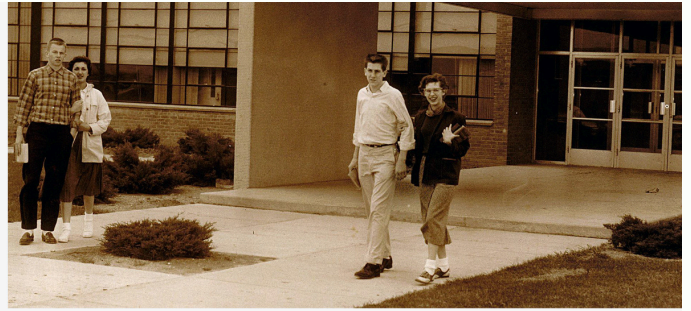


# CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY



## The Roots of UCS

The origin of Utica Community Schools can be traced to a school house that opened for three months in 1818-19 and housed between 14 and 15 students.

That number quickly grew as a land rush occurred based on the area's fertile soil and its tie to Lake St. Clair. In 1837, Michigan became a state and its constitution required a system of common schools to be opened at least three months a year. Residents responded by opening the Disco Academy - a private preparatory school for future teachers - a two room school house at 24 Mile and Van Dyke, a permanent brick structure in Sterling Heights named Burr and Utica Union just south of the present day Eppler Junior High School.

By the late part of the century, our 66 square miles consisted of 10 school houses with familiar names, such as Plumbrook and Ewell.



The story of Utica Community Schools is grounded in the work of generations of dedicated individuals who had a vision for how to prepare their children as future leaders.

Through these pages, we celebrate the work of a community that took a small school house in 1818 and created one of the nation's premier school districts.

We celebrate this rich history as it reflects who we are today and inspires us to continue the service, dedication and commitment to student success that remains part of our fabric.

The legacy of excellence that lives within Utica Community Schools continues as we look to take an exemplary school district to its next level and empower our students to change their future and the world.

Robert S. Monroe  
Superintendent of Schools



**UTICA  
COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS**

ESTABLISHING **EXCELLENCE** SINCE 1818

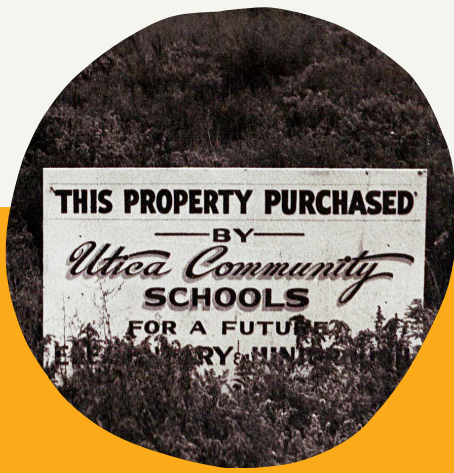


# Timeline



## THE ROOTS OF UCS 1900-1955

The modern day Eppler opened as "Utica High School" in 1929. Another population surge during World War II put pressure on community leaders to consider consolidation with other rural districts.



## A TIME OF GROWTH 1960-2000

The Utica Community Schools we recognize today largely took shape during a population surge. UCS also firmly established its reputation as a national educational leader in academics, the fine arts and athletics.



## THE LEGACY CONTINUES

UCS is building on its legacy of excellence with its UCS Empower Strategic Plan, adopted in 2023. The plan creates a roadmap that will guide our future through our cultures of caring, empowerment and transformation. In 2023, UCS voters approved the largest facility improvement project in the district's history that will enhance safety and transform our schools.

1

## THE EARLY YEARS 1818-1900

The first schoolhouse in our community opened in 1818-19. Thanks to a land surge, the area grew by the end of the century to 10 school houses. Utica Union, located in the City of Utica, was renamed "Utica High School" in 1900.



2

3

## UCS TAKES SHAPE 1955-1960

On September 2, 1955, the Board of Education voted to rename "School District No. 1, Fractional" to "Utica Community Schools." Voters in the 66 square miles of UCS had voted over the past several years to consolidate their rural schools into a single district.

4

5

## A NEW MILLENNIUM 2000-2023

Utica Community Schools continued to grow and established itself as Michigan's second largest school district. UCS excellence was recognized as schools began earning Blue Ribbon Exemplary School honors at both the state and national level.



6



**UTICA  
COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS**



# THE ROOTS OF UCS



The new century started with a new name for the “Utica Union” school - “Utica High School.”

The early part of the 20th century also resulted in the expansion of classroom content through the purchase of student textbooks. It was also when Utica High School introduced its athletic offerings, including baseball, tennis and girl’s basketball.

In 1929, voters decided to eliminate overcrowding (enrollment had swelled to 393) at Utica High School by building a new \$140,000 building – now known as the older wing at Eppler Junior High School. The great depression struck the area hard and resulted in a shortened school year and salary reductions. Then Board treasurer Dr. Wiley paid some of the bond expenses personally to ensure the district did not default on its loans.

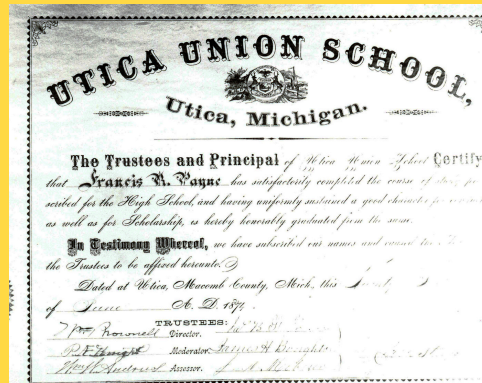
It was clear by the middle of the century that the Utica district could not continue to assume the program and debt burdens for students from other surrounding, rural districts, and that a change was needed.

## High Expectations From the Start

Enrollment to the Utica Union School was not automatic. Students were required to pass exams in math, geography, grammar, reading, spelling and history.

Students also had to “write plainly and neatly,” according to the school’s catalog.

Tuition at the school was \$1.75 per quarter.



# UCS TAKES SHAPE



The Utica Public Schools Board of Education met on September 2, 1955 to consider giving a name to a consolidation effort that began more than seven years earlier. By a unanimous vote, the board agreed to call its new 66-square mile district "Utica Community Schools."

Getting to this point was anything but easy.

The first step was for the Board of Education to begin a study on school reorganization. According to a document left by Jack Harvey, consolidation was the only practical solution and a way that local schools could control their future in an environment when reorganization was being forced on many communities.

The consolidation required voter approval by residents in the rural districts who were split over the consolidation efforts. Following several failed efforts by many communities, voters eventually agreed to consolidate into a single school district. Following the decision, the UCS Board opened a new elementary (Wiley Elementary), a new Utica High School on its present site, and the former high school opened as Eppler Junior High School.

## The Need for Consolidation

The 1946 document that paved the way for the modern Utica Community Schools argued that consolidation was an "adjustment to changing conditions everywhere."

The plan sought to address "the many conditions" that were facing school districts in the area.

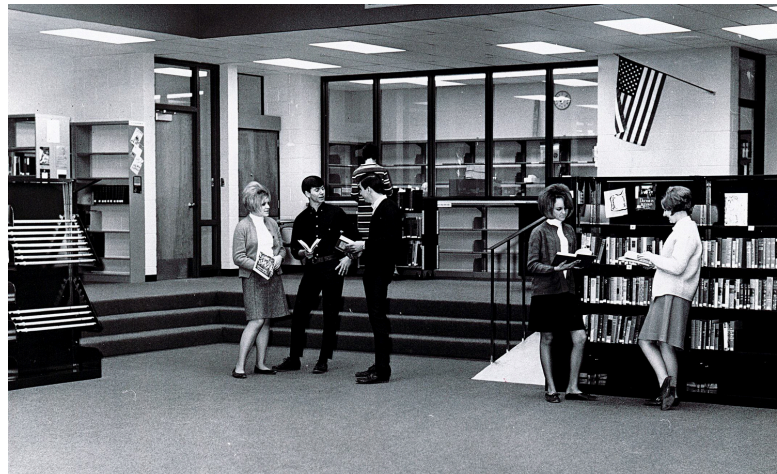
**"Already costs of operating a school are mounting higher and higher, the teacher shortage is steadily getting worse, the school members are becoming larger and larger, the school housing situation is not improving, and repairs no longer satisfy the needs of the school plants."**

The document argued for the consolidation of 10 "fractional" - or separate - schools. In essence, the study found that a better education could be provided to students with reduced costs to the homeowners.

It ends: **"Times change - we must keep improving...Let's unite and be proud of our schools. Let's give the children a good foundation."**



# A TIME OF GROWTH



There is one word to describe Utica Community Schools during the latter part of the 20th century – growth.

UCS experienced tremendous expansion both inside and outside the classroom.

Outside the classroom, more than 21,000 people moved into the community as businesses began to expand or build new facilities in our community.

In the 1950s, the student population quadrupled. It is a story that repeated itself over the course of the next 30 years. During these years, voters approved nearly 10 bond issues to build, expand or modernize school facilities.

Inside the classroom, the district quickly established its ongoing pattern of being innovative leaders by inspiring remarkable student achievement.

When Harvey and Plumbrook elementaries opened, the concept of a research center was introduced. This innovative use of space was a move by UCS from traditional self-contained classrooms to a multi-media program.

This pattern continued as innovation led the district to establish a national standard in academics, athletics and the fine arts.

In the late 1990s, the first UCS secondary specialty program opened as the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology (UCMST).

It quickly established UCS as a school district providing unique opportunities and multiple avenues for success that are only available to our students.





# UCS IN A NEW MILLENNIUM

The positive momentum that carried UCS into the 21st century has only accelerated over the past two decades.

UCS voters continued to support their schools by approving four bond issues during this time, including a 2023 Safety and Success bond issue that represented the largest facility investment in our history.

The bond issues supported new and reconstructed elementary schools and the Joan C. Sergent Instructional Resource Center. In addition, the bond issues also supported overall safety, technology

enhancements, additional instructional space and the long-range building needs of our schools.

The educational excellence also continued to be recognized at state and federal levels. Staff and students were recognized as the best in the nation and state through Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Awards and recognition in academics, technology and student achievement.

The legacy of excellence in UCS is being guided through the adoption of the UCS Empowered Strategic Plan, adopted unanimously by the Board of Education in 2023.



## Our Vision

Utica Community Schools, in partnership with our community, will empower students to positively transform their future and the world.

-Adopted unanimously by the UCS Board of Education  
August, 2022



# THE LEGACY BEHIND SCHOOL NAMES

## Senior High Schools

**Eisenhower** – Dwight D. Eisenhower was the 34th president of the United States.

**Henry Ford II** – Henry Ford II was the chief executive officer for Ford Motor Co. from 1945 to 1979.

**Stevenson** – Adlai E. Stevenson II was a U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

**Utica** – Originally named in 1900 for the region where the school was located.

---

## Junior High Schools

**Bemis** – Originally Sterling Junior High, the school was renamed to honor Donald L. Bemis who served as both the superintendent of Utica Community Schools and the state superintendent of public instruction.

**Davis** – William Davis was superintendent of schools from 1929 to 1955.

**Eppler** – George Eppler served as a Board of Education member for 27 years, including 22 as president.

**Jeannette** – Frank E. Jeannette was a Macomb County Circuit Court judge.

**Malow** – William Malow was a local business leader and past supervisor of Sterling Township.

---

## Elementary

**Beck Centennial** – The elementary school is located on property that was formerly part of the Beck farm.

**Browning** – W.B. Browning served on the Board of Education for 18 years, including 11 as president.

**Burr** – Louis Burr was the owner of a Brick and Tile Factory near where the original school was built in 1845.

**Collins** – Bruce D. Collins was an active member of the community for 24 years, including chairman of the Sterling Heights Zoning Commission.

**Crissman** – Howard G. Crissman served on the Board of Education for 14 years, including six years as President.

**DeKeyser** – Monsignor Edward J. DeKeyser was the pastor of St. Lawrence Church.

**Dresden** – Dresden is the name of the subdivision surrounding the school, one of the first constructed in Sterling Heights.

**Duncan** – Richard Duncan was a local business leader and founding member of the UCS Foundation.

**Ebeling** – Floyd H. Ebeling served as a principal and assistant superintendent in Utica Community Schools.

**Flickinger** – Walter Flickinger served on the Board of Education for 22 years, including 19 years as treasurer.

**Graebner** – W.M. Graebner was a principal and teacher at Trinity Lutheran Elementary School.

**Harvey** – Jack Harvey served 40 years on the Board of Education, including eight as president.

**Havel** – “Smiling Ed” Havel was Utica’s last village president and its first mayor.

**Messmore** – J.V. Messmore served on the Board of Education and is a former president of the Village of Utica.

**Monfort** – Isaac Monfort served on the state of Michigan’s first legislature in 1837.

**Morgan** – Harry Morgan served ten years on the Board of Education.

**Oakbrook** – The school is named for the subdivision that surrounds the school.

**Plumbrook** – The school is named for the waterway which bisects the community and was a former Indian Trail between Sterling Heights and Pontiac.

**Roberts** – George F. Roberts served on the Board of Education and was the district’s attorney.

**Rose Kidd** – Rose Kidd taught in Utica Community Schools for 40 years.

**Schuchard** – W.F. Schuchard was a local business leader who was active in Utica Community Schools and area service projects.

**Schwarzkoﬀ** – Edward Schwarzkoﬀ was a local mortician who headed anti-polio campaigns, formed local civic groups and was the first president of the Utica Library Association.

**Switzer** – Josephine Switzer served on the Disco Academy school board and as clerk in Shelby Township.

**Walsh** – Clarence and Velma Walsh were educators in Utica Community Schools.

**West Utica** – The school is located on West Utica Road.

**Wiley** – Dr. H.H. Wiley served more than 30 years on the Board of Education.

---

## Educational Facilities

**Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies (GLK-UAIS)** – Gene L. Klida served on the Board of Education for nearly 20 years, including two years as president.

**Gibbing** – Naomi Gibbing was a librarian and noted historian in Utica.

**Joan C. Sergent Instructional Resource Center (IRC)** – Dr. Joan C. Sergent served as Utica Community Schools superintendent for 13 years.



# THE LEGACY CONTINUES

For generations, learning traditions have inspired curiosity, discovery and excellence within Utica Community Schools. Our students continue these traditions, as they are empowered to learn, grow and experience success.

Through this legacy, UCS continues to set a standard of educational excellence:

- Student achievement levels that outpace state and national levels.
- A graduation rate that is among the best in our region and the nation.
- Programs, services, students and staff that are recognized for excellence throughout the state and country.

Our vision is that we will empower our students to positively transform their future and the world.

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mary K. Thomas, Ph.D., President  
Denyeal Nesovski, Vice President  
Michele Templeton, Treasurer  
Kelli Rankin, Secretary  
Kimberly Becker, Trustee  
Steven R. Meyer, Ph.D., Trustee  
Machelle Fitzpatrick, Trustee

Robert S. Monroe,  
Superintendent of Schools



*Rendering of a classroom at DeKeyser Elementary. The reconstruction project, funded by the 2023 Safety and Success Bond Issue, is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2025.*

We meet this vision through the implementation of our UCS Empowered Strategic Plan – a road map that guides the future success of our district. The plan is available on the UCS website at [uticak12.org/ucsempowered](http://uticak12.org/ucsempowered).

This plan is focused on three main priorities:

- **A Culture of Empowerment** – Ensuring all students are engaged in experiences leading to academic growth and achievement enabling them to prepare for the careers of their choosing.
- **A Culture of Caring** – Ensuring a sense of belonging and inclusion to foster engagement in a safe and respectful community.

- **A Culture of Transformation** – Ensuring programming, resources and facilities support reimagining UCS.

Already, the plan has led the way to the largest facility improvement in our district's history.

In May of 2023, UCS voters approved a \$550 million bond issue. This bond issue addresses important safety needs and begins the redesign of school facilities that gives teachers space to support the learning needs of their students. The facility redesign began with the reconstruction of DeKeyser Elementary, which is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2025.