

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FOCUS FOR THE COMMUNITY

MAY 2, 2023 ELECTION

A PUBLICATION FOR THE RESIDENTS OF UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



*From the
Superintendent...*
Robert S. Monroe
**FUTURE
FOCUSED**

Utica Community Schools started this school year with an eye firmly focused on our future.

Throughout the strategic planning process, we worked collaboratively with a large range of community members to create a new vision and mission that would empower our students to transform their futures.

A clear message throughout this process has been the critical importance of safety, resources and a positive learning environment.

It is why one of our first action items from this plan has been the creation of the proposals that address financial stability and a safe and positive learning environment.

When it comes to the safety of our students and staff, we simply cannot wait. We also need to make sure we are being fiscally responsible and ensure this school district is getting its full share of state aid. It is why we have scheduled this special election for May 2, 2023.

The two proposals being presented to the voters meet our needs today and tomorrow, and will do it in a way that has ZERO impact on the millage rate for homeowners.

Please take the time to read this newsletter carefully to learn more about how the proposals will influence the future of UCS.

I look forward to continuing to work with this community to provide services that meet the high standards for excellence in our community.



Safety and Success proposals on May 2 ballot

Zero Tax-Rate Increase Bond Proposal and Non-Homestead Millage

Utica Community Schools voters will be considering two Safety and Success proposals at a special election on May 2, 2023.

The first proposal is a zero tax-rate increase bond proposal that will provide important safety improvements to our buildings and remodel, rebuild or upgrade facilities to protect the community's investment in its schools.

The proposal does not increase the district's current debt rate – the lowest in Macomb County.

The second proposal will allow the school district to receive its full share of state aid through the replacement of a non-homestead operating millage. The proposal, which is required of all Michigan school districts, will return the rate to a previously authorized level and will only impact businesses, second homes, rental properties and vacant land.

The proposal has been structured to provide long term financial stability for our schools.

For more information on both proposals, please see the inside pages of this newsletter.

Share your voice through this survey

Our community's input and participation have been critical to bringing forth the Zero Tax-Rate Increase Bond Proposal and the Non-Homestead Millage Proposal. We invite you to share your feedback through a brief survey by scanning the QR code or by contacting us at (586) 797-1054 or questions@uticak12.org.



2 FOCUS

PROPOSAL ONE:

THE UCS SAFETY AND SUCCESS BOND PROPOSAL

The Safety and Success bond proposal will:

- » Provide important safety enhancement at our schools
- » Remodel, rebuild or upgrade facilities and fields to protect the community's investment in its schools
- » **NOT increase the district's current debt rate – the lowest in Macomb County**

Questions & Answers: Safety and Success Bond Proposal

Why is the bond proposal on the ballot?

UCS' strategic plan calls for renewed attention to upgrading, renovating and constructing educational facilities.

As indicated in the UCS strategic plan, the May 2 facilities bond proposal is phase one of a process that will continue in future years when additional projects can be completed without a tax-rate increase (over the current debt millage).

Where do I find a list of projects that will be completed at each school if the bond proposal is approved?

Go to www.uticak12.org/projectlists. The following pages of this newsletter also provide a summary of projects scheduled for elementary, junior high and high schools.

How were the bond proposal projects identified?

As part of Utica Community Schools long-range facilities program, UCS staff worked with architects and engineers to conduct a thorough assessment of school district facilities. Facility needs were then prioritized and reviewed by students, staff and community members in a series of focus panels. In addition, UCS commissioned an online survey to solicit input regarding the proposed projects. The survey was open to all UCS staff and all residents of the school district. This staff and community input was considered in finalizing the bond proposal.

Will voter approval of this bond proposal accommodate all facility needs of UCS?

No. An evaluation of facilities needs earlier this school year identified a possible \$1.4 billion in needed improvements across our 44 facilities. The May 2 bond proposal addresses the highest priority needs. UCS considers this bond election as phase one of a multi-phase initiative.

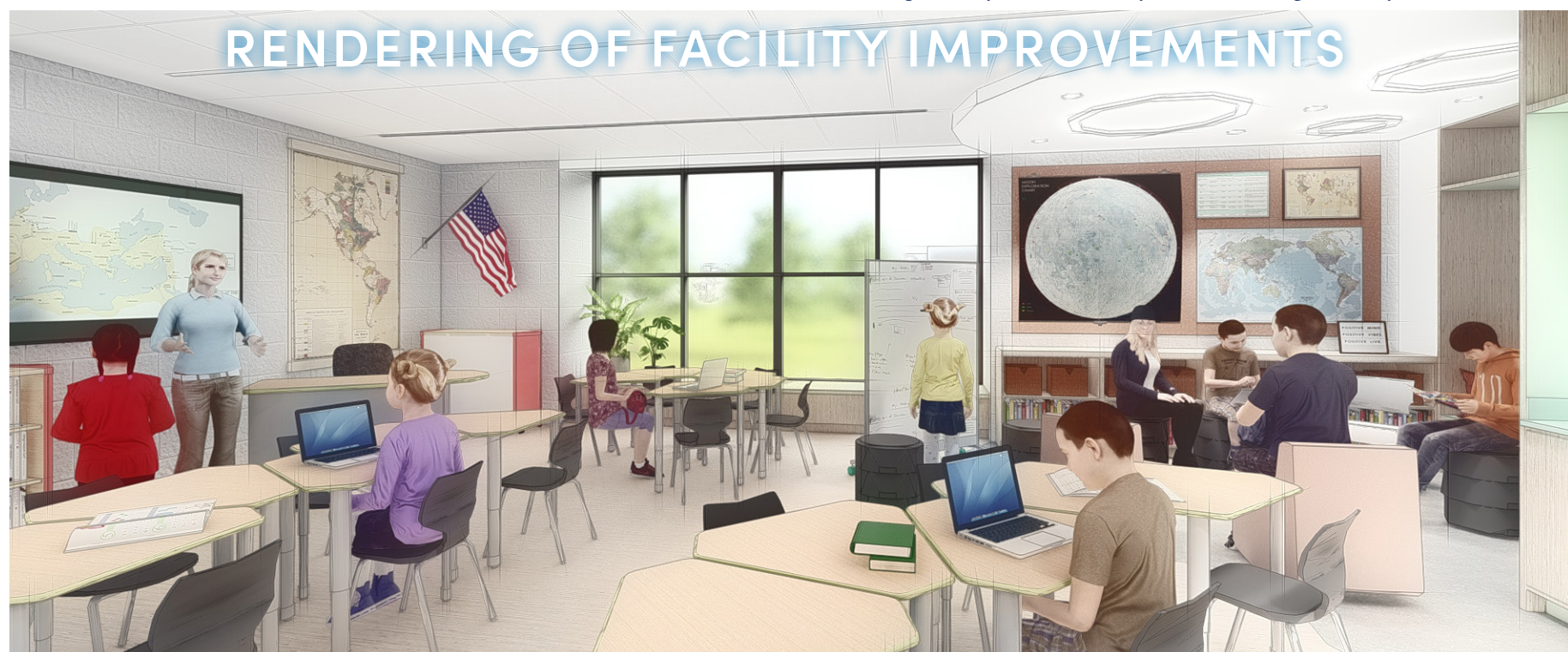
What is a bond proposal?

A bond is a state-approved funding process for a set scope of projects. When voters approve a bond proposal, the school district sells bonds in the authorized amount and uses the bond sale proceeds to pay for those projects in the bond proposal. Bonds are typically set up to be paid back in 15-30 years.

In many ways, the bonding process is like a homeowner obtaining a mortgage and making payments over a period of years. The UCS bond proposal length is 15 years.

Can any of the bond proposal funds be used for employee salaries or operating expenses?

No. Bond proceeds can only be used in accordance with facility enhancements as identified in the proposal. Bond proposal funds cannot be used for employee salaries. They also cannot be used for repair or maintenance costs or other operating expenses. Bond proposal funds must be used only for purposes specified in the ballot language, and as required by state law, they must be independently audited.



Upper Elementary Classroom***

***Image rendering represents artist's conceptualization and is subject to change.

PROPOSAL TWO:

THE UCS NON-HOMESTEAD OPERATING REPLACEMENT MILLAGE PROPOSAL

The UCS non-homestead operating replacement millage proposal:

- » Represents a previously authorized millage by voters that is restricted to businesses, vacant land, rental properties and second homes
- » Is a levy in every Michigan community to allow local school districts to receive their full share of state aid
- » **Is NOT levied on owner-occupied primary homes and has ZERO impact on a homeowner's property taxes**
- » Supports school operations, including safety initiatives and training, teachers and staff, programs and services, and utilities such as heat and water
- » Represents \$41 million in annual funding to help maintain academic programs and services that support the district's track record of excellence

Questions & Answers: Non-Homestead Operating Replacement Millage

What is the non-homestead proposal?

School districts in Michigan must levy 18 mills on non-homestead property to receive their full share of state aid.

The non-homestead replacement operating millage proposal represents a previously authorized millage by voters that is restricted to second homes, rental property, businesses and vacant land.

The 18-mill non-homestead replacement millage will generate approximately \$41.2 million for the 2023-2024 school year. The funding supports general school operations for UCS, including safety initiatives and training, teachers and staff, programs and services, and utilities such as heat and water.

This millage rate is subject to "rollbacks" per the Headlee Amendment to the Michigan Constitution. As a result of rollbacks, this year, UCS will lose \$2.85 million in state aid. Projections are that the school district will continue losing state aid and the revenue loss will be approximately \$4 million annually by 2024/2025.

The proposal has been structured to provide long-term financial stability for our schools through an additional unlevied 2 mills that will off-set any future rollbacks and provide UCS with its full share of state aid.

Does the non-homestead millage requirement apply to all Michigan school districts?

Yes. The State of Michigan requires all school districts to levy an 18-mill tax on non-homestead property (primarily businesses, second homes, rental property and vacant land) to receive their full share of state aid.

Does the non-homestead operating tax apply to the home in which I live?

No. This tax does not apply to the homes in which UCS residents live (also known as primary residences or homesteads).

If the non-homestead millage does not apply to primary residences, why do we get to vote on it?

Quite simply, that is the law. In 1994, the Michigan Legislature adopted a school funding law that allows all registered voters to vote on non-homestead operating millages.

What will happen if voters do not approve the non-homestead operating proposal?

UCS will continue to lose increasing amounts of state aid. This loss affects the school district's general fund budget and, hence, the education of all UCS students.

UCS by the Numbers

Michigan's
SECOND LARGEST
School District

Approximately 26,000 students

Average age of facilities

54 YEARS

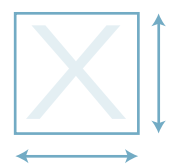
Number of Buildings in UCS



44
schools & ancillary buildings

Total square footage in UCS

Just under **four million sq. feet**
of building space



Total amount of pavement/parking lot space

138 ACRES OF PAVEMENT



4 FOCUS

WHAT'S NEXT FOR UCS?

The following are examples of projects that would be completed through the Safety and Success Bond Proposal. For a full project list by school, visit www.uticak12.org/projectlists.

ELEMENTARY



SAFETY

- ✓ Create additional layers of security to limit access for exterior entry points at main entrances and corridors, such as shatter-resistant glass
- ✓ Replace interior door hardware to integrate improved locking system based on industry-level safety standards*
- ✓ Renovate facility to address identified safety concerns related to the building's original design
- ✓ Upgrade network infrastructure
- ✓ Upgrade security systems (cameras and access control)
- ✓ Replace public address system*
- ✓ Replace drinking fountains with water bottle filling stations

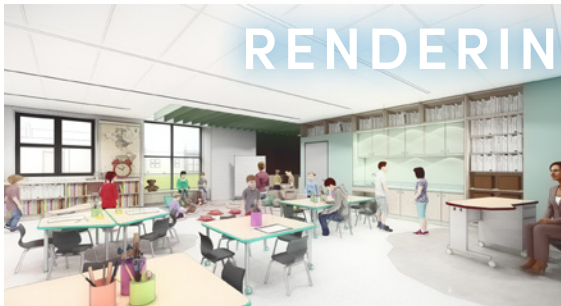
*Project scheduled for 2023 from the 2018 bond issue

Note – While the above represents a general list for elementary schools, the specific projects may vary by school. For a complete list for each school, please visit: www.uticak12.org/projectlists

SUCCESS

- ✓ Improve exterior façade and landscaping
- ✓ Improve stage lighting and sound within the gym/cafeteria
- ✓ Renovate media center
- ✓ Renovate restrooms
- ✓ Upgrade plumbing and HVAC systems
- ✓ Upgrade power systems
- ✓ Upgrade interior and exterior lighting systems
- ✓ Modernize school sign with digital technology
- ✓ Purchase instructional technology equipment for classrooms
- ✓ Purchase computers for students and staff
- ✓ Purchase classroom furniture
- ✓ Purchase media center furniture

RENDERINGS OF FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS



Lower Elementary Classroom***



Upper Elementary Playground***



Junior High School Media Center***

JUNIOR HIGH



SAFETY

- ✓ Create additional layers of security to limit access for exterior entry points at main entrances and corridors, such as shatter-resistant glass
- ✓ Replace interior door hardware to integrate improved locking system based on industry-level safety standards*
- ✓ Renovate facility to address identified safety concerns related to the building's original design
- ✓ Upgrade network infrastructure
- ✓ Upgrade security systems (cameras and access control)
- ✓ Replace public address system*
- ✓ Improve the track and bleachers
- ✓ Replace drinking fountains with water bottle filling stations

*Project scheduled for 2023 from the 2018 bond issue

Note – While the above represents a general list for junior high schools, the specific projects may vary by school. For a complete list for each school, please visit: www.uticak12.org/projectlists

SUCCESS

- ✓ Renovate the media center
- ✓ Purchase instructional technology equipment for classrooms
- ✓ Renovate restrooms
- ✓ Improve exterior façade and landscaping
- ✓ Upgrade the gym's lighting and audio system
- ✓ Upgrade plumbing and HVAC systems
- ✓ Upgrade power systems
- ✓ Upgrade interior and exterior lighting systems
- ✓ Modernize school sign with digital technology
- ✓ Purchase computers for students and staff
- ✓ Purchase classroom furniture
- ✓ Purchase media center furniture

***Image renderings represent artist's conceptualization and are subject to change.

HIGH SCHOOL

SAFETY

- ✓ Create additional layers of security to limit access for exterior entry points at main entrances and corridors, such as shatter-resistant glass
- ✓ Replace interior door hardware to integrate improved locking system based on industry-level safety standards*
- ✓ Upgrade network infrastructure
- ✓ Upgrade security systems (cameras and access control)
- ✓ Replace public address system*
- ✓ Redesign parking lot and replace paving
- ✓ Add synthetic turf to the infield of the softball and baseball fields
- ✓ Add synthetic turf to the multi-use fields
- ✓ Improve fan experience surrounding Runkel/Swinehart Stadium
- ✓ Replace select roofing areas of stadium and improve stadium press boxes and home and visitor bleachers
- ✓ Replace drinking fountains with water bottle filling stations*

*Project scheduled for 2023 from the 2018 bond issue

** Project funded by 2018 bond issue

Note – While the above represents a general list for high schools, the specific projects may vary by school. For a complete list for each school, please visit: www.uticak12.org/projectlists

SUCCESS

- ✓ Renovate science labs
- ✓ Renovate art rooms
- ✓ Renovate space for Career and Technical Education (CTE) academies
- ✓ Upgrade Performing Arts Center lighting and sound**
- ✓ Upgrade Electronic Collaboration Classroom (ECC)*
- ✓ Replace select roofing areas
- ✓ Improve gym and fitness rooms
- ✓ Replace swimming pool equipment*
- ✓ Renovate pool locker rooms and bleachers
- ✓ Upgrade kitchen*
- ✓ Upgrade power systems
- ✓ Upgrade exterior lighting systems
- ✓ Update digital school sign
- ✓ Purchase instructional technology equipment for classrooms
- ✓ Purchase computers for students and staff
- ✓ Purchase classroom furniture
- ✓ Purchase media center furniture



High School Art Classroom***

High School Science Classroom***

***Images represent conceptualization and are subject to change.

Comprehensive facility review will address changes in our community

The average age of a UCS facility is 54 years – or roughly the year 1969. It was the year of the first moonwalk; gas was 35 cents a gallon and a car costs \$2,000; a stamp was 6 cents and a loaf of bread was 23 cents.

A lot has changed in the world and in Utica Community Schools since then.

The facility enhancements outlined in the May 2 bond proposal will give the district an opportunity to have a comprehensive review of its buildings.

Facility improvements, renovations and/or new construction at UCS elementary schools will provide our students and teachers

with a learning environment that meets the high standards of our community. In addition, the review will study the future needs of the Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies and Heritage Junior High School, which currently share a campus.

This review will occur in partnership with parents through a long-standing citizens committee, the Enrollment Distribution Advisory Committee, that is comprised of representatives from each school.

This comprehensive, systematic plan will start this spring with a final recommendation provided to the Board of Education in the fall by district leadership.

Bond proposal supports UCS multi-layered approach to safety

Safety is a community priority for Utica Community Schools. Our district works closely with law enforcement, community leaders, parents and students to create a safety management process that is focused on the learning environment.

The proposed bond issue supports safety initiatives across the district by providing safeguards recommended to proactively address any emergency situation.

The district uses a multi-layered approach focused on three key areas:

- **Education and Expectations** – The district provides training, works with community partners and works to ensure that every member of the community has clear expectations when it comes to safety.
- **Learning Environment** – Partnering with law enforcement, UCS is constantly reviewing its schools with best practices related to security.
- **Wellness and Mental Health** – UCS students should feel a sense of belonging and purpose in their schools. The district’s vision embodies this by empowering students to positively transform their future and the world.

The May 2 election is focused on facility improvements that have been identified through input from law enforcement, parents, staff and students.

For the bond issue, these improvements range from addressing open school concept facilities (schools that were built 50 years ago and do not have interior walls), replacement and installation of technology that increases response times and classroom security in emergency situations, and reinforcement of all exterior door entry areas.

For more information on the school district’s multi-layered safety approach, visit www.uticak12.org/ucssafety.

MULTI-LAYERED APPROACH TO SAFETY & SUCCESS

At Utica Community Schools, everyone has a role to play in the safety and success of our students.

STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOLS:

A uniform response that is clear for any crisis.

Hold! in the room or area and clear the halls.

Secure! Get inside. Lock outside doors.

Lockdown! Locks, lights, out of sight.

Evacuate! (A location may be specified)

Shelter! Hazard and safety strategy.

EDUCATION + EXPECTATIONS

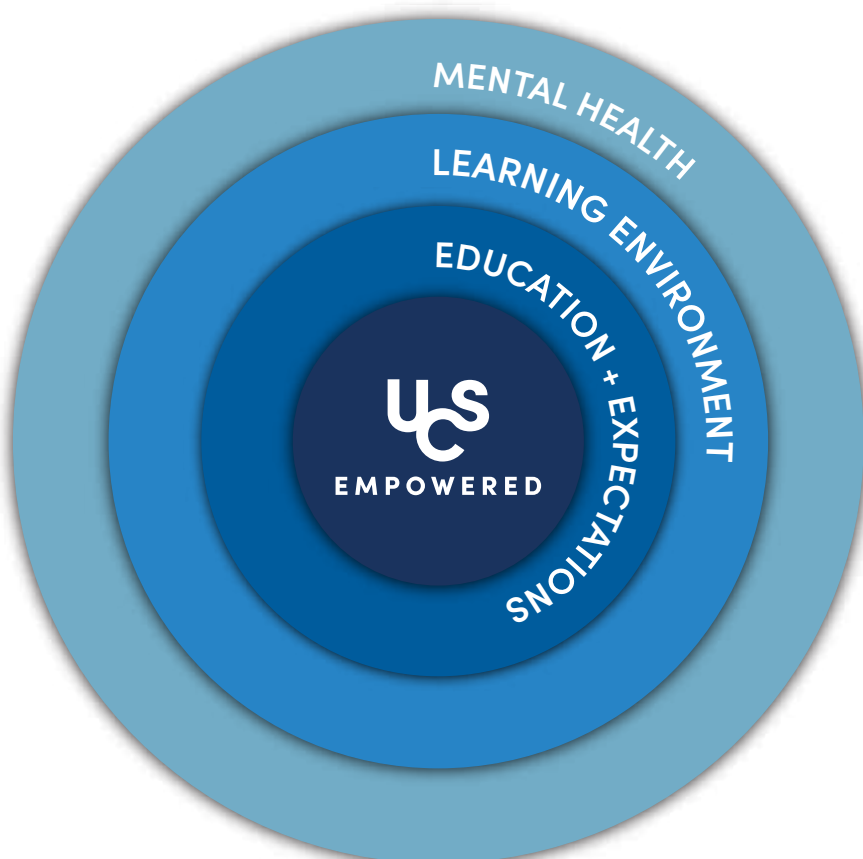
- **Training** – Staff have been trained in protocols related to incidents, threat assessments, CPR and medical response, and Automatic Defibrillator use.
- **Emergency Operations Plan** – Each school maintains an Emergency Operations Plan that identifies protocols and responses to a wide variety of school related safety issues.
- **Director of Safety and Management Services** – This role supports implementation of safety protocols and practices throughout the district.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- **Secure Entryways** – All visitors must be buzzed into the facility and enter through the main office area.
- **Swipe Door System** – All exterior doors are locked. Access to enter buildings is restricted to authorized personnel through computer swipe badges.
- **Door Locking System** – Door hardware is scheduled to be replaced to improve locking system and Night Locks have been installed.
- **Security Cameras** – Cameras can be accessed by law enforcement in emergency situations.
- **School Resource Officer** – Law enforcement officer assigned to each comprehensive high school.
- **School Security Specialist** – Former law enforcement officers hired by the district are assigned to each junior high school and all “open concept” elementary schools.
- **Law Enforcement** – Our local law enforcement agencies work directly with the entire district to identify and implement best practices for a safe learning environment.
- **Common Language** – The Standard Response Protocols (SRP) have been adopted to ensure everyone in the school understands what to do if a situation occurs.

MENTAL HEALTH

- **UCS Wellness** – Resources to provide guidance and awareness of mental health services.
- **Communication** – The district is working with school counselors on understanding common safety communication and language.
- **SMART Moves & DARE** – Education provided by law enforcement partners to promote positive decision making.
- **Training** – Staff members are trained in Trauma-Informed and Resilient Schools through Starr Commonwealth.
- **CARE of Southeastern Michigan Partnership** – Provides referral assistance for students in need of behavioral health services.
- **OK2SAY** – A student safety program which allows students to confidentially report tips on potential harmful or criminal activities directed at students or the school.
- **Character Strong** – A research-based K-12th grade wellness curricula and professional learning service that positively impacts lives.
- **MI-BEST (Macomb Intermediate Behavioral & Emotional Support Team)** – Counseling services provided to UCS students through a referral system.



AVID success leads to offering at all secondary schools next year ●●●●●●●●●●



The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program has been helping provide Utica Community Schools secondary students with a wraparound support system both academically and social-emotionally for over a decade.

First offered at Jeannette Junior High School and Stevenson High School in 2011, AVID has expanded throughout UCS since then and as of the 2023-2024 school year, AVID will be offered at all four comprehensive high schools and seven junior high schools.

“The AVID program has been one of the most successful in Utica Community Schools throughout its tenure and truly embodies our vision to empower students to positively transform their future and the world,” Superintendent Robert S. Monroe said. “I look forward to seeing the increased impact on student success our AVID program is able to achieve through this expansion.”

As a national program, the goal of AVID is to help close the achievement gap by preparing students for college and success in a global society.

“At the secondary level, the AVID program provides instruction on school skills that are not often explicitly taught such as how to manage time, study or keep organized, just to name a few,” Davis Junior High School AVID teacher, Kelly Battle, said.

“The expansion of the AVID program shows that the district has recognized the benefits of this program and how it positively impacts our students and leads to post-secondary success.”

As Michigan’s second largest school district, AVID will be offered as part of the diverse array of programs available to all UCS secondary students.

“An integral part of AVID’s mission is student success through staff that have high expectations and positive connections that impact students well beyond their secondary education,” said Director of Student Services, Dr. Heather Blum.

UCS families interested in the AVID program should speak with their child’s counselor and may begin applying in the 6th grade for junior high AVID programs.

●●●●●●●●●● UCS honored nationally for transparency in financial reporting

For the 11th straight year, Utica Community Schools has earned recognition for meeting a high standard of transparency in reporting financial information.

The school district is among approximately 500 nationally to earn a Certificate of Excellence (COE) in Financial Reporting award for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) from the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International.



“This national recognition is an important accountability standard for our taxpayers,” Superintendent Robert Monroe said. “It demonstrates our commitment to transparency and ensuring that UCS resources directly support our educational vision, mission and strategic direction.”

By participating in the COE program, school districts demonstrate their commitment to financial transparency.

“The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report informs stakeholders about the financial and economic state of the district, making it an important communications tool for building trust and engaging with the school community,” said ASBO International Executive Director, Siobhan McMahon.

The district’s 2021-2022 audit is available at www.uticak12.org/ASBOhonors.



UCS Dance Teams Find Their Rhythm at Nationals

The high school dance teams from across Utica Community Schools took their dancing to the next level and competed on national stages in Orlando, FL this month. The dance teams from Utica High School and Eisenhower High School competed at the Universal Dance Association (UDA) National Dance Team Championship while the new Stevenson Ford United Dance Team competed at the Dance Team Union National Championship.

UCS media specialist honored statewide as technology leader



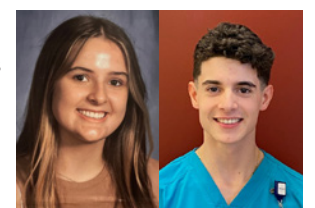
A Utica Community Schools media specialist has been honored statewide for her leadership to give all students the tools and support to effectively use technology in their classrooms and lives.

Holly Schomaker, of Schwarzkoff Elementary, received the Frank Miracola 21 Things Educational Excellence award from the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning (MACUL).

“It is an honor to receive this award for technology integration as I have worked for years to leverage technology to enhance my students’ learning,” Schomaker said.

UCS seniors, business honored for CTE excellence

Two Utica Community Schools seniors and a business partner were recently honored for



their commitment to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

Kristina Kopp, of Stevenson High School, and David Sanchez, of Utica High School, were honored as outstanding CTE Students of the Year by the Macomb Career Technical Education Administrators Association.

The association also honored MFC Netform, of Shelby Township, as an outstanding business partner for its support of the Stevenson MADE Academy.

Voices from the Community

...on how strong schools enhance property values

"I have been in the area for 22 years and would not go anywhere else. I believe when you have a cornerstone of a strong education, the community comes together on all levels. This adds to the value of the property."



**-Carla Vizzaccaro,
KW Lakeside REALTOR®**

...on the value of Career and Technical Education (CTE) academies

"The Stevenson MADE program offers a significant advantage to its students by teaching them the same Design Thinking Process utilized by General Motors. This equips them with valuable skills that are directly applicable in industry, and enables them to collaborate seamlessly with professionals in the field. The program's emphasis on practical learning prepares students for success in their future careers and instills confidence in potential employers seeking to hire them. Overall, the MADE program is an excellent investment for anyone seeking to acquire valuable skills and succeed in the industry."



**-Jeff Gramzow,
General Motors
Lead Talent Scout**

...on the importance of a positive learning environment

"As a UCS student, I have been given a multitude of opportunities that have shaped me into being who I am, but none of them would have been possible without being involved in a positive learning environment that encourages me to stand up for what's right and to always move forward no matter what. The skills and relationships I have grown and gained will forever have a positive impact on me and even how I live the rest of my life, including how I treat people and take on the world."



**-Anya Alband,
Eppler Junior High
School 9th Grader**

...on creating a long legacy of educational excellence

"My girls have become who they are through their UCS experiences and so have my grandchildren - we are all proud to be a part of this community."



**-Sue DeFrank,
UCS parent and grandparent**

Community input guides UCS proposals

UCS staff, parents and community members all have a voice when it comes to improving our schools.

Prior to placing the Safety and Success proposals on the May 2 ballot, the funding priorities were determined based on the strategic planning process, a series of focus panels featuring a wide range of stakeholders, and a community-wide survey.

The district's strategic plan – UCS Empowered – speaks clearly to the need for facilities and stable funding to ensure a preferred future.

This process was led by a survey of parents, students and staff and written by teams comprised of different stakeholders.

In addition, community members showed strong support for placing the proposals before voters in community-wide focus groups.

Consistent across the groups was a favorable stance to all aspects of the bond proposal as well as the financial stability that would be supported through the state required non-homestead election.

To see a summary of community input, please visit www.uticak12.org/safetyandsuccess.



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.

www.UticaK12.org

Find updates from
Utica Community Schools on:



www.UticaK12.org/Social

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FOCUS for the Community

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