



REDISCOVERING — THE — SPARK

How One Teacher Turned Burnout Into Brilliance



Tracie McMurray

English and AVID Teacher,
AVID Certified Educator

The school year had barely begun when Tracie McMurray, a veteran English teacher in Mesa, Arizona, found herself staring at the classroom clock, wondering if this was the end of her 20-year teaching career. “The year was so difficult that I said, ‘What if I just walk away from this?’” she recalls.

Tracie’s story isn’t unique. Across the country, nearly half of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years. Even seasoned educators can feel the weight of burnout. But what makes some stay—and even thrive—when others leave?

At AVID, we’ve learned that the answer lies in three powerful forces: community, reflection, and continuous growth.

The Power of Community

When Tracie joined her AVID Certified Educator cohort, she found more than professional development. She found a lifeline within community. That sense of belonging is no accident. AVID designs programs to create spaces where educators can exchange ideas, elevate one another, and grow together. For Tracie, those conversations sparked new strategies and renewed confidence. They reminded her why she started teaching in the first place.

Reflective Practice That Matters

Before the program, Tracie relied on instinct, saying she would "look around the room and when their eyes are glazed over, then I pivot." Now, she uses data to guide her decisions: student feedback, engagement metrics, and intentional lesson design. Reflection became her bridge from frustration to fulfillment. As AVID emphasizes, reflective practice transforms challenges into stepping stones and cultivates a mindset of continuous improvement. For Tracie, it turned a year of doubt into a year of discovery.

Continuous Growth and Leadership

Earning her AVID Certified Educator badge wasn't just about a credential; it was a commitment to lifelong learning. Tracie embraced new technology, redesigned lessons, and even learned to make ACT prep engaging and joyful. "Would I have ever done that in a million years before this program? Zero. No," she laughs.

Tracie's journey is a testament to what AVID has known for decades: when educators feel supported, empowered, and equipped to grow, they stay. And they thrive.

The AVID Certified Educator program changed Tracie's teaching approach and saved her career. And in doing so, it changed the lives of her students. They now walk into her classroom feeling engaged and valued. She tells them, "I do this for you."

That's the heart of education—and the reason we work tirelessly to keep great teachers where they belong: in the classroom, inspiring the next generation.



About the AVID Certified Educator Program

The AVID Certified Educator program is a 9-month, cohort-based experience that helps educators refine their instructional practice, grow within a collaborative network, and bring AVID strategies to life schoolwide. Through guided reflection and hands-on application aligned to the AVID Foundations of Instruction, educators deepen their classroom impact and foster lasting change.

Participants gain national certification and the opportunity to earn university credit, making the program a high-value investment in both educator and schoolwide success. Schools and districts benefit from stronger teaching, model classrooms, and deeper educator engagement.

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About AVID

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a national nonprofit that has been closing the opportunity gap in education for more than 45 years. Through evidence-based professional learning and schoolwide systems, AVID empowers educators to prepare all students for college, careers, and life. Since its founding, 3.65 million students have been enrolled in AVID Elective and AVID Elementary. An additional 7.08 million students have been impacted by AVID-trained educators across subject areas. AVID is implemented in more than 7,400 K-12 schools across the United States, plus schools in Washington, D.C., the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), the U.S. Virgin Islands, Canada, and Australia. [Learn more at www.avid.org](http://www.avid.org).