

Richardson ISD: Expanding Access and Academic Language to Accelerate Outcomes for Long-term Emergent Bilingual Students

A district's journey toward academic language, confidence, and college and career readiness.

Demonstrating the Impact of AVID

Richardson Independent School District (Richardson ISD) is accelerating outcomes for long-term emergent bilingual students through implementation of AVID Excel® by leveraging a focused approach that combines precise student identification, systems that guarantee access, and consistent academic language development instruction. For example, at Richardson West Junior High Arts and Technology Magnet, the AVID Excel system served 44 eighth graders in 2024–25 and demonstrated impressive outcomes:

- 43 students successfully completed honors or high school credit-bearing courses with a grade of C or better
- 13 completed Algebra I or a higher-level math course
- 25 were recommended for a full college-preparatory sequence in high school, demonstrating a clear shift from language support to long-term academic acceleration (Richardson West Junior High, 2026).

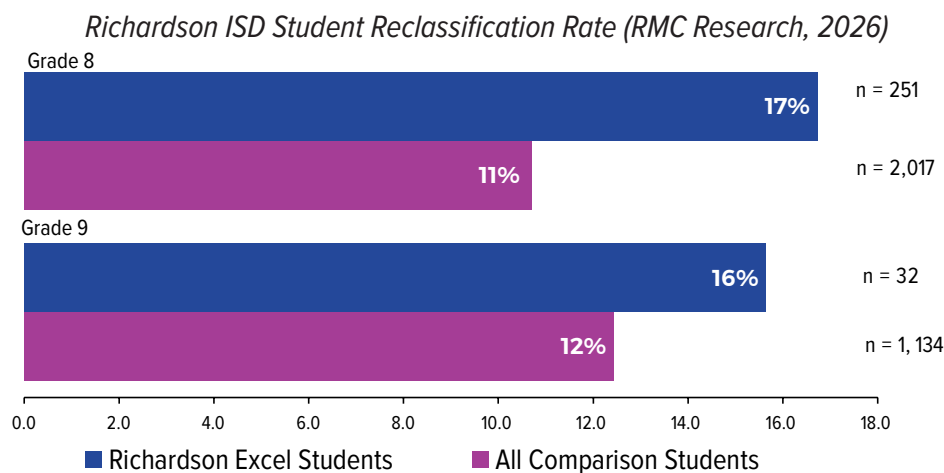
School Snapshot

- Serves grades 7-8 | Began AVID in 2003, AVID Excel in 2023
- Approximately 771 students; over 45% Hispanic/Latino
- 79 students in AVID Excel
- High number of AVID Excel students in their second year of AVID Excel (Richardson West Junior High, 2026).

Language proficiency outcomes are also improving at a faster rate, with Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) exits increasing to double-digit gains in recent years, which is in line with a recent study of AVID Excel that demonstrated statistically significant gains in English language proficiency and increased rates of reclassification (RMC Research Corporation, 2026). As one school leader shared:

“Before AVID Excel we would exit one or two students from TELPAS and once we implemented AVID Excel, our numbers went into double digits.” – Carissa Schwarzlose, Assistant Principal, Richardson West Junior High

This acceleration in language development is paired with strong engagement indicators, including a 94% attendance rate, signaling that students are both present and actively participating in their learning.



Demonstrating the Impact of AVID (cont.)

This success reflects Richardson ISD's deliberate, systemwide effort to expand access to rigorous coursework while strengthening academic language development and confidence for long-term emergent bilingual students. Since launching AVID Excel in 2015, the district is implementing the elective across five junior high schools; Richardson West Junior High Arts and Technology Magnet is an AVID National Demonstration School and is currently serving 85 AVID Excel scholars in grades 7 and 8. These students and many others across the district are benefiting from aligned identification practices, consistent instructional routines, and a sustained focus on acceleration.

Starting with a Clear Purpose

These results show a powerful shift among students who previously hesitated to participate in class, but now lead academically, access advanced coursework, and enter high school on a clear college- and career-ready trajectory. Richardson ISD's AVID Excel implementation is grounded in a clear understanding of the students it was designed to serve: long-term emergent bilingual students who had not yet passed the TELPAS or reached English proficiency after multiple years in U.S. schools. Richardson ISD serves over 12,000 emergent bilingual students (Richardson ISD, 2026a) and over 2,500 AVID secondary students, representing approximately 16% of the total secondary population (Richardson ISD, 2026b).

Leaders focus on long-term emergent bilingual students who can communicate socially but need assistance developing academic language and confidence. This ensures that AVID Excel remains asset-based and focuses on acceleration rather than remediation. Long-term English learners represent one of the most underserved student populations and require targeted, research-based supports rather than generalized interventions (RMC Research Corporation, 2026).



"AVID Excel scholars can speak conversational English with friends and teachers. They need support with using academic words to describe their learning and what they need help with. In AVID Excel, they practice language routines and build language skills which gives them confidence in their language ability."

- Josh Eason, AVID District Director



Recruiting with Precision and Purpose

Richardson ISD has established intentional systems to ensure specific access to AVID Excel for long-term emergent bilingual students. Through clearly defined identification and recruitment processes, the district consistently connects eligible students with AVID Excel services. At Richardson West Junior High, these efforts result in approximately 35 to 43 English learners per grade level participating in AVID Excel, demonstrating sustained and targeted recruitment of long-term emergent bilingual students (Richardson West Junior High, 2026). Key components of this access include:

Recruiting with Precision and Purpose (cont.)

- **Data-Informed Identification and Recruitment:** The AVID District Director, site leaders, and ESL district leaders use established criteria and multiple data points to identify and recruit potential AVID Excel scholars through the AVID application process. Students are considered for AVID Excel if they:
 - Have been designated as emergent bilingual for 5 years or more;
 - Have not yet earned “Meets” designation on the English Language Arts and Reading STAAR assessment
 - Have not yet achieved an advanced high rating on TELPAS.

This approach aligns with research showing the use of multiple measures, including language proficiency and academic performance, is effective for student recruitment and selection processes (RMC Research Corporation, 2026).

- **Guaranteed Course Schedule Alignment:** Once accepted into the program, scholars are scheduled for the AVID Excel Elective by the assistant principal, ensuring access to the program's targeted academic and language development supports.
- **Ongoing Recruitment and Outreach:** Counselors and staff continue to monitor student data and apply the same selection criteria to identify and recruit students who may not have initially applied but would benefit from participation in AVID Excel.

Together, these structures create multiple pathways for eligible students to access and benefit from AVID Excel programming.



“Our counselors are both part of our AVID Site Team. They are a very big part of recruiting students who might not have applied to AVID on their own...campus staff is also really important in this process.”

- Carissa Schwarzlose, Assistant Principal, Richardson West Junior High



Site and district leaders remove unnecessary barriers for their AVID Excel scholars to participate in the AVID Excel Summer Bridge program, which provides opportunities for relational capacity-building and early exposure to academic language routines. Summer Bridge and similar extended supports are key program components that strengthen student transitions and early engagement (RMC Research Corporation, 2026).



Creating a Culture of Confidence

AVID Excel teachers leverage AVID's Foundations of Instruction™ to create a learning environment that fosters positive relationships, high expectations, and meaningful student engagement. This intentional implementation creates a safe and supportive classroom where scholars feel comfortable taking academic risks while practicing language-building strategies and routines. Students consistently describe AVID Excel as a space where they feel safe to participate, share ideas, and learn from mistakes. Within this environment, long-term emergent bilingual scholars engage in daily structured speaking, writing, collaboration, and reflection routines that accelerate language development. As students strengthen their academic language skills, they also build confidence, develop a stronger sense of belonging, and increase their willingness to participate in class. Strong AVID Excel implementation fidelity, including the consistent use of instructional strategies, curriculum, and routines, is directly linked to stronger student outcomes. Students report meaningful, positive shifts in classroom participation and confidence, consistent with research findings that AVID Excel students develop stronger academic language, self-advocacy, and engagement over time (RMC Research Corporation, 2026).

"Students say that before [enrolling in AVID Excel], we wouldn't want to participate... now we lead in participation."

- Carissa Schwarzlose, Assistant Principal, Richardson West Junior High

The AVID teachers' work is reinforced by strong implementation structures at Richardson West Junior High School, including five AVID Excel sections and more than 22 hours of weekly Scholar Groups (Richardson West Junior High, 2026). Through critical reading, vocabulary development, and inquiry-based analysis, Scholar Groups provide students with structured opportunities to collaboratively deepen language proficiency, strengthen comprehension, and develop critical thinking skills through interacting with complex texts.

"We're building the confidence in the student to take these skills and routines beyond the AVID Excel classroom"

- Josh Eason, AVID District Director

Strengthening Academic Language by Aligning Instruction Across Classrooms

Richardson West Junior High already prioritized academic language learning before implementing AVID Excel, including using AVID academic language scripts schoolwide. AVID Excel builds upon and accelerates that initiative, aligning with existing instructional priorities. School staff embodies a shared instructional expectation that guides practice across all classrooms: "We write as we speak and we speak as we write." These practices are grounded in the AVID WICOR® framework—writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading—and extend beyond the Excel classroom, benefiting multilingual learners and all students schoolwide.

"When a student speaks, they use sentence stems... when they write, they use complete sentences with academic vocabulary."

- Carissa Schwarzlose, Assistant Principal, Richardson West Junior High

Strengthening Academic Language by Aligning Instruction Across Classrooms (cont.)

The initiative to use AVID academic language scripts at Richardson West Junior High also aligns to the six core instructional strands of AVID Excel—reading, writing, oral language, academic vocabulary, study skills, and self-determination and leadership—which lead to consistent development of academic language. These language routines campuswide create consistent learning experiences for all students throughout their day.

Richardson ISD's work on aligning initiatives is strengthened through staffing and professional learning structures. At Richardson West Junior High, 40% of educators have attended 12 hours or more of AVID-led professional learning (Richardson West Junior High, 2026), and all staff members are exposed to language building strategies through other structures on campus that support consistency of instructional practice across classrooms. This is aligned with national research on AVID Excel implementation, which found that over 80% of educators at AVID Excel schools report increased ability to engage and champion multilingual learners across the campus (RMC Research Corporation, 2026).

"They move from a teacher being trained to a teacher embodying the practice."
- Josh Eason, AVID

Looking Ahead

Richardson ISD continues to refine and strengthen its AVID Excel implementation by deepening instructional alignment, expanding access for long-term emergent bilingual students, and building educator capacity to reinforce academic language development. As students transition to high school, the district remains focused on ensuring that AVID Excel scholars enter the AVID Elective prepared to access rigorous coursework, advocate for their learning needs, and continue on a college- and career-ready pathway. By sustaining a focus on precise identification, consistent instructional practices, and schoolwide support for academic language development, Richardson ISD is creating opportunities for more students to build confidence, accelerate language growth, and achieve long-term academic success.

Applying Lessons from Richardson ISD

Here are the most important actions Richardson ISD took to achieve success with their students:

Recruit AVID Excel students with precision

- Align ESL, AVID, and site leaders around shared student selection criteria.
- Use multiple data points, including language proficiency and academic performance.
- Actively recruit students who may not self-select into advanced academic opportunities.

Build systems that guarantee access

- Schedule accepted students directly into the AVID Excel elective.
- Use Summer Bridge to assist onboarding, relationship-building, and early exposure to academic language routines.
- Remove barriers through coordinated outreach and enrollment practices.

Applying Lessons from Richardson ISD (cont.)

Implement AVID Excel with consistency and fidelity

- Utilize the AVID Excel curriculum to provide structured opportunities for language development.
- Implement Scholar Groups consistently to reinforce reading, writing, listening, and speaking routines
- Create a safe and supportive environment where students can practice academic language and take academic risks.

Align academic language development across the campus

- Reinforce AVID Excel language routines through aligned schoolwide instructional practices that provide students with consistent opportunities to use academic language throughout the day.
- Build educator capacity through ongoing professional learning and collaboration.
- Connect AVID Excel practices to broader campus instructional priorities.

References

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For deeper learning and additional research that demonstrates the effectiveness of AVID, please visit
>>> **avid.org/research**

If you have any specific questions, please contact
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