

**AVID Central Florida Collaborative:
Improving Student Outcomes in a Rural Context**

Project Narrative

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The project addresses **Absolute Priority 5**: Improving achievement and high school graduation rates in rural local educational agencies (LEAs). AVID Center, the nonprofit applicant, proposes to partner with three rural LEAs, their area educational consortium and the local college district to demonstrate the *hypothesis* that a collaborative of secondary and postsecondary institutions serving a rural area can significantly improve student achievement and success by vertically integrating college readiness best practices, access to rigorous coursework and student support strategies. The project utilizes the AVID College Readiness System as the foundation for college readiness best practices, instructional methodologies to increase access to rigorous coursework, student support strategies, and a systemic approach to creating college-going cultures on school campuses.

The proposed project addresses challenges that living and working in a rural community present for secondary students and the schools they attend. Rural communities often have high levels of poverty and are geographically large and disconnected. Rural schools and LEAs find it difficult and cost-prohibitive to: (1) attract the highly-qualified teachers needed to provide rigorous classes; (2) provide intensive professional development to teachers; and (3) form communities of practice by discipline because of the small number of teachers in each subject.

The project addresses these unique challenges by establishing a Vertical Alignment Collaborative bringing together school, district and college leaders, key decision-makers and subject content leaders from across vertical feeder patterns and multiple feeder patterns grades 6-14 to explore, define, and implement processes and procedures that leverage limited resources, create communities of practice for educators, align best practices and expectations across grades and levels, and promote economic and relational efficiencies that can result in greater student success. The project will develop a manual to guide school districts and colleges in implementing this vertical alignment approach. The manual will be designed to enable the Vertical Alignment Collaborative processes and structures developed to be used to implement other learning support structures as well as AVID and will be available in print and online.

Official Partners are the School District of DeSoto County (DeSoto), Hardee County

Schools (Hardee), and Highlands County Schools (Highlands). Each official partner LEA is an eligible rural LEA under the Rural and Low-Income (RLIS) program. Other Partners are the South Florida State College (SFSC), which offers dual enrollment, associate degrees and an expanding number of baccalaureate degrees, and the Heartland Educational Consortium (HEC), a regional non-profit educational service agency providing cooperative services to member districts. All three school districts are members of the Heartland Educational Consortium.

Four feeder patterns of middle school and high school will participate in the project. Each targeted high school has a branch campus of SFSC nearby, creating four distinct feeder patterns of middle school to high school to college to be aligned. The schools' high-need students are low-income: all of the middle schools and two of the high schools are Title I Schoolwide, and 68.7% of all of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. More than half of the participating schools' students are from racial and ethnic minority groups (see Appendix C).

Competitive Priority 7: Innovations that support college access and success. Students in rural communities face several challenges (Demi, Coleman-Jensen & Snyder, 2010), including limited exposure to their options in career paths, education and training; no college-going tradition in their families; a low sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their academic abilities; and inability to visualize themselves going to college in the future.

To be ready to succeed in college, students need four interdependent sets of skills and knowledge (Conley, 2010): (1) key content knowledge in reading, writing and other core academic areas; (2) college knowledge, the information needed to know how to prepare for college and be successful there; (3) academic behaviors, such as self-monitoring; and (4) key cognitive strategies, such as intellectual openness and problem solving. Other researchers have identified non-cognitive domains that affect college readiness, including student engagement, attendance, discipline and leadership (Barnett et al, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2001; Sedlacek, 2005).

The participating LEAs partnered with AVID because it is proven to be one of the most effective ways to increase the likelihood that a young person from a low-income family will graduate from high school and go on to enroll in postsecondary education. Most AVID students

are underrepresented minorities ó about 50% are Hispanic (only 20% of all school-age children nationally are Hispanic), and 19% are African-American (compared to the national average of 15.3% of school-age children). Many of these students do not have a college-going tradition in their families. AVID significantly improves student outcomes and closes the achievement gaps between groups of students. About 90% of AVID students complete course requirements for admission to a four-year college or university, compared to 36% nationally. The proportions of AVID students who completed these course loads were nearly consistent for each sub-group of students, with a gap of only 9 percentage points from the highest performing to the lowest. That gap nationally is 28 percentage points. Please see Appendix C for more data and detail.

AVID's efficacy is supported by several research studies. AVID middle-school students are more likely to report doing their homework, to enroll in eighth-grade algebra, to have lower absenteeism rates, and are much more likely to plan to attend college (Black, Little, McCoach, Purcell & Siegle, 2008). Strong middle school/high school articulation through AVID instills in students the need for rigor and preparation for college (Watt, Johnston, Huerta, Mendiola & Alkan, 2008). In high schools, AVID helps schools increase their advanced course enrollment, increase AP/IB test taking, and increase graduation or completion rates (Watt, Powell, Mendiola & Cossio, 2006). In addition, AVID professional development has been shown to significantly predict increases in teacher leadership (Huerta, Watt & Alkan, 2008). Please see Appendix D for references and more detail about this research.

A. Quality of the Project Design

Goals, Objectives and Strategies. The project goals are: (1) to improve the high school graduation rate; (2) to improve the college enrollment rate; and (3) to improve the college success rate (course success in the first semester and returning for a second semester of college).

The five-year project objectives are:

1. Develop a comprehensive vertical alignment system to accelerate the impact of AVID, increase student access to rigorous classes, and create a college-going school culture.
2. Train and coach at least 60% of each secondary school's teachers in AVID methodologies

and best practices.

3. Train and coach at least 60 SFSC faculty in AVID methodologies and best practices in Critical Reading and core content areas.
4. Enroll at least 6.5% of each secondary school's students in an AVID Elective class.
5. Increase the number of students who apply to, are accepted by and enroll in SFSC or another postsecondary institution by 10%.

Two project strategies will address the challenges to rural students and schools:

Strategy 1: Undertake systematic vertical alignment to increase college readiness across feeder patterns of middle schools, high schools and college campuses. Although many scholars and policymakers conclude that a key underlying cause of the need for developmental education is a misalignment between high school graduation standards and college academic expectations, Barnett et al. (2012) concluded that it is possible that fewer students would need remedial coursework in college if postsecondary institutions took a more active role in facilitating the transition from high school to college. They suggested that close coordination to improve the alignment between secondary and postsecondary education may improve students' college readiness and their outcomes in college. The proposed Vertical Alignment System from middle school through college will develop around three groups:

- ***Vertical Alignment Collaborative*** of key leaders and decision-makers for the three districts, eight schools, SFSC and its campuses, and HEC and the AVID project leaders;
- ***Vertical Team of Content Leaders*** across all feeder patterns and college;
- ***Vertical Teams within Feeder Patterns*** of content area and school leaders from each middle school, high school and their SFSC college campus.

The AVID Project Director and team will guide the design, development, implementation and documentation of the vertical alignment system. AVID project leaders provide the expertise to drive the vertical alignment activities, to ensure consistency and rigor in instructional methodologies across the feeder patterns, to deepen the use and impact of college preparation and motivation practices to shift the culture on school campuses, and to use data and vertical

team meetings to share information on students and best practices.

Strategy 2: Accelerate implementation of AVID at secondary schools to achieve a schoolwide impact and train SFSC faculty to utilize the AVID methodologies. AVID provides the infrastructure, tools and highly effective grassroots delivery system that support college access and success (Competitive Priority 7) and address the challenges to improving student achievement in rural schools (Absolute Priority 5). The AVID system provides the following:

1. An interdisciplinary AVID school site team writes an annual plan, implements the system, provides peer support to its members and trains and models to other teachers. This creates communities of practice at individual schools and the core of the vertical teams.
2. A staff member from the school district is designated as the AVID District Director to oversee program implementation at each site. This position provides leadership and consistent practices across feeder patterns and acts as a leader in vertical planning.
3. Professional development in research-based AVID instructional methodologies known as WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, & Reading) is provided. Teachers work within their content areas to ensure consistency and increased rigor for students. Teachers leave trainings motivated with better skills, new strategies and tools.
4. Teachers and college tutors trained in WICOR instructional methodologies deliver academic support and instruction to students.
5. AVID provides curriculum materials and resources that incorporate WICOR methodologies.
6. AVID structure and activities promote a sense of AVID family for the students, provide opportunities for postsecondary exploration, and engage parents and the community. AVID students apply to participate in the Elective class, and their parents sign permission letters and attend meetings to ensure their active support. AVID students perform community service, and community volunteers speak to classes about careers and educational pathways.
7. Ongoing coaching, support and resources are provided by the AVID Project Systems Coach. The full-time, dedicated coach is integral to achieving schoolwide impact and integration of vertical alignment process and practices.

8. The AVID data collection and certification system is based on eleven characteristics of program implementation that are essential to have maximum impact on student success. The schools, feeder patterns and vertical teams will use the established essentials, data collection and certification system to guide and align their college readiness efforts.
9. Students in secondary schools attend the AVID Elective five days a week. They learn critical reading, writing and thinking skills; participate in collaborative tutorials lead by trained college students; and engage in career and college exploration.

The project accelerates AVID implementation by training a significant number of teachers in the first three years. As more teachers use the AVID instructional methodologies in classes, more students learn WICOR skills and engage in college readiness activities. Students schoolwide are motivated to succeed in the rigorous classes required for college acceptance. The entire school campus is impacted as AVID's college-going mindset permeates classrooms.

AVID brings rigor to a school's curriculum by changing the way students and teachers interact with it ó not by changing the core content. Students use AVID Critical Reading strategies when reading and marking text, searching for and highlighting key words and phrases, and jotting down high level questions they have about the text (where they analyze the text, synthesize it with other knowledge, make inferences, and apply their learning). Students engage in a Socratic seminar using the text as a prompt/reference, with their dialogue stemming from the higher level questions they created while reading the text. Students engage in rigorous discussion using Costa's (2001) levels of questions, take Cornell notes, and summarize/reflect upon their learning at the conclusion of the seminar. The curriculum did not change in this process; the teacher's expectations, knowledge of and ability to use instructional best practices changed.

To support increased rigor and college preparedness and to lay the foundation for the alignment of practices, SFSC instructors will learn to implement AVID methodologies in selected core "gatekeeper" courses that students may enroll in during high school through dual enrollment, and that they must pass to make progress in earning a college degree. In addition, students will be able to take the ACT series of assessments (Explore in 8th grade, PLAN and

ACT in high school) to help ensure that they are college-ready.

Exhibit A summarizes the planned project activities, and the hypothesized interim outcomes and long term outcomes:

Exhibit A: Project Logic Model				
<u>Activities</u>	→	<u>Interim Outcomes</u>	→	<u>Long Term Outcomes</u>
<p><u>AVID System:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elective Class • Professional Development • School-wide Coaching <p><u>Vertical Collaborative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MS/HS/College teams • Professional Development across feeder patterns and Collaborative 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Achievement • High School Persistence • Enrollment in Advanced Coursework (dual enrollment, honors, AP) • MS/HS/ College Alignment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School Graduation • College Matriculation • College Persistence

Estimate of costs of the proposed project and to reach scaling targets. The Project will cost a total of \$3,447,659 over five years (with match). A total of 800 students who will be enrolled in the AVID Elective will be directly impacted by the project. The cost per student for these students is \$4,311. However, the project is designed to have a schoolwide impact on student success as the teachers implement AVID strategies across the curriculum and the schools develop a stronger college-going culture. The eight participating schools currently enroll about 7,670 students. When all students are considered, the cost per student is reduced to \$450.

AVID Center plans to integrate the lessons learned and collaborative leadership and systems development process created through the project into its ongoing AVID implementation. Therefore, the costs of bringing the project to scale for more students will reflect the overall costs of implementing AVID. Full AVID implementation in a middle school takes three years if the AVID Elective is implemented in one grade each year; in a high school it takes four years,

with the school adding another cohort of ninth graders each year until the AVID Elective is offered in grades 9-12. It currently costs school districts approximately \$625 per student in the AVID Elective to implement the AVID system in the first year (with only one Elective section started). In the second year, costs drop to \$277 per student (with two Elective sections). Costs drop to \$238 in the third year (with 3 AVID Elective grades), and then down to \$178 per year in the fourth year. It costs approximately \$1,140 per AVID Elective student to implement AVID in a middle school over three years (assuming 90 students in three Elective sections), and \$1,318 per AVID Elective student to implement AVID in a high school over four years (assuming 120 students in four Elective sections). These cost estimates include schools' costs to provide tutors, release time for teachers to attend training, and optional travel to the AVID Summer Institute.

Therefore, in the first year of implementation, it would cost approximately \$62,500,000 to reach 100,000 students in the AVID Elective, \$156,250,000 to reach 250,000 students in the AVID Elective, and \$312,500,000 to reach 500,000 students in the AVID Elective. Costs would drop steadily as additional sections of the AVID Elective are added; in the second year of implementation, it would cost \$27,000,000 to reach 100,000 students in the AVID Elective, \$69,250,000 to reach 250,000 students in the AVID Elective, and \$138,500,000 to reach 500,000 students in the AVID Elective. In the third year of implementation, it would cost \$23,800,000 to reach 100,000 students in the AVID Elective, \$59,500,000 to reach 250,000 students in the AVID Elective, and \$119,000,000 to reach 500,000 students in the AVID Elective. By the fourth year, when the AVID Elective is offered in all grades in a high school, the cost to reach 100,000 students in the AVID Elective would drop to about \$17,800,000; costs to reach 250,000 students in the AVID Elective would drop to \$44,500,000; and the costs to reach 500,000 students in the AVID Elective would drop to \$89,000,000.

The costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. The Project will cost a total of \$ 3,447,659 over five years to increase the capacity of eight secondary schools and their feeder college campuses to prepare students for successful completion of college and to document a collaborative system that can be

used by school districts and colleges throughout the country to align practices to improve student outcomes and to come together to leverage resources and reduce costs. The costs are reasonable related to the benefits associated with more students persisting to complete college degrees: (1) Individuals with higher levels of education earn more and are more likely than others to be employed; (2) The financial return associated with additional years of schooling beyond high school and the gaps in earnings by education level have increased over time; and (3) Federal, state, and local governments enjoy increased tax revenues from college graduates and spend less on income support programs for them, providing a direct financial return from investments in postsecondary education (Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010).

Significant activities to achieve objectives will be conducted by staff paid outside of the grant so that costs are contained. One of the primary goals of the Vertical Alignment Collaborative is to find ways to reduce duplication of effort and costs because rural schools traditionally have limited resources. The manual will continue to support the efforts of the project districts and college. In addition, disseminating the lessons learned and documenting productive activities and processes for use by other LEAs and colleges in the manual will allow others to save money and time to get better student outcomes. If the benefits of these replicated efforts were calculated, the costs would be quite reasonable for the benefit received.

The potential and planning for incorporation of the project purposes, activities or benefits into the ongoing work of the participating school districts and AVID. At the end of the project, eight schools will have established AVID Schoolwide programs that will continue to improve student outcomes for their approximately 7,600 students. The investment from the grant will grow within these three districts and the local college without significant costs because the nature of the AVID structure and the continuing Vertical Alignment Collaborative allow the schools and districts to sustain the systems independently. In the Memoranda of Understanding (Appendix G), the districts and SFSC commit to maintaining AVID and the Collaborative.

AVID Center will incorporate the Collaborative alignment process and materials into its ongoing leadership training offerings and into its school site team and feeder pattern training

system. This will make the collaborative alignment process developed through the proposed grant an ongoing part of the AVID system (available to the more than 4,800 schools implementing AVID). The project manual will be available online for free download.

B. Significance

Exceptional approach. The exceptional approach is the combination of two powerful components: (1) a collaborative vertical teaming of key leaders, curriculum/instruction specialists, and teachers from secondary schools, school districts and the local college in rural communities committed to working together to align college readiness practices across grades 6-14 to improve student outcomes; and (2) the AVID College Readiness System of academic and social supports for students and an extensive program of research-based and proven professional development, curriculum materials and resources. The AVID system gives the vertical alignment teams a common foundation upon which to build.

This Collaborative structure allows geographically isolated stakeholders to come together to address the issues specific to their community that hamper high school graduation and enrollment and persistence in college. The Collaborative can identify and explore solutions that leverage their limited resources and allow relational efficiencies to enhance student learning, access to rigorous classes and educational outcomes. The proposed project provides the resources and funds to allow the leaders, administrators and teachers to come together regularly over a period of years to focus on what it takes to create a strong collaborative. The project provides the resources for AVID experts to work with these teams to develop a replicable system for use by others. The Collaborative's choice of AVID gives them a common foundation for the hard work of creating alignment in student support systems.

For over 30 years, AVID has been dedicated to this simple formula: Raise the expectations of students and, with the AVID support system in place, they will rise to the challenge. AVID has grown from an elective program in secondary schools to a system for grades K-16. As experts in how to prepare students for college, AVID is committed to expanding its programs schoolwide at all sites so that all students benefit from *Advancement Via*

Individual Determination. AVID project team members have the skills and experience to apply a systems approach to the project based on what the organization has learned working with thousands of schools and students.

The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study. Project staff will document the specific tasks undertaken to implement the Collaborative approach to improving student outcomes in a manual that can be shared with other districts. The project will demonstrate how a group of rural school districts can utilize a multi-level Collaborative to leverage their limited resources for professional development; plan collaboratively to present a coherent message, academic rigor and support structures to students throughout middle school and high school and into college; develop communities of practice among teachers across school sites, districts and college campuses; make the college readiness pipeline more robust by increasing the likelihood that students from rural areas will enter college; reduce the likelihood that students will need extensive remedial education when they enter college; and increase the retention and persistence of students when they reach college.

Research confirms the need for and effectiveness of the vertical alignment approach in the education field. Two key problems disrupt student transitions from preschool through postsecondary education: a lack of cross-system alignment of expectations for college readiness, and insufficient collaboration on teacher preparation (McRobbie, 2004). The norm is institutional distance; expertise that can ensure that students get a college-prep level of rigor in their K-12 education is rarely systematically shared across institutions (Kirst & Venezia, 2001). Colleges and K-12 systems need to share data on student performance in the freshman year of college so that high schools can use that information to improve student preparation; students need the chance to take no-stakes diagnostic testing in middle school and high school to see where they need to focus their efforts for college entry without remediation (McRobbie, 2004).

The transition from high school to college is not the only one that needs to be strengthened; students frequently have a difficult time making the transition from middle school

to high school, and many either drop out shortly after they enter ninth grade or fall behind and fail to graduate on time (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). The transition into high school presents a larger, more competitive and impersonal environment than that encountered in middle school, and students need a range of activities to prepare them for the transition (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999). The most successful transition programs bring middle school and high school teachers, administrators and counselors together to learn about each other's programs and plan collaborative transition activities (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000).

The proposed project will move the field forward in several ways. First, the project will demonstrate collaborative approaches and structures for rural school districts and collaborating postsecondary institutions, including the processes and tools used to develop alignment; lessons learned in the project; how to start and maintain a collaborative; what problems occurred and how they were addressed; and a stepped implementation timeline. Second, the project will develop a manual to guide school districts and colleges in implementing this approach. The manual will be a practical tool integrating all aspects of the Vertical Systems Development. It will be prepared by AVID project staff working with the Partners and AVID's internal experts who continually develop exceptional training materials and curriculum resources. AVID staff members have significant experience integrating and synthesizing complex ideas and intricate processes into clear instructional manuals. This experience will support the development of an exceptionally useful, publicly available manual enabling others to replicate the vertical alignment approach. In addition, the Collaborative approaches and structures developed can be used to implement other learning support structures as well as AVID.

The proposed project will have a positive impact on student academic achievement and growth. The partners expect to achieve the following impacts on student achievement and growth by June 2017 (the end of the five year project):

- a 5% reduction in the number of students who do not advance from ninth to tenth grade;
- a 5% increase in the number of students who graduate with their high school class;
- a 10% increase in the number of high school students who enter a postsecondary institution;

- a 10% increase in the number of new high school graduates from the targeted schools entering SFSC who successfully complete all of their courses in their first semester;
- a 10% increase in the number of new high school graduates from the targeted schools entering SFSC who persist to a second semester of college

AVID has a track record of improving student outcomes such as high school graduation and college enrollment as stated in earlier sections and detailed in Appendices C and D. Research mentioned above and in Appendix D confirms positive impacts on student outcomes from aligning instructional practices and expectations. Therefore, the Vertical Alignment System developed in this project will support enhanced student achievement and outcomes, and will continue to build the capacity for improvement and excellence as the System is embedded in the feeder patterns and districts over time.

C. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

The management plan will achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget. When the grant is awarded, AVID Center will form a Steering Committee to provide oversight and direction to the project. The Steering Committee will meet twice a year and include the Project Director, AVID Florida State Director, AVID Director of Data and Evaluation, and key leaders from the Official Partner LEAs, SFSC and HEC. The objectives of project management are to (1) ensure consistent and complete compliance with all federal and organizational policies as they relate to the i3 project; (2) establish and maintain open communication among partners; (3) schedule, achieve, and monitor specific project milestones and objectives; (4) coordinate and facilitate project evaluation activities; (5) ensure that project information is disseminated appropriately; and (6) sustain all components of the project within AVID Center and the Partner districts and schools.

Procedures for Monitoring Project Activity Progress. The Project Director will create a project management document that will include policies and procedures, staff responsibilities, job descriptions and lines of authority, project forms, and reporting procedures and timelines to achieve the project management objectives above. The Project Director will conduct regular

project staff meetings and provide status reports to the AVID Center executive team.

AVID Center's policies and procedures will be followed to fill project-funded positions. The Project Director will require monthly time and effort reports from all full-time and part-time staff funded by the project and by matching funds, and will ensure that i3 grant funds are used to pay only those costs approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

Adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project. The proposed i3 project will be led by AVID Center, which will facilitate and guide the process to bring the school leaders together, engage in the right conversations, ensure open and consistent communications, and build relationships. The specific activities involved in addressing the project objectives, the staff responsible for each, milestones and timelines for accomplishing project tasks and tasks related to sustainability and scalability are presented below (a semester-by-semester plan is presented in Appendix J).

Objective 1: Develop a comprehensive vertical alignment system to accelerate the impact of AVID, increase student access to rigorous classes, and create a college-going school culture. This objective is accomplished by three vertical teams guided by AVID experts resulting in a manual documenting the processes and activities.

A Vertical Alignment Collaborative of leaders and key decision-makers includes school principals and administrators; district superintendents; curriculum/instruction specialists from districts and schools; AVID District Directors; and the college president and deans for instruction and dual enrollment. The Collaborative will come together twice during each semester to focus on common vision, core values, and strategies that drive a mission of college readiness for students across all feeder patterns and districts. This leadership team will visit each other's campuses, calibrate the rigor of their middle school and high school coursework, implement rigorous curriculum that meets state standards, and plan specific, cross-grade-level strategies to enhance student engagement.

A Vertical Team of Content Leaders across all feeder patterns and the college will meet twice a year (once a semester) to implement alignment decisions made by Collaborative leadership in their meetings and to support, develop and document vertical alignment activities and processes defined by vertical teams within feeder patterns. This team focuses on calibration of rigor, AVID WICOR strategies, college access and preparation best practices, shared resources and lesson plans, and student engagement across all feeder patterns and districts.

The milestones for the work of these two teams are (a) completion of a full draft of the comprehensive vertical alignment plan that incorporates the feeder pattern vertical implementation plans by the end of Year 3 of the project (December 2015); (b) completion of the final draft of the vertical alignment plan by the end of Year 4 of the project (December 2016); and (c) development and documentation of a manual that details the planning, strategies and processes of a rural collaborative approach to vertical alignment of college readiness practices from grades 6-14 (December 2017). Responsible AVID staff includes the Project Director, the Florida State Director, Director of Data and Evaluation, and Project Systems Coach.

Vertical Teams within Feeder Patterns is made up of teachers, school site leaders responsible for AVID implementation in middle schools and high schools and SFSC faculty. Teams meet at Summer Institute in Years 1-3 of the project to develop a vertically integrated plan for AVID implementation. This group then meets twice per semester for group coaching on implementing rigor in the curriculum, and to plan and share implementation activities and best practices. The milestone for this team's work is completion by each of the four participating feeder patterns of an initial vertical implementation plan (by August 2013). The team plans will then be updated annually throughout the term of the project. Responsible AVID staff includes the Florida State Director and Project Systems Coach.

Objective 2: Train and coach at least 60% of each secondary school's teachers in AVID methodologies and best practices. Activities under this objective include training an AVID District Director at each of the participating LEAs, school site teams attending Summer Institute in Years 1-3 (by August of each project year), and providing Path training in critical reading to

teachers within their feeder patterns (by June of each year 2-4). Milestones under this objective include (a) District Directors selected, with training completed by December 2014; (b) School site teams complete Summer Institute training (August 2013, 2014 and 2015); (c) School sites prepare their site implementation plan (by August 2013) and update it by August of each subsequent year; and (d) at least 20 middle school and high school teachers from each feeder pattern complete two-day Path training in AVID methodologies (June 2014, June 2015, and June 2016). Responsible AVID staff includes the Florida State Director, the Project Systems Coach, and AVID trainers.

Objective 3: Train and coach at least 60 SFSC faculty in AVID methodologies and best practices in Critical Reading and core content areas. Activities under this objective include site teams from each participating SFSC campus attending the Summer Institute in Years 1-3 (by August of each project year) and Path training in critical reading within their feeder patterns (by June of each year 2-4). Milestones under this objective include (a) Campus site teams complete Summer Institute training (August 2013, 2014 and 2015); (c) SFSC faculty work with school sites as they prepare their site implementation plan (by August 2013) and update it by August of each subsequent project year. Responsible AVID staff includes the Florida State Director, the Project Systems Coach, and AVID trainers.

Objective 4: Enroll at least 6.5% of each secondary school's students in an AVID Elective class. Activities under this objective include establishing a school site team, conducting orientations for teachers, staff and parents, and recruiting and enrolling students in the AVID Elective. The milestones for this objective are (a) schools implement their first AVID Elective by September 2013; (b) middle schools implement the AVID Elective in all grades by September 2014; (c) high schools implement the AVID Elective in all grades by September 2015; (d) schools submit data documenting enrollment to the AVID Data Collection system (annually in August, starting in 2014); and (e) publication of a site data report by the AVID Data Collection System (in December of each year, starting in 2014). Responsible staff members include the AVID Florida State Director, the AVID Director of Data and Evaluation, the Project Systems

Coach the Project data collection assistant, and Partner school and district staff.

Objective 5: Increase the number of students who apply to, are accepted and enroll in SFSC or another postsecondary institution by 10%. Activities under this objective include recruiting students to participate in the AVID Elective and allowing students to take the ACT PLAN and Explore tests to help them prepare to take college entry exams. Milestones under this objective include enrollment of students from the targeted schools in a two or four year college degree program starting in Fall 2016. Responsible staff members include the AVID Florida State Director, the Project Systems Coach, and SFSC and LEA academic leaders and faculty.

Qualifications of the project director and key project personnel. AVID Center has selected Ms. Denise Wren, Director of Leadership Development to serve as the Project Director. Ms. Wren holds a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and has over twenty years of administrative experience in a middle school, high school or district setting, where she led the implementation of the AVID system. She has served as a national trainer for AVID Leadership for College Readiness workshops for three years. Ms. Wren has extensive project management and financial oversight experience. As an Assistant Superintendent of High Schools, she managed comprehensive school reform programs in eleven high schools, demonstrated significant improvements in student outcomes, and managed a budget of \$26 million, including federal grants. As Chief Operations Officer of the Wichita USD 259, she supervised over 500 employees and successfully managed the implementation of a \$370 million bond project.

Ms. Catherine Simmons, AVID Florida State Director, will oversee implementation of AVID at the secondary schools and professional development for educators in all feeder patterns. Ms. Simmons spent nine years in education before joining the AVID Center in 2007. As Florida State Director, Ms. Simmons has increased the number of AVID schools from 94 to 386, and formed the first AVID Principals Leadership Council. She is currently leading a writing team to develop end-of-course exams for the AVID Elective in grades 6-12. Ms. Simmons manages the Florida Partnership Grant with the College Board, collaborates with the Florida Department of Education on a GEAR UP grant supporting AVID in eight school districts, and supervises a team

of five AVID staff. Ms. Simmons holds a Master's degree in School Counseling.

Dr. Dennis Johnston, AVID Director of Data and Evaluation will oversee the research and evaluation component of the grant and will coordinate grant operations with the external evaluators, MDRC. Dr. Johnson holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology. Prior to joining AVID, he held the position of Director of Assessment, Accountability and Research at the San Diego County Office of Education.

The AVID Project Systems Coach will be hired at the start of the project. The successful candidate will have at least five years of teaching and/or administrative experience, demonstrated success in developing and supervising programs and curriculum, and a strong background in professional development. The Coach will plan and lead collaborative alignment activities and meetings, and will provide technical assistance and coaching to new school sites.

The Project Grant & Data Administrator will have experience in data collection, entry and management, and in tracking and reporting expenditures on federal grants.

Mr. Rob Gira, AVID Executive Vice President, will provide the executive oversight and supervision for the project. Mr. Gira is responsible for overseeing AVID Center's National Programs, including curriculum, professional learning, leadership development, data and research, marketing and communications, e-learning, and quality control.

Mr. Granger Ward, AVID Executive Vice President, oversees division offices providing direct services to AVID school districts and secondary sites, AVID Elementary, AVID for Higher Education, AVID National Demonstration Schools, and the Development Department. Mr. Ward will ensure that the project is integrated into ongoing AVID Center operations.

To assure success for the i3 project, the Official and Other Partners have appointed key leaders and decision-makers as project champions. Project job descriptions and staff and partner champion resumes are presented in Appendix F.

D. Quality of Project Evaluation

MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan social and education policy research and evaluation organization, will conduct an independent evaluation of the proposed project. Over more than 35

years, MDRC has developed a reputation as an authoritative source of information on what works and doesn't work in education and social policy. MDRC's education research over the past 15 years has been at the forefront in testing cutting-edge ideas in the areas of high school reform and community college student support programs, including experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of interventions that support a college-bound trajectory, promote college access and success, and reduce the need for remediation in college.

This evaluation has three principal goals: (1) to describe the Vertical Alignment Collaborative's operations to ascertain with what level of fidelity the project model is being implemented and to identify conditions that facilitate or constrain successful implementation; (2) to provide formative feedback to the Collaborative; and (3) to generate preliminary evidence about the project's effect on student outcomes (e.g., high school graduation and academic performance). Exhibit A (see page 7) summarizes the planned project activities along with the hypothesized interim and long term outcomes.

The methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. To examine the activities and outcomes listed above, MDRC will employ two strands of research activities in its evaluation – one that focuses on student outcomes and one that focuses on project implementation.

Analysis of Student Outcomes. The evaluation's analysis of student outcomes will answer the following research questions: (1) Does the project offer promise in terms of strengthening students' academic performance during high school and their likelihood of staying on track and graduating from high school? (2) Does the project offer promise in strengthening the likelihood that, during high school, students enroll and succeed in more advanced courses – honors, Advanced Placement, and dual enrollment? (3) At what rates do students participating in AVID enroll in post-secondary institutions? The evaluation will use two analytical methods to explore the first two questions. The primary analysis will use a pre-post method to measure the changes over time at the participating schools in students' participation and success in dual

enrollment courses and in students' academic performance, school persistence, and graduation. A secondary 'dosage' analysis will assess whether spending more time in schools implementing AVID is associated with improved outcomes. In addition, although it will not be possible to collect college entrance data on students prior to AVID implementation, the evaluation will include descriptive information about AVID students' entrance into postsecondary institutions.

Primary 'Pre-Post' Analysis. The evaluation's primary analysis will measure changes over time by comparing cohorts of students in the project high schools after AVID has been implemented for three years ('post-AVID') to cohorts of students in the same schools before AVID was implemented ('pre-AVID'). By the third year of AVID implementation (2015-2016), most students in the participating high schools will have experienced three years of AVID implementation at the middle and/or high school they attended. Table 1 describes the roll-out of AVID by grade level in the middle and high school feeder patterns.

Table 1. AVID Implementation Years by Grade							
	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
<i>2013-2014</i>		X	X	X	X		
<i>2014-2015</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<i>2015-2016</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

By the end of 2015-16, students in grades 9-12 will have experienced three years of AVID implementation. Therefore, 'post-AVID' measures in the 'pre-post' analysis will be student outcomes measured during the 2015-16 school year. Baseline measures for the year prior to any AVID implementation, 2012-13, will be used to measure the 'pre-AVID' comparison outcomes, or if data are available, the 'pre-AVID' comparison outcomes will be averaged over the three school years prior to implementation (2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13).

This analysis will include student-level district records data and use a two-level hierarchical model (with students nested in schools and school fixed effects). Table 2 includes the outcome measures to be explored by grade.

Table 2: Outcomes to be Measured by Grade Level	
Outcome Measure	Grade levels being measured
<i>Academic Achievement</i>	
Average high school credits earned	9, 10, 11, 12
Average GPA and/or percent meeting dual enrollment GPA standards	8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Percent of students enrolled in advanced coursework (AP, honors, dual enrollment); # of credits earned	8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Percent of students earning college credit	
<i>High School Persistence and Graduation</i>	
High school retention rate	Retention: 9-12
Graduation rate	Graduation: 12

To help control for possible confounding due to comparing different sets of students at two different time points, school- and student-level baseline characteristics will be included in the model. In addition to analyzing student outcomes for the whole sample and by grade, the evaluation will include a subgroup analysis focusing only on students with characteristics similar to those usually targeted for the AVID elective. This subgroup analysis will compare AVID-like students before and after the program is implemented.

Secondary 'Dosage' Analysis. A secondary analysis will explore the association between student outcomes and AVID program dosage. For example, by including cohorts of 9th grade students from 2012-13 (no AVID), 2013-14 (one year of AVID), 2014-15 (two years of AVID) and 2015-16 (three years of AVID) in one analysis, the evaluation will assess whether spending more time in schools implementing AVID or getting a larger dose of AVID is associated with improved outcomes. This analysis will also use a two-level hierarchical model (with students nested in schools) that will include school- and student-level baseline characteristics to control for measured differences over time and over different cohorts of students. Finally, the

evaluation will collect information about AVID participants' college enrollment. Using data from either AVID Center or the National Student Clearinghouse, this analysis will compare AVID students' college enrollment (in fall 2016) to the state-wide percentages.

All evaluation analyses are considered descriptive because the associations between the AVID program and improvements in the outcomes are confounded by unmeasured changes over time and unmeasured differences in the cohorts of students. Moreover, with only 4 high schools, the power to detect small statistically significant differences will be very limited. However, the analysis can offer insight into the promise of the AVID program in a small set of rural schools.

To reduce concerns about multiple hypotheses producing statistically significant impacts by chance, MDRC has identified a primary analysis above and will follow IES guidelines (NCEE 2008-4081) by pre-specifying a small number of primary outcomes, including, for example, one measure or a composite measure from each of the categories in Table 2. A second safeguard is to either use composite statistical tests across the categories to "qualify" or call into question multiple hypotheses tests that are statistically significant individually but that may be, due to chance, in the context of mixed results or to adjust p-values upwards to account for the multiple hypothesis tests.

The evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate further development, replication, or testing in other settings. This evaluation's implementation research will investigate what it takes to develop and sustain the Vertical Alignment Collaborative described above, examine the fidelity of implementation to the project design, document the experiences of both student and staff participants, and describe the background and context in which the project was implemented. This strand of the evaluation will generate formative feedback for AVID Center during the course of the study and provide a clear picture of the implementation process and resources needed for further development and/or future replication. The implementation research findings will also be used to help interpret the results of the student outcomes analysis.

To address the project's two main strategies related to vertical collaboration and AVID

implementation, this component of the evaluation will examine a series of implementation research questions focused on the activities listed in Exhibit A: (1) How is the Collaborative's plan for vertical alignment developed, carried out and documented? (2) How often do Collaborative team members (including project leaders, content teams and feeder teams) have meetings or participate in professional development activities focused on vertical alignment? (3) To what extent are the components of AVID, including the AVID Elective and instructional methodologies implemented in project schools? (4) What AVID training do school site teams receive? (5) What factors enable or hinder the Collaborative's vertical planning activities and the implementation of AVID? To answer these questions, researchers will use a combination of traditional qualitative research methods. Data will be collected through the following activities:

- *AVID Summer Institute Site Visits:* Researchers will attend one or two AVID Summer Institutes with the project site teams. Attending these sessions will provide researchers with opportunities to observe and learn about site/vertical meetings and planning sessions and AVID training. In addition, researchers will conduct interviews with key project participants, including site team members from participating middle schools, high schools, and colleges.
- *Central Florida Site Visits:* Researchers will also conduct two three-day site visits in Central Florida to learn about the Collaborative's vertical planning activities, the implementation of AVID at local schools, and local conditions that support or inhibit the project's success. Researchers will conduct interviews and focus groups with key informants in participating districts and schools, such as the school principal, middle and high school teachers and students, Dual Enrollment coordinators at SFSC campuses, and local project leads.
- *Regular phone check-ins and interviews:* Researchers will conduct quarterly phone check-ins with project leads to receive project updates and learn about vertical planning/alignment progress. During project years that do not include site visits, researchers will also conduct phone interviews with selected project participants to learn about vertical planning activities, dual enrollment, and AVID implementation.
- *School Surveys.* 12th grade AVID Students in participating schools will be surveyed to

provide additional information about project implementation. Baseline staff and student surveys will be conducted in spring 2013 and fall 2013, respectively, before participants are exposed to the project, with multiple follow-up surveys conducted during the five years of the project. Student surveys will focus on students' attitudes (commitment to learning, efficacy), experiences with AVID and other in-school supports, and college aspirations. Staff surveys will address topics such as teacher knowledge about AVID strategies, professional development opportunities, and vertical planning with other schools and SFSC.

Deliverables and Proposed Resources

MDRC will provide formative feedback documents and conduct video conferences with AVID Center to assist in its assessment and planning during the course of the project. In 2014, MDRC will produce a feedback memo documenting early implementation findings. In 2015, MDRC will produce a set of tables outlining the results from a preliminary pre-post analysis, which will explore student outcomes after the schools' first year of AVID implementation (2013-2014). MDRC will also produce a final report that includes the results from both the implementation study and the descriptive analysis of student outcomes. In order to more broadly disseminate what is learned from the evaluation, this report will be made available to the public via MDRC's website.

The proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively. AVID Center has discussed with MDRC, its independent evaluation partner, the costs of conducting research that analyzes student outcomes and investigates program implementation, and expects to allocate \$600,000 for the evaluation. Based on MDRC's experiences conducting evaluations of projects of similar scale, this amount is seen as appropriate for the scope of work proposed.

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