

Description of the Model Program – ELA Vertical Alignment Program

University Preparatory School has the unique and fortunate opportunity to host a 6th-12th grade program. As such, the English Language Arts (ELA) Department, including grades 6-12, has worked together collaboratively on the school's ELA Vertical Alignment Program (hereafter referred to as the Program). This distinguished model program allows us to provide a cohesive ELA Program to all students, supporting not only student growth in the ELA standards of reading, writing, listening, inquiry and research, but excelling across disciplines. The Program focuses on congruence across all grades and intentionally planned scaffolding of Depth of Knowledge, vocabulary and ELA skills.

The ELA Vertical Alignment Program currently consists of twelve ELA teachers. Although the ELA staff worked together prior to the official creation of the Program, the impetus for true vertical alignment came from a need for consistent academic vocabulary among all grade-level students in ELA and the fact that we have the unique opportunity to work together in a cohesive transition between middle school and high school, providing preparation for the Advanced Placement courses in high school and overall student growth and success in English Language Arts, with the ultimate goal of preparing our students for their transition to higher education. Additionally, as a school of choice, our student population is comprised of students from over thirty feeder schools, driving the need initial introduction into our ELA vocabulary, expectations, standards and instruction.

Through the many Program meetings and self-reflections of student growth and needs, early on we identified the Program objectives, which we continue to review and reflect upon. These Program goals consist of:

1. Strengthening U-Prep's culture of camaraderie, collegiality, and community
2. Establishing curriculum, instruction, and assessment goals based on standards and expectations of Advanced Placement and overall student academic achievement
3. Identifying 6th-10th grade Pre-AP skills and concepts needed for success in Grades 11-12 AP
4. Bringing different grade-level perspectives when finding creative ways to continually improve
5. Building systems that foster ongoing collaboration around improving student preparation for and with college-level work.

In addition to identifying Program goals, the team has worked together to collaborate on the mission of the ELA Vertical Alignment Program which is:

Through collaboration, we provide all students with an AP-focused curriculum, ensuring exposure to various genres and texts with an overarching focus on critical thinking and the writing process, scaffolded to grade-level capability, all the while assessing and intervening for the success of every student.

We as a school are proud of the growth, goals and successes of the ELA Vertical Alignment Program thus far, as evidenced by data such as PSAT scores, EAP pass rates, Advanced Placement involvement and pass rates, supports provided and put in place and, among many

other factors, a continued emphasis on a Growth Mindset. Implementation of the Program would not have been successful without full support from administration, the school Board and school staff. Collaboration and professional development time have been provided these past three years and are part of the continued schedule of collaboration. Our successes and goals in action are evidenced in the professional development, our focus on Growth Mindset, our BRIDGE Program and interventions, pedagogy strategies, academic supports and supporting data.

Professional Development

Since the three years of the Program's inception, University Preparatory has been supportive in the goals and professional development of ELA and Program staff. During the 2016-17 school year, and annually since the first vertical meeting in 2016, administration has supported the Program and has been committed to professional development opportunities in order for us to work together in creating program goals and to have regularly scheduled collaboration time to work on these goals as a team, measuring students' needs and successes. Overall, the Program's professional development has included collaboration time during Staff Development meetings over the past three years, two full day professional development release days for all Program staff, with the third scheduled in February 2019, and attendance at a Pre-AP Conference.

To coincide with the goal of ensuring the most effective Program, the ELA Vertical Team meets regularly with a full day annually for professional development. These professional development days include agendas based on staff feedback, student challenges and growth areas, as well as refining consistency within our Program. In addition to the annual full-day professional development, the Vertical Team meets at least quarterly to assess student progress, discuss any new areas of concern within student progress, curriculum and/or instruction. Some of the agenda items we work together on during these meetings include:

- Writing samples from each grade based on a scaffolded writing prompt
- Using common rubrics, based off the AP Writing Rubric, to assess and provide feedback on student writing samples
- Lesson plan with different grades to brainstorm instruction on same topic, but geared towards the specific grade levels
- Brainstorm formative assessment ideas
- Work together to create summative assignments to assess students learning while providing student choice and/or a variety of assessment modalities
- Communicate the expectations of what every grade level student should have learned, specific to ELA, at the beginning and end of the school year
- Discuss and agree upon academic vocabulary and which grade the various terms should be introduced

The meetings provide a rich discussion among ELA teachers. In addition, the time to plan and collaborate as a multi-grade, vertical team has enforced our understanding of student knowledge. When planning agendas for our meetings, the entire team is part of the planning process, ensuring that the topics are relevant to all Program participants.

In the summer of 2017, six Program teachers, ranging from teaching grades 6-10th, attended the AP By the Sea Conference, specifically focused around the preparation and

implementation of a Pre-AP Program. During this three-day conference, Program staff worked diligently to break down short term goals, including curriculum, instruction and content, as well as long-term goals broken down by grade level skills and reinforcement. One of the primary goals of staff attending the conference together, representing all five grades, was to closely examine and determine specific teaching strategies for all of our students and to vertically align the following AP/ELA-specific curriculum:

- Grammar and conventions – identifying which components of grammar and conventions will be introduced and/or emphasized at each grade level
- Close Reading – emphasis on strategies and techniques for each grade level; determining literary terms and rhetorical devices introduced and emphasized at each grade level
- Assessments – applying concepts from the AP rubric to pre-AP courses, grade-level appropriate
- Critical Thinking and engaging the students in academic discourse
- Composition
 - Modes of writing
 - Modeling and scaffolding AP Prompts
 - Editing, evaluating, drafting
 - Frequency of writing
 - Depth, breadth and
- Common language among all grade levels in regards to ELA

We have found that regardless of the grade of the student, each of the specific focal areas above are skills that all students at University Preparatory School should be learning. Additionally, the consistency among each grade level, between academic terminology and discourse, will only further emphasize students' knowledge and understanding of each skill, building success with each grade completed and preparing our students for future success post high school.

Growth Mindset

A majority of our staff is familiar with Growth Mindset, whether from attending related conferences or presentations at Staff Development Meetings. The ELA Vertical Alignment Program keeps the focus of Growth Mindset at the forefront of all planning. Realizing the concept that many students may “not yet” grasp a concept, our Program goals focus around not only continued assessments, but varying assessment modalities. As a vertically-aligned program, we have only two categories of assessment: formative and summative. It is through the lens of Growth Mindset that we have simplified these assessment categories.

Through our formative assessments, we have brainstormed, and continue to expand upon, formative activities, focused solely on the initial knowledge of student understanding and growth within concepts. Formative assessments are constantly taking place in our classrooms, across all seven grade levels and as a team we agree upon the value in these being true assessments FOR learning. This formative assessment provides students with ongoing descriptive feedback to improve their work. Formative assessment occurs throughout a learning segment and informs our continued instructional practice. Depending upon the instructional purpose, examples are unlimited and may include: graphic organizers, observation of student work, benchmark/interim tests, writing samples, literature circles, fish-

bowl discussions, literary device stations, etc. Though each team member uses his/her variety of formative assessments, we bring these new ideas to collaboration meetings and even through our shared Google Drive, where we add documents and ideas to support one another and maintain consistency for our students.

We have agreed upon the breakdown between summative and formative assessment categories. Though summative is a higher stakes assessment, providing assessments OF learning, we keep the Growth Mindset as the crux of our classroom instruction and reflection process. Our summative assessments vary from projects, presentations, tests, quizzes, essays, videos and research reports, to name just a few. Our students are well aware of the continuous improvement we want to see from them, so even in most summative assignments, various grade levels within the Program provide some means of re-assessment and, in some cases, alternate means for assessments of learning.

To support the Growth Mindset, the ELA Vertical Alignment Team continuously plans for assessment opportunities that provide students the ability to show their dedication and effort in learning the concepts. The correlation of both formative and summative assessments aids in monitoring student success across the grade levels within the Vertical Alignment Team.

BRIDGE Support Program

University Preparatory School's Middle School BRIDGE Program was created due to a need for consistency and support for all of our students, specifically in ELA, but ultimately to aid in all disciplines. An offshoot of the ELA Vertical Alignment Program, BRIDGE places an emphasis on reading and writing skills development to support growth and master of skills in literacy. As a bridge between 6th and 8th grade, the BRIDGE course provides increased support for students as confident learners and skilled academic students, not only in their ELA classes, but in all coursework.

The course is specifically designed to support and guide students academically, socially and emotionally, as they transition to academic independence and increasing rigor during the junior high years, leading up through their four years of high school. Additionally, the course addresses the needs of our students in the areas of organization, proper academic discourse in the classroom, study skills, literacy skills as well as support in their other academic classes.

The BRIDGE program launched in the 2017-18 school year for 7th grade students and this current school year, 2018-19, we added a course for 8th graders. The BRIDGE program has proven to be successful. Many of our BRIDGE students are flourishing as they gain academic rigor and practices that lead them to academic success and prepare them for high school academics and expectations. Because of the benefit of our students attending school over potentially seven years, the capability to monitor student growth in categories, such as ELA, aids us in the monitoring of the Program and the focus we have placed on congruency. The addition of the BRIDGE Program is just one means of intervention and support provided to our students.

Student Support and Strategies

University Preparatory School boasts an extremely supportive school climate. Various academic and social supports are in place, which aid in students feeling supported and having multiple avenues of assistance. The ELA Vertical Alignment Program utilizes the student

supports in place at the school, and we continually seek additional means of support and intervention for all students at the school, from all grades.

The Peer Tutoring Program, currently in place, provides students access to peer tutors in a variety of disciplines. The benefit of the ELA Vertical Alignment has proven itself instrumental in tutoring situations. Because students of all grade levels have had access to the same, in most cases, academic vocabulary, students are able to communicate about needs and support. For example, one of the focus areas of the Program has been to provide a consistent essay format. Although the format becomes more complex as the grade levels increase, the basic structure, terminology and analytical requirements are the same, whether for grade 6 or grade 11. Due to this consistency, prodded by the Program, students of all levels have the ability to work together and truly speak the same ELA language.

The Program's revision process is another invaluable part of the Program and one which further weaves Growth Mindset practices into our philosophy and practices. Upon first meeting together as a vertical team, we found that many of the various ELA teachers had different expectations or allowances for revisions and rewrites. Ultimately, our goal is for our students' academic success and growth in all areas and disciplines. As a team, we worked together to finalize Program policies focused around the writing and revision process. One of the additional benefits of a Program-wide writing revision practice is that the process provides students with a sense of consistency. Students are familiar with the writing expectations and revision procedures, as they are very similar, if not the same, across all grade levels within the ELA Vertical Team. We have seen, as addressed in the Monitoring Section, that student writing, as reported by CAASP, has improved with each year students attend University Preparatory.

Quantitative Data and Monitoring

The ELA Vertical Alignment Program is supported as part of our LCAP, staffing schedules and professional development. In addition, there are multiple means of monitoring the effectiveness of the Program. Statewide testing, such as the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASP), as well as college entrance exam information, including student performance on the ACT and the PSAT provide insight as to student success, specifically within the realm of English Language Arts.

With a culture of preparing students for four-year colleges, the percentage of our graduates that meet UC/CSU admissions requirements, as noted below, more than double the rates of the District, County and in some instances the overall State statistics

% of Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Admissions Requirements				
	U-Prep	District	County	State
2008-2009	74%	33%	26%	35%
2009-2010	71%	31%	23%	36%
2010-2011	80%	32%	24%	37%
2011-2012	70%	30%	23%	38%
2012-2103	65%	37%	23%	39%
2013-2014	74%	31%	26%	42%
2014-2015	84%	33%	28%	43%
2015-2016	75%	38%	31%	45%
2016-2017	83%	44%	37%	46%
2017-2018	75%	n/a	n/a	n/a

In addition to our students meeting the admissions requirements, our curriculum and extensive Advanced Placement (AP) Program is yet another indicator of the success of our ELA and ELA Vertical Alignment Program. For the past two years, over 238 of our high school students took AP exams. Of the 236 students that took AP exams in 2017-18, 426 exams were administered. Additionally, in 2016-17 79% of our students passed the English Literature AP Exam, compared to the National average of 54.6% of students passing the same exam. Comparatively, in 2017-18, our English Language AP Exam pass rate was an impressive 97%, as compared to the National average pass rate of 55%. Data such as AP pass rates within our ELA courses are evidence of the success of the Program's efforts to focus on increasing students' academic success through ELA consistency, beginning in sixth grade.

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASP) data of the Smarter Balanced test results provides further insight into student success in English Language Arts/literacy. For example, in 2017-18, 77% of our students met or exceeded the standards, as tested on Smarter Balance tests, compared to the state percentage wherein 50% of students met or exceeded the standards, as evidenced in the charts below.

State Priority: Pupil Achievement

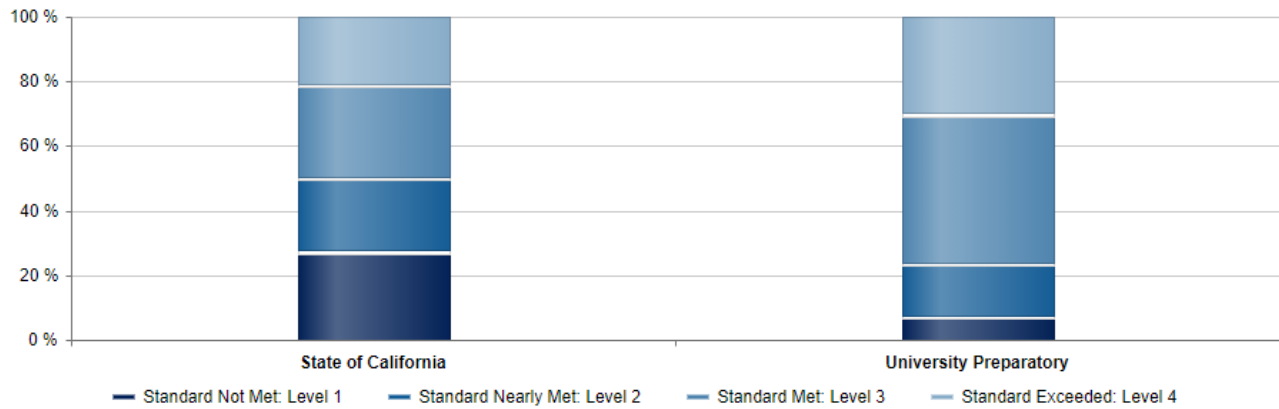
2017-2018CAASPP Test Results in ELA (School, District, State)

ELA	District	State
77%	63%	50%

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY

2018 Achievement Level Distribution

All Grades

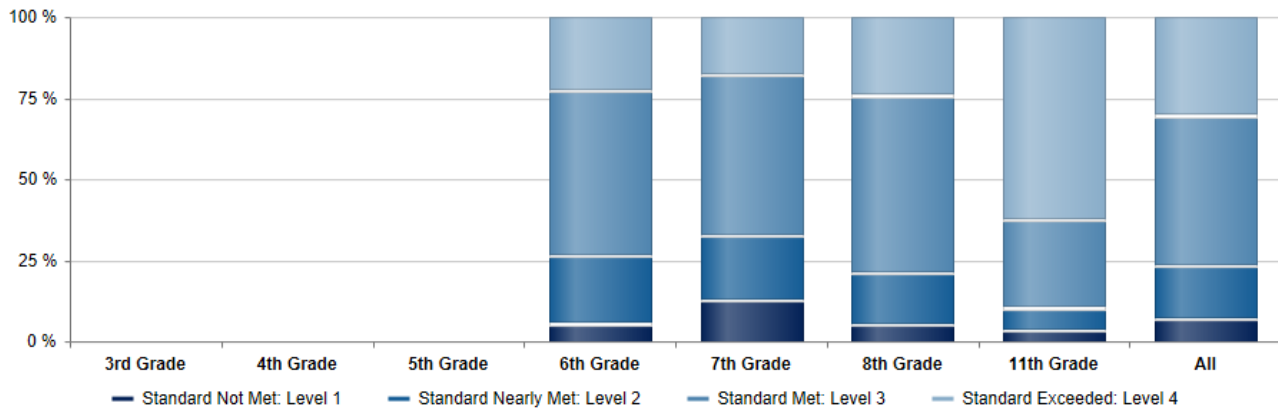


Specific ELA breakdowns by grade (below), further support the Vertical Alignment Program. Continued growth is clear based on the chart below, with 67.9% of seventh graders meeting or exceeding the standards. However, we see substantial growth as students continue within the ELA courses. The consistency of terminology and expectations only reinforces learning within ELA, therefore supporting student success within the domains of ELA.

Smarter Balanced Results (2018)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY

Achievement Level Distribution



Broken out by category, student writing in all grades shows continued improvement and growth from grades six through eleven. In grade eleven, 98.4% of our students communicate near or above standard and the growth is evidenced as students move through each grade level. The consistencies and focus that the team within the Vertical Alignment Program provide only further support a continued success within ELA and the sub-categories.

WRITING: How well do students communicate in writing?

Area Performance Level	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	11th Grade	All
Above Standard ⁽ⁱ⁾	N/A	N/A	N/A	34.21 %	35.85 %	41.67 %	71.54 %	44.72 %
Near Standard ⁽ⁱ⁾	N/A	N/A	N/A	56.58 %	54.09 %	53.85 %	26.92 %	48.74 %
Below Standard ⁽ⁱ⁾	N/A	N/A	N/A	9.21 %	10.06 %	4.49 %	1.54 %	6.53 %

College entrance exams and preliminary exams, such as the PSAT, aid us in monitoring the Program and student growth in ELA. The PSAT is paid for and administered to all students in grades 8,10 and 11. We utilize the PSAT data for several purposes, including student growth across the grade levels and the overall success of general programs, such as the ELA Vertical Alignment Program. In the case of the ELA Vertical Alignment Program, we are able to track the improvement and progress of our students across these three grade levels. Compared to the State scores in related categories, our students show academic growth and success. For example, in 2018-2019, the State Evidence-Based Reading and Writing score for 10th graders was 54%, compared to our 10th graders in the same year, scoring at an impressive 90%. Results such as the PSAT scores, provide just one glimpse into our students' success in ELA, resulting from our focus on vertical alignment.

University Preparatory PSAT Scores by Grade for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

Evidence-Based Reading and Writing	8 th Grade PSAT 8/9	10 th Grade PSAT/NMSQT	11 TH Grade PSAT/NMSQT
2016-2017	86%	91%	83%
2017-2018	90%	88%	86%
2018-2019	n/a *	93%	93%

Note: 8th Grade PSAT tests have not been administered yet for the 2018-2019 school year

The ELA Vertical Alignment Program is referenced and has been provided support through our Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). For example, in the 2017-18 school year we added a section to the Master Schedule, providing one of our Program leaders planned time to assist with implementing and planning vertical alignment for the team of ELA staff. This time was instrumental in implementing many of the goals for the ELA classes, across grade levels. One of the successes of this allotted time was the creation of common rubrics for writing assessments, specific to each grade level's scaffolded learning and expectations. These common rubrics furthers the consistency of academic language used in the classroom and setting clear expectations for students that they will be familiar with for each of their seven years here at University Preparatory School.

In addition to the added section, for the 2017-18 school year, the LCAP supports a model of continuous improvement through ongoing training and collaboration as well as aligning identified areas of focus, those within the Program, to be aligned with the school mission and data outcomes. Pupil Achievement, as evidenced above, further supports and suggests that the efforts and focus of the Program are working across grade levels. The results further show significant contrast as compared to district and state scores for 2017-2018, including among all Student Groups as supported in the chart below.

2017-2018 CAASPP Test Results in ELA by Student Group

English	U-Prep	District	State
All	77%	63%	50%
Male	74%	50%	45%
Female	81%	62%	55%
Asian	83%	76%	76%
Hispanic	74%	46%	39%
White	79%	57%	65%
Two or More Races	69%	63%	65%
Socio-Econ <u>Disadv</u>	67%	46%	38%
English Learners	58%	48%	57%
Students w/ Disabilities	60%	11%	15%

Closing

University Preparatory School's ELA Vertical Alignment Program has proven to be an integral Program within our school. The continued focus and commitment of Program teachers further add to the viability of the Program's success. Program staff is excited about the collaborative environment, paralleling the school's climate of working together with a shared focus on student success. The intervention and variety of assessments will continue to be a focal area of the Program and we will continuously provide support via the LCAP and other programs, ensuring Program review and assessments with the backing of various data, student feedback and assessments and ELA staff.