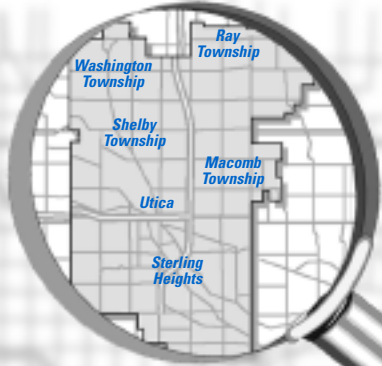


FOCUS for the community



A Publication for the Residents of Utica Community Schools

From the Superintendent...



by Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.

Education ever more important as Michigan and nation face mounting challenges

If these were typical times, as your superintendent of schools I would remark that the 2008-2009 school year is off to a great start. And, in many ways that is true. We've launched several powerful initiatives designed to improve academic achievement that will propel our students into college or other post secondary education. More than ever, we are graduating students ready to succeed in this rapidly changing world.

Our students are capable because we remain dedicated to our primary goal—that in Utica Community Schools, Every Child Achieves.

While I am happy to extol the wonderful things happening in our schools, I would be remiss if I didn't also

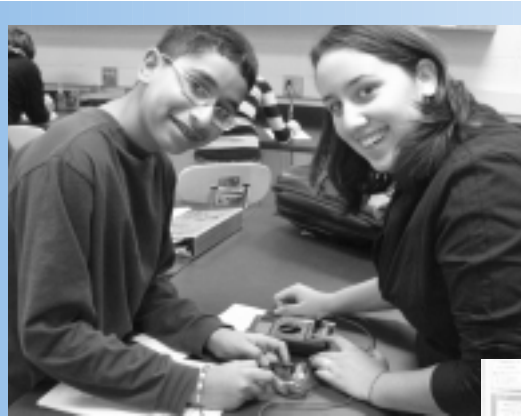
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International Baccalaureate Academy and Center for Science and Industry off to a great start

Two exciting new learning opportunities for secondary students in Utica Community Schools began operating this fall – the Utica Academy for International Studies (International Baccalaureate) and the Utica Center for Science and Industry.

Both are funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant secured through Utica's partnership with the Armada and Mount Clemens schools intended to expand learning opportunities for students in all three districts.

Housed at Heritage Junior High, the Utica Academy for International Studies offers qualifying students the opportunity to earn an International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma. IB is a globally-respected academic program of rigorous courses in mathematics, sciences, English and world literature, social studies, foreign languages and the arts.



International Baccalaureate (IB) Academy students **Shahbaz Randhawa** and **Brianna Lombardini** use a multi-meter to measure voltage as part of a unit on energy in their Physical and Biological Sciences class.

*In their History of World Civilizations class, IB students **Robin Thomas, India Clay, Emma Gougeon, Nick Zajciw and Amritpal Grewal** team up to organize random events that occurred during the classical periods of India, China and the Mediterranean. The purpose is to give students a global perspective of simultaneous events in the ancient world.*



An IB diploma signifies the graduate's commitment to achievement and ability to understand differing cultures and think strategically – qualities sought by colleges

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UCS continues trend toward higher MEAP and Michigan Merit Exam/ACT scores

Each October, students across the state in grades three through nine take the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test. The state's eleventh graders take the Michigan Merit Exam/American College Test (MME/ACT) each spring.

Student scores on these assessments provide UCS teachers and administrators with data indicating how well our students are learning the state's prescribed curriculum, their academic strengths and weaknesses, whether classroom instruction is effective in meeting the needs of every child and what action must

be taken to improve overall teaching and learning.

MEAP and MME/ACT scores also directly measure whether the district is on track to reach its goal, as established last year by the Reaching Higher Indicators of Excellence initiative, that by 2014, all UCS students will meet or exceed national, state and district proficiency standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies.

(The Reaching Higher Indicators of Excellence document is available at www.uticak12.org).

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Citizens group to offer voice in long-term planning for UCS

Long-range planning for the Utica Community Schools is the priority for parents, staff and community members participating in the Citizens for Education Project (CFEP).

The Citizens for Education Project last convened in 2003. The recommendations made at that time were used by the Board of Education to develop a bond issue which resulted in instructional and building improvements.

Building-level teams reviewed and prioritized recommendations for each school in the district. Building representatives will also participate in district-level teams to make recommendations for improvements in the areas of demographics, technology and capital projects. Final recommendations in these areas will be made to the Board of Education.

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Points of pride

At the SkillsUSA national summer conference, Ford II seniors **Adam Geml** earned first place in electronic applications and **Kyle Moran** and **Aaron Taylor** won a bronze team medal in robotics and automation.



The district's certified mechanics posted a 97.4 percent passing rate in the annual Michigan State Police inspection of the 250 buses in the UCS fleet. More than 150 items are inspected on each vehicle. Minor corrections brought the fleet to 100 percent.



UCS Career and Technical Education teachers **Geoff Clark** and **Scott Spry** won the Walter P. Chrysler "Closing the Technology Gap in Education" award this year. Sponsored in partnership with the Detroit Science Center, the program recognizes teachers who inspire and challenge students to use science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) concepts in real-world applications.



Utica Community Schools is proud to announce its Commended Scholars and Semifinalists in the 54th annual National Merit Scholarship program:

Commended:

- Eisenhower High School – **Steven Bareis, Ryan Berry, Kaitlyn DelBene, Robert Jozefiak, Megan Para**
- Ford II High School – **Shannon Biernat, Krista Bur, Holly Godden, Caitlin Grames, Christopher McMullen**
- Stevenson High School – **Christopher Dolan, Christopher Horton**
- Utica High School – **Alyssa Marchetti, Amanda Schneider**

Semifinalists:

- **Joseph Bracik, Ian Rye, Meena Sadaps**, all of Stevenson High School

More than 1.5 million students of the Class of 2009 entered the National Merit Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in 2007. Of these, approximately five percent qualified as Commended Scholars. Students who attain Semifinalist distinction represent less than one percent of the total and advance to the Finalist level of competition for Merit Scholarship awards.

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IB and UCSI off to a great start

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and universities world-wide, and the international business community, as well.

Students follow a specialized program in ninth and tenth grade in preparation for the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in their junior and senior years. One hundred and eighteen ninth graders began the UCS program this year, with a grade to be added each year until the full four-year program is established.

Located at the Joan C. Sergent Instructional Research Center, the Utica Center for Science and Industry (UCSI) offers foundation-level instruction in three career fields: engineering technology, which introduces engineering concepts; multi-media technology,

in which students study digital design, animation and television production; and mechatronics, which integrates mechanical, electrical and software engineering concepts resulting in automated operating systems for manufacturing.

UCSI ninth graders take classes in art foundations, drafting and CAD, along with English 9, taught in the context of technical reading and writing and geometry, with an emphasis on project-based mathematics.

As tenth graders, they will choose one of the three fields and take related entry courses along with English 10 and Algebra I. Course work becomes more career-focused in grades 11 and 12, and students can earn college credit

and industry certifications. They will also have access to work-based learning opportunities such as job shadowing, mentoring and internships.

UCSI classes are offered as part of the district's full range of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Nearly 4,500 district secondary students are currently pursuing CTE study in fields such as:

- automotive technology
- construction trades
- design engineering/CAD
- business
- medical health science
- future educators
- visual technologies
- computer networking, machine trades/welding
- architecture/CAD
- marketing
- family consumer science
- law enforcement

- school-to-work programming

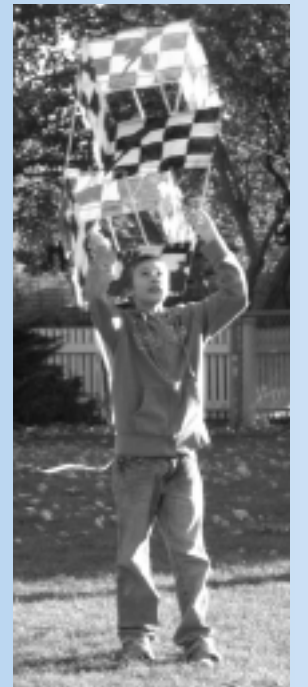
Another secondary-level program offered at the Instructional Resource Center is the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology (UCMST), a competitive-entry four-year course of advanced study in mathematics, sciences, computer science and curriculum-integrated technology.

Opened to students in 1996, the UCMST program features college-level instruction, coursework in computer programming languages, readiness for Calculus III, laboratory proficiency in analytic methods and biotechnology. Graduates are prepared for admission to the nation's top tier colleges and universities.



Students at the Utica Center for Science and Industry (UCSI) learn in a work-like setting that stresses responsibility as part of a team and encourages them to become innovative thinkers, with a deeper understanding of how to turn ideas into tangible products. Here, teacher **Megan Berry** leads students in a pre-CAD (computer assisted drawing) three-dimensional drawing activity—in this case, of the school corridor. Berry believes that "If students learn to accurately draw spaces and forms, they can become experts on the computer." Students pictured: Back row – **Lauren Letherwood, Gladys Caruso, Nick Ditta and Jake Aleck**; Front row – **Ryan Manauis, Christina Harkiewicz and Alex Stack**.

In a unit of study that integrated English Language Arts, geometry and design, groups of UCSI students were given the broad task of designing and building a functional kite within budget. They also did presentations on their projects and produced both a technical report on their process and a reflective essay that included self assessment and peer evaluation of job performance. Student **Robert Henigan** is pictured launching his group's finished project.



UCS introduces K-12 Mandarin Chinese language study

Utica Community Schools will use funding from a U.S. Department of Education grant to establish a kindergarten through twelfth grade Mandarin Chinese language instruction program.

When fully implemented, Mandarin will be offered at Oakbrook Elementary School; Heritage Junior High School, as part of the school's seventh grade exploratory language program; the Utica Academy for International Studies (International Baccalaureate) at Heritage; the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology and the Utica Center for Science and Industry, which are both housed at the district's Instructional Resource Center.

Oakbrook's program will feature K-6 language immersion, whereby students

continue their regular course of studies, but part of the day's lessons will be taught in Mandarin by a native-speaking teacher. Immersion study can enable students to rapidly become fluent in a foreign language.

As the Oakbrook and Heritage students progress, plans are to expand the Mandarin program into Stevenson High School. The initiative is intended to eventually enable students who graduate from the K-12 program to continue coordinated Mandarin language study at Michigan State University through Utica's partnership with the university's U.S. China Institute.

UCS is one of only eight districts in the nation to receive a federal Foreign Language Assistance Program grant for the purpose of supporting new



U.S. Department of Education senior official **Kristine Cohn** visited Utica Community Schools in September to officially mark the start of the district's K-12 Mandarin Chinese language program, made possible by a five-year Department of Education grant totaling \$1.5 million. Cohn especially enjoyed interacting with students such as **Christina Sudyk**, a ninth grader in the International Baccalaureate academy, shown demonstrating the new IB language lab.

or expanded programs of study in foreign languages critical to national security or the nation's success in global markets.

"The grant is another example of our efforts in Utica Community Schools to secure

additional monies beyond limited state funding so that we can continue to offer our students the best possible educational opportunities," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Christine M. Johns.

From the Superintendent...

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acknowledge that these are days of challenge in our community. As UCS residents are directly impacted by the nation's economic crisis, so is our school district. This is because public school funding has been controlled and managed by the state since 1994, when Michigan voters approved Proposal A, a constitutional amendment that fundamentally changed the way schools receive money for operations.

Simply put, taxpayers send their school taxes directly to the State of Michigan – which disburses them back to the state's public schools. When the economy was thriving – as it was in 1994 – UCS received adequate funding for operations. Now, all that has changed. For the past several years, the state has looked for ways to balance its budget by reducing funding for public education. UCS has been impacted by significant erosion in funding for operations, and more reductions from the state are expected.

What does that mean for our district and its students? For one thing, it means a significant loss in local control. Prior to Proposal A, local voters decided how local tax dollars would be allocated to their own school district. Now, because the state disburses the property taxes you pay for schools, some of the money comes back to UCS – but some goes to other districts. We have become fiscally dependent on the state to determine our destiny and that of your children.

I think it might be easy as a school district to throw up our hands and think the future can only become darker. But, as your superintendent, I won't do that. In these tough times, the public school system has an even more profound impact on our economic recovery.

When our nation was created, public education was a fundamental principle established by the founding fathers. They knew that a strong public school system was essential for the new nation's success. That is as true today as it ever was. For that reason, this school year is filled with "firsts" in UCS – funded not by the limited operating dollars we receive from the state, but with the help of federal grants we continually work to secure. Here are just a few:

The **Utica Center for Science and Industry** is a new half-day program which enables secondary students to learn the basics of engineering as it applies to everyday life. Students will have the opportunity to serve internships, participate in learning activities with students from across the globe and receive college credit and industry certifications. Skills they learn at the UCSI are those necessary to gain employment while continuing their education.

The **Utica Academy for International Studies** is a full-day school where students can earn an International

Baccalaureate diploma. In addition to offering rigorous courses in science, mathematics, English language and social studies, this program is designed for students interested in the history, art, music and literature of the world's diverse cultures. Students have the opportunity to participate in international projects, learn foreign languages through interaction with international teachers and students and engage in local community activities that have global benefits.

Mandarin Chinese, which is becoming the world's second business language, is now offered at several locations in our district. This critical skill will further support our goal that students graduating from UCS are ready to make the leap from school to success in the adult world.

For decades, our Boards of Education – composed of citizens and parents just like you – made measured and thoughtful decisions based on a proven process of long-range planning to support the achievement of every child. As a result, quality education was advanced, even as costs were contained.

Now, perhaps more than ever, strong, comprehensive education is key to individual success. It will also be key to returning economic success to Michigan and our nation. Our schools will lead the way in preparing America's next generation of highly-skilled, highly-educated workers.

While the world is very different from when you and I were students, I firmly believe that quality education remains the foundation of our nation's success. In adverse times, the daily routine of

school often provides students with a needed sense of stability. No matter what lies ahead, UCS intends to do its utmost to maintain that stability – by continuing to challenge the state's system until public education is adequately funded.

Please take a moment to read this issue of Focus for the Community, as it contains further information about the funding challenges we face, as well as the many wonderful things happening in our classrooms each and every day.

The public schools have always been a valued part of a strong and viable community – offering hope since our nation began. Our schools will remain so because Americans understand that an educated populous holds the power to change the world.

Public school funding

A mix of revenue

The operation of public schools in Michigan is funded by a mix of revenue that includes sales and use tax (40.8 percent), income tax (16.5 percent), state property tax (16.3 percent) and federal funds (10.8 percent). The balance comes from other sources, including the lottery, which contributes less than six percent.

Covering day-to-day operations

Operating funds must cover everything necessary to run the schools: utilities, salaries, textbooks, supplies, transportation and all other day-to-day costs that directly or indirectly impact student learning.

Proposal A

The State of Michigan has managed school funding since 1994, when statewide voters approved Proposal A, a constitutional amendment that fundamentally changed the way school districts receive money to operate, basically moving from local to state control.

Before Proposal A, the majority of schools were funded almost entirely by local property taxes that stayed in the local district. Homes and businesses were taxed at the same rate, which, at that time, was 38.1 mills in Utica Community Schools.

Local revenue and control go to the state

Under Proposal A, local millage rates were reduced. Instead, the state collects an annual school property tax of six mills on all property, including primary residences, or "homesteads." Owners of non-homestead properties, i.e. businesses and rentals or second homes, pay an additional 18 mills.

Not all taxes paid by local residents come back to their schools

Revenue from the state-collected six mills is disbursed back to school districts in a dollar amount – called the foundation allowance – for each child enrolled. The revenue collected within a district has no bearing on the amount the schools in that district receive. Foundation allowances vary among districts, some are much higher or lower, based on their local millage before Proposal A.

UCS is scheduled to receive approximately \$7,800 per student this school year – an amount ranking in the lower one-third of Macomb County's 21 school districts.

Sales tax increased; taxable values limited

Other provisions of Proposal A included:

- Raising the state sales tax from four to six percent; earmarking the increase for the state school aid fund
- Limiting increases in taxable property values to the inflation rate or five percent, whichever is lower

- Preventing districts from asking local voters for increases in operating millage

State funding directly tied to economy

When Proposal A was first enacted in 1994, a booming state economy and consumer spending provided ample tax revenue to fund and even increase the foundation allowance year to year, as the law intended.

UCS enrollment was also rapidly growing as existing homes sold, new homes were being built and families flocked to the district. More students meant more funding through the foundation allowance system.

The steep decline in Michigan's economy has caused Proposal A – dependent on sales, income and property taxes – to fail in its purpose to adequately fund our schools.

As funding is reduced, UCS continues to cut spending

School funding has been reduced twice in recent years, with the state taking back budgeted funds mid-year in 2002-03 and 2003-04.

In five of the last six years, anticipated cost of living increases in state funding did not occur – while school operating costs, including fuel and utilities, skyrocketed.

To make up for state losses and balance its budget each year as the law requires, UCS has continued to draw on its fund equity. The danger here is that, under the state controls, districts can no longer replenish their fund equity – meaning that, when it's gone, it's gone.

UCS also continues to implement many cost saving measures, and, to date, has:

- eliminated 276 jobs
- closed and demolished a former school
- sold unused property
- offered two rounds of early retirements
- implemented cost-cutting employee health care options
- pursued energy conservation that produced more than \$1.5 million in cost avoidance
- added 700 non-resident students through aggressive schools of choice recruitment
- reduced overall operating costs by roughly \$32 million in the past six years
- aggressively sought and secured government grants to continue to offer students quality learning opportunities, such as International Baccalaureate, Mandarin Chinese and the Center for Science and Industry
- continued to work to convince Michigan's governor and legislature to restructure school funding toward less dependency on the economy

Points of pride

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"It Takes a Village..." the Board of Education has recognized the following volunteer groups and individuals from our community for their support of UCS students:

- **Family Eye Care Associates – Dr. William Lakin**, for assisting needy families to obtain eyeglasses and vision care.
- **Sterling Estates and Rudgate Manor**, for hosting neighborhood locations of the UCS Summer Outreach program, which offers qualifying elementary students the opportunity to reinforce their academic skills for transition to the next grade. Summer Outreach is offered at schools and other sites across the district, as well.
- **Kiwanis Clubs of Sterling Heights, Sterling Heights High Noon, Utica-Shelby Township and Shelby-Macomb Daybreakers**, for donating 500 backpacks to needy UCS students and also providing dictionaries to the district's more than 2,300 third graders.
- **Henry Ford Macomb School Health Network**, for partnering with our schools to educate and support students in pursuing healthy lifestyles and behaviors.
- **St. John-Beaumont Pediatric Endocrinologists**, for assisting the district in maintaining the physician-prescribed care plans of diabetic students while they are in school.
- **Costco**, for providing backpacks and school supplies for needy children at Magahay Elementary School.

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UCS scores continue higher trends continued from page 1

UCS is putting all its efforts toward preparing every student to achieve MEAP and MME/ACT proficiency. By doing so, we are also preparing them for successful completion of Michigan's rigorous graduation requirements.

Writing is a key component in overall literacy and academic success. When the state test scores indicated the need to strengthen students' writing skills, the district responded by implementing new writing strategies in all grades and classrooms. Teachers were provided specific training that enables them to infuse more writing into every subject area and utilize a standard grading system for student writing. Utilizing consistent instruction methods and common classroom terminology grade to grade and building to building further unified and raised the level of writing instruction.

The district has put in place several other initiatives intended to improve student learning. Specialized reading programs are provided in all grades for students identified as academically at-risk. Special education teachers are adopting many of the same strategies used successfully in the regular classrooms. A junior high class entitled Exploring Literacy was added this year to increase the skills of identified students. Before and after-school tutoring is available at many schools. Algebraic Thinking, a skill-building class, is provided for seventh and eighth graders who need additional preparation for Algebra I and II.

This school year, the district will place additional focus on strategies designed to

MICHIGAN EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MEAP) UCS students achieving proficiency:			
	2006-07	2007-08	
Grade 3			
Reading	92%	91%	
Writing	65	69	
English Language Arts (ELA)	87	88	
Mathematics	92	95	
Grade 4			
Reading	90	90	
Writing	53	58	
ELA	85	84	
Mathematics	88	91	
Grade 5			
Reading	89	88	
Writing	60	70	
ELA	83	85	
Mathematics	79	81	
Science	88	87	
Grade 6			
Reading	92	90	
Writing	83	83	
ELA	88	89	
Mathematics	79	81	
Social Studies	85	80	
Grade 7			
Reading	86	78	
Writing	76	84	
ELA	83	81	
Mathematics	77	81	
Grade 8			
Reading	83	84	
Writing	77	82	
ELA	80	83	
Mathematics	82	84	
Science	84	86	
Grade 9			
Social Studies	86	84	

improve students' skills in mathematics, especially at the elementary level.

Our efforts to date appear to be working, as the latest reported MEAP and ACT scores show continued progress toward the goal of all students reaching state proficiency standards.

MICHIGAN MERIT EXAM (MME) UCS eleventh graders achieving proficiency:			
	2006-07	2007-08	
Reading			
UCS	63%	71%	
State	60	62	
County	57	61	
Writing			
UCS	50	56	
State	40	41	
County	37	41	
English Language Arts			
UCS	58	65	
State	51	52	
County	48	52	
Mathematics			
UCS	58	61	
State	46	46	
County	44	46	
Science			
UCS	64	65	
State	56	57	
County	55	54	
Social Studies			
UCS	87	87	
State	83	80	
County	83	80	
AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT) Composite			
	2006-07	2007-08	
UCS	19.7	20.3	
State	18.8	18.8	

Complete MEAP or MME/ACT reports for individual schools in the Utica district are available at www.uticak12.org. Under the District Information heading, click on MEAP Scores, and then select a school.

Have questions about the ACT?

Parents and students can learn more about the ACT (American College Test) by going to the official ACT web site, www.act.org and beginning your search by clicking on "The Test" in red.

Teaching and Learning Initiatives

The goal to increase student achievement continues to be the overriding focus in Utica Community Schools for 2008-2009. Toward that outcome, teachers and administrators worked over the summer and into this school year on efforts to introduce, improve or increase teaching and learning initiatives including those listed here:

- K-6 teachers are utilizing pacing guides to better sequence reading instruction in alignment with state standards.
- Mathematics pacing guides, power standards (areas of learning essential for student success) and common assessments better structure how sixth, seventh and eighth grade math and high school geometry, algebra I and algebra II is being taught.
- More time in the elementary school day is dedicated to reading and writing.
- Common K-6 classroom reading assessments and writing prompts (topics) were developed and implemented to unify instruction, scoring and data evaluation across the district.
- Students' math placement going into seventh grade has been made more precise to identify those needing extra learning support.
- UCS developed a graduate profile to better identify skills students need for college and career success.
- World history was introduced as a ninth grade subject.
- The Response to Intervention program has been implemented in all UCS elementary buildings to assist teachers in identifying academically at-risk students at an earlier age and provide corrective interventions to assist their learning.
- Newcomer Centers have been established at seven elementary, one junior high and two high schools to provide intensive, full-day instruction for students learning the English language.
- This summer, 250 elementary students attended UCS Camp Literacy, where better than 95 percent maintained or made gains in their reading, writing and comprehension skills.
- At federal Title I-funded Summer Outreach programs conducted through six UCS elementary schools, 175 eligible fourth, fifth and sixth graders worked to improve their skills an overall 19 percent in reading and 22 percent in mathematics.
- The district's summer math camps at Davis and Eppler Junior High schools involved 150 students in activities to increase their skill level in preparation for rigorous graduation requirements.

Advanced Placement courses expanded; enrollment and exam success on the rise

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are college-level courses that enable high school students to acquire deeper knowledge in a subject area and become better prepared for post-secondary education. AP classes are audited by the College Board, which oversees the program nationally to assure the content contains sufficient rigor.

Students enrolled in AP classes can earn college credit and resultant tuition savings by achieving qualifying scores of either three, four or five on the AP exams, with five the highest possible mark and equivalent to an A on a college-level course.

The Utica Community Schools Board of Education considers the Advanced Placement experience so valuable that

one of the district's "Reaching Higher" Indicators of Excellence, which the Board adopted in 2007, stipulates that the number of students enrolled in AP courses who achieve a qualifying score on the end of course exams will increase annually.

District efforts toward that achievement benchmark are proving successful. A report to the Board indicated the number of AP exams taken by UCS students in the 2007-08 school year increased 43.5 percent from 2006-07, with the number of students achieving qualifying scores increasing by more than 40 percent. At the same time, student enrollment in AP courses increased 58 percent overall.

UCS students can choose from among 27 College Board-certified Advanced Placement courses that are offered in the district's high schools:

- Art History
- Biology
- Calculus AB
- Calculus BC
- Chemistry
- Computer Science A
- English Language and Composition
- English Literature and Composition
- Environmental Science
- European History
- French
- German
- Government/Politics
- Japanese
- Macro Economics
- Micro Economics
- Physics
- Physics C/Mechanical
- Psychology
- Spanish
- Statistics
- Studio Art 2-D
- Studio Art 3-D
- Studio Art Draw
- U.S. Government/Politics
- U.S. History
- World History

Points of pride

continued from page 4

- **School-to-Work job sites:**
William Beaumont Hospital-Troy, dental office of Dr. Mark D. Berman, Family Practice Physicians, pediatric dental office of Dr. Arnold Tracht, Bill's Automotive, Clinton Preferred Pediatrics and Sterling Heights Dodge, for long-standing participation in providing quality on-the-job training for students in the district's Career and Technical Education programs.
- **Mentors Dr. Charles Barone, Dr. Chris Stoyanovich, Dr. Carl Pesta and Jim Zabawski**, all of Henry Ford Hospital; **Paul Copioli** of FANUC Robotics; **Larry Miller** of Anderson, Eckstein and Westrick; **Judy Reschke** of St. John Macomb Hospital; **Debby Vargo** of Faurecia Mechanical Engineering and **Rick Willemssen** of Ford Motor Company for taking part in the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology Junior Year Internship program in which students gain first-hand experience in an area of their career interest.
- **FIRST Lego Robotics** (for ages 9-14) volunteers **Jim Yaxley, Lisa Yaxley, Ed Debler, Ron Arscheene, Paul Copioli and Jennifer Copioli** and **FIRST Robotics** (high school level) volunteers **Arscheene, Debler, Bob Korsin and Bill Bedke** for working year after year to provide challenging after-school programs that engage teams of students in developing creativity, research, engineering and problem-solving skills through local, state and national robotics competition.
- **Kim Ostin and Jodi Cleaver**, for many years of involvement in Destination Imagination as coaches, mentors and organizers of local, regional and state events where countless UCS students learn to work in teams to devise creative solutions to higher-level problems and gain skills in critical-thinking, knowledge application, time management and presentation.



Heritage Junior High student **Megan Saigh** has been named an All-American Scholar by the United States Achievement Academy based on teacher recommendation.

continued on page 6

Save the Date!

All UCS 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th graders:
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UCS ACADEMIC



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- ★ Learn why college is more important than ever
- ★ What do colleges look for in prospective students?
- ★ Find out how to pay for college
- ★ Why AP makes a difference
- ★ Q & A about college, A to Z
- ★ Four-year college? Two-year? Career training? Which is the best fit?
- ★ Get ahead of the game in junior high!
- ★ Hear from UCS alumni about what's needed to succeed

★ **Parents: bring your STUDENTS!** ★
 ★ **Students: bring your PARENTS!** ★

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Points of pride

continued from page 5

At October's Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association competition, the Eisenhower and Stevenson marching bands received Division 1 ratings; the Henry Ford II and Utica marching bands received Division 2 ratings.

The Life-Centered Career Education programs at Jeannette, Eppler, Heritage and Davis Junior High schools received a \$1,200 mini-grant from the MEEMIC Insurance Company to fund off-site learning experiences for special needs students at Life Town, a therapy and activity center.

Havel Elementary teacher **Zita Burton** has been named a SAM's Club Teacher of the Year.

The quality educational program provided by Utica Community Schools was cited as a main reason why Sterling Heights and Shelby Township were selected by Money magazine (August 2008) as two of the top 100 Best Places to Live in the United States.

UCS values community feedback on annual survey

As it has done annually for more than three decades, Utica Community Schools has polled a sampling of residents for their opinions on how well the district serves its students and on key issues facing public education. Their responses provide the Board of Education and district administrators with valuable feedback in planning student programs and identifying concerns.

Volunteers called residents from an anonymous listing of telephone numbers randomly compiled by Survey Sampling International, a Connecticut-based firm whose clients include Gallup. The responses were tabulated by the Macomb Intermediate School District and statistically represent a 95 percent confidence level of plus/minus five percent.

The responses from both parents and non-parents indicate a continued high level of support and satisfaction with the district and its educational programs. A summary of the survey results appears at the right.

Here's what UCS residents have to say:

Gave the district a grade of A or B:

- All respondents 78.3%
- UCS parents 88.0

Would recommend UCS to others:

- All respondents 87.8%
- UCS parents 90.5

Best thing about UCS

(top three named):

- Teachers and other staff
- Rigorous curriculum and variety of courses
- High standards, quality programs and reputation

Lack of proper state financial support

continues to be named most often by all as the district's biggest challenge; with improved funding and the related issue of smaller classes cited most often as needed by the district to improve.

Satisfied with the district's overall direction:

- All respondents 78.5
- UCS parents 87.4

Satisfied with the quality of education UCS students receive in return for tax dollars paid:

- All respondents 83.5%
- UCS parents 92.4

Satisfied with how well UCS prepares graduates for the future:

- All respondents 77.8%
- UCS parents 82.2

Only UCS parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the following:

- Their children's safety at school – 94.9%
- What their children are learning – 94.3%
- Quality of UCS programs – 89.9%
- Communication between school and home – 94.3%
- Use of classroom technology – 89.9%
- The way staff listens to what parents have to say – 90.5%
- Amount of extra help available to students when they need it – 75.3%

- Expect their child to pursue further education after high school graduation – 97.5%

Of the survey respondents:

- 58.7% do not have school-age children
- 41.3% have school-age children
- 35.6 percent have children attending UCS

Respondents' age (if indicated):

- 18 – 30 5.3%
- 31 – 40 16.5
- 41 – 50 24.5
- 51 – 60 23.6
- 61 – 70 16.7
- 71 – 80 none
- 81 or over 2.8

Residency (if indicated):

- Sterling Heights 43.8%
- Shelby Township 37.8
- Utica 5.3
- Macomb Township 11.5

66.7% have resided in the district for 11 years or more

The full survey report is available on the district web site, www.uticak12.org.



Utica Community Schools teacher Leah Einhaus wins national Milken Educator Award

Utica Community Schools is pleased to announce that Leah Einhaus, third grade teacher at Collins Elementary School, has been selected as a 2008 Milken Foundation Educator. The nationwide award is so prestigious that it's been called the "Oscar for teachers" by *Teacher Magazine*.

The Milken awards have no formal nomination or application process. Educators are recommended without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel selected by each state's department of education.

At the student and staff assembly where Einhaus was surprised and shocked to learn she had won, Dr. Jane Foley, Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President affirmed, "We find you!"

And find Einhaus they did, based on the following criteria:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student

learning results in the classroom and school;

- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

In her 16 years with Utica Community Schools, Einhaus has earned a reputation in the district and also at the county and state levels as a highly skilled educator and a strong leader for other teachers.

She holds a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Oakland University and has completed extensive post-master's coursework. She has undertaken numerous leadership assignments in the district involving initiatives to improve teaching and learning.



Leah Einhaus reviews a chapter from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl with Collins third graders **Jonathan Grama**, **Jessica Weihs**, **Gabriel Consiglio** and **Kaitlyn Smith**. As a Milken Educator, Einhaus gains membership in national educational groups where, for example, she will learn more of how achievement gaps are being addressed in schools across the country—information she will share with other UCS teachers.

Utica Community Schools Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns said, "Leah is a gifted educator—highly talented, passionate about her profession and completely dedicated to the learning and welfare of students. We are proud of her award, but even

prouder of her great work." Congratulations also came from Governor Jennifer Granholm, State Board of Education President Kathleen Straus and other officials.

Founded in 1982 to support human development through

the advancement of education and medicine, the Milken Family Foundation has recognized and rewarded excellence in education through its awards program for the past 22 years. The awards each come with a \$25,000 cash prize.

Plante Moran auditors say UCS budget practices earn an A

The Utica Community Schools 2007-08 budget earned the highest rating from the independent firm conducting the year-end audit. “If we were giving a letter grade, the district’s financial standards would rate an A,” said Eric Formberg, CPA and director of Plante Moran, the auditing firm.

Michigan law requires an annual audit of school district revenues and expenses. Formberg and his firm reported their findings to the Board of Education at its regular meeting held October 13. He added that, even with tighter auditing standards, UCS continues to meet all requirements.

Despite high marks for the district’s fiduciary responsibility, the audit revealed an overall erosion of state funding from the State of Michigan, that, if not addressed at the legislative level, could negatively impact the district.

Revenues for fiscal year 2007-08 were \$255,922,221. State funding provides 76 percent of the amount from a mix of monies that includes the six-mill property tax homeowners pay to the state, state sales tax, state income tax and other sources. Another 17 percent comes primarily from local non-homestead property taxes assessed on commercial, rental and second-home properties.

District expenditures for the year totaled \$259,093,372 – of that, 98 percent was spent on instruction and related student support systems. Direct classroom costs rose by one percent from the previous year to 64 percent of expenditures.

The difference between revenue and expenditures was made up from the district’s reserve funds, known as fund equity. In order to balance its operating budget, as is required by state law, UCS has had to draw from its fund equity for the past several years, causing a steady depletion.

During the last fiscal year, ending June 30, the fund equity was reduced from 16.1 percent of expenditures to 14.6 percent.

If state funding continues to remain flat as costs increase, the auditors project the district’s fund equity will fall to just under 12 percent in the 2009-10 fiscal year. Formberg stressed the importance for districts to maintain adequate reserve funds in the event of an emergency.

While difficult to sustain in the face of rising costs, a fund equity is necessary to keep districts operating until state funding is released, generally

after October 20 each year. Districts without fund equity could be forced to borrow money in order to operate from July 1, when the fiscal year

Already our district has reduced its operating costs through initiatives like property sales, early retirement incentives, program reductions, pay-to-

begins, until the state funds arrive in the fall.

Board president Dr. Carol Klenow spoke about the district’s financial future. “Balancing the budget will become more difficult in future years,” she said. “We are experiencing rapid funding changes because our state legislature and the executive leadership have failed to meet their obligation to school districts over the past six to seven years.

participate and other fee increases and the elimination of more than 270 jobs.

The Board will continue to make thoughtful decisions about using the district’s fund equity, because having it provides the ability to take reasonable actions when unforeseen situations present themselves. The Board will also concentrate on three areas in which to manage the ongoing budgetary issues – energy management, fuel consumption and health care.”

“The Board will also concentrate on three areas in which to manage the ongoing budgetary issues – energy management, fuel consumption and health care.”

– Dr. Carol Klenow, Board of Education president

National Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education Coalition program introduced in UCS elementary schools

In response to more rigorous expectations for science instruction established by the Michigan Department of Education, as well as the state’s requirement that all students complete higher level mathematics and science courses in order to graduate, Utica Community Schools has begun field testing a new hands-on science program at seven of its elementary schools.

Known as STEM because it integrates Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics instruction, the program is based on a national initiative to promote a deeper understanding of these subjects for students in third through sixth grades. STEM appeals to children’s natural curiosity with hands-on opportunities to investigate the world around them.

Each lesson will begin by presenting students with a real-world problem. They will be asked to investigate several concepts and complete activities that will ultimately help them reach a solution to the problem.

One example has fifth graders designing a “thrill ride” for a

marble. The goal will be for the marble to roll safely through the most curves and loops, then slowly coast to a stop at the end of the track.

In designing the track, students will learn about Newton’s laws of motion. They will investigate balanced and unbalanced forces, non-contact forces, velocity, acceleration

and equilibrium using ramps, sophisticated timers, computers and other technology.

When fully implemented, the STEM program is intended to

prepare students earlier with a strong foundation of necessary skills so they can be successful in challenging high school and college-level academics.

*STEM activities lead students through five steps: engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration and evaluation. In the explanation step of a straw rocket launch activity, Roberts Elementary teacher **Scott Burnham** leads a team of fifth graders – **Austin Stoner, Brenton Zientak, LeAnne VanHevel and Dylan Wood** – in testing and video recording the distances their rocket will fly using various amounts of force supplied by a drop rod. Students in the background – **Addison Breeding, David Kola, Pauls Toma and Jacob Kablak** – await their turn at this activity, designed to enable the children to experience Newton’s second law of motion.*



*Next, in the elaboration step of the rocket activity, students **Brittney Vermeersch, Keenan Smyth (w/camera), Dani Timek and Andrew Sebra** work together to create a short movie about the construction and testing of their rocket, as well as their conclusions about what they learned.*

District maintains Adequate Yearly Progress as required by No Child Left Behind; all UCS schools make the state honor roll

Each year, all public schools and school districts in the United States are required to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in student achievement under the federal No Child Left Behind law.

Although the requirement is nationwide, the standards for AYP vary among the states, depending on the assessment used to determine achievement progress. In Michigan, AYP is based on student performance in English language arts and mathematics on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) in elementary and junior high school and the Michigan Merit Exam (MME)/ACT in high school.

Student scores as a whole and by individual subgroups that include special education, ethnicity or race, economically disadvantaged or those learning to speak English, are factored into whether a school meets Michigan's AYP mark. Schools also must test at least 95 percent of all students and

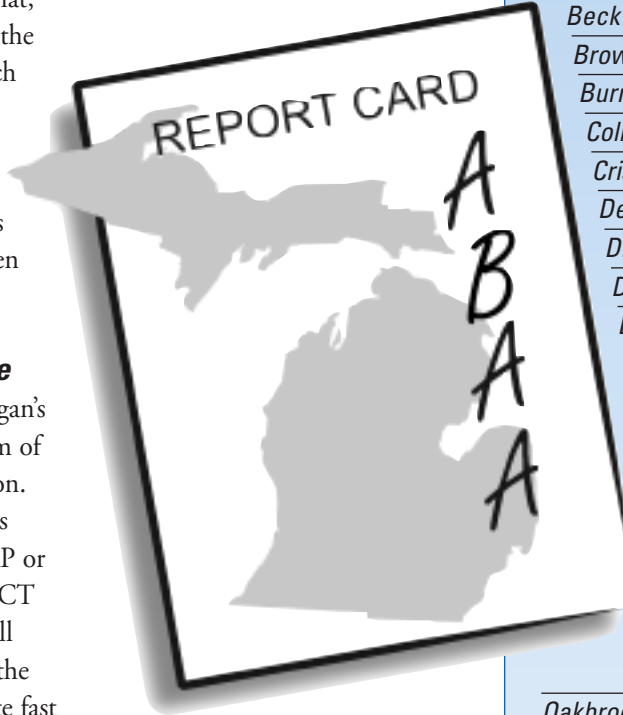
subgroups and also meet attendance or graduation rates.

The good news in Utica Community Schools is that, although the state raised the AYP standards by as much as eleven percent this reporting year, the district has once again passed the mark, as it has each year since 2002 when the law took effect.

UCS makes the grade

Education YES! is Michigan's annual letter-grade system of public school accreditation. Two-thirds of the grade is based on a school's MEAP or Michigan Merit Exam/ACT scores and whether overall student achievement on the tests is improving at a rate fast enough to attain 100 percent proficiency by 2014, as No Child Left Behind requires. School-reported performance on 40 other student achievement indicators counts for the remaining one-third of the grade. This compiled data is calculated

on a 100-point scale where 90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D and 50-59=F.



Again, the news is good for Utica Community Schools, with all 40 schools making the 2007-2008 state honor roll, earning either an A or B, and eight schools having improved their grade from the year before.

Michigan's School Report Card for Utica Community Schools

Adequate Yearly Progress Status (AYP) and Education YES! Grades

	2006-07	2007-08
Elementary Schools		
<i>Beacon Tree</i>	Yes / A	Yes / A
<i>Beck Centennial</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Browning</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Burr</i>	Y / B	Y / B
<i>Collins</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Crissman</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>DeKeyser</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Dresden</i>	Y / B	Y / B
<i>Duncan</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Ebeling</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Ewell</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Flickinger</i>	Y / B	Y / A
<i>Graebner</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Harvey</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Havel</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Magahay</i>	Y / B	Y / B
<i>Messmore</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Monfort</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Morgan</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Oakbrook</i>	Y / B	Y / A
<i>Plumbrook</i>	Y / B	Y / A
<i>Roberts</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Rose Kidd</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Schuchard</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Schwarzkoﬀ</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Switzer</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Walsh</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>West Utica</i>	Y / B	Y / B
<i>Wiley</i>	Y / B	Y / A

	AYP/Grade	AYP/Grade
Junior High Schools		
<i>Bemis</i>	Yes / A	Yes / A
<i>Davis</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Eppler</i>	Y / B	Y / A
<i>Heritage</i>	Y / B	Y / A
<i>Jeannette</i>	Y / B	Y / B
<i>Malow</i>	Y / A	Y / A
<i>Shelby</i>	Y / A	Y / A

	AYP/Grade	AYP/Grade
Senior High Schools		
<i>Eisenhower</i>	No / B	Yes / A
<i>Henry Ford II</i>	N / B	Y / B
<i>Stevenson</i>	Y / C	N / B
<i>Utica HS</i>	N / B	Y / B

District AYP	Yes	Yes
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Important dates in the 2008-09 school year

Dec 24 - Jan 4

Holiday Break

January 5

Classes resume

January 15-16

All students half days, secondary exams

January 19

No school – Martin Luther King Day

February 9-13

Elementary conference window – one evening

February 14-22

Mid-Winter Break

March 2-6

Secondary conference window – one evening

March 10

High school ACT/MME exam

April 10-19

Spring Break

May 22

No school – professional development

May 25

No school – Memorial Day

June 10

Secondary half day, secondary exams

June 11

All-students half day, secondary exams

June 12

Summer Break begins

AHERA Annual Notification (2008/2009 School Year)

This annual notice is required by the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) to inform Utica Community Schools parents, employees and residents of the district's asbestos management program.

Asbestos surveillances are conducted every six months and continue on a regular schedule. The next round of ongoing three-year re-inspections is scheduled for January and February 2009. Surveillances and re-inspections are conducted by Michigan-licensed asbestos inspectors.

Asbestos abatement was conducted at eighteen UCS facilities this past summer. Abatement is conducted by Michigan-licensed asbestos abatement contractors during times when school is not in session. Potential occupants receive notification prior to scheduled abatement.

The district's AHERA management plans are available for review at each school or at the Auxiliary Services Facility (ASF), 6600 Eighteen Mile Road in Sterling Heights. Summaries of abatement projects prior to the 2008/2009 school year are included in the plans, and complete documentation is maintained at the ASF. Inquiries regarding the program may be directed to the district's AHERA designee at 586.797.7130 during business hours.

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 the Executive Director of Human Resources at Utica Community Schools, 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.



586.797.1000

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Visit www.uticak12.org for information on programs and curriculum, school news, district calendar, annual reports and employment opportunities.

Information about the district is also available on UCS Television, which broadcasts on cable channels 15 and 22.