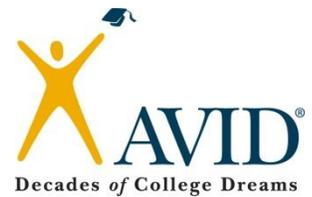


# WICOR: AVID's Foundation for High Engagement Teaching & Learning



AVID's proven learning support structure for middle and high school—and enhanced for higher education—is known as WICOR, which incorporates teaching/learning methodologies in the following critical areas: *Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading to Learn*. WICOR provides a learning model that faculty can use to guide students to comprehend materials and concepts, and articulate ideas, at increasingly complex levels (scaffolding) within developmental, general education and discipline-based curricula in their major.

Furthermore, the WICOR model reflects and promotes the expertise and attitudes that will serve students well in life beyond college graduation. Surveys of employers indicate that they seek college educated employees who have strong interpersonal skills, communicate well, and have the ability to develop creative solutions to new problems in collaborative ways. AVID's scaffold of social and academic structures instills these qualities, while at the same time improving outcomes in academic performance, building critical reading and thinking skills for rigorous fields of study, using writing as a powerful thinking and communication tool, and fostering collaboration among students, teachers, and other professionals within higher education and the “real” world of working and living. **Writing** is basic to thinking, learning and growth, requiring students to consider issues in new, complex ways, contributing to self-knowledge, and helping them to clarify and order experience and ideas. Writing consists of an essential, complex set of tools that enhance critical thinking—good writers tend to be good thinkers, and improving cognitive skill enhances one's writing ability. According to a survey of college students conducted by Richard Light (2001), students reported that the level of writing required was directly related to their engagement in their academic work. This relationship was stronger than the students' engagement in any other course characteristic.

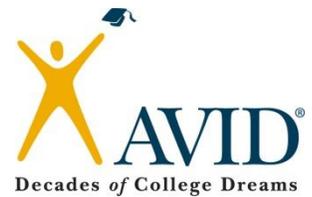
**Inquiry:** “Critical thinking,” is a term commonly used in higher education to refer to a generic set of complex but ill-defined cognitive processes. According to the Foundation for Critical Thinking, “thinking is not driven by answers but by questions,” positioning inquiry as foundational to the higher level cognition required for college success. AVID's emphasis on inquiry focuses on the application of Costa's three levels of “intellectual functioning,”

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whereby learning to ask progressively more complex questions is scaffolded and students become progressively more metacognitive—aware of their own thinking processes.

**Collaboration:** Collaborative learning involves intentionally designed student groups engaged in “co-laboring” toward meaningful learning outcomes, using active engagement activities planned to maximize learning, and facilitating the sharing of the workload Barkley, Cross and Major (2005). AVID's high engagement learning strategies involve collaborative activities through which individual students help each other learn, thereby strengthen their own learning. Students are responsible for their own learning;

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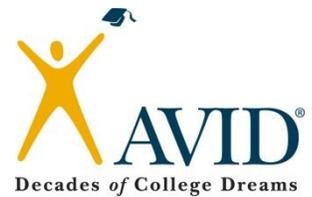


faculty serve as facilitators in a learning community working together for the success of the group.

**Organization:** Because college students face competing priorities that are often overwhelming, organizational skills are critical to success in academic and social situations. According to Cuseo, Fecas & Thompson (2010), college students “who have difficulty managing their time have difficulty managing college.” Management of time and energy and learning to set priorities can make the difference between success and failure for new college students. In addition, students must learn to plan effectively for academic assignments, organizing information and ideas for papers and projects. Consistent with its focus on promoting “individual determination,” AVID provides support for the organization of materials, assignments, assessments, handouts and notes.

**Reading to Learn:** College instructors consider reading a basic skill, one that all students should have acquired before entering college. However, students often neither complete assigned readings nor know how to effectively read assigned material—one of the most common challenges reported by college instructors (Gottschalk & Hjortshoj, 2004). AVID’s approach to “critical reading” provides faculty with common-sense and research-based strategies designed to help students read more effectively. Skills such as “reading with purpose” can be scaffolded with more complex activities to ensure that students are connecting reading material to prior knowledge, understanding the structure of texts, and using text-processing strategies during and after reading to improve comprehension.

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