

Upper St. Clair School District

Annual Report: 2020



To say that 2020 was unprecedented is a vast understatement. Individually and collectively, we were challenged in ways we had never anticipated. The effects of the pandemic have been felt physically, financially and emotionally. In response, our Upper St. Clair community responded as it most often does...with kindness, compassion, and a helping hand.

Throughout these trying times, our staff, our community and our students continued to find opportunities to help others. Students organized a free food delivery service for those with compromised immune systems and first responders. School police officers delivered technology devices to students' homes so that learning and connection to school could continue. Our food service workers and volunteers distributed 121,324 meals via curbside pick-up. And, our teachers and administrators completely altered instructional delivery to ensure continuity of education for our nearly 4,100 students. Countless staff members throughout the District have done extraordinary work during this pandemic.

As a "people business," we have re-imagined nearly every aspect of our operations to ensure that our students, staff and families remain safe and healthy. From parent meetings to graduation, we have leveraged technology to continue to provide our students and families with the Upper St. Clair experience and, most importantly, to keep moving forward.

While 2020 was far from ideal, I am incredibly proud of our students and their families, our staff and school board members, and our community. Upper St. Clair is resilient and I am confident our best days as a district are still ahead of us.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature of John T. Rozzo in black ink.

John T. Rozzo, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools





Sustaining Excellence

Sustaining Excellence through a Pandemic

While an organization can never be fully prepared for a pandemic of this magnitude, having essential skills, highly qualified staff and administration, and a culture of excellence enabled previously unthinkable challenges to be met.

Throughout 2020, discussions and decisions remained focused on our primary goal of delivering an Upper St. Clair School District quality educational experience to all USC families, in-school and at home, in a way that minimizes exposure and disruption to the greatest extent possible. This included:

- Safe schools for students and staff
- Choice for families
- High-quality education (in-school or remote) with opportunity to transition seamlessly
- Emphasis on social-emotional well-being

The following discusses some of our greatest challenges of 2020 in the areas of Academics, Wellness and Operations.



ACADEMICS: Ensuring Continuity of Education

Strategically investing *BEFORE* the pandemic Education empowers individuals to not only build better lives, but also to build stronger communities. As such, ensuring that children continued to learn and grow was a priority throughout 2020. Investments in instructional technology throughout the last several years — including 1:1 devices and the Canvas learning management system — enabled students and teachers to successfully transition between in-person and full remote learning, as needed. This year, the 1:1 initiative expanded to include grades K-4 and the transition to Canvas was extended to our elementary schools — providing a seamless and consistent learning experience for students, families and educators, K-12.

Providing Families Choice & Flexibility

Throughout the 2020-21 school year, students and their families were provided the choice of a hybrid (a combination of in-person and remote learning) or a full remote instructional model. The District remained committed to increasing in-person opportunities as conditions permitted.

Key to our success is that all students learn the USC curriculum from USC teachers while remaining connected to their classmates. K-12 teachers worked tirelessly to maintain identical curriculum objectives and pacing between their students who were learning at-home and in-person. This enabled students to transition between instructional models as needs and circumstances warranted.



Sustaining Excellence



WELLNESS: Supporting students, families and staff members

Maintaining physical, mental and social-emotional health services

The primary goal of schools is to educate children to the greatest extent possible. In order to accomplish this, student wellness must be prioritized. Our Student Support Services team re-imagined service delivery to continue to support students and their families. Counselors developed lessons for students on healthy practices during a pandemic. Our student assistance teams collaborated with our UPMC social-emotional wellness consultants to provide additional support and services to students and families experiencing unique challenges. And, staff and volunteers distributed more than 120,000 meals to families via curbside pick-up.

All schools continued to promote a positive school climate for all students learning in-school and at home through the No Place for Hate initiative, theme days and other creative engagement activities. School clubs continued to meet online to encourage and support connectedness. And, school and community athletic programs helped meet the social/emotional needs of students.

Following the data & collaborating with experts

District administrators remained committed to making decisions based on data. The data have clearly and consistently demonstrated that schools were not sources of virus transmission due to extensive mitigation efforts (outlined under Operations).

Our school nurses and Health & Safety Team leaders worked closely and collaboratively with experts from the Allegheny County Health Department's K-12 school team, which includes epidemiologists, physician consultants and contact tracers. Teachers maintained online seating charts to enable school nurses to complete contact tracing anytime/anywhere. In addition to initial contact tracing, school nurses continued to provide ongoing case monitoring to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. Through the District's diligence in implementing its Health & Safety Plan, in-school transmission and classroom/school closures were minimal.

OPERATIONS: Maintaining a safe & healthy environment for teaching & learning

Implementing effective mitigation strategies

Despite the rise in cases regionally and nationally, schools are a safe environment for students and staff. Within our schools, we continue to implement a variety of strategies that mitigate virus spread including: face-coverings; frequent cleaning/disinfecting; promoting good hygiene practices; strategic movement within buildings and buses; the addition of sanitizing systems at entrances, on buses and throughout buildings; installation of physical barriers; desk shields for all student desks; added signage to encourage social distancing and frequent hand-washing; ventilation systems that exceed industry standards; social distancing to the greatest extent possible with at least six feet in areas where students may be eating; and more. As a result of these efforts, virus transmission in schools has been rare.

Maintaining staffing levels

Upper St. Clair School District, like other school entities, faced a challenge previously not seen in maintaining a full and qualified workforce. Through collaborative and creative measures that leverage technology we have been able to find suitable, qualified candidates to serve in open roles. Success in this area can be measured by continued learning with skilled professionals and buildings that are able to stay open. Both targets were met in 2020. Through the hiring and training of new Annual Weekly Substitute (AWS) teachers, schools had immediate access to qualified teachers, familiar with the students and school who could seamlessly enter classrooms during teacher absences. Creative use of our Extended Teacher Certification (ETC) program has also enabled the District to bolster our substitute teacher corps with community members who were not initially trained as educators, but have received special training through the District in collaboration with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.

Strategic Planning:

Upper St. Clair School District will resume its Strategic Planning efforts this spring. Areas of focus include Academics, Wellness, Operations, and more. Community members are encouraged to participate in this important process to help ensure meaningful and future-focused goals for our District.

For information, visit the District's website — uscsd.org/strategicplan — or contact Brad Wilson, director of strategic initiatives, at bwilson@uscsd.k12.pa.us.



2020-21 Goals



Strategic Planning

Develop a new five-year strategic plan for the Upper St. Clair School District for 2021-2026. Focus areas will include: **Wellness, Operations, Academics** and **Culture** (expansion of No Place for Hate), and include School Board input via the Sustaining Excellence Committee (SEC).

- Engage with the SEC of the Board.
- Review, develop and implement the District's mission, vision and values (shared beliefs), including any updates or revisions.
- Create a new five-year strategic plan that is driven by the District's mission, vision and values with a development process that is inclusive of all District stakeholders.
- Develop tracking/management processes to achieve the new strategic plan.

Pandemic Leadership/Management

Deliver an Upper St. Clair School District quality educational experience to all USC families, in-school and at-home, in a way that minimizes exposure and disruption to the greatest extent possible.

- Create a communication plan and tracking for COVID cases by successfully implementing a District dashboard that provides essential ongoing information to the public.
- Implement the approved reopening plan (Phase II and III) as conditions permit.
- Maintain four key areas of pandemic planning: safe schools for students and staff, choice for families, high-quality education (in-school and remote) with opportunity to transition seamlessly, and emphasis on social-emotional well-being.

Academics

Maintain and expand upon the highest levels of educational excellence, curriculum development, and teaching methodologies.

- Maintain the highest levels of performance as measured by PSSA, Keystone, SAT and ACT scores by performing in the top 3% regionally and statewide.
- Serve as the instructional leader for the District by providing the Board with periodic updates and recommendations on educational trends/research.
- Analyze existing educational programs, resources and practices and identify areas for improvement or enhancement.
- Expand district-wide remote learning capabilities.
- Measure, identify and develop solutions for pandemic educational gaps for core academic areas.

Financial Management

Establish a financial budget not to exceed the current index of 3% by creating excellence in financial

planning, forecasting, budgeting, financial reporting, compliance and controls.

- Responsibly manage financial costs related to COVID-19 via providing updated documentation to the School Board, appropriate use of fund balance for one-time expenses, and continue the solicitation of available grants and other funds to support the pandemic-related expenses.
- Re-design and lead a budget process that encompasses long-term forecasting of key budget influencers, prioritization of needs, greater focus and management processes, including the identification of additional revenue sources.
- Enhance financial communication and transparency between the Business Office and Central Office Administration.

District Operations

Review, revise and/or develop policies and procedures that provide the foundation for operational excellence.

- Create an advancement strategy that directly aligns with the strategic plan.
- Automate and review software systems for Human Resources and Finance to enhance communication, gain efficiencies and achieve cost-savings.
- Complete the review and implementation of all policies with the Pennsylvania School Boards Association and implement a sustainable review process.
- Complete District emergency planning, including digital communication work and evacuation plans.

Sustaining Excellence...

The 2020-21 Upper St. Clair School District budget totals \$87,799,219, which included a 1.97% millage increase of 0.5197 mills – resulting in a final tax rate of 26.8972 mills.

Throughout the budgeting process, the administrative team and school board embraced the theme, “Sustaining Excellence” as they navigated challenges that included rising fixed costs, substantial revenue losses and continued uncertainty due to COVID-19.

Budget priorities include maintaining quality education for students; balancing the needs of the School District while recognizing the fiduciary responsibilities to the community; and remaining cognizant

of the interdependence of all aspects that directly and indirectly affect students’ school experience.

The budget includes staff reductions across various employee groups totaling 10.5 positions. Substantial cuts – totaling more than \$800,000 – were made to the professional development, technology, operations and supplies budgets. In addition, all District administrators voluntarily agreed to a pay freeze.

“These difficult decisions resulted in an expenditure reduction of \$1.7 million and enabled us to deliver a final budget that safeguards our educational programs,” Dr. John Rozzo, superintendent of schools, said.

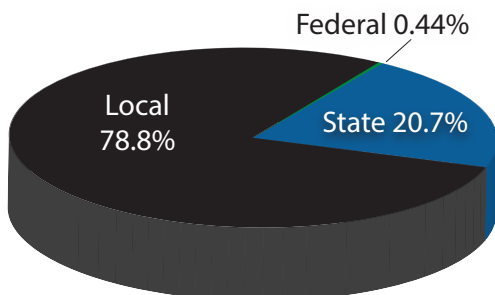
In addition to preserving the District’s educational programs, the 2020-21 budget expanded technology access for students. In the fall of 2020, all USC students K-12 were issued a District device to further support educational continuity.

With a 1.97 percent millage increase, Upper St. Clair fell well below the maximum 2.6 percent inflationary index established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

“This budget was passed without compromising the future financial stability of the District,” Dr. Rozzo said. “The 2019-20 and 2020-21 budgets yielded the two lowest tax increases in over a decade, while at the same time Upper St. Clair has been recognized as the top performing district by the Pittsburgh Business Times.”

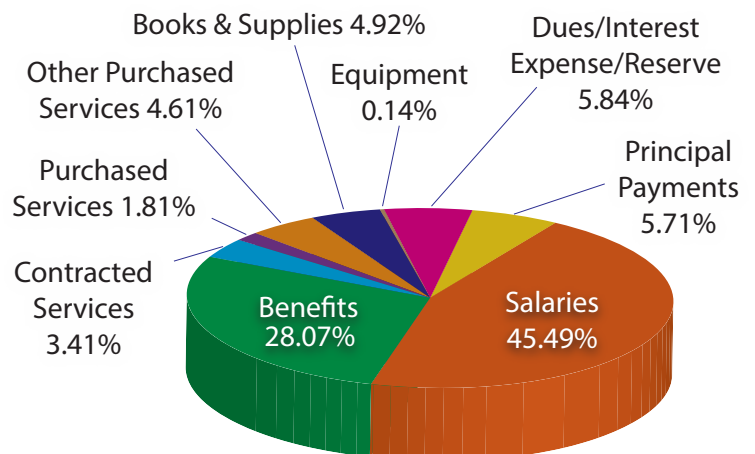
Declining Revenue — Reducing Costs

REVENUE: \$87,545,861



- Projected revenue losses attributed to the pandemic total \$1,140,000 with the potential for more.
- State revenue increased by only \$54,400 over the previous year.
- Federal revenue dropped by nearly \$1.5 million over the last two years.
- Staffing reductions included 7 current positions and 4 proposed positions - impacting operations, teaching and administration.

EXPENDITURES: \$87,779,219



- All district administrators agreed to a voluntary pay freeze.
- More than \$700,000 in reductions to professional development, technology, operations and supplies.
- 95% of expenditures still paid during the spring closure (legal & contractual obligations, debt service, capital leases & utilities).
- \$380,000 from Fund Balance will be used for one-time expenses.



Achievement

Highlights

Our Students

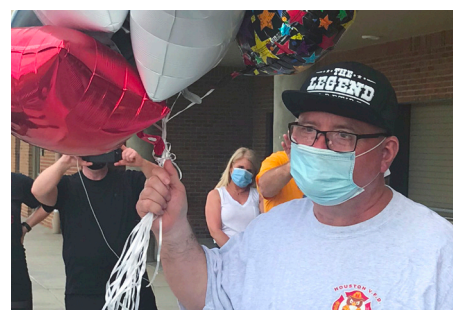
- In total, 36 Upper St. Clair seniors earned recognition in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program, including 11 Semifinalists (scoring in the top one percent) and 26 Commended students. Students enter the National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the PSAT during the fall of their junior year. 2021 Finalists and scholarship winners will be announced this spring.
- 114 Upper St. Clair High School students earned the designation of AP Scholar – including 14 National AP Scholars and one AP International Diploma. These students earned recognition for their exceptional achievement in the college-level Advanced Placement Program in 2020.
- In May 2020, 386 Upper St. Clair students completed 733 AP exams in 22 subjects – earning an 85 percent
- 172 new members were inducted into the Upper St. Clair High School chapter of the National Honor Society in June 2020.
- Seven Upper St. Clair High School students were inducted into the National Technical Honor Society. The students are enrolled in programs at Parkway West Career & Technology Center.
- The Class of 2020 included 17 International Baccalaureate Diploma Candidates. Students can earn college credit or advanced standing based on the individual scores for each of their IB courses.

pass rate. AP tests are scored 1-5; students must earn a 3 or higher to pass and possibly qualify for college credit.

exchange program between the United States and Germany. The School of Distinction program recognizes GAPP schools in the United States for their outstanding engagement and best practices that facilitate youth exchanges in their school, community and beyond.

- Upper St. Clair High School's therapeutic emotional support program was named a first-place award winner in the 25th annual Magna Awards, sponsored by the National School Boards Association's flagship magazine, American School Board Journal.

Our Staff

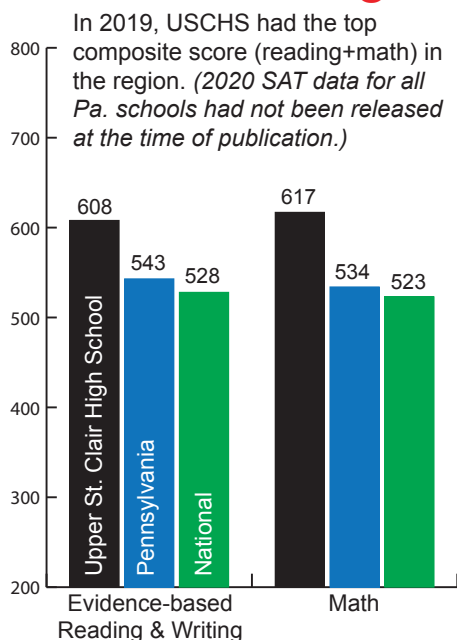


- Warren Sickles, a custodian and the District's longest serving employee, retired in May 2020 after 42 years of service.
- Assistant to the Superintendent Amy Pfender is a finalist for the Women in School Leadership Award, a program of AASA, The School Superintendents Association. In March, she received the Emerging Woman in Education Award from the Tri-State Area School Study Council.
- Assistant/Deputy Superintendent Dr. Sharon Suritsky was honored with the Alumni Excellence Award from the Penn State University College of Education.

Our District & Schools

- Each of Upper St. Clair's six schools earned the designation as a "No Place for Hate" school from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). No Place for Hate helps incorporate anti-bias and bullying prevention resources into the District's existing programs in order to have one consistent message of inclusivity.
- For the fifth consecutive year, Upper St. Clair was named among the nation's Best Communities for Music Education by the NAMM Foundation.
- Upper St. Clair High School ranks among the top 3% of high schools in the nation according to U.S. News & World Report. The newspaper released its list of 2020 Best High Schools in April 2020.
- Upper St. Clair High School was selected as a German American Partnership Program School of Distinction for its long-term youth

2020 SAT averages



continued on next page

No. 1 in region, No. 2 in Pa.

For the second year in a row, the Upper St. Clair School District ranks No. 1 in the annual rankings of regional school districts published by the Pittsburgh Business Times.

Released in May 2020, the 2020 Guide to Southwestern Pennsylvania Schools analyzes school performance data for 102 school districts throughout the seven-county region. The rankings are based on PSSA and Keystone Exam scores – three years of data are used, with the current year (2019) given the most weight.

In addition to its top spot in the regional rankings, Upper St. Clair ascended to No. 2 among Pennsylvania's 500 school districts. Upper St. Clair was 10th in 2017; climbed to fifth in 2018; and landed at No. 3 in 2019. The top ranked district in Pennsylvania is Unionville-Chadds Ford School District, located in Chester County.

"Upper St. Clair has a long tradition of excellence," Dr. John Rozzo, superintendent of schools, said. "This tradition is the result of a community that values and supports its public school district at every level. The success of the School District is a direct reflection of the commitment of our school board, administrators, teachers, staff and, especially, our students and their families."



The Pittsburgh Business Times released its first school rankings in 2005. Upper St. Clair debuted at number two in the region before spending eight consecutive years, from 2006-2013, in the number one spot. From 2014-2018, Upper St. Clair ranked within the top five each year before regaining the top spot in 2019.



Honor Roll Rank Pittsburgh Region

1. **Upper St. Clair SD**
2. Fox Chapel Area SD
3. Mt. Lebanon SD
4. Peters Township SD
5. Hampton Township SD
6. South Fayette Township SD
7. North Allegheny SD
8. Pine-Richland SD
9. Franklin Regional SD
10. Quaker Valley SD

Honor Roll Rank Pa. Public School Districts

1. Unionville-Chadds Ford SD
2. **Upper St. Clair SD**
3. Radnor Township SD
4. Mt. Lebanon SD
5. Fox Chapel Area SD
6. Peters Township SD
7. Tredyffrin-Easttown SD
8. Hampton Township SD
9. South Fayette SD
10. Lower Merion SD

- Fort Couch Middle School Principal Joe DeMar was named a Champion of Learning Award winner in the leadership category. Cathryn Rodgers, Eisenhower Elementary second-grade teacher, was one of three K-6 Finalists.
- Dr. Dan Beck, Upper St. Clair High School assistant principal, was named the 2020 Pennsylvania

Association of Student Councils Principal of the Year.

- Jennifer Kirk, Upper St. Clair High School counselor and curriculum leader, was elected as the 66th president of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association.
- Upper St. Clair High School Student Council Sponsor Brooke

Tarconson was named Pennsylvania Association of Student Council's Region B High School Advisor of the Year.

- Dr. Christine Mussomeli, Boyce Middle School assistant principal, was elected president for the West Region of the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Educators.



Class of 2020

Where are they now?

The University of Akron
The University of Alabama
Allegheny College
American University
Arizona State University-Tempe
The University of Arizona
Auburn University
Beacon College
Bella Capelli Academy
Boston College
Boston University
Bradley University
Bucknell University
Butler University
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
California University of Pennsylvania
University of California-Davis
Canisius College
Capital University
Carlow University
Carnegie Mellon University
Case Western Reserve University
Chatham University
Clarion University of Pennsylvania
Clemson University
Cleveland Institute of Art
Cleveland State University
Coastal Carolina University
University of Colorado Boulder
Colorado School of Mines
Community College of Allegheny County
Cornell University
University of Dayton
University of Delaware

Dickinson College
Drexel University
Duquesne University
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania
Elon University
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Florida Southern College
University of Florida
Fordham University
Full Sail University
Gannon University
Gardner-Webb University
George Washington University
Georgetown University
Georgia Institute of Technology
University of Georgia
Grove City College
High Point University
Hocking College
Indiana University-Bloomington
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Ithaca College
John Carroll University
Johns Hopkins University
Kent State University
University of Kentucky
Kenyon College
Lewis University
Liberty University
Mercyhurst University
Miami University-Oxford
University of Miami
Michigan State University
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

class of
2020



University of Mississippi
University of New Hampshire
Northwestern University
University of Notre Dame
Nova Southeastern University
Ohio University
The Ohio State University
Pace University
Parkway West Vocational Tech. School
Pennsylvania State University
Penn State Erie-The Behrend College
University of Pittsburgh
University of Pittsburgh-Greensburg
University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown
Pittsburgh Technical College
Queens University of Charlotte
Radford University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Robert Morris University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Saint Louis University
Saint Mary's College
Sarah Lawrence College
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
Syracuse University
The University of Tampa
Temple University
Tufts University
University of Amsterdam
University of Cambridge
UPMC Shadyside School of Nursing
Utah State University
Vanderbilt University
Vet Tech Institute
Virginia Tech
University of Virginia
Wagner College
Washington & Jefferson College
Washington and Lee University
Waynesburg University
West Liberty University
West Virginia University
The College of William and Mary
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
The College of Wooster

