

Community Letter

Fall 2008



Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

Message from the Board of Education

In this issue...

Message from the BOE	Page 1
Plainville's Teacher of the Year	Page 1
Adult Education	Page 1
Budget News	Page 2
Let's Chat With	Page 2
The Long Range Plan	Page 3
Good News!	Page 3
Student Spotlight	Page 4

In a recent article titled *"Hard Times, Hard Cuts"* in the American School Board Journal, the Finance Director for a school district in California stated, "Any cut means someone is losing something." When it comes to educational budget cuts, the story is the same no matter what coast you live on. Since the article was published in May, our economic picture has gotten bleaker with our presidential candidates stating these are the toughest times since the Depression of the 1930's.

There is little doubt that we are facing some difficult challenges. There is also little doubt that education is one of the keys to improving our economic future. How will we continue to fund our schools so that we will meet the needs of all students? There is no

easy answer to this question, but there are some critical steps that we must take. The Board must work closely with the community to find solutions that will create the best outcome. Parents and other community members must take responsibility to engage in the process early so they understand the potential impact of budget decisions. This is no time for political leaders and community members to point fingers and trade insults. The Plainville community has a job to do, and by working together we can bring about the best results. The Board of Education needs the continued support of the Plainville community, and the increased involvement of our families, businesses, and residents. We hope you will consider joining with us to make Plainville schools a true reflection of our town.

Plainville's Teacher of the Year



Claire Fournier
2008-2009

Teacher of the Year

Plainville Community Schools has named Louis Toffolon Elementary School teacher Claire Fournier the 2008-2009 Teacher of the Year. Fournier, a 30 year teaching veteran, has served in her current position as a first grade teacher at Toffolon School for

15 years. She holds a bachelor of arts degree from Saint Joseph's College and a master of arts degree from Southern Connecticut State University. In addition, she holds Reading Recovery certification from the University of Connecticut. "I believe that if teacher DNA really existed, Claire would have it," said Toffolon Principal Lynn Logoyke. "Teaching and learning are not just what Claire does; it is part of what Claire is. She is completely dedicated to the success of each and every one of her students."

Adult Education

A new Pharmacy Technician Training (PTT) Program will be offered through Plainville Adult and Continuing Education at Plainville High School. Facilitated by experienced educators, the program will offer basic instruction in: orientation to the field, federal law, medical review, aseptic technique, calculation, and pharmacy operations. The PTT program will include 150 hours in theory in a computer lab setting. Graduates will be prepared to take the national Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) Exam. All students will receive additional support including: guidance counseling, guest speakers, resume writing and business etiquette workshops, and information about employment opportunities.

For more information, contact the office of Plainville Adult and Continuing Education at 793-3209.

Budget News

The Board of Education's final 2008-09 budget represented an appropriation of \$32,271,879 -- a 2% increase over the FY2007-08 budget. As a result of the Town Council's reductions to the Board of Education's request, the district did not replace two certified positions: a high school guidance counselor and an elementary teacher of English Language Learning. Additionally, 15 non-certified staff positions were eliminated, including 12 who received layoff notices. Also, the paraprofessional workday was reduced by 20 minutes. The 2009-10 budget season is shaping up to be every bit as difficult as that of 2008-09, if not more so. As such, district administration is taking a more proactive approach to educating staff and residents about budget issues. Throughout the fall, Superintendent Binkowski and Business Manager Rich Carmelich are scheduled to attend staff meetings to answer budget questions. In addition, administration plans to create and distribute more informational items on the budget to residents. Another change for the 2009-10 year centers on the creation of the budget. For the first time, the district is taking more of a "zero-based budget" approach. Administrators have been asked to build their supply accounts up from zero. By budgeting in this manner, more emphasis can be placed on how budget items will help achieve district goals, and administrators will need to re-evaluate how line items are used. Finally, the Business Manager and Superintendent have had informal discussions with many residents regarding what can be done to improve the actual budget document. At this point, some

adjustments to the document are being considered, but administration welcomes any additional suggestions on how to make the document more readable and easier to understand.

As always, the district continues to strive for ways, no matter how small, to save taxpayer funds. The district has worked with the transportation company to eliminate three bus runs for the high school and will likely be going out to bid for some significant service contracts. Also, the Business Manager is investigating appropriate ways to utilize reverse auctioning procedures which is now permitted through new state legislation passed during the last legislative session. In short, Plainville Community Schools has been, and will continue to be, a pioneer in seeking new ways to contain costs.

However, while the district strives to save money and to make information more accessible, it will be impossible to maintain the current level of service with increases of approximately 2% per year. Therefore, it is imperative that residents become involved in the process and communicate to town leaders the importance of properly funding educational programs. The following is a summary timeline of budget related events. These events are open to the public and most allow for an audience of citizens.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>January</u> Board establishes goals and holds budget work sessions</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>February</u> Board passes BOE budget</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>March</u> Town Manager/Superintendent present budget to the Town Council; Public Hearing on budget; Town Council budget work sessions</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>April</u> Public Hearing on the budget; All day budget vote</p>

Let's Chat With...Tabitha Manafort, BOE



What is your top priority as a Board member? I want to make my mark. As big or as little as it might be, I want to be a part of something that will ultimately have an everlasting and positive impact on our school system and the students within.

What is the biggest challenge facing public education today? Communication between parents/guardians, teachers, students, Board of Education, Town Council etc., is by far the biggest challenge. We must start with communication in order to have a solid foundation. Without a strong foundation of communication, little or nothing will be accomplished.

What have you enjoyed most about being a Board member? I am enjoying the process of meeting challenges head on, overcoming the obstacles presented, and the opportunity to work with an amazing group of people. It seems as if every day presents itself with a chance to learn something new.

What is your vision for Plainville Community Schools? We need a system that has a strong foundation before we can build the structure. Whether I am in this position for one year, or 25 years (like my dad), we (and by we, not just Board of Education or Town Council, but the community as a whole) need to learn to agree to disagree, listen with an open mind, and communicate our thoughts, fears, ideas, etc., with one another. My vision is to help strengthen a foundation that has been weakening.

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.

PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

At Plainville High School, the only area where construction remains is in the office of the facilities department in the rear of the building. Final preparation for the start up of the boilers has been scheduled and the commissioning of the remaining mechanical equipment is underway. There are still some finishing "punchlist" items being completed and there are some additional items that were requested by the building committee that are now being completed. Administration has scheduled a tour of the completed building for Town Council and Board of Education members in October. An open house will take place in November for the community.

LOUIS TOFFOLON SCHOOL

The Louis Toffolon School is approximately 70% complete. Asphalt and curb installations along with landscaping are underway on the outside of the building. On the inside, all of the reconfigured and new walls are up and the cabinetry is being installed. All the windows are installed and the remaining aluminum entries are to follow later this month. The big push is currently underway, with over 90 people on site working hard each day as the project is now moving along very quickly. The state has approved Phase IV of the project which means that the furniture, fixtures, and equipment can now go out to bid. Also, the architect and school administration met with state officials on September 30 to review plans for the final phase, which is the construction of the playground in the back of the building. A mid-January 2009 building occupancy is anticipated.

Good News!

*GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT ALL THE TIME.
FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THESE GOOD NEWS HIGHLIGHTS:*

Plainville High School students Whitley Dozier and Taylor Perun attended the **National Association of Student Councils** annual leadership conference in Justin, Texas over the summer, participating in leadership workshops on inclusion/diversity, community service projects, and self-improvement...**Toffolon Elementary School staff members** collected \$850 over the 2007-2008 school year through their "*Dress Down Fridays*" initiative. The money was donated to the Petit Family Foundation and Norton Park camp scholarships for six local children...**The Plainville High School DECA Chapter** recently participated in the annual walkathon for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF). Ninety students from the Plainville DECA Chapter took part in the walk as "*The DECA Diamonds*" team...**Plainville High School students Andrew Cimino, Patrick Haggerty, and Zachary Harper** have been named *Commended Students* in the 2009 National Merit Scholarship Program...As part of Constitution Day celebrations across the school district on September 17, **Toffolon fifth graders Stephanie Martino, Peter Lawson, and Sky Scheyd** read the Preamble, followed by the Preamble that they wrote as a team, while **Joey Slivinsky, Jared Boucher, and Kyle Smith**, all members of the Connecticut Children's Choir, sang the National Anthem...**Plainville Community Schools staff** pledged more than \$11,000 this year in the annual campaign in support of the United Way...**Toffolon fifth grader Jarod Romankiw**, recently broke the 30 year record of 6:06, with a 5:56, for the mile run at Toffolon...**Plainville High School multi-sport Assistant Coach / Manager Matt Gingras** was recently featured on WFSB Channel 3's Friday Night Football Show. Athletic Director **John Zadnik** also spoke about Matt's loyalty, enthusiasm, and commitment to PHS sports during the program.

Student Spotlight: Toffolon Fifth Graders

By:
Jarod Romankiw

Room 21:
Mrs. Fabrizio



In Toffolon, fifth grades have been studying our country's history. One example is the Constitution. We learned about the Preamble. The Preamble is the introduction to the Constitution. It is one sentence saying how to have the best country, take care of each other, and make sure that the future generations are free and safe. It does not state any laws or amendments. We also studied the 27 amendments. Amendments are changes in the Constitution. The First Amendment is

giving you the right to say what you want to say and join the religion that you want to be. The Fifteenth Amendment was when all races were accepted at the voting booth. The Nineteenth Amendment was when women could finally vote (August 18, 1920).

Another activity we are doing is learning about the ear. We had a picture that had all of the parts of the ear on it. We also read the book *Sound* that defined all the parts of the ear. We had a plastic ear that showed us all the bones and parts of the ear.

In math we are learning about decimals-place value. We know about the thousands place, hundreds, tens, ones, tenths, hundredths, and thousandths. We are going to learn how to multiply and divide decimals soon. Thank you for reading about the first 20-30 days of school in fifth grade at Toffolon School.

PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Board Members:

Jesse Gnazzo
Anthony Goldberg
Lorri Goldsmith
Art Hoerle
Keith A. LaCombe
Tabitha Manafort
Patrick Ringrose
Becky Tyrrell
Barbara A. Willard



Belief Statements

We believe:

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