



Graebner is a  
Michigan Blue Ribbon  
Exemplary School

## Annual Report of School Year 2007-2008

*Reaching Higher — Indicators of Excellence* successfully launched in 2007-2008 to increase student achievement

It is our expectation in Utica Community Schools that every student will achieve academically to his/her potential and prepare for and pursue some level of higher education or career training following high school graduation.

Utica Community Schools is also required to meet by 2014 the federal No Child Left Behind requirement that 100 percent of our students and student subgroups achieve proficiency on the state MEAP assessments in grades 3 - 9 and the Michigan Merit Exam in high school. In addition, each of our 40 schools is required to annually achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) based on the state standards.

To meet these expectations, *Reaching Higher — Indicators of Excellence*, a data-driven school improvement initiative, was launched in 2007-2008 in Utica Community Schools. It is our guide for increasing student achievement in all academic areas by means of a series of clear, measurable Indicators that are to be met within a specified time.

*Reaching Higher* is based on three district-wide goals:

- **District Goal 1 —**  
*By 2014 all students in the Utica Community Schools will meet or exceed proficiency standards in English language arts (reading and writing), math, science, social studies, fine arts and career and technical education, as identified by national, state and UCS standards.*
- **District Goal 2 —**  
*The school district will implement a world-class instructional program.*
- **District Goal 3 —**  
*Parent, business and community partnerships will be an integral part of student learning.*

Stemming from the district goals are three tiers of Indicators — I, II and III — that define how and when the established student achievement targets will be met:

- **Tier I Indicators** — These are the district-wide *Indicators of Excellence* (seven at the elementary level and eight each at the junior and senior high levels - 30 total) designed to assess whether federal, state and district academic requirements are being met within a given time frame.
- **Tier II Indicators** — These are school-based indicators established during the 2007-2008 school year by each UCS school. Tier II Indicators are specific to the student needs in that building and designed as the basis for targeted improvement in support of the *Indicators of Excellence*.

### Michigan Report Card for Graebner Elementary

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) —**

2006-07: Yes    2007-2008: Yes

**Education YES! Grade —**

2006-07: A    2007-2008: A

All UCS schools are accredited by the Michigan Department of Education. In addition, the four UCS high schools are accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA).

A building report of student achievement on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is available on-line at [www.uticak12.org](http://www.uticak12.org). Under the Information heading, click on MEAP/MME scores to find our school. The on-line report also includes information on teacher qualifications, parent-teacher conference attendance and the district retention rate.

The Tier II Indicators are supported by SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) for each grade level established by the building staff.

- **Tier III Indicators** — These are the schools' narrative reports on their progress in 2007-2008 toward meeting their Tier II Indicator(s). Our school's Tier II and Tier III Indicators are printed on the back of this page.

The district's Tier I Indicators for its 29 elementary schools are as follows:

**Indicator 1.1:** All students in kindergarten through second grade will meet or exceed district benchmarks.

**Indicator 1.2:** All students in third through sixth grades will meet or exceed standards and be identified as proficient on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests in reading, writing, math, science and social studies.

**Indicator 1.3:** Third through sixth graders who receive special education services will show specified growth on the MI-Access test in reading, writing and mathematics.

**Indicator 1.4:** Third through sixth graders who are part of the district's English Language Learners (ELL) program will show specified growth on the English Language Proficiency Assessment in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

**Indicator 1.5:** All students in second through sixth grade will demonstrate proficiency on the district writing test in the areas of persuasive, informative and cause/effect writing.

**Indicator 1.6:** All students in kindergarten through sixth grade will demonstrate proficiency on the district math test.

**Indicator 1.7:** All students in third through sixth grade will demonstrate proficiency on the district science and social studies tests.

**Graebner Elementary School's Tier II Indicator:**

K-1: All kindergarten and first grade students will demonstrate proficiency in writing (using the district writing rubric) in the areas of content and ideas and organization.

Grades 2-6: All students will demonstrate proficiency in writing (using the state 6-point rubric) in the areas of content and ideas and organization.

**Graebner Elementary School's Tier III Indicator:**

This year has brought many initiatives and changes in the curriculum efforts at Graebner Elementary School. Using a data-driven decision model, our school improvement plans took on a new focus which included defining academic areas of concern, providing researched-based strategies to address the areas and developing a progress-monitoring calendar. Grade level data teams were put into place to facilitate ongoing analysis of student performance and progress.

Using the Tier I Indicator provided by the school district's Reaching Higher document, Graebner developed Tier II SMART Goals for each grade level.

The major goal for the building was to direct our efforts to the area of writing. This was determined based on the analysis of data provided by the MEAP test given in the fall of 2007. We carefully reviewed all aspects of the data given and the two major areas of concern included organization and attention to detail.

Using this information, several research-based strategies were integrated into the classroom. Writer's Workshop was the organizational structure used to guide the students. Writing was a part of the daily curriculum at least four times each week. The teachers provided the children with several opportunities to write within different genre and across subject areas. Informational and narrative formats were included.

The upper elementary students were exposed to MEAP-like writing prompts and were also asked to complete pieces within a time frame which would be equivalent to a testing situation. Graebner has a very robust monthly writing calendar which was adjusted this year to meet the needs of our students. In this calendar, all the benchmarks provided by the State of Michigan are specified. The 6 + 1 Traits of Writing have been included at every level and this has created a common writing vocabulary for the building.

In addition to the writing goals, our students incorporated other research-based strategies to enhance our language arts program. We used Literacy Workstations and the Big Nine Strategies from *A Handbook for Classroom Instruction That Works*, to assist the teachers in providing instruction that increased the performance of our students.

Grade level data teams were developed to provide our teachers with a common time to disaggregate and review data. Using information garnered from the data, discussion was focused on research-based strategies which were consistent within each grade. Teaming allowed our teachers to strategize and make changes to facilitate positive results in student achievement and provide a format that is now the

basis for our professional learning communities. One staff meeting per month was established as a base line and many of the teams also met during common prep time.

Graebner initiated the Positive Behavior Support plan (PBS). Using this research-based model, we provided our students with a structure that will result in a safe and nurturing environment, thus leading to improved academic performance. In the future, the PBS plan will become a part of Goal 2 as part of the District's Indicators of Excellence.

Graebner's initial efforts included a school-wide message and positive recognition and reward assemblies. The symbol of a KEY and an explanation for each letter can be found in every room of the school. The Graebner KEYS are: Keeping Graebner safe, Everyone acts and speaks kindly, You are in charge of you and Show respect.

As we look to the 2008-09 school year, Graebner will add components to our school improvement plan. We will develop SMART goals to address needs in math and ways to combine the PBS plan with reading to improve student achievement. Graebner will also begin vertical teaming using specific staff meetings for reporting and discussion.

**Our School's Points of Pride**

- Graebner "KEYS" (explained above) were established as the essential elements of a positive behavior support plan to establish high expectations for all students. We are dedicated to providing an environment that positively influences the learning of all of our children.
- Our curriculum efforts are based on data-driven, researched-based strategies that provide numerous opportunities for academic growth. We work as grade level and building level teams to ensure that we address the unique needs of our students at all levels of learning. Our learning goals encourage exploration and creativity with a strong emphasis on writing.
- The Response to Intervention model provided a daily opportunity for students who needed extra support in kindergarten through second grade. Knowing that early elementary instruction is imperative for future success, our students gained confidence and a strong understanding of fundamental reading/writing skills in this program.
- An off-site teacher volunteer tutoring program was made available, whereby students received help with their homework and also were provided with specific learning activities addressing needs in various curriculum areas.
- The Graebner Parent Teacher Organization is an outstanding group of parents who contribute their time, energy and fundraising efforts to our building so that we might have the many special activities that are integral to our building. Our students and teachers benefit 100% from their dedication and hard work.
- Graebner students and staff participated in many charitable activities in an effort to give back to our community. The Kiwanis Food Drive, Holiday Giving Tree, Children's Hospital fund, American Red Cross Blood Drive and contributions to our Graebner families in crisis were some of the events to which we contributed.
- Graebner parents and community volunteers continue to contribute to our learning community in many ways. We are a better school because of their tireless efforts.