

AVID EXCEL® INDEPENDENT RESEARCH FINDINGS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Accelerating Success for
Long-Term English Learners



Executive Summary

AVID Excel is a yearlong, one-period middle school elective class designed to support long-term English learners (ELs)—students who have not achieved English proficiency after 4 or more years in U.S. schools. This comprehensive, independent research study of over 2,100 AVID Excel students across six states demonstrates that AVID Excel delivers measurable results in accelerating English language acquisition and college readiness.

Key Research Findings

Accelerated English Language Proficiency

Students who participated in AVID Excel for both 7th and 8th grades demonstrated statistically significant improvements in English language proficiency:

- Scored 0.10 standard deviations higher on grade 8 English proficiency assessments
- 70% more likely to be reclassified** as English proficient by 9th grade

Pathway to Advanced Opportunities

AVID Excel students were more likely to enroll in the AVID Elective course in 9th grade than their non-AVID Excel peers (44% vs. 31%), creating a clear pathway to college preparatory coursework and continued academic support.

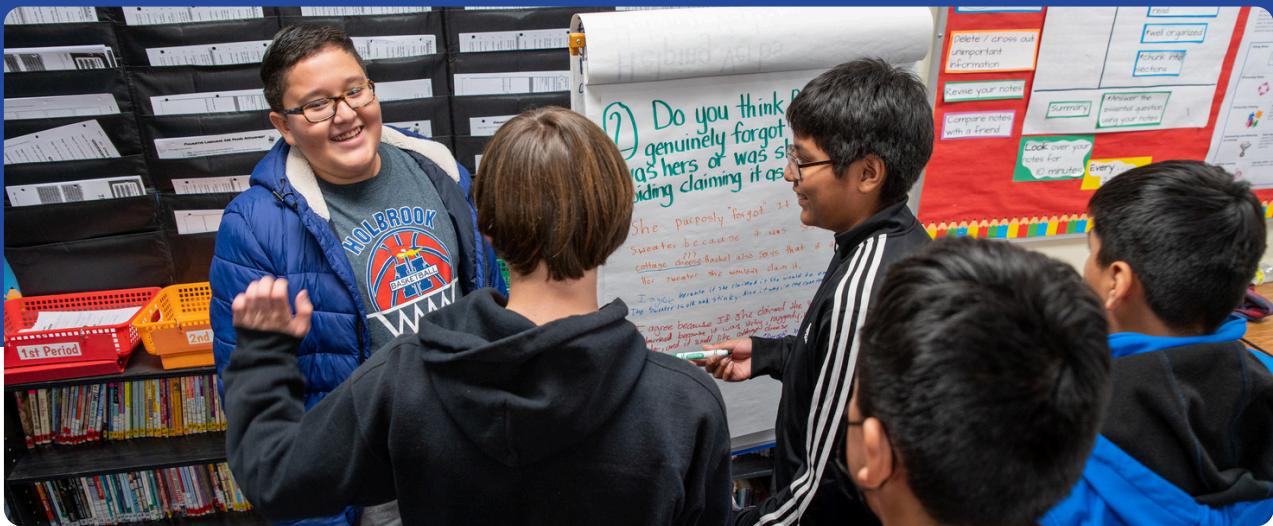
Transforming Teacher Practice

More than 80% of educators reported that Excel meaningfully increased their ability to:

- Accelerate English language acquisition.
- Engage and motivate ELs.
- Foster a sense of community among students.
- Prepare students for high school, college, and career success.

"Just practicing academic English is probably the biggest thing. ...My AVID Excel students speak in complete sentences more than my average students, even English-only students."
– AVID Elective Teacher

WHAT IS AVID EXCEL?



Overview

AVID Excel is a middle school program specifically designed to accelerate the language acquisition, literacy development, and college and career readiness of long-term English learners. Unlike generic EL support, Excel provides a structured, research-based approach that addresses the unique needs of students who have been in U.S. schools for multiple years but have not yet achieved English proficiency.

Program Components

Excel Elective Classes

Students progress through the program as a cohort in dedicated elective classes during grades 7 and 8 (with grade 6 available in some schools). The curriculum provides explicit instruction organized across six learning strands:

- **Reading:** Building comprehension and analytical skills
- **Writing:** Developing academic writing proficiency
- **Oral Language:** Practicing academic discourse
- **Academic Vocabulary:** Mastering content-specific language
- **Study Skills:** Learning organizational and metacognitive strategies
- **Self-Determination and Leadership:** Building agency and college awareness

“By the midway through the year, kids were dying to be the one that would stand and deliver. Here are kids that don’t really like to speak, but you have created a safe environment and given them opportunities to practice with a partner before they share out loud. People are encouraging. No one is making fun. Now they can’t wait to share, and I can’t get them to stop talking.” – AVID Excel Teacher

WICOR® INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES



Excel integrates AVID's proven WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading) strategies to increase student engagement and develop the skills necessary for academic success. These strategies are embedded throughout instruction and supported by:

- Scholar Groups: peer learning and support structures
- Instructional Scaffolds: sentence frames, word banks, and graphic organizers
- Classroom Routines: focused note-taking, critical reading, and collaborative learning



COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



AVID provides ongoing professional development for Excel teachers and school leadership, including:

- AVID Excel Elective Level 1–3 Communities of Practice
- Academic Language and Literacy (ALL) training for core content teachers
- AVID Summer Institutes and ongoing workshops
- In-class coaching and observations



THE RESEARCH STUDY



Study Design

This independent evaluation, conducted by [RMC Research Corporation](#), employed a rigorous quasi-experimental design to assess the impact of AVID Excel on student outcomes.



STUDY SCOPE



- 58 schools across six states (California, Colorado, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wyoming)
- 2,112 AVID Excel students and 2,338 comparison students
- Four years of data (2021–22 through 2024–25 school years)
- Outcomes tracked from grade 7 through grade 10

The findings are clear: AVID Excel boosts English language proficiency and reclassification rates, though challenges remain in transitioning these students into other “courses of rigor.”



RIGOROUS METHODOLOGY



To ensure valid comparisons and account for preexisting differences between Excel and comparison students, the study employed:

- Inverse Probability of Treatment Weighting: a statistical technique to balance comparison groups
- Baseline Controls: accounting for pre-program differences in English proficiency, academic performance, and demographics
- Multiple Data Sources: combining student administrative data, educator surveys, and qualitative interviews



DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS



Student Outcomes in English Language Proficiency

The study found statistically significant, positive impacts on English language proficiency for students who participated in Excel for both 7th and 8th grades:

- Grade 8 proficiency scores were 0.10 standard deviations higher than comparison students ($p < 0.05$).
- Students participating in both years showed significantly higher scores than those participating for only 1 year as well as higher scores than those participating for all 3 years of middle school.



ENGLISH LEARNER RECLASSIFICATION



Excel demonstrated strong impacts on reclassification rates:

- Grade 8: More likely to be reclassified (14% vs. 12%, $p < 0.07$)
- Grade 9: Nearly twice as likely to be reclassified (22% vs. 13%, $p < 0.05$)



AVID ELECTIVE ENROLLMENT



Excel created a clear pathway to continued AVID support and college preparation:

- Grade 8: More likely to enroll in the AVID Elective (13% vs. 10%, $p < 0.05$)
- Grade 9: More likely to enroll in the AVID Elective (44% vs. 31%, $p < 0.007$)
- Grade 9: Less likely to enroll in Honors or AP courses (51% vs. 64% $p < 0.001$), partially driven by limits on elective courses in an academic year

Academic Achievement

While Excel's primary focus is language acquisition, the study examined academic test scores:

- State ELA and Math assessment scores showed no statistically significant differences.
- This aligns with the program's design, as Excel focuses on language acquisition skills that support future academic success, rather than test preparation.
- Improved English proficiency creates the foundation for long-term academic achievement.

Impact of Program Duration

The research revealed important findings about program participation length.

Two Years Yields Strongest Results

Students who participated in Excel for both 7th and 8th grades demonstrated:

- Significantly higher English proficiency scores than single-year participants
- Higher state ELA scores compared to students who only participated in 8th grade

94% of educators reported that AVID Excel

fostered a sense of community with long-term EL students.

Students Need Targeted Support

Students who participated for 3 consecutive years (grades 6–8) showed lower outcomes than 2-year participants, suggesting that these students required continued intensive support due to greater initial language needs. This finding underscores the importance of Excel's flexibility in serving students with varying levels of language proficiency.

Educator Outcomes and Professional Growth

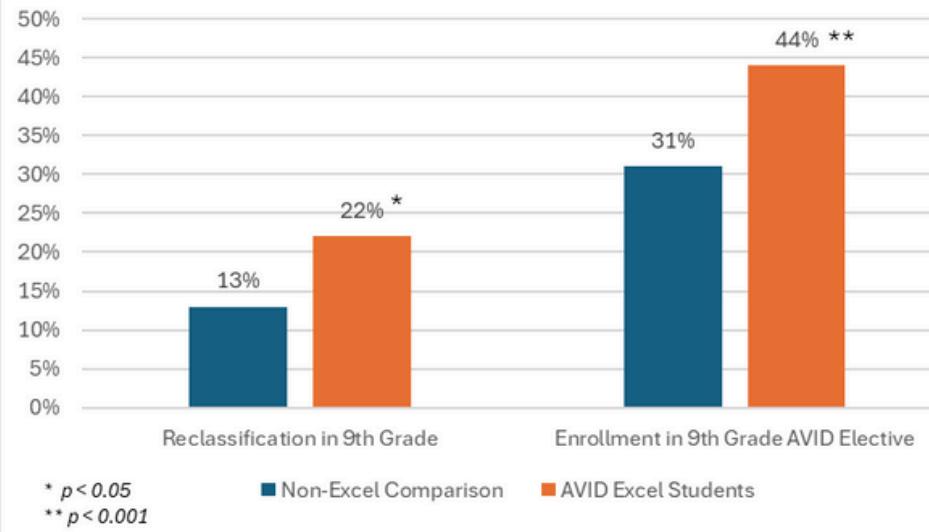
The study included surveys of 55 educators and interviews with 32 educators across 10 schools, providing insight into how Excel transforms teaching practice.

Increased Educator Capacity

More than 80% of educators reported that AVID Excel increased their ability to:

- Foster a sense of community with long-term EL students.
- Support high school, college, and career readiness.
- Engage and motivate students.
- Support academic success of multilingual learners.
- Accelerate English language acquisition.

AVID Excel Students were More Likely to be Reclassified and be Enrolled in the 9th Grade AVID Elective Course



High-Quality Professional Learning

Over 90% of survey respondents agreed that Excel professional learning:

- Prepared them to support EL students.
- Provided knowledge necessary to implement Excel successfully.
- Was hands-on, relevant, and practical.

Educators particularly valued the focus on academic language development for long-term English learners and the interactive, experiential nature of the training.

Schoolwide Impact

Excel's influence extended beyond the Excel classroom. Educators reported that:

- All students benefited from Excel strategies used in core content classes.
- Excel changed their approach to teaching all multilingual learners.
- Their school had an increased emphasis on academic vocabulary schoolwide.

Sustained Implementation Quality Matters

The study found that implementation quality significantly influences student outcomes. Schools that implemented Excel with higher fidelity achieved better results.

Key Implementation Factors

Curriculum Fidelity

Schools where Excel teachers regularly used curriculum resources and digital planning guides showed:

- Higher grade 8 English proficiency scores
- Higher grade 8 state ELA scores
- Higher grade 9 reclassification rates

Scholar Groups

Frequent implementation of scholar groups—Excel's peer learning structure—showed the largest relationship with student outcomes. Schools that implemented scholar groups weekly had:

- Dramatically higher grade 9 reclassification rates, triple the effect size of any other impact ($g = 3.78$)
- Students who developed stronger peer support systems

AVID Site Team Support

Schools with well-functioning AVID Site Teams (with 8+ members meeting monthly) demonstrated:

- Consistently positive effects across multiple outcome measures
- Better coordination between Excel and core content instruction
- Stronger schoolwide understanding and support of Excel

AVID Certification

- Schools with higher AVID Coaching and Certification Instrument ratings showed consistently stronger student outcomes, confirming that overall AVID implementation quality supports Excel effectiveness.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR SCHOOL

www.avid.org/research



AN IMPACTFUL SOLUTION FOR LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS



Long-term English learners represent one of the most underserved populations in our schools. Traditional EL support often fails to address their unique needs as students who have been in U.S. schools for years but still struggle with academic language and content-area literacy. AVID Excel provides a research-validated solution specifically designed for this population.



EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAM DESIGN



The study confirms that Excel's design aligns with its intended outcomes:

- The primary focus on language acquisition produces measurable gains in English proficiency.
- The cohort model and scholar groups build community and peer support.
- WICOR strategies transfer beyond the Excel classroom.



RETURN ON INVESTMENT



The study found that schools implementing AVID Excel had:

- Accelerated reclassification: reducing the number of years that students remain classified as an EL
- Pathways to advanced coursework: increased enrollment in the AVID Elective provides access to college-preparatory coursework
- Enhanced educator capacity: professional learning that transforms teaching practice
- Schoolwide benefits: strategies that support all multilingual learners

Sustained Implementation Quality Matters

The study found that implementation quality significantly influences student outcomes. Schools that implemented AVID Excel with higher fidelity achieved better results.

Recommendations for Implementation

Based on the research findings and feedback from educators, the study identified several key recommendations for schools considering or currently implementing AVID Excel.

1. Invest in Ongoing Professional Learning

While initial training is important, Excel teachers benefit from:

- Completing the full sequence of AVID Excel Level 1–3 trainings
- Receiving in-class observations and coaching from AVID Center staff
- Accessing ongoing support throughout the school year
- Participating in refresher training with best practices

2. Engage the Whole School

Excel works best when it's not isolated to the Excel classroom:

- Core content teachers should participate in Academic Language and Literacy training.
- Schedule Excel students into coordinated core classes when possible.
- Establish systems for Excel teachers to share strategies schoolwide.
- Build family engagement and communication around Excel goals.

3. Provide Excel-Specific Tutor Training

While many schools have tutoring programs, Excel students benefit most when tutors:

- Receive training using the AVID Excel Elective Tutor Training Module.
- Understand strategies specific to long-term English learners.
- Align their support with digital planning guides and scholar group work.

4. Ensure Strong Site Leadership

School and district administrators play a critical role in AVID Excel success by:

- Establishing and supporting an AVID Site Team
- Providing resources for materials, field trips, and professional learning
- Conducting regular classroom walk-throughs and providing feedback
- Facilitating common planning time and collaboration
- Celebrating Excel successes and student achievements

5. Focus Student Recruitment

AVID Excel students achieve best results when:

- Schools use multiple data sources (English Language Proficiency assessments, teacher recommendations, and benchmark data).
- Students and families understand program goals and commit to participation.
- Classes are composed primarily of long-term English learners.
- Students can commit to 2 years of participation.



Conclusion

This wide-ranging, independent research study provides clear evidence that AVID Excel delivers on its promise to accelerate English language acquisition and college readiness for long-term English learners, which is one of the most challenging populations to effectively serve.

The findings demonstrate:

- **Measurable gains in English proficiency:** Students who participate for 2 years score significantly higher on language assessments.
- **Accelerated reclassification:** AVID Excel students are nearly twice as likely to achieve English proficient status as their non-Excel peers.
- **Clear pathway to college preparation:** Doubled enrollment in the AVID Elective provides continued support and rigorous coursework.
- **Enhanced educator effectiveness:** This is achieved through professional learning that transforms teaching practice for all multilingual learners.
- **Sustained quality implementation throughout the school matters:** Schools that implement with high fidelity achieve stronger outcomes.

For schools and districts committed to closing opportunity gaps and ensuring that all students—including long-term English learners—have access to college and career pathways, AVID Excel offers an evidence-based solution. The program’s focus on academic language development, combined with its structured support system and comprehensive professional learning, creates conditions for student success.

Most importantly, the research shows that when schools commit to implementation with fidelity—using curriculum resources consistently, implementing scholar groups regularly, building strong Site Teams, and investing in ongoing professional learning—they can expect meaningful improvements in the outcomes that matter most: helping long-term English learners achieve English proficiency, access rigorous coursework, and build the foundation for college and career success.

About the Research

Research Team

This independent evaluation was conducted by RMC Research Corporation in partnership with AVID Center. The research team included:

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