

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FOCUS FOR THE COMMUNITY

Fall 2025

A PUBLICATION FOR THE RESIDENTS OF UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



From the Superintendent...
Robert S. Monroe

Where students belong

This newsletter features an article on potential changes to our building grade configurations. With a potential change of this nature, we recognize that there are questions from our community, much of which have to do with the timing and how this relates to our current attendance area work.

Our Enrollment Distribution Advisory Committee, often referred to as EDAC, has been reviewing issues related to our attendance areas the past two years. Their assessments are based on three factors: the age of facilities, safety needs, and our enrollment trends. Currently, they are reviewing areas related to the Stevenson High School feeder areas and Harvey and Dresden elementary schools.

We can extend the impact of their work by also looking at our actual elementary, junior high and high school configurations. Utica Community Schools has reviewed over 30 sources of external research in consideration of this potential change and has also partnered with Hanover Research. The consensus of the research is that moving 9th grade to the high school provides leverage for long-term success. Moving 6th grade to a middle school model is supported when thoughtful, deliberate design is put into practice.

We are excited about the possibilities that are now open to us as we continue to give our students an environment where they can pursue excellence, find their passion, and be where they belong.

UCS studies grade configurations

Utica Community Schools is studying how it can better support student opportunities and achievement through building grade configurations.

Currently, UCS grade configurations are set with elementary schools supporting early childhood, kindergarten and young fives through 6th grade, junior high schools 7th through 9th grade and 10th through 12th grade being taught at our high schools. The only exception is Henry Ford II High School covering 9th through 12th grade and Bemis Junior High School teaching 7th and 8th grade.

The configuration has historically been driven by how current facilities can accommodate the number of students in UCS.

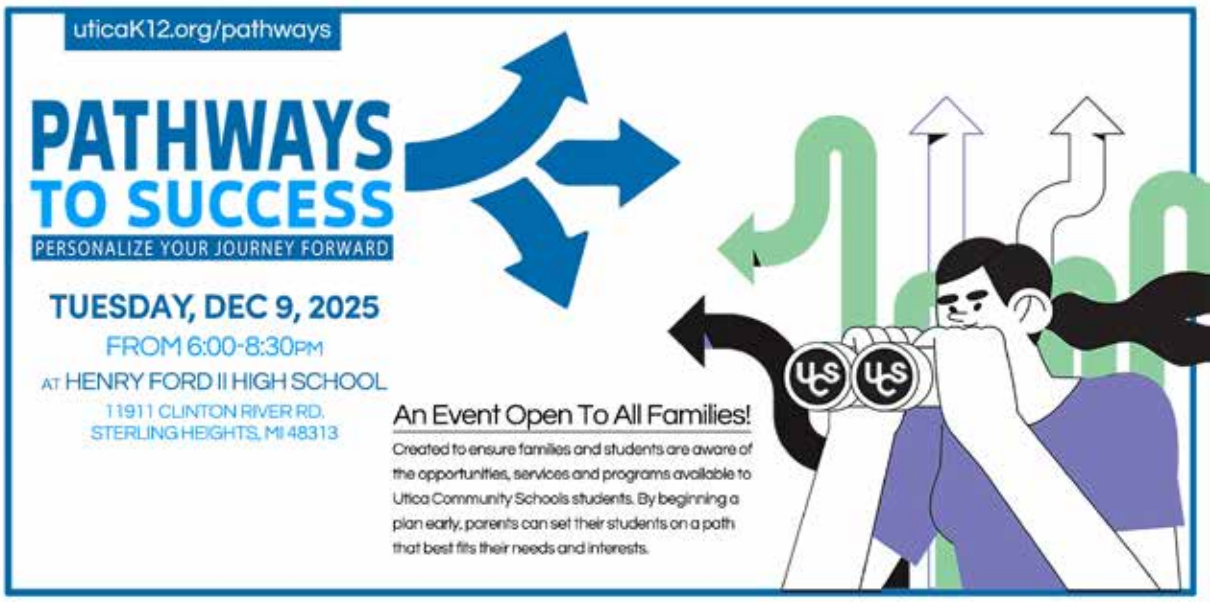
With changes to enrollment, improvements through the 2023 Safety and Success Bond Issue and an ongoing attendance area review, the district has the ability to consider grade configurations based on student needs and opportunities.

New configurations would consider: elementary schools with early childhood, kindergarten and young fives through 5th grade, middle schools with 6th through 8th grade and high schools 9th through 12th grade.

There are a number of compelling reasons why this is the right time to consider changing grade configurations:

- With changes in our enrollment, we have the building capacity to support this conversation. The timing is also something that would tie in with the work of our Enrollment Distribution Advisory Committee (EDAC), which is engaged in long-range planning and review of our attendance areas.
- UCS curriculum and the curriculum and assessment standards for the State of Michigan are organized in a K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 format. This change would better align our schools to successfully meet those expectations.
- UCS can increase the rigor and offerings to 6th and 9th grade students and their access to co-curricular activities by changing grade configurations.
- The district could reimagine how a middle school experience can support the unique needs of students in 6th through 8th grade and support a successful transition to high school in the 9th grade.

For more information, please visit www.uticak12.org/buildingforthefuture.



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UCS students honored as among nation's best

More than 20 Utica Community Schools students are among only 16,000 U.S. seniors to be named semi-finalists and commended students in the 2026 National Merit Program.

UCS National Merit semi-finalists are: Daniel Buzdugan, Benjamin Edmunds, Nolan Gorlewski, Michael Oommen and Alexandria Philip, Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies; Jack Luckino and John Murphy, of Eisenhower High School; and, Marwan Hassan, of Utica High School.

Students receiving national merit commendations are: Simon Kristensen and Kristal Youhana, of Eisenhower High School; Layla Bajric, of Henry Ford II High School; Shrey Bhatt, Sophie Perry, Jackson Trice, of Stevenson High School; Samuel John, of Utica High School, and Yara Abu Zraineh, Katelyn Hermiz, Neil Panchasara, Megan Mangalathet, Arianne Seno, of the Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies.

Bajric, Kristensen, John, Luckino, Murphy,Hassan and Trice are also part of the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology. Perry is part of the Utica Center for Science and Industry.

More than 1.6 million students of the Class of 2026 entered the National Merit Program by taking the 2024 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The nationwide pool of semi-finalists includes the highest scoring entrants in each state and represents the top one percent of students participating in the program.

To move from semi-finalist to finalist status, students must submit a detailed scholarship application. Finalists have an opportunity to continue in the competition for 6,930 National Merit Scholarships totaling $26 million.

Commended students place among the top one-third of high school seniors and have an opportunity to compete for corporate-based scholarships.


Yara Abu Zraineh


Layla Bajric


Shrey Bhatt


Daniel Buzdugan


Benjamin Edmunds


Nolan Gorlewski


Marwan Hassan


Katelyn Hermiz


Samuel John


Simon Kristensen


Jack Luckino


Megan Mangalathet


John Murphy


Michael Oommen


Neil Panchasara


Sophie Perry


Alexandria Philip


Arianne Seno


Jackson Trice


Kristal Youhana

Help us build a strong foundation for UCS students

Utica Community Schools families and staff are being asked to help build an even stronger foundation for our students.

The UCS Foundation is asking community members to support its work to improve opportunities for students as part of a campaign that runs through Giving Tuesday on December 2.

Since its inception more than 40 years ago, the Foundation's work has directly impacted student success.

- Nearly $900,000 in scholarships have been awarded to graduates since 2010.
- The Career Focus Luncheon annually pairs sixth graders with business leaders.
- The Foundation has been driving innovation with more than $10,000 in annual mini-grants to teachers.

The Foundation is a non-profit community organization of volunteer educators, residents and business leaders.

For more information on the UCS Foundation's work and how to support the campaign, please visit ucsfoundation.org.

GiveOurKids
A Strong Foundation

Students show double digit growth in AP enrollment and success

Utica Community Schools senior Gianna D'Angelo sees the value of Advanced Placement (AP) courses as a way to open more academic and career doors to her future.

"After completing each course, I feel as if I am another step closer to being prepared for my future endeavors, whatever they might be," said D'Angelo, who attends Henry Ford II High School and the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology. "I take Advanced Placement courses because I want to push myself to become the best version of myself."

It is a sentiment being shared by a growing number of UCS secondary students, who are enrolling in the college level courses in record numbers. Even as important, the increased number of students are finding greater success at meeting the standards that can make them eligible for college credit.

Advanced Placement is a program offered through the College Board that offers college-level course rigor and content at the high school level. Students take either a semester or year-long course and have the ability to earn college credit through a national exam.

The number of UCS secondary students taking AP courses has grown 21 percent since 2021. Over that time, the rate of students earning a 3 or above has grown 12 percent. In 2025, 3639 students took 4603 exams, with 63 percent earning a score of 3 or above.

Noor Al-Hasan, a Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies senior, said that beyond the college-level academic experience, her AP courses have helped her develop time management and critical thinking skills.

"My teachers and counselor strongly encouraged me to pursue Advanced Placement classes," she said. "Their support throughout the process helped me stay motivated and succeed."

Points of Pride

UCS high schools named among nation's best

All UCS high schools have once again been named among the best in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report.*

Eisenhower, Henry Ford II, Stevenson and Utica high schools have placed among the top 15 percent of 32,000 public high schools, according to the annual ranking.

Schools were ranked on six factors based on their performance on state assessments and how well they prepare students for college.

Schuchard music teacher is part of first U.S. brass band invited to international competition



Utica Community Schools teacher Tyler Schreiber is putting the district on an international map in a whole new way.

Schreiber, who has taught music at Schuchard Elementary for the past two years, is part of the first American brass band to take part in the Swiss Open Competition in Switzerland this Fall.

Schreiber will perform on the E flat tuba in the 35-member Five Lakes Silver band, a British style brass band that has been earning national honors at competitions across the country.

Sparking entrepreneurialism

Students at Stevenson and Henry Ford II High Schools have the unique opportunity to



step into the world of entrepreneurship through SparkLab, an 8-week program designed to ignite creativity, innovation and business acumen.

Powered through a partnership with SIGU Capital (Royal Oak, MI) and KMI Family Ventures (Birmingham, MI), SparkLab equips students with a hands-on experience in building a business from the ground up.

Havel one of 10 in nation to receive fitness grant

Thanks to a grant from the Life Time Foundation, the Physical Education program at Havel Elementary is rolling into action with a brand-new ride. Havel was one of 10 schools nationwide that received the learn-to-ride program from All Kids Bike in partnership with the Life Time Foundation.

"Learning to ride a bike is a skill that will last these kids a lifetime - you're gaining a sense of independence, a mode of transportation, it can be a team or individual sport and it is an inclusive activity for anyone to partake in," said Physical Education Teacher, Robbie Langlois.



The All Kids Bike program includes teacher training and certification, the comprehensive eight lesson learn-to-ride curriculum, a fleet of 24 Strider balance-to-pedal bikes, pedal conversion kits, student helmets, a teacher instruction bike and rolling storage racks: everything needed to teach kids how to progress from balancing to pedaling.

Senior named to international leadership role

Luna Alaowad, a senior at Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies (GLK-UAIS), has been elected Vice



President of Key Club International, the world's largest student-led service organization. Her election marks a historic milestone as she becomes the highest-elected official in Key Club International ever from Utica Community Schools and the first Arab American to serve in this role.

As Vice President, Alaowad will represent thousands of members across more than 40 countries, working alongside the International Board to promote leadership, character-building and a commitment to service.

For more points of pride, visit www.uticak12.org/news.

The Class of 2026 reflect on the Legacy of Excellence that lives in our schools

Zoey Wehrwein
Eisenhower High School



"My favorite thing about Eisenhower are the people. Everyone is so great. Especially the teachers. They always support you well in your academic journey."

Nolan Dabish
Utica Alternative Learning Center



"My favorite thing about the ALC is the teachers and staff that make it fun to come to school. They care about us and I feel like it is family here."

Dominic Ligocki
Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies



"This program has shaped me as a person. When I think back to the person I was as a 9th grader, I had a lot to improve upon. I think the program helped me become a better person physically, emotionally, and academically."

Natalie Cao
Stevenson High School



"At Stevenson, you will find you find a family and you will have something to push you to thrive academically."

Brooke Stalker
Utica High School



"Our school is more than just a building - it's a family that supports and uplifts each other. No matter what event or challenge comes your way, there are so many people who will go above and beyond to help you."

Ashton Mansour
Henry Ford II High School



"I am proud as a Falcon because of the community we developed, the caring teachers and the good, positive environment."

Translation Assistance

Persons seeking or needing district-related language assistance, please contact translations@uticak12.org, or:
- For Albanian: (586) 797-6946
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Para español:
(586) 797-6986
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In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act, it is the policy of Utica Community Schools that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, age, disability, height, weight, or marital status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination during any instructional opportunities, programs, services, job placement assistance, employment or in policies governing student conduct and attendance. Any person suspecting a discriminatory practice should contact Utica Community Schools Human Resources at 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.

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Editors: Tim McAvoy
Jennifer Kane