

The Source

For Shelby Township and Utica

Sunday, November 22, 2015

\$.50

[FACEBOOK.COM/ADVISORSOURCEMEDIA](https://www.facebook.com/ADVISORSOURCEMEDIA)

[TWITTER.COM/ADVISORSOURCE](https://twitter.com/ADVISORSOURCE)

sourcenenewspapers.com

Utica Community Schools gets an 'A' in finance from auditors

By FRANK DEFRANK

For The Source

When it comes to finances, Utica Community Schools got an "A" last year.

That's the conclusion of the Plante Moran auditing firm, which earlier this week delivered to the Board of Education its audit report for the 2014-2015 school year.

For the 12th straight year, the auditor issued an "un-

modified" opinion, which means Utica conducts its financial business to the highest standard the auditor can bestow.

"The unmodified opinion is the highest form of assurance we can provide, and is evidence that Utica Community Schools is committed to exemplary accounting and budgeting principles," said Donna Hanson, a certified public accountant and partner in Plante

Moran.

Hanson made her presentation earlier this week at a regular meeting of the Board of Education. Among the highlights of the report:

- Utica spent \$270.7 million during the 2014-2015 school year, with 80 cents of every dollar going to support classroom instruction, including teachers, counselors and paraprofessionals;
- 90 percent of all dis-

trict expenses are dedicated to staffing costs, which includes salaries and benefits for some 3,500 employees.

• Although Utica spent nearly \$271 million in 2014-2015, the district realized just \$264 million in revenues. The district balanced its budget through budget cuts, the sale of property and tapping its equity fund;

• The audit reported the district's fund balance at

\$26 million, or about 9.6 percent of its overall budget.

"The audit is a positive message for our residents, but it also demonstrates the work that needs to be done to ensure the financial future of our district," said Robert Ross, Board of Education treasurer.

With an estimated 28,160 students, Utica Community Schools is the second-largest school district in Mich-

igan and by far the largest in Macomb County.

Despite its size, the district has suffered in recent years from declining enrollment, as have most county school districts. About 81 percent of Utica's funding coming from the state of Michigan, with payments based on student enrollment.

A complete copy of the Plante Moran audit is available at www.uticak12.org.