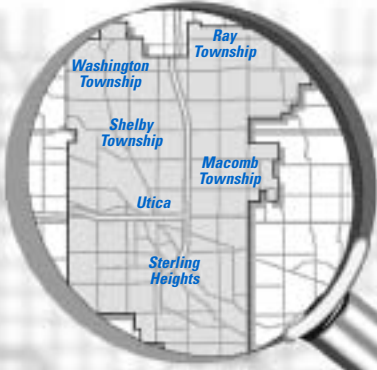


FOCUS for the community



A Publication for the Residents of Utica Community Schools

From the Superintendent...



by Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.

REACHING HIGHER – our new Indicators of Excellence will enable every student to reach higher academic goals

The 2007-2008 school year is about to begin and it is one filled with promise of even greater student achievement in Utica Community Schools.

The elements of success are in place: Highly-qualified staff devoted to teaching and learning; motivated students with dreams for their future and an understanding that education is the key to accomplishing those dreams; and parents and community members who support our students and reinforce the value of education.

UCS is a community where people want to live and raise their children. It's a place where learning is valued and where people work together on behalf of children.

To build upon this foundation, we have implemented an exciting new teaching and learning initiative called "Indicators of Excellence—Reaching Higher" that will begin this year.

We believe Reaching Higher is the right plan to prepare

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Looking forward to the first day of school



Schwarzkoﬀ Elementary School principal **Michael Hardy** (right) and several students took a moment this summer to remind everyone in Utica Community Schools that an exciting new year of student learning and achievement begins on Tuesday, September 4. The smiling young faces belong to fifth grader **David Jackowicz** and fourth grader **Robert D'Angelo**, atop the school sign, and standing l-r: sixth grader **Christopher Deprez**, second grader **Hannah Jackowicz**, third grader **Genna Altovilla** and **Julia Altovilla**, who is starting kindergarten this year.

Advanced Placement course offerings increase for 2007-2008

Expanded student interest and the district's commitment to further increase academic rigor has led to a near-doubling of the number of Advanced Placement courses available in the four high schools.

Advanced Placement, commonly referred to as AP, is a program that offers high school students in the United States and Canada the chance to receive university credit for their work during high school. It also provides a standard measurement of achievement in a particular course.

As such, AP classes provide more challenging course work and the opportunity to take

a final examination that can lead to college credit. AP is offered in range of subjects, from history, mathematics or literature to psychology, art or foreign language.

The not-for-profit College Board, which has operated the AP program since 1955, develops and maintains courses in various subject areas, supports those who teach the courses, supports universities as they define their policies related to AP grades and develops and coordinates the administration of annual AP examinations.

As Utica Community Schools further refines its creation of a

continued on page 4

Advanced Placement courses the district will offer in the 2007-2008 school year:

- Art History
- Biology
- Calculus AB
- Calculus BC
- Chemistry
- Computer Science A
- English Language and Composition
- English Literature and Composition
- Environmental Science
- European History
- French Language
- German Language
- Government and Politics: Comparative
- Government and Politics: United States
- Macroeconomics
- Microeconomics
- Physics
- Psychology
- Spanish Language
- Statistics
- Studio Art: 2-D Design
- Studio Art: 3-D Design
- Studio Art: Drawing
- United States History
- World History

Course offerings may differ between the four high schools.

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UCS Launches "Indicators of Excellence – Reaching Higher"

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Resident
 Utica Community Schools

Indicators of Excellence – Reaching Higher

UCS launches “Indicators of Excellence – Reaching Higher,” a data-driven plan to improve student achievement

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.

Improving the learning opportunities for all students in Utica Community Schools is a responsibility shared by educators, parents and community members. Just as no two children are alike, no two learning styles are alike. As a responsive school community, we must serve the individual needs of each student in order to meet our overriding district goal: *Every Child Achieves*.

To advance that purpose, the Utica Community Schools Board of Education in August approved a groundbreaking document known as “Indicators of Excellence–Reaching Higher” that will define the district’s direction forward by strengthening the academic rigor in our classrooms through strategic, data-based measurements.

“We have a high achieving school district, but there are always opportunities for improvement, said Board of Education President Dr. Carol Klenow. “As Board members, we hold the system accountable (for improved student achievement). This document makes a public statement that we will look at data to see if we are meeting our goals. If not, we will know why not. We will know if we have growth.”

The Indicators of Excellence were drawn from a recommendation by the Accountability Advisory Committee, a group of district parents, employees and residents who worked together at the direction of Superintendent of Schools Dr. Christine Johns to develop a more structured process for ensuring that UCS students continue to excel.

The “Indicators of Excellence – Reaching Higher” initiative will support UCS students in reaching higher academic achievement by:

- Defining the higher order thinking and problem-solving skills our students will need to be successful in a global economy.

- Identifying the programs and services we must offer our students to assure they master those skills.
- Setting time lines for reaching 30 targeted performance indicators—the Indicators of Excellence.
- Establishing data-based measurements to accurately assess progress.

The document is also intended to advance the College Culture in Utica Community Schools, whereby every district student will be expected and encouraged to prepare for and pursue some type of education beyond the high school diploma.

The complete document includes the district’s new Graduate Profile, Mission, Vision and Core Values – all presented on these pages.

However, the most important components are three Goals that set district’s course and the accompanying performance indicators – Indicators of Excellence – that will measure progress toward achieving each goal. Simply put, when the Indicators are met, the Goal will be achieved.

Here are the three Goals and Indicators of Excellence that clearly state what we intend to achieve at each grade level:

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.

Indicators of Excellence for Goal 1:

Elementary School –

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.

REACHING HIGHER

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



Core Values –

The beliefs that define our work:

- Every child can learn and achieve.
- 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 model ethical behavior; exhibit a strong work ethic; and continue to develop their leadership, performance and service skills.
- Parents and guardians are partners in the learning process.
- Technology supports and enhances instruction, business operations, research and communications.
- The Board of Education, district educators/staff, parents, community and business leaders must collaborate and work as a team to enhance educational opportunities for student success.

The UCS Graduate Profile

Skills a successful graduate will possess in order to succeed in the post-high school world:

Engages in Intellectual Endeavors

- Takes responsibility for his/her own learning
- Is curious and asks questions about the world and current events
- Seeks to develop language and other communication skills

Fosters Intellectual Development

- Engages in the lifelong pursuit of learning
- Supports intellectual pursuits of others
- Uses the arts as a way to think, create and express ideas
- Accepts the challenge to become an intellectual leader
- Reads and writes for pleasure

Thinks Critically and Solves Problems

- Understands there is more than one way to address an issue
- Considers problem-solving as both an individual and group pursuit
- Seeks continual improvements to the community, nation and world
- Remains intellectually flexible

Uses Technology as a Learning Resource and Tool

- Understands and embraces distance education
- Uses technology in an ethical manner
- Thinks logically when presenting his/her point of view

Listens and Communicates Effectively

- Speaks and reads more than one language
- Communicates inter-generationally and culturally
- Listens for understanding
- Builds consensus to reach a goal

Works Effectively with Others

- Seeks to understand divergent views
- Makes change peacefully and democratically
- Understands his/her roles in the global community
- Develops teamwork and management skills

(Written using “Sixteen Trends and Their Profound Impact on Our Future” by Gary Marx as a guide.)

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 21st Century. We will achieve this commitment by engaging the entire community to focus on each child's achievement, with the expectation that every student will pursue some type of post-high school educational endeavor.

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.

Junior High School –

Indicator 1.8: All junior high students will meet or exceed standards and be identified as proficient on the MEAP tests in reading, writing, math, science and social studies.

Indicator 1.9: Seventh and eighth graders who receive special education services will show specified growth on the MI-Access test in reading, writing and mathematics.

Indicator 1.10: Seventh through ninth graders who receive English Language Learners (ELL) services will show specified growth on the English Language Proficiency Assessment.

Indicator 1.11: All ninth graders will take the Pre-ACT test that will be used as a predictor of success for college-level work on the required ACT test.

Indicator 1.12: All seventh through ninth graders will demonstrate proficiency on the district writing test.

Indicator 1.13: All seventh through ninth graders will demonstrate proficiency on the district math, science and social studies tests.

Indicator 1.14: The number of seventh and eighth graders

who take and pass Algebra I will increase annually.

Indicator 1.15: All secondary students enrolled in performance-based fine arts courses will present their work to a public audience.

Senior High School –

Indicator 1.16: Beginning with the graduating class of 2011, all students will meet or exceed state standards and qualify for the Michigan Promise Scholarship, based upon qualifying scores on the Michigan Merit Exam.

Indicator 1.17: By 2014, the number of students earning college credit or transferable certificates of completion will increase to 100 percent in all Career and Technical Education classes.

Indicator 1.18: Eleventh graders who receive special education services will show specified growth on the MI-Access test in reading, writing and mathematics.

Indicator 1.19: Tenth through twelfth graders receiving English Language Learners (ELL) services will show growth in reading, writing, speaking and listening, as measured by the English Language Proficiency Assessment.

Indicator 1.20: The number of eleventh graders selected to take the PSAT/NMSQT tests will increase, resulting in more students qualifying for National Merit recognition.

Indicator 1.21: Beginning in the fall of 2007, the number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate courses who take AP or IB exams and achieve a score of three or better will increase annually.

Indicator 1.22: All tenth and eleventh graders will be

proficient and on track to meet state graduation requirements as measured by the district reading, writing, math, science and social studies tests.

Indicator 1.23: Every twelfth grader will submit an application for post-secondary education through a monitored acceptance process.

Goal 2:

The school district will implement a world-class instructional program.

Indicators of Excellence for Goal 2:

Indicator 2.1: Increase the percentage of staff who annually implement a world-class instructional program at the proficient level or higher.

Indicator 2.2: All students will be prepared to effectively function in a diverse global society.

Indicator 2.3: All UCS school leaders are empowered to and accountable for making decisions based on the needs of their school or department.

Indicator 2.4: Central Office functions as a service and support resource for building principals and teachers to promote the academic achievement of all students.

Goal 3:

Parent, business and community partnerships will be an integral part of student learning.

Indicators of Excellence for Goal 3:

Indicator 3.1: Utica Community Schools will increase timely, parent-friendly communication practices that are clearly articulate, easily understood, accessible in multiple languages and measured by parent reports indicating that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their children's schools on the district annual stakeholder satisfaction survey.

Indicator 3.2: Utica Community Schools will include parents and the community in improving student achievement.

Indicator 3.3: Utica Community Schools will extend the boundaries of the school day to the community at-large.

As you can see, the work ahead will be challenging. We have set the bar high for our students and the adults responsible for their education.

With parent and community support, we remain confident in our students' abilities to meet higher academic standards. Together, we will lead them to a more promising tomorrow.

From the Superintendent...

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our students to meet the increased proficiency standards in English language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts and career and technical education within the time frames required by the federal No Child Left Behind law and the Michigan Merit Curriculum graduation requirements.

Please take a moment to read about our Reaching Higher Goals and Indicators of Excellence presented on page two, as well as our new Mission, Vision and Core Values for the school district. The Indicators of Excellence are specific, data-based standards for attaining each goal, that when met, will demonstrate our students' higher academic achievement.

Even in the wake of public concern about the impact the lack of full funding for Michigan's public schools will have on the state's future, I am confident that Utica Community Schools will continue to offer students a strong educational foundation with the funding resources we are provided.

I'm particularly pleased that our high school students have enrolled in record numbers for expanded Advanced Placement classes. I am proud of our students for challenging themselves with more rigorous course work that can lead to college credit.

Our standardized test scores, such as the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), continue to improve and many of our children have reached full proficiency in their studies as measured by these tests.

Last spring, for the first time, all of our high school students were required to take the ACT exam, a test that to this point had been reserved for a select group of students seeking college admittance. This was a challenging exam, but it provided the opportunity for all students to see that college is not just an option for some – it is a springboard to success in the 21st Century.

Our intention to open the doors of post-secondary education for every child is one that is imperative for their future and the future vitality of our state's workforce and economy.

Our students, in addition to being "book smart," must be able to work cooperatively and be adaptable, creative and innovative in order to be successful. I already see these abilities in our students and we will seek additional ways to prepare them for bright futures.

This year, we will indeed "reach higher." We will continue to build the college culture in our school district, where every child can accomplish their post-secondary dream of college, technical school or a solid career path. Despite budget reductions due to the declining state economy, we in Utica Community Schools will continue teaching our children to aspire and prepare, and every child will achieve.

Have a wonderful year of learning.

Michigan Merit Curriculum

Beginning with the graduating class of 2011 (this year's ninth graders), in order to receive a high school diploma, all Michigan public high school students will be required to have successfully completed four credits in English Language Arts, four credits in Mathematics that include Algebra I and II and Geometry, three credits in Science that include Biology and Chemistry or Physics, three credits in Social Studies, one credit of Health and Physical Education and one credit of Visual,

Performing or Applied Arts, for a total of 16 credits.

In addition, beginning with the class of 2016, all students will be required to successfully complete a total of 18 credits: the original 16, plus two credits of World Languages.

Note: Students must also complete additional elective courses in order to meet the minimum graduation requirements in Utica Community Schools of 22 credits.

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 identified 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.

**Important dates
2007-08 school year**

- September 4, 2007**
First day of school for all students; elementary half-day
- October 31, 2007**
Elementary half-day
- November 6, 2007**
No school; staff professional development
- November 7-15, 2007**
Parent-teacher conference window
- November 15, 2007**
All students half-day; P.M. conferences
- November 21-25, 2007**
Thanksgiving break; classes resume November 26
- Dec. 22, 2007 - Jan. 2, 2008**
Holiday break; classes resume January 3
- January 17, 2008**
Secondary exams; secondary half-day
- January 18, 2008**
Secondary exams; all students half day
- January 21, 2008**
No school; staff professional development
- February 11-17, 2008**
Elementary parent-teacher conference window
- February 18-24, 2008**
Mid-winter break; classes resume February 25
- March 3-7, 2008**
Secondary parent-teacher conference window
- March 21-30, 2008**
Spring break; classes resume March 31
- May 23, 2008**
No school; staff professional development
- May 26, 2008**
No school; Memorial Day
- June 11, 2008**
Secondary exams; secondary half day
- June 12, 2008**
Secondary exams; all students half day
- June 13, 2008**
No school; summer recess begins

Utica Community Schools
Foundation for Educational Excellence
cordially invites you to take part in its fourth annual

**Building Our
Future Leaders
Golf Outing**

Monday, **September 17**
Boulder Lakes Golf Club
52100 Fairchild Road in Chesterfield
Player registration begins at 9:00 A.M.

The UCS Foundation is a non-profit group dedicated to raising funds that are used to enrich the educational experience of students in Utica Community Schools beyond that which the district budget can provide.

Special sponsorships, golf foursomes and dinner packages are available. Please call the Foundation Office at 586.797.6953 for more information.

**AHERA Annual Notification
(2007/2008 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 building surveillances are conducted every six months and continue on a regular schedule, with the latest round being completed in August 2007. The next three-year re-inspections are scheduled for August 2008. All surveillances and re-inspections are conducted by Michigan licensed asbestos inspectors.

Asbestos abatement was conducted at ten UCS facilities during the 2006-2007 school year and summer. Additional UCS facilities have yet to be determined for abatement during the 2007-2008 school year and summer. All asbestos abatement is conducted by Michigan licensed asbestos abatement contractors during after-school hours, school vacation breaks and summer recess. Notifications are provided to potential occupants prior to scheduled abatement.

The district's AHERA management plans are available for review at each school or at the Auxiliary Services Facility (ASF) at 6600 Eighteen Mile Road in Sterling Heights. Summaries of abatement projects prior to the 2007-2008 school year are included in the plans and complete documentation is maintained at the ASF. Inquiries regarding the program can be directed to the district's AHERA designee at 586.797.7130 during business hours.

Advanced Placement course offerings increase for 2007-2008

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college culture, the expanded offerings also are intended to make AP courses available to more students.

"Beyond increased rigor and the chance to receive college credit,

students taking an Advanced Placement course leave with skills they need to be successful in post-secondary study or even

the work place," said Robert VanCamp, UCS Director of Curriculum and Special Projects.

"These students tend to work more independently, which

means they develop the ability to take notes, participate in more intensive research in a particular subject and generally acquire greater discipline and responsibility," he continued.

"Students who take Advanced Placement are exposed to the gold standard of secondary education."

"Students who take Advanced Placement are exposed to the gold standard of secondary education. School districts offering AP

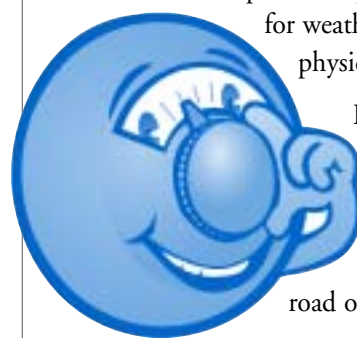
courses are routinely audited by the College Board, which oversees Advanced Placement programs nationally, to assure they contain sufficient rigor."

Energy cost avoidance helped blunt the impact of funding shortfalls

In January 2006, the Board of Education implemented a district-wide energy conservation program with the help of a consulting firm and the full cooperation of district employees. The goal: energy cost avoidance wherever possible in order to save precious dollars for the classroom.

The importance of this action is magnified when considering that without it, the impact of the budget cuts the district had to make for the 2007-2008 school year due to state funding shortfalls would have been far more severe.

Upon analyzing the first 15 months of data, the results are in – Utica Community Schools used 25 percent less energy than anticipated to operate the schools, a figure adjusted for weather conditions, utility prices and physical changes made to some buildings.



Further good news is that the district is also making a "green" impact on the environment, with the program estimated at having the same effect as removing 3,800 cars from the road or planting 7,900 acres of trees.

The plan involved communication and education among all employees to bring about changes in workday habits and district practices to curb energy usage, yet maintain a comfortable environment for students and staff.

Employees taking simple steps—like turning off lights and computer monitors when not in use and adjusting building heating and cooling systems—have made a big difference, amounting to more than \$2 million dollars in cost avoidance thus far. The program will continue in the new school year.

Children with disabilities are entitled to special education services

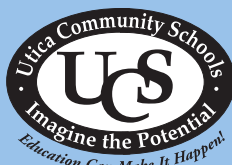
Public Act 198 of 1971, the Mandatory Special Education Act, originally established the right of persons with disabilities from birth through the age of 25 to a free, appropriate public education.

Utica Community Schools will arrange for free evaluation services to be done by a team of educational specialists to determine if a child is eligible for special education services.

Parents or guardians may contact the Executive Director of Special Services, Utica Community Schools, 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312, telephone 586.797.1000, for further information and/or to refer their child for an evaluation.

**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.



Accredited K-12 by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

586.797.1000

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2006 Commended Award
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2007 Award of Excellence
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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.