Supporting student needs through leadership and service

Across our community parents, staff and students are working together to create meaningful connections and continue learning in Michigan’s second largest school district, even as the world addresses a pandemic.

“A Sense of Normalcy and Structure”

For parent Lisa Watson, school continues for her children.

“Throughout this time of at-home schooling, connecting to our Flickinger community has been so important for the kids to maintain relationships and thrive with continued learning through interactions with teachers and classmates,” Watson said.

She said her children’s teachers and school staff have used creative means to provide lessons to her children and establish a learning routine.

“These (lessons) help my kids to cope and feel some sense of structure and normalcy,” Watson said.

She said her family has further bonded by being together, and they are taking part in a “Rainbows Over Michigan” project by painting stained glass art on their home to brighten the day of others in her neighborhood.

“We have witnessed such a movement of togetherness and kindness throughout the community that even words can’t explain the joy it has brought our family,” Watson said.

“What We Do Is Important”

For UCS staff, meeting student needs has always been a priority. Recently, this is even more apparent and important. The $22.1 million agreement runs through June 30, 2022. The contract includes a 1 to 1.5 percent increase in the salary schedule and step advancements for eligible members over the duration of this contract.

“The agreement reflects our shared commitment to provide academic excellence for all students,” said Dr. Christine Johns, Superintendent of Schools. “While face-to-face instruction has been suspended in Michigan, learning has continued and will not stop within Utica Community Schools.”

Going forward, the UCS and UEA remain committed to serving the families of Michigan’s second largest school district. While the educational process continues to change and be transformed by safety concerns, all sides remain focused on helping every student succeed.

“Throughout this extraordinary time, our entire UCS team has continued to embody a culture of leadership and service.”

UCS and UEA Reach Shared Agreement

In the face of a global pandemic that has changed the way schools operate and engage with the families of our community, the teachers, staff members, and leadership of Utica Community Schools have responded with a strong positive shared direction. Recently, that positive shared direction continues as an agreement has been reached between the Utica Community Schools (UCS) and the Utica Education Association (UEA).

“This agreement allows the educators at UCS to focus their efforts on what is critically important during this difficult time,” said Dr. Robert Ross, president of the UCS Board of Education. “We remain committed to educating our students and ensuring that our graduates leave our district prepared to make a difference both locally and globally.”

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By The Numbers

2,258 Students Graduated

216 Academics Students

241 Seal of Global Language Candidates

30 + Million Dollars in Scholarships Awarded

2020 Superintendents Scholarship Recipients

Over the past 12 years, the UCS Superintendents Scholarships have been awarded to graduating seniors. The awards were given to 32 seniors this year for post-secondary support. They are generously funded by the UCS Foundation for Educational Excellence, a non-profit organization, as well as the Jim and Helen Scholarship Fund and the Hira Scholarship Fund.

AVID Scholars

The AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program prepares students for college and careers. AVID is opening doors for UCS graduates by challenging them to reach their full potential.

CTE Career Development Students of the Year

Two Utica Community School seniors have been honored as students of the year by the Macomb County Career Technical Educators Association.

Macomb County All Academic Team

Each year, 20 students are selected as a "Dream Team" for Macomb County. This year, 12 members of the Dream Team were from UCS.
Leadership
Service and potential,” she said. “We are all doing our best to maintain meaningful relationships with students, parents and fellow teachers to help the students who need additional assistance, either academically or emotionally,” she said. “So when the mandated school closure was issued my first question was, “How am I going to do my job effectively?”

The answer is a blend of on-line resources that provide students and families lessons, routine and a connection. She has even created a Microsoft Teams group for her students. Duncan teacher Susan Meadows uses every tool in her toolbox to ensure learning - phone calls, messages through Schoology and email, weekly class Zoom meetings, individual conferences on Schoology, and even porch drop off of learning materials.

“We are all doing our best to maintain a routine to ensure each child feels safe and cared for so they are motivated to continuously improve and fulfill their potential,” she said.

Points of Pride
High schools among nation’s best
All four Utica Community Schools comprehensive high schools once again have been named among the best in the country.

Henri Ford II, Eisenhower, Stevenson and Utica high schools were among the 2020 Best High Schools as ranked by U.S. News and World Report. Graduation rates and college readiness, both key factors for the path to a higher education, are among the many metrics used to rank high schools.

Student journalists recognized
UCS student journalists have earned state and national honors for their commitment to excellence.

Two Utica Community Schools seniors were also recently named among the state's top student journalists.

Henry Ford II High School senior Theresa De Benedetti and Utica High School senior Haley Grooms were selected to the 2020 State Journalism staff by the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association (MIPA).

The Eisenhower High School staff earned a Silver Crown award in Columbia Scholastic Press Association’s Crown awards for their print news and website, ikernews.com. Eisenhower was one of 56 high school hybrid publications in the nation to earn this award. The staff also earned tenth place in National Scholastic Press Association’s Best in Show competition for their February print issue; the publication was one of ten in the nation recognized.

Distracted driving video earns national honor
A video commercial about the dangers of distracted driving has earned a senior national recognition and a college scholarship.

JT Simms, who attends Henry Ford II High School and the Utica Center for Science and Industry, received a $2,000 scholarship from the Detroit Auto Dealers Association (DADA) for a short video he created about distracted driving.

The video is available at the following link: https://youtu.be/VrCQ7BG5wp8.

Scholastic Arts honors students
Two students also earned silver medals in the national competition. Jacob Schick, of Utica High School, earned a silver medal for his drawing, “Starring Off.” Savannah Salisbury also earned a Silver award for her photograph, “Curiosity.”

Celebrating the Human Spirit in UCS
Continued from front page
The approximately 2,200 UCS students who are receiving their diploma this year give us confidence to look ahead to a bright future. It is clear from their successes that they will be leaders in science, technology, manufacturing, the military, public service and many more important professions.

Looking to their positive future illustrates how we will get through this time together. There will be a day where learning will take place not through remote keyboards, but through cooperative groups; where learning takes place in classrooms between eager minds and skilled educators, where buses roll again, and halls are alive with the sounds of children.

We will continue to move forward because we believe in each other, our children and the strength of our community. That is the “Human Spirit” of UCS and it will always endure.

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