

# From Surviving to Thriving: Harnessing the Power of AVID and GLAD®

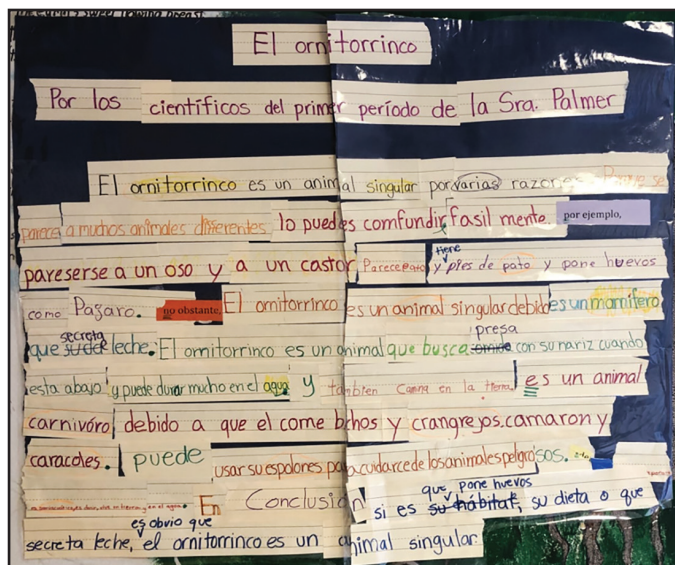
by Ryan Palmer—Bilingual Educator, Harrison Middle School, Albuquerque, NM

I will start with a disclaimer: my path to the teaching profession has not been a traditional one. I do not have an undergraduate degree in education. I was in my late 20s when I realized that I was happiest when I was helping people grow linguistically, and so I started taking graduate-level classes in Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies at the University of New Mexico. Thus, I was exposed to OCDE Project GLAD® strategies like the Pictorial Input Chart, the Here-There Chants, and the ELD Review before I ever set foot in a classroom. When I eventually became a long-term substitute, I used what I remembered of those GLAD strategies to survive. That first semester, I used any strategy I could get my hands on to attempt to deliver engaging, comprehensible lessons to my eighth-grade social studies students.

The following school year, I was a teacher of record, but on the first day of school I had taken exactly zero classes in lesson planning, classroom management, assessment, unit design, or pedagogy. I found myself going to as many free after-school trainings as I could. Two of those trainings gave me a basic understanding of AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination. I began to use the Cornell Notes method with my students to teach them to take notes and interact with those notes afterwards.

For example, if my students took notes on Monday, I would ask them to review those notes and highlight the most important ideas for Tuesday's bell ringer. Their homework on Tuesday would be to circle the key words. On Wednesday, their bell

ringer would be to review their notes and chunk them into sections. Their homework on Wednesday would be to write one possible test question per chunk of notes in the left-hand ("skinny") column of their Cornell notes paper. Their bell ringer on Thursday would be to write a summary at the bottom of their page of Cornell notes. These AVID strategies are designed to help students learn how to study while combatting what AVID calls "the curve of forgetfulness" ([avid.org](http://avid.org)).



A combination of AVID and Project GLAD® strategies support Ms. Palmer's students in her Spanish language arts class.

I also required my students to keep an Interactive Language Notebook, or ILN. By

using ILNs in my classroom, my students create and interact with a notebook that serves as a personal-learning archive and a reference tool. This subject-specific notebook holds Cornell notes, assignments, reflections, learning logs, and summaries. Maintaining an ILN helps my students stay organized. They couldn't lose their graphic organizers because they cut out and glued their graphic organizers into specific pages of their ILN. I also use the ILNs as a way to teach textual features. The first three pages are the table of contents for the whole notebook, while the last several pages serve as a reference section where students cut out and glue a glossary of literary terms, their personal vocabulary page, their personal spelling page, and their personal "Important Information" page.

OCDE Project GLAD® and AVID are principally composed of teaching best practices. Neither program claims to have invented something brand new. For me, nearly every strategy that I learned from the AVID trainings was immediately

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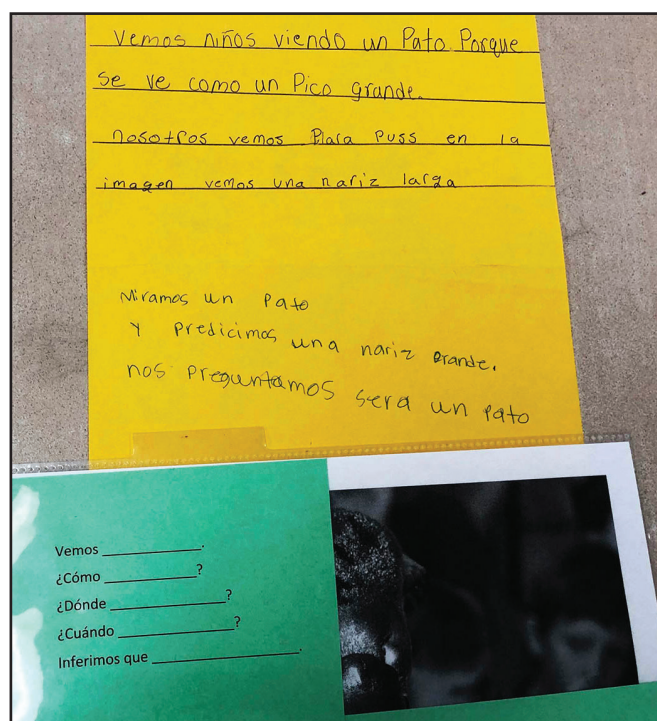
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applicable as a way to help my students achieve at a higher level. I had no compunctions about combining AVID strategies with what I remembered from my ESL methods class.

I can look back on that first full year in the classroom and cringe. I made so many mistakes! Thankfully, my principals must have taken the long view with me, since they invited me to return the following year, this time as the Spanish Language Arts teacher. Thanks to a 2-year partnership with Dual Language Education of New Mexico (DLeNM) and my school district's department of Language and Cultural Equity (LCE), all six of the core dual language teachers were sponsored to attend Tier I OCDE Project GLAD® training. Between the 2-day Research and Theory workshop and the 4-day in-class demonstration, the six of us knew enough to get started experimenting with GLAD strategies.

At the end of the school year, LCE invited all Spanish language arts teachers to attend professional development regarding a new K-12 curriculum that the district had purchased from Santillana Educación S. L.. I almost instantly fell in love with the first short story in the sixth-grade book: “*El ornitorrinco*,” by Argentine writer Carmen Vázquez-Vigo. In the short story, a platypus begins to question his identity after a group of young humans discuss whether he is a bear, a featherless duck, a rooster *sin cresta*, or a beaver. However, I knew that the text itself would not be accessible to my sixth graders due to a lack of prior knowledge, so I decided to use some GLAD strategies to build background understanding of the *ornitorrinco*, or platypus.

I started with a modified version of GLAD Observation Charts. I had printed out about 14 different pictures of platypuses in action. I put each picture inside a sheet protector. Then, in order both to create a greater sense of intellectual curiosity and to help students hone in on specific details, I used cardstock to cover up 75% of the picture. Using sentence frames, students worked with a partner to discuss and record what they observed, wondered, and predicted. After interacting with just 25% of the picture, students were allowed to remove the cardstock and see the rest of the picture.



*A modified Observation Chart gives pairs of students the opportunity to make observations, pose questions, and make hypotheses.*

After this activity, I created a Pictorial Input Chart, a large chart with categories of information, on the platypus. I wanted us to write a shared writing paragraph (a Cooperative Strip Paragraph) to synthesize why the platypus is such a strange animal, but I decided to use some AVID strategies to help each team of students create the sentence they would add to the class paragraph.

One of AVID's best-known strategies is the use of Cornell notes to help students interact with their notes and master content. I decided to blend the



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Pictorial Input Chart, the Cornell method, and the Cooperative Strip Paragraph in order to help students take ownership of their learning process. First, I took a picture with my cell phone of the *ornitorrinco* Input Chart that I had created in front of the students. I then printed out black-and-white pictures of the chart for students to cut out and glue into the “notes” section of an AVID Cornell note template. That first day with the notes, students wrote in the topic and essential question, circled key words, and highlighted key ideas. The following day, I directed my students’ attention to the essential question of the *ornitorrinco* Cornell notes: *¿Por qué es el ornitorrinco un animal singular?* Why is the platypus an unusual animal? I asked students to reflect on the information they acquired through the written text and the Input Chart and write their own answer to this essential question in the summary section of the Cornell note paper. Students read their individual answers to the rest of their four-person team. Finally, team members collaborated to combine, revise, and ultimately choose which sentence they wanted to write down on a sentence strip to add to the class paragraph. We then revised and edited the paragraph as a class.

I have also used Cornell notes for extended 10-2s I give my students when I present input charts. Students know that when I am first presenting an input chart, my expectation is that they are 100% focused on the chart and me; they should not be writing. However, I can print off copies of Cornell notes ahead of time with questions written in the left-hand column. The students can refer to those questions when I give them 2 minutes to turn and talk to an elbow partner to process the information I presented to them in the 10 minutes prior. During their 2-minute processing time, students discuss the questions orally before writing (or sketching) their answer in the right-hand column.

One way to target academic vocabulary during 10-2s is the use of a Communal Word Bank. With this AVID strategy, you let students know that they will be discussing a certain topic with a partner and you ask them to call out key vocabulary words that might be important to use

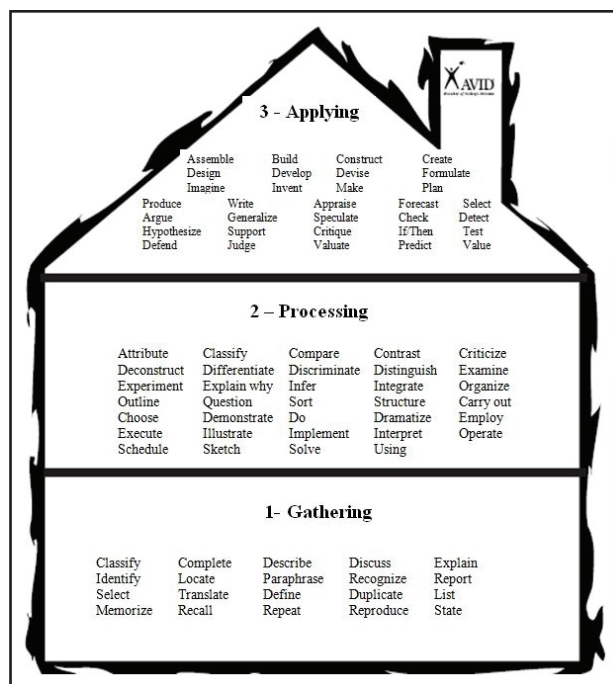
during their discussion. You scribe four to eight vocabulary words on the board and challenge students to correctly use as many of those words as they can in their responses. If you call on students to share out what they discussed, you can ask the other students to practice active listening and snap their fingers any time they hear those communal vocabulary words being used.

Another AVID strategy that works well with GLAD strategies is a reading strategy called “Inside-Outside-Outside.” This strategy is a way to help readers increase their independence and be able to decipher what unknown words mean. The premise is that when a reader encounters a word that they do not understand, they should first look *inside* the word itself for word parts, cognates, and related words. Sometimes, looking “inside” the word is all they need in order to figure out what the word means. However, if the reader still doesn’t know what the word means, the reader should look *outside* the word for context clues. If, after looking for context clues, the reader still doesn’t understand what the word means, the reader is allowed to look *outside* the text itself, in a dictionary or thesaurus, for the official meaning. The final step is writing a definition in their own words of what the word means. This strategy can be part of “think-alouds” during whole-class instruction and explicitly modeled during small-group instruction.

In “literature circles,” one of the assigned roles is that of Questioner. I taught my students about Costa’s three levels of questions (gathering, processing, and applying) so that the Questioner could practice crafting questions from each of the three levels (Costa & Kallick, 2008). AVID depicts Costa’s levels of questions as three levels of a house, with Level 1 being the foundation for all subsequent levels. I also included a picture of a traffic light and connected each level with a color. Level 3 questions were red because you have to “stop and think” in order to answer them. Both AVID and GLAD use activities that require student-generated questions. By explicitly teaching my students about Costa’s three levels of questions, I helped them to engage in more serious inquiry.

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This image of Costa's Levels of Questions serves as a scaffold for students during literature circles. Other AVID resources can be found at [avid.org](http://avid.org).

Above all, my experiences with AVID and OCDE Project GLAD® have reinforced the importance of our agency as teachers. We get to choose how we are going to use different techniques and resources in our class. It is our privilege to experiment with strategies until we find out what works best for our students. I originally started using AVID and GLAD together as a way to survive my first years in the classroom ... and to help my students survive me! In the process, I learned that students yearn for chances to write academically, engage in authentic inquiry, collaborate effectively, organize their thoughts and their resources, and read engaging texts. I have loved seeing how these strategies combine to help my students and me to thrive!

### References

Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B., (2008) *Learning and leading with habits of mind: 16 essential characteristics for success*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

# SAVE THE DATE

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