

AVID/TOPS Frequently Asked Questions

What is AVID/TOPS?

Advancement Via Individual Determination (or AVID) is a college readiness system that includes an elective course for students in grades 9-12 supporting students to attend post-secondary education. In the elective course, students keep the same AVID teacher and AVID/TOPS throughout high school. The elective course focuses on organizational strategies, study skills, critical thinking, tutorial support, and career and college awareness. On Mondays and Wednesdays AVID/TOPS learn the important skills, habits, and knowledge that will make them successful in high school and college. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, college-age tutors work with small groups of AVID/TOPS students to help them better understand their classwork. On Fridays, AVID/TOPS students visit colleges, listen to motivational speakers, and engage in fun activities that will prepare them for college.

Does AVID/TOPS work?

AVID/TOPS has been evaluated by researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and they consistently found that AVID/TOPS significantly and positively impacts student achievement. First, AVID/TOPS increases the cumulative and core GPAs of students in the elective course. Second, AVID/TOPS students take more Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses than their peers. Third, AVID/TOPS improves student attendance and reduces the rate behavioral referrals for AVID/TOPS students. Finally, AVID/TOPS students are more likely to enroll in college (both 2-year and 4-year) than their peers; furthermore, AVID/TOPS students are more likely to persist in college on a path towards college graduation.

Why does AVID/TOPS work?

Students in the AVID/TOPS elective class are more successful because of four key program supports. One, AVID/TOPS places students in a rigorous curriculum and gives them the support to achieve. Two, AVID/TOPS teaches students specific strategies to succeed in high school and get into a good college. Three, students stay with their AVID/TOPS peers for four years providing for a community of positive and motivated peers and supportive adults. Four, AVID/TOPS students are surrounded by a team of adult who role is to advocate for the success of every AVID/TOPS student.

What is the AVID/TOPS application and selection process?

AVID/TOPS targets students in the academic middle,(GPAs between 2.0-3.5 and middle to high tests scores) with the desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard. Typically, they will be the first in their families to attend college, and come from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education. These are students who are capable of completing rigorous curriculum but are falling short of their potential. In the spring semester, high schools will invite all 8th grade students, who fit the target criteria to apply for the AVID/TOPS 9th grade elective class. Note: students who participate in AVID in middle school, must also apply to participate in high school. Once invited, interested students must complete an AVID/TOPS application, submit a teacher recommendation, and interview with high school AVID/TOPS Site Team members. From the students who have submitted all application materials and interviewed, the high school AVID/TOPS Site Team will select the students who can enroll in the 9th grade AVID/TOPS elective course. Students who are not initially selected to be in the 9th grade AVID/TOPS elective class

may still be join AVID/TOPS until the first semester of their junior year, so long as they fit the criteria. Students interested in joining AVID/TOPS after the first semester of 9th grade should contact the AVID Coordinator at their high school.