



CLARE MCKENNA

SCHOOL DIRECTOR

**UNIVERSITY PREP
ART & DESIGN
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

University Prep Schools provides a culturally responsive educational experience for our scholars that builds that academic competence, habits of work and scholarship, and self-actualization empowering them to successfully accomplish their post-secondary plans, as well as socially and civically engaged as change agents for themselves and their community.

CREW PROFILE

Please share what, or who inspired you to go into education?

I was inspired to go into education after seeing the inequities that exist for Black students in schools across America throughout my educational experience within Buffalo Public Schools. After studying Human Development in college and learning about the school-to-prison pipeline, I viewed education as the arena in which I was most passionate about fighting for social justice. Education allowed me to pair my love of children with my drive to fight inequity.

How long have you been in education?

This is my tenth year in education.

Please share a memorable experience during your tenure at U Prep?

One of my most memorable experiences during my tenure at U Prep was when our high school students planned a protest during the inauguration of Donald Trump. They dressed in all black, walked out of class, formed a circle around a prominent sculpture on campus, and placed their hands over their mouths as they held signs about being silenced. Individual students performed spoken word throughout the hour inauguration as middle school students, staff, and college students looked on. When the inauguration ended, the students all walked back to their classrooms. That was truly one of the most powerful moments I've witnessed throughout my time in education. Our students are brilliant, and it is our responsibility to provide them with opportunities to share their brilliance and their voice.

What advice would you give a new teacher?

The advice I would give a new teacher is to be humble and to build relationships with your students; get to know them as individuals and learn how you can celebrate, acknowledge and connect their brilliance with the content throughout your shared classroom experience.

What activities do you enjoy in your free time?

I enjoy running and biking, going for walks on Belle Isle, and spending time with loved ones.

Is there a philosophical saying or belief that you live by?

"Liberating education exists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information." - Paulo Freire