

CREW PROFILE



DERRICK KELLAM

SCHOOL DIRECTOR

**UNIVERSITY
PREP ACADEMY
HIGH SCHOOL -
ED PARKS
CAMPUS**

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.

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

My love of sports at an early age is what fueled my thirst for literacy, numeracy, and communication. At the age of 4 I would read the newspaper to see how well my two favorite basketball players, Isiah Thomas and Magic Johnson had performed the night before. Reading the various sports story lines, game summaries, and analyzing the statistics stimulated my mind and brought me much enjoyment. Back then every game didn't come on television, as they do today, so reading was the only way to keep up with sports. The skills that I was developing by following sports transferred to the lessons being taught at school. I entered elementary school eager to learn. My 5th grade teacher, Ms. Windham was my greatest inspiration in education. She was an older, very strict black woman who based her class around black history and culture. She demanded that all of her students put forth great effort to learn about ourselves, love ourselves, gain knowledge, develop skills, and be the best at whatever we attempted in our lives. Though I seemed to always stay in trouble in her class, she believed in me and recognized that I had the ability to be a high achiever and success in life. She would challenge me to be great like Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B Du Bois, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and other great black men. Ms. Windham's culturally responsive approach, discipline, and motivation had such an impact on me that it inspired me to become an educator with hopes that I could also play such a role in the learning, growth, and development of young people.

How long have you been in education?

I am entering my 17th year in education.

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

Every day at UPA High School is an enriching experience. I truly believe that we absolutely have the best culture of any high school in the Detroit Metro area. So from that sense, each day is a memorable experience. However, if I have to hone it on a particular moment it would be when we, the UPA Panthers, were selected by Twitter to attend a viewing of The Black Panther. We had an all-school program in the gymnasium when a surprise announcement was made that our entire school was going to see The Black Panther at Emagine Theater. Local and national media outlets were on campus to film, photograph, and write about the momentous occasion, and to capture the students' response to hearing the good news. Students and staff were ecstatic and all 600 of us had a blast at the movie theatre viewing the iconic movie. U Prep Pride was on full display throughout the entire process.

What advice would you give a new teacher?

It is important for new teachers to bring the pedagogical knowledge learned in their education program and their creativity into the classroom while at the same time bringing an open mind and willingness to learn the district and school's approach to developing students. Teaching is hard work and to do it well one must have a mindset of continuous improvement. Being culturally responsive, collaborative, having a deep understanding of your curriculum, engaging in detailed planning, skillfully executing lessons, conducting data analysis, and being reflective are all essential moves to ensure that all students learn at high levels and become independent learners. Again, teaching is hard but rewarding work. It is basically activism.

What activities do you enjoy in your free time?

I enjoy spending time with family and friends, watching and attending sporting events, and traveling around the world.

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

"Keep on, then, seeking first the Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." - Matthew 6:33

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.