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

July 1, 2020

Dear UCS Community:

This past spring, our community demonstrated remarkable resilience and ingenuity when faced with the challenges posed by COVID-19. Our families and staff came together to ensure that students continued to receive educational excellence, even as buildings were closed. In addition, teachers, staff, students, and community volunteers engaged the “Meet Up and Eat Up” food distribution program.

This spirit of excellence and perseverance continues as we look forward to welcoming students back to Utica Community Schools on September 1, 2020. UCS teams are actively working on multiple levels so that students can safely travel to school, be a part of face-to-face instruction, a blended model, or a full virtual learning platform and have healthy opportunities for social interaction while maintaining physical distance. ***We will continue to provide educational excellence while ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff.***

Yesterday’s release of the “Return to School Roadmap” by the State of Michigan includes guidelines, requirements and recommendations for consideration. Many of these items were already integrated into our plans and we will be incorporating other items as appropriate and necessary for the new academic year.

While COVID-19 has introduced uncertainty into our lives, three things will not change at Utica Community Schools:

1. We will continue to create a positive learning environment that is focused on providing educational excellence using a personalized approach.
2. We will continue to partner with our families to meet the mental and physical health needs of every child enrolled at Utica Community Schools.
3. Whether your child receives instruction face-to-face, through a blended model, or a full virtual learning platform there will continue to be counselors, teachers, and other staff members to support your child’s academic progress and their social and mental health - we provide a full array of services that most online platforms cannot afford.

We recognize that reopening our schools this year will be unlike any other; however, as Michigan’s second largest school district, we are excited to welcome back nearly 27,000 students. ***There is positive energy that comes with the start of a new school year and your child will discover the joy of learning and the synergy that comes with strong teacher-student relationships even in the midst of this health crisis.***

As we finalize our plans, I will continue to provide you with key updates. Today, I want to share the following important information related to the 2020-2021 school year:

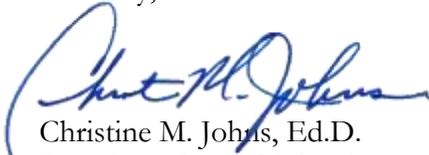
Utica Community Schools Board of Education

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- Utica Community Schools is prepared to open the 2020-2021 academic year with full face-to-face instruction, a blended model of remote and in-person instruction, or a full virtual learning platform.
- We recognize that we have parents who have medically fragile students or are uncomfortable about returning to face-to-face instruction. In our recent community survey, many of our parents expressed interest in a full-time virtual option even if social distancing requirements are in place. **If you are interested in pursuing further information about virtual schooling, contact pupil services at 586-797-1120.**
- Utica Community Schools will be providing laptops to students this fall. We will share more information on grade levels and the distribution process as we move closer to the start of the school year.
- Our schools, including food and transportation services, will support the health and safety of our community with appropriate social distancing guidelines, proper hygiene practices, and the use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).
- Over the past few months, we have deep cleaned all of our schools with EPA-approved disinfectant and implemented additional cleaning protocols.

The opening of school begins a season of endless possibilities for student growth. The 2020-2021 school year is no exception; we will continue to provide these opportunities. We are excited to open our school doors once again for our students and staff, doing what UCS does best, providing exemplary teaching and learning.

Sincerely,



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