



For Frick's Kings and Queens, College and Character Count

"Every single time I enter the AVID room, I feel like I just passed through time and I am in college."

These were the words of 7th-grader Jesus when asked about AVID, which stands for "Advancement Via Individual Determination." AVID is designed to "close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society." It often supports socio-economically disadvantaged kids in the academic "middle" who will be the first in their family to attend college, and it's only available at two Oakland middle schools. Frick is excited to be one of them.

"Kids here have really taken ownership and bought into the idea that 'Yes, I'm going to college and I'm making good choices,'" says Frick Teacher Darcel Sanders, who runs the AVID program. "That's been awesome to see."

Through AVID, students are doing a year-long project researching different colleges: first a California State University, then the UCs and the Ivy Leagues, and eventually any school of their choice.

"Writing about the college (Fresno State) made me think about what college I want

to go to," reflects 7th-grader Edith. "I have to start thinking about my future and what opportunities are best for me."

"Writing about Sonoma State," says 8th-grader Brenda, "helped me focus on college as a future goal because it helped me learn more about my college options."

Assuming they fulfill its requirements,

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students stay with AVID through 12th grade. Along the way, says Sanders, "they're given access to resources and experiences they might not normally get." Inside the classroom, kids get college tutors and learn specific college-prep practices like the Cornell note-taking system, but the experience extends off-campus as well, with students being connected with community service projects. "Those experiences will make them more competitive in high school," says Sanders, "since community service is a huge part of college applications."

College tours are another key piece of the program. "The college field trip experience

helped me realize there were more choices besides Cal and Mills because I got to see public and private schools that I didn't know about before I started AVID," reflects 8th-grader Rajean.

The tours bring college into clearer focus for the kids. "We get to see classrooms and what college students do in their spare time," adds 8th-grader Marissa.

Data, too, is backing up AVID's success. Writing test scores have improved, and last year all but three of 50 8th-graders had a C or better in Algebra. AVID, says Sanders, has been partly responsible for the improvement.

"Participating in AVID makes me always want to participate in all of my classes," reflects 7th-grader Malia.

"[Because of AVID], now I am more on top of things and I feel that I have matured since the beginning of the school year," says her classmate Monique.

"I feel that AVID is really helping me prepare for college," says Sierra. "[Ms. Sanders tells us] that we can do anything, we can succeed, and all these positive things she says make me feel successful. I've never experienced a class that is so college-like."



“From August through June, I am the parent of 450 students, and I commonly refer to them as our kings and queens. The resilience to be successful, I really admire that in our students. Frick is not just a school. Frick is a community of adults who absolutely love our students.”

- Jerome E. Gourdine, Principal

CHARACTER COUNTS! Rounds Out School Culture

Thanks to a special grant, Frick staff attended a 3-day CHARACTER COUNTS! seminar this past summer, and has begun rolling out its curriculum and goals on campus to great effect.

“It’s a really great program, and we’re looking at how to infuse it into the whole school culture. We’re constantly working to instill a sense of social responsibility and feeling responsible for others,” says Sanders, “and that’s a big part of the CHARACTER COUNTS! vision.” (The program’s “Six Pillars of Character” are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.)

Staff is eager to continue developing CHARACTER COUNTS! because it aligns so well with the culture they’re already committed to building. “It’s really about wanting to take Frick’s family atmosphere and ‘kings and queens’ culture to that next level,” Sanders explains. Principal Jerome Gourdine, along with all the adults at Frick, speak and think of their students as “kings

and queens,” and they care for them as such, as the students themselves will tell you.

“I love the environment at Frick because there are always teachers after school to help you with anything you need,” says 7th-grader Malia, “and the principal is always walking around the school looking in our classes to check on us instead of just being in his office all day, and I like that.”

“The environment inside Frick is pretty welcoming because the staff and teachers treat us like family, and watch out for us,” agrees classmate Sierra.

“Frick is a safe and hardworking environment with fantastic teachers, principal, and staff,” says 7th-grader Promyse. “The teachers make sure you do your work. The principal is great and makes sure everything goes right. The rest of the staff are just the best people ever. They might all push you hard, but it’s to succeed in life as well as school.”

SUPPORT FRICK MIDDLE SCHOOL!

To build on out-of-classroom experiences like our college tours described above, we have launched an effort to take a group of 8th-graders to Washington, D.C. this spring! Unfortunately, state budget cuts make a trip like this a challenge to fund.

Paying for even the air travel requires a major fundraising push – and you can help!

A contribution of any amount will put us closer to sending our kids on this unforgettable trip.

Donate online at www.oaklandschoolsfoundation.org (designating “Frick”)

or by mail: “OSF/Frick,” P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620.

Thank you for supporting our kings and queens!



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