



Community Letter

February 2007

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

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Message from the Board of Education

One of the greatest challenges in obtaining community support for our schools lies in our ability to answer one question--why are today's schools so different than schools of the past? The reasons for these differences are complex, yet significant. The global economy and competition have had a huge impact on school districts. Jobs that once were available to students graduating from high school without further education are now limited in number and limiting to the ability of the graduate to be a productive member of the work force. Plainville students are not only expected to compete with other students in our state, but with students all over the world. Schools must prepare students for higher education to assist them in becoming productive citizens.

Federal laws such as the (IDEA) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act also greatly changed the requirements of schools and the education of students who need special services. NCLB, No Child Left Behind, is the newest federal law that increases the pressure on school districts to assure all students can be successful on standardized tests. No one can argue with the intent of either of these laws but we must also acknowledge the challenges they present. These two issues, global competition and federal law requirements, have driven much of the change and focus in the schools of today. Smaller class sizes are required to teach more difficult material to diverse student populations with needs that are greater than those of the past. Meeting the needs of each student requires additional resources and increases the cost of educating our students.

Every board of education struggles with controlling the cost of education, but the areas of discretionary spending are shrinking. We must pay staff their contracted wages and provide health care. We must maintain our buildings and provide the energy to keep them operating. We must provide supplies and transportation. We must provide special needs students with an appropriate education as mandated by federal law. As we proceed through the annual budget season, we ask the community to be aware that the board of education, as taxpayers of Plainville, will be careful and diligent in making our decisions. We will also make every effort to communicate those decisions to the community. As always, residents with questions or concerns are welcome to contact the Plainville Board of Education to obtain accurate information.

District Leads in Environmentally Friendly Initiatives

While Plainville Community Schools continues to focus on student achievement and continuous academic improvement, the district is also making great strides in the area of environmental friendliness. A number of significant initiatives are underway in an effort to preserve the environment and support the health and well being of students and staff members.

STYROFOAM ALTERNATIVES: According to Food Services Director, James Bondi, a shift from styro-foam lunch trays to more environmentally friendly disposable serving products recently occurred. In January 2007, the Food Services Department began incorporating

"Greenwave" cafeteria trays district-wide. The trays are constructed of naturally renewable reeds and plants imported from China. The product is bio-degradable and will burn, making it an environmentally friendly choice for the district. "The Food Services staff is excited to help further the efforts of the Plainville Board of Education in offering the students and staff an environmentally friendly alternative," noted Bondi. Going forward, depending on availability and cost, there will be a gradual change in the Food Services Department's other disposable products, with the ultimate goal of converting to as many eco-friendly products as possible.

The Facilities Department also has incorporated a number of proactive practices in favor of the environment and organizational effectiveness.

RECYCLING: Recycling is an area of focus for the Facilities Department district-wide. Separating paper products for recycling purposes is going into effect throughout the school district. Recycling receptacles will be provided in each school. In addition, the Facilities Department complies with regulations regarding the proper disposal of equipment and recycling of hazardous materials.

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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 On December 14th, the high school's Mel Perry Auditorium was rededicated. On hand were the superintendent, school officials, administrators, staff, students and a large audience of Plainville citizens. Everyone was pleased with the refurbished facility and the improved acoustics. With limited funds, the building committee guided the district through a difficult project with great results. The safety of all is vastly improved with a fully operational sprinkler system. The auditorium project is now complete.

Further updates will not be necessary.

HIGH SCHOOL RENOVATION In December, construction bids on the high school renovation were opened and the building committee was very pleased with the results. Net costs for this phase of the bidding came in lower than initially projected meaning that the project can be completed within the limits of the original budget. The

next phase of the renovation process will begin this month. The building committee has been studying the possibility of including a photovoltaic roofing system. While not in the original plans for the building, new developments and financial incentives make the possibility of producing solar electricity attractive. Our next newsletter will have an update on this issue.

LINDEN ADDITION The Linden addition has entered the final stages. The improved high speed fiber optic computer network connection should be completed in the coming months. After that work is finalized the board will accept the project as complete.

TOFFOLON SCHOOL RENOVATION At the end of January a mailing went out to Plainville homes with information about the Toffolon School renovation project. The town council has set the date for the Toffolon referendum as Tuesday, March 6th.

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Examples include batteries, fluorescent lights, and non-functional computer monitors, which contain lead.

CLEANING PRODUCTS: Three years ago, the Facilities Department began utilizing environmentally friendly cleaning supplies in all of the school buildings. According to Mel Masse of the Facilities Department, while eco-friendly cleaning supplies are not yet a state mandate, Plainville remains much ahead of the curve with "green cleaning." Nearly every cleaning product being used today in the school district is a green certified chemical. Green certified products do not contain butyls, which are chemicals added to cleaning products to dissolve dirt.

The green cleaning products are environmentally friendly, safe to use and handle, and eliminate student and staff exposure to harmful cleaning agents.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY: The Facilities Department has also been proactive in efforts to address indoor air quality. District staff, led by Facilities Department Director Steve Busel, has conducted school radon testing with the assistance of each school's "Tools For Schools" committee and the Connecticut Department of Public

Health Radon Program. The Plainville school district began participating in the "Tools For Schools" program coordinated by the Department of Public Health in 2004 as a result of legislation requiring all school districts to have an indoor air quality program in place. The "Tools For Schools" program meets this requirement. As part of the program, each school in Plainville has assembled a committee of staff members responsible for facilitating surveys on indoor air quality, and identifying any related air quality issues. In addition, the Plainville school district participated in information and training sessions sponsored by the Department of Public Health on radon and other issues relative to indoor air quality. As a result of this participation, the district received free radon test kits to conduct mandatory radon testing at a savings of more than \$20,000.00. Plainville Community Schools was one of approximately seven districts in Connecticut to complete the school building radon testing through the free test kit program. Results from the radon testing indicated that there were no elevated levels of radon at the middle school or high school facilities, which were tested in December 2006. Earlier tests conducted at Wheeler and

Linden Street Schools also revealed no problems with radon. Louis Toffolon School is slated for radon testing after proposed construction and renovation projects are completed.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION: Student transportation also became more environmentally friendly last year. The DATTCO bus company now provides 35 new "green" school buses as part of a five-year contract agreement with Plainville Community Schools. The new buses are equipped with diesel engines operating on ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel--good news for both students and staff members, especially those who suffer from sensitivity to diesel exhaust fumes and other related allergens. Plainville Community Schools will continue to explore additional eco-friendly options, including the potential for using alternative clean energy sources. Solar panels will be investigated as an option for the high school and Linden Street School. Many benefits are associated with this type of initiative, including cost savings incurred through discounts and rebate programs. The town and board of education have also begun exploring pesticide free alternatives for town properties, including school grounds.

Student Spotlight: Bushnell Poetry



Pictured from left to right: Gene Bozzi (conducting), Avery Ferro, Amy Urso, Melissa Hernandez, Devon Zirpolo, and Sage Maier.

Article by: Robin Wagner and Avery Ferro

Mrs. O'Brien from the Bushnell in Hartford, Connecticut came to all Plainville elementary schools to work with 5th graders on poetry. Many students enjoyed writing and sharing poetry, as well as reading poetry written by famous poets such as William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, and even Mrs. O'Brien herself. Mrs. O'Brien had the students exercise by writing simple personification poems. Another style of writing was advice poems that we wrote to younger relatives. Some opinions of 5th grade students at Wheeler were, "I think Mrs. O'Brien inspired me to write

poetry. Before the program, I wasn't a huge fan of poetry. Now, I find it entirely interesting," said Jordan Nicholson. Melissa Hernandez said, "It was very entertaining and it helped me to understand what poetry is all about." Overall the students enjoyed the activity and wrote some pretty creative poetry. On January 26th, the Bushnell Performing Arts brought Gene Bozzi and The Hot Six to Wheeler for a musical performance. They gave a musical history of jazz and the band played several Louis Armstrong songs. Five students volunteered to sing What a Wonderful World accompanied

by the band. Three students, Brandon Chase, Lisa Murraca, and Sage Maier, were chosen to read their poetry, and the band provided a musical interpretation of their poem. They ended the wonderful program by playing a game where some students picked adjectives and the band would express the word through music. Meanwhile students would try to guess the adjective. The students really enjoyed listening to the music, as well as hearing music played with the poetry and playing some games. After the poetry program, a student was inspired to write the following beautiful poem:

Peace
By: Avery Ferro

To be at peace
To live as one
To have one lost
only of old age
To have hatred
be lost
And worries of
Loved ones are
Lost as well

To be at Peace
To live together
To have none lost
to have wars cease
And to always
See our loved ones

To have only peace
That is my Dream

Let's Chat With...*David Telesca*



Assistant Superintendent, David Telesca

Describe your role as assistant superintendent.

I have a number of roles in the district that work toward meeting the district's goals. Some of these include evaluating programs, overseeing the professional development of our teaching staff, and supervising the adult education and after-school programs. Also, I am designing an evaluation of our mathematics program in order to ensure that our students have the highest quality program possible. This will provide for a smooth progression of knowledge, skills and expectations from elementary school through middle and high school.

What attracted you to this position?

I was looking for a district that is committed to continually improving its educational programs, and has very committed teachers and administrators who keep the needs of children first.

Budget News

During the month of January, the board of education met with administrators of the district in order to discuss program and curriculum changes that are being planned for next year. All facets of the fiscal year 2008 budget were examined in the budget workshops.

At the February 12th board meeting, a budget was approved and sent to the town council for consideration. On Tuesday, March 6, at 7:00 p.m., in the Plainville Municipal Center, the town and board budgets will be presented to the town council. A public hearing on the budget will be held in the same location at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 8th. The public is invited to attend this session and speak to the town council and fellow citizens regarding the budget.

On April 24th, there will be an all day vote on the budget for the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

Adult and Continuing Education

Plainville Adult and Continuing Education is proud to offer “Senior Specials.” Plainville senior citizens are encouraged to browse through the Plainville Adult and Continuing Education’s spring brochure, which was recently mailed to all Plainville residents. A 30% discount is offered for any one program. In addition, we are pleased to offer the following “Senior Center Special” at no cost:

Chinese Brush Painting

Discover the artist within as you paint with ink and watercolors on rice paper. Create beautiful pieces for display! Materials provided. Instructor: Manli Luo

Time: 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. / Dates: March 6-April 24, 2007 / 8 Sessions

Class location: Plainville Senior Citizens Center

Please note: Pre-registration for this course is required, there is a 15 student maximum.

Chinese Brush Painting registration is conducted exclusively at the Plainville Senior Citizens Center.

Good News! *Great things are happening in our school district all the time. Following are some of these good news highlights:*

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS DR. KATHLEEN BINKOWSKI AND PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER PATRICK RINGROSE recently presented a workshop entitled “*Prioritize Your Board’s Focus to Examine Gains in Student Learning*” at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education’s annual CABE/ CAPSS convention...**PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL WORLD LANGUAGE TEACHER / INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER JOANNE CURLEY** received national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards...**PLAINVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EMPLOYEES** donated more than \$10,000 through the United Way of West Central Connecticut’s Annual Community Campaign...**KAREL ZETTERGREN, OFFICE PROFESSIONAL AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE** received the Plainville Chamber of Commerce *Employee of the Year Award*...**LINDEN, TOFFOLON, AND WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS** attended the 14th annual Elementary Level Student Leadership Training Conference where **PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM (S.A.L.T.) STUDENTS DAVID VOISINE, ELIZABETH BOWLING, WHITLEY DOZIER, AND TAYLOR PERUN** presented workshops on communication and decision making...**THE KIDS IN THE MIDDLE (K.I.M.) GIRLS ONLY CLUB** at the Middle School of Plainville received a \$2,000 grant from the Women and Girl’s Fund of the Main Street Community Foundation...**PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS DAVID GAIGNARD AND STEVEN MICHAUD** have been inducted into the *National Honor Roll’s Outstanding American Teachers*...**MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE STUDENTS MARY RAGAGLIA, TOM DINDA, MARQUILLE JOHNSON, KATIE MCLELLAN, PATRICK HOERLE, AND KENDRA VALLIERE** were selected to participate in the Northern Regional Music Festival on March 3rd sponsored by the Connecticut Music Educator’s Association...**THE PLAINVILLE FAMILY RESOURCE NETWORK** sponsored a combined project for Linden and Toffolon students who planted a “friendship garden” in the schools’ courtyards...**PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS LAUREN ROBBINS, AMANDA BOUTIN, AND ANNA BOISVERT** received the *2007 Scholastic Art Award*.

PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Board Members:

William J. Crowley

Lorri Goldsmith

Art Hoerle

Keith A. LaCombe

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Becky Tyrrell

Thomas L. Wazorko

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 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.