



UTICA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 2025-2026 DISTRICT WINS



LETTER FROM DR. SPENCE

The work of transforming a large and complex urban school system is never defined by a single initiative or moment—it is the result of sustained commitment, collaboration, and belief in the potential of every child. Over the past year, the Utica City School District has continued to make meaningful progress toward our vision of strengthening our schools while expanding opportunities for students and families across our community. This progress is rooted in the daily work of our educators, staff, administrators, families, and community partners who show up each day with the shared purpose of improving outcomes for the young people we serve.

The accomplishments summarized in Table 1 represent important milestones in that journey. Across the district, we are seeing measurable academic gains, the expansion of innovative programs such as the Raiders' Extended Day initiative, stronger career and technical education pathways, and growing partnerships with community organizations and institutions of higher education. These efforts are complemented by statewide and national recognition of our work, including honors for our RED Program and recognition of the Utica City School District as one of New York's top employers. Equally important, we are seeing renewed confidence in our schools from families and the broader community, reflected in rising enrollment and increased engagement in district initiatives and events.

Each of these achievements reflects more than a single program or initiative—they represent a system that is increasingly aligned around a clear instructional vision, strong organizational structures, and a culture that believes deeply in the promise of public education. When students experience rigorous instruction, supportive learning environments, meaningful extracurricular opportunities, and strong community partnerships, they are positioned not only to succeed in school but to pursue college, careers, and leadership in their communities.

While we are proud of the progress highlighted here, we also recognize that transformation is an ongoing process. Our district continues to focus on strengthening instructional practices, expanding enrichment opportunities, investing in staff development, and ensuring that every student—regardless of background—has access to the resources and support needed to thrive. The milestones outlined in this table therefore serve both as a reflection of how far we have come and as a reminder of the important work that remains ahead.

Together, as a community united by purpose and committed to excellence, we will continue building a school district that prepares every student for a bright and successful future.

Dr. Christopher Spence

Superintendent of Schools

Utica City School District

Table 1*Summary of Key Organizational Wins in the Utica City School District (2025–2026)*

Area of Impact	District Win	Description of Outcome
Academic Achievement	Growth in ELA and Mathematics Proficiency	Districtwide assessment results show measurable gains, with ELA proficiency increasing from 31% to 40% and mathematics proficiency rising from 36% to 41%. Students met or exceeded growth benchmarks in five of six grade levels.
Accountability	Reduction of State Accountability Designations	No additional UCSD schools were newly designated for Comprehensive or Targeted Support under NYSED accountability measures, indicating improved school performance.
Extended Learning	Launch and Expansion of Raiders Extended Day (RED) Program	The RED Program launched districtwide serving over 800 students in grades K–6, providing academic enrichment and social-emotional support beyond the traditional school day.
External Recognition	NYSSBA Champions of Change Award	The RED Program received statewide recognition from the New York State School Boards Association as an innovative initiative supporting student success.
Workforce & Organizational Culture	Forbes Best-in-State Employer Recognition	The district was recognized among New York’s Top 100 Employers for workplace culture, fairness, and professional growth opportunities.
Career & Technical Education	Expansion of Proctor High School CTE Wing	The new CTE facility strengthened partnerships with local businesses and colleges while expanding career pathways for students.
Government & Legislative Recognition	State and Federal Commendations	Letters of appreciation and commendations were received from members of Congress and state legislators recognizing district initiatives and community engagement.
Community Engagement	Districtwide Day of Student Achievement	All schools opened their doors to celebrate student growth and learning with families, community leaders, and elected officials.
Enrollment	Increasing Student Enrollment	Contrary to statewide trends of declining enrollment, UCSD experienced growth in student enrollment, signaling increased community confidence in the district.
Instructional Programming	Districtwide Literacy and Instructional Vision Implementation	Implementation of Science of Reading practices and a new mathematics instructional vision contributed to measurable academic progress.

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Community Partnerships	System of Care Collaboration	Initiatives such as the Breakfast of Champions strengthened partnerships with community agencies supporting student well-being and success.
Student Achievement	Division I College Athletics Signing	A Proctor High School student signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in Division I athletics, demonstrating the district's support of student success across domains.
State and Local Advocacy	Request for Special Service Aid \$5.4M	The request to access special service aid in the amount of \$5.3M has been forwarded to the state legislature for consideration. As a result of advocacy at the 2026 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing - Elementary Education/Secondary Education.

Note. This is a summary of the key collective accomplishments of the Utica City School district, although we recognize that we are in the process of continuous improvement.

