

Diversity, Social Justice, and the Educational Leader

Volume 2 | Number 4

Article 1

January 2019

Developing a Community of Academic Success through a Teacher Preparation Initiative

Elizabeth T. Murakami

University of North Texas, elizabeth.murakami@unt.edu

Ann Marie Smith

The University of Texas at Permian Basin, asmith@na.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uttyler.edu/dsjel>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Murakami, Elizabeth T. and Smith, Ann Marie (2019) "Developing a Community of Academic Success through a Teacher Preparation Initiative," *Diversity, Social Justice, and the Educational Leader*. Vol. 2: No. 4, Article 1.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uttyler.edu/dsjel/vol2/iss4/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholar Works at UT Tyler. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Diversity, Social Justice, and the Educational Leader* by an authorized editor of Scholar Works at UT Tyler. For more information, please contact tgullings@uttyler.edu.

Developing a Community of Academic Success through a Teacher Preparation Initiative

Elizabeth T. Murakami, Ph.D.

University of North Texas

Ann Marie Smith, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Permian Basin

This study reflects the experiences of professors of education at a 4-year Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in a pilot program to collaboratively develop a curriculum alignment. The professional development opportunity, Teacher Preparation Initiative (TPI), focuses on preparing faculty in a college of education to use concepts which student-teachers could incorporate in their teaching. The study was designed as an ethnographic descriptive single-site case study, and reports on one of two nationwide pilot initiatives. For the purpose of this study, we observed the transformative potential for change in higher education institutions.

KEYWORDS: Latino/a students, professional development, teacher preparation

Introduction

This case study focuses on a University's teacher preparation program that prepares teacher-candidates serving a Hispanic population in public schools Texas. The potential of professors and teacher-candidates focusing on the promotion of academic success of students using culturally-relevant practices are worthy of examination, especially when considering the need to break historical cycles of students who do not finish school, do not contemplate college access, or think about the teaching profession as a career opportunity.

To prepare teacher-candidates, professors need to be similarly attuned to the context in which these future teachers are prepared. Gay and Howard (2000) for example contend that "teacher education faculties must be held as accountable for implementing quality multicultural education as they should expect their students to be in K-12 classrooms" (p. 15). Moreover, scholars like Ladson-Billings (1995) highlight the importance of adopting culturally-relevant pedagogies to not only address student achievement but also help students to "accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469).

Interestingly, the expectations, professional development, and practice of professors in higher education are often encouraged through individual autonomy and independence (Uchiyama & Radin, 2009). In fact, competition and individualism has been a tradition in the professoriate, not encouraging tenure-track professors to generate pedagogical strategies collaboratively (Austin & Baldwin, 1991; Tierney, 1991). Individualism and competition are contrary to K-12 practices, where collaboration and community are more often emphasized (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015).

In developing a community of professors and teachers focused on academic success, it is also important to consider that professors may begin developing their own pedagogies early

in their tenure-based on *self* as having experienced similar struggles, and therefore developing relations between students' needs (Murakami, Nuñez, & Cuero, 2010). The importance of

observing professors working collectively to prepare teacher candidates then, becomes significant, especially with attention to issues of equity and opportunity for students, with a focus on underserved communities (Curtin, Schweitzer, Tuxbury, & D'Aoust, 2016) where concerns related to race, ethnicity, geography, literacy, and health may present additional challenges limiting high achievement and academic success.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the adoption of culturally-relevant strategies in a teacher preparation program preparing teacher-candidates to serve the needs of diverse students in public schools in Texas. We observed professors in a teacher education program at a 4-year comprehensive Hispanic-serving university who were part of a pilot program named Advancement via Individual Determination Teacher Preparation Initiative (AVID TPI). The program focused on redesigning a teacher education curriculum embedding culturally-relevant strategies. AVID TPI focused on three interrelated arenas: (a) invest in the professional development of faculty in a college of education; (b) promote the alignment of a teacher preparation curriculum with AVID strategies that provide future teachers with tools to promote student success; and (c) promote a culturally-sensitive strategies to meet the needs of K-12 students in the area.

Designed as an ethnographic descriptive case study, the research question was: "In what ways do faculty in a teacher preparation program include AVID culturally-relevant strategies to prepare teacher-candidates for students in schools?" In this study, we explored the potential for change not only to impact teacher candidates in their future positions, but also the potential of higher educational institutions to train professors to work collectively to address the need of underserved communities, in particular Latinx, English language learners, and bilingual students within the preparation of teacher-candidates.

This case included the observation of university faculty training, and measures taken to develop the curriculum to align AVID strategies. The goal for West University's (pseudonym) College of Education was to impact teacher-candidates by improving their readiness in culturally-relevant pedagogy and instruction to address struggling students in K-12 schools. West is a university in Texas with a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation.

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, originally designed for public schools, to provide teachers with techniques for motivating and engaging students with study skills. The program prepares teachers with strategies to plan and organize students' learning. Further, the AVID TPI program's objective is to have professors prepared to include not only content pedagogy, but also techniques to motivate and engage especially underserved students who need support to organize their learning. Important in this study was considering the high representation of Latinos in the HSI and surrounding areas of one university in Texas. The potential of this program redesign seemed of significance in positively impacting both teacher candidates and subsequently the K-12 students in the area.

Rationale for the Study

This research presents multiple layers in relation to the observation of a program redesign, including innovative approaches to the professional development of professors in an HSI, proposed changes in teacher preparation programs, and considerations related to the

readiness of teacher candidates in serving schools with a large Hispanic and underserved population.

Important to consider, is the nature of the professoriate as being very different from teaching in K-12 environments (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015). Faculty in colleges of education transition from K-12 environments to the professoriate, and are oftentimes left on their own, without much encouragement to collaborate in the development of teaching pedagogies (Kugel, 1993). In higher education environments, it is common to see professors using the academic freedom to teach sections of the same course in different ways (Norton, Richardson, Hartley, Newstead, & Mayes, 2005). In addition, faculty members are evaluated for their teaching, but not necessarily encouraged to develop programmatic collaboration in the development of courses.

Interestingly, Fogg (2006) highlighted the importance of collegiality, especially among junior professors, emphasizing the importance of interactions as even affecting job satisfaction in academia. Collaborative efforts in higher education that include professional development seem to be mainly motivated by external grants. That seems the case of Uchiyama and Radin's (2009) study of curriculum mapping among faculty in teacher education. Hence the importance in this study, of observing the development of a higher education curriculum from a collaborative approach. In the next section, we expand on this rationale, by providing a framework for the examination of collaborative efforts among university faculty focused on teacher preparation and practice.

An important observation among the professoriate is that they are not necessarily prepared in their degree programs to become instructors with pedagogies that enhance student success in the classroom, or more importantly, the promotion of nontraditional students. Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) for example, prioritized the importance of developing a strong sense of moral purpose among teachers if to support equitable and powerful education for their students. These authors also highlighted the importance of "pedagogies and assessment strategies in teacher education that appear to help prospective teachers develop the capacities and dispositions they need to teach diverse children effectively and to help develop schools that support this work" (p. 8). Rendón (2006) referred to the importance of sensemaking in teaching and learning. However, considering the professors preparing teachers, scholars like Kugel (1993) call out attention to the fact that college professors' abilities develop in stages.

Kugel (1993) describe that in their development, professors were only able to focus on their students' needs after spending time focusing on self, and their discipline. Kugel asserted that some professors may not even shift from a focus on self, spending much time polishing teaching skills, before moving their attention to what is being taught. On the other hand, Murakami, Nuñez. and Cuero, (2010), exemplified how Latina professors begin developing their pedagogies early in their tenure based on self as having experienced instances of discrimination, and therefore developing relations between students' needs, and ways in which professors in higher education may promote their success. While Latinx professors are considered the missing piece in the success of Latino students (Nuñez, & Murakami, 2012; Ponjuan, 2011), it is important to note that professors with backgrounds that match those of Latinos are rare.

Most importantly, the transformation of postsecondary structures brings about deep concerns related to privilege. Scholars like Rendón (2006) remind us that higher education institutions continue to value privileged students, without providing most needed support to Latinx and other nontraditional students. In the U.S., Latinx are the second largest ethnic group behind Whites. However, only 33 percent of Latinx ages 18-24 are enrolled in school according to the last census (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). In fact, Latinx have the lowest educational

attainment when compared to other students (Fry, 2002; Gandara & Contreras, 2009), evidencing both a lack of support to transition to college, and less chances of enrolling in college programs such as educator preparation. In Texas, Latinx represent 52 percent of public-school population (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

Teachers who have not experienced the same upbringing as their students, often struggle to view underserved and economically disadvantaged students beyond the lens of ‘deficit’-- even though the students may be victims of systematically oppressive conditions, such as lack of health care, adequate housing and other basic needs (Gorski, 2008; Rendón, 2006; Valencia, 2010). Rendón (2006) reflected:

Postsecondary institutions should be engaged in transforming their academic and social structures to foster success, not only for the privileged students whose characteristics closely match what postsecondary institutions have traditionally offered and are used to offering, but rather, the challenge is to do things quite differently in the face of a student population that defies homogeneity and seeks to realize an education that values them as capable knowers and views them as whole human beings (p. 24).

When observing the development of a community of academic success, we perceive this study of a teacher preparation initiative as significant in explore the adoption of culturally-relevant strategies in a teacher preparation program preparing teacher-candidates to serve a high number of Hispanic students in public schools in Texas.

Theoretical Framework: Changing the Landscape of Teacher Preparation and Practice

We approached this study through the lens of change. Eckel, Hill & Green (1998) observed that the investigation of change could span across units, be intentional, and occur over time, touching upon values, beliefs and structures. These authors also call our attention to the value of studying change processes that are not isolated or just affecting the surface of an institution. Furthermore, Kezar and Eckel (2002) add that a strong relationship between institutional culture and change can be observed when considering five core strategies: (a) senior administrative support; (b) collaborative leadership; (c) a robust vision and design; (d) staff development; and (e) visible actions. The Kezar and Eckel (2002) frame these elements as follows:

- a. *Senior administrative support*: The importance of senior administrative support relates to individuals in positional leadership providing support in terms of articulated values, resources and/or new administrative structures
- b. *Collaborative leadership*: A collaborative leadership as relating to a process where individuals participating directly or indirectly can be involved in the initiative from conception to implementation
- c. *A robust vision and design*: The importance of a robust design for implementation and the consideration of a ‘desirable’ and flexible picture of the future that is clear to stakeholders, which includes goals and objectives
- d. *Staff development*: The provision of staff development, with programmatic efforts to offer individuals with skills and knowledge associated with the change initiative; and
- e. *Visible actions*: as referring to evidence of the change process. Such visibility is perceived as building momentum

Kezar and Eckel’s framework is helpful in observing the steps developed in the implementation and curriculum development of the AVID TPI initiative and developed a curriculum.

In addition, the work of Cuseo (2011; 2013) remind us that a campus culture that values student success is driven by a community of leaders, school faculty, and staff that are

supportive of transformative change. Cuseo recognized that successful retention and graduation of nontraditional students are not reached using quick fixes, but rather through a student success- focused institution. Efforts in creating a seamless P-20 experience, have been a challenge, especially in transitioning students from high school to college. To this end, AVID's Teacher Preparation Initiative (TPI) seems to require internal university collaboration to develop cultural proficiency in the preparation of teacher candidates with implications for their practice.

When observing school and university collaborations, Nuñez and Oliva (2009) argued that barriers to forming school-university partnerships could include differences in organizational functions, differences in cultural expectations and reward systems, in addition to faculty resistance. Resistance from university faculty in this study could be an impediment to generating impactful initiatives. Hence the focus of this study on investigating ways in which faculty collaborated in preparing teacher candidates.

Mission of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

AVID is a readiness program designed to increase student learning and performance often adopted as a high school academic elective. The organization expanded its K-12 support towards college students in 28 postsecondary institutions in the U.S. impacting over 700,000 students in approximately 5,000 K-12 schools (avid.org, 2017). The program has been adopted by the US Department of Education, and internationally. Most recently, AVID's P-20 partnerships link preschool, K-12, and higher education with state and national organizations aimed at addressing college success. This extended program is motivated by concerns that some students, once gaining access to college, are not successful completers (Nuñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, & Vázquez, 2013). Indeed, the College Board (2008) shows that even though the U.S. ranks as one of the higher among college going rates, it also ranks at the bottom half of the nations in relation to college completion rates. Organizations like Complete College America (2011), recognize that too few students are graduating from two-year or four-year colleges, suggesting that new generations have the potential to be less educated than their parents. The focus of AVID in postsecondary institutions continues to be related to the needs of underserved students.

AVID has partnered with institutions, preparing teachers with the competence and sensitivity with attention to concerns related to diverse school settings and underserved students (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Davis, 2008). Of concern, is the lack of teacher expertise in meeting the needs of underserved students. Professors struggle to prepare a new generation of teachers to work with these students.

Mainly focused on holding students to high standards of instruction from kindergarten to college and providing organizational tools to navigate through high school and college, AVID carries a philosophy of impacting change especially among underserved students. Mehan, Hubbard, Okamoto, and Villanueva (1994) extensively researched the impact of AVID in schools, closely observing the needs of low achieving students, practices that limited their success, such as tracking systems, and placement issues for low track students. These studies also showed the importance of institutional support in order to implement AVID classrooms (Stanton-Salazar, Vasquez, & Mehan, 1996). Even though critics of the program recognize the limitations of AVID and outreach programs in that they only focus on individual students (Gandara, Orfield, & Horn, 2006), rather than transforming the culture of a high school, value can be perceived in the preparation of educators in changing the opportunities for students.

Although AVID did not intend to serve Latinx students specifically, the workshops and training related to culturally-responsive teaching was effective for the HSI and the teacher educators preparing to serve in the local districts. The promotion of culturally-responsive teaching can have a direct effect on the development and performance of students (Gay, 2002; Murakami, Nuñez. & Cuero, 2010). However, opportunities for culturally relevant professional development for educators are limited when focused on changing mindsets and hearts. Cuseo (2011), describing the features leading to the effectiveness of the AVID program at the postsecondary level, indicated six significant features that could lead to student success:

- a. a holistic view of student and institution;
- b. a systemic cross-divisional infrastructure to generate synergistic effects on student success;
- c. a sustained support and follow up assessment systems;
- d. a transformative culture towards a student-centered and learning-focused environment;
- e. cumulative empirical data collection in multiple sites, using a variety of research methods and assessment tools; and
- f. a system that is customized to students' needs in localized institutions.

In AVID K-12 schools, selected teachers are trained and have specific classrooms where students, perceived as needing strategies to graduate, can attend these AVID classes. At higher education levels, two new programs were intended to support students using AVID strategies: the first one was the student success initiative, building on the existing pre-college support or coaching divisions. The program was also designed to promote college readiness and college success. The second and more complex initiative is the Teacher Preparation Initiative (TPI), intended to support educator preparation programs in colleges of education.

Method

A descriptive single-case study was employed to explore the adoption of culturally-relevant strategies in a University teacher preparation program preparing teacher-candidates to serve Hispanic students in public schools in Texas. The nature of this study involved the complex observation of participants and their transformative potential for change in higher education institutions. Using a holistic and real-world approach to explore the site (Yin, 2013), the case study was analyzed for its intrinsic features through the examination of a pilot program. This study of West University's process of AVID TPI integration makes this research of value for its uniqueness and innovativeness (Stake, 1995). Yin (2013) recommends that case studies observe contemporary events. At the time of this study, the program was in the third year of implementation, and West University was one of two university sites in Texas who piloted the program. The single-site case study was developed through the use of five sources of data including documents, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts.

Research Setting

West University has been recognized by the state board of Texas as being one of the first public institutions to implement AVID strategies at the postsecondary level. Located in an area of fast economic growth, and with over 5,000 students, this 4-year university is part of a statewide system, serving the city and several communities in west Texas. Eighty two percent of its students are enrolled in undergraduate degrees, of which, 128 are AVID students (students who elected AVID support in high school). In 2013, 40 percent were low-income

students, with about 44 percent Latinos students, 43 percent White, 6 percent African Americans, and 3 percent of Asian descent. Considered a Hispanic-Serving Institution, 30 percent of its graduates in 2012 were Latinos. Relative to students served, only eight percent of the tenure/tenure-track faculty is Latino, and five percent are African American (authors, 2014).

AVID TPI involves college of education administrators and university professors to (a) become proficient in AVID strategies (see table 1), and (b) implement these strategies into teacher preparation curricula. By partnering with colleges of education, AVID frameworks, methods, and strategies can now be embedded in teacher preparation courses. The name of the initiative is a bit misleading, since the program not only supports aspiring teachers—to support K-12 students in their academic success—but the TPI initiative prepares higher education faculty to infuse strategies aspirant teachers can learn and apply later in the K-12 classrooms. In the site in which this case study is developed, university members strengthened relationships with surrounding districts by working with AVID coordinators in the local public schools to prepare the university professors.

With the goal of transforming the culture of colleges of education from independently developing syllabi to jointly develop curricular plans, deans and faculty in the college were trained through professional development in the implementation of a variety of AVID strategies. With an initial effort to modify first-year courses, AVID strategies were adopted the following year. Professors collaborated to develop an AVID infused curriculum. Particularly important in this study's observation is the transformative process of higher education faculty in their work with teacher candidates. The participants also documented their own training and curricula design.

In the Texas region where the university prepares teacher candidates, there are over 88,000 K-12 students, of which 68 percent are Latinos, 24 percent are White, and 4 percent are African Americans (TEA, 2018). In 2017, fifty-three percent of the student population in the school districts was economically disadvantaged and 51 percent were at risk of not graduating. The district adjacent to the university was found actively implementing AVID strategies to increase graduation rates. This school district partnered with the university, joining in the training and also providing expert knowledge with professors to improve college readiness, especially due to the low passing rates in the areas of literacy and math.

At the university level, the president and deans in the college of education endorsed the initiative with intensive training of teacher preparation program faculty. Selected faculty from the college of education composed the site-team. A resource space for teacher preparation was created in the college. In the past two years the faculty received AVID strategies training in the areas of math, language arts, critical reading, social studies, student success, and English-language learning (Salgado, Carter, Hurst, & Smith, 2014). During training sessions, the two higher education institutions piloting the TPI program met regularly to share implementation strategies, along with planning for site-based and differentiated approaches. Some of the local training sessions were jointly conducted to include AVID district representatives, university faculty, local school district teachers, and teacher candidates. At the end of the first year, 531 teacher preparation candidates attended courses that contained these strategies. At the end of the second year, a total of 24 courses contained AVID strategies.

Participants and Data Sources

A total of fourteen participants were interviewed through a series of semi-structured questionnaires. The sample included three administrators (dean, associate dean, director of teacher field experiences), two department chairs (in the areas of curriculum and teaching and

educational leadership/counseling education), and nine faculty members of the AVID TPI site team. Among the site-team members and administrators at West, only 4 out of 11 were Latinx. Nine faculty, two K-12/University liaisons and two administrators were interviewed. The district expert was also interviewed. The data collection was limited to the university and district personnel involved in the implementation of the initiative. The prospect of enhancing retention and graduation at the university was a strong motivator to transform the curriculum implementation. The associate dean had been involved with AVID activities in kindergarten through grade twelve schools in the past and was ready to guide professors as a liaison.

When piloting the AVID TPI initiative, the faculty at West committed to collectively meet the following TPI goals: (a) gain familiarity with AVID methodologies and appropriateness in content areas; (b) develop a faculty research framework for the program; (c) generate an implementation plan to modify courses; (d) examine links between the TPI and the alignment with current programs; and (e) align the new initiative with accreditation and institutional goals and objectives. Monthly site team meetings were observed where the faculty discussed methodologies and modified courses. Administrators and chairs were interviewed individually. Faculty members in the site team meeting were interviewed in a focus group at the end of year one. Documented strategies in the professors' respective areas of expertise were collected and informed the study about knowledge acquisition and lessons learned, not only about pedagogies being developed, but also about the participants' own transformation in the process. When the professors received training, and spent time analyzing the curriculum to implement changes, there was also a peer-review structure set for both support and follow-up assessment cycles observed and documented by the researchers. Documents included those provided by AVID for the TPI training. Artifacts included syllabi generated by faculty and materials related to the training received by faculty and area teachers. The professors in the AVID TPI team also collected empirical data of student-teachers and shared their findings during the interviews.

The site was appropriate for piloting the initiative, due to its relatively small faculty. This university, serving rural areas of sometimes 100 miles apart, serves many smaller and remote communities with the use of technology. In addition, the school districts in the area where the university is located experience severe teacher shortages.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis consisted of examining, categorizing and interpreting the data, and coding it thematically in the findings. The data was analyzed and organized chronologically, as the participants' accounts, documents, adoption of strategies, and feedback from the participants on the application of knowledge were incorporated in the curriculum.

Convergence of evidence was sought in order to establish construct validity and reliability (Yin, 2013), where documents such as memoranda of understanding between the AVID organization and the university, leadership informed the structure and incentives to adopt the teacher preparation initiative. Documents were juxtaposed through a matrix of categories that included student-teacher strategies adopted by professors, strategies related to the development of cultural proficiency for equity, and strategies for student engagement. The focus in the analysis was not on discipline content (such as English and Math) but the adoption of strategies to support underserved students in K-12 schools.

Ethical Considerations

Even though there is value in developing research of professors transforming their practice through initiatives such as AVID, limitations in this research include the restricted knowledge of the success among the students in the teacher preparation program as a result of the initiative, due to the early stages of the implementation (students had not graduated by the end of this research). Longitudinal data is not yet available, as the students who are undergoing this teacher preparation program are currently in their internship phase. In the next section we report on the findings beginning with the sequence of events and the experience of faculty and site team in the development of the AVID TPI.

Findings

In the examination of a University's teacher preparation program preparing teacher-candidates serving a Hispanic population in public schools in the area, we asked: "In what ways do faculty in a teacher preparation program include AVID strategies to prepare teacher candidates that can promote academic success in schools?" AVID TPI seemed to promote a robust redesign that borrowed from earlier implementation of similar processes in K-12 systems. In this section we organize the findings related to the following areas of importance as indicated earlier (Cuseo, 2011): (a) a holistic view of student and the institution; (b) a cross-divisional infrastructure to generate impact on student success; (c) support and follow up assessment systems (d) empirical data collection using a variety of research and assessment tools; (e) student centered and learning-focused culture; and (f) a system that is customized to students' needs in localized institutions. Following we share findings in each of these areas.

A Holistic View of Students and the Institution

A holistic view of students refers to the importance of understanding that the work of students at the university had a double mission: To encourage the success of teacher candidates at the university, and through their work, support the students in the school district who would benefit from the well-prepared teachers. "At this university, we recognize that we are an HSI, and as such, we identified steps towards the implementation of administrative support to lead to both student success at the university level, and the school districts" attested one of the administrators in the college of education. He continued, "We believe evidence of student success will be shown when these new teachers join the profession and gain pedagogical experience based on the knowledge acquired here". It was evident that in the implementation of this initiative, strong senior administrative support at the university level was significant, in order for the professors to focus on student success elements in the preparation of teacher candidates. In addition, a structure of collaborative leadership among professors the professional development of faculty, and subsequent degree of adoption through visible actions in transforming the curriculum in this HSI strengthened the educator preparation program.

Cross-Divisional Infrastructure to Generate Impact on Student Success

Bernhardt (2013) affirmed that a distinct feature of the program that it is not just focused on what happens between teacher and student; rather, its' aim is to create a community of stakeholders genuinely committed to increasing the number of students who enroll and persist in four-year colleges as well as creating engaging, motivational learning environments that consistently support academic and affective development and the creation of dynamic relationships (p. 205). In observing cross-divisional infrastructures, the focus was on the stages of TPI implementation. Selected professors in different areas of the teacher preparation

program attended training sessions both locally and nationally. Buy-in from professors seemed positive as they attended site team meetings. Validation of implementation was present during national AVID meetings, where professors presented on their steps of implementation. Nonetheless, the adoption of TPI concepts seemed to be uneven in instances where a professor was not able to attend training and affected the degree of adoption.

There were additional local training sessions targeted to K-12 in-service teachers. Professors and teacher candidates were included in these sessions. During these, the professors' roles were observed for dispositions to support underserved students along with the utilization or adoption of methods. The next phase involved professors in the College of Education working together to align curriculum with information learned from AVID professional development sessions.

Support and Follow-Up Assessment Systems

Support and follow-up relate to sustainability, according to Carey (2005) who documented college campus that demonstrated higher graduation rates due to consistency and sustainability of programs. In the case of West, peer-review cycles geared towards the support and follow-up assessments of innovation generated a less traditional way to generate curriculum alignment in higher education. Traditionally, due to academic freedom, it is not common to see faculty examining each other's syllabi and dialoguing or observing each other about best practices unless embedded in the university requirements. West provided steps to this dialogue through the use of empirical data and assessments. These included periodic meetings to review the implementation of strategies provided by AVID, and a reflection of how these were incorporated to syllabi and activities for teacher-candidates. One of the professors shared:

The map delineates where concepts are "introduced", "developed" and "maintained." The map provides a guide to assess the fidelity of the use of Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading (WICOR) strategies within the unit's programs. Reflections about the concepts and how they were measured in relation to teacher-candidates performance were discussed, in order to "maintain" strategies across syllabi. Assessment and reflections on improvement also related to the professors evidencing the development of a learner-center culture.

Using Research and Assessments

During the TPI implementation process, we observed faculty at West in a process of data collection to evaluate their effectiveness. This included the observation of new concepts such as culturally-relevant pedagogies introduced by AVID and the application of strategies, further documented in site-team reports. These observations and group assessments were documented for the initiative and shared at the institutional and national levels back to AVID, providing empirical data of a variety of foci and assessment strategies for institutional learning at the HSI.

In collecting empirical data to improve the program, professors also reported on teacher candidates' demonstrated proficiency after attending AVID workshops. According to one of West's AVID liaisons "They can work on fine tuning their craft. . . and are not as overwhelmed with new information." The teacher candidates were as knowledgeable about AVID strategies and principles as the professional teachers who attend the workshops.

Student-Centered and Learning-Focused Culture

At West University, the opportunity for peer-review of teaching and learning may have been easier to implement due to the small size of its program faculty. Nonetheless, it was important to observe how program faculty generated opportunities for student-centered and learning-focused culture. We could observe the generation of a student-centered effort, and learning-focused culture among the professors. One of the professors commented on the layers of meaning-making that were occurring as they taught and observed each other on the application of some of the strategies to their students:

A lot of our students are first-generation students. Many of the AVID strategies we are teaching them--to teach their students--they are using themselves. You can see that. You can hear the students say they are seeking out AVID for their own learning and they finally understand what their own students are going through. It makes them a stronger advocate for their own children.

Professors continuously reviewed the usefulness of AVID strategies for their teacher candidates and future students as they thought about how to infuse AVID academic strategies into their existing course curricula.

Teacher Preparation Supporting Diverse Communities

When preparing teachers to support diverse communities, we observed the training of culturally-responsive teaching. In one workshop activity, for example, participants (professors, teachers, and college students) analyzed personal stereotypes about people from non-dominant groups. One of the professors reflected:

Even though for some of the professors, culturally-sensitive activities offered at the AVID workshop were familiar, it was clear that many of the districts' teachers and some of us were not prepared to understand the struggles of underprivileged students. Some teachers who had to engage in critical conversations about race were offended with materials that addressed discrimination. These teachers felt like they were being targeted.

This experience connects to comments from Bernhardt (2013), a previous AVID coordinator. He provides a vivid example of how challenging it was to initiate conversations with teachers in high school about examining practices that created unfair advantages to certain students. Teachers were offended when they were asked to examine criteria used to write recommendation letters for students to enter advanced classes or colleges.

Resistance to culturally-responsive concepts revealed how students could be subject to academic environments lacking social justice. Levine-Ratsky (2011), in fact, recognized that positions of power in terms of class-ness and white-ness can prevent students of color from having college access very early in their academic lives. Although West University professors were agreed with the necessity to prepare teacher candidates to be aware of intended or unintended inequities, they were unclear about how AVID would assist teachers who were resisting to concepts offered in professional development trainings. The professors were also unclear about how to guide teacher candidates to join schools not exercising concepts offered during their preparation.

Systemic Change to Serve Local Students' Needs

In the delivery of courses, the faculty was intentional about indicating the courses in which AVID strategies were embedded for the teacher candidates. Professors voiced the importance of their teacher candidates to be intentional about learning the strategies offered. These strategies included AVID materials that helped teachers apply strategies on areas such as: writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading-to-learn (WICOR) (Bernhardt, 2013; Salgado et al., 2014).

Three site-team members documented the process of planning AVID strategies in teacher preparation courses through a curriculum mapping process (see Figure 1). One of the professors recognized the value of curriculum mapping:

The curriculum mapping process is an excellent framework to facilitate a faculty's understanding of the WICOR strategies taught in each university course. The map delineates where concepts are 'introduced', 'developed' and 'maintained'. The map provides a guide to assess the fidelity of the use of WICOR strategies within the unit's programs.

As courses were reviewed each semester, the mapping process continued to evolve, and AVID strategies were realigning existing courses without interrupting requirements at the State level (see Figure 1).

AVID Strategies University



Strategy	EDUC 3322 Lit in the Classroom EC – 6	EDUC 4324 Reading & Writing Primary Grades	EDUC 4373 LA & SS EC – 6	EDUC 4375 LA & SS 4 – 8	EDUC 4325 Reading Middle Grades	EDUC 4321/4322 Classroom Instr & Mgment	EDUC 4326 Content Area Reading 4 – 12	EDUC 4323 Adolescent Literature 4 – 12	EDUC 4371 LA & Reading 8 – 12
Empty the Cup	X			X	X		X	X	
Think- Pair- Share	X			X	X		X	X	
Writing in the Margins: Visualizing	X				X		X		X
Writing in the Margins: Connections	X				X	X	X	X	X
Four Corner Discussion	X			X	X		X	X	
Philosophical Chairs	X			X	X			X	
Inside Outside Circle	X			X	X			X	
Cat and Fish		X	X						
Read Write Speak Listen	X			X	X				
Board or Poster Project	X								
Acrostic Poetry	X							X	
Recycled Story with Pattern	X								
Concept Maps	X								
Quick Write		X		X	X		X	X	
D-L-I-Q Writing		X							
Content Connection		X							
Socratic Circle Fishbowl				X		X		X	
Role Play	X	X							

Figure 1. University Strategies using AVID

Salgado and colleagues (2014), studying the same group of professors attested that the faculty planned the adaptation of the curriculum while consciously ‘not re-inventing the wheel’ (p. 8). One of the professors showed her curricular map, attesting:

Right now, we are working on strategies for success—the part before the WICOR section- which is what all of the AVID strategies has in common. The idea of scholarly speaking, places to study...all of those pieces that go into college readiness are easily identifiable.

West professors agreed that considering the value of English language learners was of value, as many of the teacher candidates were once English language learners. However, the intentional effort to align culturally-relevant strategies with existing best practices as requirement was an effective way to keep the goal in mind. “The goal,” attested the authors

...Was to provide both the faculty and the teacher candidates with a common strategy toolbox that was also familiar to the leadership in local school districts so that when West candidates were interviewed for teaching positions they were prepared to teach with AVID training (Salgado et al., 2014, p. 78).

When observing AVID strategies are designed to teach students effective methods of studying, writing, reading, and problem solving, it seemed that most of the strategies taught in literacy education courses were intended to help students improve literacy skills. In this HSI, many faculty members found that students were second language learners and the students they will teach would most likely be second language English speakers as well. One professor explained:

Because AVID is about ‘best practices,’ I see Latinx teacher-candidates nodding their heads and saying ‘Yes, I understand!’--because they have been there themselves.

Students at times recognize that as first-generation students they wished someone had done this for them.

Another professor talked about a Content Reading class, where teacher candidates were encouraged to consider strategies that might work best for English language learners who struggle with vocabulary. Especially teacher candidates planning to teach Spanish were asked to consider how native English speakers who are learning Spanish would differ from native Spanish speakers learning in relation to how to read and write in Spanish and English.

Learning about the students’ backgrounds created a lens through which teacher educators could approach the teaching of AVID strategies and methods. For example, one of the professors new to Texas learned that not all of her Latino/a pre-service teachers spoke Spanish. Some of West University students grew up speaking English even though one or both of their parents were from Mexico, or they are from a long line of Texas residents. One professor exemplified, “When I conduct the AVID *paper bag activity*, they bring symbols of their cultures, talk about their cultures, etc. as they label the five sides of the paper bag. We discuss who we are, how we relate to the community, how we respect the community. . .”

In one professor’s children’s literature class, a pre-service teacher brought up a criticism of one local school in which she observed a teacher teaching content areas only in English to Latino/a students who spoke very little English. This comment emerged from a critical discussion about a novel’s portrayal of government control. The students in the class talked about what they had learned from a West’s ELL professor, who described ELL classes in which content areas were taught in students’ native language and in English. Discussion about the US government, power and English as students’ first and second languages demonstrated these pre-service teachers’ implementation of AVID TPI concepts in the classes.

Discussion

With the purpose of observing a University’s teacher preparation program preparing teacher-candidates serving a Hispanic population in public schools in the area, we asked, “In

what ways do faculty in a teacher preparation program include AVID strategies to prepare teacher candidates that can promote academic success in schools?”

The institution showed efforts in the AVID TPI initiative in order to generate a path between the HSI and the local school districts, by engaging in the development of a collective vision for the preparedness of new teachers, and in provide opportunities for both in-service and pre-service training. The holistic approach in preparing teacher-candidates in the university referred to generating college access, success, and promoting faculty support in preparing a curriculum that was aligned with current realities, and strategies needed for teachers to work with historically underprivileged students.

A cross-divisional infrastructure to generate impact on student success was evidenced in the use of an existing model and a series of strategies. The site-team members focused on employing lessons learned from professional development opportunities that align with the way they taught. Professors used these strategies to consider how their students learned about the mechanisms they used for their own learning. The effects of this initiative may not be limited to the data collected based on the two-year implementation, but provides a new model of generating a cycle of student success as illustrated in Figure 2:

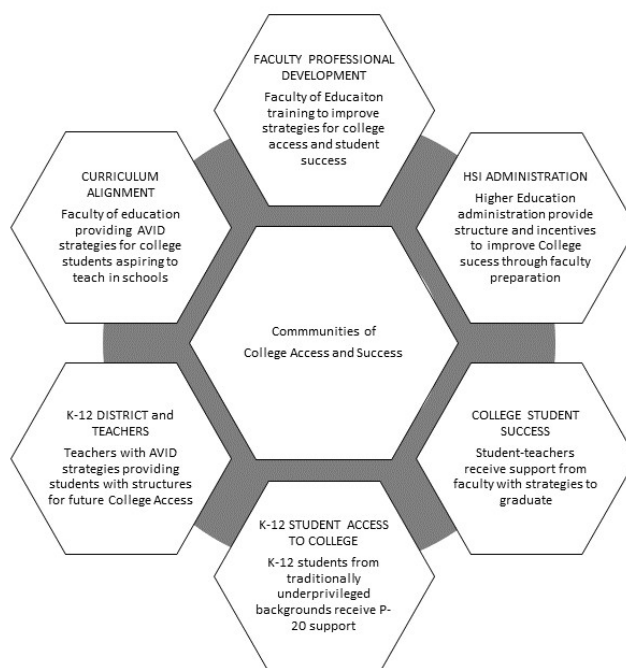


Figure 2. Communities of College Access and Success

After two years of training, support and follow-up assessment included site-team meetings, peer-review of strategies, interactions with local school districts and feedback from national conventions. In the generation of a student-centered and learning-focused culture, opportunities to interact with teachers in relation to the needs of underprivileged students, it was evident that even though professors worked in an HSI, and teachers were serving a large number of Latinos and other underserved students--that there was support for these students. Teachers reacting negatively to culturally-relevant training demonstrated a strong need for more opportunities for culturally-relevant professional development. Nevertheless, when

interacting with students in the classroom, professors recognized the importance of building connections between teacher candidates and Latinx students.

In collecting empirical data based on research and assessments, the pilot program members were purposefully collecting data and reporting on their findings, as part of the TPI initiative. Considerations as to the collection of data or use of data to further inform the improvement of the program was evidenced.

An important area observed in this study related to customizing strategies for students' needs, especially to benefit the local community. As professors at West continued their collaborative work through AVID TPI, work in partnership with each other and with the school community seemed to likely result in continued gains in relation to servicing students in the area. Although funding for workshops and summer institutes will be limited once the pilot initiative ends, West University intended to support at least two workshops a year, inviting local teachers to participate. Local school districts continue to include AVID programs, focusing on college preparation for students who may struggle with academics.

Conclusion

Cuseo (2011) highlighted how "AVID is intentionally designed to catalyze organizational change and drive institutional movement toward the development of a student-centered, learning-focused culture" (p. 10). Through changes in the way faculty collaborated through site team meetings, and developed adaptations to syllabi, this study demonstrated how the AVID TPI pilot program impacted professors in this teacher preparation program. The activities seemed to also generate a stronger connection between teacher-candidates and school districts when AVID strategies were practiced by supervising teachers in the districts, and professors engaged in teaching such strategies. Significant implications for research include identifying elements in building changes in teacher education programs, most specifically in Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Generating seamless connections in the preparation of teachers and their impact in preparing P-12 students beyond AVID classrooms demonstrates the power of directly impacting these students.

Implications for practice include the identification of strategies that contribute to building collaborations between K-12 and higher education institutions that can be sustained over time, and that are independent from external entities, or external sources of funds. In addition, implications for practice relate to the preparation of teachers of color, especially in schools where there is less support for non-traditional or underserved students. Furthermore, universities can also facilitate the transition from K-12 to college, through teacher preparation programs that encourage Latinx and other underserved students to aspire to become teachers.

Existing barriers to prepare students of color stem from low expectations in K-12 schools (Gandara & Contreras, 2009), which often result in limited academic preparation and lack of readiness for college. When professors and teacher candidates intently explore strategies that promote the academic success of students using culturally-relevant practices, we see their empowerment, and a potential in breaking historical cycles limiting college access for those who would not even pursue college, or even consider their potential in contributing as educators in benefit of future societies.

References

- Austin, A.E. & Baldwin, R.G. (1991). *Faculty collaboration: Enhancing the quality of scholarship teaching*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 7. Washington, DC: George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.
- AVID for Higher Education. (2013). Overview. Available from: http://www.avid.org/hed_overview.html (Accessed 5 June 2013).
- Bernhardt, P. (2013). The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program: providing cultural capital and college access to low-income students. *School Community Journal* 23(1), 203-222.
- Carey, K. (2005). *Choosing to improve: Voices from colleges and universities with better graduation rates*. New York: The Education Trust.
- College Board. (2008). *Coming to our senses: Education and the American future*. New York, NY: College Board Advocacy.
- Complete College America. (2011). Available from: <http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Texas.pdf> and http://www.completecollege.org/state_data/ (Accessed 30 October 2013).
- Cuseo, J. (2011). The significant six: Effective & distinctive features of the AVID postsecondary system. Available from: http://www.avid.org/dl/starting/ps_thesignificantsix.pdf (Accessed September 17, 2013).
- Curtin, K. A., Schweitzer, A., Tuxbury, K., & D'Aoust, J. A. (2016). Investigating the factors of resilience among exceptional youth living in rural underserved communities. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 35(2), 3-9.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Eckel, P., Hill, B. & Green, M. (1998). On change: En route to transformation. *Occasional Paper, No. 1*. Washington DC: American Council on Education.
- Fogg, P. (2006, September 29). Young Ph.D.'s say collegiality matters more than salary. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. 1.
- Fry, R. (2002). *Latinos in higher education: Many enroll, too few graduate*. Los Angeles, CA: Pew Hispanic Center.
- Gandara, P. & Conteras, N. (2009). *The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Gandara, P., Orfield, G., & Horn, C. (2006). *Frontiers in education: Expanding opportunity in higher education: Leveraging promise*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education* 53(2), 106-116.

- Gay, G., & Howard, T. C. (2000). Multicultural teacher education for the 21st century. *The Teacher Educator*, 36(1), 1-16. DOI: 10.1080/08878730009555246.
- Gorski, P. 2008. The myth of the culture of poverty. *Journal of Educational Leadership* 65(7), 32-36.
- Kezar, A., & Eckel, P. (2002). The effect of institutional culture on change strategies in higher education: Universal principles or culturally responsive concepts? *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73 (4), 435-460.
- Kugel, P. (1993). How professors develop as teachers. *Studies in Higher Education*, 18(3), 315-328.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Levine-Rasky, C. (2011). Intersectionality theory applied to white middle-classness. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 17(2), 239-253.
- Mehan, H., Hubbard, L., Okamoto, D. & Villanueva, I. (1994). Untracking high school students in preparation for college: Implications for Latino students. In A. Hurtado, E. Garcia, & R. Buriel, eds., *The educational achievement of Latinos: Barriers and successes*. 1st ed, Santa Cruz, CA: Regents of the University of California, 149-195.
- Mehan, H., Villanueva, I., & Hubbard, L. (1995). Forming academic identities: Accommodation without assimilation among involuntary minorities. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 24(2), 1-27.
- Murakami, E., Nuñez, A., & Cuero, K. (2010). Pedagogy for equity: Teaching in a Hispanic-Serving Institution. *Innovative Higher Education*. 35(1), 177-190.
- Norton, L., Richardson, J. T. E., Hartley, J., Newstead, S., & Mayes, J. (2005). Teachers' beliefs and intentions concerning teaching in higher education. *Higher Education* 50(4), 537-571.
- Nuñez, A., Hoover, R.E., Pickett, K. Stuart-Carruthers, A. C., & Vázquez, M. (2013). *Latinos in higher education: Creating conditions for student success*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Nuñez, A., & Murakami, E. (2012). Addressing the demographic dividend: Building inclusiveness for Latinx faculty and students in higher education. *Academe*, 98(1), 32-37.
- Nuñez, A., & Oliva, M. (2009). Organizational collaboration to promote college access: A P-20 framework. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 8(4), 322-339.
- Pew Hispanic Center. (2009). Latinos and education: Explaining the attainment gap. Accessed December 3, 2018 at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/10/07/latinos-and-education-explaining-the-attainment-gap/>
- Ponjuan, L. (2011). Recruiting and retaining Latino faculty members: The missing piece to Latino student success. *Thought and Action*, 99-110.

- Rendón, L. I. (2006). Reconceptualizing success for underserved students in higher education. *National Postsecondary Education Cooperative*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(3), 475-514.
- Salgado, Y., Carter, J., Hurst, J., & Smith, A. (2014). The teacher preparation initiative. *The Journal of Teaching Effectiveness and Student Achievement*, 1(1), 75-84.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stanton-Salazar, R. Vásquez, O.A., & Mehan, H. (1996). Engineering success with institutional support. In: A. Hurtado ed. *Latino Eligibility Task Force Report*. Santa Cruz, CA: Regents of the University of California.
- Texas Education Agency. (2017). Enrollment in Texas public schools 2016-17. Division of Research and Analysis, Office of Academics.
- Texas Education Agency. (2018). Texas Academic Performance Report 2016-17 Region Performance. Retrieved July 10, 2018 from <https://rptsrvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2017/static/region/region18.pdf>
- Tierney, W. G. (1991). *Culture and ideology in higher education: Advancing a critical agenda*. 1st ed. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Uchiyama, K. P., & Radin, J. L. (2009). Curriculum mapping in higher education: A vehicle for collaboration. *Innovative Higher Education* 33, 271-280. DOI 10.1007/s10755-008-9078-8.
- Valencia, R. (2010). *Chicano school failure and success: Past, present, and future*, 3rd ed. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Villegas, A. & Davis, D. (2008). Approaches to diversifying the teaching force: Attending to issues of recruitment, preparation, and retention. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(4), 137-147.
- Yin, R.K. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. *Evaluation*, 19, 321-332. doi:10.1177/1356389013497081