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**THE IMPACT OF THE PRE-COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM AVID
(ADVANCEMENT VIA INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION) ON MILLVILLE SENIOR
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' SUCCESS IN COLLEGE**

by
Chelsea L. Ranck

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services, Administration, and Higher Education
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration
at
Rowan University
April 12, 2014

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

Dedication

I dedicate this to Dr. Sisco and Dr. Walpole and the pursuit of higher learning.

Acknowledgments

I would like to recognize Donna Cohen, my former high school teacher who has inspired me every step of the way through reaching all of my educational goals. She has influenced me to strive for success in all areas of life. Additionally, she influenced the topic of AVID for my thesis project.

I would like to acknowledge my many friends who continuously supported me to stay focused and strong. My dear friend Kathryn Ruhno deserves special appreciation for going above and beyond in showing her love and support in my goals.

Foremost, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Burton Sisco, for his endless support and motivation to achieve greatness. His compassion and dedication was the true source of my motivation to pursue obtaining my Master's degree in Higher Education Administration.

Abstract

Chelsea L. Ranck

**THE IMPACT OF THE PRE-COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM
AVID (ADVANCEMENT VIA INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION)
ON MILLVILLE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS'
SUCCESS IN COLLEGE**

2013/14

Burton R. Sisco, Ed. D.

Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this study was to investigate the pre-college program AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) and its impact on Millville Senior High School's recent graduates now attending higher education institutions. The study investigated the attitudes of students who had participated in AVID while attending Millville Senior High School in Millville, NJ and are now on course to complete a Bachelor's Degree.

This study utilized a mixed method design to collect data. The perception survey contained 30 items from four different factor groupings focused on family and parental support, academic persistence, college preparation, and AVID reflections.

The second part of the study involved conducting a focus group interview in order to gather more data on the students' experiences in the AVID program and their reflections on its effects on the college experience.

The study found that AVID played a pivotal role in preparing and supporting these students in pursuing their academic goals. It is recommended that more studies similar in scope and design should be conducted on other AVID students and the progress in their academic careers.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Vince Lombardi once said that “The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack in will” (<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/93874>). With this in my mind, there is a belief system based on determination. It is often said “where there is a will, there is a way.” A number of schools are now adopting a methodology in order to advance students through this mind set.

In 1980, Mary Catherine Swanson, of San Diego’s Clairemont High School decided she needed to spread a belief system of determination to Clairemont High School’s underserved students. She had grave concerns of underserved, inner city students succeeding academically with their suburban counterparts. In response, a program titled AVID was introduced to the school system. AVID which is an acronym for, Advancement Via Individual Determination, was introduced as an academic elective for students. The philosophy behind AVID is to, “hold students accountable to the highest standards, provide academic and social support, and they will rise to the challenge” (www.avid.org/abo_whatisavid.html, para 3). This elective started 30 years ago in one high school with 32 students and now serves over 425,000 students in 48 states (www.avid.org/abo_whatisavid.html, para 4). “AVID’s mission is to close the

achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society" (http://www.avid.org/abo_what_is_avid.html, para 6).

Today, AVID has been adopted in many schools in 48 states. School districts frequently use federal and state education initiatives to fund the program. AVID is often offered in grade levels 7-12 and it is open to all students. However, it is typically used to target students in the academic middle achieving grades of B, C, and even D levels. These students are also identified as having a desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard. Generally, the students are first generation college students. Often the students are from low socio-economic backgrounds. Educators believe that if all students are offered a supportive environment, they will succeed.

According to the AVID program description, the AVID curriculum was developed by middle and senior high school teachers in collaboration with college professors. It is based on the WICOR method, which stands for writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading. This is applied not only to elective classes but to AVID English, Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies classes. With faculty who believe in the AVID methodology and tutors who can serve as role models and academic coaches the students have a greater opportunity to succeed.

This study investigated how a pre-college program like AVID impacted the retention rates of underserved students admitted to a four year college. Through the lens of the work of Astin, Tinto, and Kuh as well as other researchers in higher education, this study examined the role that persistence played in students' success rates. More specifically, the study investigated the claim that when the expectation of determination

and persistence is established in high school through a program like AVID, it is more likely that students will obtain a higher education degree.

Statement of the Problem

According to the College Board statistics of 2009, only 35% of America's college students graduate with a bachelor's degree in four years and only 52% graduate within six years. Students attending college part-time have even lower statistics. Less than 25% of students graduate within eight years when attending college part-time. The United States of America was once ranked as number two in the world with college completion rates. Currently, it is ranked at number 12 (Complete College America, 2012). There is a need for postsecondary education after high school in order to receive employment which makes these poor retention rates so alarming.

Tierney, Hagedorn, Swail, and Perna (2002) identify that students of color continue to be underrepresented at institutions despite the billions of government funding invested in student access programs. It is remarked that perhaps one of the reasons for the continuing degree attainment gaps is "may be that the traditional approaches to increasing college access (e.g. student financial aid programs) have focused too narrowly on the issue of college enrollment, without sufficient attention to the steps required to be academically, socially, and psychologically prepared to enter and succeed in college" (Tierney et al., 2002, p. 15). It is necessary to identify that access is not the only problem for American students but succeeding in degree attainment as well.

Tinto's (1975) examination on dropout from higher education offers the perspective that college degree attainment is a longitudinal process starting with the student's pre-college experiences. Tinto elaborates by stating that "Individuals enter

institutions of higher education with a variety of attributes (e.g., sex, race, ability), precollege experiences (e.g., grade-point averages, academic and social attainments), and family backgrounds (e.g., social status attributes, value climates, expectational climates), each of which has direct and indirect impacts upon performance in college” (Tinto, 1975, p. 94). Factors like a student’s family background, a student’s perceived skills and abilities, and prior learning environments are likely to affect a student’s drive to succeed. The experiences students have with meeting or not meeting expectations impacts academic persistence. There is a need to determine options that can be offered to students before they enter college so that students can have a more successful transition academically and socially. Additionally, it is important for the expectation to be achievement no matter what the challenge. When students struggle to adjust to their new environment and a new set of challenges they often do not return for the following semester.

In response to Tinto’s findings, the federal government and private agencies have invested in instituting pre-college programs. The most commonly known programs are TRIO, GEAR UP, Upward Bound, I Have a Dream, and AVID. However, the problem exists that there is little to no data on these programs leading to increased retention rates. Tierney et al. (2002) identify that, “Over the last decade I have been involved in a national study of college preparation programs and I have found that no program that states it is anything than highly successful. However, the evaluations of these programs have usually been simple reports of what took place” (Tierney et al., 2002, p. 219). There is little to no evidence if learning actually took place and if there is actually an impact from students participating in the program (Tierney et al., 2002). Moreover, it is

important that pre-college programs are evaluated frequently to determine if there are lasting effects from the efforts of the educators and the principles of these programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of the pre-college program, AVID, on both in-and-out-of-classroom experiences. The study sought to gain an understanding of the students' overall reflection of how participation in the AVID system prepared them for college. Of related interest were the motivating factors in students' persistence to succeed.

Significance of the Study

Gathering data on the reflections of the AVID graduates' college experiences adds to the knowledge base of pre-college programs. Since the majority of AVID students are underserved students, the findings of this study may help to develop plans and services at other high schools with similar demographics. The practices of AVID can be compared to other similar programs. Furthermore, the results may help high school teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors to be better equipped to prepare students for higher education. Hopefully, this will ultimately have a positive effect on retention rates at higher education institutions.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study was completed with AVID graduates of Millville Senior High School in Millville, NJ. The study was limited to 17 AVID graduates who graduated between the time of June 2007-June 2012. The students attend different college institutions and are at different places in academic careers. Four of these students participated in a focus group conducted in the Spring 2013 semester. It is assumed that each subject was truthful and

thorough in his or her responses. Lastly, researcher perspectives and relationships to the subjects being interviewed may present bias in the findings.

Operational Definitions

1. Achievement Needs: An individual's enjoyment of surmounting obstacles and successfully completing tasks undertaken (Chapman & Pascerella, 1983).
2. Affiliation Needs: The extent to which a person is group-centered, friendly and participative with others (Chapman & Pascerella, 1983).
3. Cultural Capital: Knowledge about the value of attending a higher education institution. For example, the student's background culture of the expectation to receive a degree (Astin, 2004).
4. First Generation Student: Child of a parent who has possibly pursued some college education but ultimately does not have a college diploma (Walpole, 2007)
5. Low-SES: Parental education is less than a high school diploma and parents are of unskilled occupations (Walpole, 2007)
6. Social Capital: A student's social characteristics at the time of initial entry to an institution. For example, the friends of a student seeking a higher education degree (Astin, 2004).
7. Socioeconomic Status (SES): A measurement of one's social status based on parental education and parental occupation status (Walpole, 2007)
8. Underserved High School Student: Students who receive free or reduced lunch and who are not gaining access to challenging academic coursework that prepares them for secondary education (www.AVID.org/abo_whatisavid.html).

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What do selected students who participated in the MSHS AVID program report about their college preparation, family/parental support, persistence and motivation, and AVID reflections?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the demographics variables of age, sex, race/ethnicity, and the factors of college preparation, family/parental support, persistence and motivation, and AVID reflections?
3. How do selected students who participated in the MSHS AVID program describe the role AVID played in preparing them for college academics?
4. How do selected students who participated in the MSHS AVID program describe the role AVID played in preparing them for college involvement?
5. How do selected students who participated in the MSHS AVID program describe the importance of AVID?

Overview of the Study

Chapter II provides a review of scholarly literature in relation to this study. It includes a brief history of the research of first year students' experiences. Following that is an overview discussing the challenges that underserved students face in pursuing their higher education degrees. Next is a review of pre-college programs implemented in high schools as well as Millville Senior High School's pre-college AVID program. Lastly, there is a summary of the chapter.

Chapter III discusses the methods and procedures used to gather information for this study. This chapter includes the context of the study, the population and sample

selection, demographics, data collection instruments, the data collection process, and analysis of the data.

Chapter IV presents the findings and results of the study. This chapter focuses on answering the research questions with quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

Chapter V provides a summary of the study, discusses the findings, offers conclusions based upon the findings, and gives recommendations for practice and further research.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

First Year Students' Persistence to Succeed

The works of Astin (1984), Astin & Oseguera (2004), Tinto (1975, 1988, 1993), Tierney, Hagedorn, Perna, and Swail (2002), Tierney (2004), Kuh (2009), Walpole (1997, 2007), Wells (2008), elaborate on the number of factors that are related to a first year student persisting in pursuing a higher education degree. The first year experience of a student is often an indicator whether he or she will return for the second year.

Tinto's (1988) extension of the Theory of Early Student Departure discusses the different stages students experience as they enter a four year institution. The first year students referred to in this discussion are typically between the ages of 18-24. According to Arnold Van Gennep this age group is typically passing from youth to adulthood so the stages of that process have influenced the defining of the stages first year students experience (Tinto, 1988). The stages are known as separation, transition, and incorporation. Separation occurs when the individual is separated from past associations. The transition period is when the individual begins to interact in new ways with members of a new group to establish membership, and finally, the incorporation stage is when the individual takes on the new behaviors of the new group.

Theoretical Framework

Tinto's theory of departure. According to Tinto's (1988) departure theory, the transition stages are considered very important because successful transition often leads to persistence. These stages occur within the first year of college and the end of the year is most often the time when students will decide to persist or withdraw from an institution. Tinto (1988) places emphasis on the first six weeks of the first semester and how the connections created in this time period are crucial to the student's adjustment to the new environment. Likewise the first six months and the completion of the first year of college play a strong role in persistence to obtaining a bachelors degree.

Tinto (1988) discusses the first stage students experience as the separation from past environments and habits and eventually adopting new habits appropriate for the college setting in order for students to succeed. The degree of similarity of existing habits compared to the habits of a college student determines this level of difficulty to adjust.

Tinto's longitudinal model. Similarly, Tinto's (1975) longitudinal model of college withdrawal describes how a student's personal characteristics, pre-college experience, and pre-college preparation, and commitment to educational goals effects how easily students transition in the first year. Tinto says "some students are unwilling to put up with the stresses of transition because they are not sufficiently committed either to the goals of education and/or to the institution" (Tinto, 1988, p. 444). Often the culture and expectations that students are used to before entering college can affect the transition process.

To support Tinto (1975), Pascarella and Chapman (1983) conducted a study based on Tinto's longitudinal model. The study focused on students after freshman year that

chose to persist or chose to withdraw; it excluded academic dismissals. The study was conducted in the fall of 1979. The sophomore year students (persisters) and the withdrawals were identified at 11 two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions. The study examined the student background characteristics of sex, age, high school GPA, SES, affiliation needs, achievement needs, commitment to the institution, and commitment to the goal of graduation. The study also examined institutional variables like size, residence life, living on-or-off campus, cultural events, peer conversations, participation in student programs, participating in career development programs, and the number of best friends on campus. Results of the study found that the type of institution students attended largely played a role in persistence. But other factors affecting persistence were related to student background characteristics. For example, the expectations of friends and family members for the students to succeed were a factor.

Astin's input-environment-outcomes-model. Similarly, Alexander Astin and L. Oseguera (2004), developed a theory to support Tinto's longitudinal process theory. Astin and Oseguera (2004) titled his theory the "Input-Environment- Outcomes Model." The characteristics students have before they enter college, the inputs, influence the likelihood to succeed. Astin primarily examined how the college environment can affect the pre-established characteristics. Astin "identified 146 possible input (precollege) variables, including high school grades and admission test scores, race, ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, religious preference, income, parental level of education, and reasons for attending college" (Astin & Oseguera, 2004, p. 330).

Astin and Wells cultural capital. A factor in students' pre-college preparation is their knowledge of college and how important college is considered in personal

background. Astin and Oseguera (2004) and Wells (2008) discuss how social and cultural capital effects academic persistence. Coming from a background that places emphasis on the completion of a college degree plays a positive role in students' commitment to educational goals. Wells (2008) conducted a study which found that "parental education and friend's college plans were associated with the greatest odds of persistence" (Wells, 2008, p. 121), supporting the link between a student's social capital and cultural capital and commitment to educational goals. When students are involved in a social network that promotes college degree attainment they are more likely to persist to obtain a degree. Similarly, if the student comes from a culture that expects a student to obtain a degree, he or she is more likely to persist.

Similar to the discussion on the effects of social capital on a student's degree of persistence, Kuh's Theory of Student Engagement describes the positive impact of student engagement on all students, regardless of background (Kuh, 2009). Student engagement is the time and effort students devote to activities. Activities offer the opportunity for students to engage with faculty and students, thus strengthening their on campus social network. Additionally, engagement has shown to have positive effects on grades and persistence for students who most need a boost to performance because they are not adequately prepared academically when they enter college (Kuh, 2009).

Engagement helps students through the transition process and promotes positive attitudes towards institutional commitment which ultimately can result in retention of the student.

Astin's student involvement. Astin (1984) also looks at the environmental effects on student persistence. He terms his theory as student involvement. When referring to student involvement, it means "the amount of physical and psychological

energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 518). Students who are highly involved are considered to spend more time studying, participating in student activities, and frequently interacting with faculty and peers (Astin, 1984). Being involved means students behave in a manner that commits them to academics and institution. The ratio of effort students put into academics correlates with how much they learn. Likewise, the effort they put into building on campus relationships results in more meaningful relationship which helps them become incorporated into the new college group, resulting in successfully separating from previous lifestyles. This is increasingly important when students are entering from cultures that are not supportive of the changes and expectations of being part of a college culture.

Obstacles to the Success of Underserved Students

Low socioeconomic-status (SES) high school students typically struggle to gain access, admission, and completion of a higher education degree (Tinto, 1988; Walpole, 2007). A 30% gap exists between the college-going rates of low- and high- SES high school graduates. According to Walpole (2007), only a third of low-SES students enroll in college, and less than 15% earn a four year degree. These data not only express a need to change policy but also leads to the question of why is it so difficult for these students to achieve a higher education degree. Research by Astin and Oseguera (2004), Wells (2008), and Walpole (2007) have indicated that students who come from low-income families and whose parents did not attend college are less likely to enroll in college or a four-year institution. Additionally, regardless of ability, students of these families are also less likely to persist. Similarly, students with parents who work at lower-status jobs or have lower incomes have lower educational aspirations, persistence rates, and educational

attainment than do students of higher SES backgrounds. For example, to high-SES parents, success for their child might mean a bachelor's degree, an advanced degree, or attendance at a prestigious university; while to low-SES parents, their child's success could be a high school diploma, a full-time job, or enrollment at a vocational school or two-year college (Walpole, 1997). With these expectations, it makes it harder for students to believe they should and can achieve a four year degree. These are alarming statistics because as this cycle of not furthering education continues, it closes the door of social mobility for these low-SES students.

Additionally, an obstacle that presents itself to underrepresented students is the fact that they seem to struggle to gain access to more well-known institutions. Astin and Oseguera (2004) discusses the difficulties of students from the lower economic strata to be admitted to more elite institutions. This type of equity in which all students have the same access is important because often more elite institutions have more resources. In addition, the majority of students are from the upper economic strata that effects the social networking of incoming students from low SES groups. It makes it challenging for students to adjust and transition when life experiences differ so strongly (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Walpole, 1997). Astin and Oseguera's (2004) study on underrepresented students in higher education institutions used data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) survey administered to freshmen students every fall. Every year for the past 38 years, 400,000 students from more than 700 institutions complete a questionnaire that asks about basic demographic and biographical information, values, self-concept, attitudes, and educational plans. From this study, Astin (2004) found that while there is an increase in admittance of low income students, they are still unlikely to

be admitted to elite institutions. However, students who enroll in college having parents that both have higher education degrees strongly outnumber the first generation students about 6 to 1. First generation students of the low SES groups are faced with challenges before they even set foot on the college campus to begin their path to degree completion.

In addition to low SES students having the proper academic and cultural preparation, having the proper financial preparation is a concern as well. A student's economic background does more than affect the student's mindset of persistence. The current financial demands of attending an institution often cause students to struggle between the balance of attending classes and working. This is another challenge that can affect the student's involvement in on-campus activities as well as academics (Walpole, 1997).

Pre-College Programs Instituted in High Schools

Proper preparation leads students to more easily adopt the lifestyle of a college student upon entering a four year institution. With the proper preparation, it is more hopeful that students will persist. According to Tinto (1988), the stages of separation and transition into a new college environment and the new academic demands leads to stress and can result in early student departure. However, ultimately "it is the individual's response to those conditions that finally determines staying or leaving" (Tinto, 1988, p. 445). Pointing out that it is ultimately the student's response to challenges aligns with the theme of pre-college programs. A pre-college program implemented in high school inspires students to stay determined and achieve despite the challenges they must overcome.

The most widely known program is the Federal TRIO program. TRIO was a result of the War on Poverty in the Lyndon Johnson administration (Tierney et al., 2002). The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post baccalaureate programs. TRIO also includes a training program for directors and staff of TRIO projects (<http://www.2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html#programs>).

Tierney (2004) devised a model for outreach to underserved students. It is known as the Neighborhood Academic Initiative (NAI), a college preparatory program that targets students with a “C” average from low-income areas. The program also requires all participants to have the support of one adult guardian. Program leaders act as a mentor to participants and offer positive support to help students pursue their academic interests. Participants are called scholars to elicit a positive self-perception of their academic competencies. There are rigorous standards to meet but it is ensured that students are always encouraged. Students have after-school activities, week-end classes, a summer intensive program, and guardians attending periodic weekend workshops. There is a great deal of time spent on the discipline one needs to succeed. The teachers and leaders lead students to the sense of responsibility for their own success however at the same time ensuring an environment that supports high expectations is created. Leaders from within the African American and Hispanic communities serve as role models. Parents are also

involved in the students' academic pursuits in hopes of changing the cultural perception of obtaining a college degree.

A program titled "Beyond Borders, Beyond Barriers" at the School of International Business in San Diego, California implemented a similar mission to prepare students for the rigors of college (Diaz-Booz, 2011). The student population of the school is comprised of 79% receiving free or reduced-price lunch, 45% are Latino, and 38% are English language learners. The high school has a committed faculty and staff that reinforce the idea of holding students accountable. The school is also committed to having open lines of communication with the parents so that they are all working together towards a common goal. The students are pushed to succeed. From this program, a college "Fast Track" program emerged in which high school students could take courses at the nearby Mesa Community College to receive credits. When the program began, less than 10 students graduated from high school with college credits. Currently, every senior is graduating with having taken at least one class, and many graduates accumulate more than 20 college units. More than 50 juniors and seniors every semester are enrolled dually at the school and Mesa College. Like AVID the administrator boasts, "we have brought discipline, good teaching, high standards and a college-going culture to a traditionally underserved community" (Diaz-Booz, 2011, p. 93).

The GEAR UP program stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs. It is a state grant and is designed to encourage more young people to have high expectations, stay in school, study hard and go to college. It is "the federal government's role in early intervention" in order to offer students the social and academic support they need to be college ready (Tierney et al., 2002, p. 16). Currently,

Rowan University partners with Camden Schools in Camden, NJ to promote a college going environment. The specific program name is C.H.A.M.P. GEAR UP which stands for Creating Higher Aspirations and Motivation Project. The program serves 419 Camden middle and high school students. Students and parents are informed about college options and financial aid. Students are challenged with rigorous coursework starting in sixth or seventh grade and continue through high school graduation (<http://www.rowan.edu/camden/champ/>).

Millville Senior High School's Pre-College Program, AVID

AVID is an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination. AVID is a pre-college program that aims to prepare all students with the proper habits and behaviors of a college student. The program creates an environment which sets the expectation that all students will go to college.

AVID was first established in 1980 by Mary Catherine Swanson, of San Diego's Clairemont High School. She designed a model to lead underserved, inner city students to success through instilling the belief system of determination. The drive to instill this program was so that more of Clairemont High School's underserved students would graduate high school and go on to college. The program was introduced as an academic elective to improve students' study skills and habits. The program began with one high school and 32 students, and now impacts more than 425,000 students in 48 states (http://www.avid.org/abo_whatisavid.html para. 5). Students going through the AVID program are applying and getting accepted into four year institutions. Data collected from the 2011-2012 academic year reports that 3 out of 4 AVID graduates are accepted to four year colleges or universities (http://www.avid.org/abo_dataandresults.html#02).

Similar to Mary Catherine Swanson of San Diego who realized the underserved students were not succeeding, two teachers by the names of Patti Akinston and Ellen Nickerson realized that underserved students in the Millville School District in Millville, NJ needed extra support in order to succeed. These teachers noticed that challenges arose early on in the students' academic careers and that it would be best to begin implementing AVID in the earlier grades of grades 7 and 8. Before AVID was implemented at Millville's Lakeside Middle School, the method of tracking was being used. All students who were earning As were grouped together and put in the same classrooms, the same for all students earning Bs. It appeared that all of the students did not have the same access to the honors and advanced courses being offered. The faculty wanted to close the achievement gap by providing those in the academic middle with additional strategies to succeed in the areas of writing, critical thinking, and study skills via the AVID methodologies

In 2003, Akinston and Nickerson after attending a training program for AVID, were inspired to introduce AVID to Lakeside Middle School in Millville, NJ. By the summer of 2005, a team of 13 administrators and teachers from the middle school and high school attended the Atlanta Summer Institute from all major academic disciplines to undergo training. The training included implementing AVID strategies critical thinking, writing and reading strategies; training in conducting AVID tutorials and the training of AVID tutors; binder organization; how to navigate the AVID website (posting data); and lastly, Cornell note-taking. In order to increase the number of students graduating and planning to attend a postsecondary institution, the faculty was inspired and dedicated to adopting the AVID methodology.

In the fall of 2005, Lakeside Middle School first fully implemented the AVID pre-college program. Students were selected and interviewed for the program and the parents of these students were contacted. The first AVID elective began with 18 freshmen students. The teachers in the Millville middle school were excited about using this methodology as well as an abundance of support from the administration. The superintendent of the Millville school district was instrumental in bringing AVID to life in the school district. By the 2007-2008 academic year Lakeside Middle School became the first AVID demonstration site in the northeast region.

Currently, AVID is operating in grades 6-12 in the Millville school district. Beginning in middle school the faculty identifies students in the academic middle achieving grades of B, C, and even D levels. These students are also identified as having a desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard. These students are on the path to be first in their family to attend college. The Millville School district educators maintain that through believing in their students and offering them the right environment and tools to succeed; the students would rise to the challenge. The expectation in Millville Senior High School (MSHS) is that all students will graduate and attend a higher education institution.

Millville school district educators learn through AVID training, certain techniques to use with students. AVID is offered as an elective in grades 6-12 so that students can have a class period to learn how to properly stay organized and become familiarized with college note taking techniques. The elective course also reviews how to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial options as well. As a result, there is consistent college-going support for students every day.

The AVID methods are also extended to core class so that AVID math, AVID English, and AVID science can be offered to AVID students. Additionally, to be part of the AVID program students are required to take one Honors or AP course and take the AP exam. The AVID curriculum was developed by middle and senior high school teachers in collaboration with college professors. It is based on the WICOR method, which stands for writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading (http://www.avid.org/sec_overview.html#curriculum). This is applied not only to elective classes but to AVID English, Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies classes. The students have a greater opportunity to succeed with faculty who believe in the AVID methodology and tutors who can serve as role models and academic coaches the students have a greater opportunity to succeed.

Summary of the Literature Review

Astin and Oseguera (2004), Tinto (1975), and Walpole (1997) discuss in their works the challenges first generation students of low SES face when trying to gain access to higher education institutions. In addition to the challenge of gaining access, is the challenge of adjusting to an environment with their higher SES counterparts on a college campus.

Tinto (1975, 1988) further explains how pre-college preparation academically and culturally can have a large impact on students' persistence in higher education. Often, the stress caused from the social and academic transition can lead to early student departure (Tinto, 1988).

The pre-college program AVID is implemented to lessen the impact of the challenges that low SES students face. When the AVID program is put in place in high

schools, educators create a college seeking culture for all students. AVID offers the resources and tools to prepare students with the knowledge and best practices for achieving a higher education degree. By participating in AVID during high school years, students are expected to be college ready and college bound upon graduation.

Data indicate that AVID increases college bound rates of low SES students (http://www.avid.org/abo_dataandresults.html#02). However, there is a gap in the research of college-prep programs like AVID, if they actually increase college retention rates. This study sought to examine the experiences of AVID graduates of Millville Senior High School who attended a four year higher education institution to determine how AVID affected their academic persistence.

Chapter III

Methodology

Context of the Study

Millville Senior High School (MSHS) is located in Millville, New Jersey. Millville, NJ established itself in 1776 with the anticipation for its numerous mills thus the name “Millville.” The land was first developed by the Union Estates Company that purchased 24,000 acres of land to establish a mill. The mill was then powered by enlarging the dam along the northern part of the Maurice River. This established the first meaningful development along the waterway. Millville continued producing mills due to the abundance of Silica Sand that led to the large glass industry in South Jersey. The community consists primarily of individuals from a lower socio-economic status. According to the United States 2010 census, the city of Millville has an estimated population of 28,400 residents, consisting of approximately 66% White persons, 19% Black persons, and about 15% Latino persons (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>). There are seven elementary schools, one junior high school, and three high schools including the alternative high school. The New Jersey District Factor Grouping (DFG) examines the population of a school district and assigns them a code based on the overall socioeconomic status of its students. This tool is used to compare the performance of students in similar situations attending nearby schools (<http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/sf/dfg.shtml>). The school district of the Millville City in the 2000 census was assigned the grouping of A. The grouping is

determined by the following six factors; percent of adults with no high school diploma, percent of adults with some college education, occupational status, unemployment rate, percent of individuals in poverty, and the median family income. This grouping indicates that most of the members of the community are part of a very low SES category. Furthermore this grouping indicates the need for social mobility of students in this community.

Population and Sample Selection

The study was administered to 17 selected AVID graduates. These students are first generation college students from the academic middle and a low SES. The 17 students were selected to participate in the completion of a survey and complete a short demographic survey. After the survey was conducted, four students were asked to participate in interview sessions. These four undergraduate students were attending New Jersey institutions during the 2012/2013 academic year. All of the students who participated in the study are AVID graduates of Millville Senior High School.

Instrumentation

The study used a mixed method in order to compile data. The study has three components. The first component was a short demographic survey followed with a perception survey. The final component were interview sessions. The instrument used for the survey was modeled after the work of Williams (2010). The interview guide used for the interviews was modeled after the work of Schell (2010). The modified survey (Appendix A) consists of 15 items and gathered demographic and background information. Questions are asked regarding age, gender, race, current academic status,

on- and off- campus involvement as well as the educational background of family members.

The second part of the study gathered quantitative data through a survey (Appendix B). The survey contains 30 items from four different factor groupings. Those factor groupings include family and parental support, academic persistence, college preparation, and AVID reflections. These factor groupings are based off of the proposed research questions of determining the factors playing a role in the students' persistence to succeed. The survey was designed so that the participants could rate each item on a Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree.

A pilot test was conducted to determine face validity and reliability of the demographic and the perception survey. Responses indicated that the items were clear and understood by participants. To determine reliability, the Likert scale items of the perception survey were analyzed using Guttman Split-Half coefficient tool in SPSS. According to the split-half coefficient, the results yielded an overall score of .621. Coefficients of .700 and above are considered reliable. While the coefficient for the Likert scale items is lower than this threshold, the sample size of 13 could reduce the coefficient estimate; thus, the instrument appears to be reasonably internally consistent and reliable. More research with larger samples using the same instrument would help verify this claim.

The final part of the study gathered qualitative data through interview sessions (Appendix C). Both the survey and interview schedule were approved by the Institutional Review Board at Rowan University (Appendix C).

The interview questions were designed to gain more detailed accounts from students of how AVID prepared them for the college experience. The questions were divided into two sections: In- and Out- of Classroom Experiences and Overall Impressions and Reflections. Astin's (1984) Theory of Student Involvement and Tinto's (1988) Theory of Student Departure helped to guide the development of the interview protocol. All participants were notified that their responses would be used solely for data collection in this study, and that their names would be changed to ensure confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data collection took place during April 2013. I administered a demographic survey and a perception survey to 17 students. Four students were randomly selected to participate in an interview session. Each participant was notified in advance as to when and where the interview would take place and how long it would last.

The interviews were conducted in two separate sessions consisting of two students in each session. The research and the individuals met in a quiet section of the Cumberland County College's student center. I treated each participant to a beverage and or snack at each interview meeting to ensure a level of comfort. On average each interview session lasted about 23 minutes. With the participant's permission, each session was tape recorded and then transcribed for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The independent variables in this study included gender, race, and age. Information for these variables were collected in the first part of the survey. The dependent variables were the attitudes and views that the students' had about different factors relating to their college experiences. These factors were known as college

preparation, family/parental support, academic persistence, and AVID reflections.

Variations in students' attitudes were explored based on each of the independent variables using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) computer software.

Correlations (Pearson product-moment calculations) and descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to examine the data in regard to research questions one and two presented in Chapter I of this study.

Interviews were transcribed and interpreted using content analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Sisco, 1981). Key words and phrases were coded and arranged in themes in order to reveal patterns of the selected students' perceptions and reflections, as well as their current involvement, academic achievement, and their plans for the future. Research questions three, four and five were treated using the data collected from the interviews.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of the Survey Sample

The subjects for the quantitative portion of this study were graduates of Millville Senior High School in Millville, NJ. These students were all attending higher education institutions in New Jersey. The student contact information was recruited through the Millville AVID District Director. A survey was electronically distributed to the students allowing them to voluntarily submit responses. Of the 17 students who received the survey, 13 students responded yielding a 76.4% response rate.

Table 4.1 displays the demographic information that the Millville High School AVID graduate respondents reported. All of the students were enrolled in a higher education institution. Fifteen percent of the students reported being 18 years of age, 38% of students were either 19 or 20 years of age, and 46% of the respondents were between the ages of 21 and 22 years of age. Eighty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they identify as females and 15% identify as males. Sixty-one percent of students identified as being White and 38% of students identified as being Black or African American.

Table 4.1

Demographics for AVID Respondents (N = 13)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
18 & under	2	15.4
19 to 20	5	38.5
21 to 22	6	46.2
23 & Older	0	0
Total	13	100.0
Sex		
Male	2	15.4
Female	11	84.6
Other	0	0
Total	13	100.0
Racial or Ethnic Identification		
White	8	61.5
Black or African American	5	38.5
Asian	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0
Latino	0	0
Mexican-American	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	13	100.0
Currently enrolled in a higher education institution		
Yes	11	83.3
No	2	16.6
Total	13	100.0
Have you already graduated from a higher education institution?		
Yes	0	0
No	13	100.0
Total	13	100.0

Table 4.2 reviews the respondents' socioeconomic demographics. The questions are related to the education levels of parents as well if the students needed to work throughout the academic year. The respondents also reported the number of hours they worked each week at an on-or-off campus job. The highest level of parents' education is an Associate's degree. Thirty percent of respondents reported that mothers had obtained an Associate's degree while 15% reported that of fathers. Seventy six percent of students reported working an on-or-off campus job and 36% of those students worked 20 or more hours a week.

Table 4.2

Socioeconomic Demographics (N=13)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Mother's Education Level		
Unknown	0	0
Elementary School	0	0
Some Middle or High School	1	7.7
High School Graduate	7	53.8
Associate's Degree	4	30.8
Bachelor's Degree	0	0
Master's Degree	0	0
Other	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0
Father's Education Level		
Unknown	1	7.7
Elementary School	0	0
Some Middle or High School	3	23.1
High School Graduate	7	53.8
Associate's Degree	2	15.4
Bachelor's Degree	0	0
Master's Degree	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	13	100.0
Work at an on or off campus job		
Yes	10	76.9
No	3	23.1
Total	13	100.0
How many hours a week do you work?		
5 to 10	3	27.3
10 to 15	3	27.3
15 to 20	1	9.1
20 or more	4	36.4
No response	2	0
Total	13	100.0

Table 4.3 describes the students' current educational standings and goals in addition to gathering information about the pre-college program AVID. The respondents reported first becoming involved with AVID between the grade level 6 and grade level 11. Twenty three percent of students became involved in grade 8, grade 9, and grade 10. The students who participated in the survey graduated from Millville Senior High School between the years of 2008 and 2012. The majority, 46% of students, graduated in 2010. Thirty percent of students have returned to MSHS to participate as an AVID tutor. These AVID graduates currently attend a variety of higher education institutions. Fifteen percent attend a community college, 38% attend a New Jersey four year institution, while another 38% attend an out-of-state four year institution. Only one individual reported attending college online. Sixty-one percent of respondents reported earning a GPA between 3.1 and 3.5 and 23% reported a GPA between 2.6 and 3.0. All respondents expect to minimally complete a Bachelor's degree and 30% of respondents ultimately have a goal of obtaining a Master's degree. When asked the question, "who contributed most to your desire to go to college," the respondents could choose up to three responses. The table indicates where students believed their influence to pursue a degree came from. Students most commonly selected parents/guardian or an AVID teacher.

Table 4.3

Education-Current Standings & Goals (N=13)

Variable		<i>f</i>	%
Grade student became involved in AVID			
	6	2	15.4
	7	3	23.1
	8	1	7.7
	9	3	23.1
	10	3	23.1
	11	1	7.7
	12	0	0
	Total	13	100.0
Year of graduation from MSHS			
	2007	0	0
	2008	1	7.7
	2009	3	23.1
	2010	6	46.2
	2011	1	7.7
	2012	2	15.4
	Total	13	100.0
AVID Tutor			
	Yes	4	30.8
	No	9	69.2
	Total	13	100.0
Type of institution currently attending			
	Community College	2	15.4
	NJ State 4 year institution	5	38.5
	Out of State 4 year institution	6	38.5
	College Online	1	7.7
	Total	13	100.0

Table 4.3

Education-Current Standings & Goals (N=13)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Current GPA		
4.1 or above	0	0
3.6-4.0	1	7.7
3.1-3.5	8	61.5
2.6-3.0	3	23.1
2.1-2.5	1	7.7
2.0 or below	0	0
Total	13	100.0
Currently involved in any clubs or organizations on campus		
Yes	6	46.2
No	7	53.8
Total	13	100.0
Who contributed most to your desire to go to college?		
		61.5
Parent or Guardian	8	0
AVID tutor	0	0
Mentor	0	23.1
Peers	3	1
Guidance Counselor	1	0
Teacher	0	1
AVID Teacher	1	0
Other	0	0
Total	13	100.0

Table 4.3

Education-Current Standings & Goals (N=13)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Who contributed most to your desire to go to college?		
Parent or Guardian	1	7.7
AVID tutor	1	7.7
Mentor	1	7.7
Peers	0	0
Guidance Counselor	3	
Teacher	1	23.1
AVID Teacher	6	7.7
Other	0	46.2
Total	13	0
		100.0
Who contributed most to your desire to go to college?		
Parent or Guardian	1	7.7
AVID tutor	1	7.7
Mentor	0	0
Peers	0	0
Guidance Counselor	0	0
Teacher	0	0
AVID Teacher	5	38.5
No Response	6	46.2
Total	13	100.0
What level of education do you plan to complete?		
Associate's Degree	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	8	61.5
Some Post Graduate	0	0
Master's Degree	4	30.8
Doctoral Degree	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Research Question 1: What do selected students who participated in the MSHS AVID program report about their college preparation, family/parental support, persistence and motivation, and AVID reflections?

In order to determine the level of preparedness of selected MSHS AVID graduates had when transitioning to the college campus, the responses to the MSHS Perception Survey were examined. Particular statements were grouped together based on four factor groupings. The factors identified were college preparation, family/parental support, persistence/motivation, and AVID reflections. Respondents contemplated how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement and indicated on the survey. These responses offer insight on what type of role the MSHS AVID program played in preparing students as well as levels of persistence to obtain a college degree.

Table 4.4 shows the respondents' answers to the subset of statements related to college preparation. This group of items assessed how prepared students were in the college classroom after AVID classroom experiences. Students could choose between the responses of "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree." The table organized the statements from highest level to the lowest level of agreement in congruence with the students' responses.

Table 4.4 illustrates the participants' responses to the particular group of survey items related to college preparation. To the statement "AVID helped me strengthen my organizational skills," 62% of students replied that they "strongly agreed" and 30% selected "agreed" while 7% were "undecided." In response to the statement "AVID prepared me to behave like a college student," 46% of respondents indicated that they

“strongly agreed” and 53% indicated that they “agreed.” The participants also reported that 38% “strongly agreed” and 46% “agreed” that “the study skills learned in AVID helped me to study in college.”

Table 4.4

<i>College Preparation</i>										
Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
AVID helped me strengthen my organizational skills. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.54, <i>SD</i> =.66)	8	61.5	4	30.8	1	7.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
AVID prepared me to behave like a college student. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.46, <i>SD</i> =.51)	6	46.2	7	53.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
The study skills I learned in AVID helped me to study in college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.23, <i>SD</i> =.725)	5	38.5	6	46.2	2	15.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
AVID prepared me to adjust to my college professor's academic expectations. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.15, <i>SD</i> =.80)	5	38.5	5	38.5	3	23.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Taking an AP course in high school made me feel more prepared for college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =3.92, <i>SD</i> =1.38)	6	46.2	4	30.8	0	0.0	2	15.4	1	7.7
In my first semester of college, it was easy for me to transition to the new culture of the campus. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =3.38, <i>SD</i> =1.19)	2	15.4	5	38.5	3	23.1	2	15.4	1	7.7
It was difficult to transition to college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =2.31, <i>SD</i> =1.03)	6	46.2	4	30.8	0	0.0	2	15.4	1	7.7

Table 4.5 revealed the reactions of respondents to a group of statements related to how much family and parental support students received as they pursue a college education. In response to the statement “I have a close relationship with my family,” 46% of students “strongly agreed” and 38% “agreed.” Thirty-eight percent of respondents “strongly agreed” and 23% “agreed” with the statement “My parents expected me to go to college.” The table organized the statements from highest level to the lowest level of agreement in congruence with the students’ responses.

Table 4.5

Family/Parental Support

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I have a close relationship with my family. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.15, <i>SD</i> =1.14)	6	46.2	5	38.5	1	7.7	0	0.0	1	7.7
My parents expected me to go to college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =3.69, <i>SD</i> =1.37)	5	38.5	3	23.1	2	15.4	2	15.4	1	7.7
In my first semester of college I missed my family. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =3.08, <i>SD</i> =1.44)	2	15.4	4	30.8	3	23.1	1	7.7	3	23.1
It is harder for me to succeed in college because my family did not go to college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =1.92, <i>SD</i> =.86)	0	0.0	1	7.7	1	7.7	7	53.8	4	30.8

Table 4.6 shows the respondents’ answers to the subset of statements related to persistence and motivation. This group of items assessed the likelihood of students

persisting to earning a college degree. Students could choose between the responses of “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Undecided,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.” The table organized the statements from highest level to the lowest level of agreement in congruence with the students’ responses.

Table 4.6 illustrates the students’ responses to feelings of levels of persistence and motivation. To the statement, “I plan on succeeding in earning a college degree,” 84% of participants responded “Strongly Agree” and 15% responded “Agree.” Sixty-nine percent of participants responded with “Strongly Agree” to the statement, “I will persist to earn my college degree no matter what,” and 30% responded with “Agree.” To the statement, “I work hard in order to do well in school,” 61% of participants responded with, “Strongly Agree” and 30% responded with, “Agree.”

Table 4.6

Persistence/Motivation

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I plan on succeeding in earning a college degree. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.85, <i>SD</i> =.376)	11	84.6	2	15.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
I will persist to earn my college degree no matter what. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.69, <i>SD</i> =.48)	9	69.2	4	30.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Table 4.6

Persistence/Motivation

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I work hard in order to do well in school. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.54, <i>SD</i> =.66)	8	61.5	4	30.8	1	7.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Because my parent(s) did not obtain a college degree, I am motivated to obtain a college degree. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.46, <i>SD</i> =.66)	7	53.8	5	38.5	1	7.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
I believe I am responsible for my own academic success. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.38, <i>SD</i> =.65)	6	46.2	6	46.2	1	7.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
I seek academic help when I am having difficulties in a college class. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.23, <i>SD</i> =.927)	6	46.2	5	38.5	1	7.7	1	7.7	0	0.0
Because I achieved good grades in high school, I am motivated to achieve similar grades in college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.00, <i>SD</i> =1.15)	5	38.5	5	38.5	2	15.4	0	0.0	5	38.5
In college I always put my school work first. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =3.77, <i>SD</i> =1.01)	2	15.4	8	61.5	2	15.4	0	0.0	1	7.7

Table 4.6

Persistence/Motivation

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I am the first in my family to go to college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =3.62, <i>SD</i> =1.38)	5	38.5	3	23.1	0	0.0	5	38.5	0	0.0
I often lose focus in class. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =2.92, <i>SD</i> =1.256)	2	15.4	2	15.4	3	23.1	5	38.5	1	7.7
I need someone to motivate me to go to class or do my homework. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =2.23, <i>SD</i> =1.23)	1	7.7	1	7.7	2	15.4	5	38.4	4	30.4
I do not need mentors to succeed. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =2.08, <i>SD</i> =.86)	0	0.0	1	7.7	2	15.4	7	53.8	3	23.1

Table 4.7 shows the respondents’ answers to the subset of statements related to reflections on the AVID experience. This group of items allowed students to report perceptions of the AVID experience. Students could choose between the responses of “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Undecided,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.” The table organized the statements from highest level to the lowest level of agreement in congruence with the students’ responses.

Table 4.7 illustrates the answers students responded on the topic of the AVID experience. To the statements, “My AVID teacher motivated me to attend college,” and

“I feel that AVID made me a more disciplined student,” for each item 61% of participants responded “Strongly Agree” and 38% responded “Agree.” Likewise, 61% of participants responded “Strongly Agree” and 38% responded “Agree” to the statement, “AVID teachers at MSHS were committed to holding me accountable for my academic success.”

Table 4.7

AVID Reflections

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Un-decided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
My AVID teacher motivated me to attend college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.62, <i>SD</i> =.50)	8	61.5	5	38.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
I feel that AVID made me a more disciplined student. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.62, <i>SD</i> =.506)	8	61.5	5	35.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
AVID teachers at MSHS were committed to holding me accountable for my academic success. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.38, <i>SD</i> =.65)	8	61.5	5	38.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Table 4.7

AVID Reflections

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Un-decided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
When I graduate, I will reflect on the role AVID teachers played in my education. ($N=13$, $M=4.23$, $SD=.439$)	3	23.1	10	76.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
In my first semester of college I missed the support system that AVID teachers offered. ($N=13$, $M=4.08$, $SD=.76$)	4	30.8	6	46.2	3	23.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
In high school I always put my school work first. ($N=13$, $M=3.38$, $SD=1.32$)	3	23.1	4	30.8	2	15.4	3	23.1	1	7.7
In high school, having an AVID tutor motivated me to attend college. ($N=13$, $M=3.38$, $SD=.96$)	0	0.0	8	61.5	3	23.1	1	7.7	1	7.7
Before I was in AVID I did not believe I would go to college. ($N=13$, $M=2.62$, $SD=1.60$)	3	23.1	1	7.7	1	7.7	4	30.8	4	30.8

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between the demographics variables of age, sex, race/ethnicity, and the factors of college preparation, family/parental support, persistence and motivation, and AVID reflections?

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between age, race/ethnicity, and the factors of college preparation, family/parental support, persistence and motivation, and AVID reflections.

An analysis of the data indicated correlations between attitudes toward the college experience with the variables of age, sex and race/ethnicity in three of the four subscales. There were no correlations in attitudes between age, sex and race/ethnicity and the factor subscales of family/parental support.

Significant correlations with age are displayed in Table 4.8. Four significant correlations with age were found.

Table 4.8

Significant Correlations with Age

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> level
College Preparation	AVID prepared me to adjust to my college professor's academic expectations. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.15, <i>SD</i> =.80)	-.640*	.019

Table 4.8

Significant Correlations with Age

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> level
Academic Persistence	I believe I am responsible for my own academic success. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.38, <i>SD</i> =.65)	-.604*	.029
AVD Reflections	Before I was in AVID I did not believe I would go to college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =2.62, <i>SD</i> =1.60)	.658*	.015
AVID Reflections	AVID teachers at MSHS were committed to holding me accountable for my academic success. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.38, <i>SD</i> =.65)	-.604*	.029

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Significant correlations with gender are displayed in Table 4.9. Five significant correlations with gender were found.

Table 4.9

Significant Correlations with Gender

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> level
College Preparation	The study skills I learned in AVID helped me to study in college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.23, <i>SD</i> =.725)	.753**	.003
College Preparation	Taking an AP course in high school made me feel more prepared for college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =3.92, <i>SD</i> =1.38)	.618*	.025
Academic Persistence	I will persist to earn my college degree no matter what. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.69, <i>SD</i> =.48)	.640*	.019
Academic Persistence	I work hard in order to do well in school. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.54, <i>SD</i> =.66)	.698**	.008
AVID Reflections	AVID teachers at MSHS were committed to holding me accountable for my academic success. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.38, <i>SD</i> =.65)	.604*	.029

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Significant correlations with race and ethnicity are displayed in Table 4.10. Five significant correlations were found.

Table 4.10

Significant Correlations with Race/Ethnicity

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> level
College Preparation	The study skills I learned in AVID helped me to study in college. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.23, <i>SD</i> =.725)	.646*	.017
College Preparation	AVID prepared me to behave like a college student. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.46, <i>SD</i> =.51)	.854**	.000
Academic Persistence	Because my parent(s) did not obtain a college degree, I am motivated to obtain a college degree. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.46, <i>SD</i> =.66)	.671*	.012
AVID Reflections	In my first semester of college I missed the support system that AVID teachers offered. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.08, <i>SD</i> =.76)	.567*	.043
AVID Reflections	I feel that AVID made me a more disciplined student. (<i>N</i> =13, <i>M</i> =4.62, <i>SD</i> =.506)	.625*	.022

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Profile of the Interview Sample

The participants for the qualitative phase of this study were graduates of the AVID program at Millville Senior High School in Millville, New Jersey. The participants all responded to an individual e-mail to schedule a time to partake in an interview. Five students were requested to participate in an interview and 4 responded.

The interview sample contained 50% females and 50% males. The participants graduated from MSHS at different times, 50% graduated in 2010, 25% graduated in 2009, and 25% graduated in 2012.

Participant A is a 21-year-old male who identified his race as “White.” He is attending a 4 year New Jersey state public institution and holds an on-campus job working between 15 and 20 hours a week. He indicated that his GPA is between a 2.1 and a 2.5. He identified his guidance counselor, Non-AVID and AVID teachers, AVID tutor, peers, and parents as those who most contributed to his desire to attend college. He is in his third year of studies at the institution and is majoring in Information Technology and Informatics. Both of his parents are high school graduates. He plans to earn a Bachelor’s Degree.

Participant B is also a 21-year-old male who identified his race as “White.” He is attending a 4 year New Jersey state public institution and holds an on-campus job working between 5 and 10 hours a week. He indicated that his GPA is between a 3.1 and a 3.5. He identified his AVID tutor and parents as those who most contributed to his desire to attend college. He is in his third year of studies at the institution and is majoring

in Biology. Both of his parents are high school graduates. He plans to earn a Bachelor's Degree.

Participant C is a 19-year-old female who identified her race as "Black" and "White." She is attending a two year community college and currently holds an off-campus job working 20 or more hours a week. Additionally, she is currently an AVID tutor. She indicated her GPA is between a 3.6 and a 4.0. She identified her parent or guardian and her AVID teacher as being the individuals who contributed most to her desire to go to college. Her father attended high school and her mother is certified nurse. She plans to major in accounting and earn a Bachelor's Degree.

Participant D is a 21-year-old female who identified her race as "Black." She is attending a 4 year New Jersey state public institution and holds an off-campus job working between 5 and 10 hours a week. Additionally, she is currently an AVID tutor. She indicated that her GPA is between a 3.1 and a 3.5. She identified her AVID teacher as the person who contributed most to her desire to attend college. She is in her third year of studies at the institution and is majoring in Social Work with a minor in Sociology and Communications. Her father attended high school and her mother is a high school graduate. She plans to earn a Master's Degree.

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

To compare how the interviewees spoke about their overall college experience after participating in the AVID program in high school, the content analysis examined interview questions that asked about both the overall college experience and how AVID prepared the students for college. There were a total of 11 separate questions examined, with similar questions grouped together. The corresponding tables arranged the themes in

participants' responses by most to least frequency and then gave them each a ranking. Direct quotes from the interviews illustrated the themes that appeared with the greatest frequency.

Research Question 3: How do selected students who participated in the MSHS AVID program describe the role AVID played in preparing them for college academics?

Table 4.11 illustrates the themes that students identified when responding to a question about how they made academic decisions throughout their college experience.

Table 4.11

AVID Graduates' Report on Preparation to Make Academic Decisions

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Organization	2	1
Time Management	2	1
Attitude to persist	1	2
Note taking techniques	1	3

The first question of the interview asked the students, "Did AVID help you make academic decisions throughout the first year of college? If so, how?"

Three of four the interviewees indicated that AVID played a role in making academic decisions throughout the first year of college. One participant stated, "I think AVID did help me make good academic decisions" and another said "It definitely did, even though I left Millville and I left my AVID program."

The interviewees referenced the themes of personal attitude, time management, organization, and note taking techniques. Table 4.11 illustrates how AVID helped some students make academic decisions.

One participant reflected and noted how an AVID teacher helped her make a decision about pursuing her academic goals, “I just always remember Jamie (MSHS AVID teacher) always telling us that, nothing is going to stop us, that we are the only ones who are going to stop ourselves and so to make our decisions for us and not for others.” Another remarked on how AVID techniques helped keep her organized and on task. The student stated, “I keep a binder with all my important worksheets. Also I think AVID taught me to utilize my books. I like to walk through a chapter with my highlighter and pen before I even make it to class. That way it is easier to keep up with my notes.”

Table 4.12 displays participants’ reflections on academic challenges in college and overcoming those challenges.

Table 4.12

AVID Graduates’ Report on Overcoming Academic Challenges

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Time Management	3	1
Attending Class	2	2
Studying	1	3

The question to participants, “If you were to return to MSHS and speak to other AVID students what would you say is the most challenging in terms of the academic experience? How did you overcome these challenges?”

All participants remarked on the importance of being accountable for completing assignments on time. They reported that managing personal time properly and actually attending class were the biggest challenges. One participant said, “Staying on top of your work. It is so easy to fall behind and then just make it up at the end of the semester. I feel

like you would do so much better if you stayed on top of it. Which is so hard to do because there is no one there making sure you do it.” Another said, “I would have to say that the most challenging thing for me is scheduling my time evenly to each course.” One participant stated, “I think most [challenging] is the actually going to class is the academic challenge. You are mostly required to go to class and then you get in the mind set for some of those classes that you don’t necessarily have to go to class and then instantly you believe you don’t have to go to any classes.” Another participant agreed with that in saying, “I think the hardest academically is that professors don’t care. I mean they care, but like they don’t care if you don’t show up for you know, if you miss four classes in a row. They don’t care if you miss this class and you had a surprise exam.”

Table 4.13 describes the study techniques that AVID graduates found to be the most successful in the college classroom.

Table 4.13

AVID Graduates’ Report on Successful AVID Study Techniques

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Cornell Notes	3	1
Daily Review of Notes	2	2
Learning Logs	1	1

To the question, “What are the study techniques AVID teaches in order for students to succeed in the college classroom?”

Almost all participants remarked on the usefulness of Cornell note taking. One participant said, “I kept Cornell notes that I transitioned to index cards so I could study no matter where I was. I think Cornell notes saved me my first two semesters, and helped

me to past my general classes.” Another said, “I still actually use Cornell notes for classes that are heavy in vocab because I find that it’s just easier when I am looking back on it.” The other technique that seemed favorable to participants was taking time each day to look over notes for each course. One participant said, “A study technique I wish I would of stuck with is looking at your stuff each day even its just 15 minutes. I feel like we did that a lot in high school, even it was just the notes in the morning and stuff like that.”

Research Question 4: How do selected students who participated in the MSHS AVID program describe the role AVID played in preparing them for college involvement?

Table 4.14 illustrates how the participants responded to a questions about making non-academic decisions like getting involved with organizations.

Table 4.14

AVID Graduates’ Report on Making Non-Academic Decisions

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Involved in an Organization	4	1
Not Enough Time	3	2
Support System	1	3

Students were asked, “Did AVID help you make non-academic decisions throughout the first year? For example, getting involved with organizations, personal relationships, things like that.”

One participant responded, “The organizations I first became involved with, I was definitely very interested. And I would say that AVID said you should join clubs and

organizations and things like that. I joined a club but then my schedule became absolutely atrocious and I could not keep up with it.” Another participant added, “Yeah, I immediately got involved with a couple different clubs. I’ve stuck with like one or two of them.” Another agreed that, “AVID encourages their high school students to be active in things outside of school.” Another participant added how her desire to make connections pushed her to get involved “I think of my AVID class and the kids that I graduated with as extra family members and I wanted that at X university so it let me to join other groups.”

Table 4.15 displays the advice these current college students would give to MSHS students about the “college experience.”

Table 4.15

AVID Graduates’ Report on the “College Experience”

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Maintain Academic Habits	3	1
Research Institutions	2	2
Great Experience	2	3
Be Your Self	1	1

The participants were asked, “If you were to return to Millville Senior High School and speak to other AVID students what feedback would you give them about the college experience?”

One participant responded, “It’s great, the college experience is wonderful, it is fun. But you need to do your own research on institutions. And you need to study on your own before you head out. You just need to keep those habits. Because I was not ready for this.” Another agreed that students need to research institutions before selecting one. He stated, “I would say make sure you do a lot of research about the university you want to

attend. We did a lot of touring of colleges and I think that helped. I would say definitely take those tours and really research your major.”

Another participant agreed with her love for college as well as the necessity to maintain good academic habits. Being an AVID tutor she has spoken to students and reports “I tell them how much I love it, how much I enjoy the freedom of choosing what time I want classes, and being completely in control of my learn experience. I also let students know how I struggled in high school, and in AVID. I didn’t love tutorials, Cornell notes, or binders. At the time I thought they were extra work but now I am thankful for those things.”

Another remarked on the importance of being true to who you are as well as making sure students plan. Participant D reported,

“Honestly, I would tell them, to just be themselves. Often times in college you are thrown into this new environment with different people and you try to fit in with these people because you know you are away from home, just be yourself. And college is all about time management. Which is something that AVID focuses heavily on. And it is really all about planning your entire day to maximize what you can do so you are not scrambling, the day before your 10 page paper is due.”

Table 4.16 illustrates participants’ reflections to the best non-academic experience thus far in their college careers.

Table 4.16

AVID Graduates' Report on the Best Non-Academic Experience

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Clubs	2	1
Making Connections	2	1

Participants reported that getting involved in a club or getting involved with new friends enhanced their experiences thus far in their college careers. Two participants were excited about the clubs they joined while being in college. One participant said, “The club I joined freshman first semester was the solar power car team. We hadn’t had one for 6-8 years. I was there as they began. I no longer attend the meetings. But it was cool to see it start up and continue.” Another participant commented, “My freshman year I helped create an oceanography club. There was one in the 1990s and then it stopped. It has been growing ever since and I am actually going to be the president for next year.”

The other participants indicated the positive relationships they had formed with others on campus. One participant remarked, “The best nonacademic experience would have to be the friends I have met on campus and at work. I have become close friends with a lot of the other AVID tutors. It is good having people around who are in your element. They are all in school, and working toward achieving their goals. It helps keep me focused, and on track. Also a lot of the older AVID tutors have taught me a lot of tricks of the trade.” Another participant commented, “Honestly, the people that I have met are just so incredible because they come from everywhere and you never realized how sheltered in a way your little school is until you get somewhere where people come

from all over the world. And I would say that is probably the best experience- meeting people.”

Research Question 5: How do selected students who participated in the MSHS AVID program describe the importance of AVID.

Table 4.17 illustrates some of the themes participants described as being an AVID tutor. The third question asked in the interview was to those who were currently serving as AVID tutors. They were asked, “Can you describe why you are currently an AVID tutor?”

Table 4.17

<i>AVID Tutors</i>		
Theme	Frequency	Rank
Extending time with AVID	2	1
AVID Knowledge	1	2
Opportunity	1	3

When asked about returning to MSHS as an AVID tutor, one participant responded, “I chose to be an AVID tutor because I know a lot about AVID and already knew most of the teachers I would work with. To me it felt like just extending my time in the AVID program, I do have to say as an AVID tutor my knowledge of AVID has expanded, and I have so many opportunities because of it.” Another tutor focused on the impact that tutors had on her when she was in high school and therefore wanted to be in that role for other students. Participant D said, “I like the rapport I had with my tutors. I liked that they were going through things I would soon be going through. I never knew

half the stuff they were talking about was important and then you get to college and it's a whole new ball game and it turns that it is important.”

All participants indicated that they are returning for the 2013-2014 academic year. Table 4.18 illustrates themes which are motivating students to continue in pursuit of degree obtainment.

Table 4.18

AVID Graduates' Persistence Towards Obtaining a Degree

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Personal Drive	4	1
Family	3	2
Peers	2	3
AVID	2	4

All participants responded that they are pursuing a degree for personal desires but they included that the expectations of family, peers, and AVID members were also motivating factors. One participant responded, “I am influenced by my mother, friends, and boyfriend to continue my academics. Graduating from school has always been one of my main goals, and I plan to reach it. I feel as though the people closest to me encourage me to succeed with studies, and some of those people include my high school AVID teacher and peers.” Another said, “I really never thought that I would be successful but now that I am here and now that I have had a taste of it. It has kind of led me to want more and more and more.”

The final scheduled question on the interview asked the students if the participants' plans for educational goals had changed. All participants reported that they were staying with established majors. Only one participant definitively responded that

she was planning to attend graduate school. Her response was, “I haven’t thought as far as my doctorate but I have thought as far as my Master’s because my school has a five year Master’s program for Social Work. So I figure why not just do another year. I’ve done four so what’s one more.” The other participants are maintaining focus on achieving a Bachelor’s Degree.

Table 4.19 displays the overall reflections AVID graduates’ reported in the interviews.

Table 4.19

AVID Graduates’ Overall Reflections

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Impact of AVID	3	1

In the opportunity to add anything else to the interview, participants reported on the power of AVID. The participants recognized that the AVID program was life changing and should be implemented for more students. For example, one student remarked, “AVID was a great resource. And it was a great resource to help you get to college. I feel bad for the people that don’t have it. I think it is a shame that AVID isn’t school wide and it is just limited to 60 kids per grade. I think that is something that the whole school district should try to adopt.” Another participant commented, “I would say AVID definitely helped out more than if I didn’t have it. I feel bad for anyone who attended college who didn’t have AVID and came from Millville.” The most powerful was when another student said, “AVID definitely changed my life, you know. I definitely wouldn’t be going to the school that I am going to. I wouldn’t be going to X University.

I would never have heard of X University. I wouldn't have the great scholarship that I have. And I wouldn't really be in the position that I am in to help my younger sister and my younger cousins get further in life." Two participants offered feedback for the desire to have AVID extend its services on the college level. One participant remarked, "I wish there was kind of like a follow up maybe, like a contact still or maybe a similar program in college to keep you on track." Another said,

"I can say first hand, after my first semester doing terribly at Y, I was on academic warning and I had to meet with an advisor who I had to meet with every two or three weeks. She wasn't really an advisor. She kind of just asked me how my classes were going and helped me with a project or two. And that was really nice, and I did not expect that from Y. And because it was forced on me, it helped out a lot. Even though some people would complain, I believe something similar for everyone would help."

All of the students agreed that AVID taking them on trips to nearby higher education institutions in the area truly helped them believe in the process and initiated an interest to research schools and choose a school that they felt was right for them. One participant commented, "If it wasn't for AVID, I wouldn't even know X university existed."

The final sentiment of a participant reflects the power of AVID. The participant remarked, "So without them I wouldn't be there. And it's helped, you know I think that AVID should be everywhere. And I am pretty sure they are going to take over the world one day."

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This study explored the impact of the pre-college program titled AVID on preparing Millville Senior High School for the college experience. Students in AVID are known to be first generation college students, from the academic middle as well as being from a low socio economic background. The participants in this study were selected Millville Senior High School AVID graduates enrolled in a higher education institution.

A total of 17 subjects were recruited through the AVID District Director and administered a survey. A survey was electronically distributed to the students allowing them to voluntarily submit responses. Of the 17 students who received the survey, 13 students responded yielding a 76.4% response rate.

The survey had two parts. Part I collected general demographic information, as well as information about participants' GPA, on- and off-campus involvement, educational aspirations, and parents' highest level of education completed. Part II of the survey instrument was a perception survey on the AVID experience. The survey contains 30 items organized into four different factor groupings: family and parental support, academic persistence, college preparation and AVID reflections.

Secondly, four participants were recruited for the interview portion of this study. The participants all responded to an individual e-mail to schedule a time to partake in an interview. Five students were requested to participate and 4 responded.

The interviews were conducted in a quiet area of the students' institution's student center. With permission, the sessions were tape recorded. The interview was designed to capture the participants' overall reflections of how participating in AVID prepared them for the college experience. Additionally, the interview questions probed what the students reported on the factors of family/parental support, persistence and motivation, and AVID reflections in pursuit of their degree obtainment. There were a total of 11 questions asked. The responses were transcribed and interpreted using content analysis. Key words and phrases were coded and rearranged with similar themes to reveal patterns of the selected participants' perceptions and reflections (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Sisco, 1981).

Discussion of the Findings

After reviewing the survey data the study found that AVID graduates attending higher education institutions reported that being involved in AVID did prepare them for the college experience. Participants had an overall positive attitude towards family/parental support and persistence and motivation towards their academic goals. Additionally, participants reported a strong positive attitude in their AVID reflections.

Ninety-two percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "AVID helped me strengthen my organizational skills." Furthermore, 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "AVID prepared me to behave like a college student." Eighty-four percent of participants also indicated that they agreed

or strongly agreed with the statement that “the study skills learned in AVID helped me to study in college.” Lastly, 77% of participants reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “AVID prepared me to adjust to my college professor’s academic expectations.” Research illustrates that the preparation students receive during their high school experience strongly plays a role in students’ persisting during their first year of college. Tinto (1988) discusses students transitioning into the new college environment and describes that the degree of similarity of existing habits compared to the habits of a college student determines this level of difficulty to adjust. Similarly, Tinto’s (1975) longitudinal model of college withdrawal describes how a student’s personal characteristics, pre-college experience, and pre-college preparation and commitment to educational goals effects how easily students transition in the first year.

Eighty-four percent of participants indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I have a close relationship with my family.” Additionally, 61% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “My parents expected me to go to college.” Furthermore, 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I plan on succeeding in earning a college degree.” One-hundred percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed, “I will persist to earn my college degree no matter what.” These data resonate with themes illustrated in research on the importance of cultural preparation for students prior to entering college. Research by Astin and Oseguera (2004), Walpole (2007), and Wells (2008) have indicated that students who come from low-income families and whose parents did not attend college are less likely to enroll in college or a four-year institution. Additionally, regardless of ability, students of these families are also less likely to persist. AVID is designed to target students from

low-income families in order to serve as a resource to help them persist and obtain a higher education degree. None of the participants in this study had a parent who earned more than an Associate's Degree. However, the data showed that these participants of AVID are determined to earn a Bachelor's Degree and generally have the support of family members. All of the participants plan to earn more than an Associate's Degree, 61.5% of the participants currently anticipate to earn a Bachelor's Degree while the remaining participants have plans to earn degrees in higher levels of education. Additionally, 61.5% of participants reported that the support of family members played a role in their persistence to earn a degree.

When reflecting upon participation in AVID, 100% of participants reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "My AVID teacher motivated me to attend college." Similarly, 97% of participants indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I feel that AVID made me a more disciplined student." Lastly, 100% of participants indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "AVID teachers at MSHS were committed to holding me accountable for my academic success." Pre-college programs are implemented in high school in order to inspire students to stay determined and achieve despite the challenges they must overcome. Astin and Oseguera (2004) and Wells (2008) discuss how social and cultural capital effects academic persistence. They discuss the importance of students coming from a background with places an emphasis on the completion of a college degree. This plays a role in students' commitment to educational goals.

After reviewing the survey data which reported demographic information as well as participants' feedback on the experience in AVID and how AVID played a role in

preparing students for the college experience, significant correlations were determined. Research question two was analyzed using the Person product-moment-correlation coefficient to determine if there was a significant relationship between the responses of the survey items regarding the attitudes of the selected participants and the selected variables.

Significant correlations were found between the selected variables of age, sex, race/ethnicity, and the factors of the college preparation, persistence and motivation, and AVID reflections. There were no correlations in attitudes between age, sex and race/ethnicity, and the factor subscales of family/parental support.

This study found a mildly strong positive correlation between the age of the participants and attitudes towards AVID reflections ($r = .658$). Students in a similar age grouping felt strongly that becoming a participant in AVID is what made them believe they would go to college. Participants reported that AVID teachers held AVID students accountable for academic success and motivated them to believe they would one day attend a higher education institution.

This study also found as strong correlation between the gender of the participants and college preparation ($r = .753$) and academic persistence ($r = .698$). Responses indicated that individuals felt that AVID offered the proper academic preparation for college courses. AVID helped students to study in college thus making them feel capable of achieving.

Lastly, this study found a very strong positive correlation between the race of the participants and college preparation ($r = .854$). Responses indicated that individuals of

like race/ethnicity that AVID helped students to behave like college students. Students felt they were capable of assuming the role of a college student on a college campus.

This study found that MSHS AVID participants perceived positive outcomes in regards to preparing students for college academics. Many of these findings are consistent with findings of seminal researchers in higher education such as Astin and Oseguera (2004), Tinto (1975, 1988), and Walpole (2007). These researchers discuss that preparing students for the college experience despite cultural backgrounds will aid them in obtaining a degree.

This study found that students reported many academic decisions were formed based of the habits that were practiced in high school through the AVID program. According to Tinto (1988), when students are adequately prepared to behave like a college student, they are more likely to be retained after the first year. When students were asked in the interview if AVID helped make academic decisions throughout the first year of college students indicated that AVID played a role in making academic decisions throughout the first year of college. Students indicated that they learned time management, organization, and note taking techniques that could be used in the college setting. Additionally, students remarked that succeeding in college was strongly related to personal attitude and drive. The AVID philosophy is based off of individual determination. This reinforces the research of Astin and Oseguera (2004) and Wells (2008) that discuss students who are surrounded with individuals who maintain the attitude to persist prior to entering college are more likely to persist themselves.

In this study students reported that AVID absolutely promoted student involvement in extracurricular activities. All of the students interviewed discussed

different organizations they became involved with upon entering college. Some students chose clubs, others chose Greek life and a few chose to return to MSHS to act as an AVID tutor. The participants reported that getting involved was a good way to create a support system and make connections with other students. Kuh's Theory of Student Engagement (2009) discusses the importance of students becoming engaged with activities in order to have a more successful transition to the college life. Kuh (2009) emphasizes that strengthening a social network with other students and faculty members is more likely to lead to success.

This study found that students perceived AVID to be extremely important and necessary to their success. Participants identified that AVID teachers were some of the individuals who motivated them to pursue higher education. Participants reported that the AVID program taught them the academic and behavioral techniques necessary to succeed in the college classroom. However, students did report that failure to actually utilize the skills they were taught did result in a lack of academic successes. Participants reported that there is a need to have an AVID type program on a college campus in order for them to be more successful. Students reported that AVID put them in the proper mind-set to be college ready but that college academics are much more difficult than high school courses and this is a challenge. The participants' responses resonate with the many themes of higher education researchers, Astin, Kuh, Tierney, Walpole, and Wells. For the students who participated in this study, AVID provided them with the pre-college culture and academic techniques to aid them in being successful in the college classroom. AVID did more than just help them gain access to higher education; AVID helped prepare them to be successful.

Conclusions

The data from this study confirm the various positive impacts of a pre-college high school program such as AVID. The structure, expectations, and culture created through the AVID teachers and mentors served as a resource for students to not only gain access to higher education institutions but offered the tools necessary to persist towards obtaining a Bachelor's Degree. The students in this study did not come from families who attended college. Before AVID these students did not believe in the idea of college and that college would be a reality to them. This perspective is similar to Walpole's (1997) findings.

The research findings in this study indicate strong positive correlations between participants and the AVID experience. There are strong correlations indicating that the AVID experience prepared students to behave as college students as well as academically prepared them for the college classroom. AVID offered the opportunity for students to view college as the next step in life.

Through AVID, students had the support system to make reasonably informed decisions about their futures. Students were more informed and prepared which led to a stronger commitment to the goal of obtaining a degree. Similar to Astin's findings, since students had the input factors of preparation and persistence, it is more likely that the outcome will be success in the college classroom.

Recommendations for Practice

Based upon the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. While attending high school, more students should be exposed to the organizational techniques and study practices that AVID students learn.
2. For AVID students attending college, throughout the first semester or first year a follow up AVID mentor should be assigned to a cluster of AVID alumni.
3. AVID should be present on college campuses.
4. AVID at MSHS and other New Jersey high schools should include more students in the AVID classrooms.
5. All schools implementing AVID should be sure to take students on a number of college tours.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based upon the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. Further studies should be conducted with larger populations to confirm the findings in this study.
2. A longitudinal study should be conducted with a number of high schools to follow the students over a period of time to expand on the findings in this study.
3. A study should be conducted focusing on the differences in success rates based on gender.
4. A study should be conducted on the retention rates of AVID graduates within a given region.

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Appendix A
Survey Instrument

**MILLVILLE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (MSHS) AVID GRADUATE'S
PERCEPTION – DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

Hello Participants. This survey is intended to further understand you and your background. All information you share will be kept confidential. If you do not know the answer to a question, it is OK to leave it blank.

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. No response

2. What is your age?
 - a. 18 & Under
 - b. 19 to 20
 - c. 21 to 22
 - d. 23 & Older

3. What race or ethnicity do you identify with?
 - a. White
 - b. Black
 - c. African American
 - d. Latino
 - e. Mexican
 - f. No Response

4. Who contributed most to your desire to go to college?
 - a. Parent or Guardian
 - b. AVID tutor
 - c. Mentor
 - d. Peers
 - e. Guidance Counselor
 - f. Teacher
 - g. AVID Teacher
 - h. Other _____

5. What type of institution do you currently attend?
 - a. Community College
 - b. NJ State 4 year institution
 - c. Out of State 4 year institution
 - d. College Online

6. What is your current cumulative GPA?
- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| a. 4.0 to 3.7 | d. 2.9 to 2.7 | g. 1.9 to 1.7 |
| b. 3.6 to 3.4 | e. 2.6 to 2.4 | h. 1.6 to 1.4 |
| c. 3.3 to 3.0 | f. 2.3 to 2.0 | i. 1.3 & Below |
7. Do you hold any on or off campus jobs?
- Yes
 - No
8. If so, how many hours a week do you work?
- 5 to 10
 - 10 to 15
 - 15 to 20
 - 20 or more
9. Are you involved in any clubs or organizations on campus?
- Yes
 - No
10. Are you an AVID tutor?
- Yes
 - No
11. What is the highest level of education your mother completed?
- Unknown
 - No formal education
 - Elementary School
 - Some Middle or High School
 - High School Graduate
 - Associate's Degree
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Some Post Graduate
 - Master's Degree
 - Doctoral Degree
 - Other Advanced Degree _____

12. What is the highest level of education your father completed?

- a. Unknown
- b. No formal education
- c. Elementary School
- d. Some Middle or High School
- e. High School Graduate
- f. Associate's Degree
- g. Bachelor's Degree
- h. Some Post Graduate
- i. Master's Degree
- j. Doctoral Degree
- k. Other Advanced Degree _____

13. What level of education do you plan to complete?

- a. Bachelor's Degree
- b. Some Post Graduate
- c. Master's Degree
- d. Doctoral Degree
- e. Other Advanced Degree

14. Which grade did you become involved with AVID?

- a. 2003-2004
- b. 2004-2005
- c. 2005-2006
- d. 2006-2007
- e. 2007-2008
- f. 2008-2009
- g. 2009-2010
- h. 2010-2011
- i. 2011-2012

15. Currently, which institution do you attend?

- a. Cumberland Community College
- b. Gloucester County Community College
- c. Atlantic County Community College
- d. Rowan University
- e. Rutgers University
- f. Stockton University
- g. TCNJ

- h. Rider University
- i. Other, please indicate _____
- j. I prefer to not disclose that information

**MILLVILLE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (MSHS) AVID GRADUATE'S
PERCEPTION SURVEY**

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of whether you agree or not for each question.

Description/Identification of Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. AVID prepared me to behave like a college student.	5	4	3	2	1
2. AVID helped me strengthen my organizational skills.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The study skills I learned in AVID helped me to study in college.	5	4	3	2	1
4. My parents expected me to go to college.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I have a close relationship with my family.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I do not need mentors to succeed academically.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Before I was in AVID I did not believe I would go to college.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I plan on succeeding in earning a college degree.	5	4	3	2	1
9. In my first semester of college, it was easy for me to transition to the new culture of the campus.	5	4	3	2	1
10. In high school I always put my school work first.	5	4	3	2	1
11. Because I achieved good grades in high school, I am motivated to achieve similar grades in college.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I seek academic help when I am having difficulties in a college class.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I am the first in my family to go to college.	5	4	3	2	1
14. It is harder for me to succeed in college because my family did not go to college.	5	4	3	2	1
15. AVID prepared me to adjust to my college professor's academic expectations.	5	4	3	2	1
16. In my first semester of college I missed my family.	5	4	3	2	1
17. In my first semester of college I missed the support system that AVID teachers offered.	5	4	3	2	1
18. In college I always put my school work first.	5	4	3	2	1

19. In high school, having an AVID tutor motivated me to attend college.	5	4	3	2	1
20. Taking an AP course in high school made me feel more prepared for college.	5	4	3	2	1
21. I often lose focus in class.	5	4	3	2	1
22. I will persist to earn my college degree no matter what.	5	4	3	2	1
23. I need someone to motivate me to go to class or do my homework.	5	4	3	2	1
24. I work hard in order to do well in school.	5	4	3	2	1
25. Because my parent(s) did not obtain a college degree, I am motivated to obtain a college degree.	5	4	3	2	1
26. It was difficult to transition to college.	5	4	3	2	1
27. My AVID teacher motivated me to attend college.	5	4	3	2	1
28. When I graduate, I will reflect to the role AVID teachers played in my education.	5	4	3	2	1
29. I believe I am responsible for my own academic success.	5	4	3	2	1
30. AVID teachers at MSHS were committed to holding me accountable for my academic success.	5	4	3	2	1
31. I feel that AVID made me a more disciplined student.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Interview Session Questions

Overall Impressions and Reflections of the pre-college AVID program

Introduction: Thank you for continuing to participate with this study. This interview is intended to discover your overall impressions and reflections of the college experience and how AVID prepared you for those experiences. Feel free to talk about any experiences or ideas that come to mind as we discuss each area.

1. Did AVID help you make academic decisions throughout the first year of college? If so, how?
2. Did AVID help you make non-academic decisions throughout the first year? If so, how?
3. (To AVID tutors) Can you describe why you are currently an AVID tutor?
4. If you were to return to Millville Senior High School (MSHS) and speak to other AVID students what feedback would you give them about the college experience?
5. If you were to return to MSHS and speak to other AVID students what would you say is the most challenging in terms of the academic experience? How did you overcome these challenges?
6. What are the study techniques AVID teaches in order for students to succeed in the college classroom?
7. What would you say has been the best non-academic experience thus far?
8. Are you planning on returning for the 2013/2014 academic year?
9. What is influencing you to continue or not continue your academic education?
10. Have your plans for your educational goals changed? What is your life goal?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Closing: Thank you for your time and willingness to share. As I said earlier, your identity will be kept confidential.

Appendix C

IRB Approval Letter



February 27, 2013

Chelsea Ranck
501 Mullica Road
#28
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Chelsea Ranck:

In accordance with the University's IRB policies and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to inform you that the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your project:

IRB application number: 2013-158

Project Title: The AVID Experience and the Effects on Academic Persistence at a Four Year Institution

In accordance with federal law, this approval is effective for **one calendar year** from the date of this letter. If your research project extends beyond that date, or if you need to make significant modifications to your study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

Please retain copies of consent forms for this research for three years after completion of the research.

If, during your research, you encounter any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, you must report this immediately to Dr. Harriet Hartman (hartman@rowan.edu or call 856-256-4500, ext. 3787) or contact Dr. Shreekanth Mandayam, Associate Provost for Research (shreek@rowan.edu or call 856-256-5150).

If you have any administrative questions, please contact Karen Heiser (heiser@rowan.edu or 856-256-5150).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harriet Hartman".

Harriet Hartman, Ph.D.
Chair, Rowan University IRB

c: Burton Sisco, Educational Services, Administration, Higher Education, James Hall

Office of Research
Bole Hall
201 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701

856-256-5150
856-256-4425 fax

Appendix D

Approval of the MSHS AVID District Director



MILLVILLE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Home of the Thunderbolts

200 WADE BOULEVARD, MILLVILLE, NEW JERSEY 08332-2299

Kathleen Procopio
Principal

Phone: (856) 327-6040
Fax: (856) 293-1342

February 6, 2013

Institutional Review Board
Rowan University
201 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, New Jersey 08028

Dear Members of the Institutional Review Board,

On behalf of the staff, faculty and administration at Millville Senior High School, I grant Chelsea Ranck permission to conduct research using Millville Senior High School AVID graduates who are now attending college. We are aware that her findings will be used in her study of the impact of a pre-college program on the college experience.

A final summary of the study's results will be available to all interested parties at the conclusion.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at (856) 327-6050.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen Procopio".

Kathleen Procopio
Principal