



University Park Campus School

An Unparalleled Record of Achievement

Recognized as a national model by the Education Trust, the Alliance for Excellent Education, and Newsweek Magazine, the University Park Campus School has compiled an unparalleled record of academic achievement since opening its doors in 1997. UPCS, a grade 7–12 school serving 231 students, has ranked first among urban schools serving low-income students on state-mandated English and math graduation exams and in the top quartile of all



high schools in the state over the last four years. All members of its first three graduating classes have gone on to college, each a first-generation college attendee.

The school's record of accomplishment is all the more remarkable given the low academic skills and limited English proficiency of its entering students. Located in the poorest section of Worcester, the second largest city in Massachusetts, UPCS has as its only requirement for entry that students live in the immediate neighborhood of the school. Chosen by lottery, the vast majority of students enter at least two grade levels behind in reading and math. Three-quarters of the students qualify for free lunch; two-thirds come from homes where English is not spoken. Reflecting the ethnic composition of the surrounding neighborhood, 37 percent of the school's students are Latino, 18 percent are Asian Americans, and 11 percent are African American. Many of the white students are recent arrivals from Eastern Europe who enter the school speaking only a few words of English.

Located a block from Clark University, UPCS was founded in 1997 as part of a larger effort by Clark and local community development organizations to reverse the economic and social decline of the neighborhood. Together the university and the Worcester Public Schools planned

and opened UPCS, which was built around the promise to prepare every student for college. Operating on the same per pupil budget as other district high schools in the city, the success of UPCS is not the result of exceptional financial resources. Rather, it is a result of an exceptional school culture and academic program that refuses to let any student fail to achieve high standards.



UPCS At-a-Glance

- Grade 7–12 with 231 students
- All students are from the high-poverty neighborhood surrounding the school. Admission is by lottery.
- Demographics:
 - 73% receive free or reduced priced lunch;
 - 67% speak English as a second language;
 - 61% are students of color.

Our Success

- All UPCS graduates have gone on to college. All are first-generation college attenders.
- All students have passed the state's MCAS graduation exam on the first try, with the vast majority scoring advanced and proficient.

Our Awards

- Top-ranked high school in New England and top-ranked high-poverty school in the nation by *Newsweek*
- Breakthrough High School, National Association for Secondary School Principals
- Outstanding Adolescent Literacy Program, Alliance for Excellent Education
- Dispelling the Myth Award, The Education Trust
- Highest performing urban high school in Massachusetts, MassINC
- Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Partnership Award



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Educational Program at UPCS

The school's powerful educational program and deep partnership with Clark have created a culture where academic success is universal. Beginning in the ninth grade, all students pursue a rigorous college-preparatory program consisting of all honors classes. At the same time, instruction is individualized to connect to each student's particular level of development. There is no tracking. Instead, there are small classes, personal relationship-building with a caring and competent faculty, 90-minute learning blocks, and homework sessions in the morning and evening.

UPCS has no pull out classes. The school uses a full immersion model for its English language learners, meeting the needs of these students within its small classes. In addition, teachers work to promote students' social and emotional development as a critical piece of overall academic and life success. By offering a common curriculum with few electives, the school can deploy its teaching resources more efficiently than the typical high school, keeping class sizes low (22 or fewer) in core academic subjects.

To make an accelerated college preparatory curriculum accessible to all students by the beginning of high school, the grade 7–8 curriculum is designed to address the significant academic and English language skill gaps of entering students. Literacy is a primary focus of these years, helping students to accelerate their reading and

writing skills to grade level as rapidly as possible. Students also spend extended blocks of time on numeracy skills, learning both the hows and whys of basic mathematic operations. And while students are developing basic literacy skills, they are introduced to the distinctive modes of analysis in the core disciplines; they begin to engage in projects where they learn to “think like scientists or historians.” For example, incoming seventh graders with very low reading levels learn how to conduct a literacy analysis using picture books as their texts.

Entering seventh graders attend a month-long August Academy that helps them acclimate to the school and begin their path to high academic achievement even before their first official school day. Whenever possible, teachers loop with students in seventh and eighth grades to ensure that no time is lost in those critical years and students are ready for the honors-level curriculum beginning in ninth grade.

The honors-level program in grades 9–12 is modeled after a prep school course of study that follows a curricular mantra of “minds thinking”—showing and explaining critical thinking through writing at all times. The school uses “writing across the curriculum” to continue to build and reinforce literacy skills in all subject areas. UPCS offers few electives; instead, juniors and seniors can take courses at Clark University, choosing from the entire college course catalog.

The Culture of UPCS

The culture of UPCS is one of excitement, engagement, and support. Students come to school excited to learn. They are fully engaged in class and have deep personal relationships with the faculty. The teachers at UPCS are not simply teachers- they are mentors and advisors for their students on academic and personal issues. With their relentless passion and an unflinching belief that all students can achieve at high levels, teachers motivate students to succeed and drive the achievement of the school.

Education at UPCS is not driven by teachers alone. Students at UPCS take collective responsibility for ensuring that their fellow students succeed. Juniors and seniors mentor younger students, formally and informally. Students support their peers in class, until every student fully grasps the material at hand. Even friendships within the UPCS community revolve around academic success and support. The importance of academic achievement is pervasive at UPCS.

For staff, UPCS has created a system of embedded professional development where all faculty members continually support one another and veteran teachers

mentor their younger colleagues. Through analysis of student data, the sharing of student work, and continual dialogue among the staff during weekly common planning times, every teacher knows the strengths, weaknesses, and plan for success for each student. This open door culture leads to a group of reflective teachers who are continually striving to improve their own practice.



Partnership with Clark University

The educational program at UPCS is deliberately planned to help students prepare for college. The partnership with Clark University has the power to make the abstract concept of “college” real for students. The sense of being part of a college community helps students gain the motivation and confidence they need to persevere in demanding academic courses. Students and teachers are on Clark’s campus nearly every day, not only using the labs or the gym but also observing and interacting with Clark students and faculty. UPCS students take mini-seminars with college faculty in grades 7 to 10, and most enroll in college classes for credit during their junior and senior years. As they become more familiar with the campus culture, they begin to see a future for themselves in which college feels within reach. As early as the seventh grade, UPCS students walk through the campus and point out their future dorm rooms. They are “little Clarkies,” with

college IDs to seal the deal. Upon graduation, students who meet the admission criteria can attend Clark tuition free for four years, eliminating real and perceived financial barriers to college.

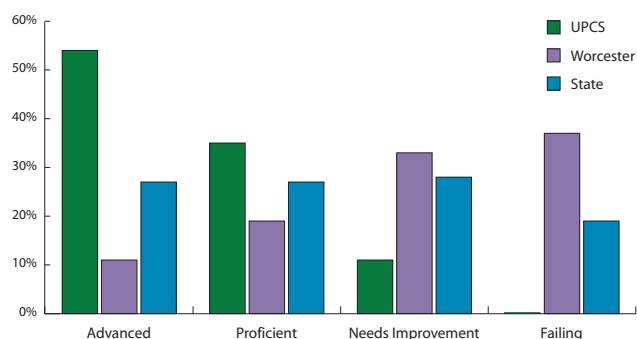
The partnership with Clark University also provides UPCS with valuable teaching and professional development resources through the Jacob Hiatt Center for Urban Education. The school serves as a clinical training site for the university’s teacher preparation program, with four to six student teachers working alongside UPCS master faculty for the full academic year. Many UPCS staff members started out as student teachers at the school. Several UPCS teachers lead courses in the university’s education program and serve with college faculty on curriculum teams in each discipline to improve instruction through careful analysis of data, student work, and classroom practice.

Excellence on State Exams

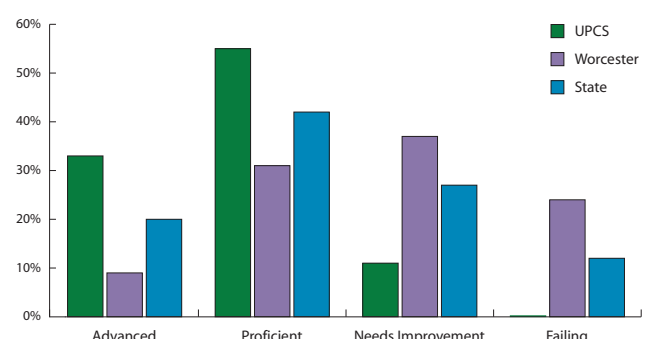
At UPCS, even the neediest members of Worcester’s neediest neighborhood achieve academic success. Since the inception of the state’s tenth-grade graduation exams (MCAS), not a single UPCS student has failed the test. Averaging test scores from the past four years, 89% of UPCS students scored at proficient and advanced levels on the tenth-grade MCAS math exam compared to 31%

of their Worcester public school peers and 54% statewide. In English, 89% scored at proficient and advanced levels compared to 39% of students in the district and 61% across the state. Over this period, UPCS has achieved the highest cumulative performance of any school serving a majority low-income population and placed in the top quartile of all schools in the state.

2002–2005 MCAS Math Performance



2002–2005 MCAS English Performance



10th Grade MCAS Performance, 2002–2005

Year–Subject	Proficient/Advanced vs. Failing	UPCS	Worcester	Massachusetts
2002–2005 Math (aggregate)	% scoring proficient and advanced	89%	31%	54%
	% failing	0%	37%	19%
2002–2005 English (aggregate)	% scoring proficient and advanced	89%	39%	61%
	% failing	0%	23%	12%
2005 Math	% scoring proficient and advanced	90%	35%	62%
	% failing	0%	32%	15%
2005 English	% scoring proficient and advanced	81%	42%	65%
	% failing	0%	20%	10%

All Students Graduate & Go On to College

High test scores and college-going rates are not all that sets UPCS apart from other urban schools serving low-income students. Over nine years of operation, the school's dropout and mobility rates are virtually zero. At UPCS, even the most at-risk students make it to graduation day—and beyond.

The same study that identified UPCS as the top-performing urban high school in the state singled out University Park as the only urban school that implements a demanding academic curriculum without suffering significant student attrition as a result. Other urban schools that excelled on state tests did so at a high price: many of their academically weaker students were leaving the school within two years of entry.

Yet finishing high school is only the beginning for UPCS students. In keeping with the school's promise to neighborhood residents, every graduate has left UPCS prepared to continue his or her education in college, and 80% have gone on to four-year institutions, including Brown, Georgetown, Trinity, Tufts, and, of course, Clark.

UPCS/Clark Institute for Student Success

The University Park Campus School, Clark University, and Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based educational non-profit, have partnered to form the UPCS/Clark Institute for Student Success. Supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the institute enables the school to share its success and serve as a model for other small schools across the nation. At trainings and residencies, school developers, leaders, and teachers observe classroom practice and learn how to apply the leadership and instructional strategies that have led to the school's success.

If you would like more information about UPCS or the UPCS/Clark Institute for Student Success, contact:

Dan Restuccia • Institute Coordinator
617.794.0726 • drestuccia@clarku.edu

www.upcsinstitute.org

Clark University, through the Jacob Hiatt Center for Urban Education, is dedicated to preparing outstanding urban teachers as part of a broad effort to enhance education possibilities for urban youth, transform schools and renew urban community life.

Jobs for the Future seeks to accelerate the education and economic advancement of youth and adults struggling in our economy.

