It takes a whole community to build a strong reader

The entire UCS community is on the same page when it comes to an important fact - reading is an essential life skill.

At any given hour in UCS classrooms across the district, teachers, senior citizens, parent volunteers and community members are working with students to engage them in developing reading skills. Advancing a student’s reading skills immediately opens a new world of engagement.

As the district continues to focus on the importance of reading as fundamental to student success, literacy coaches/consultants were reintroduced at elementary schools this year.

However, the need remains to build stronger readers through additional professional support resources.

Reading specialists, who work directly with students, would provide the opportunity to personalize learning needs and fast track students for long-term success.

UCS promotes a reading program for students in five key areas: phonemic awareness, vocabulary, phonics, fluency and comprehension. Students have experiences utilizing print and digital material.

The goal is not only to ensure all students are reading at grade level by third grade - which is Michigan law - but to build and keep a strong foundation through positive forms of expression, aids in reducing isolation, and fosters academic success.

With the increase of food allergies and students with critical health issues such as diabetes, seizures and asthma, schools require increased resources to manage day-to-day childhood health concerns.

To serve its 27,000 students, the district needs more than one nurse.

The need for counselors, social workers and health professionals is apparent. School social workers, counselors and nurses provide a specialized approach with students and offer additional support to teachers so they can focus on teaching while students receive needed mental, emotional and health resources.
Points of Pride

UCS theatre students earn $3 million in scholarship offers and 84 awards at state festival

Students earned more than $3 million in scholarship offers and 84 top awards at the 2019 Michigan Thespian Festival. In addition, a Henry Ford II High School senior earned a top award as the state's best representative of the spirit of high school theatre.

More than 120 theatre students from Eisenhower, Henry Ford II, Stevenson and Utica high schools attended the annual festival in Detroit, held December 13-14. Approximately 1,600 students from across Michigan had the opportunity to attend professional workshops, meet with college representatives, view performances and compete in events that were judged by college and industry professionals.

UCS students who auditioned for college programs received a combined total of approximately $3,057,580 in scholarship offers. Students from all four high schools collectively earned 27 Superior awards and 57 Excellent ratings.

UCS students earn top honors at Scholastic Arts competition

Nearly 200 top honors were awarded to Utica Community Schools students through the annual Scholastic Arts competition, including two of the top five awards in the program, a Best of Show honor and an additional 13 students earning the highest levels for their entire portfolios.

The competition, a program that honors student-produced art, is a regional competition featuring high schools in the Michigan Thumb region.

The regional Macomb, St. Clair and Lapeer program received more than 2,600 works of art. Professional artists, with the assistance of volunteer art teachers, selected pieces for Certificates, Silver and Gold Key Awards, American Vision nominations and Best of Show Portfolios.

The American Vision Award winners are chosen as the “Best of Show” from all the artwork entered in this year’s Michigan Thumb Regional competition. Of the five American Visions awards from the entire Thumb area, Samantha Caballero from Eisenhower High School, earned two of the top honors. Caballero was honored for her digital art portfolio “Animal” and for her painting portfolio “Looking up and Arbitrarily.” Caballero will represent the region on the national level as an American Vision nominee.

Judges also awarded approximately 170 gold, silver, bronze and honorable mention honors for individual entries. In addition, the following students earned awards for their portfolios:

• Bryanna Ankawi, “Look on the Bright Side” – Eisenhower High School – Gold Key
• Michael Sheaves, “Emotion” – Utica High School – Gold Key and Best of Show Portfolio
• Emma Buck, “Facing Problems” – Henry Ford II High School – Silver Key
• Hailey Morin, “Debilitating Mental Ability” – Henry Ford II High School – Silver Key
• Grace Alaska, “Passing on the Pollution” – Henry Ford II High School – Honorable Mention
• Amber Brunett, “Locked Away Memories” – Henry Ford II High School – Honorable Mention

Partnership promotes increased learning through healthy habits

Through a unique partnership, three UCS schools are sending students a clear message about how eating right and exercise can improve their learning. It is a message that is being received loud and clear.

“It’s very, very important to get more exercise – 60 minutes every day,” said Plumbrook Elementary second grade student Abagail Bowden, a member of the new after-school exercise club.

“It helps us stay healthy.”

L to r: Plumbrook Elementary first graders Mirna Mushi, Mary Mushi, Sydney Beckett, Abigail Bowden, Molly Bowden, Mia Gale & Claire McLeod

Plumbrook, Havel and Roberts elementaries were selected by Blue Cross Blue Shield to participate in the Building Healthy Communities initiative.

The Step Up to Wellness program promotes healthy habits in ways that have tied greater social and emotional support to academic achievement. The goals are simple:

• Educate students through classroom lessons
• Encourage students to apply new insight and skills outside the classroom
• Provide increased opportunities for physical activity
• Improve access to healthy food and beverages
• Create an environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice

The program has been implemented in more than 260 Michigan elementary schools over the past nine years.

UCS District Calendar 2019-2020

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 17</td>
<td>Mid-Winter Break Begins</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No School</td>
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<td>February 24</td>
<td>Classes Resume</td>
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<td>May 22</td>
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<td>Professional Development Day</td>
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<td>No School</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Professional Development Day</td>
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<td>No School</td>
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<td>April 3</td>
<td>Elementary Half Day</td>
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<td>June 10</td>
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<td>Secondary Exams</td>
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<td>Secondary Half Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 6</td>
<td>Spring Break Begins</td>
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<td>June 11</td>
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<td>Secondary Exams</td>
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<td>All Students Half Day</td>
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<td>April 13</td>
<td>Classes Resume</td>
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<td>June 12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Last Day for K-12 Students*</td>
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<td>Secondary Exams</td>
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<td>All Students Half Day</td>
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</tbody>
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*Tentative and subject to change due to collective bargaining and/or snow days

All 8th Grade Students

SPECIALTY PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

NOW OPEN

APPLICATION DEADLINE

FEBRUARY 14, 2020 AT 11:59 PM

www.uticak12.org/specialtyprograms2020
Utica Community Schools is joining area communities in helping to share information about the importance of participating in the 2020 Census.

Participating in the census survey will have a positive impact on the resources that the communities receive from the federal government, and local programs for students is no exception.

The census data is used to determine federal funding levels by determining the number of residents and the needs of the community.

The census also provides funding to address key community needs for road improvements, housing, block grants and student college loans. Census materials are scheduled to be mailed in mid-March with information on how to complete the questionnaire online, by phone or mail. More information is available at census.gov.
Excellence benefits everyone

Dr. Sarah Wilson is a local veterinarian who graduated from Eisenhower High School. As one of the first graduates of the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology, she developed a passion for science. Her time at Michigan State University was made easier due to the challenging academic rigor during her high school years. In addition, the bonus was that she had college credit before she ever set foot in East Lansing. Dr. Wilson is an outstanding local business leader, supporting the local economy and serving the community with her UCS values of compassion, dedication to excellence and strong work ethic.

Reading

The district continues to be recognized for its fiscal leadership through its annual audit. For the 16th straight year, independent auditors awarded the district its highest level of assurance of strong financial controls and policies.

UCS has also been recognized for meeting national standards for transparency in reporting financial information for the past seven years. The district is among approximately 500 nationally to earn a Certificate of Excellence (COE) in Financial Reporting award for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) from the Association of School Business Officials International.

Excellence benefits everyone

Four experienced UCS Board of Education members were unanimously re-elected to officer positions at an organizational meeting on January 13.

The Board voted 7-0 to re-elect Dr. Robert Ross as president, Dr. Mary Thomas as vice president, Michele Templeton as treasurer and Denyeal Nesovski as secretary. Trustees for 2020 are Jennifer Prybys, Kimberly Becker and Kelli Rankin. This is the second straight year the Board will maintain its current officers.

“Our Board of Education provides the stable leadership that allows our staff, students and families to focus on teaching and learning,” Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns said. “Their commitment allows UCS to remain a destination district that meets the high standards of our community.”

Over the past year, the Board’s leadership has guided the implementation of the first phase of a five-year facility improvement program set into motion when voters approved a $155 million bond issue. The projects—which include student safety, technology and the district’s long-range infrastructure improvement program—remain on schedule and within budget.

UCS Board of Education maintains stable leadership with re-election of officers

Dr. Ross called the selection of officers a “sacred, important responsibility” of the Board of Education. “Working together, our seven Board of Education members are committed to the success of every student in Michigan’s second-largest school district,” Dr. Ross said. “We take seriously the responsible stewardship of taxpayers’ funds and the effective use of resources to achieve our educational mission.”