



# Community Letter

Winter 2005

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

## Q & A:

### Do Plainville test scores show improvements?

Plainville High School's student achievement, as measured by the Connecticut Academic Performance Test have improved over the past four years. Writing scores are 11 percentage points higher. The 2004 results revealed the best scores in four years in science, writing, and reading with an average gain of 7 points. Our high school students scored an average of 5 points above the state in all subject areas.

Grade 8 mathematics scores have risen significantly, although we continue to monitor mathematics achievement throughout the district.

### How will we improve student achievement across the district?

Significant changes have been made to the mathematics program to address areas in need of improvement in graphing, estimation and measurement, ratios, proportions and percents. Students are devoting more time to writing in all disciplines to improve their written expression. Additional support is being provided to students most in need of help. The staff is also looking at each child who is at-risk for school failure and individualizing their plans to help every student succeed.

## Message from the Board of Education

Improving student achievement is the goal of the Plainville Board of Education, and we assess achievement in several ways. Standardized tests are an important part of assessing students and curriculum. The intent of these tests is to follow trends over time. The high stakes of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has increased the visibility and scrutiny of these tests, but the desire to improve performance came well before NCLB.

Other indicators, such as a reduced drop out rate, increased participation in Advanced Placement (AP) classes and increased percentage of students attending post secondary education also help monitor the progress for the district.

Recently approved revisions to the math and science curriculum and improvements to AP courses and SAT preparation are aimed directly at improving student achievement. These are continuing steps in our efforts to support students. It is the responsibility of the Board to seek community support for these improvements and the operation of the schools.

As taxpayers ourselves, Board members are always aware of the financial impact of the budget on the community. Our role, as set forth by the State of Connecticut, is to advocate for our schools and our students. During our budget process we will describe the needs of the district, and the impact budget reductions will have on the school system and students. Our effectiveness as a Board hinges upon our ability to communicate with and gain the support of the community especially at the budget vote in April. We urge residents to get involved in the process by attending meetings or speaking with Board members. The schedule, agenda, and minutes of each meeting are posted on our website: [www.plainvilleschools.org](http://www.plainvilleschools.org).

## The Board of Education

**Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D.**

*Superintendent of Schools*

### Board Members:

**Patrick Ringrose, Chairman**

**William Crowley, Vice Chairman**

**Lorri Goldsmith**

**Susan McCarthy**

**Marliss Pavano**

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**Barbara Willard**



### *We Believe:*

Effective communication and collaboration build trust and respect

A safe, caring, learning environment embraces diversity and upholds individual accountability

A high quality curriculum gives serious consideration to the arts, literacy and technology

In a shared responsibility in establishing high learning expectations

# Standardized Testing: A Snapshot of Student Performance

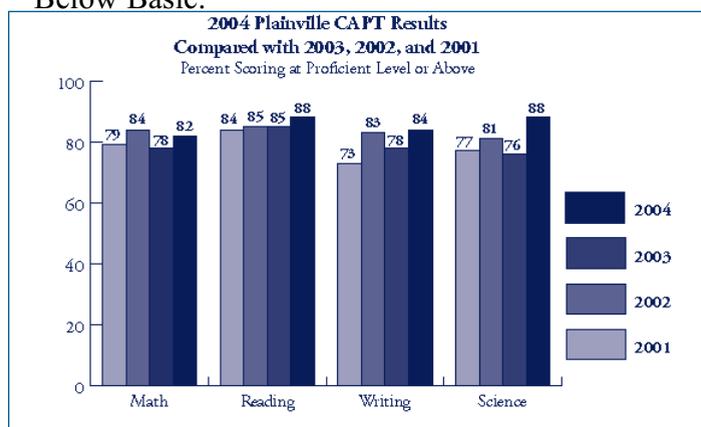
## GRADE 10 STUDENTS ADVANCE ON STATE CAPT

Last year's sophomore students posted some of Plainville's highest proficiency scores to date on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). In science and writing, nearly 88% of Plainville students scored at the proficient level or higher. In math and reading, more than 80% of the students scored proficiency or better. Part of this success is due to our careful realignment of curriculum, which has been particularly effective in the science area. In Connecticut, CAPT has become a high stakes test. Beginning with the Class of 2006, it will be one way students demonstrate academic proficiency for graduation. Sophomores who fail to meet the goal must retake the test as juniors, pass a department exam, score 450 or higher on SAT tests, or use other measures to demonstrate their knowledge.

### ABOUT THE TEST

The CAPT measures students' abilities to apply what they have learned in school to situations they may face in life. The state goal for each test repre-

sents a demanding level of achievement in four content areas: Mathematics, Science, Reading Across the Disciplines and Writing Across the Disciplines. The No Child Left Behind Act requires every state to adopt both proficiency and goal level standards to measure the progress of its students. The State Board of Education, with the recommendation of committees of educators, established score ranges for five different performance levels. From highest to lowest these are: Level 5-Advanced, Level 4-Goal, Level 3-Proficient, Level 2-Basic, Level 1-Below Basic.



## CONNECTICUT MASTERY TEST RESULTS

Over time, standardized assessments like the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) give us important information about our school district's progress toward reaching the high educational standards set by the state. Connecticut's goal standards exceed those set by No Child Left Behind (NCLB); and achievement trends guide our curriculum development and resource allocation planning.

Students in grades 4, 6, and 8 are tested on reading, writing, and mathematics in the CMT. Reading tests assess comprehension; writing requires an extensive response and assesses editing and revision; math focuses on students' problem solving skills and understanding of math concepts. When compared to similar towns, Plainville students' 2004 performance was in line with prior years. Over the four-year administration of the third generation of CMT, Plainville student performance has remained relatively stable in grade 6. Declining scores in grade 6 and in grade 4 mathematics and reading scores are noted

exceptions to be monitored and addressed.

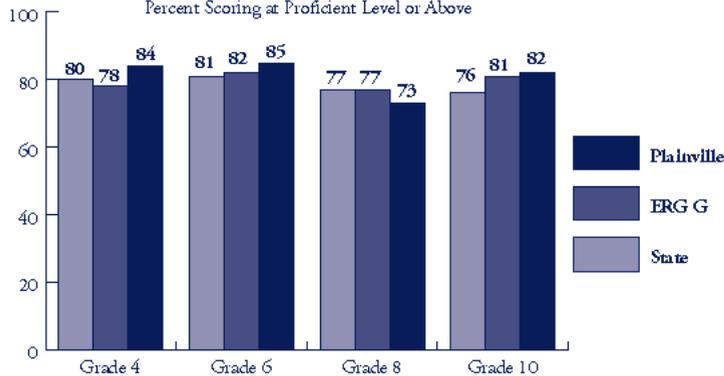
Our most impressive test scoring was in grade 6, where 88% of the students scored at the proficiency level or higher in writing.

Following NCLB guidelines, Connecticut's testing program is moving into its next phase. In spring of 2006, all students in grades 3 through 8 will be tested in Generation 4 of the CMT.

2001-2004 Plainville CMT Results by Grade for Reading, Writing, Mathematics													
Reading													
	2001				2002				2003				2004
Grade	4				6				8				
Levels 3, 4 & 5 Proficiency & Above	79	75	68	66	74	76	80	74	82	79	75	82	
Writing													
	2001				2002				2003				2004
Grade	4				6				8				
Levels 3, 4 & 5 Proficiency & Above	85	87	84	86	84	87	83	88	83	75	75	79	
Mathematics													
	2001				2002				2003				2004
Grade	4				6				8				
Levels 3, 4 & 5 Proficiency & Above	91	86	84	79	83	85	85	81	84	72	73	79	

# Standardized Testing: Continued

**2003-04 Plainville Proficiency in Mathematics**  
**Compared with ERG G and State Results**  
 Percent Scoring at Proficient Level or Above



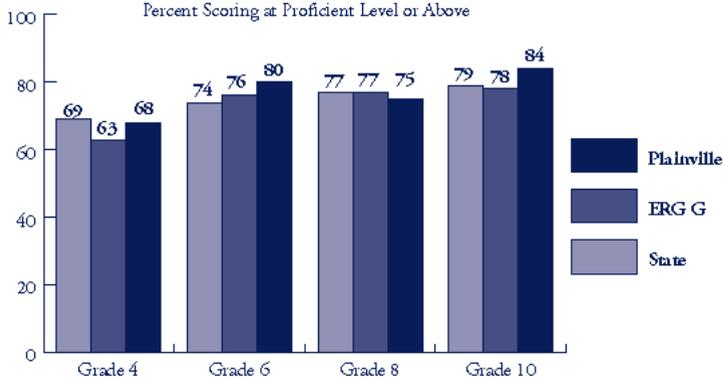
## MEASURING SUCCESS

Year-to-year trends only give us part of the picture for measuring student performance. Another measure of success is to compare Plainville's test scores to statewide results and results from similar towns. Plainville fits into an Education Reference Group of similar towns called "ERG G." Results by subject area for mathematics, reading and writing are highlighted on this page.

### Mathematics

More than 80% of our Plainville students in grades 4, 6 and 10 reached proficiency in math, outperforming ERG G and statewide results.

**2003-04 Plainville Proficiency in Reading**  
**Compared with ERG G and State Results**  
 Percent Scoring at Proficient Level or Above



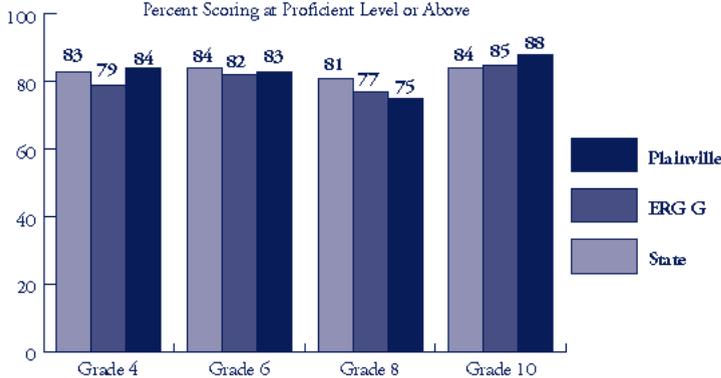
### Reading

Plainville students' results in grades 6 and 10 outperformed ERG G and statewide results in reading. The percentage of grade 4 students scoring at the proficient level or higher exceeded the ERG G average and fell slightly short of the statewide average. Grade 8 student performance was only slightly below both ERG G and the state.

### Writing

In the area of writing, Plainville students in grades 4 and 10 exceeded the proficiency results of both ERG G and the state. Grade 6 Plainville students outperformed their ERG G peers and fell just short of the statewide average.

**2003-04 Plainville Proficiency in Writing**  
**Compared with ERG G and State Results**  
 Percent Scoring at Proficient Level or Above



### Science

Science is not included in the charts since it is only tested at the tenth grade level. Starting in 2007, elementary students will be tested in science. However, it is worth noting that Plainville students' science CAPT test scores rose to an all-time high of 87.6%, exceeding both the ERG G average (86%) and the statewide average (81.7%).

# Long Range Plan Update

The first phase of the Long Range Plan, the construction and renovation of Linden Street School, continues to be on schedule and within budget. On January 19th the school community watched as one of the final beams was hoisted into place after all Linden students and staff had the privilege of signing the beam to commemorate the event. The new building is scheduled to open in January of 2006.

The Long Range Plan was developed to repair and update school buildings in the most cost-effective manner possible. The order of projects is based on the use of the oldest portion of Linden School for "swing space." Toffolon renovations can take place while students are housed at the Linden building, preventing the need to purchase expensive temporary classrooms that have no permanent value. Once Toffolon is complete and students return, the Board of Education offices at the high school would move into the oldest portion of Linden. The vacated space at the high school will be renovated into additional classrooms.

The Plainville Schools Steering Committee has been charged by the Town Council to act as a temporary Building Committee and plan a spring referendum to renovate Toffolon School, Plainville High School, and the build-out of storage space into classrooms at the Middle School of Plainville. A preliminary plan has been developed but a final decision regarding the scope of the spring referendum will hinge on project costs.

L i n d e n   i s   t h e      t o   t h e   L o n g   R a n g e   P l a n

## Let's Chat With...



### Let's Chat With...James Bondi, Food Service Director

*James Bondi has recently joined Plainville Community Schools as Food Service Director. He has been in the food service industry for 24 years and has worked in various school systems in Connecticut over the past 11 years. He attended Johnson and Wales College, and is certified by the National Restaurant Association as a Food Management Professional.*

#### **Since your arrival, what changes have you made to cafeteria services?**

We have made a number of changes to the Food Service Department. First, we are introducing more healthy and nutritious food items at all five schools, such as featuring a salad entree at the elementary school level. Also, we are working toward improving the efficiency of the cafeterias through a change in workflow that will reduce waiting lines and maximize the time that students have to eat lunch. In addition, we are in the process of forming a Food Services Advisory Council at each school. The Council will include students, staff, and parents. The group will work together with the Food Services Department to further improve offerings and service in the school cafeterias.

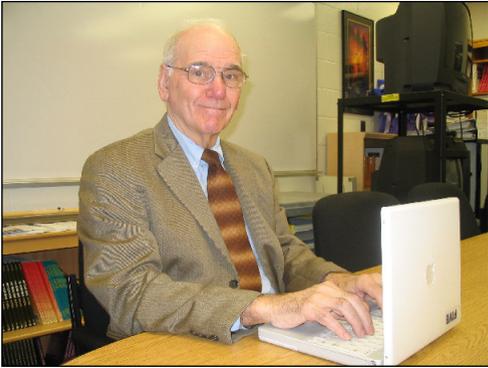
#### **How are the menus determined?**

Menus are based on state and federal guidelines for nutrition. Within these parameters, we aim to provide a variety of healthy and nutritional items that students will enjoy. We are introducing new selections on a continual basis district-wide. In addition, suggestions from students and parents are always welcome. I can be reached by telephone at 793-3234 or by email: [bondij@plainvilleschools.org](mailto:bondij@plainvilleschools.org).

#### **What is your vision for the food services department?**

Our long term plan focuses on continuing to upgrade the quality of the food selections, as we strive to provide a variety of healthy and nutritious foods at all schools. Additionally, our vision is to change the perception of the school cafeteria. We want students and staff to enjoy more of a restaurant-like atmosphere, including full breakfast selections and additional gourmet items.

# Virtual Adult High School



*"Distance Learning is a concept that places accountability for success upon the learner, combining computer technology with individualized programs to meet the needs of the student. Strengthened by support from local mentors and individual teachers, it allows the learner to chart their own schedule and pace for success."*

**Arthur Corbeil,  
Credit Diploma Program Instructor**

Plainville Adult Education was recently selected to participate in the State of Connecticut's Virtual Adult High School project for 2004-2005. The program will meet the needs of adult students who have not completed their high school diploma. The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium, (CTDLC), initially worked collaboratively with four urban districts to develop the model for a web-based adult high school credit program.

Students from Plainville's Adult Education program will be eligible, at no cost to the district, to enroll in the Virtual Adult High

School courses beginning in the spring semester, 2005. Eleven courses will enroll 20 students from 12 participating districts on a first come first served basis. A group of Adult Education staff has been trained, while the technology and space requirements in Plainville are being addressed. Arthur Corbeil, Adult Education Mathematics Instructor and trained Distance Learning Mentor explains, "Distance Learning is a concept that places accountability for success upon the learner, combining computer technology with individualized programs to meet the needs of the student. Strengthened by support

from local mentors and individual teachers, it allows the learner to chart their own schedule and pace for success."

"Our goal is to enroll eight of our students in both the orientation and one or more of the eleven course offerings in the spring semester, 2005," noted Julia Marshall, Adult Education Director. "This program enhances the total curriculum and addresses the fact that students learn in different ways. It allows the students more opportunity to complete their education through expanded course offerings."

## Grant from GE to Provide Leadership Training

Plainville Community Schools is the recipient of a \$100,000 grant from the GE Foundation, the philanthropic organization of General Electric. Chris Fuselier, General Manager of Industrial Technology at General Electric, presented the two-year grant to the Board of Education, at the January 10th Board of Education meeting.

The grant will be used to develop and implement a professional development program modeled after General Electric's executive leadership and management training process. The goal of the program is to improve student performance by improving the leadership skills of district administrators. Administrators from Plainville Community Schools will work together with representatives from General Electric and the Connecticut Center for School Change, to customize seminars for educators.

The development will be a true collaboration, relying on expertise from all participating partners. Components will include materials developed by GE and successfully used in the corporation's leadership development program, the Plainville district's professional development and supervisory evaluation model, and the Connecticut Center for School Change's knowledge of instructional leadership. The program is scheduled to begin immediately, with two educational leadership training modules in place by January, 2006.

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*The No Child Left Behind Federal legislation requires strong parent and community knowledge about our schools and Federal programs. As part of our district communication efforts, we have created the Plainville Board of Education's Community Letter. Funding is provided through grants including Title V Federal Funds and a Strategic planning Grant from General Electric.*

## **After School Programs Expand!**

Plainville Community Schools was recently awarded \$50,000 by the State of Connecticut to provide after-school programs to students in the community. State Representative Elizabeth Boukus, a Plainville resident, has been instrumental in focusing the State's attention on the importance of quality programs before and after school. Superintendent Binkowski was pleased to receive the grant which will enable the district to assess the need for childcare for our students and to begin to expand the after-school programs offered. Kenneth and Anthony Gnazzo, former Plainville Community Schools' students, donated \$25,000 from the William and Sylvia Gnazzo Trust to support planning and programs, which will begin this spring. Additionally, Farmington Savings Bank and the United Way have committed to joining the partnership.

The school system is seeking to expand the partnership to include additional businesses and volunteer support from the community. Help is needed to assist staff in providing homework support and to do a variety of activities with the students. The program's pilot session will be held at the Middle School of Plainville, twice per week, beginning in March, and will target students in grades 5-8. Activities will include cooking, arts and crafts, sports, music, and more. Volunteers are needed! Call Lynn Davis, Volunteer Coordinator, at 793-3209 to discuss your hobbies and interests and how you can be involved.