this WICOR strategy as one being most effectively being implemented in year three. Findings related to writing, inquiry, and reading varied in responses analyzed from participants. This variation in responses for these WICOR strategies indicate that each are dependent on the personal perceptions of the participant from their own classroom and not dependent upon grade level taught or years at the AVID site school.

**WICOR effectiveness in year three.** When posed with this question related to WICOR strategies that had been implemented effectively in year three the child theme, *Most and Least Effective Implemented WICOR Strategies* emerged, organization was again discussed as one of the most effectively implemented strategies by seven of the 11 participants. When analyzing participants' perceptions of most effectively implemented strategies, kindergarten, first, third and fourth grade participants had recurring comments related around organization in year three of implementation.

From the perspective of kindergarten, Participants 3, 5 and 10 shared their own perceptions of organization being implemented at their grade level. Participant 3 shared that organization is an easier strategy, stating that the grade level is the first-year students are having to manage a desk and supplies within a structured environment making it a primary focus for the teachers. Participant 5 mentioned specific ways that kindergarten as a grade level used to implement organization effectively:

An AVID way of making sure that they stay organized at the end of the day, we do labeled folders. We talk about what an AVID desk looks like at the end of the day. Every day before they get to do their STEM time, they have to raise their hand and show me what an AVID desk looks like, and we talk about what AVID means for them in kindergarten.

Participant 10 shared that organization is more naturally part of the experience when working with younger students at the kindergarten level. In first grade Participants 4 and 9 reiterated similar perceptions of feeling that organization was implemented most effectively for them as part of the grade level experience based on the natural fit of the strategy to the grade level for students.

Upper elementary, third and fourth grade teachers also saw organization as the most effective implemented strategy. Participant 11 shared that organization is a strength, relating again by to why at their grade level, third grade, it is a natural fit for students, “I think it’s just easy to maintain and implement the entire student’s organization.” Finally at the fourth-grade level, Participant 6 commented on how organization is most effective due to it being the most seamless thing they have implemented. It is also important to associate that in the year three site school, the first phase of implementation was focused on organization. With it being an area of continuous support within professional learning and fidelity checks. Which some saw as a strength and weakness related to repetition in the professional learning by year three from those at varying degrees of time at the AVID site school.

Overall, the strategy of collaboration was also perceived as being one of the most effectively implemented WICOR strategies in year three. Specifically, comments made by Participants 10 and 9, from the lower elementary grade levels, indicated that organization and collaboration are equally noticed as being effective. Out of all grade levels, collaboration was mentioned as one of the most effective in grades kindergarten, first, fourth and fifth. Participant 2 stated the use of collaboration hand in hand with structures like Socratic seminar and philosophical chairs is beneficial in multiple ways. Going on to share specifically how this is beneficial and implemented effectively with other structures at the older grade level, Participant 2 mentioned:

I think it just helps prepare them as far as how to communicate with others. How to voice your beliefs without coming across in an overbearing, rude way. Like how to talk about things that are very debatable as they head into middle school. I

think just some of that communication piece, it's also really important to focus on those because they're on computers so much. They've lost skills with personal communication. To make them feel comfortable when sharing ideas in person and how to effectively speak and share ideas with other people versus that computer.

Some participants who perceived collaboration was being implemented less effectively in their classrooms were those teachers from second and fourth grade. Interestingly, when relaying why they perceive collaboration as being implemented less effectively in their classrooms each of the participants had two different explanations as to why they felt this occurred. Participant 7, from the second-grade level, shared that when using collaboration in structures such as Socratic seminar, which is inquiry based, the teacher saw a break down. The participant credited this ineffective implementation to the lack of understanding with inquiry implementation structures to in turn having a negative effect on collaboration. In the upper elementary grades, Participant 1, from the fourth-grade level, felt that the teacher's classroom behaviors that current school year had bearing on the ineffective implementation of collaboration. Participant 1 commented:

I think I've avoided collaboration this year a little bit just because I don't think they can handle it effectively. So that means I've taken away some of those things I have done in years past because I just don't think my students will be able to handle it in the way that I want.

Within this study, this has been the only mention of behavior as a deterrent when implementing specific AVID WICOR strategies. In this study, it is evident that overall, the participants perceive that the most effective WICOR strategies implemented in year



three at multiple grade levels is organization with collaboration being the second most mentioned.

Also noticed through discussions was the mentioning of inquiry being the least effectively implemented WICOR strategy in year three by most participants. There was an obvious split between the lower and upper grades when teachers shared their perceptions of inquiry. Participants from grades kindergarten, first, second and third said they felt they struggled to effectively implement inquiry within year three at the AVID site school. While participants from grade five commented on inquiry being an area of effective implementation. It is worth noting that there were two contradictions within this finding. Participant 7 and 10 from the primary grades mentioned specific to their own classrooms some perceptions of having a strong implementation of inquiry that was growing as they put the practice into a modified way appropriate for their younger students. Participant 10 mentioned how Socratic seminar is conducted in the classroom in a modified way, but still can elicit higher level thinking skills from young kindergarten students in a way that increases understanding of debating and seeing viewpoints other than their own. Participant 7 shared specific to her classroom, the use of Costa's levels of questioning evolved over time, with modeling, and practice being the route taken for implementation with her second graders. Participant 7, had the students first identify the levels of questioning and modeled heavily with them, finally with the students putting this into practice independently by the end of the year:

With inquiry, back to notetaking, with second graders, is just always one of our big focuses. Working with them on the levels or Costa's levels of questioning, I

really tried to take that more to heart this year and get my students to be able to identify the levels of questions.

When examining the effectiveness of AVID writing strategies under the WICOR framework, it was mentioned as effective in the upper elementary grades but not as the most effective. Participants 7, 11, 1, 6, and 2 all mentioned writing strategies being carried out in their individual classrooms. More so they said that teachers were working to strengthen students' understanding of how to use writing strategies in grade two, three, four and five. In grade kindergarten and first grade, Participants 3, 5, 10 and 9, mentioned implementation of writing strategies was more so done in a modeled fashion. Modeling done first by the participants was purposeful with specifically focused note taking strategies due to ability of the younger students being capable of independently carrying out AVID writing strategies. This led to see a definite split between the perceptions of the teachers by grade level.

Finally, when examining the effectiveness of reading in relation to WICOR strategies being implemented in year three effectively, lower elementary participants mentioned that they struggled with the depth of reading resources for younger students. This was mentioned when discussing specific student books used to implement reading strategies within the WICOR framework. This comment was one that was grade level specific to primary grade participants. All grade levels mentioned that AVID reading strategies were naturally embedded within current curriculum because these fit under just strong pedagogy and practice all readers are taught to utilize when moving from learning to read into reading to learn. These findings report that there are definite trends in perceived effectiveness of strategies as the most or least effectively implemented within

classrooms related to grade levels taught, the statement that some of the experiences and perceptions of teachers are based on personal experiences and implementation in their own classrooms not reliant on grade level descriptors is evident in statements from participants within this study.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings that resulted from analysis of the qualitative data obtained from 11 participants from the elementary AVID site school that participated in voluntary Zoom interview sessions conducted by a third-party interviewer. Within the group of participants, the 11 teachers had a total of two main descriptors that were pertinent to the findings within this qualitative study. These descriptors were specific to years in teaching and at this specific AVID site school, as well as grade level taught. The 11 elementary teachers ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade, provided their perceptions of AVID professional learning. Each participant shared their perceptions based on their own personal experiences within AVID professional learning along with perceptions of colleagues and or grade level teams acquired through the professional learning and AVID schoolwide implementation process at a year three site school. The findings and themes that emerged in connection with the three research questions resulted in a total of two recurring occurrences noted related to the perceptions of the participants being influenced by their years at the site school or the grade level taught. Within the study a total of six parent themes and 12 child themes significant to interview and follow-up questions under the main research questions emerged. The themes shared the participants' perceptions of AVID professional learning approach at the elementary level in relation to personal impact and preparedness; effectiveness and

experiences over time; strengths and weaknesses perceived by colleagues; individual participants' perceptions of least and most effective WICOR strategies at year three within the AVID site school. Final discussion of the findings from this study are described in chapter 5 along with recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Interpretation and Recommendations**

This chapter is organized into three major sections to allow for summarization and discussion of the interpretations of this qualitative study regarding elementary teachers' perceptions of AVID professional learning at a year three AVID site school. The summary of the study entails an overview of the problem, the purpose of the study and research questions that guided the qualitative study. Also included in the summary are a review of the research methodology and major findings. In the final section of the chapter, implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks are explained.

#### **Study Summary**

This qualitative study examined the teachers' perceptions from their time spent participating in AVID professional learning at the elementary level within a year three site school. Each teacher represented in this study was responsible for carrying out the implementation of AVID strategies at their grade level in a schoolwide fashion based on the AVID focus for the year and continuous professional learning. This study examined the teachers' perceptions of the AVID professional learning experience at the elementary level, as well as how their perceptions have evolved with time and their own perceptions of effectiveness in implementing specific AVID WICOR strategies. To better understand other nuances of the teachers' perceptions or of overall perceptions gained from interactions with colleagues at the AVID site school follow up questions were used to elaborate on and explore these understandings.

The major components of this qualitative research study which includes the problem, purpose, methods, and major findings are first shared in this section to allow for a better understanding prior to the final conclusions and further recommendations being presented to the reader within this chapter.

**Overview of the problem.** This study was designed to examine perceptions of elementary teachers in an AVID site school in year three of implementation, specifically in relation to the teachers' perceptions of the impact of AVID professional learning on their efficacy and effectiveness. As noted, prior, AVID shared studies supporting their claim of the AVID effect on teacher behaviors in relation to professional learning that elicits changes in teachers' practices then in return cultivates changes in student learning. (AVID, n.d.) With the continuing need for school improvement in American education, teacher efficacy that in turn directly relates to teacher effectiveness is the topic of much research. Again, referring back to Hattie's (2018) research reporting one of the largest effect sizes is the impact of effective professional learning on self-efficacy in teachers, ultimately directly impacting student achievement and school improvement.

**Purpose statement and research questions.** This qualitative study was designed to gain an understanding of the impact of professional learning on teacher effectiveness at the elementary level within AVID's program which was originally designed for secondary education. The desire of the researcher was to gain understanding of elementary teachers' perceptions related to the impact, preparedness and effectiveness of AVID professional learning that directly would tie to teacher efficacy perceptions when implementing specific AVID strategies and components. When needed the researcher also used follow up questions to gain understanding of the participants' perceptions of

colleagues, and strengths and weaknesses within the AVID site school related to AVID professional learning.

The study was guided by a central question with supporting sub questions based around the perceptions of elementary teacher participating in AVID professional learning over time. The guiding question was, “What are teachers’ perceptions of AVID professional learning at the elementary level?” This question was supported by the following specific research questions:

**RQ1.** What are elementary teachers’ perceptions of the AVID professional learning approach at the elementary level, and the impact that it has had on them overall as an educator?

**RQ2.** How have elementary teachers’ perceptions of their own effectiveness in implementing AVID strategies changed over time from year one of implementation to year three as an AVID site school?

**RQ3.** What are the perceptions of the elementary teachers’ effectiveness when specifically implementing AVID Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading (WICOR) strategies in year three of implementation?

**Review of the methodology.** The methodology used for this study was that of a qualitative research design to best understand elementary teachers’ perceptions of AVID professional learning at the year three site school. To explore perceptions of elementary teachers varying in degree of experiences with AVID, grade level, and years, the AVID site school in its third year was chosen. Those teachers who had no prior experience or time spent on the AVID site leadership team that conducted all trainings and professional learning were selected to participate in the study. Twelve participants ranging from

grades kindergarten to fifth grade were selected for the study and 11 completed the volunteer permission process, Zoom interviews with a third-party interviewer, and verified transcripts through member checking overseen by the third-party interviewer as the liaison between the researcher and participants. Of the 11 participants, each grade level was represented by one to two teachers. The group of participants also had varying degrees of years in teaching ranging from 1 to 5 years up to 20 plus years. The group also ranged in years at the AVID site school from 1 to 5 years up to 11 to 15 years. Finally, out of the group of participants, one had prior experience with AVID while the other 10 had no experience. During the study, the participants responded to a total of 12 interview questions within the protocol, with the first five being rapport building questions and the remaining seven interview questions relating back to the three main research questions. Interviews were recorded by a third-party interviewer and later transcribed by the researcher using Trint online transcription service.

From the interviews, once transcribed and verified for accuracy through member checking, the researcher used the Dedoose Research Analysis computer program to organize and analyze the qualitative data. Coding was conducted by the researcher within individual interview responses, finding emerging themes and commonalities among responses that connected directly back to participant descriptors. The coding was conducted multiple times by the researcher to clarify themes and accurate interpretations of the data. These common themes were then connected directly to each main research question, corresponding interview questions, and follow-up questions. This process resulted in the findings reported in Chapter 4 and summarized in the major findings below.



**Major findings.** This qualitative study, was conducted under three research questions areas, guided by an overarching central research question designed to better understand teachers' perceptions of AVID professional learning at the elementary level in a year three site school. The teachers' responses from the interviews resulted in three major findings. These findings and themes are summarized and organized according to the guiding research questions. What was noticeable to the researcher was that the reoccurrence of the participants' perceptions being influenced by their grade level taught or years at the site school was seen in several responses and discussions within the interviews. While these recurrences were present, perceptions varied being negative or positive toward aspects of AVID professional learning at the elementary level overall. The researcher noted often in Chapter 4 that specific common themes emerged and were shared among research questions that related back to time, adjustments needed in professional learning to better meet needs and finally perceived strengths and weaknesses with implementation of specific AVID WICOR strategies.

The first finding of the study consisted of two parent themes and six child themes emerging under research question one. In the study when examining discussions perceptions emerged which revealed overall participants perceived AVID's professional learning approach had benefits and left them generally prepared. This finding creating the first child theme of *Benefits and Preparedness*, under the first parent theme, *AVID Professional Learning Approach*. These discussions by many of the participants spoke to the positiveness of the continuous and ongoing professional learning that was carried out. Also mentioned as a positive were the built-in fidelity checks and opportunities to see and hear from team members that are on their grade level and a member of the AVID site

team. While later child themes emerged depicting lacking components and needs related to AVID professional learning, it seemed overall most of the teachers saw the benefits and sound practices that are research based as valid to use and carried these out in their classrooms to varying degrees of implementation. The three remaining child themes under the parent theme, *AVID Professional Learning Approach*, reported negative aspects of AVID professional learning in each participant's experience it was noticed by the researcher that not all themes were specific to a single aspect each time they emerged from discussions. When looking at the child theme of *Time with Curriculum and Students*, it emerged from discussions from teachers that were newer and had been at the site school for a length of time. Based on this noticing it causes the researcher to deduce that time in general is seen as a factor for teachers when implementing any strategy or professional learning, no matter how much exposure they have had with the strategies and professional learning received. The third child theme, *Adjustments to AVID Professional Learning* that emerged having a negative connotation in relation to how the professional learning was being carried out at the site school. The discussions from participants that emerged regarding things they noted as lacking fell under two areas of focus. The first being the sense of redundancy in the professional learning at the site school from year to year. This was noticed specifically as a theme for those participants that had been at the site school longer than one to five years. The second being that teachers saw a need for how the professional learning was carried out by only the AVID site team. Suggestions for training to come from the AVID organization at the site school or similar teachers to their own grade levels offered emerged from discussions. The fourth child theme that was noticed by the researcher was *Clarity and Alignment Needs*.

This child theme was one that emerged when examining participants responses that specifically taught the younger elementary or primary grade levels of kindergarten through second grade. Most often this was noted by the kindergarten and first grade teaching participants when speaking to implementing the professional learning in their classroom settings and expressing a need for clarity, alignment, and the perception that some of the more abstract strategies were not developmentally appropriate.

The second parent theme that emerged under research question one was *Impact and Experiences*. Within this theme related to research question one it was noted by the researcher that the following two child themes emerged: *Years in Teaching Versus Years in AVID* and *Shared Experiences with Colloques*. The first child theme that was most noted from research question one in relation to AVID professional learning was that despite years in teaching overall those participants that had been at the site school from one to five years discussed having the largest impact from the experiences. These specifically speaking to how the participants are more intentional when teaching AVID strategies that feed into strong pedagogical practices. The second child theme that arose was that this perception also was present when participants discussed having similar impact and experiences as their colleagues with AVID professional learning. These findings show a strong sense of impact and a positive experience overall with AVID professional learning for teachers that are first receiving AVID professional learning within the one to five years range despite the number of years they had taught. The significance of impact was not seen in those participants with time at the site school of five or more years. It was also noticed through discussions that the impact or experiences did not vary due to the grade level taught by participants when examining this parent

theme under research question one. The second child theme that emerged under parent theme two was *Shared Experiences with Colloques*. This child theme also emerged with the same frequency in responses showing that participants shared the largest impact and change in experiences within the AVID professional learning approach with colleagues that were also in the span of one to five years within the AVID site school. Revealing that these teachers being newer to the professional learning perceive that their implementation in the classroom overall has changed the most with the learning received from AVID.

Finding two emerged from research question two and associated interview questions. Research question two addressed the perceptions of participants in connection with effectiveness over time exposed to AVID professional learning in the year three AVID site school. Under this research question, the participants responses revealed the parent theme, *Perceptions of Effectiveness Changed Over Time*. When examining the participants' perceptions of their evolution of effectiveness over time when implementing the AVID strategies, a significant occurrence emerged related specifically to Participant 2 and the frequency of responses in relation to the teacher's evolution and change within the classroom from AVID professional learning. Interestingly noted was this participant while within one to five years at the site school had 20 plus years of teaching experience. Revealing again the common description of one to five years at the site school being related to an emerging theme of significance. In finding two, the second parent theme that emerged was *Needs for Effective Implementation in Year Three*. The first child theme under the area of need returned to the mentioning of time needed by participants. Specifically, when examining responses, the teachers broke into two differences depicted

with the need of time. One need being time with curriculum and strategies to build up the newest AVID focus of inquiry, most often. The other being the time of day and constraints in fully implementing best practices with students within all aspects of the AVID WICOR framework. These responses varied by participants in relation to grade level taught and years at the site school. The second child theme that arose was again related to a need for adjustments in how professional learning is implemented after they have reached year three of implementation. Interestingly, the mention of repetition was again brought up by most participants but had both positive and negative connotations related to how the repeating of the strategies can be redundant and allow for continual reminders and support. Also, under the theme of need, discussions from participants revealed the need for differentiation and more modeling in like grade level classrooms. Responses revealed the specific strategy of inquiry needed more support and modeling within the professional learning. This result was present most commonly within the primary grade levels and those teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience.

The third child theme noted in need under parent theme two, *Needs for Effective Implementation in Year Three*, related back to the mention of clarity and vertical alignment of the strategies provided within the professional learning. This was most seen in responses from the primary grade levels. When reviewing these themes, it is worth noting that there are recurring patterns in responses specific to lacking in preparedness from research question one and needs in research question two by a variety of participants in the AVID site school.

As participants' discussions adjusted to speak to year three and perceptions of colleagues in relation to strengths and weaknesses with implementation of AVID a third

parent theme emerged, *Colleagues' Perceptions of Strengths and Weaknesses in Year Three*. Worth noting from the findings was that perceptions of colleagues had a definite split by grade level when responding to weaknesses of the implementation in year three. The participants from kindergarten and first again mentioned the need for clarity as how writing, reading and inquiry look at their grade levels. While second through fifth focused more on perceived weakness shared from colleagues at how the professional learning approach has been implemented and repetitive going into year three. A significant occurrence that emerged from discussions was most participants felt a strength and value in AVID strategies overall for organization and collaboration in year three.

The third finding from the study emerged from research question three. The research question focused on the participants' perceptions of effectiveness in implementing specific WICOR strategies most or least effectively in year three of implementation. Important to remember is the gradual roll out of the professional learning and how strategies have been focused on each year building up from organization, collaboration, reading and now writing and inquiry within the AVID WICOR framework. When examining perceptions of teachers in relation to most and least effective implementation of WICOR strategies, an occurrence related back to the grade level taught was noted in participants' responses was again present. Overall, most participants felt that effectiveness in year three to implement specific WICOR strategies relied heavily on the grade level taught. No significance was mentioned in responses to the AVID site's year of implementation and bearing of effectiveness. What was noted was the development of the child theme, *Most Effectively Implemented WICOR Strategies*, through responses. The theme revealed a connection between effective

implementation of WICOR strategies related back to how professional learning was rolled out supporting organization and collaboration allowing a continual focus since year one for all grade levels. Most of the grade levels reported organization followed by collaboration as the most effective AVID strategies implemented in year three. Another significant occurrence that arose when examining perceptions of implementation of AVID strategies effectively was, upper, and lower grades have varying perceptions in relation to inquiry and writing. Upper grades see inquiry, specifically fifth grade, as an area of most effective implementation in contrast to primary grades, specifically kindergarten and first grade. This perception was flipped when examining writing. Upper grades, again fifth, saw writing as an area of least effective implementation. Whereas kindergarten specifically mentioned this as a strength in how it is implemented by the grade level with gradual release and modeling. Again, showing a connection in themes to the participants' grade level taught.

Overall, the findings related to each research question had common themes tying back to grade level taught, years at the site school in relation to perceptions of approach, impact, effectiveness over time and with implementation of specific WICOR strategies. The common return to strengths in practices of fidelity and professional learning over time have assisted in strengthening organization and collaboration strategies. There are still some needs seen within the approach to how the professional learning is structured and communicated to improve specifically in the areas of alignment between grade levels for all WICOR strategies, writing support and learning and overall implementation of inquiry strategies. Inquiry, which is the newest focus under the WICOR framework as well as writing within the year three site school received the strongest response from

participants as seen being implemented least effectively within their current roles in year three. Finally, a consistent discussion among participants regarding the professional learning approach was support for the teachers by differentiating professional learning to be considered in future professional learning approaches within the site school.

### **Findings Related to the Literature**

A framework or program that can empower and grow educators in a way to foster continuous improvement and close achievement gaps for learners in America has been the focal point in educational reform for many years. As noted by Hattie (2018), one of the impacts on student learning that shows the largest effect size within research is effective professional learning. Effective teacher professional learning influencing teacher self-efficacy is seen to have a direct impact on student achievement (Hattie, 2018). In this study, when examining teachers' perceptions of AVID professional learning at the elementary level, it was clear that overall benefits and strengths are noted collectively by the group. The first theme that arose was that the majority of the 11 participants overall saw AVID professional learning at the elementary level as beneficial. The participants also perceived that the components of AVID professional learning experienced at the elementary level left them feeling for the most part prepared. Furthermore, the participants that fell under 1 to 5 years at the AVID site school, despite having varying levels of teaching experience, saw the professional learning as having the strongest impact on them as an educator. The other participants did relay this similar response, but not to the frequency as those within the 1-to-5-year range at the AVID site school. When reviewing these findings and considering the research conducted by Guidetti et al. (2018), stating teachers' perceptions of their work abilities are directly tied



to their feelings of self-efficacy in the classroom overall AVID professional learning for these participants has showed success in year three. Guidetti et al. (2018), as mentioned prior, in his research that if teachers believe in their own professional capabilities, generating the feeling of self-efficacy and belief of this in return, their students may be more likely to experience significant learning opportunities. This research gives support to continue with professional learning that elicits an overall sense of benefit and preparedness for the participants and over time possible growth for teachers and students alike.

The guiding research question was designed to reveal through the perceptions of the participants, the level of effectiveness in AVID professional learning to create teacher growth and efficacy. What was further revealed beyond overall benefits were nuances from participants' discussions that a sense of need or lack of preparedness within the professional learning approach were present. Within the WICOR framework, lower elementary grades struggled with how to implement higher level thinking strategies, such as inquiry and writing components for younger learners relating back to perceptions of age appropriateness of these two strategies. Within the perceptions of preparedness, there were also some differences that arose in participants' responses dependent on the grade level taught. While overall the participants viewed colleagues having similar experiences and having grown from the experiences within the AVID professional learning, those at the upper grade levels responded revealing a need for time with teams directly after professional learning. This time was voiced as time to collaborate and effectively embed these strategies to implement right away after the learning had taken place. Literature from AVID containing data from survey results taken by participants attending summer

learning institutes in 2014, reported growth in understanding and full integration of AVID strategies in the classroom (AVID, n.d.). Also noted by AVID (n.d.), in the same research, the teachers found the ongoing onsite team to support them in real time as beneficial. While the site school shows full implementation of AVID strategies at varying degrees and a supportive on-site leadership team, room for change and growth has been revealed through participants' responses specific to their perception of needs by grade level or years at the site school.

When going back to the review of AVID by grade level, the website under "About AVID", described the program at the elementary level as one that puts into practice the use of academic behaviors and higher-level thinking at a young age, and in return have a lasting effect in later grades (AVID, n.d.). Interestingly, what later emerged as important within this study were perceptions of effectiveness in year three and differences in perceptions based on grade level taught and years at the site school related to higher level thinking. Specifically, those participants in 1 to 5 years at the site school, one had the highest frequency of response in relation to evolution in effectiveness over time. While the other participants at this range of years at the site school did not show this high of a frequency due to their struggle with implementing inquiry at the kindergarten and first grade level. AVID (n.d.) described AVID elementary as rooted in the growth mindset work from Carol Dweck (2000) and Albert Bandura's (1977) social cognitive learning theory, which is applicable at all stages of academic life but needs to be taught in an age-appropriate way. This study on AVID professional learning revealed the concept of age appropriateness is seen as an area of struggle for six of the 11 participants. Furthermore, when examining participants' perceptions of needs to

effectively implement AVID strategies within year three, the researcher found a recurring theme related back to grade level appropriateness and need to effectively implement inquiry at the younger grade levels. The discussion of grade level appropriateness was not only mentioned by lower elementary grade level participants but also the upper grade levels, when reflecting on lower grades. Among the suggestions for improving AVID professional learning shared by participants, a continuum illustrating how to vertically align the WICOR strategies from grade to grade; collaborative grade level visits across district, as well as modeling of inquiry; differentiation approaches to professional learning were described.

The last significant finding that related specifically to the literature fell under the focus of the AVID WICOR framework. When examining participants' perceptions of least or most effective implemented WICOR strategies within year three, returning to the purpose of the framework itself is necessary for clarification. According to Drumright et al. (2016), the use of the framework aligns to AVID's overall goal in creating independent learners. This goal is achieved within students by allowing them to wrestle with new information and build up their schema creating new neural pathways (Drumright, et al., 2016). He also stated that engaging learners through AVID, to develop long-term learning, by being active critical thinkers is more likely to occur (Drumright et al., 2016).

While discussions from this study revealed some participants feel the AVID professional learning approach is repetitive there is some strength seen in the continuous method of learning for the teachers to keep the strategies in focus and being built upon each year. This strength was revealed within this study by discussions of organization

and collaboration being effectively implemented due to the nature of the roll out of the strategies building upon one another from year to year. Upper elementary participants perceived that inquiry was implemented effectively; with lower elementary stating this was their least effective. Each group returned in discussions related to age and grade level appropriateness or readiness. Lower elementary focusing on the struggle of how this looks in their classrooms and upper stating that the students are prepared for inquiry by the work done before in other grade levels with the WICOR strategies. Then finally, upper elementary mentioned a struggle in writing, specific to their students and habits. While lower grades, mostly kindergarten, felt their gradual release approach with modeling of focused notetaking and learning through writing allowed their students to have a strong understanding of how this looks for them in writing. Worth remembering is that AVID (n.d.) described the WICOR framework as the use of a combination of many skills to build capacity in learners as they progress toward the secondary level. Within this study what has emerged in relation to AVID WICOR strategies is that capacity building is occurring among students with a strong foundation seen by participants in organization and collaboration. As the site school has progressed into year three with some repetition and natural spiraling organization and collaboration remain in place as a foundation as reading, writing and inquiry have been added on year by year. Due to some needs and weaknesses in the learning approach, there are varying perceptions as to the participants' effectiveness when implementing the last three WICOR strategies depending on the grade level taught. It could be seen as a need for an adjustment in how the professional learning has been carried or possibly a need for differentiation at each grade level, brought up prior by participants. Finally, knowing that

the site school had to work around restrictions due to COVID-19 during implementation and professional learning, outside factors could also be at play only noted due to the time of this research study.

## **Conclusions**

Building capacity in our learners to become independent and develop long term learning through engagement and critical thinking is vital to shift and see changes in academic gain for students. AVID professional learning at the elementary level, while not widely researched, as noted by this study shows overall benefits and impact gathered from the participants within this study. These participants voiced specific ways that they have been validated in best practice or changed how they teach explicit strategies related back to the AVID WICOR framework. These changes as noted by Hattie (2018) within the teacher move to change the learning experience received by the student creating greater efficacy and overall teacher effectiveness. The greater benefit would outweigh the perception of lacking in preparedness or need still seen as the professional learning has evolved over time into year three of implementation. The struggle specifically for the approach of AVID professional learning relates back to moving and building in a spiral fashion upon the WICOR framework while adding on with the critical thinking components. This approach when examined by grade level taught or years at the site school perceptions are not as positive. The recurring theme of hitting repetition in the foundational strategies such as organization as a possible negative, but also needs for clarity, explicitness, and age-appropriate understanding of how to implement the more abstract strategies like inquiry and writing emerge.

**Implications for action.** District XYZ is the researcher's home district in which the AVID professional learning approach has been implemented district wide at secondary and elementary settings. In this final year, the last elementary schools joined the journey of AVID professional learning. The current qualitative study provided in depth perceptions of those teachers at a site school that has been involved in AVID professional learning at the elementary level since the first year of the pilot. While these findings are only specific to this site school in District XYZ and should not be directly applied or transferred to other schools within the district, these findings do allow for insight into what teachers perceive about the effectiveness of AVID professional learning at the elementary level at an experienced site within the implementation process. District program administration, directors and building administrators at the elementary level may find these shared perceptions worth taking into consideration when beginning or reviewing their journey of professional learning and the approach used within the AVID model at any year of implementation. Specific to this researcher's school a review of the findings would be valuable to assess current needs and supports for entering the next year of AVID professional learning and implementation. It is also worth mentioning, that if any new supports or resources are produced from these research findings specific to needs and preparedness within this specific site school, these would be of value for all elementary sites in District XYZ as a resource. These findings may also be useful to administrators and staff of other districts or schools that are seeking insight into the AVID elementary program or professional learning approach.

**Recommendations for future research.** Recommendations for future studies that could build upon this research study include:

1. A qualitative research study that examines the perceptions of students within an AVID elementary site school that have been exposed to AVID instruction for three to five years could add to this study. Allowing for the understanding of how the students perceive they have changed with exposure to AVID and specific WICOR frameworks as a learner from year-to-year building upon understanding. This study could focus on elementary and middle school students within cohorts that have moved from an AVID site elementary school to the middle school setting.
2. A quantitative study relating back to the changes in student achievement in relation to being exposed to AVID instruction within the elementary setting at an AVID site school compared to students who had two or less years of exposure within the same district. Showing specifically where they fall in relation to one another in performance on benchmark assessments within the district for reading and or math.
3. A quantitative study over time that follows a single cohort of students from kindergarten to third grade to gauge the growth in specific areas of the WICOR frameworks and how this correlates back to their academic achievement in reading.
4. A mixed methods study that tracks the attendance and graduation rates of students that attended AVID feeder schools within District XYZ and if there is a correlation to AVID at the younger grades and overall involvement and success in

the secondary setting. The study would also examine the perception of those said students in relation to their feeling of involvement and success being connected to AVID foundations at the younger grade levels.

5. A qualitative study with a corresponding district examining teacher's perception of the AVID professional learning schoolwide approach taken at District XYZ in comparison to another site using a different approach, like one grade level at a time, or other varying implementation models.

**Concluding remarks.** Creating a learning environment that builds capacity in our learners while building up and creating efficacy in our educators founded in solid, research based, and best practices is the description of AVID shared in available resources from the AVID program (AVID, n.d.). What stood out most for this researcher was that the lack of information on AVID elementary in relation to professional learning indicates a need for this program to be examined more closely from the point of view of those receiving the professional learning. While resources found and offered within this study, report that AVID elementary showed evidence of increasing engagement in learning and increases in all areas of WICOR for students when implemented successfully (AVID, 2020). As well as a second study referenced from AVID (2017) showing the instructional strategies taught within the WICOR framework being solid instructional practices in turn having a positive impact. There was still room for understanding to be gained from the teacher's perspective. Specifically, in relation to how AVID originally created for secondary is given to elementary teachers and implemented effectively. While a third study referenced within this work, conducted by Danskey (2017), did conclude that AVID elementary's educational theories housed



within the program were consistently researched based and if implemented with fidelity could work to close the achievement gap as well as give students rigorous academic skills. This researcher found it prudent to seek understanding in the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of AVID professional learning at the elementary level when the application differs from secondary settings. What was gained in understanding by the researcher was specific struggles or needs still apparent after year three for teachers based on their perceptions that commonly related back to the grade level taught, years at the site school or own personal perceptions and experiences specific to their own classroom needs. The hope of this researcher is that a review of current approaches within AVID professional learning could be adjusted based on perceptions shared as well as further research conducted to gain perspective from the students' point of view in overall effectiveness and impact on them as a learner.

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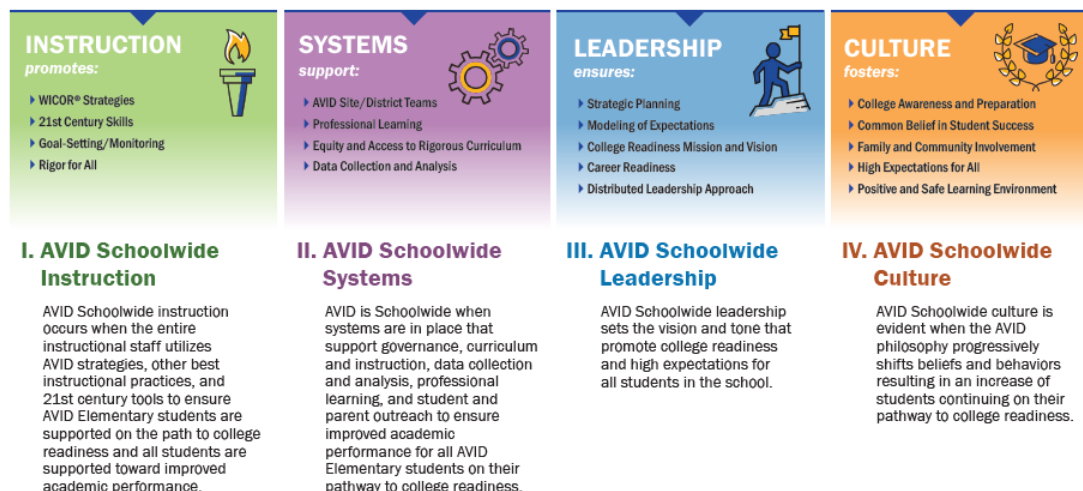
## Appendices

**Appendix A: AVID Elementary Coaching and Certification Instrument Directions**



## AVID Schoolwide Domains

The CCI is structured around four AVID Schoolwide Domains: Instruction, Systems, Leadership, and Culture.



## AVID Schoolwide Subdomains (Elementary)

- |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. WICOR® (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization and Reading)</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Management of AVID Elementary Implementation</li> <li>2. Access to Rigor and Student Support</li> <li>3. Assessment of Student Progress</li> <li>4. Professional Learning</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. College Readiness Mission and Vision</li> <li>2. Representative Governance</li> <li>3. Pathway to College Readiness</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rigor</li> <li>2. Community Activities and College Awareness</li> <li>3. College-Going Environment</li> </ol> |
|---|--|--|---|

## How to Use this Instrument

For an elementary site to implement AVID Elementary Schoolwide, AVID Center assumes the school has adopted a philosophy that is aligned with AVID's mission and vision of college readiness for all students. This instrument, the AVID Elementary Coaching and Certification Instrument (CCI), provides a systematic pathway to impact more students through the implementation of AVID on a campus.

Through a collaborative process, the AVID Site Team is expected to support the continuous improvement of the school's AVID system by completing the CCI early in the school year, using the initial findings to coach and guide AVID implementation, considering authentic evidence to document progress, and revisiting the CCI regularly to grow the site's AVID system. At the end of this process, the AVID Coordinator/Administrator submits the completed instrument to the AVID District Director, who reviews, approves, and submits the CCI to AVID Center.

The CCI is structured around four key Domains of operations: Instruction, Systems, Leadership, and Culture. The four Domains are further defined through Subdomains that monitor the level of AVID Implementation using multiple Indicators.

The overall AVID Certification rating for an AVID Elementary school is determined based on the individual levels of Implementation of each Domain and Subdomain and the submission of AVID's Data Collection forms. The CCI represents cumulative growth over an individualized timeline to fully develop and sustain the AVID system.

Note: The AVID Elementary Certification Self-Study is referenced as "ECSS" in the following pages to convey where Indicators connect to that certification tool.

**Appendix B: AVID WICOR Framework**



## Writing

### Writing is:

- A tool for communication, reflection, and learning
- Inquiry
- Visible organization of thought
- Communication with authentic audiences

### Students who write:

- Engage frequently in every content area and classroom
- Cite evidence to support their thinking
- Deepen their understanding of content
- Demonstrate command of academic vocabulary
- Communicate as a content expert
- Communicate their thinking competently and confidently

### AVID supports writing through blended learning experiences including:

- Disciplinary literacy
- Academic language and literacy scaffolds
- Learning-through-writing strategies
- The focused note-taking process
- The writing process in every content area
- Collaboration
- Tutorials, Collaborative Study Groups, and Scholar Groups

## Inquiry

### Inquiry is:

- Uncovering one's understanding
- Critical thinking and questioning
- Exploring a variety of ways to solve problems
- Engaging in thinking, learning, and discussion to inspire innovation

### Students who inquire:

- Analyze and synthesize materials or ideas
- Clarify their own thinking
- Probe others' thinking
- Work through ambiguity
- Solve authentic problems

### AVID supports inquiry through blended learning experiences including:

- Design thinking and problem-based learning
- Computational thinking
- Skilled questioning techniques
- Costa's Levels of Thinking
- Socratic Seminars
- Tutorials, Collaborative Study Groups, and Scholar Groups

## Collaboration

### Collaboration is:

- Positive group interactions
- Teamwork with shared responsibility
- Sharing of ideas, information, and opinions

### Students who collaborate:

- Create a safe and supportive physical and philosophical environment
- Work through identified structures and roles to achieve a common goal
- Develop positive interdependence
- Clearly communicate verbally and nonverbally
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning
- Deepen the learning of others through inquiry and active engagement

### AVID supports collaboration through blended learning experiences including:

- Academic language and literacy scaffolds
- Socratic Seminars
- Philosophical Chairs
- Jigsaw, World Café, Reciprocal Teaching, and Numbered Heads
- Synchronous and asynchronous peer editing groups
- Tutorials, Collaborative Study Groups, and Scholar Groups

## Organization

### Organization is:

- Managing materials, time, and self
- Practicing methodical study habits
- Planning and prioritizing school, work, and social tasks
- Engaging in goal-setting, planning, and reflection
- Strategically and intentionally taking responsibility for one's own learning

### Students who organize:

- Self-direct, self-evaluate, self-monitor, and self-advocate to reach academic goals
- Develop and use tools to organize thinking, resources, and time
- Develop and use processes, procedures, and tools to study effectively
- Prepare for rigorous courses and engage fully in instruction

### AVID supports organization through blended learning experiences including:

- Binders, eBinders, calendars, planners, and agendas
- The focused note-taking process
- Graphic organizers
- Project planning and SMART goal-setting
- Tutorials, Collaborative Study Groups, and Scholar Groups

## Reading

### Reading is:

- Making connections between texts, self, and the world
- Navigating and comprehending rigorous texts
- Evaluating information from a variety of formats
- Organizing and applying text-based learning

### Students who read:

- Activate, engage, and extend beyond the text
- Make predictions and create visual images as they read
- Understand text structures
- Question the text and engage in deep inquiry
- Become content experts
- Evaluate sources for accuracy and bias

### AVID supports reading through blended learning experiences including:

- Disciplinary literacy
- Academic language and literacy scaffolds
- Culturally relevant texts
- The critical reading process
- The focused note-taking process
- Vocabulary building
- Summarizing
- Tutorials, Collaborative Study Groups, and Scholar Groups

**Appendix C: Baker University Institutional Review Board Approval**



*Baker University Institutional Review Board*

April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Angela Doss and Harold Frye,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [npoell@bakeru.edu](mailto:npoell@bakeru.edu) or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

*Nathan Poell, MLS*  
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee  
Sara Crump, PhD  
Nick Harris, MS  
Christa Hughes, PhD  
Susan Rogers, PhD

**Appendix D: Approval from School District**

## Application to Conduct Research in [REDACTED]

Name Angie Doss	Organization Baker University	Department Elementary
Address 12419 North Wayne Avenue	City Kansas City	State MO
Phone Number 816-681-1905/816-359-5596	Fax Number 816 359 4379	Zip Code 64165
		E-mail [REDACTED]

I have read and understand the process of application to conduct research in the [REDACTED] School District. I also verify that the information provided in this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature

Date

*Angie Doss* 2/24/22

Is this study part of your work for a degree?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, complete the following:

☒ Ph.D. ☐ Ed.D. ☐ M.A./M.S.

☐ Undergraduate ☒ Other

University or College Baker

Date of IRB Approval (or date of application if pending) 2/20/22

Advisor's Name Harold Frye

Advisor's Telephone Number 913-344-1220

Attach a concise, yet thorough, response to each of the following items.

**1) Title and purpose of study**

**2) Timeline**

When do you plan to start your study? What is the estimated total length of time?

**3) Benefits to the district**

How will this study benefit the [REDACTED]?

**4) Research Design Summary**

Give specific information on the methods to be used during the course of the study. Please include your research questions, instruments, sampling and data collection methodologies, and proposed analyses. Samples of instruments may include survey questions, observation forms, and interview questions. Finally, describe any tasks students or staff will be asked to complete. Describe procedures you will use to secure and acknowledge informed consent of all participants, including active or passive consent. If passive, please provide a rationale. Please attach copies of any letters. Outline how subjects will be identified and criteria used for recruitment, who will make the initial contact with subjects, and whether or not inducements will be used to secure participation.

**5) Assurance of anonymity of [REDACTED] students & staff**

How will the anonymity of [REDACTED] students and staff be protected?

**6) Risks of the research**

List any known risks of the proposed investigation to students, staff, or the district.

**7) District involvement**

What request are you making of the [REDACTED] and the Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment? Specify numbers of students and staff to be involved, length of time, and time line for completion of your investigation.

**8) Funding Sources**

**9) IRB approval**

If applicable, give the date and copy of IRB approval letter, or application if IRB review is in process. [REDACTED] will not allow study to begin until we have an approval letter on file.

2/24/2022

## [REDACTED]

### Research Checklist and Approval

Date: February 24, 2024

Submitted to: Director of Research, Evaluation & Assessment

Submitted by: Angie Doss

Research Proposal Title: Teachers' Perceptions of Advancement Via Individual Determination Professional Learning at the Elementary Level

Principal Investigator(s): Angie Doss

#### Checklist

- X Completed "Application to Conduct Research in [REDACTED]"
- X Copy of "Informed consent" letter to study population/parents
- X Copies of measurement instruments
- ☐ Approval from university human subjects committee (IRB) if applicable *(Being processed)*
- X Copy of your complete application package

Approval of this research is contingent on adherence to district procedures as outlined in the document entitled "Application to Conduct Research" and the information provided with the application. The district must be notified of any substantive changes to the information contained in the application. The district reserves the right to withdraw approval of research if the research is deemed to no longer be in the best interests of the [REDACTED] students, staff, or the district.

Research Application: ☒ Approved ☐ Denied Date: 2.25.2022

Signatures

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

2/24/2022



**Appendix E: Email Solicitation for Voluntary Participation**

Hello,

My name is Angie Doss, and I am a student working on my EdD in Educational Leadership at Baker University. I have finished coursework and am now beginning work on my dissertation. The focus of the study will be on Teachers' Perceptions of Advancement Via Individual Determination Professional Learning at the Elementary Level.

This email is an invitation to participate in the study. Should you agree to participate you can be assured that your personal/ identifying information will be confidential. Your participation aside from the fact that you are guiding professional learning practices will be anonymous to everyone including me. A third party will be conducting the interviews for the basis of the research.

Included in this email is a copy of the consent form, and interview questions/protocol that each participant will be asked for the study by the third-party interviewer, Julia Legate. Ms. Legate will contact you within this next week to confirm participation and secure a date for the interview to be conducted via Zoom. Once this is confirmed, I will collect the consent form digitally or by inner mail within the district. Moving forward, Julia can be reached to discuss any questions you have regarding the study or confidentiality once participation is confirmed prior to your interview session. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Angie Doss  
Baker University Doctoral Candidate  
Assistant Principal, English Landing Elementary  
816-359-5596  
AngelaMDoss@stu.bakeru.edu

CC: Julia Legate  
juliamlegate@stu.bakeru.edu

**Appendix F: Consent Form for Participation**

**Research Title: Teachers' Perceptions of Advancement Via Individual Determination Professional Learning at the Elementary Level**

**Researcher:** Angie Doss

**Advisor:** Dr. Harold Frye  
 School of Education  
 Baker University  
 8001 College Blvd.  
 Overland Park, KS 66210  
 913.344.1220  
 harold.frye@bakeru.edu

I am writing to request your participation in my doctoral dissertation. The research within my study is focused on teacher's perceptions of how AVID professional learning at the elementary level influences one's overall effectiveness in the classroom with achievement. My current role within the district and the implementation of AVID professional learning and program district wide, has increased my interest in understanding a teacher's viewpoint on a program that was originated for the secondary setting. With my third year within the AVID program training, myself, I am very curious at the lack of research on this topic related to the elementary level in correlation with AVID professional learning and development and see a need to further this research.

Your participation is requested based on your teaching position within the [REDACTED]. The interview will consist of 12 questions, with the possibility of follow-up questions. Each follow-up question will be used as a tool to help clarify answers and gather more in-depth information. You have the right to decline to answer any questions or follow-up questions. Additionally, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

The interview will be conducted via Zoom and will be recorded so that I can transcribe the interview. Once completed, you will have an opportunity to read the interview transcript for accuracy. The transcripts will be password protected, and only the research analyst and I will have access to the raw data. All personal and identifiable information and answers to questions will be kept confidential. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will add to the body of research in increasing the understanding of AVID professional learning at the elementary level.

**Consent to participate**

- I understand that my participation in the research study is voluntary.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.
- I understand that I can contact the researcher at AngelaMDoss@stu.baker.edu with any questions or to withdraw from the study.

I have read and understand the above statements. By signing this consent to participate, I agree to participate in the research study. The Baker University International Review Board approved this study on \_\_\_\_\_, which will expire on \_\_\_\_\_ unless renewal is obtained by the review board.

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix G: Analysis of Research Data**

## Code Application Dedoose Chart

	Totals	Least Effective: Reading	Least Effective: Organization	Least Effective: Collaboration	Least Effective: Inquiry	Least Effective: Writing	Most Effective: Reading	Most Effective: Organization	Most Effective: Collaboration	Most Effective: Inquiry	Most Effective: Writing	Mention of Weaknesses in regard to AVID PL	Mention of Strengths in regard to AVID PL	Colleague's perceptions of strengths or weaknesses	Area of need noted with PL	Perceptions that own effectiveness time related	T's with similar experiences as participant	Perception of Effectiveness tied to Years in AVID PL	Experiences changed perceptions	Mention Impact of AVID PL	Mention of Lack of preparedness in regard to AVID PL	Mention of Preparedness in regard to AVID PL	Perceptions of AVID PL at Ele level (+/-)
Participant_1.docx	48	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	3	5	9	0	1	4	5	2	5	6
Participant_2.docx	53	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	7	2	1	4	7	5	4	12
Participant_3.docx	47	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	3	1	5	10	1	2	7	0	5	4	4
Participant_4.docx	47	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	2	6	2	1	6	4	2	10	6
Participant_5.docx	39	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	2	2	2	7	1	0	4	2	3	6	6
Participant_6.docx	53	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	1	10	11	1	3	6	1	2	6	6
Participant_7.docx	38	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	5	3	3	2	7	3	5	5
Participant_8.docx	42	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	1	4	4	1	5	3	4	1	9	9
Participant_9.docx	50	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	5	2	1	10	0	8	7	7
Participant_10.pdf	43	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	6	8	1	2	7	1	2	6	6
Participant_11.docx	36	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	7	1	3	7	5	0	2	1
Totals	0	4	0	3	10	6	3	8	11	4	10	12	14	19	43	79	14	21	37	67	21	37	72