

IMPACT EVALUATION OF AVID AUSTRALIA

Public Report

March 2026

About this report

This is the public version of a longer report that presents the findings of a multi-year impact evaluation of AVID Australia. The evaluation was conducted by S J Spencer Consulting Pty Ltd from 2024-2026.

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Summary

AVID® (Advancement Via Individual Determination) was founded in the US over 45 years ago and brought to Australia in 2011. This report presents the findings of an evaluation of AVID Australia.

This evaluation provides strong evidence that AVID Australia is helping schools deliver significant and sustained improvements in teaching practice and student outcomes across diverse school contexts and in multiple states.

AVID's support adapts to each school's stage of maturity, providing intensive, tailored professional learning and guidance early on then increasingly moving to bespoke coaching for each school and facilitation of peer networks as schools mature.

About AVID

AVID is an evidence-based whole-school improvement system that aims to close opportunity gaps and improve tertiary, career and life readiness, especially for disadvantaged students. It provides support across four domains: Instruction, Systems, Leadership, and Culture.

Evaluation methodology

AVID's impact on student academic outcomes was analysed using data from NAPLAN (National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy), Australia's annual nationwide assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (see <https://www.nap.edu.au/naplan>). AVID methodologies and practices were evaluated at 13 AVID schools based on five in-depth school insight visits and eight semi-structured leadership interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes.

Findings from NAPLAN analysis:

The evaluation developed a new Value-Added NAPLAN Analysis methodology that allows for robust, longitudinal, and demographically-adjusted comparisons. Key findings are:

- ✓ Students in AVID Australia schools are making **impressive gains in their core literacy and numeracy skills**, especially in Years 5 and 9. One school closed **three-quarters of the Year 9 writing gap** between its students and the national average since 2014 ($p < 0.005$).
- ✓ Several schools have shown **sustained NAPLAN improvements for at least ten years**.
- ✓ **Nearly all established AVID schools** improved their NAPLAN results **faster than students with similar background** from across Australia. Most improved faster than comparable local schools ($p < 0.05$).
- ✓ Established AVID secondary schools are **more than twice as likely (2.6x)** to have outperformed in all three core NAPLAN domains as comparable schools ($p \sim 0.023$).
- ✓ Since 2014, established AVID secondary schools added **nearly eight times more value (7.7x)** in Year 9 than comparable secondary schools ($p \sim 0.020$; see Figure 1), and **three months more value** in Year 5 than comparable primary schools.
- ✓ NAPLAN gains are **strongly correlated ($p < 0.005$) with our ratings of school practices**.

The most improved AVID schools have very different contexts in three different states (Victoria, NSW, and WA). This strongly suggests that the partnership with AVID – the common factor – is the reason, and the schools themselves attribute the gains to the AVID partnership.

Cross-school themes

Four cross-school themes were identified for each AVID domain to address the question: “What approaches or factors are most commonly associated with schools that successfully implement AVID and lift student outcomes?” The themes (detailed further in Table 1) are:

Instruction *AVID helps us address the ‘hidden curriculum’, the unwritten knowledge about how to learn effectively*

- AVID is the foundation for building academic success and student autonomy.
- Use of systematic processes to put AVID at the centre of teaching and learning.
- AVID is a system of instruction to be contextualised, not a program to follow.
- Alignment with state-level strategic priorities and the national focus on explicit teaching.

Systems *AVID PL is purposefully designed ... so that AVID strategies become embedded in daily routines.*

- AVID systems create clarity and consistency, reduce cognitive load, and foster collaboration.
- AVID site teams lead and champion AVID and its practices in contextual and evolving ways.
- AVID professional learning is purposeful, integrated, and models AVID strategies.
- Data informs day-to-day education decisions and ongoing improvement efforts.

Culture *The strongest AVID schools embody a sense of ‘All of the people, all of the time’.*

- Establishment and active promotion of high expectations for both students and staff.
- Intentional focus on building relational capacity, trust and psychological safety.
- Students are given agency through student voice, empowerment and leadership.
- Parental and community engagement reinforces what happens at school.

Leadership *Leaders consistently reinforce the why and the how, not just the what.*

- Sophisticated understanding of AVID as a purpose-driven system of improvement.
- AVID is embedded in the school’s strategic plan, budget and other key documents.
- Senior leaders promote AVID via instructional and transformational leadership.
- Strong focus on distributed AVID leadership and development of middle leaders.

Overarching themes

AVID’s broad impact raises the question: “How has AVID Australia helped schools in diverse contexts successfully implement AVID, improve teaching and lift student outcomes?” We identified five overarching themes (see Table 2) that help explain long-term implementation success in AVID schools, collectively covering the *why*, *what* and *how* of implementing AVID:

1. AVID’s mission to **help every student succeed** helps schools to align around a **common purpose** and create the enabling conditions to embark on meaningful change.
2. AVID is a comprehensive, evidence-based **system of school improvement** that **combines rigour with flexibility** to adapt to varying local and jurisdictional contexts.
3. The **four AVID domains are mutually reinforcing**, helping schools create a coherent and contextualised way of implementing AVID that **balances fidelity and autonomy**.
4. **AVID Australia supports school leaders** as they implement AVID and work to transform Instruction, Culture, Systems and Leadership Practices in their schools.
5. AVID Australia provides **long-term support and coaching** as schools build their capability to embed AVID schoolwide and **collective professional efficacy grows**.

Barriers to implementing AVID

The evaluation identified common barriers to implementation. As a holistic school improvement strategy, AVID can be complex for schools to understand.

The main internal barriers are leadership turnover or low leadership buy-in, staff turnover or resistance, limited budgets, and competing priorities.

The main external challenges are shifting educational landscapes, including opposition from education departments, and low parental expectations, especially in disadvantaged communities.

AVID schools need strong leadership and committed AVID champions to overcome these barriers, plus ongoing and practical support from AVID Australia.

Conclusion

School improvement is complex, contextual and non-linear.

AVID is not a magic bullet: schools with implementation challenges such as significant leadership turnover show much smaller gains than schools that sustain fidelity and improvement over the long term.

The most successful AVID schools demonstrate outstanding and consistent pedagogical practices and have delivered truly impressive gains in student outcomes.

This requires strong leadership, systematic processes, high expectations, and a culture of trust and empowerment within each school.

[In strong AVID schools] there is a genuine feeling of psychological safety both within teaching and learning environments and in the staff and leadership spaces.

But the schools themselves know they could not do this alone, and they attribute their ability to deliver this long-term improvement to their ongoing partnership with AVID Australia.

Table 1: Common themes by domain for schools that successfully implement and sustain AVID

Instruction	
<p>AVID is the foundation for building academic success and student autonomy.</p> <p>Strong AVID schools focus on the <i>why</i> behind AVID strategies. For example, they emphasise how AVID’s organisational tools do more than provide day-to-day structure, they help students navigate the “hidden curriculum” to become more effective learners.</p>	<p>Use of systematic processes to put AVID at the centre of teaching and learning.</p> <p>AVID’s evidence-based instructional strategies – including but not limited to WICOR® – are clearly visible within a well-articulated teaching and learning model, backed by a range of actions and mechanisms to drive consistency and fidelity across the school.</p>
<p>AVID is a system of instruction to be contextualised, not a program to follow.</p> <p>Strong AVID schools implement AVID in a contextually appropriate way; it is not a “one-size-fits-all” program. This “freedom within a structure” ensures fidelity and consistency while maintaining flexibility and creating the space for teacher professional judgement. It also makes it easier for schools to adopt and integrate other instructional or wellbeing programs that complement AVID.</p>	<p>Alignment with state-level strategic priorities and the national focus on explicit teaching.</p> <p>Strong AVID schools consciously articulate how AVID’s suite of evidence-based teaching strategies align with their state’s preferred Teaching and Learning framework and with Australia’s current emphasis on explicit teaching. This helps them respond to their external contexts in a measured way that buffers the downside of ever-evolving political and policy expectations.</p>
Systems	
<p>AVID systems create clarity and consistency, reduce cognitive load, and foster collaboration.</p> <p>Strong AVID schools establish clear, documented processes that are embedded in daily operations, ensuring expectations are explicit and collaboration is routine. This streamlines operations, reduces cognitive load for students and educators, strengthens collective efficacy, and positions AVID as central to sustaining school success.</p>	<p>AVID site teams lead and champion AVID and its practices in contextual and evolving ways.</p> <p>AVID site teams play a pivotal and adaptive role in leading the implementation of AVID, empowering teachers and evolving as the school’s needs change. Senior leadership backing helps site teams champion and model AVID strategies and fosters distributed leadership, ensuring AVID remains central to improvement and responsive to local context.</p>
<p>AVID professional learning is purposeful, integrated, and models AVID strategies.</p> <p>Professional learning in strong AVID schools is ongoing, embedded in daily routines, and designed and delivered in ways that model AVID instructional strategies. Robust induction and purposeful internal PL build staff capability, foster collaboration, and ensure consistent, high-quality implementation across the school.</p>	<p>Data informs day-to-day education decisions and ongoing improvement efforts.</p> <p>Strong AVID schools use academic, behavioural and wellbeing data to inform daily decisions and drive improvement. Teams systematically analyse data to shape individual student plans and school priorities. Data is used to acknowledge and celebrate improvement, which reinforces the use of AVID strategies.</p>

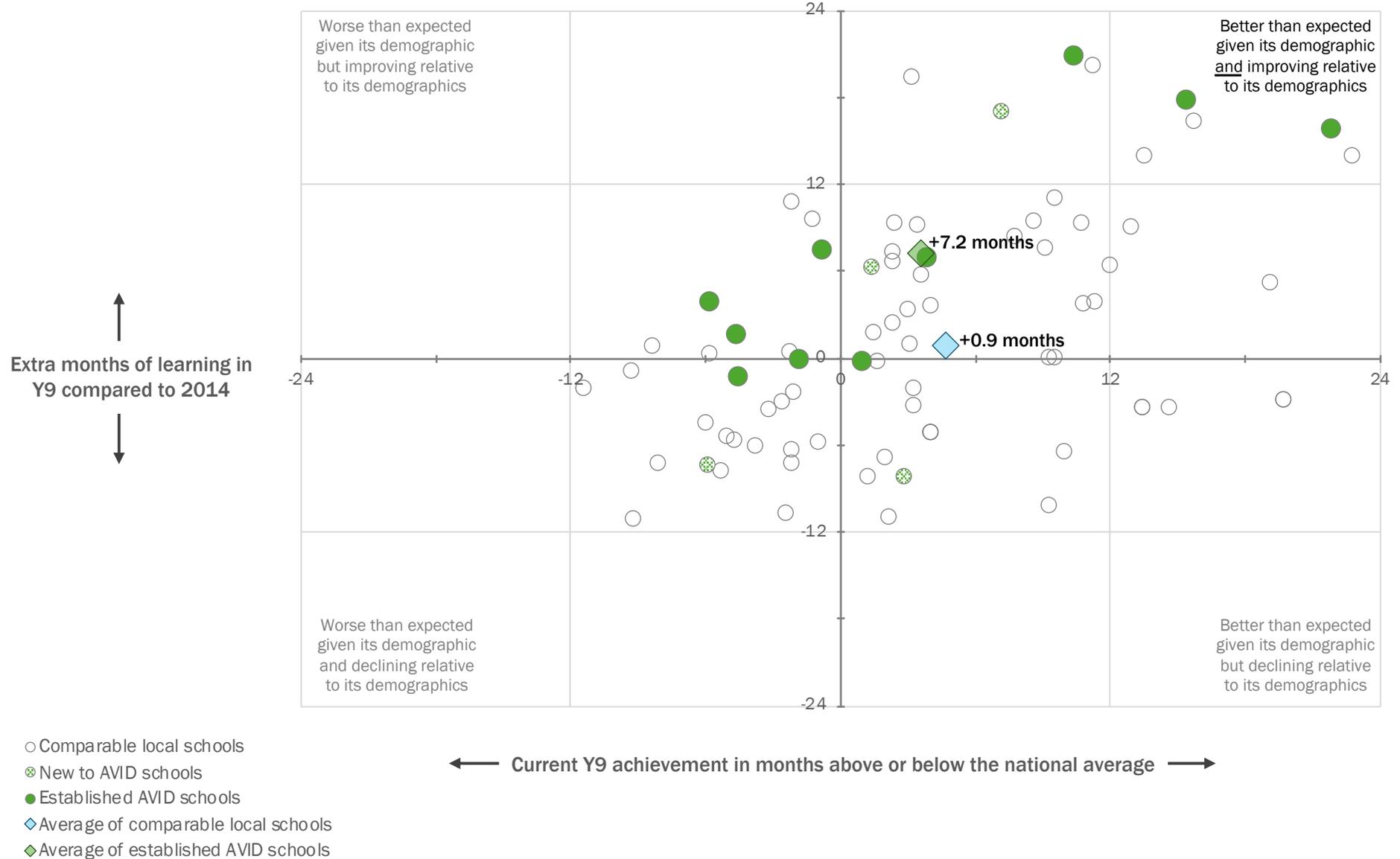
Table 1 (cont'd): Common themes for schools that successfully implement and sustain AVID

Culture	
<p>Establishment and active promotion of high expectations for both students and staff.</p> <p>High expectations complement effective instructional strategies. AVID schools that actively promote high expectations for all students and staff, and consistently deliver AVID strategies, have shown significant improvement in student outcomes over time.</p>	<p>Intentional focus on building relational capacity, trust and psychological safety.</p> <p>Relational capacity underpins educator and student agency in AVID's Tertiary and Career Readiness Framework. AVID schools that intentionally build relational capacity and trust develop and sustain safe and positive learning environments for students and staff.</p>
<p>Students are given agency through student voice, empowerment and leadership.</p> <p>Individual determination is inherent to AVID, and student agency is essential for students to succeed at school and beyond. Strong AVID schools build students' capabilities to take ownership for their own learning and build students' leadership skills, alongside creating opportunities to practise and apply those skills beyond the classroom.</p>	<p>Parental and community engagement reinforces what happens at school.</p> <p>Strong AVID schools understand that parent, carer and community engagement is vital, and leverage these partnerships to reinforce high expectations and support good study habits. The approaches that AVID schools use to engage parents are highly contextual, with some AVID schools noting significant challenges in getting parents to engage.</p>
Leadership	
<p>Sophisticated understanding of AVID as a purpose-driven system of improvement.</p> <p>AVID has greatest impact when a school has strong leaders who have a clear vision and strategy for their AVID implementation that is clearly linked to the school's purpose, and when those leaders deeply understand AVID as a system of improvement, not a program to implement. Principals need sophisticated meta-language to explain this to staff.</p>	<p>AVID is embedded in the school's strategic plan, budget, and other key documents.</p> <p>Strong AVID schools explicitly include AVID in short-, medium- and long-term planning, and name it in the documentation that every school needs. Naming AVID in formal documentation and including implementation costs in school budgets supports long-term sustainability in the face of external questions and pressure about AVID.</p>
<p>Senior leaders promote AVID via instructional and transformational leadership.</p> <p>Senior leaders in strong AVID schools consistently position and reinforce AVID instructional practices as central to the schools' purpose, and model AVID practices in their interactions with staff. They also use transformational leadership techniques to inspire and motivate others. This takes courage and commitment.</p>	<p>Strong focus on distributed AVID leadership and development of middle leaders.</p> <p>Leadership is a team effort. Strong AVID schools use distributed AVID leadership models to support school-wide fidelity. They focus on building the AVID understanding and capabilities of the middle leaders in their school, and use AVID leadership professional learning as a pathway for overall leadership development and succession planning.</p>

Table 2: Overarching themes that explain how AVID Australia has helped diverse schools implement AVID, improve teaching, and lift student outcomes

Overarching theme	Description
AVID’s mission to help every student succeed helps schools to align around a common purpose and create the enabling conditions to embark on meaningful change.	AVID is driven by a clear mission that aligns well with the existing philosophy of many Australian schools. When schools embrace and embed AVID’s unwavering commitment to closing achievement and opportunity gaps for disadvantaged students, they clarify and reinforce a common purpose that helps align the whole school community. This common purpose then creates an enabling environment for meaningful change and risk-taking and supports persistence in the face of external challenges and pressures.
AVID is a comprehensive, evidence-based system of school improvement that combines rigour with flexibility to adapt to varying local and jurisdictional contexts.	School improvement is complex. While it follows common patterns, it is also highly contextual, and no single approach meets all needs. AVID is a comprehensive and integrated system of school improvement, built on evidence and backed by high quality professional learning. While it has well-defined instructional strategies and clear expectations around ways of working, it is not prescriptive. This balance of structure and flexibility allows schools to adapt AVID to their local context and state expectations and requirements.
The four AVID domains are mutually reinforcing, helping schools create a coherent and contextualised way of implementing AVID that balances fidelity and autonomy.	AVID uses an interdependent system of improvement across four domains that has been refined over time: Instruction, Systems, Culture and Leadership. Success in the core Instruction domain both depends on the other three domains and reinforces them, affirming the purpose and value of implementing AVID. Schools that build the interconnections between the four AVID domains benefit from increased coherence, operational clarity and reduced dependence on any single person or process. This coherence enables “freedom within a structure” that supports fidelity while affirming teacher judgement and providing teachers with autonomy.
AVID Australia supports school leaders as they implement AVID and work to transform Instruction, Culture, Systems and Leadership Practices in their schools.	While clarity of purpose and understanding the elements of school improvement are essential precursors, day-to-day leadership is what drives real change, delivered with courage, conviction and persistence. Doing this alone is twice as hard. AVID Australia provides professional learning and contextualised coaching to help school leaders build their understanding of and meta-language about AVID. It provides guidance about leading change without being prescriptive. And it sustains school leaders by acknowledging and celebrating successes, and by building connections with peers in the broader AVID community who provide inspiration, continuity, and reinforcement.
AVID Australia provides long-term support and coaching as schools build their capability to embed AVID schoolwide and collective professional efficacy grows.	Transforming a school takes years, and is not linear. The persistence and patience to sustain AVID comes from many places – most visibly the principal – but meaningful change cannot be imposed on staff, students, or the wider community. Schools emphasise the value of AVID Australia’s long-term support, where building relational capacity as important as the high-quality PL that strengthens technical capability and capacity. As AVID becomes embedded, schools experience a self-reinforcing cycle of greater operational coherence, trust, psychological safety to take risks, and visible success. This strengthens collective professional efficacy – centred on, but not confined to, AVID – which in turn builds the persistence and resilience to continue growing and improving.

Figure 1: Year 9 NAPLAN value-add for AVID and comparable local schools, average across Reading, Writing and Numeracy, 2014-2024



Source: Author's analysis of data from My School / Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

