



UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FOCUS FOR THE COMMUNITY

WINTER 2024

A PUBLICATION FOR THE RESIDENTS OF UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



From the Superintendent...

Robert S. Monroe

Our 2024 resolution:

Honor our past as we embrace future change

This is always a time of year for new resolutions.

For Utica Community Schools, our New Year's resolution centers on how we will continue to embrace significant changes that will position our students for future success.

More than any other community, Utica Community Schools residents are proud of their legacy and how they built their schools into a national standard of excellence.

Parents and staff are proud of their Utica Community Schools roots. You can find graduates who returned to the community to build families, alumni who join our staff to give back to the community that raised them, and generations of families and volunteers who remain active in our district. They want to be part of the same strong sense of community that is at the center of their success.

Our Board of Education and our leadership teams respect, understand and are proud to be part of this environment.

It is why even as we look forward to significant changes, we will never forget the heart of what we are - exemplary teaching and learning; the positive relationships that are formed every day in our schools; the pride, care and concern that are at the center of our collaborative work; and the environment that is created by a community that is always working towards something greater.

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A Culture of Caring in Utica Community Schools

It is not always easy to be the new kid on the block. For JD Schroeder, their transition to a new school has been made easier thanks to a culture where students have a sense of belonging.

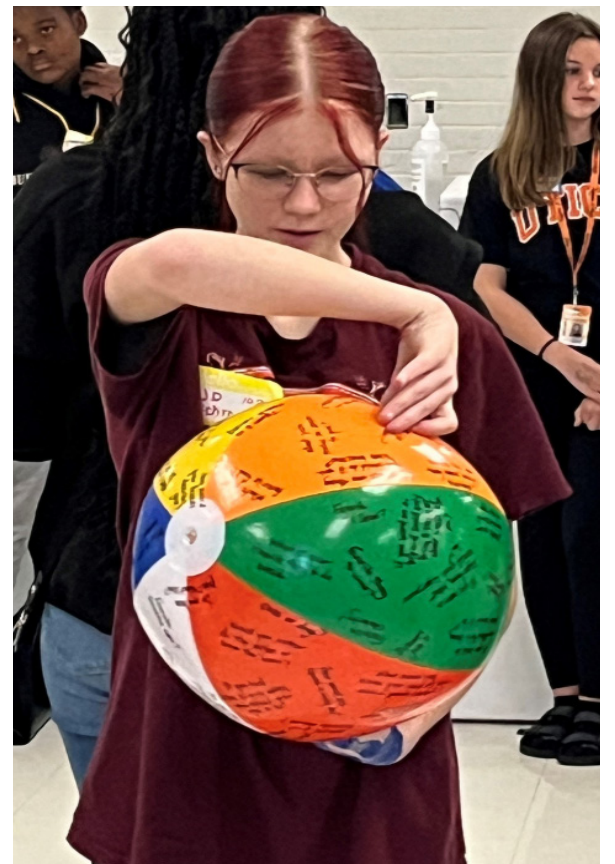
"I was worried about finding new friends, but I have made quite a few new ones," said the 9th grader, who had transferred this year from an Oakland County district. "I really like Eppler – how organized the school is and how the teachers treat the kids."

Schroeder was recently among 32 students who took part in the "New Student Mixer" event Eppler counselors put together for students new to both their school and Utica Community Schools. Counselors were able to see how the year was starting for them in a low-stress environment that featured cider, donuts, and ice breakers.

The new student activity is one example of a series of districtwide activities focused on student, staff and family mental health.

Rooted in the Utica Community Schools strategic plan, the Culture of Caring ensures a sense of belonging and inclusion for students to foster engagement in a safe and respectful community. The culture creates an environment that fosters connectedness, inclusivity, creativity, and well-being.

Through this culture, our district has created an extensive network of services and preventative



9th grader Jozlynn (JD) Schroeder takes part in an outreach to students that were new to Eppler Junior High School and Utica Community Schools. The activity is part of a larger effort focused on creating a sense of belonging and inclusion for students to foster engagement in a safe and respectful community.

wellness tools to create a sense of belonging and foster engagement of our school family in a safe and respectful community.

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Explore all UCS has to offer at Pathways to Success event

uticaK12.org/pathways

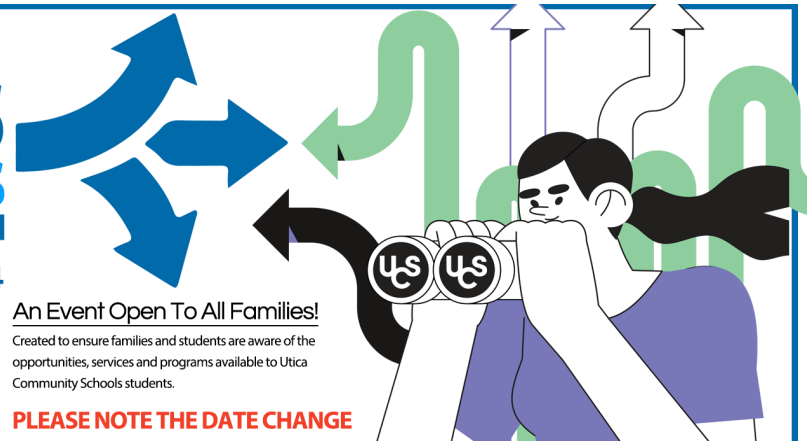
PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS
PERSONALIZE YOUR JOURNEY FORWARD

THURSDAY, JAN 18, 2024

FROM 6:00-8:30PM

AT HENRY FORD II HIGH SCHOOL

11911 CLINTON RIVER RD.
STERLING HEIGHTS, MI 48313



An Event Open To All Families!

Created to ensure families and students are aware of the opportunities, services and programs available to Utica Community Schools students.

PLEASE NOTE THE DATE CHANGE

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Junior high school attendance areas readjusted, Heritage students reassigned to neighboring schools

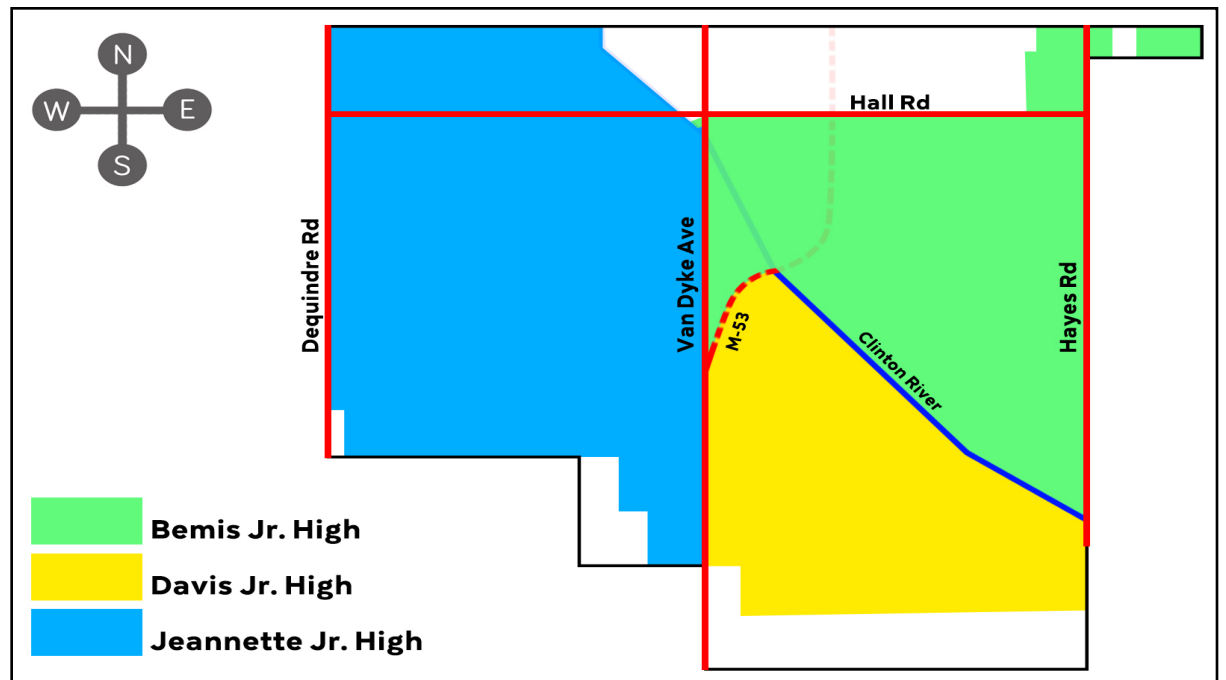
Facilities review increases student opportunities, improves building effectiveness

Since early spring, Utica Community Schools has been involved in a long-range study on the future use of Heritage Junior High School/Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies.

The process also involved a review of junior high school attendance patterns in the area to address subdivisions that are geographically separated from the neighboring communities or the distances families travel to attend their assigned school.

The result of this long-range study is an adjusted junior high school attendance area that reassigns Heritage Junior High students to neighboring schools, beginning in the 2024-25 school year.

This change will ensure that current Heritage Junior High School students have access to the same opportunities available to students in schools with greater enrollment. The Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International



Studies will remain in the facility.

The revised attendance areas will follow the major geographical boundaries of Van Dyke and the Clinton River to embrace our neighborhood schools. This also addresses the issue of some families having significantly larger distances that their child must travel to reach their school.

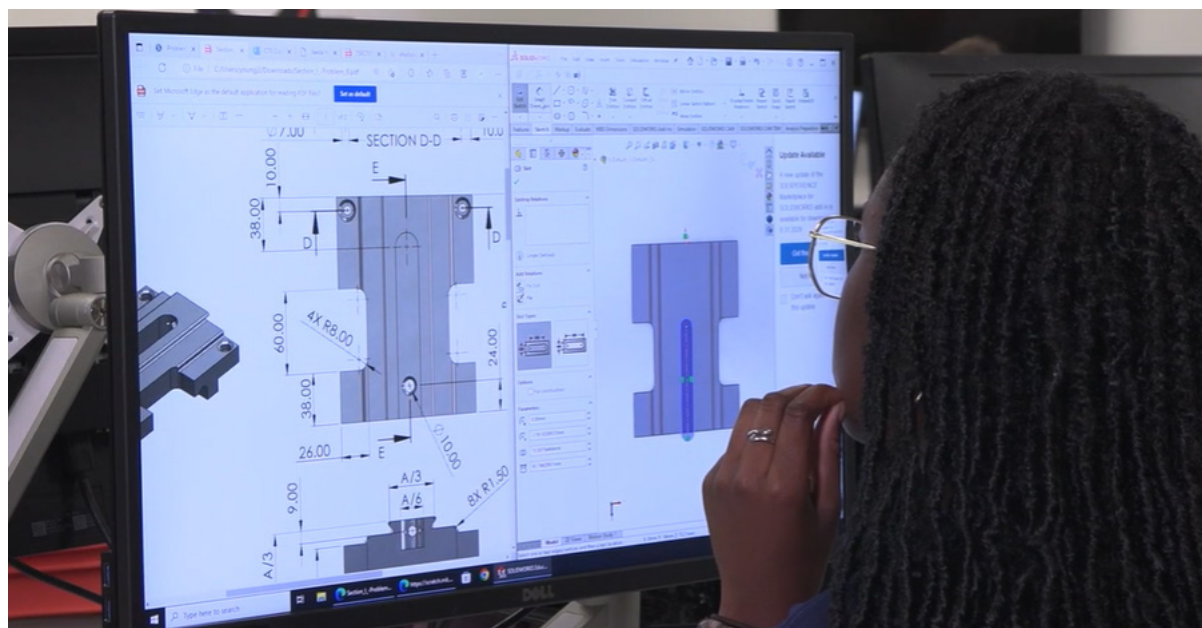
The facility study was based on input from a citizens committee, the Enrollment Distribution Advisory Committee. The study was also based on building needs assessments from our Auxiliary Services Department, and student access to programs and experiences.

In the long-term, these modifications will increase opportunities for students while using resources and facilities more effectively.

At UCS, the priority remains providing our students with safe, secure and educationally vibrant schools. We want every student to have opportunities to grow, develop and ultimately pursue their educational passion.

More information is available at www.uticak12.org/buildingforthefuture.

Video series explores Career and Technical Education opportunities



Now there is a new way to explore the multiple Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities available to Utica Community Schools students.

A series of informational videos have been produced that explore the pathways students can explore through CTE.

The UCS CTE courses are designed to position students for college and career success by providing them skills for high paying jobs right in our back yard. The department works closely with industry professionals to ensure UCS students can meet current needs and have front-door access to rewarding careers.

You can find out more at www.uticak12.org/ucscte.

Rick Bye Fieldhouse honors 42 years of service

Nearly four decades ago, Rick Bye envisioned a facility for Stevenson student athletes that represented school pride and a commitment to excellence of Stevenson High School.

Now that vision will carry his name.

The Utica Community Schools Board of Education approved the naming of the Stevenson Fieldhouse after a committee of staff, parents and alumni recommended the honor.

“None of this would have been possible without my coaches and those who supported us. We wanted to encourage all athletes to be the best they could be,” Bye said at the dedication ceremony on December 19. “I am so proud to have my name attached to this facility.”

Stevenson principal Kenneth Cucchi said Mr. Bye’s legacy and presence are integral to the school community.

“I cannot think of a better way to acknowledge



Pictured left to right: Board of Education Trustee - Dr. Steven R. Meyer, Board of Education Treasurer - Michele Templeton, Rick Bye, Board of Education Trustee - Kimberly Becker, Superintendent of Schools - Robert S. Monroe.

the work of Coach Bye than having this fieldhouse in his honor,” Stevenson principal Kenneth Cucchi said.

“This is a place where students and athletes come together as Titans and that was what

Coach Bye was all about.”

The naming comes as Stevenson High School works to upgrade the facility with natural lighting, improved practice areas and branding that celebrates the school’s proud history.

Our New Year’s resolution

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The needed changes our district faces are centered on our vision of empowering our students to positively change their futures and the world.

One visible area of this need is related to facilities. As referenced in this newsletter, we have begun this process by addressing the future use of the Heritage Junior High School/Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies shared facility.

Throughout the next few years, we will closely study how we use facilities to ensure we are increasing opportunities for students while using resources and school buildings more effectively. This change will come as we make significant renovations to our facilities and the construction of two new elementary schools with the help of our 2023 Safety and Success Bond.

As we move forward, it is clear that we may look different, but the essence of our district will never change – the honor and pride we feel as part of something special that has been generations in the making, Utica Community Schools.

Points of Pride



Riva Hannish, from Messmore Elementary, was honored for excellence in education by the Michigan Lottery. Pictured with her is Liliana Martinez-Monteleone, Francesca Weber, Nolan Griffin, Audriana Kizy (her nominator) and Isaiah Kachouh.

UCS students paint the plow



Lehrer and Utica Community Schools to paint one of the department’s snowplows ahead of the winter season. The winning design was submitted by 6th grader Peyton Wassenaar.

This year, MCDR partnered with Collins Elementary School art teacher Jennifer

UCS bands are superior

All four Utica Community Schools bands took top honors at a recent regional competition.

Eisenhower, Henry Ford, Utica, and Stevenson bands received the top Division 1 ratings from judges at the annual Michigan School Band & Orchestra Association (MSBOA) District 16 Marching Band Festival.





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UCS promotes a culture of caring

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This focus has included:

- Strategic use of grant funds to support student wellness
- Additional staff members supporting mental

health and wellness, including added social workers and a K-12 Wellness Consultant

- Implementation of a research-based wellness curriculum
- Non-violent crisis intervention training for staff
- A partnership with Care Solace, which helps provide students, families and staff access to professional resources for needs that exceed the scope of school-based services

Many of the resources available to families and students are available on the district's website: www.uticak12.org/ucs_wellness.

The focus is on the relationships that allow children and adults to thrive. When we work together, there is a sense of belonging in school with a place they can go in times of stress or discomfort. For everyone, this is an issue that eliminates inhibitors to student success but also is critical to a safe learning environment.

Translation Assistance

Persons seeking or needing language assistance, please contact:

- For Albanian: (586) 797-6946
- For Arabic: (586) 797-6906
- For Spanish: (586) 797-6986

Personat që kërkojnë ose kanë nevojë për ndihmë gjuhësore, janë të lutur të kontaktojnë administratorin e qendrës:

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الأشخاص الذين يبحثون أو يحتاجون إلى مساعدة لغوية، يرجى الاتصال ب:

- اللغة الألبانية: (586) 797-6946
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Personas buscando o que necesiten ayuda con el idioma, por favor póngase en contacto con:

- Para albanés: (586) 797-6946
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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 Utica Community Schools Human Resources at 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.



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WWW.UTICAK12.ORG

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Community**

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Jennifer Kane