

UNIVERSITY PREP CHARTER SCHOOL ACCLAIMED BY NYC DEPT OF ED *School Shows Value of Empowering Teachers as Leaders*

For the second year in a row, University Prep Charter School (formerly Green Dot New York Charter School) is one of the finest high schools in New York City.

The school, now in its sixth year, scored an “A” in every category of the New York City Department of Education’s newly-released progress report for academic year 2012–2013. Out of 100 possible points, University Prep actually scored 100.1, due to extra credit for closing the achievement gap. The school ranks as the fourth best public high school in New York City.

Additionally, the school has also seen great outcomes for its students: over the past two years, all of the school’s graduating seniors have been accepted to college. Every student in the class of 2013 graduated in four years, and 20% of those students graduated with Advanced Regents Diplomas. At University Prep, 89% of the students qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, and approximately 13% qualify for special education and 12% as English Language Learners.

University Prep was founded in 2008 by Randi Weingarten and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) along with Steve Barr, founder of Green Dot Public Schools. The elements of the School’s success include a longer school day and year, a college preparatory curriculum with high expectations, and intensive support for English language learners and other students with special needs. The school’s teachers are UFT members and negotiate their own, school-based contract. This break-the-mold agreement includes an untimed “professional day,” a just cause standard of due process, salaries 20 percent above the NYC salary schedule, and ample opportunities for teacher voice in school decision-making.

“This just goes to show what amazing things can happen when you really involve the educators themselves in the process of building and running a school,” said Steve Barr, chairman of the school’s board and founder of Future Is Now. “There’s so much battling in education right now. University Prep shows that when you respect and support teacher professionalism, you can bring different sides together and create great schools.”

UFT President Michael Mulgrew said, “University Prep Charter School is an inspirational place to visit, a school where staff and administration work together to create a successful learning environment for students who come to the school from a variety of backgrounds, including many English Language Learners and children with disabilities.”

“This is a public school that works,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten. “What makes this school stand out is that it’s living proof that respect for and support of teachers—as exemplified in the school’s culture of collaboration, the role accorded to teachers in all of the important educational decisions, and the professional supports and opportunities provided for teachers—make the difference.”

“Our progress report is a testament to the great work of all of our students, families, assistant principals, teachers, counselors, and support staff,” said the school’s principal, Ashish Kapadia. “Our board of trustees and I are very proud of their tremendous accomplishments, but there is still a lot more that we must do to help our students become successful.”

University Prep teacher and board member Donial Rodriguez added, “Our school’s success is based on our parents’ trust in us to educate their children, the students’ dedication and hard work, and the staff and administration adhering to the vision that our students come first.”

About Future Is Now: Future Is Now works to improve public education by organizing and supporting effective educators to lead improvements in their schools, districts, and unions.

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