

# WISCAPE

Wisconsin Center for the Advancement  
of Postsecondary Education

[www.wiscape.wisc.edu](http://www.wiscape.wisc.edu)



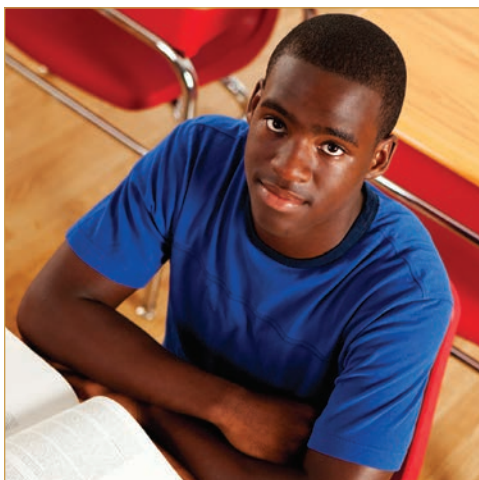
A Boys & Girls Club and Madison  
Metropolitan School District Partnership

[www.avidtops.org](http://www.avidtops.org)

**Appendix 000-9-4**  
**March 18, 2013**

## AVID/TOPS 2011–2012

# District Findings: Executive Summary



For the past three years, WISCAPE has partnered with the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County to conduct an annual assessment of the Advancement Via Individual Determination/Teens of Promise (AVID/TOPS) program. AVID/TOPS is a collaborative partnership between MMSD and the Boys & Girls Club designed to increase college preparation, postsecondary educational access and degree attainment, and academic achievement for under-represented students (defined as low-income students and students of color) in the academic middle (students with a GPA between 2.0 and 3.5). The program operates in four MMSD high schools.

The 2011-12 WISCAPE report analyzes measurable outcomes for 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students that reflect the program's stated goals.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1** *How do AVID/TOPS students compare to academically and demographically similar non-AVID/TOPS peers?*
- 2** *In particular, how do low-income students and students of color in AVID/TOPS compare to similar non-AVID/TOPS peers?*



# OVERALL PROGRAM

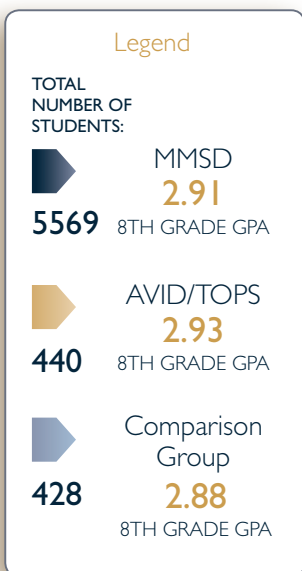
To answer the guiding research questions, we developed a comparison group of academically and demographically similar non-participants to compare outcomes with AVID/TOPS students based on 8th grade pre-participation data. Using a statistical matching method called propensity score matching, we matched every AVID/TOPS student with a similar non-AVID/TOPS student at the same high school to create the comparison group.

Using these groups, we test for statistically and practically significant differences on key measures of *academic preparation* (cumulative GPA, enrollment and GPA in core courses, enrollment and GPA in AP/Honors courses, and credit attainment), *college knowledge* (test-taking rates and performance on the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT tests), and *student engagement* (attendance rates and behavioral referrals).

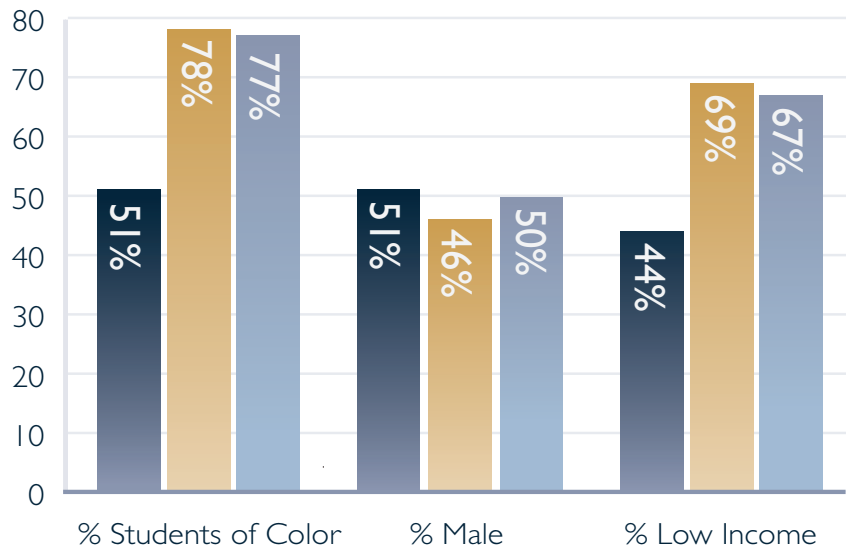
Statistically significant differences are differences that are unlikely to have occurred through random chance and are large enough to reflect meaningful differences in practice. In this report, we highlight statistically significant differences with a red symbol: ✖. To focus attention on underrepresented students' achievement, we disaggregated the measures by income and race. Though we report disaggregated findings, many of these groups are not mutually exclusive; for example, low-income students may also be African-American and therefore also represented in that data disaggregation. We do not report data from disaggregated groups that have fewer than five students in them. We then analyze this data at the program, grade cohort, and high school levels.

This assessment does not make causal claims about AVID/TOPS, nor does it present a longitudinal analysis of AVID/TOPS student achievement. Rather, the findings represent a single snapshot for achievement during the 2011–12 school year of the program's 9th, 10th, and 11th graders.

## KEY FINDINGS



## Student Characteristics



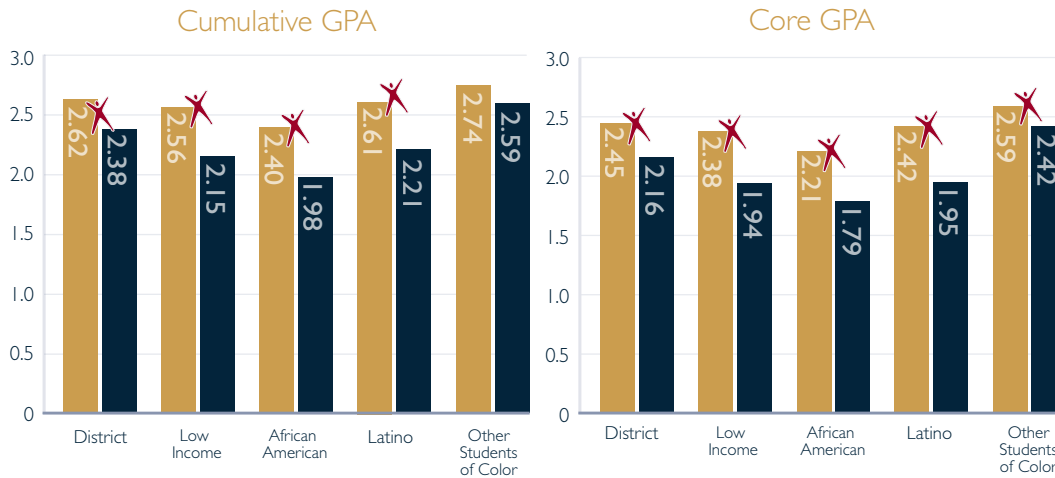
# District Findings

## KEY FINDING 1

**1** AVID/TOPS students have higher cumulative and core GPAs than their comparison group peers. Core GPA is the grade point average for core academic subjects: math, English, science, and social studies.

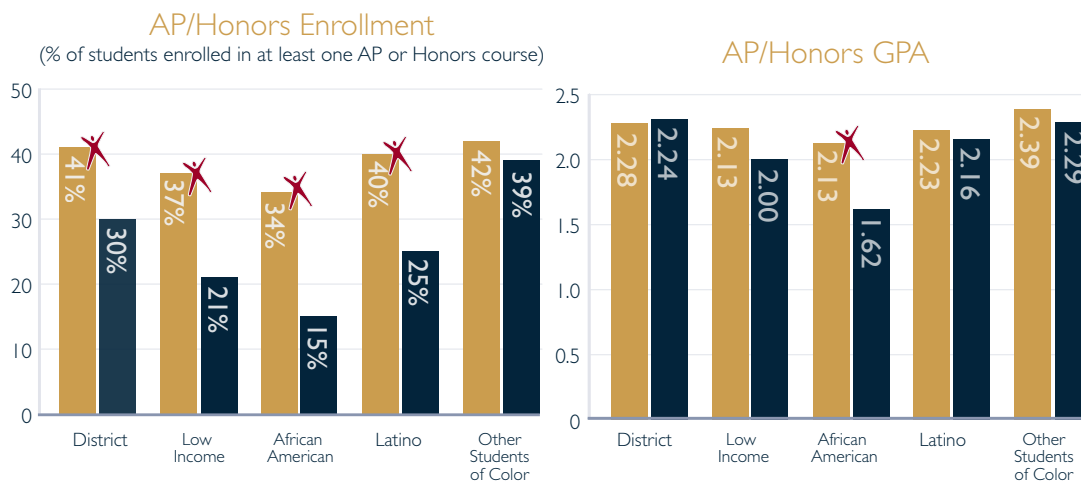
**Legend**

- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group
- ✖ Difference is statistically significant



## KEY FINDING 2

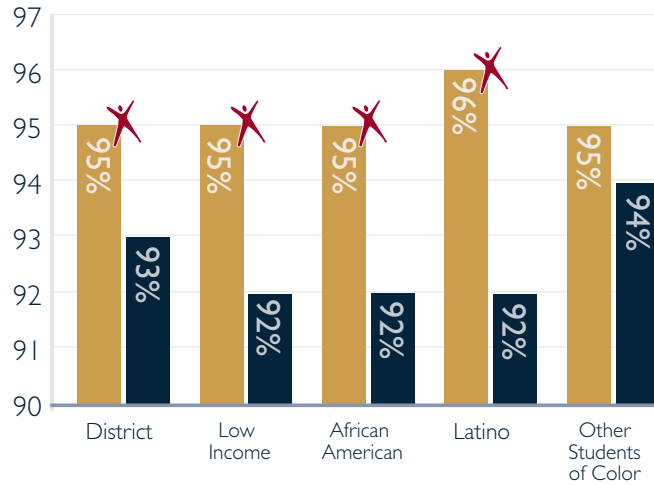
**2** AVID/TOPS students enroll in AP and Honors courses at higher rates than their comparison group peers. In particular, African American AVID/TOPS students earn higher grades in those courses than comparison group students.



# District Findings

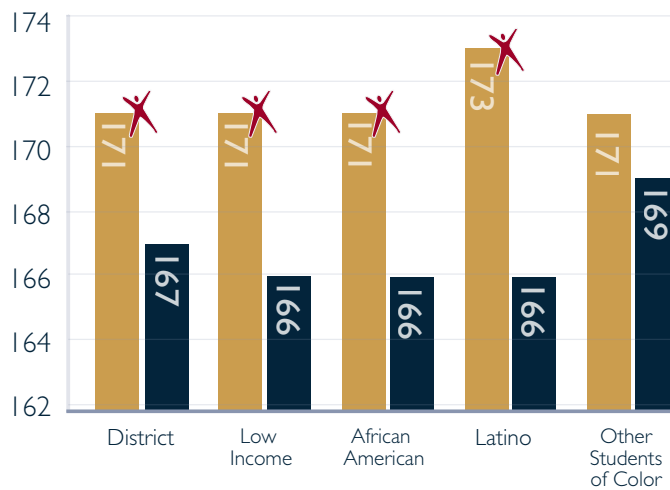
## KEY FINDING 3

### Attendance Rate (%)



**3** AVID/TOPS students have higher attendance rates than their comparison group peers.

### Attendance (Days Present)



There are 180 days in the school year. MMSD's attendance goal is 94%, or 169 days.

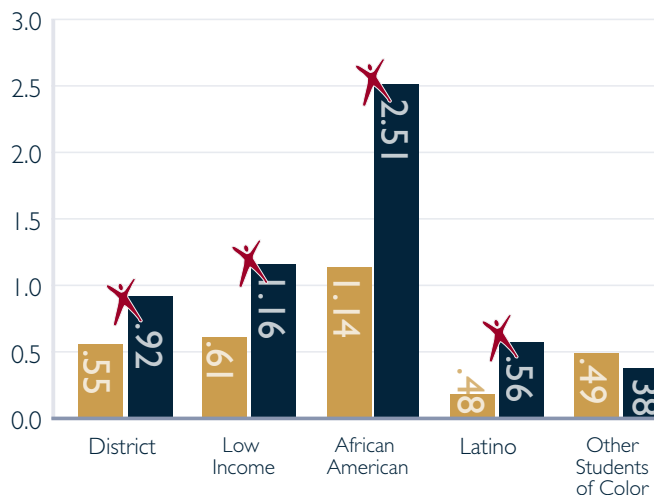
#### Legend

- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group

**\*** Difference is statistically significant

## KEY FINDING 4

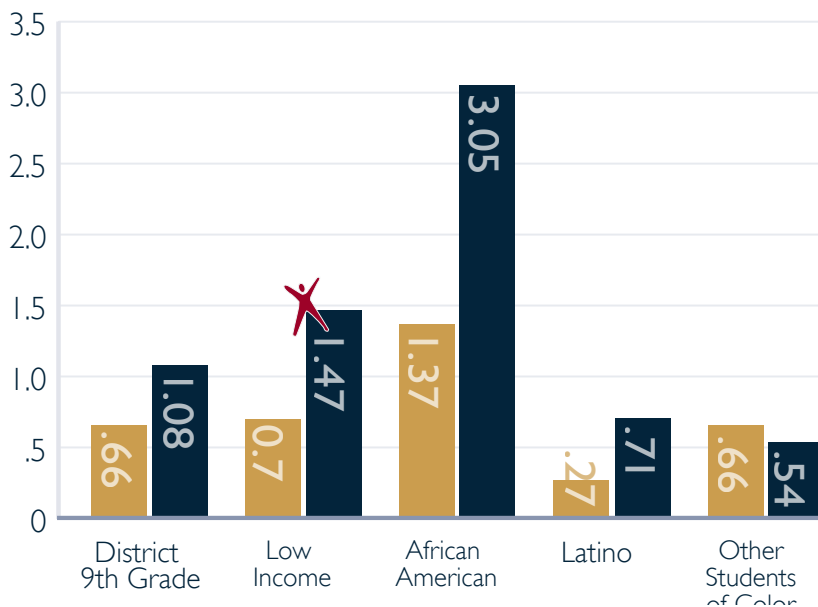
### Behavioral Referrals



**4** AVID/TOPS students have fewer numbers of behavioral referrals than comparison group students.

Overall, **AVID/TOPS** 9th graders have similar test scores and course enrollment rates as comparison group 9th graders. The differences are relatively small and not statistically or practically significant. Nonetheless, we see differences between AVID/TOPS and comparison group students in a few notable places.

### 9th Grade Behavioral Referrals



Legend

- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group
- Difference is statistically significant

**1** **AVID/TOPS** students have fewer behavioral referrals than their comparison group peers, particularly among low-income students.

Though African American comparison group students earned more behavioral referrals than African American AVID/TOPS students, this difference is not considered statistically significant. However, the difference is large enough to yield a practical difference in students' engagement.

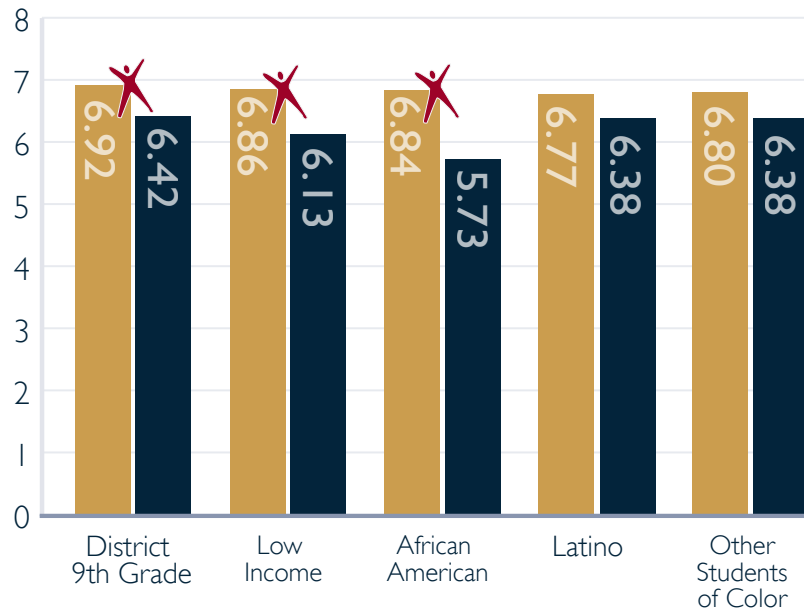
## KEY FINDING 2

2 Even as freshmen, **AVID/TOPS** students attain more credits and take more core courses than their comparison group peers. These differences are especially pronounced for African American 9th graders.

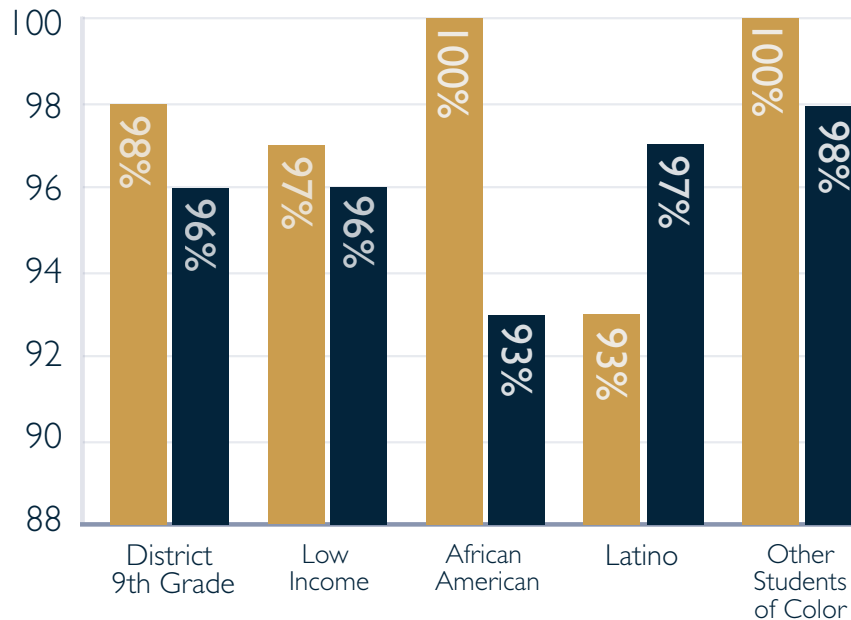
**Legend**

- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group
- ✕ Difference is statistically significant

### 9th Grade Credit Attainment



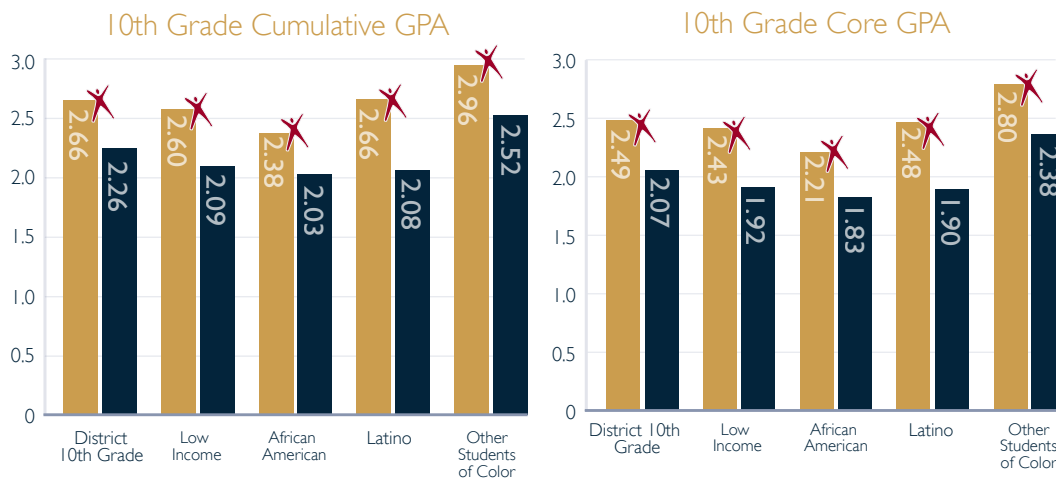
### 9th Grade Core Course Enrollment (% of students enrolled in all four core courses)



# 10th Grade District

## KEY FINDING 1

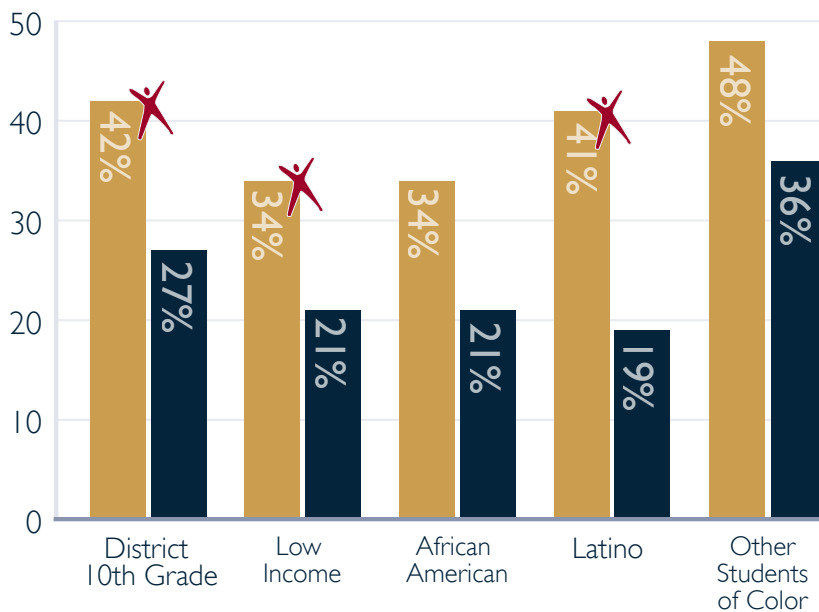
**1** **AVID/TOPS** 10th grade students have higher core GPAs (2.49 vs. 2.07) and cumulative GPAs (2.66 vs. 2.26) than their comparison group peers. These differences are statistically significant.



## KEY FINDING 2

**2** **AVID/TOPS** 10th grade students take more AP and Honors courses than their comparison group peers.

**10th Grade AP/Honors Enrollment**  
(% of students enrolled in at least one AP or Honors course)



**Legend**

- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group
- Difference is statistically significant

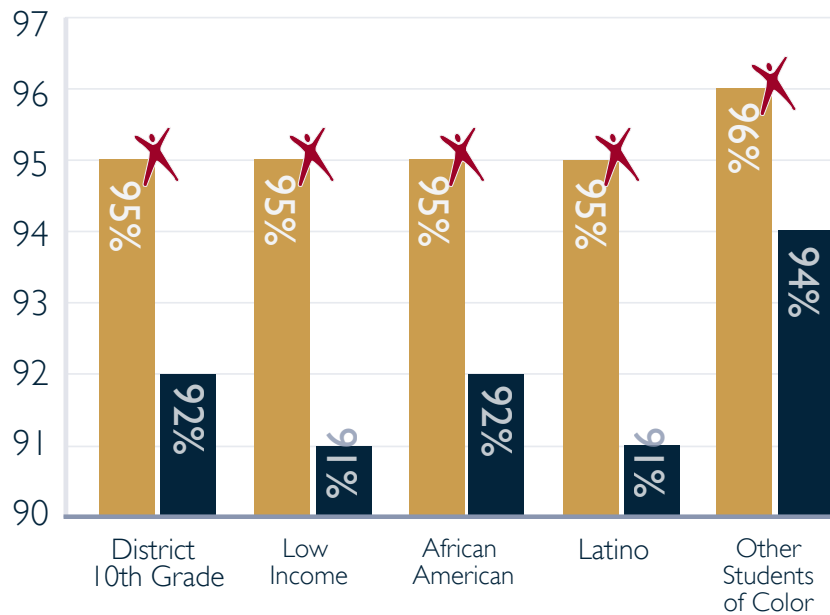
## KEY FINDING 3

**Legend**

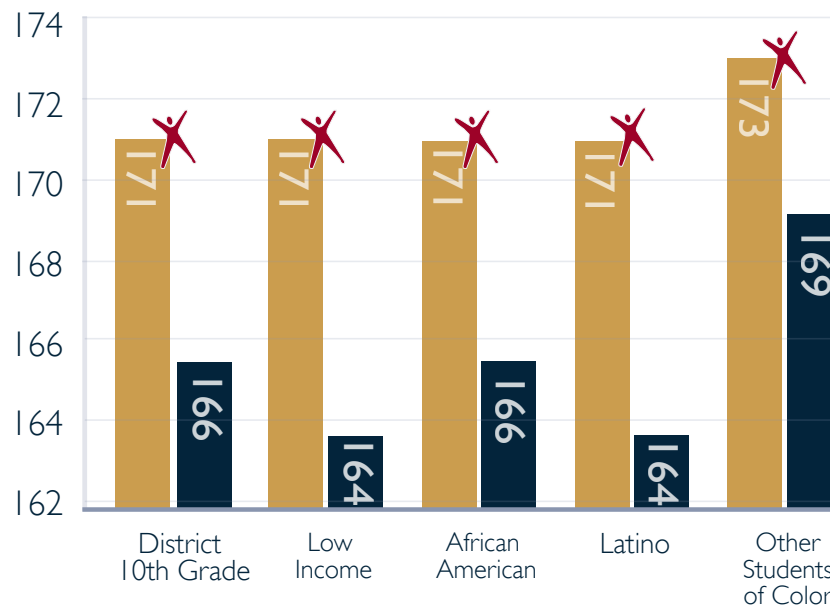
- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group
- ✕ Difference is statistically significant

**3 AVID/TOPS** 10th grade students have higher attendance rates than their comparison group peers. This difference is especially striking for 10th grade Latino students in AVID/TOPS, who attend school an average of seven days more than their comparison group peers.

### 10th Grade Attendance Rate



### 10th Grade Attendance (Days Present)





# 11th Grade District

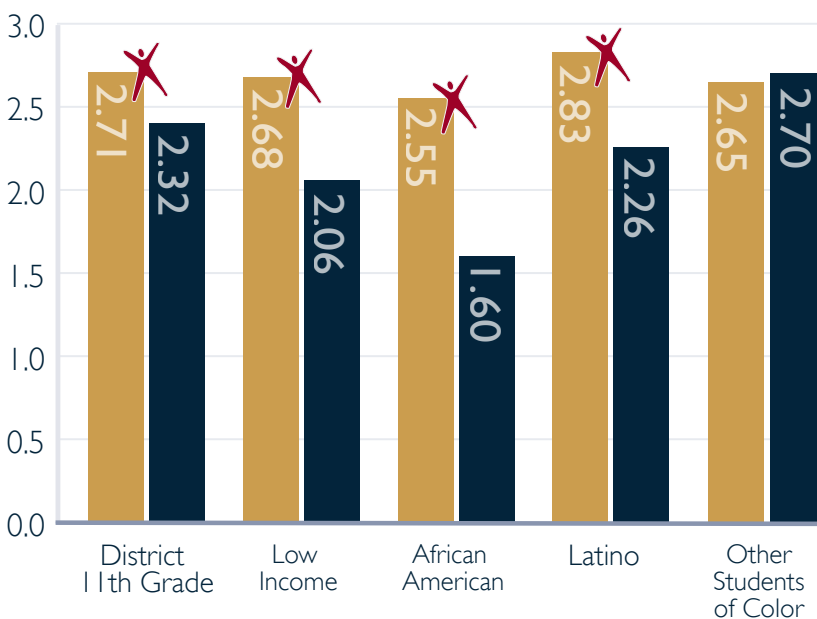
## KEY FINDING |

**1** AVID/TOPS students have significantly higher cumulative GPAs (2.71 vs. 2.32) and core GPAs (2.53 vs. 2.06) compared to their comparison group peers. These differences are especially striking for core GPAs among low-income students (2.49 vs. 1.79) and African-American students (2.34 vs. 1.42).

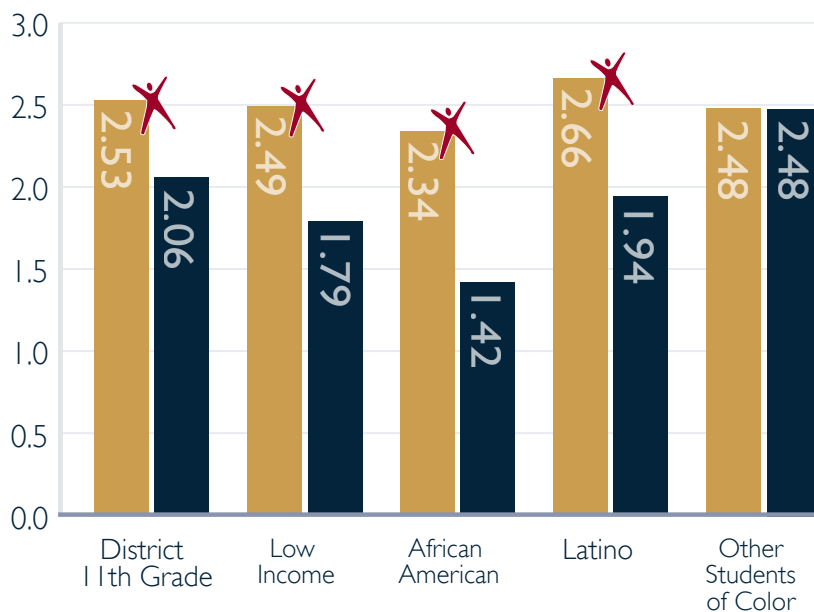
Legend

- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group
- Difference is statistically significant

### 11th Grade Cumulative GPA



### 11th Grade Core GPA



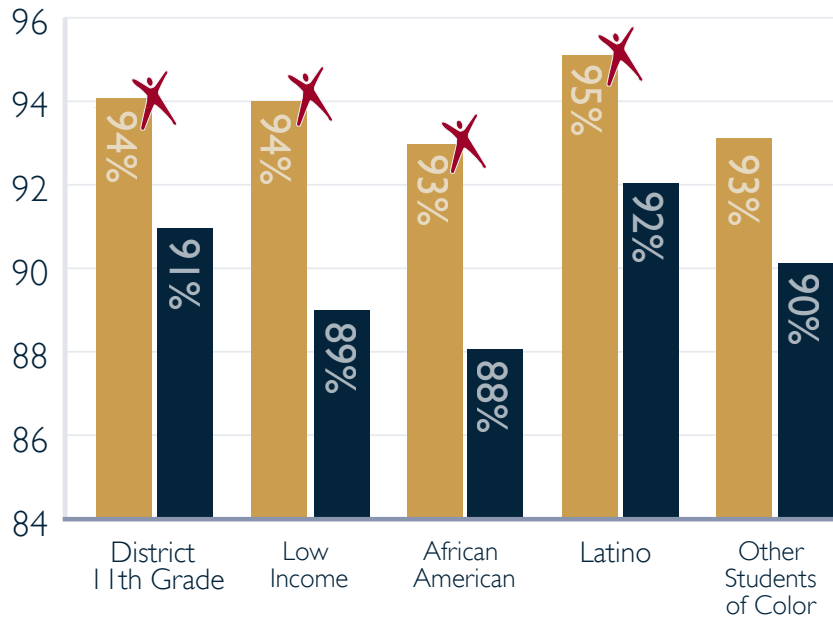
## KEY FINDING 2

**Legend**

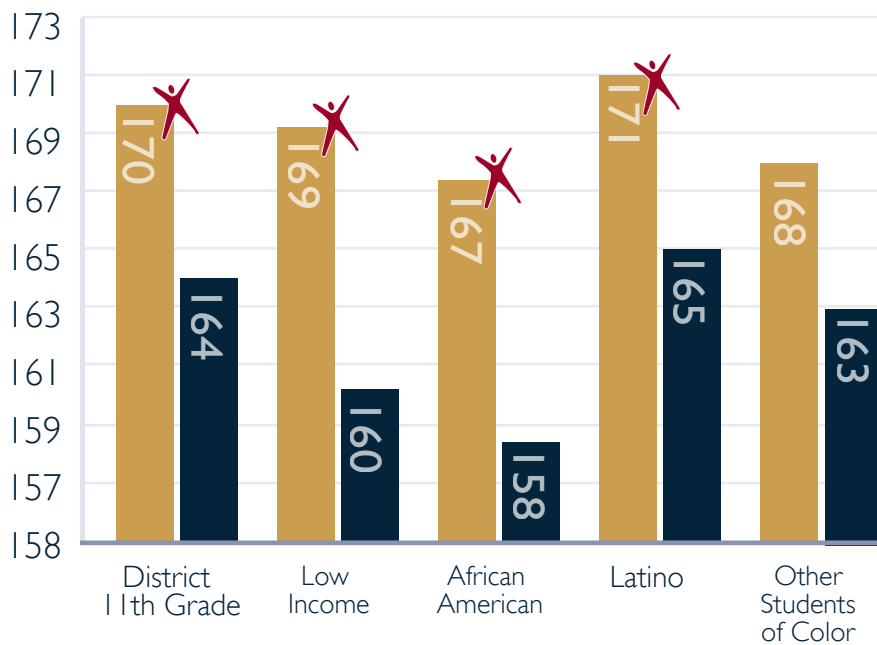
- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group
- ✕ Difference is statistically significant

**2** AVID/TOPS students have significantly higher attendance rates than their comparison group peers (94.2% vs. 90.8%). For example, African American AVID/TOPS students attend school an average of ten more days than their comparison group peers.

### 11th Grade Attendance Rates

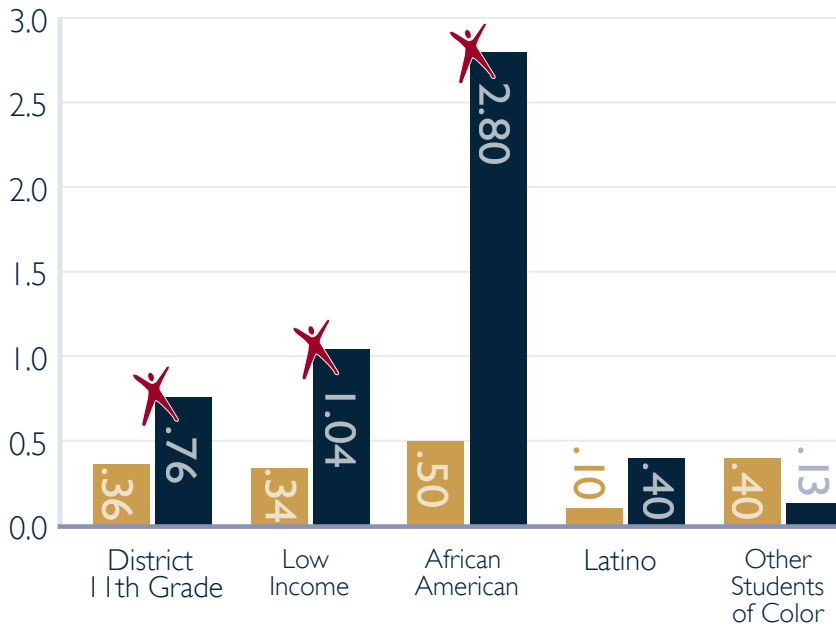


### 11th Grade Attendance (Days Present)



**3** AVID/TOPS students have lower average behavioral referrals than their comparison group peers (0.36 vs. 0.76). The difference is especially large for low-income and African American students.

### 11th Grade Behavioral Referrals



**Legend**

- AVID/TOPS
- Comparison Group
- X Difference is statistically significant

## CONCLUSION

Over the past three years, WISCAPE has worked with MMSD and the Boys & Girls Club to continually refine the evaluation of the AVID/TOPS program. In addition to the public release of key findings, this year's report reflects a more precise and accurate comparison between AVID/TOPS students and their comparison group peers than in previous reports. Though the report still does not allow for causal conclusions about the effect of AVID/TOPS on students' achievement, this improved methodology enables us to more confidently isolate the program's effects on participating students relative to similar students who do not participate in AVID/TOPS. For future reports, we plan to strengthen the research design in order to more robustly understand the effect of the AVID/TOPS program on students' high school achievement and postsecondary education access and success.

# WISCAPE

*aims to inform  
and improve  
postsecondary  
education policy,  
research, and  
practice through  
the creation and  
exchange of  
knowledge.*

The Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education (WISCAPE) was established in 2001 on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus to study the challenges confronting postsecondary education while bringing together key stakeholders to discuss issues and solutions. The center is housed in the School of Education.

## **MISSION**

WISCAPE recognizes that colleges and universities make significant contributions to society. To help these institutions better serve the public good, the center aims to inform and improve postsecondary education policy, research, and practice through the creation and exchange of knowledge.

## **WISCAPE'S WORK**

In pursuit of this goal, WISCAPE conducts and supports research projects; sponsors public programs; produces and distributes publications; and convenes and fosters communication among key stakeholder groups.

For more information on this report, contact Eleni Schirmer at [eschirmer@wisc.edu](mailto:eschirmer@wisc.edu).



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