Focus on early elementary reading and writing continues

Utica Community Schools is continuing to create a strong foundation in literacy for elementary students. This school year, the district has added literacy consultants at elementary schools to intensify its efforts in building student skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. UCS is focused on ensuring all students are proficient readers by third grade.

“We want our students to develop a life-long love for reading and be effective communicators,” superintendent Dr. Christine Johns said. “The literacy consultants provide professional assistance and will support students in developing important literacy skills.”

Math Matters
Expanding future options for students

UCS elementary student Viktoria Krasnici loves everything about math. “I’ve loved math since I was little,” the Browning Elementary student said. “I can remember sitting on my mom’s counter and just practicing math. As I got older, I realized I was pretty good at it.”

The good news for Viktoria and other elementary students is that the foundation is continuing to get stronger. The district is in its second year implementation of Math Expressions – a comprehensive research-based mathematics program that addresses the rigor of state and national academic standards.

Consultants, who will support classroom teachers, took part in intense professional development activities to ensure a structured integration of essential literacy skills. Fatina Chapman said she is delighted to be part of the literacy consulting cohort for UCS. “My goal is to utilize all the newly acquired learning to positively empower teachers and students for success at Graebner Elementary.”

This series integrates student inquiry, discussions focusing on mathematical thinking, hands-on learning and problem solving, as well as the pairing of modeled examples.

Math Expressions provides students skills through experiences that create understanding using models, discussion, exploration, inquiry, and guided instruction.

The series provides greater intensity in math instruction in three key ways: having students discuss the process they are using to find solutions to problems; allowing students to visualize math problems and how they...
Points of Pride

Imagination takes UCS students to international honors
Three UCS teams took part in an international competition focusing on creativity, teamwork and innovation.

Bemis Junior High School, Collins Elementary, and Messmore Elementary took part in the Destination Imagination Global Finals in Kansas City. Also qualifying was a UCS South team comprised of students from Stevenson High School, Utica Academy of International Studies and Davis Junior High School.

Teams participated in the international event after earning top honors at the state level.

Student work selected for AP Student Art Exhibit
A recent UCS graduate is among only 30 of the nation’s top student artists to have work selected for a prestigious national exhibit.

Lauren Seymour, a 2019 graduate of Eisenhower High, had her photograph “American Epidemic” selected from approximately 1.5 million individual pieces reviewed for the Advanced Placement Studio Art Exhibit. Seymour’s work will be featured in the traveling exhibit which includes stops at the Chauncey Conference Center in New Jersey and the AP Annual Conference in 2020. Her 2019 art teacher was Nancy Druia.

Wiley Elementary student earns state honor with service message
UCS sixth grader Frances Casem has a simple message for others, “You can help the environment no matter of your background. Everyone is equal.”

Casem placed first in the 2019 Michigan Youth For Service Poster Contest for a poster she designed that promotes environmental awareness. She was honored by the Michigan Community Service Commission, as part of the 2019 Governor’s Service Awards, on September 5 at the Detroit Opera House.

Casem’s artwork will be used this year to inspire community service throughout Michigan.

Students at three elementary schools are on the move this year
The schools have been selected to participate in the Building Healthy Communities program, sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan.

The program, which is being implemented at Roberts, Plumbrook and Havel elementary schools, promotes healthy habits in ways that have tied greater social and emotional support to academic achievement.

UCS among ten districts honored by Red Cross for blood drive support
When tragedies occur across the world, UCS students step up and their service has been recognized by the American Red Cross.

“Our students care deeply about their community and their world,” superintendent Dr. Christine Johns said. “Through partnerships such as the Red Cross, we are helping students become successful not only in school, but also in life.”

Last year, UCS blood drives collected 300 units of blood which helped more than 800 people in need, according to the Red Cross.

Nine students are among only 16,000 U.S. seniors to be named 2020 National Merit Semifinalists
National Merit Semifinalists are among the top one percent of the nation’s high school seniors who took the 2018 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

UCS National Merit Semifinalists are: Armando Gjergji, Riley Klumb and Kirthika Krishan of Stevenson High School; Aaryan Patel and Aayush Patel of Henry Ford II High School; Leo Barrios and Olivia Stack of Eisenhower High School; and Julie ElFishawy and Nisha Patel of the Utica Academy for International Studies.

Gjergji, Krishnan, Stack, and Aaryan Patel also attend the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology. Klumb attends the Utica Center for Science and Industry.

Marching Bands Bring Sound, Color and Movement to Band-A-Rama
Band-A-Rama showcases the district’s talented high school musicians in field performances at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 7 at Stevenson High’s Runkel Field, 39701 Dodge Park Road.

Everyone is welcome, as UCS’ four award-winning marching bands will perform their half-time shows. The event will begin with a combined performance of the Star Spangled Banner.

The performances are a preview of shows the bands will stage at the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association Marching Band Festival on October 15, also set for Runkel Field.

Ticket proceeds from Band-A-Rama benefit the Louis Gonda Memorial Music Scholarship, which funds opportunities for UCS band students to further their music education. Over the years, the Gonda Scholarship has enabled hundreds of students to attend music camps, take private lessons or otherwise enrich their music study.

Tickets are $5 for adults and high school students. Admission is free for junior high school and younger students. Tickets are available at the entrance gate.

UCS continues to be honored at state and national levels for the high quality of its music program. The district has been selected, for the fifth time, as one of the nation’s Best Communities for Music Education by NAMM.

Bond issue projects improve student learning environment
Less than a year after voter approval, a $155 million bond issue is already paying dividends for Utica Community Schools students. This summer, UCS initiated nearly $20 million in projects as part of the first phase of the five-year capital improvement program.

The bond issue improvements are focused on three critical areas: safety and security; infrastructure improvements identified through the district’s strategic, long-range facility program; and technology.

To check project status visit the district website for posted updates: https://www.uticak12.org/2018bond/updates

Safety and Security Bond Update 2019-2023
Click this button on the homepage at www.uticak12.org
Summer breaks propel unique woodworking program

Last summer, Henry Ford II woodworking teacher Christopher Davis spent time at a Northern Michigan paddle board company and brought their unique process back to his students. This summer, the innovative class projects students produced through the process have landed them in national magazines and an impending visit from the host of a national building program.

“These boards are getting more attention than I expected,” Davis said. “I am looking forward to raising the bar even more this year.”

The attention being created by Ford II students has come in the form of write-ups in both Wood Magazine, published by Better Homes and Gardens, and a future edition Bessey Tools Newsletter. Kristy Petrillo, who hosts HGTV’s Cabin Reno, is also scheduled to visit the class after receiving a board made by the students.

Henry Ford II is one of the only schools that creates completely wooden paddle boards. “These boards are unique because they are completely custom and hollow,” Davis said. “We do not use any foam on the inside of the board. Materials are handpicked to match the desired design. The boards are also eco-friendly - they will never end up in a landfill like foam boards.”

The designs are based on the work of Jason Thelen and his Little Bay Boards business in Petoskey. Thelen has become a mentor to students in the program.

Last year, about 50 students built 12 boards, with each weighing approximately 30 pounds. One was sent to HGTV’s Petrillo, who is going to travel from the Dominican Republic this fall to visit the class.

UCS students are continuing to outperform their county, state and national peers

Results of assessments released this fall demonstrate that UCS students are achieving at consistent levels on the M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress), PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test) and SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test).

UCS students took the tests in the spring. District and school-based staff members have been analyzing the results to gain a deeper understanding of the level of achievement and growth of the students.

The PSAT and SAT are administered to secondary students to allow students to demonstrate they are college and career ready. UCS high schools are placing among the top quarter of county schools on the SAT and higher than national averages.

The SAT is an important indicator for a student’s post-secondary success, a key aspect of the district’s vision and mission.

Prior to the SAT, students take the PSAT 8/9 and the PSAT 10 that provide information on their progress toward college readiness. The tests are comprised of three areas: evidence-based reading, writing and mathematics.

For students in grades 3 through 7, the M-STEP is given to students to determine progress being made to meet state academic standards in English language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science and social studies.

Makerspaces mean there is innovation at work in every corner

Through their media center, elementary students are creating circuit boards, building bridges out of Legos or rockets out of plastic bottles, taking apart a computer or programming small robots to knock down a pin. Some students even use the time for a quiet game of one-on-one chess.

A makerspace is a hands-on, creative place where students can design, experiment, build and invent as they deeply engage in science, technology, engineering, art and math.

The media center teachers are involved in providing that space after being selected to participate in a statewide group of educators that was formed to create makerspaces, where students are encouraged to explore and develop a love of everything Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics – or STEAM.

For students, the makerspaces represent a chance to try something new. “There are so many fun things to do here - we’ve never done anything like this before,” said Morgan Elementary sixth grader Aidan Evans. “It is fun because we can really just explore and be creative.”

Helena Foust-Mantel of Burr Elementary, Mike DeLorenzo of Morgan Elementary, and Michelle Rizzo of Ebeling Elementary were among 79 Michigan educators selected this year as Classroom Maker Ambassadors through the Regional Educational Media Center Association of Michigan.
Doug Hartley has always appreciated his Utica Community Schools diploma and the doors it opens for him. Hartley, a 2010 graduate, is taking advantage of a unique opportunity to show his appreciation by helping current students develop a love of computer science.

“I am looking forward to being an influence to high school students who are thinking about a career in the computer industry,” Hartley said.

TEALS (Technology Education and Literacy in Schools), a Microsoft Philanthropies program, brings professionals from across the computer science industry to volunteer and team-teach Advanced Placement Computer Science programs at partner schools. Hartley is one of 20 TEALS computer scientists who will be volunteering at our four comprehensive high schools this school year.

“Utica Community Schools is at the forefront of computer science education in the State of Michigan,” said Andrew Spiece, Regional Manager of the Microsoft Philanthropies TEALS Program.

Math Matters
Continued from front page

This year, students are provided greater access to the online resources—called Think Central—to improve their math skills. The resources include a personal math trainer that works with students at their own level and online activities that engage students in their learning.

Another focus this year is further integration of Math Talk—a strategy that involves students talking about the steps used to solve a problem.

Through Math Talk, students discuss the process they are using to find solutions to math problems with their teacher, one-on-one or in their class.

By discussing their solutions, students take a greater responsibility for solving problems and create a better understanding of the process used to find answers.

Through the strong foundation created in UCS elementary schools, students are being prepared to excel in the advanced math opportunities available at the secondary level.

That is good news for Viktoria, who plans to carry her love into a career. “I plan to make a career out of math—maybe as a doctor or a mathematician,” she said. “Math is used for just about everything.”

Notice of Nondiscrimination
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 the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources at Utica Community Schools, 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.

www.uticak12.org
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