



2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

UTICA WINS

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY

ACCELERATING ACHIEVEMENT

BUILDING MOMENTUM



LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT DR. CHRISTOPHER SPENCE

Dear Faculty, Staff, Families, Students, Community Members and Partners,

The work of transforming a large and complex urban school district is never defined by a single initiative, program, or moment. It is the result of thousands of individuals working together with a shared belief that every child deserves access to opportunity and that public education remains one of the most powerful forces for changing lives.

When I joined the Utica City School District in 2024, I spoke about the importance of creating new opportunities for students, strengthening our systems, embracing our diversity, and empowering every learner to reach their highest potential. I shared my belief that together we could build upon the strong foundation established by those who came before us while positioning the district for a new era of excellence and innovation.

Two years later, we are witnessing the results of that collective effort.

Across the district, students are achieving at higher levels. Schools are becoming safer. Opportunities are expanding. Enrollment is growing. Community confidence is increasing. Partnerships are strengthening. More students than ever before have access to the academic, social-emotional, career, technical, and enrichment opportunities necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

These accomplishments belong to our students, educators, support staff, administrators, Board of Education, families, higher education partners, community organizations, business leaders, and elected officials. Every milestone reflected in this report is the result of a community united around a common purpose: improving outcomes for children.

While we celebrate these achievements, we remain focused on the future. Transformation is not a destination—it is an ongoing commitment. The momentum we have built over the past two years must continue. The opportunity structures we have created must continue to expand. The systems we have developed must continue to mature.

The future of the Utica City School District has never been brighter, and I am honored to continue this work alongside each of you.

Together, we are expanding opportunity.
Together, we are transforming outcomes.
Together, we are building the future of Utica.

Educationally,

Dr. Christopher Spence
Superintendent of Schools
Utica City School District



Year Two: Advancing Urban Transformation Through Opportunity, Momentum, and Results

The 2025–2026 school year represents one of the most significant periods of progress in the recent history of the Utica City School District.

Over the past two years, the District has engaged in a deliberate effort to strengthen organizational systems, improve student outcomes, expand educational opportunities, and build public confidence in our schools. What began as a vision for transformation has evolved into measurable results across academics, student support services, workforce development, school climate, community engagement, and organizational effectiveness.

Most importantly, we have expanded the opportunity structure available to children throughout our community.

Students now have access to award-winning extended learning opportunities, expanded Career and Technical Education pathways, stronger literacy and mathematics supports, enhanced social-emotional services, improved attendance interventions, greater workforce development experiences, and broader access to enrichment opportunities than at any point in recent memory.

Why This Matters

These accomplishments represent expanded opportunities for children and families. Every gain in achievement, every RED seat, every CTE pathway, every attendance intervention, and every community partnership creates new possibilities for students and strengthens the future of Utica.

Historic Academic Progress

- ELA proficiency increased from 31% to 40%
- Mathematics proficiency increased from 36% to 41%
- Science achievement increased by 11 percentage points
- Students met or exceeded growth benchmarks in five of six grade levels

Historic Accountability Achievement

For the first time since New York State began accountability designations in 2002, no school within the Utica City School District carries a CSI, ATSI, or Receivership designation.

Historic Expansion of Opportunity

The District opened a new Career and Technical Education Center while simultaneously expanding the award-winning Raiders Extended Day Program, creating unprecedented access to academic support, enrichment, workforce development, and career exploration opportunities.

Historic Community Confidence

Enrollment increased for the third consecutive year, reaching approximately 9,535 students.

Historic Organizational Recognition

The District was recognized among New York State’s Best Employers by Forbes and received the New York State School Boards Association’s Champions of Change Award.

Historic Fiscal Stewardship

The District maintained a clean audit, earned an unmodified audit opinion, improved its bond rating, and continued investing in students while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Collectively, these accomplishments demonstrate that the Utica City School District is not simply improving—it is transforming. Year One focused on building systems.

Year Two delivered measurable results.

Year Three will focus on accelerating achievement, expanding opportunities, and sustaining momentum.

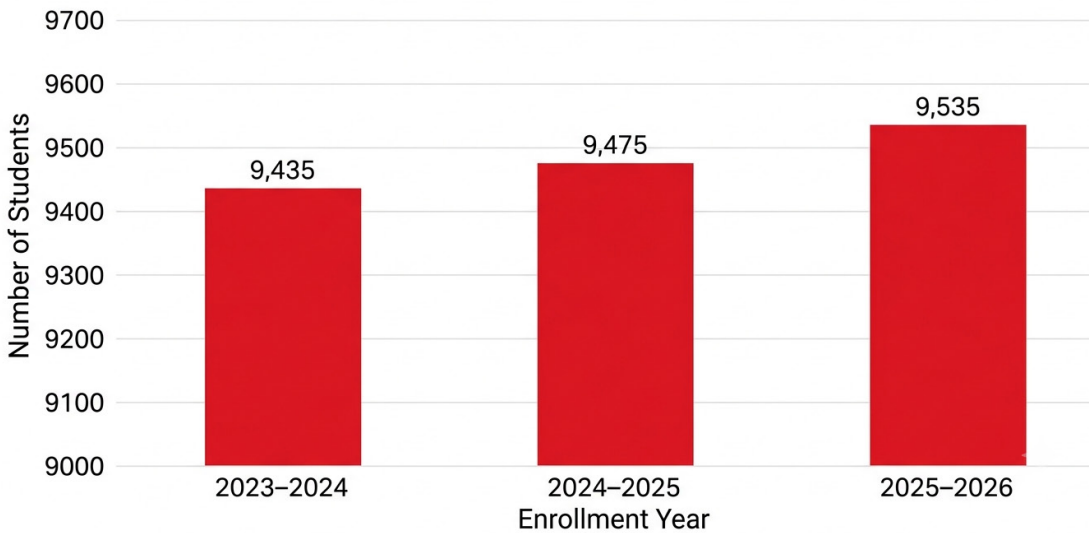
Strategic Pillars of Growth

Strategic Pillar I	ACCELERATING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	Science of Reading implementation Districtwide mathematics instructional vision DIBELS and UFLI pilot implementation MTSS, AIS, and RTI expansion New K–8 science curriculum Digital Fluency Standards Enhanced school improvement planning
Strategic Pillar II	SAFE, SUPPORTIVE, AND ENGAGING SCHOOLS	Reduction in student altercations Violent Incidents Are Trending Lower at Proctor High School this year Cell phone initiative implementation Restorative Practices expansion Mental Health First Aid training Enhanced social-emotional supports Improved attendance systems
Strategic Pillar III	EXPANDING THE OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE	Urban transformation requires intentionally expanding opportunities for children. Career & Technical Education The District opened a transformative Career and Technical Education Center designed with more than 120 industry and postsecondary partners. Pathways Include: Advanced Manufacturing Robotics & Mechatronics Cybersecurity Electric Vehicle Technology Construction Technology Business Analytics Future Educators Health Professions Media Production Entrepreneurship Electricity & Fiber Optics Projected Capacity: 1,000+ Students
		Raiders Extended Day Program The RED Program provides: Academic Support Literacy Intervention STEM Activities Arts Enrichment Physical Activity Social-Emotional Learning Meals Transportation The program expanded from approximately 675 students to more than 1,000 students and is projected to serve over 1,000 students.

Strategic Pillar IV	SUPPORTING THE WHOLE CHILD	The Utica City School District serves one of New York State's most diverse student populations. English Language Learners Students representing more than 52 languages Expanded translation services Enhanced family engagement New curriculum resources Established a new Director of English Language Learners position and expanded departmental supports
		Students with Disabilities Expanded service delivery Additional specialized personnel Enhanced transition supports IDEA compliance maintained Homeless and Vulnerable Youth McKinney-Vento Resource Guide Expanded supports and services Stronger community partnerships
Strategic Pillar V	ATTENDANCE AS AN EQUITY STRATEGY	The District reframed attendance as an equity issue rather than a compliance issue. Added five attendance teachers Attendance teacher assigned to every school Districtwide attendance handbook Communications translated into 14 languages Structured intervention systems Family engagement and outreach Improved attendance outcomes
Strategic Pillar VI	INVESTING IN PEOPLE	Mobile Recruitment Team Enhanced onboarding systems Expanded professional development Leadership development opportunities Labor-management collaboration These efforts contributed to recognition as one of New York State's Best Employers.
Strategic Pillar VII	FISCAL STEWARDSHIP AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE	Clean Independent Audit Unmodified Audit Opinion Bond Rating Increase Smart Schools Bond Investments Technology Infrastructure Upgrades Healthcare and Benefits Savings Long-Term Financial Stability

THE TRANSFORMATION BY THE NUMBERS

Three Consecutive Years of Enrollment Growth



Expanding Opportunity

RED Program

Projected to Serve 1,000+ Students

Career & Technical Education

12 Career Pathways

Work-Based Learning

288 Opportunities

Workforce Experiences

534 Hours

Strengthening Schools

Violent Incidents Are Trending Lower at Proctor High School this year

Restorative Practices

80%+ Staff Trained

Attendance

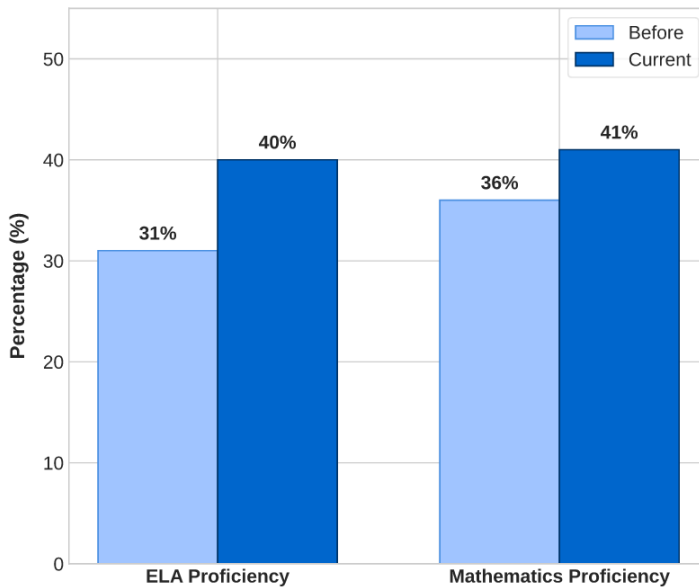
90% Attendance Rate

Cell Phone Initiative

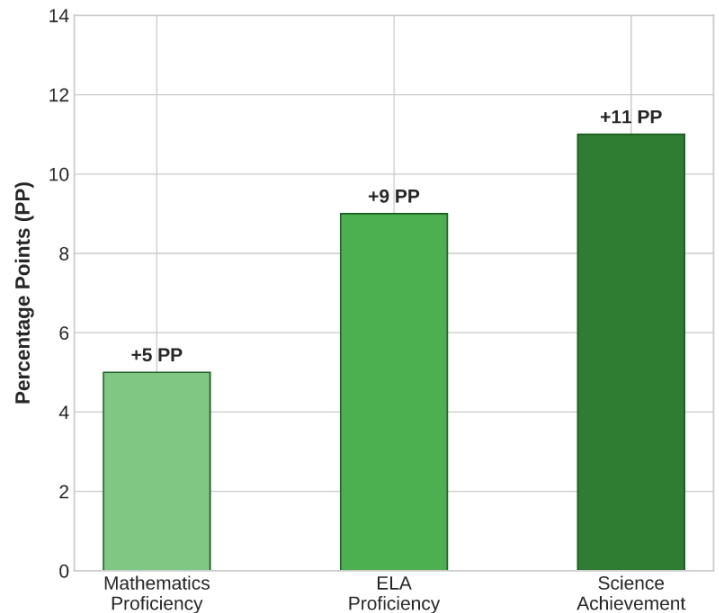
Successfully Implemented Districtwide

Academic Excellence & Performance Growth

Proficiency Level Comparison



Net Growth & Achievements



THE TRANSFORMATION BY THE NUMBERS: ACCELERATING ACHIEVEMENT

- ELA Proficiency: 31% → 40% (+9 Percentage Points)
- Mathematics Proficiency: 36% → 41% (+5 Percentage Points)
- Science Achievement: +11 Percentage Points Growth

First Time Since 2002

No school designated:

- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)
- Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)
- Receivership

Forbes Recognized as one of New York State's Best Employers

NYSSBA Champions of Change Award Recipient

Opened the new Career and Technical Education Center at Proctor High School

RED Program expanded from an innovative concept to an award-winning districtwide initiative

HISTORIC DISTRICT MILESTONES



LEADING BEYOND UTICA

The District increasingly serves as a voice for urban education across New York State.

Areas of Advocacy:

- Literacy Achievement
- Mathematics Achievement
- Career and Technical Education
- Chronic Absenteeism
- Educational Equity
- Teacher Pipeline Development
- State Funding Priorities

The District also advanced a request for approximately \$5.4 million in Special Services Aid to support the continued expansion of Career and Technical Education opportunities.

RECOGNITION AND AWARDS:

Forbes New York State Best Employer
NYSSBA Champions of Change Award
Laura Bush Foundation
Seven Schools Awarded Library Grants
Wadas Foundation
More Than \$246,000 in Student Support Funding
Federal and State Recognition
Multiple Commendations for Innovation and Community Engagement





LOOKING AHEAD

The progress achieved over the past two years demonstrates what is possible when a community unites around a shared vision for children.

As we enter Year Three, our focus remains clear:

- Accelerate Academic Achievement
- Expand Student Opportunities
- Strengthen School Culture
- Deepen Community Partnerships
- Invest in Our Workforce
- Ensure Every Student Graduates Prepared for Success

The momentum is real. The transformation is underway. The future is bright.

