

1 **Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic for AVID** 2 **High School Students** 3

4 Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of how
5 education is delivered. The need for social and emotional learning supports at
6 the high school level are more critical now than ever before. This qualitative
7 research study conducted directly through student interviews examined the
8 effect(s) of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic on high school AVID
9 (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students and examined what
10 social and emotional learning supports are needed as students transition to all
11 in-person learning. Structured interviews were conducted with 20 AVID
12 student participants from one high school in a Central Florida School District.
13 Thematic analysis of the data collected was studied and analyzed. The results
14 show that students experienced a significant amount of stress from being forced
15 to learn online during the pandemic. The findings also show that students do not
16 feel adequate social and emotional supports are currently in place at the high
17 school level, except for curriculum taught in the AVID elective course. This
18 study offers a foundational piece outlining the importance of social and
19 emotional learning both within and outside of the context of the AVID
20 program.
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22 *Keywords:* COVID-19 pandemic, social and emotional learning, SEL, AVID
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24

25 **Introduction** 26

27 **Background of the Study** 28

29 Since the COVID-19 pandemic, students have shared they are having trouble
30 sleeping, finding time to juggle a multitude of responsibilities, and are
31 experiencing extreme stress and anxiety. These challenges appear to plague their
32 daily routines such as eating, bathing, completing homework, and communicating
33 with those around them (Camarata, 2022). While this trend has grown over recent
34 years, the pandemic caused a sudden halt to all things school related and brought
35 about disruption to routine, structure, and relational capacity. Fear and anxiety
36 surrounding the COVID-19 virus grew and continues to be problematic among
37 many even as the virus dissipates. Faculty and staff have voiced that the number
38 of students in need of social and emotional support is increasing by the day and
39 concern for student's well-being is at an all-time high. As most students transition
40 back to school in-person during the 2022-2023 school year, students are in need of
41 support.
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43 **Statement of the Problem** 44

45 After almost two years of learning amidst a pandemic, schools opened their
46 doors this past August. An expectation existed for students to assimilate back to
47 fully in-person classes, after being in an isolated learning environment during the

1 pandemic. The same was expected of faculty and staff as they were presumed to
2 teach the current curriculum while also catching students up on learning loss. Yet,
3 very little if any, additional support and resources were provided, and little is being
4 done to address the social and emotional loss students have faced because of the
5 COVID-19 pandemic.

6 Social and emotional learning has never been implemented or explicitly
7 taught at the high school level in the Central Florida School District explored in
8 this study. Some teachers may mention Growth Mindset and share a few videos,
9 which mostly discuss bullying or identifying signs of inappropriate or troublesome
10 behavior. AVID, which stands for *Advancement Via Individual Determination*, is
11 an advanced program of study that focuses specifically on college, careers, and life
12 readiness (AVID Center, 2021). The AVID program encourages teachers to tie
13 social and emotional learning components to lessons to build relationships (Watt et
14 al., 2008), however, nothing comprehensive or inclusive has been provided to
15 teachers, and many struggle to start incorporating social and emotional learning
16 into their already heavy curriculum mandates.

17 18 19 **Research Questions**

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21 The intent of this qualitative research study was to examine the effect(s) of
22 learning during the COVID-19 pandemic on high school AVID students and what
23 social and emotional learning supports are needed as students transition to all in-
24 person learning. Throughout this study our research team was guided by the
25 following two research questions:

- 26
27 1. What effect(s) has learning during the COVID-19 pandemic had on high
28 school AVID students?
- 29 2. What social and emotional learning supports do students need as they
30 transition back to fully in-person school?

31 32 **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

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34 The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the effect(s) of
35 learning during the COVID-19 pandemic on high school AVID students and what
36 social and emotional learning supports are needed as students transition to all in-
37 person learning. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is as important as studying
38 and mastering core academic subjects. Social and Emotional Learning was defined
39 by Zins & Elias (2007) as, “the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve
40 problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others.” The
41 National Research Council (2012) notes, “In addition to graduating academically
42 proficient students who are culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and
43 committed to lifelong learning, schools must also enhance students’ intrapersonal
44 and interpersonal competencies, so they’re optimally prepared for work and life.”
45 A study published in the American Educational Research Journal described a one-
46 year, multilevel comparative case study of four high schools in Broward County,

1 with findings showing the great need to “address the elements of students’ high
2 school experiences that not only target the instructional core, but also the social
3 emotional supports that enable students to succeed” (Rutledge et al., 2015, p.
4 1084). This study, however, was done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic becoming
5 a reality. Teaching and learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic and addressing
6 social and emotional learning in connection to college and career readiness at the
7 high school level has only recently been studied or evaluated, proving that this
8 study is necessary and critical.

9 10 **Limitations**

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12 A potential limitation to this study is the sample size. The study took place in
13 a large Central Florida School District with a total of ten high schools. Due to the
14 time restrictions pertaining to the timeline of this research study, only one high
15 school was selected as a focus point for this study. A total of 20 students
16 participated: ten students currently in the 11th grade and ten students in the 12th
17 grade. While the sample size was small, it did provide a needed foundation and
18 starting point for continued research.

19 Another limitation to this study is having minors as the research participants.
20 Due to the many ethical and legal aspects surrounding the use of minors as
21 research study participants, the approval of the IRB and Consent to Participate
22 paperwork took much longer to acquire than anticipated (nine months total
23 between institutional approval and school district approval). The IRB was edited
24 as recommended by the committee after the initial submission and resubmitted for
25 review. Although the timeline and process to secure approval to conduct the study
26 was tedious and time consuming, the experience interviewing students was
27 priceless, as they were authentic and eager to share their thoughts without
28 reservation.

29 30 31 **Literature Review**

32 33 **Overview**

34
35 The COVID-19 pandemic has been the epicenter of news headlines since
36 March 2020. Schools across the nation shut down and quickly started to re-think
37 teaching and learning as it had previously existed. Across many states, the push for
38 college and career readiness and increased graduation rates remained the priority
39 despite the adaptations that had to be made for COVID-19. This study assessed the
40 effect(s) learning during the COVID-19 pandemic had on high school AVID
41 students. In addition, the study identified social and emotional learning supports
42 students needed as they transitioned fully back to in-person school to continue
43 being on a college and career ready path.

1 **Social and Emotional Learning**

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3 The Collaborative for Social, Emotional and Academic Learning (CASEL),
4 defines social and emotional learning (SEL) *“as a process through which all*
5 *young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to*
6 *develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective*
7 *goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive*
8 *relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions* (CASEL.org, n.d.).
9 Students attending school via the online live stream shared they feel alone,
10 withdrawn, and hopeless. Research has reinforced that social and emotional
11 learning is as important as studying and mastering core academic subjects. A
12 student who is truly college and career ready is not only academically capable, but
13 also displays mastery over social and emotional needs and coping techniques.
14 Social and emotional learning needs to be taught, discussed, and made readily
15 available for all students. Strong and effective social and emotional learning
16 strategies and interventions can improve student academic achievement,
17 motivation, grit, and self-advocacy.

18 Social and emotional learning is linked to enhancing student’s self-awareness,
19 confidence, and motivation through increased student agency and skills to
20 overcome obstacles, problem solve, and manage stress. These social and
21 emotional learning competencies support the person-centered explanations of
22 behavior change leading to increased school performance (Joseph et al., 2011). An
23 emphasis on social and emotional learning could empower students with
24 strategies, tools, and coping skills that are needed to truly be college, careers, and
25 life ready. Social and emotional learning has never been implemented at the high
26 school level in the district studied, proving that attention is necessary and critical to
27 further understand the impact that social and emotional learning can have on
28 students of all ages, especially as it pertains to college and career readiness.

29 30 **Culturally Relevant Social and Emotional Needs for Adolescents**

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32 Studying and analyzing the impact that social and emotional learning has on
33 our students is just one piece of a very complex puzzle. Equally important is
34 looking at specific needs for adolescents and examining how these needs differ
35 among various cultures, ages, and genders. The Massachusetts Department of
36 Elementary and Secondary Education “recognizes that SEL instruction must be
37 culturally responsive and sustaining, and grounded in equity and racial equity
38 goals, to help all students have meaningful engagement in and access to high-
39 quality SEL.”

40 Adolescence can be a difficult and trying time as school becomes more
41 rigorous, friendships turn unstable, and home responsibilities increase
42 exponentially. Yeager (2017) explains that young people want to be a part of
43 changing a school’s dynamic and climate and thrive with SEL programs that focus
44 on building and improving skills and mindsets through mutual respect and
45 understanding. A plethora of literature reinforces the connection and effectiveness

1 of strong, positive, teacher-student relationships and increased academic
2 achievement.

3 Dr. James Comer, professor of Child Psychiatry at Yale University has
4 conducted much research on the topic of teacher-student relationships. A research
5 study highlighted in the article, *Child and Adolescent Development: The Critical*
6 *Missing Focus in School Reform* (Comer, 2005), reinforces the belief that the
7 focus on child development, and building relationships with each individual child,
8 is largely missing from today's education preparation. This lack of focus is
9 contributing to and creating dysfunctional and underperforming schools. The
10 research conducted at two pilot schools for the Yale Child Study Center School
11 Development Program showed overwhelming data that both academic and
12 behavioral success were more likely when teachers and administrators valued and
13 supported building relationships and constructing work on ideologies determined
14 by child development. This may be even more prevalent with Hispanic and
15 African-American students.

16 Social and emotional learning needs do not vary solely on age and child
17 development. It is equally important to address the needs and impact of social and
18 emotional learning supports through the lens of culture and gender. Often times,
19 schools of majority Hispanic and/or African-American students may overlook the
20 immediate need for social and emotional learning because they are highly focused
21 on academic achievement. When examining the effect of a social and emotional
22 learning framework at a Hispanic-majority middle school, Ewell (2021) noted the
23 need for increased focus on SEL in order to help close the achievement gaps and
24 current "disparities related to Hispanic students' academic and social life
25 outcomes" (p. 2). Cultural practices and beliefs impact student learning and shape
26 identity and perceptions. A strong social and emotional learning framework must
27 incorporate and recognize diversity. "Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) shifts
28 pedagogical orientations away from pathologizing minoritized students as
29 deficient versions of dominant youth, and instead focuses on recognizing and
30 building upon the assets and strengths of working-class and multilingual
31 individuals and people of color" (Mahfouz & Anthony-Stevens, 2020, p. 62). In
32 the article, *Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching*, Gay (2002) shares, "the
33 knowledge that teachers need to have about cultural diversity goes beyond mere
34 awareness of, respect for, and general recognition of the fact that ethnic groups
35 have different values or express similar values in various ways" (p. 107).
36 Educators need to have adequate and ongoing learning opportunities about social
37 and emotional learning impacts on student achievement when combined with
38 culturally responsive teaching.

39 40 **AVID**

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42 According to the Florida Department of Education,

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44 "students are considered college and career ready when they have the [knowledge,](#)
45 [skills, and academic preparation](#) needed to enroll and succeed in introductory college
46 credit-bearing courses within an associate or baccalaureate degree program without
47 the need for remediation. These same attributes and levels of achievement are needed

1 for entry into and success in postsecondary workforce education or directly into a job
2 that offers gainful employment and career advancement.”
3

4 Programs like AVID provide structure and curriculum to enhance college and
5 career readiness framework. AVID is a college, careers, and life readiness system,
6 currently impacting over 6,000 schools and close to two million students. As
7 outlined on the AVID website (<https://www.avid.org/>), AVID is a nonprofit
8 organization whose passion is to help schools become more equitable and student
9 centered, while providing more access and opportunities to all students to become
10 college and career ready. AVID was started by Ms. Mary Catherine Swanson, a
11 high school English teacher at Clairemont High School, in San Diego, California,
12 in 1980 (Bernhardt, 2013; Swanson, 1993). Swanson’s vision for the program was
13 a result of a call-to-action response after many in the school and community
14 became upset that the district was starting to bus low-income students to
15 Clairemont High, an affluent, suburban school. While many teachers expressed
16 their disappointed and low expectations of these new students, Swanson thought
17 different. She believed that all students can excel, and can be college and career
18 ready, as long as they had the will to work hard and the determination/desire to
19 succeed, partnered with access and opportunities. Her proposal stated that with
20 high expectations, proper support, better professional development for teachers,
21 and same exposure to the better-quality education all the other students were
22 already receiving, these new students could be just as successful and even go to
23 college. Swanson asked her administration for support and placed the students in
24 the school’s toughest classes. The AVID Elective class was also a requirement for
25 these students. This elective class included instruction in note-taking, study skills,
26 questioning and higher thinking techniques, grade conferencing and monitoring,
27 and academic support provided by local college students. This class had a family-
28 like culture, where all students had a voice, shared their stories, celebrated their
29 success, and leaned on each other through the challenges. That first AVID class
30 had 32 students. Today, there are more than two million AVID students, in over
31 7,000 schools, in 44 states and 16 countries/territories (Huerta, Watt, & Butcher,
32 2013).

33 Over the years, the AVID curriculum and methodologies have been
34 extremely research and data driven, providing a continuous growth model to
35 ensure educators and schools are adapting to strategies and methodologies that are
36 proven to work with high success. AVID serves student in grades K to
37 postsecondary. Schools who partner with AVID receive on-going professional
38 development, a plethora of resources, a collaborative network of enthusiastic and
39 zealous educators, and continuous support from AVID Center Staff (Sepanik,
40 Safran, & Saco, 2018). AVID is not just another program, or flavor of the month
41 strategy, or a fix for all or a one size fits all. AVID is not only for students formally
42 enrolled in the program, taking it as an elective class. AVID’s work aligns with
43 individual school and/or district wide goals to ensure access and opportunities are
44 presented to all students (Hubbard, Metz-Matthews, & Resultan, 2022), especially
45 those who are historically underrepresented (Bernhardt, 2013; Gillmore &
46 Sullivan, 2014; Mendiola, Watt, & Huerta, 2010; Watt, et al., 2006). AVID is a
47 system that when implemented properly with fidelity, affects, and impacts all

1 students, all educators, and the school community for the better. Through the
2 implementation of AVID Schoolwide, the program truly transforms a school's
3 instruction, system, leadership, and culture (Kolbe, et al., 2018). Opportunities and
4 exposure to all things related to college and careers is delivered in an environment
5 fostering rigor, high expectations, growth mindset, culturally responsive teaching,
6 and relational capacity.

7 AVID teaches us that there is no such thing as an “achievement gap,” but
8 there is much evidence of “opportunity gap.” For students to acquire college and
9 career readiness skills, they need to have access to rigorous courses, exposure to
10 college and career research/awareness, and opportunities to develop a growth
11 mindset and critical thinking (Jurado, 2014; Wilson, Sulak, & Bagby, 2021).
12 Culturally responsive teaching, relationship building, and promoting self-advocacy
13 are key components of the program (Parker, Eliot, & Tart, 2013). These
14 opportunities will not only create a strong foundation academically, but will also
15 provide growth in leadership, strong communication skills, and development of
16 diverse relationships through mentoring/networking.

17 18 **Summary**

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20 The review of literature indicates that social and emotional learning
21 interventions or programs implemented with building trust, positive relationships
22 between adolescents and adults, and cultivating a growth mindset serve as most
23 effective. Research also states that young adults have different needs and factors
24 such as culture, age, and gender which need to be studied and addressed (Peabody,
25 2012). The AVID program has shown tremendous success in closing the
26 opportunity gap, creating access and equity for all, and promoting all things
27 college and career ready (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2000). AVID schools have a strong
28 foundation advocating social and emotional support systems that create student
29 agency and promotes student voice (Bernhardt, 2013).

30 **Methodology**

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32 To conduct this study, qualitative, structured interviews were used.
33 Structured interviews were done consisting of nine questions for the 11th grade
34 students and nine questions for the 12th grade students. Structured interviews were
35 chosen due to the age of the students and to compare similarities in responses
36 (Mertler, 2021). To begin this study, Informed Consent Forms were shared with
37 the students and families identified as possible participants. The first ten students
38 from each grade level that turned in the completed Informed Consent Form
39 became the study's participants. The students were interviewed one-on-one
40 privately in an office at School A with a representative from Stetson University
41 (the higher education institution sponsoring the study) present for the interviews.
42 The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. A grounded theory
43 approach (Walker & Myrick, 2006) was used for data analysis, as it provided the
44 opportunity to connect data to existing research on AVID programs.

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1 Setting

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3 This research study occurred at School A, a high school in the Central Florida
4 School District. Students participated in the structured interview during their
5 school day while at school. The interviews were conducted in a private office
6 located in the building 3 Administrative Office.

7 It is important to explain the learning environment options given to students
8 to provide more social distance inside the classrooms due to the COVID-19
9 pandemic. This explanation helps to provide context to the study. The Central
10 Florida School District gave students and families the choice of attending school
11 via three options: Traditional, Innovative, or Online. The traditional choice had
12 students attending school in-person, as usual. The innovative choice allowed
13 students to stay actively involved within their school environment by taking
14 classes they normally would have taken in-person via a live stream feed. The
15 online choice gave students the opportunity to take all courses online.

17 Participants

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19 This research study was conducted in a Central Florida School District,
20 working with one high school that was named, School A, for the purpose of the
21 study. The Central Florida School District currently serves 61,088 students, with a
22 teacher count of 4,189. Approximately fifty-eight percent of the district's student
23 population is classified as being Economically Disadvantaged. The Central Florida
24 School District is a B rated district and has an 87.7% graduation rate. The
25 breakdown of the district's demographics for the ten main high schools are as
26 follows:

28 *Table 1a. Enrollment by Grade, District Wide*

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Students	5,554	5,042	4,557	4,213

30 *Table 1b. Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity, District Wide*

	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multiracial	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	White
Students	0.2%	2%	16.2%	21.1%	4.6%	0.2%	55.7%

32 *Table 1c. Enrollment by Sex, District Wide*

	Male	Female
Students	51.5%	48.5%

34 *Table 1d. Learning Environment Selected for Instruction, District Wide*

	Traditional Brick and Mortar	Innovative	Traditional Virtual
Students	64.4%	23.2%	12.4%

School A is located in a rural area on the West side of the district. The school earned a B grade during the 2019-2020 school year, a C grade during the 2021-2022 year (note, no school grades were given during 2020-2021) and is identified for Targeted Support and Improvement. School A has an 92% graduation rate, which has ranked them #6 out of the 10 high schools in the district. Currently, the school has 129 teachers and 2,304 students. Fifty-four percent of the student population is classified as being Economically Disadvantaged at the time of the study. The school's demographics at the time of the study are as follows:

Table 2a. Enrollment by Grade, School A

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Students	642	601	576	485

Table 2b. Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity, School A

	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multiracial	Subgroups <10 Students	White
Students	0	2.1%	9.9%	30.3%	3%	0.4%	54.3%

Table 2c. Enrollment by Sex, School A

	Male	Female
Students	52.8%	47.2%

Table 2d. Learning Environment Selected for Instruction, School A

	Traditional Brick and Mortar	Innovative
Students	62.9%	37%

Participants included a total of twenty students at School A from the Central Florida School District. More specifically, the participants were ten students in the 11th grade and ten students in the 12th grade, all enrolled in the school's AVID program. The 11th grade student participants were identified using the letters A to J. The 12th grade student participants were identified using the numbers 1 to 10. The student participant's demographics are as follows:

Table 3. Student Participants Demographics

Identifier	Sex	Race	Learning Modality in 2020-2021
A	Female	Black	Innovative
B	Female	Hispanic	Innovative/Traditional
C	Female	Black	Innovative/Traditional
D	Female	White	Traditional
E	Female	Hispanic	Innovative
F	Female	Hispanic	Innovative/Traditional
G	Female	Black	Innovative

H	Female	White	Innovative/Traditional
I	Female	White	Traditional
J	Female	Hispanic	Innovative/Traditional
1	Female	White	Innovative
2	Female	White	Innovative
3	Male	White	Innovative
4	Female	Hispanic	Innovative
5	Female	White	Traditional
6	Female	White	Traditional
7	Male	White	Innovative
8	Female	Black	Innovative
9	Male	Hispanic	Innovative
10	Female	Hispanic	Innovative/Traditional

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Instrumentation

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The following questions were developed by the researcher prior to conducting data collection and were utilized during the structured interview session with the 11th grade AVID students:

1. What is your name, grade level, and how many years have you participated in the AVID program?
2. How did you attend school last year (in person, Volusia Live, VOL/FLVS or combination), and how would you describe your learning experience?
3. What is your current understanding of what social and emotional learning is?
4. Do you feel you are provided with adequate social and emotional learning opportunities at school? Explain how or why not?
5. Explain how supported, accepted, and/or understood you feel by those around you, at home and at school? How does this help or hurt you navigate school and learning?
6. Can you describe positive and negative aspects of your personal experiences learning during the pandemic?
7. What strategies have you used to help with difficult emotions while learning during the pandemic?
8. Have there been specific situations or events that have happened over the past year that have influenced your levels of stress and/or anxiety? Explain.
9. What supports do students need as they transition fully back to in-person school this year? Please be as detailed as possible.

The following questions were developed by the researcher prior to conducting data collection and were utilized during the structured interview session with the 12th grade AVID students:

1. What is your name, grade level, and how many years have you participated in the AVID program?

- 1 2. How did you attend school last year (in person, Volusia Live, VOL/FLVS
- 2 or combination), and how would you describe your learning experience?
- 3 3. Do you feel you are provided with adequate social and emotional learning
- 4 opportunities at school? Explain how or why not?
- 5 4. Explain how supported, accepted, and/or understood you feel by those
- 6 around you, at home and at school? How does this help or hurt you
- 7 navigate school and learning?
- 8 5. Can you describe positive and negative aspects of your personal
- 9 experiences learning during the pandemic?
- 10 6. What strategies have you used to help with difficult emotions while
- 11 learning during the pandemic?
- 12 7. Have there been specific situations or events that have happened over the
- 13 past year that have influenced your levels of stress and/or anxiety?
- 14 Explain.
- 15 8. What are your plans for after graduating from high school? Where do you
- 16 see yourself throughout the next 5 years?
- 17 9. Have your plans for after graduating from high school changed over this
- 18 past year as you experienced learning and living during the pandemic?
- 19 Please tell me how or why not.
- 20

21 **Procedures**

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23 The steps and procedures taken to conduct this research study followed a

24 prescribed project timeline recommended by the university to fulfill the

25 requirements to complete and earn the specialist degree. To begin, research request

26 documentation was completed and proposed to the Institutional Review Board

27 (IRB) for review and approval. The IRB committee recommended several

28 revisions and amendments to the initial research request and upon completion of

29 these edits, the research request was resubmitted and approved.

30 Once the research request was approved by the IRB at the institution, a formal

31 research request was submitted to the Central Florida School District for approval.

32 This step is essential as students from the Central Florida School District served as

33 study participants. After receiving approval from the school district, Research

34 Study Consent Forms were provided to students currently enrolled at School A

35 and scheduled in the 11th and 12th grade AVID Elective class.

36 The first ten (10) consent forms turned in for each grade level became the

37 research study participants. Student participants sat for a structured interview at

38 School A which lasted anywhere from six to ten minutes long each. The

39 interviews were conducted face-to-face and were recorded. Each of the twenty

40 interviews was then transcribed and coded to identify themes and patterns.

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Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the effect(s) of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic on high school AVID students and what social and emotional learning supports are needed as students transition back to in-person learning. The data collection method used for this study was structured interviews (Hodges, 1993) of twenty high school student participants. Thematic analysis of the data collected was studied and analyzed. Looking for themes and patterns in the interviews conducted helped determine if and what the effect(s) that learning during the COVID-19 pandemic had on high school AVID students, and what social and emotional learning supports were needed as students transitioned back to fully in-person school.

Research Question 1

What effect(s) has learning during the Covid-19 pandemic had on high school AVID students?

In order to analyze research question number one, data collected from the student interviews were coded to specifically address student experiences learning during the pandemic. Two interview questions specifically measured what if any, consequences, or outcomes, came about because of learning during the pandemic. Question number 2 asked students to describe their learning experience during the pandemic, and question number 5 for seniors and number 6 for juniors asked students to describe positive and negative aspects of their personal experiences learning during the pandemic.

Even though most of the students interviewed felt safer learning virtually from home, they expressed being much happier with in person learning versus the online/innovative learning offered at the Central Florida District during the pandemic. Describing her learning experience as a “double edge sword”, AVID senior student, #4, said, learning during the pandemic was “a double edged sword because not only it provided safety for me and my friends in terms of the pandemic, but at the same time, it was very strenuous on my mental health and the mental health of the household that I was in.” Katzman (2020) supports the integration of social and emotional learning supports in conjunction with online learning and reinforces that “many educational experts worry that distance education may increase a student’s isolation (p. 1563), thus causing a strain on their mental health and wellbeing.

The results of the student interviews also showed that most of the student participants felt learning during the pandemic was stressful, full of anxiety, and was difficult to learn. Much of the stress and anxiety reported by the students were a result of not knowing what would happen next because of the pandemic, while staying home away from family and friends, added with the new and sudden onset of online learning. AVID senior student, #1, shared that not knowing what the

1 world would be like because of the effects of the pandemic caused a lot of stress
2 and anxiety and that learning online made learning even more stressful and more
3 anxious due to lack of supports from teachers. She said, “a lot of my teachers felt
4 that I wasn't putting in enough effort because I was online, so I got extra
5 assignments, and I got more pushback from my teachers, even though I was doing
6 more work and putting more effort into my work than the in-person students”.

7 When asked to describe the learning experience during the pandemic, AVID
8 junior student #J, answered, “I would describe my learning experience as very
9 rough and difficult. It was something new that I wasn't ready to prepare for. I had
10 to adapt fairly quickly. So, it was majority very difficult for me”. AVID senior
11 student #2, added, “learning during the pandemic definitely was my most difficult
12 year ever. I hit a personal low and I hit an academic low at the same time”.
13 Overwhelmingly, many of the students interviewed learning online stated they felt
14 teachers ignored them or didn't interact with them as much or the same as the
15 students attending school in-person. AVID senior student #7, stated it was hard to
16 learn because “a lot of teachers really didn't pay attention to the online kids”.

17 Because AVID is so grounded in the relationships the teachers have with their
18 students, online learning presented a barrier for many students. Stress and anxiety
19 due to the unknowns of the pandemic and feeling alone and isolated made
20 learning, especially for those online, very difficult. At the onset of the pandemic,
21 there was no specific framework made to move courses strictly online, adding
22 further barriers and aggravations. Students were left to the mercy of the
23 willingness and desires of their teachers to make the transition to accommodate
24 online learning. While hybrid instruction served, and continues to serve, as a
25 flexible method for students during the pandemic, the students who participated in
26 this study expressed frustration and disconnect with their peers and mentor
27 teachers.

28 29 **Research Question 2**

30 **What social and emotional learning supports do students need as they**
31 **transition back to fully in-person school?**

32
33 Many students lost over a year and a half of in person instruction due to the
34 COVID-19 pandemic. The transition back to fully in person school required
35 students to demonstrate resilience with very little support. Students felt frustrations
36 with expectations placed on them to return to a modality they had not experience
37 in over a year and a half and do so as if nothing was lost in the process. This
38 caused loss of motivation and increased detachment with students and their
39 academic opportunities.

40 In order to analyze research question number two, data collected from the
41 student interviews were coded to specifically address what social and emotional
42 learning supports are needed as students transition back to fully in-person learning.
43 Two interview questions specifically examined this. Question number 4 asked
44 students if they felt they are provided with adequate social and emotional learning
45 opportunities at school. Question number 9 asked what supports are needed as
46 students transition back to in-person school this year.

1 Student participants said they did not feel the school offers social and
2 emotional learning opportunities. One student mentioned the only resource she
3 knows available at school for her would be going to see a school counselor.
4 Another student said she feels no one at the school pays attention to how students
5 feel or what they are going through. Several students did respond by saying the
6 only place they were being offered social and emotional learning supports was in
7 the AVID class. AVID senior, student #5, responded, “in programs like AVID you
8 do get these opportunities, but outside of that there is nothing”. Likewise, student
9 #2 said, “I only feel that I am provided with social and emotional learning through
10 AVID in full honesty”.

11 When asked what supports are needed as students transition back to in-person
12 school, the themes that emerged from the interviews include patience, time to
13 adjust, and having teachers check-in or simply ask how students are doing. The
14 need and desire for human interaction and conversation is evident. AVID junior
15 student #A said students “need patience and more resources readily available” to
16 help them adjust and cope. She also indicated a struggle with adjusting to in-
17 person class time and expectations after being online on her own for so long, with
18 much more flexibility provided on assignment deadlines in the online
19 environment. AVID junior student #B shared, “students need understanding from
20 teachers. Teachers need to understand that students online haven’t had the same
21 kind of teaching”. She expressed feeling confused and overwhelmed as she learns
22 to transition back to in-person school.

23 Without a doubt, the social and emotional learning piece missing most from a
24 school setting was the individualized attention and support from teachers that
25 students had come to expect. A characteristic of AVID is individualized mentorship
26 and the recognition that there is a need for social and emotional learning support
27 system at the high school level. Yeager (2017) agrees that adolescents need SEL
28 and stresses that “just when academic work becomes more difficult and
29 friendships become less stable, the brain’s method of processing emotions
30 undergoes a dramatic transformation” (p. 74). Thus, making the social and
31 emotional supports even more essential. When students lose this support in other
32 classes, or don’t receive it at all, it can cause them to experience a disconnect with
33 their school, teachers, and peers. Perhaps, even more of a burden, placing
34 additional pressure on AVID teachers to provide the support that students did not
35 receive elsewhere. “The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated stressful working
36 conditions and made the need to address shortcomings in SEL training more
37 pressing” (Ferren, 2021, p. 3).

38
39

40 Conclusions

41

42 This research study provided insight as to the effect(s) of learning during the
43 COVID-19 pandemic on high school AVID students and what social and
44 emotional learning supports are needed as students transition to all in-person
45 learning. The results of the study have provided a strong foundation and awareness
46 to the needs of our high school students. Social and emotional learning supports

1 must be discussed, addressed, and properly implemented at the high school level,
2 not only on a local level, but even at the state and national levels. This is crucial in
3 order to help students reach their full academic potential so that they can
4 experience academic success, specifically to be considered college and career
5 ready. Onyema et al. (2020) stresses that “the outbreak of Coronavirus negatively
6 affected educational activities worldwide” (p. 111). She further adds, “if the
7 students are not engaged productively, it could lead to idleness which might result
8 in youth involvement in crimes, loss of interest in learning, and poor academic
9 performance” (Onyema et al., 2020, p. 111). This research study further
10 exacerbated this was the case in the Large Central Florida School District studied,
11 and that students will continue to require additional support as they transition back
12 to fully in-person learning experiences.

13

14 **Recommendations**

15

16 As a result of this research study, our recommendations to address moving
17 forward include:

18

- 19 • identifying an AVID framework for online learning
- 20 • providing high school students adequate social and emotional resources and
21 supports, especially when dealing with emergencies and unusual
22 circumstances
- 23 • creating a support system for educators

24

25 When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, schools were tasked with shutting down
26 and moving to an all-online education system quickly and without notice. While
27 the AVID program has always encouraged technology use, the program does not
28 have a framework or system in place set up for teachers to use in an online-only
29 setting. AVID teachers had less than a week to learn a new learning management
30 system and figure out how to move lessons that required student collaboration and
31 manipulating print documents onto a virtual platform. As a positive result of the
32 COVID-19 pandemic, AVID and AVID teachers from around the world have
33 begun the conversations and the work to design and create a framework that can
34 be used should the need arise to move into online learning. Currently, AVID offers
35 teacher professional learning opportunities digitally, and for the first time since
36 2020, educators can participate in professional development either face-to-face or
37 through a digital platform (AVID Digital XP, 2021). A recommendation from the
38 findings is to begin looking at the AVID curriculum as it is currently, and start
39 creating thematic units, per the standards, that can be used both via print and
40 virtual. This would allow educators to better integrate technology tools in the
41 classroom to prepare students in 21st century skills and would provide educators
42 with options to enhance and improve their teaching styles and techniques.

43

44 A second recommendation is to provide high school students adequate social
45 and emotional resources and supports, especially when dealing with emergencies
46 and unusual circumstances. This research study supports the notion that every high
school should have a school counselor dedicated to social and emotional learning

1 initiatives. Data collected via this research study demonstrated the need for
2 students to have at least one adult in the school building they can trust and turn to,
3 especially when highly stressed or feeling anxious. AVID elective teachers value
4 the outcomes produced by having strong teacher-student relationships. Wellness
5 checks, journal writing, brain breaks, and teaching coping strategies are activities
6 often done in AVID class. Through professional development and having a school
7 counselor dedicated to SEL, these same lesson ideas and strategies can be used
8 school wide so that all students on campus have ample opportunities to build and
9 master social and emotional learning. A strong support plan needs to be created
10 should another event like the COVID-19 pandemic happen again.

11 Finally, educators must also receive support. We recommend creating a
12 framework of care and compassion for educators across all schools. Providing
13 social and emotional supports and taking the time to build positive relationships
14 within the school will improve school climate and culture. To begin, we
15 recommend that everyone going through an educational leadership program spend
16 time studying and reviewing relationships within the school and identifying ways
17 to add or create a more positive and inclusive environment for all. We would also
18 recommend that all leadership teams be required to have a social and emotional
19 competency requirement added to the school improvement plan every year. We
20 strongly believe that in order to obtain and maintain increased student
21 achievement, the adults on campus need to be supported, cared for, valued, and
22 appreciated on an ongoing basis. Having these supports in place should also help
23 address recruitment and retention initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic added a lot
24 of stress and heartache to many educators across the world. Due to feeling alone,
25 unseen, and uncared for, we have seen teachers quit and leave the profession in
26 record breaking numbers.

27

28 **Further Research**

29

30 This research study provided an insight and strong foundation addressing the
31 effect(s) of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic for high school AVID
32 students, and the essential social and emotional learning supports students need as
33 they transitioned to fully in person learning. Further research may uncover more
34 insights related to social and emotional learning for all students, not just
35 specifically for AVID students.

36 The first further research opportunity is to track the students who completed
37 the AVID program during the pandemic. It would be beneficial to know how
38 many of the AVID seniors graduated high school and went straight to college
39 versus taking a gap year or joining the workforce. As part of this study, future
40 surveys can be created to assess and compare the student's social and emotional
41 competencies at the time of the initial research study as opposed to current time.
42 Check points can be created to track and assess student progression and growth.
43 The final piece of this tracking study would be to interview the student for a full
44 evaluation of the long-term effect(s), if any, learning during the COVID-19
45 pandemic had on them and their social and emotional well-being.

1 While this research study had a short timeline and limitations to the
2 participant size, another further research opportunity is to take the initial research
3 question pertaining to the effect(s) of learning during the pandemic to conduct a
4 more in-depth study of academic behaviors and patterns. Using mixed method
5 research, this study would include data tracking of student's grades, attendance,
6 and discipline, and interviews would be conducted to measure the patterns and
7 behaviors. Data collected would consist of a six-year time span (2018 to 2023) in
8 order to analyze themes and determine causation or effect(s) of the COVID-19
9 pandemic to the current student outcomes. The sample size would be larger and
10 include participants from at least three high schools. The study would include a
11 literature review of current research studies published and recorded. This study
12 would focus on identifying causes and correlations of student achievement and
13 outcomes as a result of a global pandemic.

14 The last further research idea derived is to directly examine the link between
15 social and emotional learning and a schoolwide AVID program. Although this
16 study addresses social and emotional learning from the lens of an AVID elective
17 teacher, it does not look at what social and emotional learning systems are in place
18 schoolwide, nor does it examine if AVID strategies and methodologies are indeed
19 being used schoolwide. In order to conduct this study, a focus group can be
20 identified at a school trained in and using AVID schoolwide, and another focus
21 group would be identified at a school that has an AVID elective, but not currently
22 using AVID schoolwide. A before, during, and after survey can be used to track
23 data, and semi-structured interviews can be analyzed to look for links and
24 correlations.

25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48

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