

Every Child  
Achieves



# Utica Community Schools

11303 Greendale  
Sterling Heights, Michigan 48312

## REACHING HIGHER

The UCS College Culture – *Aspire, Prepare, Achieve!*



# Approved Budget

2008-2009

Utica Community Schools

**Approved Budget**

2008-2009

# Utica Community Schools Board of Education

---

<b>Carol Klenow, Ed.D.</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Gene Klida</b>	<b>Vice President</b>
<b>Michele Templeton</b>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>Carl Territo</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
<b>Daniel Meyers</b>	<b>Trustee</b>
<b>Jennifer Prybys</b>	<b>Trustee</b>
<b>Robert Ross, Ph.D.</b>	<b>Trustee</b>

---

## Administration

**Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Randel Eckhardt**  
Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

**Mark Davey**  
Assistant Superintendent for Auxiliary Services

**Richard Montcalm**  
Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance

---

Contributors:  
**Jill Tomy, Budget Director**  
**Hildy Corbett, Director of School/Community Relations**  
**Fran Schokora, Coordinator of School/Community Publications**

## Table of Contents

---

2008-2009 Budget Message from the Superintendent.....	1
2008-2009 Budget Overview/Executive Summary.....	3
District Overview/Indicators of Excellence .....	4
How Michigan’s public schools are funded .....	8
How revenues are conserved and expended .....	11
Analysis of the 2008-2009 Budget .....	13
Summary .....	15

*Dear Utica Community Schools Parents, Staff and Community Members:*

A school district's budget is a living document that reflects the district's priorities for student achievement, tempered by the realities of the current economic climate. I am pleased to present my second annual budget message to you.

Since the passage of Proposal A in 1994, school districts have been dependent upon the state legislature for operating revenue. Fully 78 percent of our district's revenue comes directly from the state. Local property taxes, lottery profits and other revenue go directly to the state legislature for apportionment to every public school district in Michigan.

This apportionment, or Foundation Grant, is the specified amount a district receives for each child enrolled. In Utica, our Foundation Grant for fiscal year 2008-09 is projected to increase approximately \$100, totaling \$7,809 per child. This amount remains an estimate because, although state law requires school districts to approve balanced budgets by July 1 each year, the state legislature has until October 1 to finalize its own budget and release funding to the schools.

To make matters worse, the October 1 target date is often missed by the legislature, as happened last year, further restricting our ability to forecast revenue and disrupting the planning process for the education of students. This instability in school funding is an unfortunate reality in Michigan, and one that must be continually addressed as we move through the budget process.

The district's 2008-09 budget is, therefore, predictably austere, reflecting Michigan's economic dilemma. Just like our household budgets, it is impacted by increasing costs of fuel, utilities, health care, food and other items.

Although we are Michigan's second largest public school district – educating some 29,300 students – the revenue we receive per student falls among the lower one-third of Macomb County districts. Despite this, Utica Community Schools has justifiably earned its reputation as a fiscally conservative school district – one in which expenditure is carefully planned to support student achievement.

Our previous Boards of Education and administrations are to be commended for their thoughtful approach to fiscal management. Without their prudent decisions, our economic situation would be more difficult than it is.

The Board and administration have significantly decreased spending over the past five years. Our operating budget has been reduced by more than \$36 million, using a four-part strategy of cost containment, cost avoidance, revenue enhancement and strategic use of district fund equity. Examples include:

**Cost containment:** A total of 276 employee positions have been eliminated from all work groups, including administrators and teachers. In addition, a building was closed, eliminating that operating expense.

**Cost avoidance:** The district has implemented an aggressive energy conservation program, as well as employee health care options that reduce operating costs.

**Revenue enhancements:** A strong Schools of Choice program has brought new students to the district, which helps offset declining enrollment. Approximately \$4.5 million in new revenue was gained this year through Schools of Choice.

The district has sold unused property and sought state and federal restricted grants to provide new opportunities for students such as the Utica Center for Science and Industry and the International Baccalaureate Programme, coming in 2008-2009.

**Fund equity:** The district's reserve fund, known as fund equity, was wisely set aside over many years of careful management. However, the ability to rebuild the fund ended in 1994 when Proposal A shifted control of school funding to the state, thus rendering the fund equity to a one-time source of emergency dollars.

UCS was forced to draw on its fund equity to balance its budget and offset state funding shortfalls in four of the past five years and now again in 2008-2009. As a result, the fund equity that once stood at 22.7 percent of the operating budget is forecast to fall to about 14.4 percent — a figure below the amount independent auditors recommend for stable financial operation.

Our district would be in even more difficult financial straits today had the fund equity not existed. However, with future school funding shortfalls dependent on the state's economy, our district must now take measures to avoid expending what fund equity remains or risk having zero reserve funds in an uncertain future.


The balance between revenues and expenditures is critical, but equally imperative is another balance for which we must strive – one upon which our future success depends. It is the balance between the need to be fiscally prudent while meeting our mission that Every Child Achieves – as detailed in our *Indicators of Excellence* document (available at [www.uticak12.org](http://www.uticak12.org)).

We have had much success in this arena. Student test scores remain strong and on the rise. Malow Junior High School this year became the 22nd school in our district to be named a Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School. Our students have earned myriad local, state and national awards in the arenas of academics, athletics and the arts. Many staff members have also received well-deserved recognition for their work on behalf of our students.

In the 2007-08 school year, we offered more Advanced Placement courses and enrollment in those challenging classes doubled. More than 2,000 parents and students attended the UCS Academic Blitz last winter, suggesting that increasing student access to Advanced Placement courses was the right thing to do. I am very proud that academic rigor is both celebrated and supported in our schools, considering current and future changes in the global workplace beyond our doors.

Our future plan calls for continued conservative fiscal management while still providing a high-quality education for our students within the parameters of the revenue provided by the state.

Sincerely,

  
Dr. Christine M. Johns  
Superintendent of Schools



Utica Community Schools is the second largest school district in Michigan. More than 29,300 students from Shelby Township, the City of Utica and portions of Sterling Heights, Macomb, Washington, and Ray townships are served by the district's 40 school buildings.

## 2008-2009 Budget Overview

### Executive Summary

The Budget Overview looks at a single moment in the “life” of our school district’s financial picture.

For more than three decades, Utica Community Schools has issued an annual financial review to its public. Taken collectively, these reviews have brought into focus long-term, audited financial records which district residents can use to understand both the challenges and the triumphs associated with the district’s long-term financial plan.

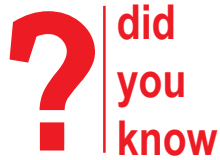
This overview of 2008-2009 provides a summary of the district’s anticipated financial revenues and expenditures. The district budget was developed collaboratively by the district’s Auxiliary Services, Business and Finance, Curriculum and Human Resources divisions under the direction of Dr. Christine M. Johns, Superintendent of Schools. The budget report is intended to provide a concise review of accounting methods and financial allocations which support the district’s 2008-2009 instructional plan.

#### Utica Community Schools Operating Expenditures

	2006-2007 Actual	2007-2008 Budgeted*	2008-2009 Budgeted	Percent Change
General Fund:	\$250,970,594	\$266,660,761	\$269,648,767	1.1%

*\*pending final audit, August 2008*

Presently, Utica Community Schools remains financially solvent and instructionally sound, despite challenges such as volatility in state funding and declining student enrollment. This document provides a broad perspective, including a detailed accounting of the district’s budget.

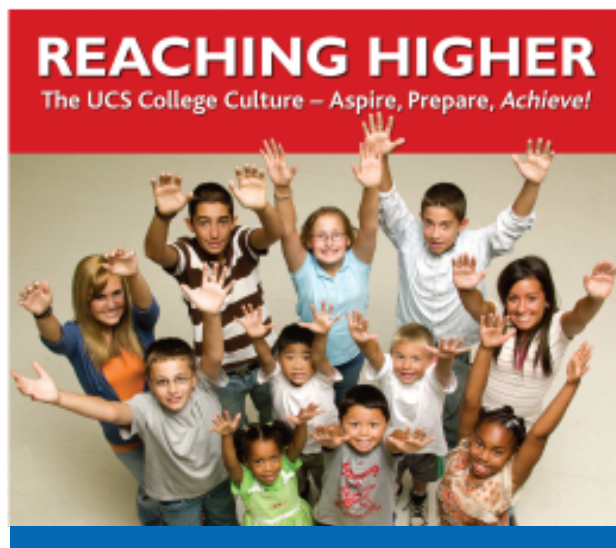


Twenty-two UCS schools have been designated as Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools.

## District Overview

Utica Community Schools enjoys an outstanding reputation as a high-performing school district. The second-largest public school district in Michigan, Utica Community Schools has earned its reputation by providing innovative, rigorous programming; setting high expectations for students; and prudent use of resources. The district serves its taxpayers’ interests well, providing an excellent academic return on their financial investment.

Starting with the 2007-2008 school year, the district’s instructional plan has been based on the *“Reaching Higher” Indicators of Excellence* initiative (below) that includes a set of 30 specific statements of measurable, grade-level student achievement expectations developed by the Accountability Advisory Team, an ad hoc group of teachers, parents, administrators and community leaders. All financial decisions in the school district are based on advancing the *Indicators of Excellence* and thereby, increasing student achievement.



### UCS Core Values — The beliefs that define our work:

- Every child can learn and achieve.
- Parents and guardians are partners in the learning process.
- Being “smart” can be achieved through persistence, hard work and effective effort.
- Excellence is expected and celebrated.
- Data is used to guide our decision-making.
- All employees will exemplify ethical behavior; exhibit a strong

work ethic; and continue to develop their leadership, performance and service skills.

- Technology supports and enhances instruction, business operations, research and communications.
- The Board of Education, district educators/staff, parents, community members and business leaders must collaborate and work as a team to enhance educational opportunities for student success.

### District Vision — What we stand for:

*All children have the right to a rigorous, high-quality education which meets their individual needs. Utica Community Schools will respect, encourage and empower each and every student to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to be successful, contributing members of a diverse community and global society.*



The four UCS high schools, Eisenhower, Ford II, Stevenson and Utica, produced a total of 2,129 graduates in June 2008 – 95 percent of whom plan to pursue some type of post- secondary education.

Of this year's graduates, 370 maintained a grade point average of 3.67 or above throughout high school.

**District Mission — What our school district is committed to:**

*We are committed to exemplary teaching and learning in order for our students to be prepared for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We will achieve this commitment by engaging the entire community to focus on every child's achievement, with the expectation that every student will pursue some type of post-high school educational endeavor.*

**District Goals — Our course for the future:**

- **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 defined by national, state and UCS standards.
- **Goal 2:** The school district will implement a world-class instructional program.
- **Goal 3:** Parent, business and community partnerships will be an integral part of student learning.

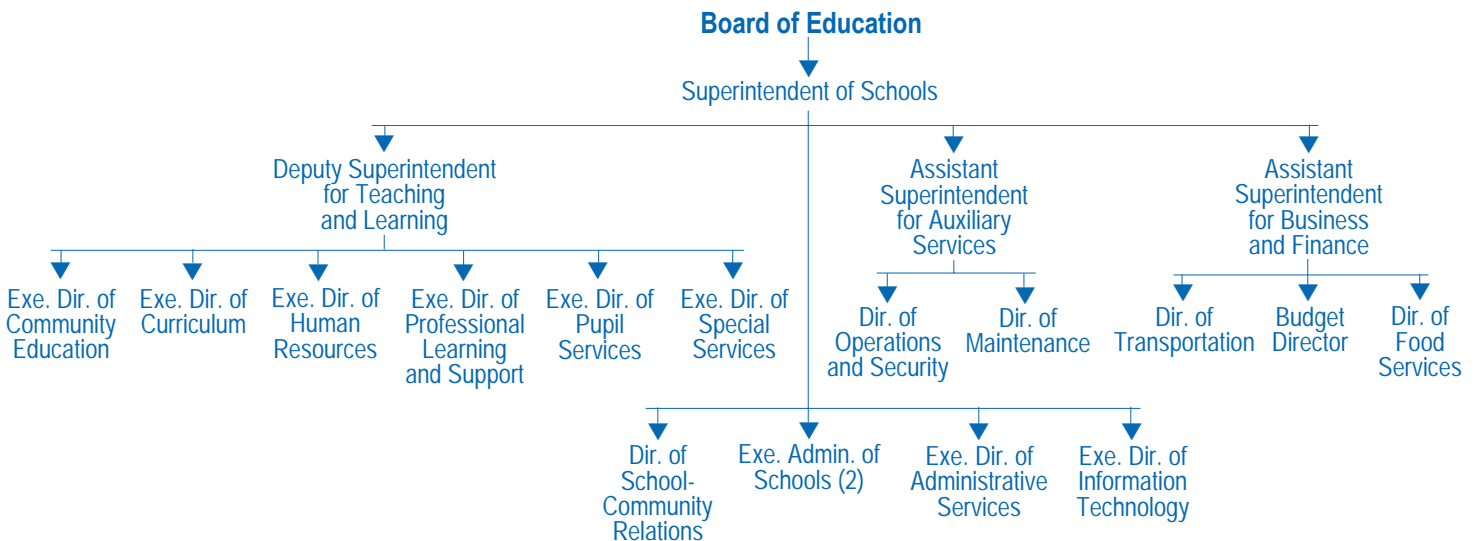
**Indicators of Excellence — Specific measurements of student progress**

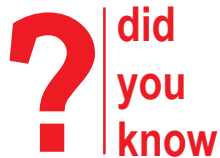
*The Indicators of Excellence are 30 statements with an “end objective” of specific results to be achieved in measurable terms over a specified period of time. Simply put, when the Indicators are met, the Goals will be achieved.*

The complete “*Reaching Higher*” Indicators of Excellence document is available at [www.uticak12.org](http://www.uticak12.org).

**Utica Community Schools Organizational Structure**

The district's organizational structure, shown in part below, is designed to support teaching and learning by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the UCS administrative team.





Five UCS schools: Browning, Collins, Harvey, Messmore and DeKeyser, achieved 100 percent MEAP proficiency in reading or mathematics at one or more grade levels in 2008.

Bemis, Malow and Shelby Junior High schools achieved 90 percent proficiency in one or more MEAP areas: English language arts (ELA), writing, mathematics or science.

ACT scores at all UCS high schools continue to rise above state and national averages.

The 2007-2008 school year held many academic highlights, including the following:

- ✓ Malow Junior High School was named the district’s 22nd Blue Ribbon Exemplary School by the Michigan Department of Education.
- ✓ Numerous students were recognized this year for achievement in academics, Career and Technical Education, athletics and fine arts.
- ✓ The UCS ThunderChickens Robotics Team won the FIRST Robotics World Championship for the second time in three years.
- ✓ At the June 7 commencement ceremonies, 2,129 students were awarded high school diplomas. Six National Merit Finalists were among their ranks and 370 were named Academic Scholars for maintaining a grade point average of 3.67 or above while actively involved in school activities. Members of this class have been accepted to 118 institutes of higher learning throughout the United States and as far away as Japan.
- ✓ In addition, 155 students graduated from the Utica Learning Academy, Utica Center for Applied Learning and UCS Adult Education programs.
- ✓ As intended, the district’s students are moving toward full proficiency, as reflected by standardized test scores such as the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and the Michigan Merit Exam. Their scores are holding steady or improving, and remain above county, state and national averages.

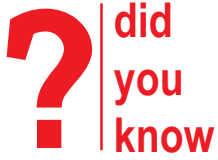
**District MEAP and MME Scores**

	English Language Arts		Mathematics	
	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2006	Fall 2007
Gr. 3	87	88	92	95
Gr. 4	85	84	88	91
Gr. 5	83	85	78	81
Gr. 6	88	89	79	81
Gr. 7	83	81	77	81
Gr. 8	80	83	82	84
	Spring 2007	Spring 2008	Spring 2007	Spring 2008
Gr. 11	58	65	58	61

*This chart indicates the percentage of students achieving proficiency on the most recent MEAP tests.*

*All eleventh graders take the Michigan Merit Exam, which includes the ACT (American College Test), in the spring.*

*MEAP/MME data is posted on the district website, [www.uticak12.org](http://www.uticak12.org), as it becomes available.*



The district offers three high-level learning opportunities for students in grades 9-12: the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology; International Baccalaureate; and the Utica Center for Science and Industry. The latter two are possible through a U.S. Department of Education grant UCS secured through a partnership with two other districts.

- ✓ The district has taken advantage of a partnership with Armada Area Schools and the Mount Clemens School District to obtain a comprehensive federal grant totaling some \$12.9 million over a five-year period. The partnership, the Alliance for Academic Excellence, has created several exciting educational opportunities for students in the three districts for 2008-2009, including the Utica Center for Science and Industry and the International Baccalaureate Programme, both housed in UCS. As part of the Alliance partnership, Utica students can attend specialized classes in both Armada and Mount Clemens.
- ✓ Utica Community Schools also has a partnership with area parochial schools that extends beyond busing those students to and from school. This year, UCS teachers taught a number of non-core classes in the parochial schools. It is a winning arrangement for all involved, as it expands learning opportunities for other students in our community and enables UCS to receive state funding for the portion of the day these students are taught by a UCS teacher.
- ✓ In 2007-2008, the Board of Education approved the expansion of Advanced Placement (AP) offerings, adding seven new courses, for a total of 25, to provide greater academic challenges for students. As a result, AP enrollment has doubled. The impact of this decision was certainly noted at the district's first Academic Blitz, held last winter and attended by more than 2,000 parents and students interested in AP and other programs featuring enhanced academic rigor.

In summary, Utica Community Schools will continue its pursuit of providing a first-quality academic program within the constraints of the current economic climate, utilizing the *Indicators of Excellence* as its guide.

### How Michigan’s public schools are funded

Utica Community Schools remains dedicated to the concept that the public needs a working knowledge of how its school district receives and allocates resources. Public understanding of budget issues is particularly important as operating expenditures continue to outpace revenue.

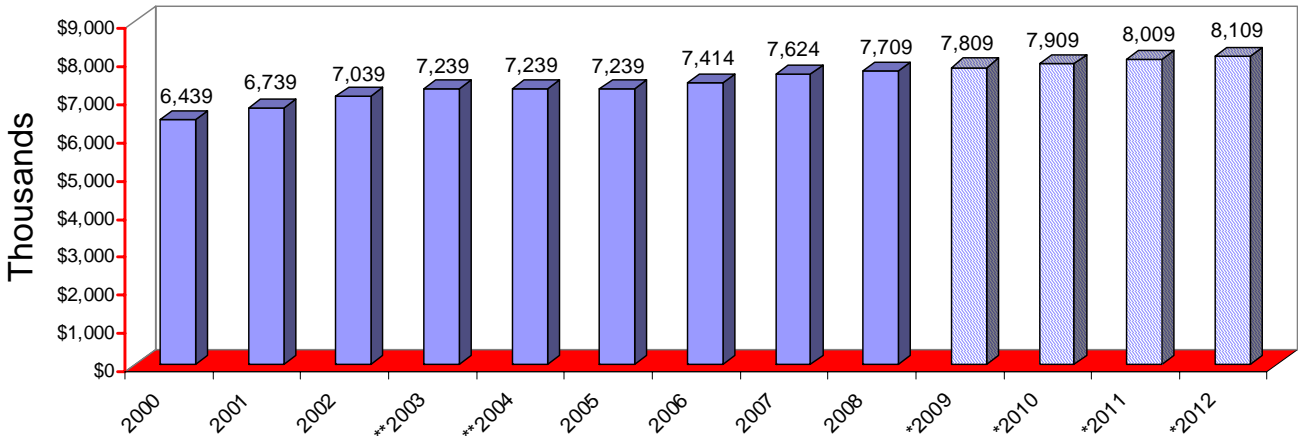
When Michigan voters approved Proposal A in 1994, school districts lost the ability to raise operating dollars from local revenue sources, such as property taxes. Funding for public schools has since been controlled by the state legislature.

The property taxes district residents now pay are sent directly to the State of Michigan, where the money is pooled with other tax dollars – including state income tax and sales tax – into the state’s School Aid Fund. The Michigan legislature then determines how many dollars will be returned to local schools for operating purposes on a per-student basis. This dollar amount is called the State Foundation Grant.



The amount of the per-pupil Foundation Grant UCS receives from the state ranks in the lower one-third of the 21 Macomb County school districts.

### UCS Per-Pupil State Foundation Grant 2000 - 2012



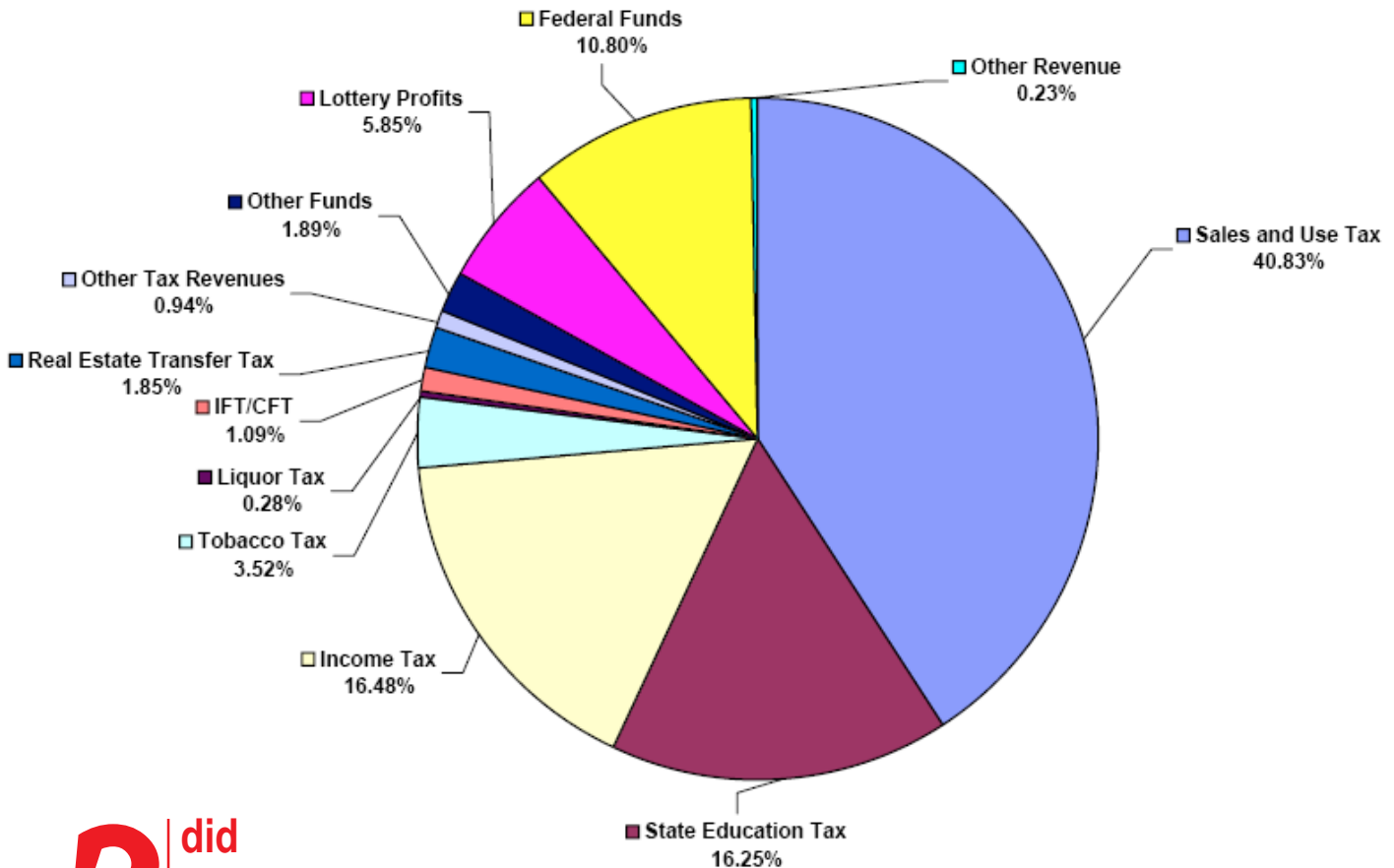
\*Projected grant  
\*\*Amounts reduced due to State's inability to fully fund by \$43 and \$74 respectively

In good economic times, Proposal A provided local school districts with sufficient funding for operations. However, since 2003, districts have neither been fully funded nor received funds to offset inflation, due to the state’s ongoing economic decline.

Job losses and the accompanying reductions in consumer spending have resulted in lower income and sales tax revenues, limiting the dollars available for schools. Lottery money, often seen as a main funding source for schools, amounts to just less than six percent of the School Aid Fund.

## Sources of 2007 School Aid Revenue

Latest data from Michigan Department of Education



### did you know

The district's debt millage levy is third lowest of the 21 districts in Macomb County.

Compounding the school funding crisis is the reality that, by law, Michigan's public school districts must approve a balanced budget by July 1, the start of the fiscal year. The state legislature, meanwhile, has until October 1 to approve its budget and begin sending the districts their funding – fully three months after the fiscal year begins and well into the school year.

As happened in 2007-2008, the legislature can miss its own October 1 deadline, further delaying the districts' receipt of operating dollars and complicating their budget-making process. Many districts are forced to borrow money to operate until the state funds are released.

**?** did you know

Every Schools of Choice student brings approximately \$7,800 in additional revenue to the district by way of the per-pupil State Foundation Grant. In 2007-2008, Schools of Choice revenue coming to the district totaled \$4.5 million.

For 2008-2009, it is estimated that Michigan school districts will receive a small increase in the Foundation Grant, ranging from \$55 per student for those already receiving higher Foundation Grants to \$110 for lower funded districts. If this is the case, Utica Community Schools may receive about \$100.

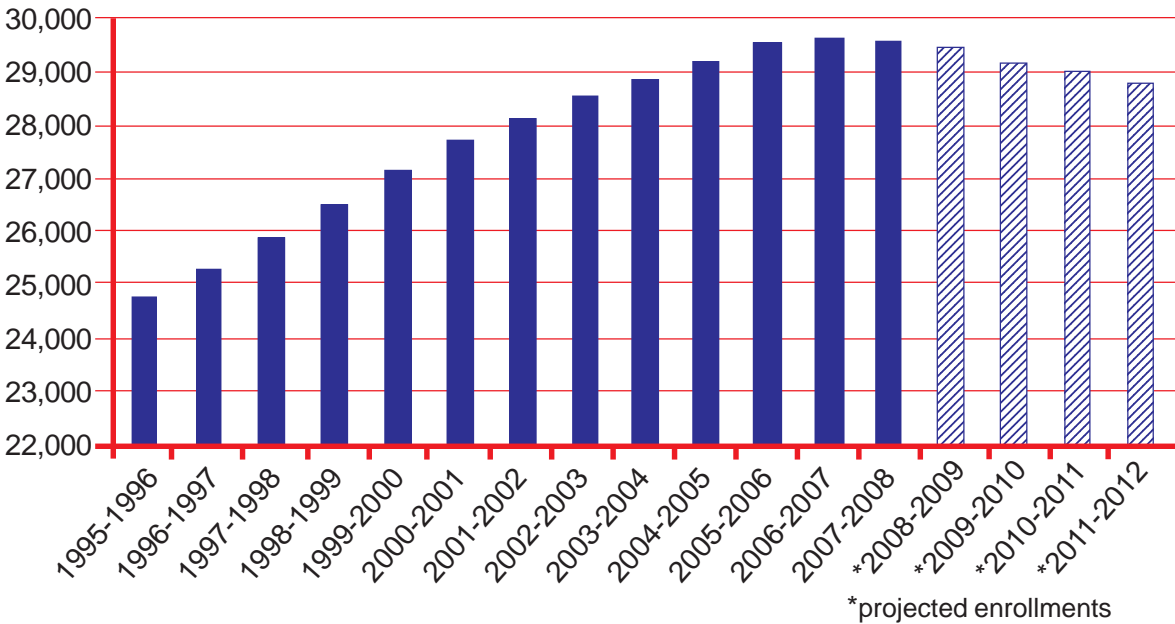
“Estimated” is the key word, as the state has, on several occasions in recent years, failed to meet its school funding obligation. Twice in the past five years, the state has actually **reduced** the Foundation Grant in mid-year, forcing districts to quickly adjust budgets that had to be set months before, often by reducing programs and staff.

Because state resources are apportioned on a per-student basis, enrollment becomes critical. For the past five years, Utica Community Schools has pursued additional enrollment through an aggressive Schools of Choice campaign, targeting kindergarten through ninth grade students living in Macomb County.

As a result of school choice, UCS now counts 585 additional students in its enrollment, a gain to the district’s operating budget of \$4.5 million in Foundation Grant revenue in the 2007-2008 school year alone.

UCS will continue Schools of Choice recruitment in the coming fiscal year as a hedge against potential revenue losses, as well as a means to offer its outstanding programs to students across Macomb County.

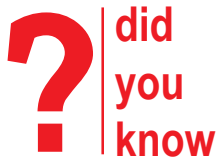
**Student Enrollment**  
School Years 1995-1996 through 2011-2012





The district's bus fleet required more than 424,000 gallons of diesel fuel over the past year.

The district's cost for diesel fuel has nearly doubled in the last year, up from \$2.19 per gallon in May 2007 to \$4.21 per gallon in May 2008.



The district's aggressive energy conservation program, begun in 2006, has so far resulted in approximately \$2.2 million in energy cost avoidance.

Five UCS schools earned "Energy Star" awards in 2008: Ewell, Harvey and Oakbrook Elementary schools and Bemis and Heritage Junior High schools.

## How revenues are conserved and expended

In the current economic climate, it is imperative that Utica Community Schools continues its program of prudent financial management. Over the past five years, the district eliminated 276 employee positions and reduced its operating budget by more than \$36 million. Property was sold and the district closed a building. The high school instructional day has been reduced from seven to six periods. The district has strategically used its fund equity to balance the budget and maintain programs. Employees are participating in health care programs at reduced costs to the district.

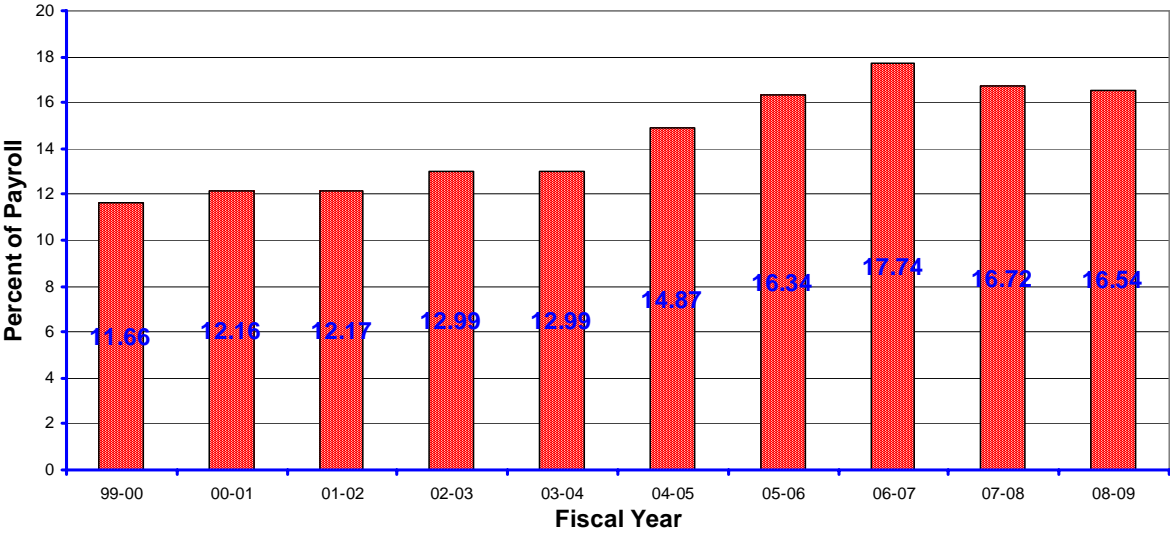
Fiscal year 2007-2008 proved especially challenging because of the economic variables facing the district. Bus fuel and heating costs have skyrocketed, while food, electricity and other daily expenses are also increasing beyond expectations.

UCS took action to conserve precious operating dollars by consolidating bus stops and continuing a partnership with other local school districts to purchase diesel fuel at a cost savings. Employees continue to actively participate in a district energy conservation program which has resulted in some \$2.2 million in cost avoidance since it began in 2006.

Included in the district's budget are employee wages and benefits. An overall increase of 2.9 percent is anticipated for 2008-2009, due to changes in employee health care rates and a slight reduction in the retirement rate. Over the past two years, the health care changes have saved the district \$1.5 million, with an additional \$300,000 in savings anticipated in 2009.

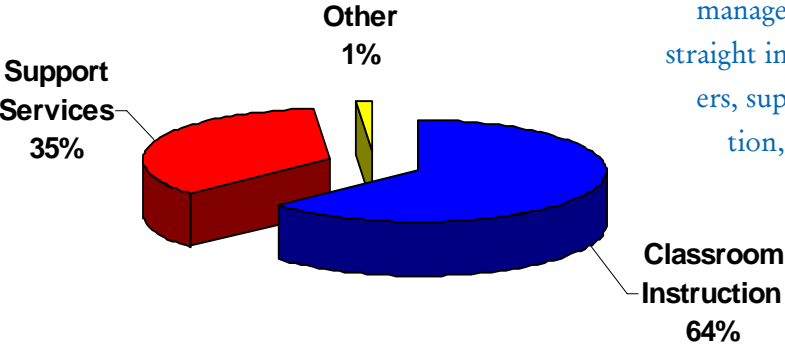
The state legislature sets the retirement rate paid by school districts for their employees each year (graph on page 12). The rate is a percentage paid on all reportable wages. The anticipated retirement rate for 2009 of 16.54, down from 16.72, will reflect a .18 percent reduction, equating to a district savings of approximately \$10 per student, or \$300,000.

**Retirement Rate Comparison**  
 School Years 1999-2000 through 2008-2009



From a business standpoint, the desired “product” of public schools is a well-educated populace, ready to take their place in advancing the nation’s economy in the global marketplace. Success in the vital industry of public education demands quality classroom instruction bolstered by top-notch support services.

**General Fund Expenditures**  
 2008 - 2009



In Utica Community Schools, where independent auditors routinely praise the district for its fiscal management, 64 percent of the 2008-2009 budget will go straight into student classroom instruction, including teachers, supplies and equipment. The other side of the equation, 35 percent, will be spent to support instruction.

This includes professional development and training for teachers and other staff; special education services away from the classroom, such as student psychological, social work, speech/language, vision and guidance services; administrative supervision; building and grounds maintenance; transportation; fuel; utilities; student monitoring; and other services.



The district's operating budget has been reduced by more than \$36 million since 2003.

Going forward, Utica Community Schools will continue to seek efficiencies in its operations. Financial decisions will remain driven by state requirements for a balanced budget and the district’s plan for higher student achievement, as articulated by the *Indicators of Excellence*.



Operating 250 buses, UCS has the largest district-owned school bus fleet in Michigan.

Each day, UCS buses safely transport more than 21,700 students, including parochial school students who reside in the district.

UCS buses travel some 21,300 miles each day, or nearly 3.9 million miles a year.

## Analysis of the 2008-2009 Budget

The General Fund budget is the primary operational fund of the district and reflects the day-to-day operating expenses of the district. This includes salaries and benefits, supplies, utilities, professional development and furniture/equipment purchases.

The personnel and financial resources are allocated in the budget to meet the benchmarks of the *Indicators of Excellence*. Therefore, the budget reflects the allocation of expenditures to support educational programs and services.

General Fund revenues are expected to remain flat, primarily because, while the Foundation Grant is projected to increase by \$100 per student, the final Grant amount still has not been finalized. Variables including student enrollment, elimination of state funding for the state junior high mathematics program and others could offset any increases in revenue.

### General Fund Revenue Sources

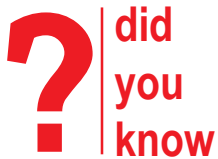
Revenue Sources –	Actual 2006-2007	Budgeted* 2007-2008	Budgeted 2008-2009	Percent Change
Local:	\$44,871,450	\$43,101,259	\$35,825,987	-16.9%
State:	\$192,612,584	\$194,317,241	\$202,492,148	4.2%
Federal:	\$8,226,903	\$12,613,789	\$12,301,767	-2.5%
Transfers/Other:	\$9,028,017	\$9,364,440	\$8,760,380	-6.5%
<b>Total Revenue:</b>	<b>\$254,738,954</b>	<b>\$259,396,729</b>	<b>\$259,380,282</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

### General Fund Expenditures

	Actual 2006-2007	Budgeted* 2007-2008	Budgeted 2008-2009	Percent Change
Instruction:	\$157,020,192	\$167,082,181	\$170,879,978	2.3%
Support Services:	\$91,010,164	\$94,091,944	\$94,860,066	0.8%
Other Transactions:	\$2,940,238	\$5,486,636	\$3,908,723	-28.8%
<b>Total Expenditures:</b>	<b>\$250,970,594</b>	<b>\$266,660,761</b>	<b>\$269,648,767</b>	<b>1.1%</b>

\*pending final audit in August 2008

**Expenditure increases for 2008-2009 are primarily due to rising energy costs and salaries and benefits.**



By the end of the 2008 calendar year, the projects from the district's last bond issue (which voters approved in 2003) will have been completed.

It is a fact that the budget is, by necessity, built on assumptions. It is also a fact that all decisions in Utica Community Schools are based on providing every student the most challenging learning opportunities possible within the district's financial resources. The facts speak for themselves:

- ✓ Utica Community Schools ranks in the lower one-third of Macomb County school districts in the amount of Foundation Grant dollars received from the state.
- ✓ UCS cannot seek additional operating funds from local voters.
- ✓ The district's operating budget has been reduced by more than \$36 million over the past five years, 2003 – 2008.
- ✓ Over the same period, the district eliminated 276 employee positions.
- ✓ Employees participate in health care options that reduce district costs.
- ✓ The district has received a \$12.9 million United States Department of Education grant in partnership with the Armada and Mount Clemens districts, which, over the next five years, will provide funding for the Utica Center for Science and Industry and the International Baccalaureate Programme.
- ✓ An aggressive energy management program enables the district to keep more of its operating dollars for classroom use.
- ✓ Utica Community Schools residents are assessed six mills in homestead property tax, paid to the state, along with 3.5 mills to retire bond issue debt – one of the lowest school millage rates in Macomb County.
- ✓ The non-homestead (non-residential) millage rate in UCS has been rolled back from 18 mills to 17.9316 mills, as required by the Headlee Amendment. That, combined with the six-mill state levy and the 3.5 mill bond levy brings the total rate to 27.4316 on commercial, industrial and second home properties in the district.
- ✓ There is no existing legislative plan to revise the method in which Michigan's public schools are funded.

## Summary

Despite the ongoing challenge of securing sufficient operating dollars, the district's core mission, as defined by the *Indicators of Excellence*, remains to provide a challenging curriculum in which every child will reach his or her individual potential.

Therefore, the district will continue to seek cost-effective ways to update its curriculum offerings and programs in accordance with increasing state, national and international standards.

Reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies will remain our emphasis. Students will still have access to art, music and physical education, as well as the benefits of classroom technology in all subject areas.

Utica Community Schools acknowledges that its most important responsibility is to give its 29,300 students the very best educational opportunities possible. It is only by providing today's students with the quality public education they will need for success beyond high school that we will build the intellectual capital necessary to bring our state back to economic prosperity.

Every dollar is precious to the school district, but only in so far as it improves the educational experience of the community's most precious asset – its children.