

## Trustee Talk



### AVID Schoolwide offers a bright future for students

By Trustee Alex Cassadas, Trustee Area 4, Banning Unified School District

Kindergarteners learn more than their ABCs in our District. By the time they're five years old, they've already learned about the importance of college and their future.

From our perspective in the Banning Unified School District, it's never *too* early to dream big, so we're implementing a nationally recognized college and career readiness program, at *every* grade level in *every* school.

It's called *Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Schoolwide*.

#### The AVID difference

Four years ago, Banning Unified was one of the first school districts in Riverside County to adopt *AVID Schoolwide*. We're investing \$46,000 into the program each year training teachers and providing students with binders, spiral notebooks, pens, pencils, highlighters, and college road trips.

In 2010, *AVID* expanded its mission and went from offering the program

as an elective in middle school and high school to creating *AVID Schoolwide* to reach *every* student from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. About 2 million students are enrolled in *AVID* programs across the United States.

About 20 years ago, I first learned of the *AVID* program while sitting in an assembly as an eighth grader at Nicolet Middle School. The experience changed the trajectory of my life. I went from being a struggling "C" student to earning two college degrees and becoming a human resources manager.

<http://www.banning.k12.ca.us/District-Administration/School-Board/Alex-Cassadas-Trustee/index.html>

Within three to five years, we're planning on having *every* teacher in our District trained in *AVID Schoolwide*. At the moment, more than half of the District's teachers are trained in *AVID Schoolwide*.

For example, at Banning High School, training in *AVID* techniques has been



as high as 75 percent for teachers, according to *AVID* coordinator Nathan Valdivia.

### ***AVID Schoolwide***

While *AVID* harks back almost 40 years, it's not a curriculum and the program doesn't change *what* is taught; *AVID* only changes *how* things are taught. *AVID* is taken from the Latin word *avidus*, which means "eager for knowledge."

In classrooms, *AVID Schoolwide* creates its own vibe: teachers don't lecture to rows of students with their hands up; teachers and students generally sit in a circle engaging in free-flowing dialogue and critical thinking exercises about class material.

*AVID* students take class notes in a three-and-four column format popularized at Cornell University and use a binder to organize their studies. They also sign a contract to do least two hours of homework every night. *AVID* classrooms have walls adorned with college banners, posters, and pennants as part of a college-going culture, and students often take road trips to tour their favorite colleges. *AVID Schoolwide* methods are also useful in the workplace.

### **College-bound**

At Banning High School, *AVID Schoolwide* is dramatically increasing the college-going rate for those enrolled in the program.

In 2018, 97 percent of *AVID Schoolwide* students at Banning High attended either a four-year-college or a community college and every student except one is still enrolled, statistics show. Banning High is also on its way to becoming a *Schoolwide Site of Distinction*, the highest rating a school can achieve under the program.

And so as we strive to offer *AVID Schoolwide* to every student, we recall the words of *AVID* founder Mary Catherine Swanson:

***"Teachers don't understand the power they have"***