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

July 27, 2020

Dear UCS Community:

With the start of school rapidly approaching, the teachers and staff members of Utica Community Schools have been busy preparing for the coming school year. Teams from around the district are working tirelessly to develop plans and procedures to support the unique needs that come with a COVID-19 environment.

Each of our teams are creating pathways under the phases of the MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap that all lead to student success. The **first pathway** provides students with face-to-face instruction with their scheduled classroom teacher(s), which may transition to remote learning with that same teacher(s) and classmates. The **second pathway** provides both medically fragile students and families hesitant to engage in face-to-face instruction the opportunity to enroll exclusively in the UCS Virtual Academy. This Academy has instructional content that runs parallel with face-to-face/remote instruction and will also be provided by highly-qualified UCS teachers. In each case, while the educational process may look different and even change part way through the year, every student will experience educational excellence.

We have heard much about the heroes working in health care today, but I also want to celebrate and express appreciation to all of our teachers and staff members for their passionate commitment to create a learning process that engages and encourages every student. In today's changing world, this is not an easy task. These individuals – teachers, administrators, support staff – are committed to establishing both a vibrant and safe academic environment.

Dedicated teams have been working since June to consider how instruction can be provided and improved. From face-to-face engagement (with the ability to transition to remote learning) to the UCS Virtual Academy, every student will have a dedicated UCS teacher and device. But, make no mistake, the technology does not substitute for the relationships between our teachers and students; our UCS educators know the importance and power of building positive connections with students to engage and empower them in meaningful ways.

In addition to the academic planning, teams are working intentionally at providing quality support services, such as transportation and food service, in a safe manner.

This **Wednesday, July 29**, our Board of Education will be holding a virtual special meeting/study session to consider the plan created by our UCS teams, which utilizes the MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap as a guide. The agenda for the 6:00 p.m. Board of Education meeting is available at this [link](#).

Utica Community Schools Board of Education

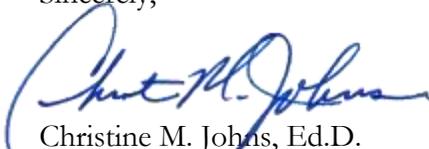
Robert A. Ross, Ph.D., *President* Mary K. Thomas, Ph.D., *Vice President* Michele Templeton, *Treasurer* Denyeal Nesovski, *Secretary*
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The Board will consider approval of the plan at its August 10 regular meeting. The Board approved plan will be submitted August 15 to the Macomb Intermediate School District and forwarded to the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Department of Treasury. The plan provides each family options and health and safety measures that will be in place for each of the state-designated COVID-19 phases.

While uncertainty remains a difficult part of our world and the pandemic landscape evolves rapidly, we will continue to communicate regular updates even as plans are in the process of becoming finalized. Our community can expect an important update with detailed information of our plan next week. Many of you have expressed appreciation for the regular communication; thank you for your words of support and for your patience. This is a challenging time.

Finally, as you encounter our teachers and staff members, please join me in expressing gratitude for their hard work in preparing for the coming year. As educators, we are excited about welcoming back our students and once again opening the doors of curiosity, learning, and opportunity for every student in our schools, whether we are face-to-face or remote. Thank you for your continued partnership with UCS.

Sincerely,



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