



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/JOHN JAQUES

Some Heaton Middle School students let out a big cheer Thursday as the school was awarded the designation of being a 'certified' Advancement Via Individual Determination School.

EDUCATION

Hawks soar into national prominence

BY JON POMPIA
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Advancement Via Individual Determination, or AVID, is a curriculum designed to help students — especially those traditionally underrepresented in higher education — develop the skills to be successful in college.

Critical tools that include writing, critical thinking, teamwork, organization and reading skills.

For the past three years, Heaton Middle School has been rated as a "certified" AVID School for its exemplary work in readying young Hawks for a productive and enriching life beyond middle school.

On Thursday, Heaton was rewarded for those years of dedication by being named an AVID Demonstration School. Nationwide, only about 170 schools — 2 percent — have reached this

distinguished level.

Gordon Mosher, an official validator from AVID, was on hand Thursday to bestow the honor during an afternoon school-wide assembly.

Earlier in the day, Mosher and his team conducted a series of classroom visits and dialogues with educators, part of a final review of Heaton's AVID program.

"This is a school I want to bring other schools to," Mosher said of Heaton. "I'm very impressed that here, students are the core of every decision made. It's all about the kids."

Although an elective class, AVID has attracted 200 of Heaton's 700 students — most of whom would not have considered college and a career if not for the AVID.

Having implemented the AVID program and witnessed its fruitful results, Heaton Principal Jayme Stangier is now pleased to be able to showcase Heaton's

Heaton students' achievement of AVID designation is a rare honor



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model to other schools looking to travel the AVID path.

"We are the exemplar — the model for how the AVID elective should be done," Stangier said. "Other schools can come to see how these strategies and the AVID elective are being implemented and applied to help students succeed."

Earlier this week, Stangier hosted a team from Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8, eager to observe the university preparatory program in action.

And in October, Heaton welcomed educators and administrators from throughout Pueblo City Schools (D60) and Calhan and Englewood school districts, eager to gain insight into the impact-making AVID strategies.

"As a demonstration school, we now can help to train, support and guide others on their quest to help students become college ready," Stangier said.

Solidarity, she added, is the driver behind the national designation.

"It is truly a testament of a collaborative effort by all students

and staff," Stangier said. "The teamwork and genuine care to ensure all students are prepared for their future has been our mission from the onset of this process."

"I have never been so proud of a group of people than I am of our staff and our students, who have worked so hard to reach this outstanding accomplishment."

Not only does Stangier credit AVID with helping to change and shape the lives of its participants, she said it has lifted up the school as a whole.

"We had been an 'Improvement' school in the state's school performance framework for as long as it's been in existence," said Stangier. "So when we went into AVID, and by building those strategies, we started to see the increase slowly."

"But last year, we went into 'Performance' for the first time ever in Heaton's history, and I believe that AVID was the reason behind that."

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