



650 W. State Street • Room 307 • Boise, ID • 83702  
P.O. Box 83720 • Boise, ID • 83720-0037

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Contact: Mike Keckler  
208-332-1591 (office)  
208-866-5734 (cell)  
[Mike.Keckler@osbe.idaho.gov](mailto:Mike.Keckler@osbe.idaho.gov)

## **An Education Initiative Producing Results**

By Kurt Liebich, President, Idaho State Board of Education

In order to educate students, teachers need to find a way to make a meaningful connection. Whether it was the written word, science or even high-level mathematics, we all had that teacher or teachers in our past who recognized our potential and found ways to draw us out and help us understand. Those teachers prepared us to succeed.

Successful educators are also good students who continually hone their craft and learn new ways to connect with their students. That is why professional development is so important to the teaching profession.

One learning program in particular will be utilized in the upcoming school year by over 50 rural, urban and virtual Idaho schools. It is called Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). It is a program that includes secondary elective classes focused on college and career readiness and it is showing promising results.

AVID-trained teachers work in both in elementary and secondary classrooms focusing on students who are capable but are not yet reaching their potential. Many of the students are economically disadvantaged and members of minority populations.

By first instilling confidence, and then introducing students to accelerated coursework while developing study and note keeping skills needed to learn and

succeed, college going on rates in AVID schools are about 20 percentage points higher than the statewide average.

The Hagerman Joint School District recently started using AVID and early results are promising.

“AVID has been a positive addition for our students and dedicated staff. In three years of running the program as district director, I have seen a change in culture within the Hagerman School District for the better,” said Dr. Troy Easterday, who serves both as vice principal and as a high school science instructor. “AVID has opened up the eyes of our students to different pathways, both College & Career based programs that they may have never thought of prior to AVID. Testing scores have increased, but not to a large extent, due to being such a short time running the program in our district.”

The Homedale School District has employed the AVID program for four years. Educator Kristie Dorsey says it encourages healthy interactions among classmates and empowers students to feel comfortable asking questions in front of their peers.

“The thing that I like about AVID class, is that the class takes students of all different learning levels and styles and gives them the chance to enhance how they learn best to fit in any class situation,” Dorsey said. “AVID helps students set high expectations for themselves as they work their way to post high school life. Whether a student chooses to move onto post-secondary education or straight into the workforce, the tools that AVID teaches students is something they can use throughout their lifetime.”

The Boise Independent School District has been affiliated with AVID for 15 years. 74 percent of the district’s 2019/20 graduating AVID students went directly into college.

“Clear results prove that Boise School District’s AVID Program successfully prepares our students to succeed in college, career and citizenship,” said Coby Dennis, superintendent, Boise School District. “We are proud that nearly three quarters of our AVID graduates go directly into college to pursue their dreams and aspirations.”

The AVID approach starts in the early grades, emphasizing problem solving and critical thinking skills. Students receive individual support and most thrive because their teachers are able to make course materials interesting and relevant in ways that help students of various backgrounds relate and learn.

The AVID system is just one example of various resources available to our school boards and administrators that help educators to become more effective at preparing our students to realize their full potential, in the classroom and in their eventual careers.

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