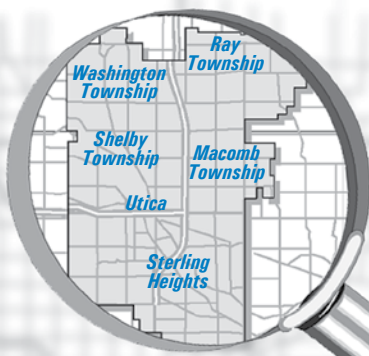


F O C U S for the community



A Publication for the Residents of Utica Community Schools

From the Superintendent...



by Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.

Full day kindergarten promotes a strong foundation in the UCS college culture

I am pleased and excited to announce that Utica Community Schools will provide full day kindergarten at all 25 of our elementary schools, beginning with the 2012-2013 school year.

A full day of quality instruction for every child entering kindergarten in our district marks a significant and very positive educational change for our youngest learners.

The kindergarten day is being structured to provide children an even stronger foundation in reading, mathematics, science, technology use and other subject areas in preparation for the array of rigorous options the UCS college culture will offer them over their next twelve years of education.

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High-level thinking made UCS students big winners at regional and state First Lego League tournaments

Students from Utica Community Schools comprised more than half the teams earning awards at the district's tenth annual FIRST Lego League regional ThunderQuest tournament hosted at Henry Ford II High School.

Eight UCS teams advanced from the regional to compete at the state tournament, where they did the district, their schools and themselves proud!

FIRST Lego robotics attracts more than 200,000 students ages 9-14 worldwide to tackle exciting challenges that incorporate mathematics, science and technology with higher-level thinking, problem solving and teamwork to find solutions to real-life issues.

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All in a day's work at ThunderQuest



Determination shows on the faces of these FIRST LEGO Robotics teammates as they work to coax the best performances from the robotic vehicles they helped design and build. Clockwise top is Flickinger Elementary fifth grader Ben Pick; at upper right are Bemis Junior High seventh grader Vince Nguyen and eighth graders Kim Nguyen and Kush Patel; at right are Morgan Elementary sixth grader Jacob Thabet, fifth grader William Bergler and sixth grader Mark Bologna.



UCS secondary students are AVID learners

Students at Jeannette Junior High and Stevenson High School are learning important skills for academic success in Macomb County's first AVID program.

AVID, short for Advancement Via Individual Determination, is a national research-based college readiness system. The elective program currently serves seventh and tenth graders who have the ability and motivation to go to college but need additional support in some areas to reach their potential.

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Engaged in a deep inquiry exercise as part of an advanced geography class are Jeannette seventh graders Mary Mekha, Mathew Issa, Nicholas Day and Emily Earls. Flanking them are OU facilitators Brent L'Esperance, left, and Andrew Vickers, right.

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Points of pride

NATIONAL AWARD

Malow Junior High teacher Kirstin Carolin is one of a select group of U.S. educators to receive a 2011 Award of Excellence from the National Federation of High School Associations and the only teacher given the group's Outstanding Speech, Debate and Theater Educator award.

GOOD NEIGHBORS

Two UCS students – Jacob Pelletier of Bemis Junior High and John Beauvais of Stevenson High School – were honored with community service awards from the Sterling Heights City Council.

Jacob received his award for helping his neighbors with chores and other acts of kindness without expectation of reward. Those he assists call him their “quiet hero.”

John volunteers with the Sterling Heights Initiative for Neighborhood Excellence (SHINE) program, assisting residents with home and yard maintenance who are unable to do it themselves.

NATIONAL MERIT AWARDS

Twenty UCS students attained commended or semifinalist honors in the 2012 National Merit Scholarship program. Merit semifinalists, who comprise less than one percent of 1.5 million entrants, advance to the finalist level of competition for scholarship awards.

Commended:

- Eisenhower HS – *Andrew Martz, Elliott Pearson*
- Henry Ford II HS – *Akshdeep Dhaliwal, Jason Pevitt*
- Stevenson HS – *Joshua Gahan, Jeremy Martineau*
- Utica HS – *Nicholas Simopoulos*
- Utica Academy for International Studies – *David Cai, John Kruse,*

Getting in the (academic) game

At the recent Academic Blitz, more than 800 students and parents formed a “game plan” for educational success and learned more about the portfolio of options available in Utica Community Schools.

Dr. Bess German, Michigan State University Director of Admissions and Student Affairs, opened the evening by explaining the college enrollment process and the UCS advantage. “I work with thousands of exceptional students, and the students from this district stand out,” she said.

She credited the UCS portfolio of learning options and its academic rigor for our students’ success. “It is very exceptional,” she said. “And that doesn’t happen everywhere in Michigan or even around the country where you have these amazing opportunities.”

The Academic Blitz was initiated five years ago by the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council,

comprised of students from all UCS secondary schools

“The Blitz was started to help parents and students better understand everything that is available to them in our schools,” said Advisory Council member and Ford II senior Afifah Latif, who emceed the opening session.

Program selection at the secondary level and after graduation can be a mystery. The good news is that UCS offers plenty of assistance in making choices to meet a

student’s unique needs.

The Academic Blitz is one important opportunity. The annual UCS Career Expo on March 15 this year and the UCS College Fair on April 17 are two more. Teachers and counselors are valuable sources of advice and assistance, as well.

Parents are encouraged to gather information, ask questions and get direction on how to best navigate the many choices their children have in UCS.



Utica Center for Science and Industry mechatronics teacher Scott Spry and UCSI and Stevenson HS senior Christina Harkiewicz explain the program to an interested parent and students at the Academic Blitz on January 26.

Annual luncheon helps students get career and college-ready

Keynote speaker Packer’s Frank Zombo will share insight on preparing for success

The 19th Career Focus Luncheon, an annual “must attend” event for workplace professionals and Utica Community Schools sixth graders, is set for Wednesday and Thursday, May 2-3, at the Palazzo Grande Center in Shelby Township.



Frank Zombo

Keynote speaker both days will be Green Bay Packers linebacker Frank Zombo, a graduate of Stevenson High School and Central Michigan University.

Business and individual sponsors are to join in making the 2012 Luncheon another success. Please contact the Foundation at 586.797.6953 or www.ucsfoundation.org to reserve your table on May 2 or May 3 and share your career and college expertise with today’s children – tomorrow’s leaders.

UCS 2012 Graduating Seniors: You're invited to apply for a Superintendent's Academic or Career & Technology Education Scholarship – find out more at <http://reachinghigher.uticak12.org/scholarship.asp>. Applications close March 2.



Arts & Idols supports the UCS college culture

The fourth annual Arts & Idols Scholarship Gala will take place on Thursday, May 31 at the Palazzo Grande, 54660 Van Dyke in Shelby Township.

The “Idols” portion of the evening will showcase amateur singing talents in a prize competition. The “Arts” are student works of art auctioned during the program.

Gala proceeds fund the Superintendent’s Scholarship program, with more than \$60,000 raised to date. Last year, 17 deserving UCS graduating seniors received tuition awards.

Tickets to the Gala, which includes dinner, and entertainment, a scholarship raffle and an art auction are available by calling 586.797.6953 or online at www.ucsfoundation.org.

Points of pride

Jordan Mevorach, Grant Ogden, William Qing

Semifinalists:

- Eisenhower – *Sanders Aspelund, Jeffrey Carr*
- Stevenson – *John Beauvais, Brigit Edwards, Eric Riedel*
- Utica – *Connie Gao, David Smellie*
- UAIS – *Joshua Barthel*

ADVANCED PLACEMENT SCHOLARS

Of the more than 1.8 million students across the globe who took Advanced Placement exams last year, only 18 percent qualified for special recognition in three categories:

- **AP Scholar** – attained scores of 3 or higher on three or more exams –

Eisenhower HS:

Sabrina Barretta, Jose Beas, Alen Eid, Monique Fiscelli, Omuwa Kerobo, Christine Klingert, Brendan Muster, Elliott Pearson, Steven Quell, Jamie Schornack, Joshua Scott, Alex Zettler

Henry Ford II HS:

Nathan Baxter, Jack Dischler, Amanda Hallquist, Afifah Latif, Alexander Luksch, Martin Magda, Matthew Maranzano, Andrew McMullen, Brandon Mikula, Sara Neal, Jennifer Turner, Ajna Uzuni, Nicole Zabik

Stevenson HS:

Mirna Awrow, Dominic Cadez, Cody Ciaramitaro, Lauren Cocco, Naomi Hwang, Austin Kirk, Stephen Nagy, Jacob Podgorski, Bryan Purakal, Marisa Riddle, Adam Romanko, Mario Yousif

Utica HS:

Matthew Berlin, Shawna Boyd, Austin Claeyes, Kasee Diaz, Jessica McNeil, Alex Susalla, Daniel VanCamp

Points of pride

- **AP Scholar with Honor** – average score of at least 3.25 on all AP exams taken and scores of 3 or higher on four or more

Eisenhower:

Sanders Aspelund, Ryan Brunk, Brian Burton, Jeffrey Carr, Rutvik Gandhi, Tyler Gierc, Mitchell Jamieson, Emma Liburdi, Andrew Martz, Phillip Peabody, Andreea Temelie, Allyson Wright

Ford II:

Jonathan Coldicott, Caitlin Duffy, Kevin Duffy, Melissa Gatto, Brandon Gevaert, Sydney Glide, Melissa Hunter, Martin McAvoy, Thomas Studzinski

Stevenson:

Navjot Batra, Emily Moran, Eric Riedel, Donovan Whitehead

Utica:

Kristen Berg, Emily Briggs, Devpreet Chahal, Connie Gao, Kyle Klein, Jessica Polisena, Brandon VanSickle

- **AP Scholar with Distinction** –

average score of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken and scores of 3 or higher on five or more

Eisenhower:

Bryan Arment

Ford II:

Haroon Ahmed, Akshdeep Dhaliwal, Justin Harris, Elaina Michewicz, Ariana Mirian, Joseph Neary, Jason Pevit, Blaze Travis, Katelyn Vedolich

Stevenson:

John Beauvais, Alison Brousseau, Curtis Hill

Utica:

Pedro Espinosa, Nicholas Simopoulos, David Smellie

Robotics rule!

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“Food Factor,” this year’s challenge had students explore food safety and possible points of contamination – from exposure to insects and other pests to unsterile processing and transport to unsanitary preparation and storage – and find ways to prevent or combat these dangers.

The tournament included a technology challenge where the student teams built an autonomous Lego robot vehicle that can negotiate a themed course. Students were also awarded points in team-work challenges requiring them to identify a problem, complete extensive research, develop an innovative solution and explain their findings to a panel of judges.

Congratulations to our regional and state winners:

Bemis Junior High – Regional: ThunderQuest Champion, Tournament Grand Winner and Highest Scoring Robot
State: Winner/Robot Performance, Winner/Project Presentation

Beck Elementary and Shelby Junior High – Regional: First Place/Innovation and Strategy
State: Second Place/Project Innovative Solution



That’s teamwork! Malow JHS student Brianna Vono with Roberts Elementary students Matt Wisniewski and Marc Socha

Jack Harvey Elementary – Regional: First Place/Innovative Solution

Crissman Elementary #1 – Regional: Second Place/Innovation and Strategy

Crissman Elementary #2 – Regional: First Place/Programming, ThunderQuest Playoff Finalist
State: Winner/Project Innovative Solution

Roberts Elementary, Malow and Eppler Junior Highs and Powell Middle School – Regional: Second Place/Presentation
State: Finalist/Project Innovative Solution

Schuchard Elementary – Regional: Second Place/Programming

Dresden Elementary – Regional: Second Place/Mechanical Design
State: Finalist/Project Innovative Solution

UCS College Fair

Tuesday, April 17
6:30-8:00 p.m.
Henry Ford II High School
11911 Clinton River Road
Sterling Heights, 48313



Utica Community Schools will hold its annual College Fair on April 17 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Ford II High School. Everyone is welcome.

It’s a great opportunity for all UCS students and parents to speak with representatives from several colleges and universities all in one place. Find out about programs of study, admission requirements, financial aid and more.

From the Superintendent... *continued from page 1*

Extensive research and study have shown that full-day kindergarten is what’s best for children in terms of long range benefits. We have seen this in our own district when we began offering a full day in a handful of kindergarten classrooms nearly 10 years ago, and continued to expand these opportunities to its current level at 13 of our schools.

Implementation of full day is also in response to the UCS community, which solidly values education and has become increasingly interested in this educational option for its children. Now we will be able to accommodate every family.

In addition to parent interest, the change was made to better prepare this group of kindergarten students – the class of 2025 – and all those to follow for successful full immersion in the rigorous new K-12 Core Content State Standards adopted by the Michigan Department of Education.

The core standards set very specific new learning goals for all Michigan students aimed at ensuring they are career and college-ready by the time they graduate from our high schools.

The Michigan Legislature’s stated goal in its reforms is to move our education system from producing workers for manufacturing-based jobs to preparing problem-solvers who can compete for high tech careers in a global economy.

A change in school aid by state lawmakers requiring districts to provide an all day program to receive the full student funding furthered spurred our decision.

Utica Community Schools has always worked to give students every advantage to increase their academic achievement at all grade levels. Full day kindergarten is another welcome addition to a portfolio of proven learning options we

have long embraced. Five years ago, our Board of Education adopted the UCS Reaching Higher Indicators of Excellence, a district-wide initiative to advance a college culture where all students aspire, prepare and achieve.

We follow the Indicators as our guide in preparing all students for Michigan’s graduation requirements in higher-level mathematics and science, English and foreign language, as well as achievement on the Michigan Merit Exam/ACT – one predictor for admission and success in post-secondary education.

Starting in seventh grade, UCS students begin a sequence of strategic assessments leading up to the ACT. In seventh and eighth grades, students take the Explore assessment that guides us in preparing them for high school coursework and begins their college and career paths. Explore is followed by the PLAN assessment in ninth grade, which continues to aid in course planning for secondary and post-secondary opportunities.

But test results are just part of the many indicators of academic growth we look at in order to provide programs that continue to meet learning needs and interests as varied and unique as the 29,000 students who enter our doors in kindergarten and every grade after that.

These 29,000 unique reasons are why Utica Community Schools continues to expand its portfolio of learning options.

On a recent evening, the 800-plus students and parents in attendance at the district’s fifth annual Academic Blitz learned more about these options.

They heard about our specialized secondary programs such as the Utica Center for Science and Industry, Utica Academy

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From the Superintendent... *continued from page 3*

for International Studies and the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Industry.

They learned we offer 26 Advanced Placement courses, as well as a Mandarin language partial immersion curriculum beginning in kindergarten.

They heard about advanced classes beginning in sixth grade, post-secondary options for students with disabilities, tutoring assistance, early college enrollment and much more.

They listened to representatives from a major state university and our local community college.

But most importantly, they learned that solid preparation for educational success all starts here in UCS – especially now in the full-day kindergarten classrooms of our exemplary schools.

To all future UCS kindergarten students and their parents: Welcome to the portfolio of world-class academic choices that all start in your own elementary school!

AVID learners

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Specially-trained UCS teachers conduct the program, aided by student facilitators from Oakland University.

Jeannette principal Dr. Robyne Thompson, the district's AVID coordinator, said the program targets students who are academically "in the middle," with enrollment based on MEAP scores and teacher recommendation. Students must agree to work hard. Parents are kept involved through regular meetings and communication.

Jodi Ruiz, Jeannette Spanish teacher who also teaches the AVID class, said the focus is on setting goals and following through.

The students are learning organizational and critical thinking skills along with the Cornell method of note-taking, how to prepare assignments and how to study.

Dr. Thompson explained that the strategies students learn in AVID translate into their other classes.

Depending on grade-level, the students must be taking at least one advanced, honors or Advanced Placement course.

Peer presentation, deep inquiry, peer reinforcement and the Socratic method are used extensively in class.

Facilitator Kaitlin King, an Oakland University senior majoring in mathematics, enjoys her role in mentoring students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Sixty students are enrolled this first year and many have success stories to tell.

Seventh grader Katelyn Jaboro admitted to struggling in fifth and sixth grades because she was unprepared for class. "But when I started getting organized this year, I started getting As and Bs."

She hopes to go to Michigan State and added that her mother encouraged her to continue in the program next year in eighth grade.

Parents, wherever you see your child's future...



Future Doctor

Future Journalist

Future Scientist

Future President

Future Teacher

...it all starts here in UCS!

UCS Kindergarten Open House

at all 25 district elementary schools

7 p.m. – Wednesday, February 15

Register your child for Fall 2012

Meet the staff • Learn about our award-winning programs

For more information and a registration packet, go to www.uticak12.org and click on "It All Starts Here" icon

Macomb County residents, make UCS your Schools of Choice!

You are invited to learn about Schools of Choice opportunities in Utica Community Schools

at a Special Open House for non-UCS resident families

7 p.m. • Wednesday, March 14 held at Stevenson High School

39701 Dodge Park, Sterling Heights 48313

Meet UCS staff and learn about our award winning programs.

Schools of Choice enrollment applications are available at www.uticak12.org

District Calendar 2011-2012

January 31 – February 10

Elementary conference window

February 20 – 24

No school – Mid-winter break

February 28 – March 9

Secondary conference window

March 6 – 8

ACT/MME testing – grade 11

March 30

Third marking period ends

April 2 – 9

No school – Spring break

April 10

Classes resume

May 25

No school

May 28

No school – Memorial Day

June 12

Secondary half day – records

June 13

Secondary half day – records

June 14

Last day for students
Half day for all

Notice of Nondiscrimination

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act, it is the policy of Utica Community Schools that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, age, disability, height, weight, or marital status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination during any instructional opportunities, programs, services, job placement assistance, employment or in policies governing student conduct and attendance. Any person suspecting a discriminatory practice should contact the Executive Director of Human Resources at Utica Community Schools, 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.



586.797.1000

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