



Literacy Instruction at the University Park Campus School

University Park Campus School

The University Park Campus School, small, grade 7-12 secondary school in Worcester, Massachusetts, has generated an unparalleled record of achievement since opening in 1997. Admitted through an open lottery, all students have passed the MCAS graduation requirement exam on the first try and all graduates have gone on to attend college. UPCS is a Worcester Public School which operates in close partnership with its neighbor Clark University. Students at UPCS are junior members of the Clark community, enabling them to use the campus, interact with students and take college courses. Upon graduation, UPCS students may attend Clark tuition free if they are admitted through the regular admission process.

Literacy Program at UPCS

Students get better at writing by writing and students get better at reading by reading. This philosophy, remarkable perhaps only for its simplicity, drives instructional practice at UPCS. By focusing on literacy in every classroom with a school-wide program of literacy across the curriculum, pernicious skills gaps rapidly disappear, enabling all students to achieve at high levels and graduate from high school fully prepared for higher education. Listed below are the critical design elements of UPCS' Literacy Program.

- *Focus on Writing-to-Learn Activities:* "Writing to learn" activities simultaneously improve students' literacy skills and deepen their content knowledge. These activities are the foundation of the UPCS curriculum, which has led to universal success for its students. They allow teachers to differentiate their instruction, encouraging and challenging students of all levels within a single classroom.
- *Create a shared vision for success:* The mission of the University Park Campus School is to prepare every student for college.
- *Appoint a Literacy Coordinator:* An English teacher serves as literacy coordinator. In this role, he identifies standards which content-area teachers can address in their classrooms and trains them to implement effective instructional practices in reading and writing.
- *Create a shared vocabulary and common expectations:* For literacy across the curriculum to be successful, its core elements must be used by every teacher in every class. Through discussion among teachers at all grade levels, teachers must agree upon a common school-wide writing rubric and aligned vertical expectations. Teachers also establish a common language around literacy that is used in all classrooms.
- *Analyze Data for Student Success:* All teachers analyze data of incoming students to tailor curriculum and instruction to the unique needs of each incoming group.
- *Offer Extra Support for Students:* Even with a focus on literacy in all classes, the regular school year and regular school day is not enough time for students to achieve academic excellence necessary for college matriculation. All incoming students participate in a three-week literacy themed summer program and the school sponsors before and after-school homework sessions. For students who continue to struggle, the school enlists an elementary school reading specialist to support them individually.