



# Community Letter

April 2007

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

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## Message from the Board of Education

The last board of education message dealt with the differences in education over time. The impact of special education, the global economy and No Child Left Behind were discussed. Another area where schools of today differ from the past is in the facilities that are used to educate our students. Schools built 30 or 40 years ago were not constructed to be handicapped accessible. They lack ramps and elevators, and even the width of classroom and bathroom doors can prevent students with special needs from attending. Fire safety codes have also changed, requiring new schools to be equipped with sprinklers. Another safety issue with older schools is the presence of hazardous materials such as asbestos. Older school buildings often lack the kind of spaces needed today where small group instruction or one on one tutoring takes place. Special Education is an area that has required many additional classrooms for programs that are mandated to meet the needs of these students. The increased use of computers has also created difficulties as wiring for these computers was never planned in older buildings. Building security is also an issue. Schools must have doors that close properly and access that can be limited to ensure a safe atmosphere. The proximity of the office to the entrance doors in older buildings can even be a problem. We have also learned over the years about the importance of air quality in buildings. Older buildings often have inadequate air flow. Air conditioning plays a critical role in maintaining air quality by reducing moisture. The Plainville Board of Education strives to have all of our buildings: 1. accessible to handicapped students and visitors, 2. meet fire safety codes and be free of hazardous materials, 3. provide appropriate spaces for students and staff, and 4. secure and healthy. The Long Range Plan for Plainville Community Schools is driven by these goals and we have made great strides in this area with the support of the Plainville community.

## Student Spotlight: Plainville High School's CANstruction

By: Alex Cimino, Brandon Giando, and Samantha Sirois

Every year, many people struggle to deal with the issue of hunger, and may have trouble providing food for their families. CANstruction is a competition started by the American Institute of Architects that combines the spirit of design with a unique way to tackle world hunger. Teams led by schools and architecture firms compete by designing sculptures made entirely from canned goods. After the competition, the cans will be donated to local food banks. Plainville High School's

Architecture classes will be one of the teams competing in CANstruction on May 11, at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. The architecture students cannot compete without community support. Donations will allow the class to purchase the necessary canned goods and to participate in the competition. The students are well on their way to developing the design for their structure. Mrs. Kulpa, the teacher leading the students, said, "The students are working very well together to try and raise money for the cans, and

they are very excited to compete in CANstruction." If you would like additional information about the project, please feel free to contact Mrs. Kulpa via email at [kulpal@plainvilleschools.org](mailto:kulpal@plainvilleschools.org)



(left to right) Samantha Sirois, Alex Cimino, and Brandon Giando

# The Long Range Plan

*The Long Range Plan for the school district intends to improve the school buildings.*

*There are a number of projects in progress.*

## HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

With the recent installation of the lift and the addition of railings near the stairs, the high school auditorium project is nearly done--stage lighting and air conditioning will be completed in the full high school project. A sound system has also been added and the auditorium has been open for many events in the last couple of months. A rededication of the facility was held in December prior to the high school choral performance, and numerous local citizens were honored for their efforts to make the project successful.

## HIGH SCHOOL RENOVATION

The like new renovation of the high school is in full swing. Day in and day out students and staff are tolerating construction and destruction on the site in order to complete the project while still operating a school of almost 900 students. High School Principal, Greg Ziogas, reported progress on the project at the March board of education meeting. He stated that Phase II (the former superintendent's office area) is almost complete and Phase III (the upstairs 200 corridor) would begin in April. Turner Construction is handling the construction management on this project and Mr. Ziogas reported that the firm is doing an excellent job under difficult

conditions. There have been a few issues along the way with the hot water system knocked off line and the fire alarms inadvertently being disconnected. These problems were resolved shortly after being identified. There was a "quiet time" during CAPT testing for the high school students, but renovations are back in full swing again.

## TOFFOLON SCHOOL RENOVATION

Town voters turned out in very low numbers and the additional funding requested for the Toffolon School renovation project was narrowly defeated on March 6th. A short time after the vote, the board and council chairpersons met with the town manager, superintendent of schools, chair of the Capital Projects Building Committee and other employees. Those present agreed to try to move the project forward with additional funding for a revised project that would scale back some portions of the project in order to lower the total cost. At a future date another referendum will come before town voters in order to request the funds necessary to meet the board specifications for the Toffolon School and to complete the necessary building code renovations. With each passing month the estimated costs for the project continue to rise as construction costs and inflation continue to increase.

## Budget News

At the beginning of March, the town manager and superintendent presented their budgets to the town council and a budget hearing was held for Plainville citizens.

Details about the budgets were discussed during department meetings with the town council. At the end of March, the town council decided to recommend to voters a board of education operating budget of \$31,845,921 which is an increase of 4.86% above the current year budget. While this increase will not fund all of the improvements that the board hoped to institute in the coming year, it will allow existing programs to continue and it will also fund the 20 minute increase in the school day for students.

## Did You Know?

Plainville High School Facilities Department Custodian, Michael Turcotte, has organized a Mother's Day Ham Dinner and Jazz Concert. The event will take place at Plainville High School. The jazz portion of the concert will feature performances by the Plainville High School Jazz Band and alumni, musicians from Central Connecticut State University, and local performers. Turcotte commented, "I'm organizing this to help cut costs associated with the Plainville High School Music Department's December performance in Florida. I'm a parent of a former band member, and I recognized a need to help out." For further information, please call Plainville High School: 793-3220.



***Explain your role as director of curriculum, instruction and assessment.***

In my role, I am responsible for coordinating the curriculum for grades K-12 in all subjects. I work with teachers from all schools and all grades to determine what the students need to learn in each grade to prepare them for success throughout their school years and beyond. I also work with teachers to select and use the best instructional practices to help students learn. And, finally, I am responsible for coordinating the district's assessment plan which includes both the CMT and CAPT assessments as well as our own local assessments such as monthly math and writing prompts that help us determine the strengths and weaknesses of our students.

***What do you enjoy most about your position?***

Without doubt, my favorite part of the job is working with our teachers to develop curriculum and improve instruction. Their enthusiasm for learning and teaching is infectious, and their dedication and commitment to our students makes my work a joy.

***What are the key issues or challenges that you face?***

Certainly the pressures of NCLB and high stakes testing are challenging, particularly when we consider the importance of providing a well-rounded, balanced program of academic learning and learning in the arts. In addition, meeting the needs of each child, stretching each one to his or her fullest potential is an on-going challenge that I fully embrace.

***How is curriculum determined?***

We begin by examining the state curriculum frameworks, which provide a road map for us to follow. From there, we determine which route will work best for us in Plainville, based upon our students' needs and the interests and talents of our faculty. We develop assessments that will enable us to see what our students know, understand and are able to do. All of this forms the core of our curriculum and helps our teachers determine the day to day instruction for our children.

***What professional accomplishment are you most proud of?***

I have been blessed throughout my career with the opportunities to learn and grow as an educator. If I had to select just one of these opportunities to highlight, it would be the work that I did to become a member of the first group of teachers to achieve national certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching

Standards. This rigorous portfolio and testing process helped me to become a better teacher and a better leader by demanding consistent reflection on my teaching as I worked to improve instruction for each child in my class. Because I was part of the inaugural group, I had the opportunity to attend a White House reception hosted by President and Mrs. Clinton, and the chance to speak at length with the President about what it means to me to be an educator.

***What is your top priority?***

My top priority is to ensure that each of our curriculum areas is aligned so that learning occurs in an appropriate sequence as we move from kindergarten through 12th grade. This year brings a particular focus on mathematics as we continue to provide a program that meets the needs of our diverse learners, challenging and supporting each child to reach his or her fullest potential.

***Describe your leadership style.***

In a word, my leadership style is collaborative. I believe that each one of us has the right and responsibility to be a leader, and I work with groups of teachers to help them develop their capacities for leadership. I know that if we all work in concert, with our eyes on a common goal and with a shared vision in our hearts and minds, we can accomplish great things for the children of Plainville.

## **Adult and Continuing Education**

It's never too late to return to school. Plainville Adult and Continuing Education offers those in need of a high school diploma an opportunity to earn one--free of charge. State regulations require that potential students must be at least 16 years of age and officially withdrawn from school. There are two programs available, each designed to fit the unique needs of today's busy student: The Adult High School Credit Diploma Program and the GED (General Educational Development) test preparation program. Not sure which program is right for you? **Call today, for a confidential consultation: 793-3209. Classes are available year-long.**

## Good News!

*Great things are happening in our school district all the time.*

*Following are some of these good news highlights:*

SUPERINTENDENT KATHLEEN BINKOWSKI, BOARD OF EDUCATION CHAIRPERSON BECKY TYRRELL, AND PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS CRISSI MANN AND SARAH TANNER participated in the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)'s *Day on the Hill* event, which included briefings on pending legislation and potential impact to school districts, an education rally, and visits with legislators at the State Capitol...MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE STUDENT ABIGAIL COUCH AND PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT CRYSTAL BUTLER received the *President's Volunteer Service Award*, as part of the *2007 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards* program recognizing Americans of all ages who have volunteered significant amounts of time in their communities...PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL COACH BOB FREIMUTH has been nominated for the *National Federation High School Baseball Coach of the Year Award*...THE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF PLAINVILLE organized a "guest reader" program, featuring town leaders who shared books with classes throughout the school district as part of *Read Across America Day* activities on March 2nd...MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE STUDENTS PETER DALENA, ALYSSA MILLS, AND MAILE MIRMINA took first place at the Middle School Open Championship Swim Meet held recently at Central Connecticut State University...TOFFOLON AND LINDEN STREET SCHOOLS held a Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) pep rally to kick off testing, and celebrated the completion of the mastery test period and hard work of the students with an "Aloha Party"...PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARIEN WILKERSON AND SARAH TANNER were invited by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) to speak on behalf of proposed Education Bill "HB 7344 An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention of Teachers" to the State of Connecticut General Assembly's Education Committee...THE MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE'S MILITARY MAILROOM held a "support the troops" dance and video conferencing event, which included a live chat with students and their Connecticut Army National Guard pen pals in Afghanistan...PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PATRICK HAGGERTY was one of 14 trombonists statewide who auditioned and were selected to perform with the Connecticut All-State Band at Central Connecticut State University's Welte Hall...WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOURTH GRADERS DYLLAN MARTIN, SARAH GROSSE, SARAH ABDELSAME, COURTNEY GOODALL, ANDREA LYONS, AND DEVON HRYWNIAC will represent Wheeler at the statewide Invention Convention at the University of Connecticut in April...40 PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL DECA MEMBERS participated in the annual statewide Career Development Conference. The Plainville DECA Chapter won 13 state awards, and seven Plainville High School students are eligible to advance and attend the International Career Development Conference in April.

### PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D.**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

#### Board Members:

**William J. Crowley**  
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## Belief Statements

We believe:

- that a quality school system is the core of our community and increases the quality of our lives;
- in a shared responsibility among home, school and community that promotes achievement for all learners;
- in a safe, caring, learning environment that respects individual difference and rejects discrimination of any form;
- in holding all students, faculty, staff, and parents accountable to participate in and maintain a positive learning environment throughout the district;
- a high quality curriculum emphasizes the arts, literacy, and technology; and
- effective communication and collaboration builds trust and respect.