



# GOOSE CREEK

## CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Donated hardhats spur hardwork in REL classroom

The oldest and most reliable way of communicating inspiration and aspiration is through a simple motto.

A good motto is the antithesis of a cheesy marketing slogan or bureaucratic vision statement. It isn't hip: it's old-fashioned and enduring.

"Building My Future with Purpose" fits the bill. That's the motto adopted by Robert E. Lee High School teachers and students in the AVID program this semester.

AVID — Advancement Via Individual Determination — is a preparatory program offered at each Goose Creek CISD high school to help students enhance their chances of going to college by improving their academic focus and organizational skills.

And to help drive the new motto home with his students, Lee AVID campus coordinator Bill Miller enlisted the folks at Shell Oil who donated 80 hard hats to Lee's 80 AVID students.

Miller explains the hard-hat deal:

"Three days a week we conduct tutorial sessions in the AVID elective class. These tutorials are very organized and methodical ... the idea is that when we engage in tutorials throughout the week, we put our hard hats on during those t-sessions. In essence, it symbolizes a construction zone. When that hat goes on, they get in a building mode. Each one of them understands that this is all a part of the process of building their future with purpose."

During the Jan. 22 hard-hat presentation, Shell employees Thomas Paden and Robert Lazarus — both Robert E. Lee High School graduates — spoke to the AVID teachers and students about how their education helped them in their positions with Shell.

The men also talked about how companies such as Shell are always seeking individually determined people that have the solid critical thinking and leadership skills that AVID teaches.

"We target the student that is considered in the middle and recruit them into our program. If they are not enrolled in a Pre-AP or AP course we place them in one," Miller said. "We back them with support by also putting them into an AVID elective class where we teach them organizational, time-management, note-taking, communication, leadership, test-taking, and study skills."

AVID students must take at least one advanced level course (pre-Advanced Placement or Advanced Placement), but many take more. AVID then provides the necessary extra tutoring during the AVID class.

AVID is not extracurricular. Its classes are part of the school day, taught by pre-AP and AP teachers who stay with the students through their years of high school, giving continuity to personal and academic relationships.

To help the students, a site team for every level of AVID is made up of administrators, counselors, teachers from each advanced level core course and the AVID elective teacher.

Students are selected based on recommendations, grades, TAKS scores, self-determination, and other qualifications stipulated by the AVID program.

Robert E. Lee High School Principal Bruce Davis said in the four years that he has been running Lee High School, the AVID program continues to get better and better. "The program has really inspired the students and made them believe in their future," he said. To Miller, the success of Lee's AVID program lies in its teachers and staff.

"Our AVID teachers are incredible. Sheila Gruver and Emily Patrick are so committed to the common goal of having our students become independent learners and college-ready," Miller said.

Lee's AVID tutors, known as academic coaches, are the heartbeat of the program, Miller said. "Rachael Hayes, Reggie Butler, Vanesa Lopez, Madeline Cisneros, Cynthia Garcia, Marina Chavez, Kelli Muscarello, Kiki Merritt, and Shamontae Hebert go above and beyond the call of duty," he said. "The students absolutely love them, and it's showing in their academic achievement."

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