

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FOCUS FOR THE COMMUNITY

FALL 2026

A PUBLICATION FOR THE RESIDENTS OF UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



From the Superintendent...

Robert S. Monroe

Serving our entire community

I read the other day a comment from a community member that referenced how a strength of our district is that we operate as a family.

I believe this to be true. We are a large family, certainly, but one that is successful because generations of families and community members care and provide for our kids, just like a family.

This edition of our newsletter is focused on our community members who do not have students in school at this time.

Every resident has a vested interest in the success of their district. Schools are important to the quality of life and vitality of our neighborhoods – they impact property values, drive the local economy by bringing in new families and serving as a pipeline for tomorrow's workforce, and the children we are educating represent the future of our community.

Whether you work in our community, are new to UCS or you have children who have graduated from our schools, you are a critical part of our district's success story.

The legacy of UCS is that each generation actively prepares each group of students for success. This legacy has led to UCS graduates being leaders in the military, health care, manufacturing or in business and public service.

UCS graduates can lead because each generation builds and maintains educational facilities and educational programs of excellence. They look beyond themselves to something greater – a vibrant community that continues today.

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Keeping Community Members Engaged in UCS

Honoring our legacy and those who built it

There are generations of families that built our school district. The UCS Legacy of Excellence honors these residents by celebrating the people and events that wrote the UCS success story. We invite you to reconnect to UCS!

Legacy of Excellence
UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Uticak12.org/legacy

An invitation to see our schools in action



UCS residents have an open invitation to family events and activities held in UCS throughout the school year. The UCS athletics department offers senior gold passes that offer free admission to all district-sponsored athletic events (available at home ticket booths). Other events are listed in our district calendar.

UCS in the community

Schools are an integral part of our community. That is why you will find our students front and center at local events – from parades, to memorials, to community celebrations. Our students are also active volunteers at community events.



Partners in safe schools



Safety is everyone's responsibility. Thanks to your support, UCS has moved forward with improvements to create a safer and more positive learning environment for our students. Improvements include reconstructions, building additions of walls and security features built into technology. We also have strong community partnerships with local law enforcement which provide direct support through police liaisons, ongoing planning related to best practices, and safety drill practices and trainings.

Uticak12.org/safetyandsuccess

Accountability and Transparency

JUST ASK UCS

On a regular basis, we invite our community to share their thoughts on the future of our schools. In December, we will be asking our community to help us plan for the next step in our facility planning. We also encourage you to reach out any time you have a question or have a perspective to share.

Uticak12.org/justaskucs

The Utica Community Schools Legacy

Student Achievement and Success

UCS has a legacy of excellence that reflects a commitment to student success.

Our teachers and staff members have high expectations for our students. Strong relationships with trusted adults are at the center of the learning process.

UCS takes great pride in our students outperforming their peers on average in state and national assessments. We are also proud that our graduation rates remain one of the best in the region and nation.

Other recent achievement points of pride include:

- **Records set in AP numbers:** We have recorded an all-time high in the number of students taking advantage of rigorous advanced placement programs. More importantly, even as the participation grew, so too did the percentage of students who achieved a 3 or higher – the score where most colleges award credit.
- **Growth in Career and Technical Education (CTE) credentials:** In another indication of readiness, more than two thousand seven hundred (2,700) Career and Technical Education students have earned sixteen hundred (1,600) business credentials. This is more than three times greater than what we had just a few short years ago.
- **Every School Succeeding:** Our most recent Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) results have shown that students in every school in UCS are meeting and exceeding the expected achievement growth in each subject.



UCS graduation rates remain one of the best in the region and the nation.

Financial Accountability

UCS is committed to excellence in all aspects of work – be it academic or financial. We are committed to best practices that reflect good stewardship of community resources.

Examples of our financial accountability in action include:



Through reconstruction of facilities, UCS is realizing $14 million in savings for each project, such as the reconstruction of DeKeyser Elementary during the 2024-25 school year.

- **Nationally Recognized for Transparency in Reporting:** UCS is consistently honored for accountability in how it reports its financial statements to the public. The school district continues to earn a Certificate of Excellence (COE) in Financial Reporting for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) from the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International. Additionally, UCS receives the highest level of audit assurance from its external auditors on a consistent annual basis.
- **Careful management of Bond Resources:** We have extended the impact of the 2023 Safety and Success Bond Issue through a variety of cost saving measures. For instance, a strategy to reconstruct schools where possible represents a savings of approximately a third of the building costs – or roughly $14 million.
In addition, our Board of Education recently approved the refinancing of the debt authorized by the community to fund these projects. This will allow the district to save an estimated $1.3 million in interest over the life of the debt.
Finally, for each project there is a comprehensive and thorough bidding process that awards projects to the lowest qualified bid with vendors that can meet the high expectations of this Board of Education and the UCS community.
- **Grants Supporting Additional Student Opportunities:** Utica Community Schools annually secures about $50 million in grants to help support opportunities for students. These grants extend through every part of our schools, and include such things as summer programming for students, support for CTE programs and safety initiatives. Partnerships with business and community organizations also realize additional classroom grants and scholarship opportunities for our students.

Planning for the Future

The legacy of UCS is that one generation actively prepares the district for the next generation. UCS graduates lead because generations before built and maintained the educational facilities and academic programs of excellence.

In our community, this future is being shaped through the UCS Empowered Strategic Plan, adopted by the Board of Education in 2023. This long-range plan was created in collaboration with our community and has led to significant improvements in our district focused on the Cultures of Empowerment, Caring and Transformation.

In just three short years, the plan has led to a comprehensive set of curriculum improvements to drive student achievement, expanded wellness programs, the 2023 Safety and Success Bond Issue, a change to UCS grade configurations and the adjustment of attendance areas to bring neighborhoods together.

More information is available at *uticak12.org/UCSempowered*.



The UCS Empowered Strategic Plan has led to an expanded district wellness program.

Points of Pride

Seven seniors named among the top one percent of 2027 graduates

Seven Utica Community Schools students are among only 16,000 U.S. seniors to be named 2027 National Merit Semifinalists.

UCS National Merit Semifinalists are: Isaac Faruga, Mason May and Eli Ponton, of Eisenhower High School; Isaac Dunford, of Stevenson High School; and Garet Gertsch, Isla Nightingale and Evalena Witkow, of the Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies.

Faruga, May, Ponton and Dunford are also part of the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology.

National Merit Semifinalists are among the top one percent of seniors nationwide.

More than 1.2 million students of the Class of 2027 entered the National Merit Program by taking the 2025 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists includes the highest scoring entrants in each state.

To move from Semifinalist to Finalist status, students must submit a detailed scholarship application. The application includes information about their academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership, an essay, record of consistently high academic performance, a recommendation by an official of their high school, and SAT scores that confirm their PSAT/NMSQT performance.

Finalists have an opportunity to continue in the competition for 6,700 National Merit Scholarships totaling $24 million next spring.


Isaac Dunford

Isaac Faruga

Garet Gertsch

Mason May


Isla Nightingale


Eli Ponton


Evalena Witkow



UCS earns Patriot Award supporting deployed Air National Guard teacher

Utica Community Schools has been honored with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Patriot Award, a U.S. military recognition honoring employers and supervisors who provide outstanding support to employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve.

The award was presented to Wayne Johnson, Director of Employee Services, Alessandra Tilk, Employee Services Generalist, and Ebeling Principal Jacqueline Zawierucha for their support of Elijah Fante, Physical Education Teacher at Ebeling Elementary School and member of the 127th Wing, Michigan Air National Guard.

The award was presented at the August 17, 2026 Utica Community Schools Board of Education meeting by Michigan Employer Support of Guard and Reserves retired US Air Force Lt. Colonel, Jack Bronka.

High schools named among nation's best

All four 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 9 percent of the nation's 27,000 high schools evaluated in the study, according to the annual ranking.

Schools were ranked on six factors: college readiness, college curriculum breadth, state assessment proficiency, state assessment performance, underserved student performance, and graduation rate.

Health Academy prepares to graduate its first class of seniors

The Utica Health and Human Services (HHS) Academy is celebrating a milestone this year - its first graduating class of seniors.

One of those seniors - Leah Jolley - said that the Academy made her a step ahead as she pursues a career in sports medicine.

"The experiences I received in the Academy I never would have had anywhere else," she said.

HHS, opened in 2023, utilizes therapeutic services, public safety and rehabilitation services themes to help students develop technical and critical thinking skills while exposing students to in-depth industry related challenges through a medical lens.

Together We Make an Impact
www.ucsfoundation.org
UCS Foundation



Translations Available

Persons seeking or needing district related language assistance, please contact translations@uticak12.org, or:
• For Albanian: (586) 797-6946
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Las personas que buscan o necesitan asistencia con el idioma inglés para asuntos relacionados a las escuelas de nuestro distrito escolar, por favor comuníquese con:
Para español:
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Notice of Nondiscrimination

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.

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

WWW.UTICAK12.ORG

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WWW.UTICAK12.ORG/SOCIAL

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FOCUS for the Community

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