AIMS/AIS American Indian AVID

AIMS’ Mission – “We are a school emphasizing an American Indian Cultural perspective to provide a high quality education for all.”

The AIS program exists to create a greater understanding and knowledge of the history and culture of the indigenous peoples of America.

AVID’s mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society.

Together AIMS, AIS, and AVID are working to help all American Indian students find success in school and be ready for success in college or any career they might choose.

**Background:**

AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination), a college preparatory system serving mostly first generation college students in nearly 4,500 schools in 45 states seems to not reach American Indian students. This shows that there is an academic culture gap and that the traditional AVID curriculum needs to grow to create culturally responsive material to reach the greater American Indian student population. This shift in AVID culture is now happening at the American Indian Magnet School in St. Paul. If the goal of AVID is to shrink the achievement gap it must be understood that the biggest achievement gap faces American Indian students and that there needs to be AVID opportunities for those American Indian students who need the support most of all.

**Purpose:**

Founded in 1980, AVID accelerates students who fall in the academic middle and creates a school-wide system of college readiness. Through the American Indian Studies (AIS) program, the American Indian Magnet School has developed the beginnings of a culturally responsive American Indian specific AVID class with the flexibility to address achievement and other issues that affect the academic success of American Indian students in SPPS.

AVID’s mission is to close the achievement gap for all, however many of our American Indian students cannot qualify for AVID classes due to obstacles like attendance issues or GPA. We have found that these students are the most in need of AVID and so we have designed our application process to be more culturally specific, looking at the whole child rather than the numbers.

AVID is about holding all students to high expectations and providing support for them to succeed in rigorous courses. American Indian students continue to be under represented in rigorous courses and in higher education. The American Indian Studies Program and the American Indian Magnet School are committed to increasing the college readiness and attendance rates for these students. As a key part of SPPS equity efforts, AIMS will continue to refine the program to reach out to more American Indian students as well as American Indian teachers whom they can look up to as role models.

The goal of this AIS/AIMS initiative will raise high school graduation and college entrance rates for American Indian Students. There will be alignment with the SPPS American Indian Education Program, to align this initiative with Native authored best practices for native students. This partnership with Indian Education can provide researched-based literature, studies, theories, practice, methodologies and data to our students.

The collaboration is what is really creating success for our students and that is the purpose of our culturally specific class. This community-based structure provides opportunities for American Indian students to succeed at all levels. This collaboration also provides professional guest speakers, including key tribal leaders devoting time to the raising achievement of American Indian students.

**Understandings:**

Standardized test scores reveal a significant achievement gap in Saint Paul, especially for American Indian students. AIMS believe that we have an imperative to eliminate the achievement gap in Saint Paul and help all students reach their full potential. Through AVID strategies and rigor, including tutoring and community school effort, AIMS and AIS can seek to provide American Indian students with the resources, support and environment they need to excel in public school and in life.

This new AVID class is trying to close the achievement gap by providing a place that allows a positive sense of identity to emerge, which will actually allow for more learning to take place. AIS/AIMS are using AVID strategies that align with culturally sensitive educational approaches on a personal level to bring forth more comprehension and understanding for our students, many of which, need more support to get to their goals in the future. By providing more opportunities for our students we are actually creating more leaders.

**Strategies:**

**Writing:**

* Students write using AVID strategies including, “quick writes”, taking notes the Cornell Way, writing essay drafts, writing reflection pieces and culturally appropriate lesson plans for SPPS. Students write speeches and put together comprehensive plans for projects. Students use their strengths to practice these writing skills and use Tutorials to practice writing and being engaged with other classes.

**Inquiry:**

* Students review cultural lesson plans from SPPS schools and ask higher-level questions of the SPPS district on how and why SPPS employees use cultural artifacts and lesson plans. By inquiring about the SPPS lesson plans students become fully engaged with learning and gain real leadership experience.
* Students learn skilled questioning skills to engage in learning and to be prepared for speeches and leadership opportunities, including community activities.
* Students use Socratic seminar to engage in learning, which provides an arena to have conversations rather than debates, like traditional native council settings.
* Students have opportunities to listen to American Indian leaders to learn about other Native people and successes.
* Students have opportunities to visit colleges and universities through a Native perspective, showing Native-specific resources for incoming college students.

**Collaboration:**

* AIS/AIMS AVID is successful because of community outreach and community collaboration. Traditional AVID only collaborates within the school culture but AIMS/AIS extends that reach to include extended family, the greater community, elders, and other American Indian professionals that have an invested interest in the success of American Indian youth. On a regular basis you will see family and community members in the class to assist with group projects and academics.

**Organization:**

* All students will use binders, planners, and learn to take engaging notes.

**Reading:**

* With the flexibility we can provide with our class, we can use tutorials as a chance for our lower performing students to work with a tutor or teacher, one on one, to practice reading skills and strategies. This is important because some of our American Indian students are developing readers and writers and cannot complete full TRF forms independently.

**Short-term Outcomes:**

* To recruit American Indian students that do not fit the “typical” AVID characteristics and give academic success to those students.
* The site will utilize data to assess and improve teaching methods for all classes by infusing Native culture into curriculum.
* To form an American Indian AVID middle school site team, including community members, cultural specialists, family members, community elders and will work collaboratively to implement AVID methodologies.
* Implement culturally specific organizational tools and strategies to promote learning and time management.
* Inquiry and collaboration are used as a basis for instruction in the AIS/AVID classroom.
* Students will use their own culture and knowledge to develop individual determination.
* Students will develop culturally specific Tutorials and reflect on work.
* Students will develop higher-level questions and deeper thinking skills.

**Long-term Outcomes:**

* To prepare all American Indian students for college and career readiness by providing access to AIS/AVID strategies.
* Transformation of SPPS school cultures through fidelity to the 11 AVID essentials, professional learning and use of data, tied to the AIS/AVID model.
* To incorporate culture and language into AVID curriculum, ready to be accessed by anyone.
* To use cultural strengths to raise attendance rates for American Indian Students
* To raise graduation rates for American Indian students in SPPS
* To create an American Indian Studies/AVID path to college that starts at elementary and goes through high school and beyond.
* To collect data and use the data to help American Indian students succeed in all academics including high school and college.