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No Fooling: Using Students' time in Avid more wisely

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Abstract

Why would anyone want to waste time and not get the most out of a free program that not many

students have a chance to be a part of? AVID (Advance Via Individual Determination) helps low

socio-economic status students get ready for college. Many students like to take the easy route

when it comes to schoolwork, but then we have those students that really want to get the most of

high school and continue on to college. Students' wasting their time during AVID period is an

important issue, because resources are limited and not everyone has the opportunity to be part of

the program. Five AVID students and the AVID coordinator where interviewed about what they

though about the program and what should be done to better use their AVID period. The

researcher created a brochure that was handed out to students and teachers with ideas on how

they can maximize their time during their AVID period. There is always time to get students'

input and do what they want to learn about college.

No Fooling: Using Students' time in Avid more wisely

When I was a little girl, I always wanted to be a teacher and I knew that I had to go to college in order for me to accomplish my dream. I am the first person in my family to attend college. My mom never finished high school and my dad repeated the first grade twice and finished elementary school in prison. I did not have anyone in my family that could answer my questions about college, because my parents never finished school. My mom only speaks Spanish and is not able to help me with any of my school assignments. However, she has always encouraged me to continue my education and to seek help whenever I needed it. My family moved around a lot from living in Mexico and living in California. This made it hard for my siblings and I to learn English all over again every time, because we would go years without speaking the English language to anyone.

Although the English language was a barrier at first, my siblings and I picked up the language quickly with the extra help we got from classes in school and did well in our classes. Language Arts is not my strongest skill and throughout my middle school and high school years I was in basic Language Arts and English classes. All my friends spoke and wrote English well and were in Honors English classes. One day, we were comparing our class schedule and I noticed one of my friends was enrolled in a class called AVID, which stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. I asked her what that class was and she told me that it was a class where students who are in the AVID program receive extra help learning information about college and getting prepared for college courses. I wanted to be enrolled, but she said that a teacher had to recommend the students to be enrolled in that class. I was a little upset because a teacher had not recommended me. I started thinking that maybe the teachers thought that I was not interested in college or even had thought about college, because I was still working on my

English. From that day on, I started asking my friend what they did in AVID and she would show me what they did and what she learned. I started taking notes, Cornell note style, and found out that it helped me be more organized and thoughtful about my ideas, questions and things I had learned that day.

My friend remained in the AVID program throughout high school and she continued to help me with the college process. Now that I am in college, I work for the AVID program as an AVID tutor at Salinas High School and I really enjoy it. The only down thing about it is that students and teachers are not using their time very efficiently. In a couple of occasion, all they did was watch a movie because the teacher was behind on grading and needed more time to finish grading papers. In a different classroom, the teacher would just sit in the back on his computer and let the students work on their own. Some groups did an excellent job and actually used their time to talk with other classmates about math problems they did not understand but other groups said they had nothing to work on, that they had finished everything or did not bring their books. During this time, the teacher could have been meeting with the students individually and asking them how they were doing, what they needed more help in or even ask the students' input about what they should be doing during class once they are done with all the college applications and testing. This is the main reason why I choose to do my paper on the AVID program, because I believe it is a good program for students and I wished everyone could have the opportunity to get that extra help. Sine this is not the case, those who do have the opportunity should take advantage of every minute they have and make the most of it, either by working on researching schools, getting college students to attend their class and talk to them about transitioning from high school to the college life or working on finding scholarships and writing personals statements that they might need depending on the colleges they choose to apply to.

There is always a better way for teachers to spend time in class, other than just sitting in the back grading. Possibilities include: asking for some input from the students on what they would like to learn more about. That seems a lot fairer than just letting that time go to waste.

Literature Review: Why is using class time during AVID period wisely an asset for the students, faculty, parents and coordinators?

The AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program's student selection process varies across different school districts, but for the most part a teacher recommendation is required; the reason being that teachers know which students are dedicated and are average students who need the extra support to succeed academically (Ensor, 2009). The program is designed to prepare "first-generation college-goers for four-year colleges and universities" (Huerta, 2013, p. 27). The opportunity to get involved in the AVID program should be open to all students regardless of their academic status, because if any student decides to take the elective it shows that he or she is capable and interested in attending college, but probably needs help, support and motivation from peers and teachers. Opening the doors to all students to take part in "college-prep opportunities" has shown that "students are rising to the challenges" and performing sometimes even better then they would in a remedial class" (Nelson, 2007, p.74). The program not only helps students, but also gets parents involved in the students' college decision making and by monitoring the students' stress levels.

College Preparation

Students who have the opportunity to participate in the AVID program can take advantage of the extra academic counseling they receive one-on-one with a counselor who cares about the students' interest in education. Some schools have a four-year plan for students that are

enrolled in the program to help them get college ready. Before students can get the most out of

the program, they need to have some skills, like being able to summarize and gather information.

If they do not posses these skills, their AVID participation should help students develop the

abilities to ask questions, be active participants, critical thinkers, and synthesize information

(Nelson, 2007). During their enrollment in the program, there is a trained teacher that is

supposed to be helping the students achieve these skills so that they can be successful and ready

for college. Taking AP courses is part of the contract that students are required to complete in

order to be academically challenged and help them prepare for college classes (Huerta, 2013).

The AP courses helps students get a little taste of how a college class can be and it can get the

students into the habit of making priorities when it comes to school. Not only does it challenge

students to think critically, but to also be able to analyze information and making sure that they

understand what they are doing. Visiting colleges gives an opportunity for students to experience

college life for a day and see how different it is from high school. They might even get to talk to

college students and talk about transitioning from high school to college (Ensor, 2009). Having

the students do mock admission interviews helps them with the process of applying for college

and when it comes to their senior year the students are ready to go and have in mind what they

are looking for in a school. It makes the whole process a little less overwhelming if they where

doing it on their own without any support or help from a teacher (Ensor, 2009). This is where

having access to technology in the classroom can make the process easier, because if the students

have any questions there is a teacher that can help them answer it an not feel stuck. It's important

that teachers get the necessary training in order to teach students and help them excel in their

academics. AVID teachers should also use technology in their classroom since it's a period

where students learn about college and how to apply for college. Megan Kauffman states: " The

advantages of using technology as an integral part of a classroom curriculum are that a teacher could potentially see a positive change in students classroom grades, GPA, and attendance" (Teaching with Technology). Having students use technology is distracting but if you assigned an activity where students get to use their technology, more students are going to be participating and getting the most time out of their AVID period by searching and learning about schools that they are interested in. Note taking is a big part of the AVID approach that they call "Cornell Notes", because they ask questions about the material they did not understand and summarize what they learned (Nelson, 2007). Taking good notes and asking critical questions makes the foundation for putting the students into groups during their AVID period, so that students can work together to come up with a solution and or understand the material.

What has been done about how class time during AVID period is being used?

The AVID program has already implemented some ideas into the program that help students and teachers maximize their time in the classroom. Some of the things that the program already has are, having tutors help the students in their classes and making sure that they can take good notes to help the students be involved in the conversations they have in class. The program has an agenda, but in that agenda they should also have college students come into the AVID class and talk about their experiences and some of the transitions that students are going to be facing as freshmen in college. According to the problem solving theory, "students work collaboratively in small groups toward the problem's resolution" (Problem Based Learning). This is a perfect example of something that the AVID program is always working on, because students are divided into small groups to work on similar topics that they have questions on. Using their Cornell notes students are supposed to come up with an answer to their question by working together. The program does take high school students in college tours so outside sources

are good in the program; it's just trying to find more things to do inside the classroom that needs adjustment so that students and teachers benefit from the program.

Tutors

Tutors are a big part of the AVID program, because the tutors provide feedback and extra help to the students in the group that each tutor is assigned too. In order for the groups to work properly and for the students to get the most out of the groups while in Avid class, the students need to fully participate and the tutor needs to have knowledge about the subject. According to Swanson, college students are hired as tutors to lead a specific subject area group and there are training sessions that college students can attend to become well rounded Avid tutors (Swanson, 1996). It is important to not just throw in the tutors with a group of kids if they have had no training in how the Avid program works and how it is suppose to help the students improve their knowledge on any particular subject. The tutors are also allowed to be in the classrooms with the students so that students are actually taking notes and having discussions in their respective groups when they get to their Avid class period. Not only are the Tutors there to help the students but they also serve as roles models and can connect with the students on a level that the teacher might not be able too (Swanson, 2000).

Note taking

A big part of the Avid program is that students need to take good notes in all of their classes so that when they get to their Avid class, the students have something to share and discuss with their group members. The good thing about the students taking notes is that if the whole classroom has the same question about a particular subject that they are learning, the whole class can work together to understand, and have other classmates that understand the questions help their fellow classmates (Born, 2006). Without any proper or thoughtful questions

the tutorial time is no use for anyone and it doesn't help the students get into a habit of asking

question or being curious about why something is the write answer. This process of note taking

helps the student to actually stay focused in the classroom and have something ready to share

with his/her group, because he/she has learned how to start thinking critically about his/her

questions and really go in deep into the stuff that they do not understand (Swanson, 1989).

Method

For this Capstone Project the researcher investigated how AVID coordinators, teachers

and students viewed their current use of time during the AVID period. The researcher wanted to

determine if improvements needed to be made to the program design. This research is relevant to

students preparing for college who need to be utilizing all the tools that are available to them.

Students should be able to get all the necessary help, to accomplish the at-times daunting task of

choosing, applying, and succeeding in college.

Context

Salinas High School is located in Salinas, CA on South Main Street. The school is close to

downtown Salinas, which means that the high school students have access to fast food restaurants

and there is a lot of traffic by the school. The city of Salinas is working with The Community

Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP) to decrease the amount of gang violence in youth, and to

make the city safe for businesses and children. According to Wikipedia, "Salinas is known as the

Salad Bowl of the World." Salinas is surrounded by agricultural land. The majority of the people

living in Salinas are blue-collar workers. Salinas High School looks like an old mission with a

clock bell tower. It is a two-story building high school, which makes it easy to get lost with

different pathways to get around the building. The numbers below are taken from the Salinas High

School Accountability Report Card, 2012-2013 (http://salinas.schoolwisepress.com/home/). The

total student enrollment for the year of 2012-2013 is 2,533 students. Forty percent of the seniors at Salinas High School took the SAT. The percentage of students at Salinas High that enrolled in AP course is four percent. The graduation rate for Salinas High is 92%, with only a five percent dropout rate. The majority of the students at the school are considered English proficient, with only a 14% rate of students being English learners. For most of the students who are English learners, the language that is spoken at home is Spanish. The ethnicity consists of African American (2%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (6%), Hispanic/Latino (63%) and White (27%).

Participants and Participant Selection

The AVID coordinator and six senior students served as the participants in this study. Three of the participant are girls and three are boys. All of the participants are hispanic or latino. This group of prospective participants where invited to participate because they have been in the AVID program since their freshman year in high school and they have relevant experience and knowledge of the program.

Researcher

This process is important to me on a personal level. Being a first-generation college student, I had no one to help guide me through the process of applying to college. My decisions were based on trial and error. I was not aware that there was an AVID program and I had to do all my college applications on my own. If I had the opportunity or the knowledge that there was a program that would assist me, my process of navigating the college system would not have been as overwhelming. My own experience as a tutor at Salinas High and as a future teacher has led me to believe that AVID teachers should be engaging with the students, and maximize the time during the period they have together. Making sure you are prepared with the proper knowledge is key to informing students and parents.

My experience plays part in my qualification to carry out this project. I have assisted in some of the classrooms during their AVID program and I was also an AVID tutor. Another qualification I have is that I also have four years of college experience and I have taken courses that are related to schools that interest me.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

Student's taking an AVID class Interview

1. What do you see as the benefit of Avid?

2. What do you see as the problem with how the time is being used during AVID period; or What are you concerned about when it comes to the use of time during the AVID program?

3. What is currently being done to improve how time is being used in AVID; -by whom- and do you think this is a good, bad, or indifferent? Why?

4. What do you think should be done about how time is spend during AVID period?

5. What do you think are the disadvantages or challenges to changing how the time is being spend during the AVID period?

6. How much homework do you typically get done during your AVID period?

7. How much time do you spend outside of the AVID program doing homework?

8. What kinds of things do you do in AVID period?

9. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the used of time in the AVID period?

AVID Teachers and the coordinator Interview:

1. What do you see as the benefits of Avid?

2. What do you see as the problem with how the time is being used during AVID period; or

What are you concerned about when it comes to the use of time during the AVID?

3. What is currently being done to improve how time is being used in AVID; -by whom- and do you think this is a good, bad, or indifferent? Why?

4. What do you think should be done about how time is spent during AVID period?

5. What do you think are the disadvantages to changing how the time is spent during the AVID period?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the used of time in the AVID period?

Procedure

Participants will be interviewed. All interviews will be done individually and in small groups. When it is not possible to interview participants in person, they will be invited to complete a phone interview or paper and pencil survey of the same questions. Face-to-Face interviews will take less than one hour, be audio-recorded (with participant consent), and take place in Salinas High School. A semi-structured interview formal will be used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions to unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys will be scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews will be coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

<div align="center">

Results

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The seven interviews where done face to face at Salinas High School in the Counseling office. Each student was called in one at a time to the counseling office so that they can be interviewed. The seven student participants that where interviewed where in the AVID program

since middle school and all four years of their high school. All of the participants got accepted to

a four-year college, thanks to the AVID program.

Activities done during AVID period

From the interviews there where a wide variety of responses. The responses where

divided into categories: things done during the class and suggestions.

Results from Interviews
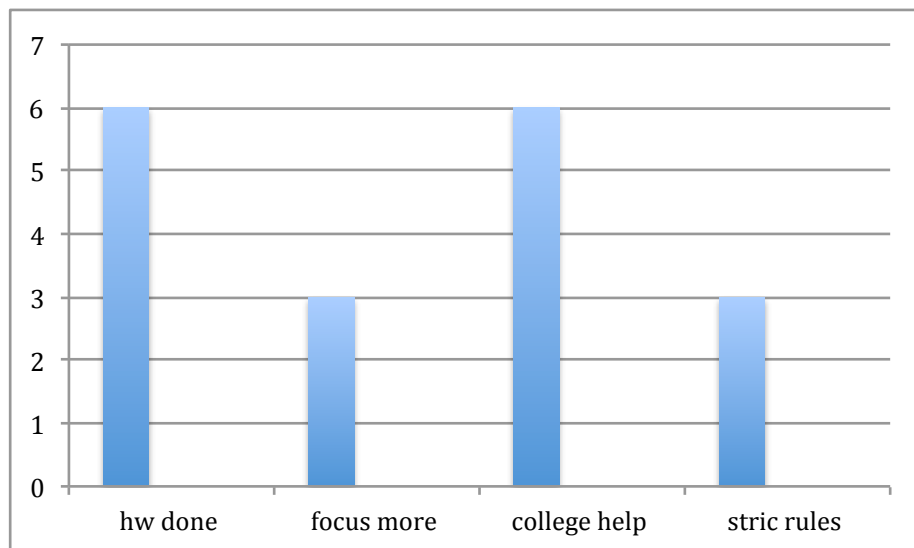
The students where glad to help with the project and where ready to answer all the

questions. When the students where asked if they saw any problem with how some of the

students are spending the time during AVID period, nine out of ten students said that they

saw no problem. The one student that said that he did saw a problem with how some of the

students are spending the time during the AVID period, said that "some students lack and

don't take that time wisely"(Personal Communication, April 24, 2014). Which is exactly

what the problem is when it comes to tutorial time during the AVID period. The other nine

students didn't see this at all and believe that all the students are in the program, because they want to be and are doing all the necessary work to get their homework done during that period. The students gave some input on what they do during that time and what could be done to get the most out of their AVID period.

Ten out of ten students agree that the program has helped them decided where they want to go to college and has motivated them to do well in school. Some of the suggestions that all the participants agreed on were that the class should spend more time on debates, planning family night and for the teachers to have strict rules on getting work done during that period. A lot of the students are taking AP courses and would like to have extra time to work on their homework so that they have less homework to do at home. One student mentioned that his AVID teacher does a survey for his class and this is part of one of my solutions that I was thinking about. The survey taken in the classroom would be helpful, because it would allow the teacher to see what the students want to learn and it gives the students a way to input something into the curriculum. After all it's an elective class that students want to be part of and want to be able to express themselves. The participants believe it's the student's responsibility to do whatever they want during that time as long as they don't disrupt the other students.

When I interviewed the AVID coordinator she said: "The AVID teacher is in charge of the lesson plans and how the AVID time is spent. If the teacher is AVID trained, then it should go well. Sometimes teachers do not utilize the provided lesson plans and the AVID program can suffer" (Personal Communication, April 24, 2014). Which is why I wanted to interview a teacher but I was unable to get a response from an AVID teacher, because of scheduling problems and they never responded to the survey. Some of the students agreed

that on some days the teacher is in the back of the room working on other things and occasionally tells the students to keep working on something, even if they are done. The teacher should walk around the classroom and check that the students are actually working on schoolwork and if not have the tutors check on the other groups as well.

The results indicate that majority of the students and teachers are doing the best they can for the students to be able to use the time during AVID wisely, but its is ultimately up to the kids if they are going to get any of the work done and actually used their time to do schoolwork. One of the main things that students would love to do during that period is having more debates about important issues and debates that relate to college and college experiences. Even though not all participants believed there was a problem with the way time was being spend during the AVID period, they all agree that there should be something done about those students that are not following the rules.

<div align="center">**Description and Justification of Action**</div>

Since not every student has access to the AVID program, those students that do have the opportunity to be part of it should be taking the opportunity to get the most out of the program and not waste any of the resources available to them. Teachers need to make sure that they provide enough activities for the students to get the most out of the AVID program period and not waste time doing nothing.

Options

The three options that the researcher came up would solve and give some ideas on how the time can be spend during the AVID period, when students feel like they are all done with their work and have nothing else to do. The three options where bringing in college students to talk to the students during the AVID program, Holding a small informational forum during

AVID period and outside of the classroom and the last option Passing out brochures with information on activities that students can do during the AVID period and can hold on to it to reference back and add more ideas to the brochure. In all three options the teacher and the students get an opportunity to express themselves and add anything that they feel that should be incorporated into their curriculum to learn.

Evaluation of Options

In order to decide which of these three options is the best and is the one that will be accomplished, a criteria was created. The criteria selection included time, reach and access. Time referred to how much time would be necessary and how much time it would take to complete the option. The reach selection refers to how many are going to be able to attend and how many college students the school would be able to get. Access criteria is based on where the option would take place and how easy or hard it would be to get a place. Which one is more likely to be accomplish and get done before the deadline for project? In the table below you will see the option table with the criteria.

	Time	Reach	Access
Option1: Bringing in college students	Time consuming	Varies from available college students	Easy to find a location to use
Option 2: Hold a small informational forum	Time consuming	If people show up, reaches a wide amount of people	Easy to find a location to use for a group
Option 3: Pass out a brochure	Wont take a lot of time	If read can reach a wide amount of people	Easy to find a location to use

The first option involves bringing in college students into the AVID classroom and having the students ask the college students any questions that they have about college and or college experience. Finding students that are available and are willing to drive to the school site, might be hard, but if they can find hire more AVID tutors they would also talk about their experiences in college. Filling out paper work could be a hassle, but once completed students can volunteer for the following year and it could also look good in their applications.

The second option for holding a small informational forum consist of having people that are interested in the program come talk about ideas that students can do during that period, along with the researchers own ideas of how time is being spend and what they could add to the curriculum to maximize their time during that period to get school work and college information. The amount of people that can be reach will vary and it would take some time to find a location, ask for permission and still get some forms if necessary sign. If possible it could even be done during the AVID period as a workshop.

The third option of passing out brochures will be to just inform teachers, parents, students and anyone who is interested in the program and what the students are doing with their time in a program that is free. Depending to how many classrooms and places the brochure will be handed to, the time could be little to a lot of time consuming. If the brochures are read it could reach a lot of people and finding a location could be easy and hard depending if you have permission from the desire location.

Decision Making

After carefully considering all the options and evaluating the time frame to complete the project, it was decided that passing out brochures would be the most convenient action to take. The reason why this would be the best decision to make is because of the researchers' school

schedule and work schedule. Time is a big issue and a crucial part to be taken into account when making a decision as to which option will work best for the project. The fact that the brochure can be taken home and be shared with the family gives it a wide amount of reachability and it does not require the students to take time out of their day during the program to hear about what they could be doing. Students will probably feel more comfortable writing down ideas of what they could be doing on the down time when they are done with the material in class and then share the answers with the classroom.

The other two options are also good options but with the time frame in mind, they would not work because people might not have enough time during the day to spare and hear an informational session. The first option will required a lot of time from both the school and the college students to communicate and agree on a time. A lot of time is going to be needed to complete this two actions and time is an issue with the researcher.

My Position

Bringing in college students to the classroom is an excellent idea, because high school students will get an opportunity to ask college students questions about college experiences and the college students can give the high school students advice on how to study and prepare for college classes and keep in touch if they have questions about college. Getting college students to go talk in a classroom full of high schools students without getting paid or for extra credit on a classroom assignment could be difficult. The AVID coordinator or the teachers might not agree with some of the stuff in the brochure and would not let the researcher pass it in class or give it to teachers to pass.

Conclusions and related outcomes

I feel that passing out the brochure will be most effective, because the students and teachers would be able to see that people that don't go to the school care about how students spend their time and want them to get the most of the program and be successful in college. It will also spark ideas into the students and hopefully they will share it with their peers and teachers.

Action Documentation

I did my project based on the AVID program at Salinas High school, from an observation I had when I was working there. I talked to the AVID coordinator about what I saw and why I wanted to do my project on this topic. I got the approval from the coordinator to interview some of the AVID students.
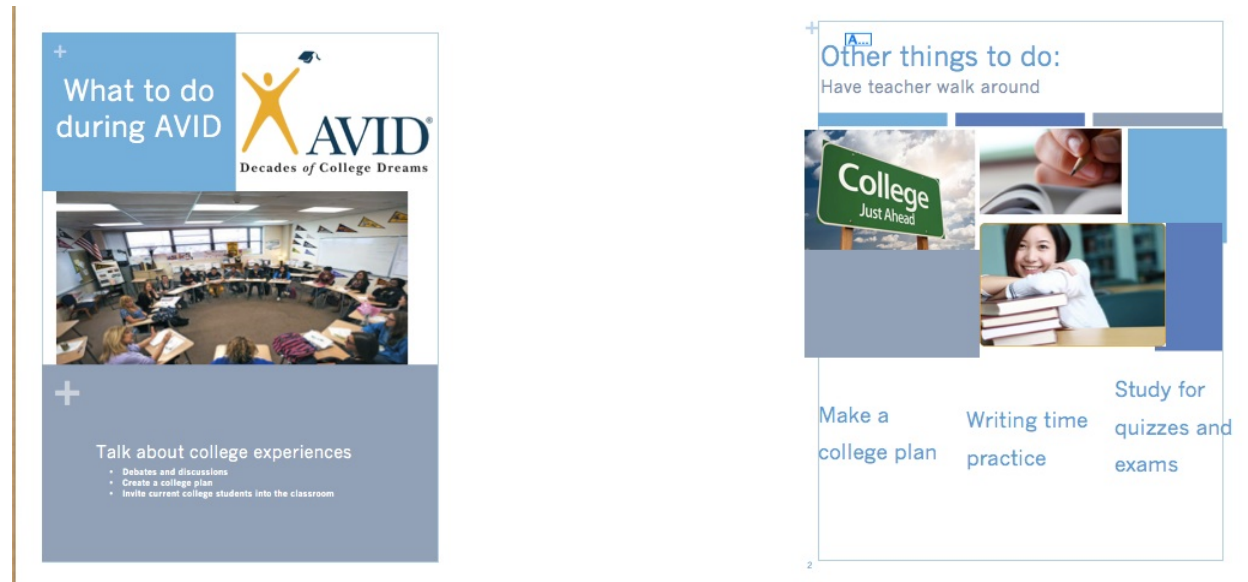

While I was doing the interviews, I asked the AVID coordinator if I would be able to pass out a

brochure to the seniors during their AVID period with some ideas and talk to them about what I

saw when I was working as an AVID tutor. This is the brochure that I passed out to the students.

When I was in the seniors AVID class, the students where interested in what they had to

do as part of their major if they went to CSUMB, so I was able to talk to them about my

experiences at CSUMB and how I did not have the opportunity to be in the program while I was

in high school, but that thanks to my friend I was able to learn about the program and that is why

when I see students wasting their time during class it frustrates me, since they do not seem to

realize how lucky they are to be part of the program. I encouraged them to talk to their teacher

and have a suggestion box where they can put in new activities that students can work on that are

related to college and getting done with high school and moving on with their lives to greater

things.

I want to be able to be part of the program again and work with students so that they can

get an opportunity to share their ideas with their peers that are not in the program or that might

not know about the program, so that it can be an elective everyone can take and not just the

students that are being recommended.

Critical Reflection

Researching and putting my Capstone together made me realize that I'm truly passionate about becoming a teacher, because I want to be able to help and inform students and parents that might not have the opportunity or know where to get information about college. I'm a first generation college student in my family and I am proud to say that this Capstone made me realize that I want to spread the word about education programs that are free and available to students to everyone not just the students in need. Everyone should have the opportunity to succeed in college and should know how to get there with the right advice.

I want to be able to work with the AVID program when I become a future educator, because I want to be able to work towards making the program available to as many students as possible that are willing to learn about college and working with the students that others might not believe that they have a shoot at making it into college. Everyone needs to be encouraged and motivated to attend college and without passion and desire its going to be hard to change a person's habit, but trying will always give you a result at the end and it does not hurt anyone.

Liberal Studies Themes

The required courses and coursework that I have taken at CSU-Monterey Bay have impacted my professional development in that I have learned to work with other people on big school projects that required a lot of team building and working within the community to promote social change. Some of the themes within the department are that they promote a lot of diversity, understanding of other cultures, working on becoming a future educator and keeping an open mind on how technology and teaching are changing rapidly.

Developing educator

As a developing educator, the steps that I need to take in order to become the professional that I envision myself being is finishing my last semester as a super senior at CSUMB this fall 2014. I need to be involved in more education programs and keep in touch with my service-learning teachers so that in the future I can use those teachers as reference and gain more experience by volunteering at a school. I need to pass the required test for the teaching credential and apply for the Cal State Teach teacher preparation program. As part of being a future educator I need to be well knowledgeable with technology and constantly learning new insights and ways to teach students. Most important, I need to be open to new ideas and passionate about what I'm doing.

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