



CASE STUDY

Florida Private High School Increases AP® Scores by over 100% with UWorld

Advanced Placement® (AP®) is a household name at Cristo Rey Tampa Salesian High School in Tampa, Florida. This private, college-preparatory Catholic institution has adopted an AP-for-All approach, meaning that all students are required to take all of the AP courses that the school offers. Enrolling every young learner in this rigorous program demonstrates a boundless commitment to college readiness. However, it also poses a significant challenge: scant resources and historically lower-than-average scores.

Newly appointed Principal Kelly Larson has seen the full scope of her school's engagement with AP. During her time as an AP English Literature teacher, curriculum specialist, and dean of curriculum and instruction, she empathized with educators and advocated for students. With a keen understanding of the needs of both sides of the AP classroom, she searched for a resource that would provide appropriate scaffolding and streamline instruction.

Kelly Larson
Principal
Cristo Rey Tampa

AP Challenges at Cristo Rey Tampa

Larson began teaching at Cristo Rey Tampa, part of the Cristo Rey Network, in 2021. At that time, approximately **80% of AP exam scores were 1s**. Understandably, she and some of her colleagues began to question the program's effectiveness. Larson realized that identifying instructional best practices would be key to setting clear expectations about AP. When she and her then-principal set out to lay a new foundation for the school's AP program, they encountered yet another fundamental challenge: less-than-ideal educational materials.

Many teachers had been creating their own AP resources, which led to wasted time and effort. In addition, they widely used AP Classroom, but students easily found answers to AP Classroom questions online, resulting in academic dishonesty and unreliable data. Educators also lacked the time, energy, or expertise to develop their own AP-level resources, and they couldn't commit to costly textbooks due to the ever-changing nature of AP content. It was clear that integrating the right resource would be vital for academic achievement.

The most pervasive obstacle was finding a cost-effective AP resource. Cristo Rey Tampa often struggled with funding high-quality educational materials due to lower tuition income. Larson knew it would be crucial to implement an AP resource that would be both budget-friendly

and results-driven. During her arduous search, she came across the [AP Success Grant](#), which offered yearlong access to [UWorld's Courses for AP](#). It was an opportunity Larson couldn't refuse. Looking back, she's glad she didn't.

The Right Tool at the Right Time

"It was literally the perfect timing," Larson explained.

Like other AP educators at Cristo Rey Tampa, she initially thought UWorld was too good to be true. Grateful to have received the grant, she and her colleagues used the courses for a year and unanimously agreed that it would be a worthwhile investment moving forward.

She indicated they were especially thrilled to use a digital product. Since AP exams are now administered online, they knew that delivering an online resource would be the best way to help students practice.

"I'm not going into classrooms and opening textbooks," said Larson. "Instead, I'm opening UWorld's online course."

UWorld's online course for AP Lit provided her with an all-in-one instructional resource, complete with materials aligned with College Board's Course and Exam Description (CED). It also included ready-made assignments, extensive data reporting, and in-depth answer rationales to help her students better understand and digest challenging content. By integrating these features, Larson removed the need to depend solely on AP Classroom or assemble resources piecemeal.

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— Kelly Larson,
principal and former AP Lit
teacher at Cristo Rey Tampa



Cristo Rey Tampa Teachers Who Advocate for UWorld

Praising UWorld’s complexity, Larson remarked, “It’s been a massive help in providing teachers with resources at the correct level of difficulty. Many of them say UWorld is actually harder than AP. I told my students, ‘If you can do this, the exam is going to feel really easy.’ That has been so true and so helpful. My students say, ‘I’ve done tests harder than this. It was nothing.’ To hear that, you know UWorld works.”

Many AP teachers at Cristo Rey Tampa echoed Larson’s opinions about UWorld’s online instructional resources, including 2 standout educators whose course integrations yielded promising results.

John Caramanica, AP Lang Teacher

John Caramanica currently teaches AP English Language and Composition (AP Lang). He regularly implements UWorld by assigning practice questions on a weekly basis.

“UWorld is easier to navigate from a teacher’s point of view,” said Caramanica. “We want ease. We’re doing a lot of things. Since it grades itself and the reports are so clear, I’m able to know what types of questions I need to reinforce. Let’s say the topic is rhetorical strategies. Now I can go back and reteach that in a mini-lesson and approach it the following week.”

Caramanica wanted his students to earn at least 2s on the AP exam. He set this goal after learning that those who earn 2s or above are more likely to find success in college, stay enrolled, and graduate. To his amazement, his students achieved **3s and 4s**, reflecting true competence, not just potential. While he attributed much of that success to UWorld, he realized it couldn’t have been possible without his learners, whose drive to

excel reached new heights. UWorld’s intensive AP content motivated them to meet their goals. It also allowed Caramanica to meet his goals.

“UWorld hit my sweet spot,” Caramanica commented. “It’s made multiple-choice practice easy, intelligent, accessible, and measurable. That means everything.”



UWorld’s content is created by experienced AP educators who deeply understand course expectations and what students face on the exams. They carefully craft and review everything to ensure rigor, alignment, and ease of use. Caramanica knows this firsthand.

“Clearly, UWorld has an army of experts who do the stuff that I can’t do,” he said. “Anybody who thinks they can program this class on their own or just use AP Classroom is missing the depth and commitment of the UWorld professionals behind the courses.”

Andrea Diaz del Valle, AP Biology Teacher

Another educator who believes in UWorld’s army of experts is Andrea Diaz del Valle. As an AP Biology (AP Bio) teacher, she values educational content that is both structured and rigorous. Fortunately, she found it in UWorld’s questions and ready-made hands-on activities. And because many of UWorld’s educational resources are customizable, she was able to add her own instructional flair.

“I tweaked the activities to amplify that ‘wow’ experience I hope to give students in my class. I used them as a solid base and was inspired to add my own ideas,” said Diaz del Valle. “One activity was a simple cell-factory simulator where students had to get a 3D perspective of a cell. I put my own spin on it and said, ‘The cell’s nucleus is retiring, so we need a new organelle to backfill the position.’ I had my students make a campaign for their individual organelles. The organelle with the strongest campaign would get the job, so to speak. Students had to think hard



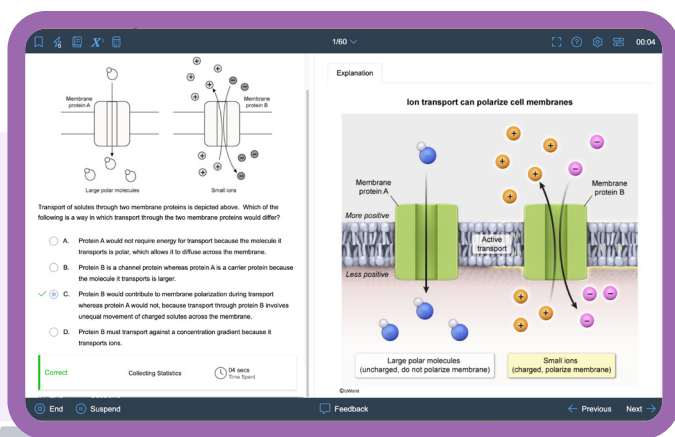
about the function of specialized structures within a living cell. UWorld really helped spark that idea.”

Diaz del Valle enhanced her in-class instruction with UWorld for a truly personalized learning experience. She found it so helpful that she recommended it to every AP Bio teacher at an AP Summer Institute (APSI), a series of workshops designed for professional learning among AP educators.

Diaz del Valle recounted, “The other teachers didn’t know about UWorld, so I showed it to them, and they requested more information about it.

They were pretty much sold from the get-go.”

Asked about her overall opinion of the new instructional materials, she said, “In the end, UWorld is super resourceful and user-friendly. It’s also just plain awesome.”



Cristo Rey Tampa's AP-for-All Success

Cristo Rey Tampa experienced substantial overall and subject-specific gains following the integration of UWorld in 2023-24 and increased fidelity in 2024-25. Equally noteworthy are the standout scholars and the AP success of the Class of 2025.

OVERALL AP PROGRAM GROWTH



Pass Rate Surge

Percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher: from 32% in 2024 to 50.31% in 2025



Longitudinal Growth

2025 result represents a 149% increase in pass rates compared to 2021 (20.54%) and a 57% increase over 2023 (32%)



Higher Exam Volume

Number of AP exams administered: from 405 in 2024 to 548 in 2025*

*Indicates expanded student participation alongside improved outcomes

MEAN SCORE IMPROVEMENTS BY SUBJECT

AP Course	2024 Mean	2025 Mean	Point Increase
AP Lang	1.63	2.42	+0.79
AP Lit	1.90	2.22	+0.32
AP U.S. Government & Politics	2.06	2.28	+0.22
AP U.S. History (APUSH)	1.69	1.94	+0.25
AP World History: Modern	1.67	1.90	+0.23
AP Spanish Language & Culture	3.44	3.50	+0.06
AP Statistics	1.00	1.50	+0.05

Additional Achievements

AP Scholars

The AP Scholar distinction signifies high performance on AP exams, as recognized by College Board. Specifically, AP Scholars score 3 or higher on at least 3 AP exams. At Cristo Rey Tampa, the number of AP Scholars increased from **12 students in 2024 to 35 in 2025**. Furthermore, the number of students earning the AP Scholar with Honor and AP Scholar with Distinction awards

doubled from **2 to 4**. Students who earn the AP Scholar with Honor accolade score 3 or higher on at least 4 AP exams and an average score of 3.25 or greater on all exams taken. Those who are AP Scholars with Distinction score 3 or higher on at least 5 AP exams and an average score of 3.5 or greater on all exams taken.

CLASS OF 2025

A whopping **94.9%** of graduating seniors scored a 3 or higher on at least 1 AP exam during high school. This marks a **22.4%** increase from the previous year, which was 72.5%.



3 4 5

Even Greater Things to Come

An indispensable member of Cristo Rey Tampa's distinguished staff, Kelly Larson helped shape her AP-for-All program into the well-oiled machine it is today. And now that she's the principal, she's been monitoring her program's health from a fresh angle.

Larson explained, "I can see when students are crushing it. I can also see when a teacher hasn't used UWorld in a few months. That's my cue to open the communication and ask how we can boost participation. UWorld allows me as an administrator to be more tuned in and aware of what's happening. It's yet another thing I've really enjoyed."

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— John Caramanica,
AP Lang teacher at
Cristo Rey Tampa

UWorld played a crucial role in Cristo Rey Tampa's success in AP. To Larson, that success was worth its weight in gold and then some.

"There's no amount of money that could pay for something that feels as good as sending a student off knowing they're ready for college. UWorld has been phenomenal. Watching our program grow, with my teachers loving their jobs and my students flourishing, has been really enjoyable. I'm so happy that UWorld randomly popped into my inbox one day, saying, 'Hey, would you be interested?' It's been a wonderful collaboration, and I'm thankful it happened."

Today, Larson isn't in her office brooding over lackluster resources and working toward a new AP strategy like she's done before. Instead, she's reflecting on her teachers' dedication, her students' hard work, and UWorld's innovative technology. She's fully confident that her educators will continue using the online courses to shepherd — never drag — high schoolers through demanding classwork and assessments.



For more information visit:

collegereadiness.uworld.com