July 6, 2021

Dear UCS Parents/Guardians,

Last month I asked you to help recognize resiliency and service within our educational community through a program we called #UCSChampions. I am pleased to report more than 200 nominations and stories of innovation and support were shared! Thank you to those who submitted a nomination and I encourage you to visit the UCS social media sites to read these inspiring stories.

At UCS, excellence comes in many forms, through many people, and is displayed in our commitment to the core academic areas and specialized programming geared toward college and career preparation. We provide a range of choices all designed to meet the collective and individual needs of students leading to high levels of academic achievement and growth. These choices allow families to make decisions that fit the unique needs of their child.

I am grateful to students, families and staff members for taking care of your own health and contributing to the good health of others through your actions each day during the pandemic. Your commitment has enabled our community to return to a sense of normalcy in our everyday lives and optimistically approach the new school year.

As I have shared previously, we are actively planning a back-to-school this fall that will have the look and feel of a traditional school year. Based on the recommendations released on June 25, 2021 by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Macomb County Health Department’s Return to School Toolkit, our plans for this fall remain:

- A return to five full days a week of in-person learning. Families that are seeking an online alternative may enroll in the UCS Virtual Academy. We will share a second enrollment period for the program in early August.
- Consistent with the protocols that are in place for our summer learning programs and camps, face coverings will not be required for students and staff in our schools and work environments this fall. The wearing of face coverings will be based on the choice of each family or individual. It should be noted that while no longer required, the Macomb County Health Department recommends that individuals who are not fully vaccinated should consider wearing a face covering when indoors, especially in crowded settings. Utica Community Schools respects each family’s or individual’s decision.
- UCS has no plans to require students and staff to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The decision to receive the vaccine remains a choice of the family or individual.
- We have no information to indicate testing for COVID-19 will be required for schools in the fall and UCS has no plans to test students or staff.
• Health and safety strategies will continue, including self-screening and reporting, cleaning protocols and the frequent use of disinfectants and hand washing.

During the summer, selecting new team members is always a priority. This includes leadership positions in career and technical education, equity and inclusion, support for Special Services, safety and management services, principals and assistant principals. Highly skilled and dynamic leaders ensure that all students have a safe and positive learning environment, access to programs and supports to meet their needs and ultimately earn a diploma that positions them to pursue post-secondary options leading to a career of their choosing.

As the start of the school year approaches, I recognize there will be multiple proposals or conflicting reports that may create speculation or uncertainty. **Your best source of accurate information is our district website.** Rest assured, we will not be distracted from our focus on a successful and positive opening. We remain centered on our core educational mission and creating success for every student.

We are excited about the potential for normalcy as we return to school. We will continue to communicate with you this summer regarding the important activities leading up to our **start date of August 31.** Thank you for your continued confidence and trust.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Monroe
Superintendent of Schools