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## **San Dimas High School AVID Program Puts Students on Path to College Success**

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** – San Dimas High School senior Alyssa Suarez has a dream of going to college and studying to be a civil engineer. Now in her fourth year of the college-prep elective Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Suarez and her AVID cohort are in the final stages of college and career planning, brimming with confidence and ready to take on the challenges of post-secondary education.

San Dimas' AVID program is changing the academic trajectory for dozens of students who have embraced the elective, which provides fundamental skills to bolster their college readiness, emphasizes the importance of completing A-G admissions requirements for UC and Cal State schools, assists in researching potential colleges and filling out applications, and promotes college culture.

"I would strongly recommend taking the AVID program. It helps build character and gives you an opportunity to decide who you want to be and where you want to go," Suarez said. "Because of AVID I am better organized, which helps me considerably in my other classes. By teaching me the importance of communication skills, I have much more confidence. AVID really has changed my life."

San Dimas began its AVID program in 2019 and graduated its first 22-student cohort at the end of the 2022-23 school year, with each graduating student accepted to at least one college or university. The program is geared toward underrepresented students who demonstrate academic potential but are not at the top of their class.

The need to bring the AVID program to San Dimas arose when a schoolwide assessment in 2018 indicated there was room for improvement in getting students to complete their A-G requirements. AVID was chosen for its emphasis on teaching fundamental skills, targeting students who are first-generation college-goers and organizing those students into a four-year cohort.

"We found the AVID program best suited our needs," San Dimas AVID coordinator Sarah Ruiz said. "What my students love the most about AVID is that it acclimates them to college culture and teaches them how to be better speakers and advocates. Since they are together four years, the class feels like family, and my students love going on field trips."

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## NEWS RELEASE

To select the students who will join the AVID program, San Dimas sends flyers to its feeder middle schools advertising the program. Students who are interested scan a QR code for more information, fill out applications, and are interviewed by San Dimas staff. From a pool of about 50 to 100 students, 25 students are placed into a freshman cohort. San Dimas currently has 100 students enrolled in AVID.

Suarez knew nothing about AVID when she received her flyer and sat down with her father to discuss the program's potential benefits. Suarez, who will be the first member of her family to attend college, quickly realized what AVID could help her to achieve and enrolled just prior to her freshman year at San Dimas.

Suarez said AVID class was like nothing else she had ever experienced. Her freshman year focused on learning how to become a good student, taking notes, and becoming organized. Over the years, Suarez and her cohort have learned resume-building and interview skills, completed a yearlong community service project, applied for financial aid and written essays for their college applications.

"The first year is like boot camp; you find out how everything is going to work," Suarez said. "Before taking AVID I didn't ever use a planner, I just wrote everything down, but now my organizational skills are much better. I am also a much better communicator, even outside of school. I'm not afraid to strike up a conversation with people. There are so many ways AVID has helped me become a better person."

### PHOTO:

**BUSD\_SDHS\_AVID:** San Dimas High School's Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) elective is changing the academic trajectory for dozens of students who have embraced the college-prep elective, which provides fundamental skills that bolster college readiness. San Dimas High School senior Alyssa Suarez (center), a first-generation college-goer, has plans to attend college and study civil engineering.

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