Fall Newsletter

United North Elementary

3-2-1 Board Report
October 2026

Kinder Success!

Our kinders maintained over the summer with 73% of our incoming first graders meeting or exceeding coming into the school year. This shows great success of smaller class sizes and our Fundations Phonics and Benchmark Reading programs.

Reading					
Early Lit Fall	Early Lit Fall Mid	Early Lit Winter	Reading Winter	Reading Spring Mid	Reading Spring
4	0	0	0	0	0
20	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
73.53%	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!

United North + Monmouth College



MTSS Team

Our MTSS/RtI team presented at Monmouth College to the Exceptional Learning class. We were invited to explain our MTSS procedures. We discussed our intervention process, data days, the 3 tiers of support within a classroom, how to collect data and present it, as well as working with families to support all aspects of students who are struggling. Our MTSS team consists of:

Mrs. Wallace, Principal
Mrs. Bertelsen, Interventionist/Coordinator
Mrs. Clayton, School Counselor
Mrs. Sanchez, classroom teacher (teachers switch out based on students being brought to the team)

After our presentation, we had a great question/answer session with the students.

Playground Upgrade

Playground 2026

This summer we updated our playground by extending the mulch area, adding 5 new equipment pieces, a fence for safety measures, a walking path around the playground painted with sensory activities. We had many volunteers to make it happen and we are so thankful! The kids have been enjoying the new features!



Screen time



Screen time is becoming an increasing concern at school. Many studies show that excessive screen time can lead to behavior issues, decreased attention span, and mental health concerns.

Playground Needs

While adding our playground equipment this summer, it really brought out how weathered our old big equipment is. It could really use an upgrade as well.



Important Dates

Oct 22 — **P/T Conferences**
4-8pm

Oct 23 — **P/T Conferences**
No School

Oct. 30 — **Halloween Activities**
1:30-3:00pm

United Unplugged

We are in the works of creating a monthly family challenge, encouraging families to be mindful of screen time and do activities that don't involve screens!!

United West Elementary Board Report, October 2

Successes:

PTO Family Game Night

A portion of our school improvement plan is family engagement. We held our first Family Game Night September 16 in order to give families an opportunity to visit the building informally prior to Parent-Teacher Conferences in October. Over thirty families enjoyed traditional card and board games in the cafeteria as well as gross motor activities in the gym. Families were treated to pizza slices and drinks as well.







Outdoor Classroom

The first two phases of our outdoor classroom project were completed by July. The funding for the all weather tables and concrete floor came through fundraising led by the PTO totalling $15, 700 over the last two years. In addition, two all weather benches were installed in the playground area. The goal this year is to raise funds for roof structure for the classroom.







Bridges Math

Another goal in our school improvement plan this year is to raise our 1st-3rd grade STAR Math scores to the point where 70% are at or above the 50th percentile by the last benchmarking period in April. The K-3 teachers are off to a terrific start implementing the new Bridges Math curriculum. While the planning and preparation is extensive, teachers have reported they are pleased with the discussions and connections the students are making with the curriculum. We are also seeing more students enjoying math more than before as well.









Concerns:

Tier 2 Character Strong and Check Yourself

A school improvement goal is to reduce behavior incidents by 25% through the use of the Tier 2 Character Strong program. We've implemented the Tier 1 program previously. Tier 2 concentrates on coping, regulation, relationships and self-management. In addition, we've implemented Check Yourself for all K-3 students which focuses on hands, eyes, ears, mouth and body when transitioning throughout the building.



United Intermediate School

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United Intermediate School: 3 Reasons to Celebrate

Positive Office Referrals: At UIS, we love celebrating students who are doing amazing things! Shooting Stars are our positive office referrals, students who have been successful, shown kindness, gone above and beyond, or simply amazed their teachers in some special way. These students are recognized at Morning Assembly in front of our entire school, giving us the opportunity to celebrate the positive choices and actions happening throughout our building. Their names are also added to our Hallway of Stars! And here's something worth celebrating: we have more positive office referrals than major disciplinary referrals! To date, we have 76 unique referrals! That means there are more students being recognized for doing awesome things than there are students being sent to the office for major behaviors. That is something to be proud of, and it shows that our students are doing some pretty amazing things at UIS!



Bridges Math Program: We are also seeing so many benefits from our new math program! Math may look a little different this year as our teachers learn to navigate the new materials and approach alongside their students. While there is certainly a learning curve, we are already seeing students develop a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. One of the things we are especially excited about is the opportunity for students to discover mathematical concepts rather than simply being given the answers. Students are spending more time thinking, exploring, explaining their reasoning, and talking through their ideas with their classmates. These conversations are helping students learn from one another and develop a stronger understanding of not just how to solve a problem, but why a strategy works. We are also seeing students reinforce their learning through games and hands-on activities. These experiences give students the opportunity to practice important skills in a way that feels engaging and meaningful while allowing teachers to listen to student thinking and identify areas where additional support may be needed. There is a lot of purposeful learning happening during what may sometimes look like play!





Celebrating UIS Readers: Our readers are taking off at UIS! We currently have several students approaching one million words read, which will earn them a spot in our UIS Reading Hall of Fame.

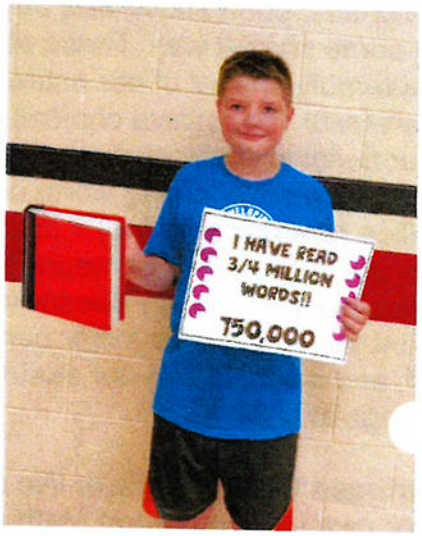
Even more impressive, UIS students have collectively read just over 12 million words so far this year!

We are also continuing to grow and strengthen our library collection this year so our students have plenty of new and exciting books to discover. We are incredibly proud of the reading growth happening at UIS and can't wait to see how many more words our students read this year!





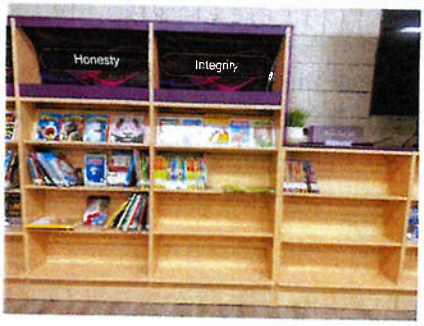




United Intermediate School: 2 Reasons to Show Concern

Library Books: UIS serves readers across a wide range of reading levels, so we need a variety of texts to ensure every student has books that are accessible, engaging, and appropriately challenging. We are grateful for the funding that helped us establish our library; however, our avid readers are quickly outpacing our collection. Some students are reading 500,000 to 1 million words in a single quarter, making it challenging to keep fresh, engaging books in their hands. Expanding our collection will help us continue to foster a strong culture of reading and meet the needs of all our students.





Standards-Based Grading: The rollout of standards-based grading, including its expansion to sixth grade, has been challenging as teachers learn to navigate both a new grading system and new curriculum. Shifting mindsets, aligning standards, and implementing new instructional strategies has been demanding this year. Our instructional coach, Vanessa Witherell, has provided consistent support throughout the transition and across grade levels. Additionally, our new teachers are receiving ongoing support through weekly admin check-ins and mentor meetings. While the process has been taxing, we recognize that this work will provide

long term benefits for student learning and more meaningful measures of student progress.	
United Intermediate School: 1 Step to Address a Concern	
Library Collection Solutions: Our librarian is developing a wish list of high interest titles to help expand and diversify our library collection. With the support of our PTO, the wishlist will be shared through a QR code, giving families and community members an easy way to donate books. We have already received several generous donations from community members, and we hope to continue building community support to keep our students reading and our library growing.	

United Junior Senior High School

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To: Mr. Tom Hawkins, Superintendent of Schools
From: Michael Washabaugh, Principal
Date: October 2, 2026

United Junior Senior High School: Celebrate

1. Back-To-School Events/1st Quarter Events

United Junior Senior High School began the 2026–27 school year with on-site registration on July 30 and 31. Thank you to our secretaries, counselors, athletic directors, and transportation for working together to make registration a successful start to the school year. We then held two institute days on August 10 and 11. It was great to welcome our faculty and staff back to campus and prepare for the start of the new school year. On August 11, UJSHS hosted Backpack Night, which had a tremendous turnout from our staff, students, parents, and community members. A special thank you to Junior High Counselor Morgan Stuart for organizing our community partners and helping make the event a success. We also appreciate Acaí with Me and Eddie B's BBQ for providing food trucks for our families. On August 12, we welcomed students back for the first day of school. The day included Senior Sunrise, class meetings to review and establish expectations, and a great first day of school! The senior class gathered at the football field for Senior Sunrise before beginning the school day. We wrapped up the first week of school with our Fall Athletic and Activities Kick-Off. This event showcased the many athletic teams and activities available to our junior high and high school students. Thank you to the United Booster Club for organizing the event and creating a great experience for our students and families. The first quarter has also included several exciting events, highlighted by Homecoming Week, September 13–18. The week provided numerous opportunities for students to participate in activities and showcase their school spirit. The high school student council sold 240 tickets to the Homecoming Dance on Saturday, September 18.



2. 1st Quarter Attendance

A key focus this year with staff, students, parents/guardians, and community stakeholders has been the importance of regular school attendance and increasing awareness of chronic absenteeism. Administration began the school year by discussing the importance of daily attendance with students during class meetings, including an explanation of what chronic absenteeism is and how it can impact student achievement and overall success. Attendance and chronic absenteeism were also highlighted in the September UJSHS Newsletter to help educate parents/guardians and reinforce the importance of consistent school attendance. Below is the attendance data for the first quarter:

	Junior High	HighSchool
August	**95.2%**	**94.8%**
September	**94.7%**	**94.3%**
Running Total	**94.8%**	**94.4%**

3. **Campus Branding/Building Upkeep**

Following my one-to-one meetings with staff members this summer, the condition of the building and school spirit emerged as common themes. One of our goals this year is to continue the work started by the UJSHS Beautification Committee, including the first phase of our hallway painting project. We have also continued to strengthen school branding throughout the building and campus. This work has included the purchase of school-branded rugs, school-branded boulevard banners, and maximizing the use of our internal television system to promote school activities, student accomplishments, and school messaging. Thank you to Ryan Molek, Roger Shurtz, and Drew Witherell for their help in getting these projects started and for their work to improve the school environment for our students. I would also like to thank the four members of our custodial team for their continued efforts to maintain the building. The building has been re-zoned to ensure that every learning space is cleaned each day. As staff members have returned to the building, I have also asked them to submit work orders for items that need to be addressed in their learning spaces. During the first quarter, our custodial and maintenance teams worked together to complete 19 work orders. We also recently completed a project to repair or replace all non-functioning ballasts and light tubes in the building's hallways. Finally, thank you to the members of our SEL Team, SIP Team, and Beautification Committee for their ongoing work to address the climate/culture and physical needs of our building.



United Junior Senior High School: Concern

1. Student-Parent Communication During the School Day

With the recent changes to and enforcement of the cell phone/technology policy outlined in the student handbook, there has been an increased need for students to have appropriate ways to communicate with their parents and guardians during the school day. In previous years, students often used their personal devices to call or text their parents and guardians during the school day. With the updated expectations, students have done a great job of following the new procedures by coming to the office and asking for permission to use a staff member's office phone or, with administrative approval, their personal cell phone to contact a parent or guardian. We appreciate our students' cooperation and their willingness to adapt to the updated expectations. Staff and administration will continue to support students and families while maintaining the expectations outlined in our cell phone/technology policy.

2. English Language Services at UJSHS

Over the summer, UJSHS welcomed three students who transferred into our building and had previously qualified for English Learner (EL) services in their former districts. At the building level, we reviewed and revised our process to ensure alignment with ISBE requirements for identifying and supporting students who qualify for English Learner services. In addition to reviewing WIDA scores received as part of the student transfer process, we have implemented a language screener to assess each student's current level of language proficiency. This additional screening helps us better understand individual student needs and determine appropriate supports. As we progress through the school year, we are also incorporating these students into our building-level MTSS process to provide additional language acquisition support and monitor their progress. Our goal is to ensure that each student receives the appropriate resources and support to be successful academically and in their language development.

United Junior Senior High School: Action Step

1. Student Phones Installed

Students and staff have done a tremendous job implementing and upholding the new cell phone/technology policy. During the first few weeks of school, there was a need to provide students with an appropriate way to contact their parents and guardians throughout the school day. Administration worked with Roger Shurtz to have a student phone installed in both the high school and junior high offices. This has provided students with a convenient way to contact their parents and guardians without needing to request the use of a personal device. The addition of the student phones has helped address this need while allowing us to maintain the expectations outlined in the updated cell phone and technology policy.

Parent Communication: 1st Quarter

September Newsletter



October Newsletter



Administration-Parent Contacts: 139