

First United Methodist School
Your Child and Curriculum and Instruction
Our Position on Common Core/Sunshine State Standards

February 18, 2014

First United Methodist School has always prided itself in its successful students, both while they are here at our Christian institution that began in 1967 and as we have released those students to both public and private middle and high schools. As you may have read on our website's alumni page, we have many previous students who praise FUMS as the school that prepared them superiorly for further education, college, and in their careers. Here is an excerpt from our website about our alums:

- Celia Thacker - 1998 FUMS graduate, Osceola High School salutatorian, graduated cum laude from University of Florida School of Law, now a local attorney
- Krystine Kossol - 2013 Middle School Valedictorian
- Tyler Pugh completed his Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Operations Management from the University of Florida, May, 2012
- Celeste Thacker – alum of the late 90's currently at UF Law School
- Kimberly Evers – FUMS alum, certified K-6 teacher at FUMS!
- Shonte Fraser – 1995 FUMS alum was the first student to be awarded the Disney Dreamers and Doers award from Disney; FSU grad of 2005 with a BS in Chemical Science; Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA with an MS in Health Administration; American University of Antigua in Antigua, West Indies, with a medical degree in Family Medicine; Plymouth University where she received her MBA. Currently, she is a fourth year medical student completing clinical rotations in Maryland and New York hospitals, graduating and beginning residency in March.
- Three former FUMS graduates were valedictorians of their classes:
 Alexander Miller - High School Valedictorian
 Bianca Rodriguez - High School Valedictorian
 David De Vore - Middle School Valedictorian
- Among our alumni are veterinarians, geneticists, television reporters, journalists, school teachers, and business executives.
- We currently have seven alumni in law school and one alumna beginning her internship in family medicine.
- Of the 5 top academic 2012 seniors at Osceola High School, four were graduates of First United Methodist School!
- Approximately 80% of graduates from FUMS are in the top 10% of academic students graduating high school!
- Seventy-five percent of FUMS graduates continue some form of higher education after completing high school.

We also want to celebrate the most recent accomplishments of our youngest FUMS alums:

- Luke Miller and Tyler Everett (7th grade at Neptune) both made First Team All American Scholars for Pop Warner (Top 2% in academics)
- Walker Brooks, FUMS alumnus, was crowned Swimmer of the Year from Gateway High. He set dozens of school and county swimming records, while maintaining his academic excellence.
- At the Osceola District Middle School Science Fair, FUMS alums were well represented. Six of our alumni competed at the district level, with Emily Froelich receiving first place in Medicine and Health,

Sasha Haslam placing second in Bio Chemistry, and Sydney Burtis placing third in Zoology. Both Sydney and Sasha will go on to the State Regional Science Fair.

- City of Life Christian Academy's Science Fair, held January 31, 2014, 5 out of the 9 awards for 6th and 7th graders were FUMS alumni!

As you can see, we could go on and on singing praises of our students who have progressed forward to bright and brilliant futures in both private and public education, as well as completing their education and are now superior professionals in their fields. This is why we, the curriculum and instruction leadership, want to assure you that we are constantly striving to continue in the long tradition of outstanding education for your children and to strive to make it progressively better and better through solid professional development, curriculum review and new textbook adoptions, and continuous creativity in sound teaching methodology to address the learning needs of all students.

Fresh, New, Exciting Times Ahead!

In anticipation for a dynamic school year in 2014-15, we are making many transitions to better serve you and your child both educationally and spiritually, making your family's experience with FUMS the most formidable time in your child's educational life. Not only are we making many physical upgrades and adjustments to our campus, but we are also extending our positive and superior educational impact on students by launching the First United Methodist Middle School, beginning with sixth grade and adding a grade a year until completed with eighth grade in the 2016-17 school year. Thus, we have heard your requests and needs and are finding many ways to meet them.

Curriculum and Textbooks

In addition, we have also taken a long hard look at curriculum and textbooks. Every five years or so, all schools need to reassess not only their delivery system (how they teach) but also their text system (what they teach). Earlier this fall, a Curriculum Review Team was brought together to assess our textbooks and curriculum. The team is compiled of myself as the school administrator with a background in public, private, gifted, elementary, middle, and high school curriculum and administration; and current teachers and parents with certified teaching backgrounds from both upper and lower elementary and middle school areas. In addition, the team consists of both veteran teachers as well as newly certified teachers to ensure solid traditional approaches as well as cutting edge, new methodology.

The curriculum and instruction team has nearly completed its process and will be posting our curriculum matrix/chart on our website soon. We are excited about fresh, new curriculum that is traditional in approach, Christian in perspective, and engaging in methodology. We have streamlined our subjects of math, language arts/English/spelling/reading, and science so that the same publisher is used throughout a particular subject area for nearly all grade levels. We are especially excited about our new science curriculum that is inquiry-based and focused on the scientific method with observations, experiments, and lab reports built into every lesson. Furthermore, you will see much integration of subjects and writing across the curriculum as we increase your student's composition skills through multiple modes and opportunities for both fictional and ample non-fictional writing. Finally, throughout the curriculum and texts, as well as through our excellent, certified teachers' own creativity, you will witness your child being taught and learning at an advanced level but also receiving support for those areas where he/she may need a little extra instruction for fuller understanding and maximum success.

Our Position on Common Core & Sunshine State Standards: Moderation

Finally, a statement regarding our position on the Common Core and Sunshine State Standards: First, we would like to refer you to the Florida Department of Education website, where the standards are explained for

parents. There you will find summaries of the purposes and rationale for the state’s adoption of those standards. We at First United Methodist School recognize several needs for our students’ success in their future education, both in secondary and post-secondary schools, while being committed to still uphold our traditional, Christian approach to education:

1. FUMS has the freedom to follow whatever standards for education we deem appropriate for our students, according to our registration through the Florida Department of Education as a private school. Be assured, our standards will be superior.
2. We also recognize that many of our students later transfer to both public and private schools, and we desire for them to have a seamless transition academically into whatever educational choice they and their parents make.
3. We are also aware that much of the overarching, broad characteristics of the Common Core and Sunshine State philosophy and pedagogy (methodology) of education is simply good high-level and consistently solid teaching that includes, but is not limited to, higher level questioning, critical thinking, writing and literacy across the curriculum, integrated units of instruction, learning styles instruction, alternative assessments, collaborative group learning, non-fiction/factual reading, media research, production, and consumption. These concepts are aligned to the highest international standards in order to make our United States’ students well-prepared and competitive for our technological world.
4. We also recognize that many parents place their students in FUMS because they desire an alternative education to the public school system and its standards. Yes, we are unique in Christian perspective and are academically acclaimed.

Therefore, we at FUMS have chosen a hybrid, if you will, of meeting all these above needs for our parents and students. As we recognize the benefits of Common Core and Sunshine State Standards, we also recognize that there are still many questions and concerns among both educators and parents alike regarding the standards’ full adoption. As you may know, our Florida legislature is meeting even today to discuss modifications to Common Core.

Our stance, then, is one of moderation. As I have said from the beginning of this discussion back in the fall with our teachers, we will not “embrace” the standards but will strive to “complement” in their approach to educational methodology (pedagogy). No, we will not be following the Common Core/Sunshine State Standards as closely as the public schools do; however, the overarching concepts of good teaching and delivery methods will be enhanced by the aforementioned characteristics and approaches to learning that Common Core espouses. (See #3 above.) Again, let me be clear to you that, in our most prayerful and committed effort to deliver the best education to your children, we are taking a moderate approach to “**complement**” but not “**embrace**” Common Core Standards.

I pray that this clarification answers many of your questions that you may be having as conscientious parents of our students. If you should have any further questions, I would love to speak with any of you at your convenience.

Serving Christ and His Children,

Dr. Richelle Sampl, FUMS Principal

and

The FUMS Curriculum and Instruction Review Team