

Overview

Twelve Bridges Middle School is located in the growing community of Lincoln at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The city's population is currently 47,674 people (2017). The Western Placer Unified School district is the largest employer in the area and the school system is an integral part of the community and its activities.

Twelve Bridges Middle School (TBMS) is one of two middle schools in Western Placer Unified School District, serving 802 sixth through eighth grade students. TBMS, which opened in the Fall of 2006, serves major suburban developments as well as rural areas. Our student body and families are rich in diversity, representing both farming and non-farming families: 1.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native; 2.4% Asian; 0.4% Pacific Islander; 3.3% Filipino; 15.6% Hispanic; 2.7% African American; 65.1% Caucasian; and 3.0% Multiple Races. Nineteen percent (19%) of the students at Twelve Bridges Middle School are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged.

We view the middle school experience as a bridge between a more sheltered elementary program and the more independent high school years and it is a time of transition for students and families. Students at Twelve Bridges have the support of their grade-level team, teachers, and administrative staff. Students explore a more challenging academic environment, while at the same time, experience rapid personal, physical and emotional growth. We are committed to challenging students academically in a safe environment, while providing strong supports. In addition, we pride ourselves on being available to families with concerns, questions or needs during this transitional phase of life. The school's mission statement reflects high expectations and the belief that all students can and will learn.

Twelve Bridges Middle School is committed to providing a rigorous and engaging learning environment. We have committed to engaging teaching practices that emphasize cooperative learning, through collaboration and discourse. Teachers are committed to ongoing professional development, collaboration, positive relationships with families, and high expectations for students.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: AVID

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2-4 years

Target Area(s): Minority, rural, low-income and other students without a college-going tradition in their families. AVID is for all students, but it targets those in the academic middle.

Target Population(s): AVID targets students in the academic middle, (B, C, and even D students) who have the desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard. These are students who are capable of completing rigorous curriculum but are falling short of their potential. Typically, they will be the first in their families to attend college, and many are from low-income or minority families. AVID insures these students are placed in challenging courses and puts them on the college track: acceleration instead of remediation.

Strategies used: The AVID curriculum, based on rigorous standards, was developed by middle and senior high school teachers in collaboration with college professors. It is driven by the WICOR method, which infuses classroom lessons with writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading. The AVID curriculum is used in AVID elective classes, and in content-area classes in AVID Schoolwide schools. Twelve Bridges Middle School implements AVID Schoolwide.

Description

In the spring of 2015, Western Placer Unified School District committed to college and career readiness for all by developing a LCAP goal specific to that charge: “All students will graduate from high school college and career ready,” (WPUSD, LCAP Goal #3). In support of this goal, the district made a significant financial commitment to expand its AVID program. With the district’s financial support, we were able to move forward with our dream of developing an AVID program at Twelve Bridges Middle School.

In the fall of 2015, with the implementation of the AVID elective class, Twelve Bridges Middle School officially became affiliated with AVID. As we began shifting to meet the expectations of Common Core standards and college and career readiness, it was obvious that we were unprepared for the level of instructional rigor and student engagement needed to ensure student success for all students. While our overall performance on statewide standardized tests was consistently above the state average, there were some student populations (i.e. - socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities) having less academic success.

We realized it was going to take more than an AVID elective class for all of our students to find the academic success they needed to be truly college and career ready.

Teaching practices and academic expectations, school-wide, needed to evolve. As a result, we committed to being an AVID Schoolwide school, implementing AVID for all students in all classes.

This decision, and our subsequent work, has been instrumental in our achievement gains.

Implementation and Monitoring

The vision and mission of Twelve Bridges Middle School are as follows:

Vision:

The staff at Twelve Bridges Middle School, in cooperation with the students, parents, and community, will provide students with a safe and supportive learning environment in which to foster a culture of academic excellence and discipline in addition to life-long learning. Our goal is for our students to not only become responsible and well-rounded individuals, but also to become better citizens.

Mission:

To create a respectful, success-oriented, cooperative community that challenges all students to develop a curiosity for learning and to pursue academic excellence.

AVID aligns well with our vision and mission of challenging all students academically. The AVID elective classes provide daily acceleration and support for students who might otherwise struggle in rigorous content-area classes, and the implementation of AVID Schoolwide guarantees all students an engaging, collaborative learning environment throughout their school day.

As mentioned before, our journey began in 2015-2016 with the implementation of the AVID elective. When we saw the burgeoning academic successes in our AVID elective students, we began to realize the impact the program could have on a larger scale. So, we spent 2016-2017 pursuing as much AVID-related professional development as possible; teachers attended AVID Summer Institute, AVID Pathway trainings, and regional AVID trainings (with CapMetro AVID based out of Sacramento Office of Education). AVID-trained teachers shared AVID strategies at staff meetings. We began to see evidence of WICOR in classes other than the AVID elective, but the evidence showed inconsistencies from classroom to classroom.

At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, administration at Twelve Bridges Middle School made a decision to make classroom walkthroughs a priority. A change in philosophy was in order and we had to make a decision with regard to focus and direction. The data gathered from numerous walkthroughs, along with support and training from our district office, led us to the conclusion that we needed to increase academic rigor and student engagement in all classrooms. Having this data solidified our commitment to AVID Schoolwide.

When collaboratively developing our classroom walkthrough form, teachers and administration both felt that evidence of AVID strategies in action was a concrete way to measure both academic rigor and student engagement. AVID strategies literally check all the boxes for us! In the past two years, the data collected from our classroom walkthroughs indicates an increase in the use of AVID strategies and, thus, an increase in rigor and cooperative learning strategies in the classroom.

Results and Outcomes

The commitment to students, though always talked about, was emphasized by the number of staff members requesting to go to AVID training. 65% of our core teaching staff have received formal AVID training. Every teacher (100% of our core teaching staff) has received training through the school practice of modeling/teaching cooperative learning strategies at staff meetings. The focus of Twelve Bridges Middle School is student engagement and an academically rigorous learning environment through the use of cooperative learning strategies and we are in the practice of modeling those strategies for each other.

The overall academic growth in SBAC-tested subjects, Math and Language Arts, is reflected in an increased number of students meeting and exceeding grade level standards. SBAC test data over the last 4 years shows a pattern of “all school” growth in Math and Language Arts. From spring 2015 (prior to AVID implementation) to spring 2018 (three years into AVID implementation), there has been a 5% increase in all students meeting or exceeding the standards in Language Arts and a 6% increase in Math. The cohort of students who were 6th graders in 2015-2016 saw an 11% increase over three years in meeting or exceeding the standards in Language Arts. The same cohort of students saw a 14.5% increase over three years in meeting or exceeding the standards in Math.

Additionally, data shows that students who took the AVID elective outperformed their classmates. 80% of AVID elective students met or exceeded standards on the Language Arts SBAC in 2018, compared to 68% of all students. 68% of AVID elective students met or exceeded standards on the Math SBAC in 2018, compared to 59% of all students.

The data also shows a narrowing of the achievement gap in Math for socioeconomically disadvantaged students. In spring 2015 (prior to AVID implementation), 16% fewer socioeconomically disadvantaged students met or exceeded the state standards compared to all students. In spring 2018, that achievement gap decreased to 9%. The overall Placer County achievement gap in math remains high, at 20%.

AVID has expanded considerably in the district since the fall of 2015. While many schools are working toward a successful schoolwide model, we are the first to fully integrate AVID into our systems and practices. We feel our achievement data is compelling and illustrates the positive impact AVID has had on students' academic success.