



# Community Letter

June 2007

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

## In this issue...

Message from the Board of Education.....Page 1

The Role of Administration.....Page 1,3

The Long Range Plan.....Page 2

Budget News.....Page 2

Let's Chat With.....Page 2

Student Spotlight...Page 3

Adult Education.....Page 3

Good News.....Page 4

## Message from the Board of Education

As we approach the end of the school year, we proudly reflect on the many accomplishments achieved and congratulate the Plainville High School Class of 2007 as our seniors look forward to the next steps on their educational and professional journeys. We have much to celebrate, including the completion of Linden Street School and the opening of the high school auditorium. We celebrate our volunteers, mentors, faculty, and staff who make the difference in the lives of students every day. We celebrate the privilege of serving as board members, working together with administrators, staff, community members, parents and students to maximize educational opportunities for Plainville's youth. As board members, we are proud to be recognized as one of 19 recipients of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Leadership Awards. Finally, with our district-wide focus on student achievement, we pause to recognize the cohorts of students moving from 4th to 5th grade who showed significant improvement in reading, writing and math on the Connecticut Mastery Test. As always, we continue to hone curriculum based on data to improve student achievement. Plainville Community Schools have much to celebrate and be proud of, but we are always striving to improve what we do. The Board, administration and staff continue to focus on the future. Next year, the school day will increase by 20 minutes in an effort to expand instructional time for students.

We continue to improve communication on all levels and increase community participation and collaboration in our schools. We look forward to our future successes and the start of the next school year. On behalf of the Plainville Board of Education, have a safe and restful summer. See you in September!

## Understanding the Role of Administration

Over the last 20 years, there has been significant research that supports the role of administrators in promoting increases in student achievement. Unfortunately, the public perception of school administration is that of a bureaucracy diverting resources from instruction. This perception is not grounded in fact and this article will describe the critical role administrators play in raising student achievement and in managing schools.

Good school management is essential for the development and operation of effective schools. Assertive leadership by the school principal, superintendent and central-office staff is a key

element common to effective schools. Most parents have a pretty clear understanding of the role of the principal in that they interact with the community on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, district-level administrative and professional staff provide critically needed support for school-level programs. Part of the success of schools is attributed to the district personnel who provide vision and direction for improvement. The district staff are credited with setting the expectations, and then with providing the resources, mentoring, and expertise necessary for schools to achieve learning goals. Moreover,

many central office functions--fiscal services, transportation coordination, food services, and personnel administration--are performed at the central office level to ensure that building administrators can focus on instruction. Additionally, central office staff supervise the development and implementation of curriculum and professional training for staff. Finally, they make provisions for and supervise special education and health-related services.

*Continued on page 3*

# 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

The high school auditorium has been officially accepted as complete by the building committee and by the Plainville Board of Education. Additional improvements to this area such as the installation of a new roof and the connection for air conditioning will be reported under the High School Renovation updates in the months to come.

## HIGH SCHOOL RENOVATION

Phase III (the upstairs 200 corridor) of the high school renovation is almost complete and shortly after the last day of school in June, Phase IV will begin. Phase IV will see the renovation of the remainder of the first floor labs, classrooms, the guidance area, and high school offices east of the Kegel Gym. Completion of this area is expected for the start of the new school year, and a newly designed stairwell will lead from the front of the Kegel Gym to the second floor. The pool is also presently under renovation with completion expected sometime in the middle of August. The next area planned for renovation will be the Kegel Gym and locker rooms. This Phase V of the project will be completed by the end of October. While holding school on a construction site may be a challenge, the cooperation of students and staff members has helped to allow the project to proceed as smoothly as possible.

## Budget News

With a very low voter turnout, the town budget was defeated again in May. The Plainville Town Council settled on \$31,645,921 as the Board of Education operating budget; this is a 4.2% increase over the 2006-2007 operating budget. The Board budget will have areas that are funded lower than the previous year in order to implement the 20 minute increase in the school day for students. The current year budget ends on June 30th and the new budget will begin on July 1st. Actual spending for the current year will help to provide information used to prepare for the next budget cycle.

## Let's Chat With...Director of Special Education and Pupil Services, Maureen Schiffer



***Describe your role as Director of Special Education and Pupil Services.*** My role in the district is to ensure that special education students have appropriate programs designed to help them

maximize their learning potential. While all students learn in different ways, all students can learn. I also assist teachers and support staff with identifying students who may be in need of special education services.

***What programs and services are provided for special education students in Plainville?*** Plainville offers a continuum of special education services that we are very proud of. There are programs such as Connections that offer supports for students with

behavioral and emotional concerns. We also have Developmental Resource programs that offer services for students who need a more functional approach. Most of our special education students spend the majority of their day in the regular education classroom with help in the class or a small amount of time out of the class to remediate a specific skill area such as reading.

***What are the key special education issues or challenges that you face?*** The biggest challenge is to meet individual student needs, while maximizing their time in the general education environment. We are continuously trying to balance all of the students' learning needs. We realize the best outcomes when the school, family and student work together as a team.

## Continued from page 1

When we compare staffing ratios, Plainville is similar to the nation in that central office administrators represent 1.4% of the total staff in the school district. Principals and assistant principals represent 2% of the total staff. When we compare to state data in 2006, Plainville administrators supervised 13.0 teachers per administrator compared to 13.9 in the state and the Education Reference Group. So, on average, Plainville administrators evaluate similar numbers of teaching staff compared to the state and the Education Reference Group. It is important to compare administrators in education to executive and managerial staffs in business and industry. Our comparisons are from the most respected source of this data--the United States Bureau of Labor

Statistics. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics uses this data in compiling official government reports. When we review their most recent data from 2003, the ratio of employees to executive, administrator and/or manager is higher in K-12 education (15.2 to 1) than in any other business or industry shown. Only the health care industry reports similar patterns, with 11.7 people supervised per executive or administrator. In Plainville, our ratio in 2006 is 27.9 total staff, including non-teaching positions, supervised per administrator, which is significantly above the national data. The average ratio throughout all manufacturing industries is 5.6 to 1. These data indicate that, judged by similar management/staffing practices in business and industry, K-12 education is not top-heavy.

Many of the misconceptions about school funding result from a lack of

understanding of the complex issues involved. Court decisions, legislation and public demand for expanded services also add to what is needed to fund education. Despite increases in expectations for schools, over the past 15 years, the shares of school budgets allocated to both instruction and administration have been relatively stable, with about two-thirds of school budgets going to instruction. Therefore, administration has not been increasing at the expense of instruction. Clearly, the administrative proportion of the budget is a small piece of the financial and staffing pie. Finally, an enterprise as large and important as public education could not function effectively without well-trained, professional leadership staff. These staff members lead the way and support other staff as we continue to make gains in student achievement and manage scarce resources.

## Student Spotlight: 5th Grade, Linden Street School



Written by: (left to right)  
Andrew Zajackowski, Michele Thibodeau,  
Nikky-Ann Duncan, Jazmine Gonzalez-  
Hernandez and Claudia Cwalina  
(missing from photo is Jacob Jones)

**THE KIDS' OPINION:  
LONGER SCHOOL DAYS VS.  
REGULAR SCHOOL DAYS**

### *Do you think the school day should be prolonged?*

Most kids in Mrs. Bravado's fifth grade class at Linden Street School don't. Why? We will probably get more homework! Students already have to run around to finish book projects, homework and chores. By the time that we are done with everything, we don't have the downtime that we deserve. The day should not be longer because it would also cut into after school activities. As you can see 20 more minutes could max out our already busy schedule.

However, some kids think that the extended day is a superb idea. Teachers will be more creative when helping us learn! For instance, they can use games to help us prepare for tests. Students would also have more opportunities to be involved in band or chorus. A longer day is likely to be beneficial for teachers and students. Regardless of your stance, adding time to our day is something that should be thought out very carefully.

## Adult and Continuing Education

Plainville Summer School will offer a range of courses to secondary school students. Successful completion of the courses will provide students with a grade and credit toward graduation. In addition, the following Adult and Continuing Education mandated summer programs will be available: Complete GED Preparation, Adult High School Credit Diploma Program, English as a Second Language, and Adult Basic Education. This summer, classes will be held at the Middle School of Plainville, due to current renovations at Plainville High School. Classes will begin in July. Registration is required for all summer programs. For further information, please call the Office of Adult and Continuing Education (860) 793-3209.

## Good News!

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

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND PUPIL SERVICES MAUREEN SCHIFFER, SUPERVISOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION ANNE WALSH, AND PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL VALEDICTORIAN KAYLA WEICHE received the 2007 *Women in Leadership* award sponsored by the New Britain YWCA... LINDEN STREET SCHOOL THIRD GRADER SYDNEY MCGOUGH'S entry for the "Coping in an Uncertain World: Students' Thoughts on Safety, Conflicts, and Homeland Security" program was selected by the Connecticut Commission on Children, to be featured as part of a program held at the State Capitol... MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE STUDENT JOANNA KACPRZYK won third place in the Connecticut Chapter Surfriider Foundation's first annual *Storm Drain Design Contest*... The April 2007 edition of *The Journal*, a publication of the The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) featured an article by SUPERINTENDENT KATHLEEN BINKOWSKI AND BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER PATRICK RINGROSE on Plainville's experience in raising student achievement over the past five years... MR. MICHAEL TURCOTTE received the 2006-2007 *Plainville Community Schools Volunteer of the Year Award* and MR. FRANK MORGAN received the 2006-2007 *Dick Ronalter Mentor of the Year Award*... THE LINDEN STREET SCHOOL RELAY FOR LIFE TEAM, LED BY TEAM LEADERS MELISSA DODENHOFF AND RACHEL VALENTINE, held a carnival in support of the American Cancer Society. The event, which raised nearly \$2,000, included a dunking booth featuring 16 teachers who agreed to be "dunked"... PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT RYAN PELLETIER has been selected as one of thirty *Governor's Scholars of Connecticut for 2007*. He was chosen from an entry pool of more than 120 juniors in Connecticut high schools... WHEELER, LINDEN, AND TOFFOLON students participated in Earth Day activities sponsored by the Plainville Conservation Commission... LINDEN STREET SCHOOL FOURTH GRADE TEACHER SANDY WALKER coordinated a math-a-thon to support research and treatment for childhood cancers at the Saint Jude Children's Research Hospital. More than 25% of Linden students participated in the math-a-thon, raising nearly \$4,000... THE PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL ART DEPARTMENT received a grant from the Greater Hartford Arts Council to bring noted ceramic artist Tim Scull to Plainville High School for an all day workshop for Plainville students... THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TEAM'S efforts were highlighted recently in the State Education Resource Center (SERC's) *LRE News* publication. The article, which includes an interview with School Psychologist JERI LYNN TURKOWITZ, recognizes Plainville's exceptional work in promoting responsible inclusive practice... THE LINDEN STREET SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT has been officially completed and turned over from the Linden Street School Building Committee to the Plainville Board of Education. The project was completed on time and under budget by an estimated \$500,000 - \$750,000 pending final reimbursement figures from the State of Connecticut... MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES TEACHER JANE WILSON coordinated a luncheon for middle school staff members in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week. The event, sponsored by the Middle School's PTC organization, and "staffed" by eighth grade students, featured a Moroccan theme... MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE STUDENTS participated in a can tab drive, collecting 1,066,000 tabs, earning a \$390 donation to the Shriners Children's Hospital in honor of Alexis Charbonneau, a Plainville resident.

### PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

#### Board Members:

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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.