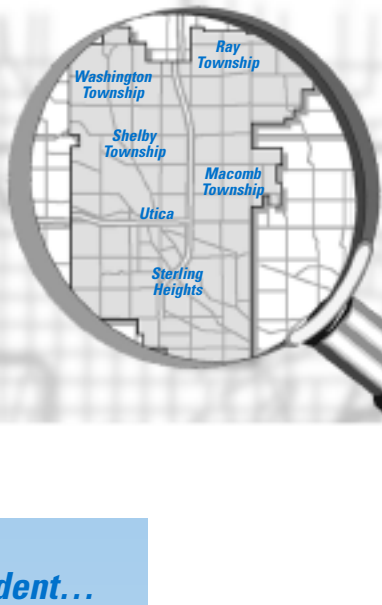


FOCUS for the community



A Publication for the Residents of Utica Community Schools

From the Superintendent...



by Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.

Interesting times call for measured planning toward a brighter future

There is an old expression that is as fresh today as it ever was:

May you live in interesting times.

These are interesting times, yet filled with possibility. Despite our current economic challenges, I believe the residents of Utica Community Schools are well-positioned for the economic rebound that follows a downturn.

Why am I optimistic? Simply put, it's because we have a wonderful mix of hard-working residents and a school district that is dedicated to the academic success of our students.

When faced with a challenge, this community has traditionally done what it must to weather any storm and think ahead to what must be done to ensure that its young people continue to achieve.

In Utica Community Schools, we have contributed to that effort through prudent fiscal management while providing a world-class education to prepare students for success in the global economy.

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Six more UCS schools earn the Michigan Blue Ribbon, bringing the district's total to 28

Collins, Duncan, Ebeling, Morgan, Switzer and Wiley Elementary schools have been named **2009 Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools** by the State Board of Education. This is the twelfth consecutive year that Utica Community Schools has received the state honor at one or more of its schools.

According to State Board of Education President Kathleen N. Straus, "The Blue Ribbon program's advisory committee selected these schools as meeting some very tough criteria in delivering quality education to their students. The schools, their teachers, students, parents and communities should be very proud of their accomplishment."

Straus pointed out that the Blue Ribbon serves three purposes. It identifies and recognizes outstanding schools across the

state; makes research-based effectiveness criteria available to schools so they can assess themselves and plan improvements; and encourages schools to share their best practices for educational success with other schools.

"Michigan Blue Ribbon Schools are models of both excellence and equity," Straus said.

"To be recognized, a school must demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students."

The selection process includes comprehensive evaluation of a school's academic programs and student achievement data, as well as on-site validation by a team of educators from established Blue Ribbon schools.

The State Board also stipulates that in order to be considered for the award, schools must have made Adequate Yearly Progress



"Selection as a Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School underscores the climate of academic rigor which is the hallmark at each of our schools."

– Dr. Christine M. Johns, Superintendent of Schools

(AYP) as determined by the federal No Child Left Behind law; achieved a Michigan Education YES! School Report

Card grade of A or B and not have a Native American mascot, nickname or logo.

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Voters to decide bond issue on May 5

A \$112.5 million bond issue will appear on the Tuesday, May 5 annual school election ballot.

Schools Superintendent Dr. Christine M. Johns said the decision to seek the bond issue will allow the district to continue to sustain student learning opportunities, particularly in the area of classroom technology.

If approved, the bond issue would raise the \$112.5 million with no projected increase in the total current UCS debt levy, which is planned to remain at or below 3.5 mills.

The objectives of the bond issue are to allow the district to—

Provide classroom technology to:

- Sustain and expand student/staff access to technology

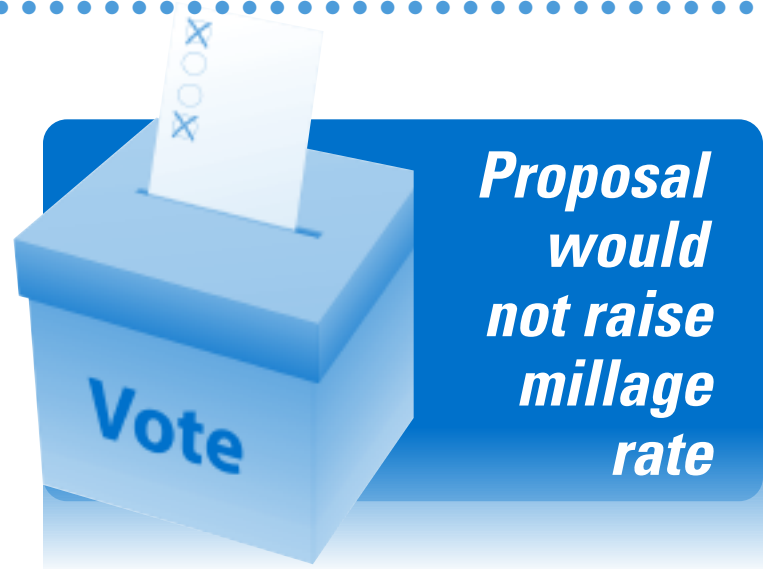
- Continue emphasis on presentation and communication through 21st Century technologies
- Improve infrastructure technologies and systems

Keep buildings in good working order by replacing, renovating or remodeling:

- Boilers, HVAC, interior lighting
- Roofing, doors, restrooms
- Security improvements, paving
- Flooring, cabinets/countertops furniture/equipment, school signs, public address systems

Provide parity among facilities, offering equal access to students including:

- Auxiliary gyms reconfigured at Malow and Davis Junior High schools



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Schools of Choice enrollment expanded to K-12 for the fall

Utica Community Schools will expand its Schools of Choice program this fall to allow all Macomb County students in kindergarten through grade 12 to enroll in any of its 40 buildings, provided space is available. Registration will run May 1–15. Information is available online at www.uticak12.org or by calling 586.797.1120.

Six years ago, when Utica first began offering Schools of Choice, it was limited to grades K-9 in five schools. Currently, 702 Choice students are enrolled at 13 schools. The district receives the state funding allowance for each student enrolled, helping to enable UCS to continue offering comprehensive, high quality academic programs.

Once a student enrolls in the district, he or she becomes eligible, as are all UCS students, to apply for any of the district's programs, including all-day kindergarten, Mandarin Chinese, International Baccalaureate, Utica Center for Science and Industry and Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology.

Blue Ribbon Schools...

continued from page 1

The latest selections bring the total number of Blue Ribbon schools in the Utica Community Schools district to 28. The others are Browning, Crissman, DeKeyser, Ewell, Flickinger, Graebner, Harvey, Havel, Magahay, Messmore, Monfort, Roberts, Schuchard, Schwarzkoff, Walsh and West Utica Elementary schools; Bemis, Malow and Shelby Junior High schools; and Eisenhower, Ford II and Stevenson High schools.

"I couldn't be prouder of our staff and students who, with the support of parents, made these Blue Ribbon designations a reality," commented UCS superintendent of schools, Dr. Christine M. Johns.

"Selection as a Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School underscores the climate of academic rigor which is the hallmark at each of our schools. We look at these 28 awards as a standard we've achieved while continuing to strive higher, because we know the key to student success now and in the future is a strong educational experience."

Bond issue on May 5

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- Electronic Collaboration Classroom at Stevenson High School
- Media Center at Utica High School
- Bus replacement

The projects to be funded by the bond issue stem from recommendations of the Citizens for Education Project (CFEP), a group of nearly 750 parents, community members and school staff who met for more than

1,000 hours last fall to develop a series of recommendations to the Board of Education.

Teams evaluated district needs in the areas of capital projects, demographics and technology before presenting their

recommendations to the Board in December 2008.

"If approved, this bond issue will also maintain the investment in our buildings which has been made over time," Johns said.

Utica Community Schools May 5, 2009 BALLOT LANGUAGE EXPLANATION

BOND PROPOSAL

Shall the Utica Community Schools, County of Macomb, Michigan, borrow the principal sum of not to exceed one hundred twelve million five hundred thousand dollars (\$112,500,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds for the purpose of defraying the cost of:

- acquiring and installing technology infrastructure and equipment in and for the purpose of connecting all School District buildings;
- remodeling and/or constructing additions to expand spaces at existing secondary schools, including media centers and gymnasiums;
- equipping, furnishing, reequipping and/or refurnishing School District buildings, and acquiring school buses;
- improving and developing sites, including playgrounds and outdoor athletic facilities, in the School District; and
- remodeling existing School District buildings, including security, mechanical and other infrastructure improvements?

The estimated millage to be levied in 2009 to service this issue of bonds is 0.5 mill (\$0.50 per \$1,000 of taxable value) and the estimated simple average annual millage rate required to retire the bonds of this issue is 0.8 mill (\$0.80 per \$1,000 of taxable value). The debt millage levy required to retire all bonds of the School District currently outstanding and proposed by this ballot proposal is currently estimated to remain at or below 3.50 mills. The bonds may be issued in one or more series, payable in the case of each series in not to exceed sixteen (16) years from the date of issue of each series. If the School District borrows from the State to pay debt service on the bonds of this issue, the School District may be required to continue to levy mills beyond the term of the bonds to repay the State.

(Under State law, bond proceeds may not be used to pay teacher, administrator or other employee salaries, routine maintenance costs or other School District operating expenses.)

Includes Shelby Township; City of Utica and portions of Sterling Heights and Macomb, Ray and Washington townships.

To pay for specific projects outlined below and generally described in the bond application to the State of Michigan.

Would permit the sale of bonds to obtain \$112.5 million for these projects described below.

Projects intended to provide facilities and technology to support student learning and achievement at all grade levels. All projects were recommended to the Utica Community Schools Board of Education by the 750-member Citizens for Education Project committee (CFEP) following its assessment of the district's demographic, technology and capital projects needs. The CFEP report is available at each school and online at www.uticak12.org.

Additional information for voters on the first year allocation of the tax levy toward retirement on the \$112.5 million bond issue. **The objective is to maintain the current millage rate.**

Again, additional information for voters on the average annual yearly allocation of tax levy toward retirement of the \$112.5 million bond issue over the 15-16 year maturity schedule. **The objective is to maintain the current millage rate.**

No projected increase in the total current UCS debt levy, which is planned to remain at or below 3.5 mills.

State law forbids public school districts from using money from a bond issue for daily operational costs, such as employee salaries and benefits, routine cleaning and maintenance, supplies, fuel, electricity, natural gas and other utilities.

UCS Voters' Guide • May 5, 2009 Bond Election Facts

1. What will appear on the ballot on Tuesday, May 5?

There will be candidates for two six-year positions on the Utica Community Schools Board of Education.

One proposal will be on the ballot, as shown on the reverse side. It seeks approval of a bond issue totaling \$112.5 million.

This bond issue would finance projects in the areas of technology, building remodeling and construction at existing facilities.

2. Will this bond issue vote change the present debt millage levy on my home?

The bond issue is structured to maintain the existing 3.5 mills on all property for debt retirement.

Continuation of the 3.5 mills for debt should allow the district to meet its current debt obligations, as well as the principal and interest payments for the \$112.5 million at no increase to the present debt millage levy.

3. Why is the Board of Education requesting this bond issue?

Utica Community Schools has strived to provide a rigorous, high-quality education for its students. The district believes that maintenance of its buildings and technology are necessary to keep our educational programs both relevant and competitive.

The objectives of the \$112.5 million bond issue are to allow the district to:

✓ Provide classroom **technology** to:

- Sustain and expand student/staff access to technology
- Continue emphasis on presentation and communication through 21st Century technologies
- Improve infrastructure technologies and systems

✓ Keep its buildings in good working order by **replacing, renovating or remodeling**:

- Boilers, HVAC, interior lighting
- Roofing, doors, restrooms
- Security improvements, paving
- Flooring, cabinets/countertops furniture/equipment, school signs, public address systems

✓ Provide **parity** among facilities, providing equal access to students including:

- Auxiliary gyms reconfigured at Malow and Davis Junior High schools
- Electronic Collaboration Classroom at Stevenson High School
- Media Center at Utica High School
- Bus replacement

4. How were the priorities determined?

Nearly 750 parents, community members and school staff met in a series of sessions last fall as members of the Citizens for Education Project (CFEP). Teams met for more than 1,000 hours to develop a series of recommendations to the Board of Education.

Teams evaluated district needs in the areas of capital projects, demographics and technology.

The recommendations of the Citizens for Education Project resulted in the Board's decision to seek the \$112.5 million bond issue.



5. What will happen if the bond issue is not approved by the electorate?

Without the issuance of additional bonds, the 3.5 mill debt levy will begin to decline slightly in fiscal year 2009-2010. The district would not have the \$112.5 million to fulfill the recommendations made by the CFEP committee.

Remodeling and replacement of equipment and technology at district buildings may be postponed or eliminated.

6. When was the last time we voted on a bond issue?

District voters last approved a bond issue in 2003. The \$141 million it generated funded new construction; remodeling projects at every school, including dedicated elementary school art, science and music classrooms; media centers at Stevenson, Eisenhower and Ford II High and Eppler Junior High; performing arts centers at Eisenhower and Ford II; construction of Beacon Tree Elementary and the Auxiliary Service Center; and comprehensive educational technology at all schools.

7. With today's economy, why is the district seeking a bond issue?

Just as homes need to be kept in good repair, so do school buildings. Each of the items to be financed by a bond issue is intended to support the district's goal of improved student achievement.

8. How can I get more information about the bond issue vote?

Further election information is included in this newsletter, which is distributed to every home in the school district.

Additional information is available at every school building and on **UCS-TV** (channel 15 or 22) and the district web site, www.uticak12.org. The Superintendent's Hotline also takes calls at 586.797.7788.

9. How will the economic stimulus package impact our school district?

Utica Community Schools has not received any indication that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, as approved by Congress, will provide funds for construction.

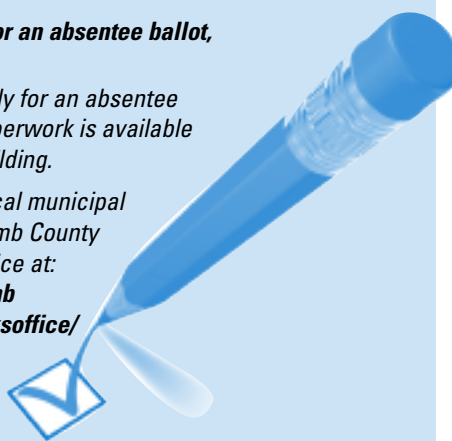
The Act specifically requires the State of Michigan to provide operating funds to school districts at current levels through 2011.

What has remained in the plan is funding for economically disadvantaged students and those with disabilities. These dollars are restricted and must be allocated exclusively for the identified students.

10. If I need to apply for an absentee ballot, how do I do that?

The last day to apply for an absentee ballot is May 2. Paperwork is available at every district building.

Or, contact your local municipal office or the Macomb County Clerk's Election Office at: <http://www.macombcountymi.gov/clerksoffice/electiondept.htm>.



Board of Education candidates are on the May 5 ballot

In addition to the Bond Issue ballot proposal explained in this newsletter, the election on May 5, 2009 will also serve to fill two terms on the Utica Community Schools Board of Education that begin on July 1, 2009 and will end on June 30, 2015. Incumbents Dr. Carol Klenow and Dr. Robert A. Ross are seeking to retain their seats. There are no other candidates.

Dr. Klenow was first appointed to the Board of Education in 1993. She has served on the capital projects and human resources subcommittees and has been president of the Board since 1995.

She and her husband, Blaise, have lived in Shelby Township since 1978 and both their children graduated from Eisenhower High School. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics from Michigan State University and Oakland University, respectively, as well as a doctorate in educational administration from Wayne State University.

Klenow is employed as associate superintendent for Oakland Schools, the Intermediate School District in Oakland County, where her leadership responsibilities have included technology services, curriculum and instruction services, workforce development programs, human resources/organizational development and strategic planning.

She is a member of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the American Association of School Administrators, the Society for Human Resource Management and the Michigan Association of School Boards. She also serves on the Alumni Steering Committee – Michigan Political Leadership Program of Michigan State University.

Dr. Ross has served on the Board of Education for five years, having been elected in 2004. He is the current chairperson of the Board of Education's Capital Projects subcommittee and has served on the Board's Curriculum, Finance and Human Resources subcommittees.

He and his wife Lou Ann have resided in Sterling Heights for 25 years. They are the parents of four children – two who are currently enrolled in the district and two UCS alumni, one of whom is a Michigan State University graduate, the other a graduate from the University of Michigan.

Ross holds bachelor's and doctorate degrees in physics from Wayne State University and is employed as a physics professor at the University of Detroit Mercy. He is a member of the American Association of Physics Teachers and the American Society for Engineering Education.

From the Superintendent... continued from page 1

We traditionally graduate young adults who can reason and problem-solve in the real world; who can read and write at high levels for both business and self-enrichment; who can work well with others to bring a project from dream to reality.

As a result, we have enjoyed strong financial support from the community on behalf of our students. UCS residents have long supported bond issues that have allowed the school district to meet the changing face of education – whether to provide our students with advanced technology in their classrooms, develop enhanced learning facilities or keep our schools safe and well-maintained places where our students can learn and grow.

On Tuesday, May 5, district residents will be asked to support a \$112.5 million bond issue for Utica Community Schools. The bond issue has been structured to maintain the current millage rate. It will allow the district to:

- Provide classroom technology to expand student/staff access to technology and improve infrastructure technology and systems, allowing continued emphasis on presentation and communication through 21st Century technologies
- Keep buildings in good working order by replacing, renovating or remodeling projects, such as boilers, HVAC, roofing, doors, restrooms, paving, interior lighting and security improvements

- Address the goal of providing parity among facilities by providing equal educational facilities for students no matter which school they attend

We are not unaware of the economic times in which this request comes. Utica Community Schools has always taken leadership in fiscal responsibility.

Over the past five years, for example, our district has balanced its budget for day-to-day operations by reducing spending by more than \$36 million. A total of 276 jobs have been eliminated and our employees have taken on greater share of their health care costs and agreed to other wage concessions, as well.

I want to emphasize that none of the dollars generated from the proposed bond issue would be spent on day-to-day operations, including salaries, benefits, utilities and the like.

What it will be spent on are projects designed to maintain our school district as a great place for students to learn. And what better investment in the renewal of our economy is there?

Please review this edition of Focus for the Community to learn more about the bond issue as well as more about how our students continue to achieve at higher levels.

For UCS sixth graders, the Career Focus experience can spark answers to the question:

What do you want to be when you grow up?

The fifteenth annual Career Focus Luncheon will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, May 6 and May 7, at Penna's of Sterling Heights. As in past years, the event is planned as a unique learning experience for all Utica Community Schools sixth graders – some 2,000 girls and boys. In fact, more than 20,000 students have taken part over the years.

Career Focus is made possible by sponsorships from area business and career professionals who serve as mentors for the day, sharing career-themed table talk with students seated with them for lunch. It's hard to tell who has more fun – the children, for whom this is a special "grown-up" occasion, or the adults, who offer them advice and encouragement.

Past keynote speakers have included state and local officials, sports figures and business leaders. Speaking to the students this year will be

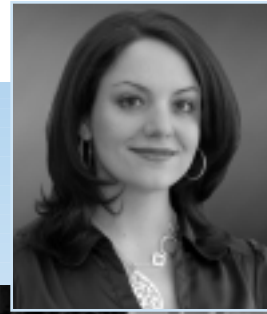
UCS alumna **Annalisa Esposito Bluhm**, Communications Manager for General Motors Design and Product Planning.

Esposito Bluhm is responsible for global communication and marketing support for 13 GM brands including Chevrolet, Buick, Cadillac and Hummer-model vehicles. She also had a key role in the media reveal of the Volt, an electric-powered car to be launched in 2010.

Esposito Bluhm attended Plumbrook and Crissman Elementary schools, Malow Junior High and graduated from Eisenhower High School. She holds a master's degree in communication from Eastern Michigan University.

The Career Focus Luncheon is co-sponsored each year by the Utica Community Schools Foundation for Educational Excellence, the Chamber of Commerce and the Advisor & Source Newspapers, in

Annalisa Esposito Bluhm,
GM manager and
2009 Career Focus
keynote speaker



Business mentor **Kristen Miller** of Huntington Bank (third from right) joined Ebeling sixth graders (clockwise from Miller) **Taylor Bilan, Alexis McCoy, Anna Marie Pavlovski, Michael Morris, Bradley Doebler, Joe Juncevic**, teacher **Albert Shad, Nathan Wright** and **Azmath Anwarullah** at the 2008 Career Focus Luncheon.

cooperation with Utica Community Schools.

Proceeds benefit the Foundation's work on behalf of UCS students. In existence since 1986, the volunteer UCS Foundation for Educational Excellence has raised funds to enrich the educational

experiences of our students beyond what the district budget can allow. Some programs funded each year are post-secondary Career and Technical Education scholarships, elementary summer literacy programs and after-school academic support for secondary students.

Volunteer mentors are needed to make the event a success. Please call 586.797.6953 to reserve your table on May 6 or 7 and share your career know-how with today's children – tomorrow's leaders.

Be a star maker at the Arts & Idols Gala on May 21

Come join the fun while supporting student learning at the first ever Arts & Idols Gala on Thursday, May 21 at the Palazzo Grande Banquet and Event Center. Modeled after TV's "American Idol," part of the evening will showcase twelve talented local singing finalists in competition.



Celebrity judges, including radio personalities **Jackie Purtan** and **Tom Ryan**, former Second City NY music director **Mark Levenson**, Macomb County Sheriff **Mark Hackel**, 41-A District Court **Judge Kimberley A. Wiegand** and Miss Michigan USA **Lindsey Tycholiz**, will choose the winner with help from the audience. Master of Ceremonies will be radio's **Ron Tavernit**.

Arts & Idols is sponsored by the UCS Foundation for Educational Excellence and the Palazzo Grande. The evening includes dinner, dancing and entertainment, a scholarship raffle and silent and live auctions of student art on display. Tickets are \$50 per person, available at www.artsandidols.com or by calling the Foundation office at 586.797.6902. Doors open at 6 p.m. – dinner served at 7 p.m. The Palazzo Grande is at 54660 Van Dyke (just south of 25 Mile Road) in Shelby Township, 48315. Proceeds benefit the Utica Community Schools Scholarship Fund.

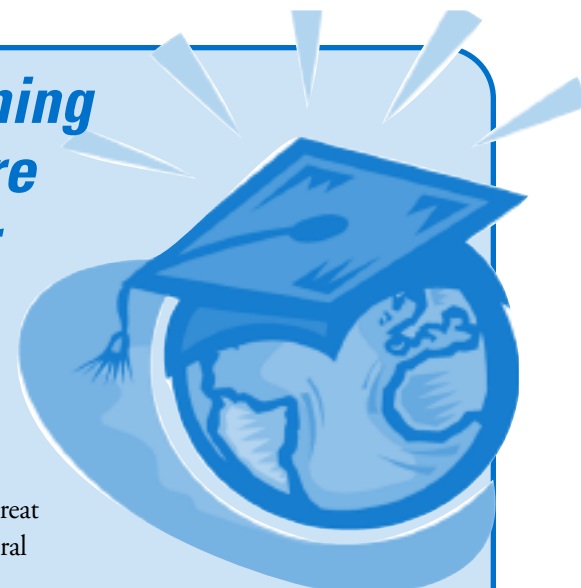
Learn more about planning for your academic future at the UCS College Fair

Thursday, April 23, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Utica Community Schools will conduct its fourth annual College Fair from 6:30 – 8 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, at Henry Ford II High School, 11911 Clinton River Road in Sterling Heights. The event is free and a great chance for UCS students and parents to learn about several colleges and universities all at once.

Representatives from **Albion, Central Michigan, Western Michigan, Lawrence Tech, Northern Michigan, Ohio State, Bowling Green, Iowa State, Carnegie Mellon** and others will be on hand to answer questions about their school's programs of study, admission requirements and available financial aid.

The UCS College Fair is the final event this year designed to prepare all students for a successful post-secondary experience, following the Academic Blitz in January and the Career Expo in March.



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.



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FOCUS for the Community

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2008 Distinguished Award
Michigan School Public Relations Association



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.

Important dates in the 2008-09 school year

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