
AVID CERTIFIED EDUCATORS --- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The AVID Certified Educator (ACE) experience is a 10-month professional development opportunity designed for educators across the United States. The experience ran from July through April and was structured to provide a mix of face-to-face and virtual collaborative learning. The initial phase of the program involved a two-day face-to-face session, followed by four virtual sessions throughout the year to ensure continuous support and development.

A select group of 50 teachers from across the country participated in the program, organized into smaller groups based on grade level (elementary, middle, and high school). The ACE experience was piloted with these educators, giving them the opportunity to explore and implement best practices for effective teaching strategies.

The core focus of the program is on five key Foundations of Instruction (FOIs):

- **Positive Relationships:** Educators build a collaborative community that fosters connection, cooperation, and respect so each individual feels included, accepted, and integral to the collective success.
- **Appropriate Environment:** Educators create a physical, philosophical, and digital space that is inclusive, empowering, and accelerates academic inquiry and success.
- **Diagnostic Teaching:** Educators consider and monitor student engagement, understanding, and outcomes before, during, and after lesson design and delivery and adapt lesson content and instruction in real time to accelerate and support students in achieving the desired learning outcomes.
- **Clear Learning Objectives:** Educators create rigorous, student-centered, skill and content-based learning objectives that students and teachers use to direct, monitor, and reflect on progress toward mastery.
- **Strategic Lesson Planning:** Educators align lesson design with targeted learning outcomes and model gradual release of responsibility and a blended approach as they purposefully integrate WICOR, scaffolds, and instructional routines into learning tasks and assessments to engage all students in content and support each of them in achieving success.

The ACE experience aims to equip educators with the tools, strategies, and support needed to enhance student success and create an environment where students are actively engaged and challenged.

Throughout the AVID Certified Educator (ACE) experience, participants were encouraged to reflect on their growth and application of the Foundations of Instruction (FOIs) using various forms of evidence. Reflection was an ongoing process, requiring active documentation and analysis of personal development.

Evidence Collection Components:

- **One-Pager Reflection:** At the end of the application phase, participants were tasked with creating a one-pager that included a 3–5 paragraph reflection on their growth within a specific FOI component, as measured by the Foundations of Instruction Scoring Rubric. This focused on the changes and improvements from the beginning to the end of the phase.
- **Visual Evidence:** Participants collected 3–5 images to showcase their practical application of AVID strategies in the classroom, providing a visual representation of their efforts and outcomes.
- **Student Impact:** The collection of 2 student quotes was essential in demonstrating the tangible effects of AVID strategies on students, illustrating how the approach positively influenced learning and engagement.
- **Lesson/Unit Plans:** Participants included 2 lesson or unit plans, which highlighted how they applied specific AVID strategies. These plans provided a structured framework for assessing how AVID methodologies were integrated into daily instruction.
- **Additional Artifacts:** To further support their reflection, participants gathered 2 additional artifacts (such as student work, assessments, or classroom activities) that captured their application of the program's strategies.
- **Problem of Practice:** Each participant identified a "problem of practice" they wanted to address and discuss during the collaborative sessions in the final phase of the program, ensuring that their learning was grounded in real-world challenges.
- **Final Capstone:** The final project included a demonstration of the ACE Cohort Performance Objectives, a summative reflection of growth in all areas, and professional goal setting.

Ongoing Reflection:

- **Bi-Weekly Journal Reflections:** Throughout the program, participants kept bi-weekly journals to document their thoughts, challenges, and insights. These journal entries allowed for personal reflection on their learning and progress over time.
- **Summary of Growth:** At the conclusion of the program, participants summarized their growth based on the rubric criteria, highlighting specific areas of strength and improvement.
- **Learning Logs:** Participants maintained learning logs as a tool for tracking new concepts, strategies, and experiences, facilitating ongoing self-assessment and growth.
- **[Foundations of Instruction Rubric](#)**

Collaborative Discussions: Additionally, participants were required to complete one discussion post for each resource explored during the Application Phase, fostering collaborative learning and the sharing of ideas among peers.

These varied forms of reflection allowed educators to continuously engage with the program's content, apply it in meaningful ways, and assess their growth in real time.

NEW LEARNINGS

Clear Learning Objectives-

Prior to this school year and growth throughout the ACE Cohort, one teacher's format of Learning Objectives was inconsistent and the day's agenda was occasionally shared verbally. As a result of the ACE Cohort, a more intentional routine has been integrated into the class. To begin the academic/learning portion of class, the class reads the day's Learning Objective. It is formatted to include the level of thinking and a relevant product. The Learning Objective slide is presented and read together using Drop-In Read. In grades K-1, many of the student-read words reinforce common high-frequency words while also including some of the content vocabulary words. In grades 2-5, student-read words include thinking verbs and content vocabulary. The Learning Objective is displayed throughout the lesson unless content is being presented through the screen. Throughout the learning, the Learning Objective is reviewed as necessary. At the closure of class, the Learning Objective is re-read for self-monitoring and Diagnostic Teaching through checks for understanding via Exit Tickets and/or signal check-ins. The Daily Overview provided below the Learning Objective is the learning pathway for this class. It reflects the Gradual Release of Responsibility and an aligned lesson design. It is a way to connect the learning process with the learning objective.

Appropriate Learning Environment- integrating this AVID FOI with the Catalyst Approach

Foundational Skills for creating instructional routines has really improved the ACE educator classrooms. Creating calm, routine, visual to-do lists for students allows both the teacher and students to get ready to learn. As the students prepare themselves for learning, the teacher is able to meet the needs of the classroom and individual students before beginning instruction with the whole group. This seemingly small change in opening routine allows the students to begin the lesson with full engagement.

The Catalyst Approach is another district sponsored initiative that helps teachers maximize their communication skills to preserve relationships while maximizing learning in the classroom. Adults reserve their oral language for relationships and curriculum, while utilizing non-verbal communication for management.

The Bridges Math curriculum promotes discourse, draws out student thinking, and includes embedded assessments through teacher noticing and purposeful questioning. These math lessons were expanded using the FOI rubric, incorporating additional elements. Clear learning objectives, checks for understanding,

collaborative structures, and gradual release of responsibility were among the features added based on the FOI self-assessment rubric.

The **AVID FOI of Instructional Design** and rubric provides a strong foundation for teachers to design their daily and unit instruction plans to systematically incorporate the best practices for all students. As experienced educators, this rubric provided opportunity to reflect on current practices and make small adjustments for alignment. The Instructional Design is something that could be used by all new teachers in planning for their units and lessons.

STUDENT IMPACT

Through the AVID Certified Educator training, instructional practices have strengthened and in turn increased student engagement, deeper critical thinking, and improved collaboration. By incorporating more intentional AVID strategies and aligning teaching strategies with the FOI rubric, students have become more independent learners, demonstrating stronger organization, inquiry, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, the Gradual Release of Responsibility model has helped them take more ownership of their learning, leading to greater confidence and academic success. The BHM ACE Educators have noticed these changes through student quotes, data collection and observations in the classroom.

Student quotes:

“It’s easier to do the project when I can just check off each part” -BCMS Student

“I usually know what Mrs. Schahn wants us to get out of the lesson when I walk out the door. She talks about it at the beginning of class.” -BCMS Student

“My favorite way to show what I’ve learned is a brain dump. I can write EVERYTHING I know about a topic...even random facts!” -Lexi, 5th Grade Student

“ She always encourages us to engage in our classroom discussions and to talk over certain points with our classmates sitting next to us.” -BHS student

“We do a lot of group work activities in and outside the classroom. As well as moving the seating chart throughout the course to allow us to engage with our fellow classmates.” -BHS student

“[I appreciate] the list of things that she has on the board for us to do before class starts. I like how we have a few minutes at the start to ourselves to gather what we need.” - BHS student

“The classroom has plenty of visually pleasing posters spread around the room with some of our core principles that we use throughout the course.”- BHS

“She allows us to research our own topics for certain activities.” - BHS student

“I always know that when I enter Mrs. Mens’ class, she is going to see me and she is probably going to ask me how I am at the very least. I can’t really hide in there.” - BHS Student

“Being in her (Mrs. Koltes) class feels fun, and like I said before, since we get to connect and build connections with

the other students, you get to feel more comfortable and excited for class”. -8th grade student.

“ Students are highly engaged in the activity. Great discussions!”- BHS administrator observation

“Mrs. Mens always tells us to look over the rubric. It helps. You can tell the difference between students who read the rubric and those that didn’t....” - BHS Student

Data Collection

A random sample of 3rd Grade students were asked questions about Learning Objectives during class in October 2024. The same students were asked the same questions again in February.

(FOI: Clear Learning Objectives)

- Is it helpful/valuable for your learning? *Percentage of “Yes” Responses*
 - October: 70%
 - February: 80%

Fourth and fifth grade students anonymously self-evaluated the statement: *Making mistakes helps me learn and grow.* (FOI: Appropriate Environment, Student Agency)

- In October, 85% of students responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”
- In February, 90% responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”.

Observations

- Students appear to be more confident in class
- Students appreciate the consistent routines set in place
- Students are more willing to engage in collaborative activities
- Students are more engaged at the start of class and ready to jump in

NEXT STEPS

The BHM ACE Educators are committed to the following next steps:

- Revisiting the Foundations of Instruction (FOI) rubric throughout the year will provide ongoing opportunities to reflect on and refine teaching practices. Regular reflection helps reinforce effective strategies, identify areas for growth, and ensure alignment with instructional goals.
- As part of the capstone, we are creating three SMART goals based on the FOI performance objective that we will focus on over the next school year, continuing to apply our learning.
- Serve as AVID leaders within our PLCs by focusing on one FOI at a time, so it’s not as overwhelming.
- Collaborating with our PLCs to identify and implement additional AVID strategies tailored to our specific content areas
- Ensuring consistency in Foundations of Instruction and AVID strategies across the district from kindergarten through 12th grade.
- Possibility to lead a professional development session at our district day in the fall of 2025.

