



Community Letter

Winter 2004

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

Q&A:

The Board of Education approved a \$28,940,596 budget for 2004-2005. Why is an increase necessary?

An increase of \$1,859,301 to the education budget reflects funding to accommodate rising enrollment, contractual agreements with employees, and increases in insurance costs. Additionally, the district faces increases in basic areas of the budget such as fuel, textbooks, and instructional supplies.

What are some of the specific improvements and capital projects identified in the 2004-2005 budget?

- One and a half additional teachers are needed at the high school in English and mathematics to meet increases in student enrollment.
- Additional special education staff is required to meet the needs of our disabled students. This will also help control special education costs by providing services within our district rather than in schools and facilities outside Plainville.
- Security improvements at Plainville High School will include an access system to the main entrance area.
- Aging Plainville High School ductwork will be replaced.
- Technology expenditures will include replacement of computers over 7 years of age and upgrades needed in the district operating system.
- Asbestos will be removed at Plainville High School for the protection and safety of students and staff.

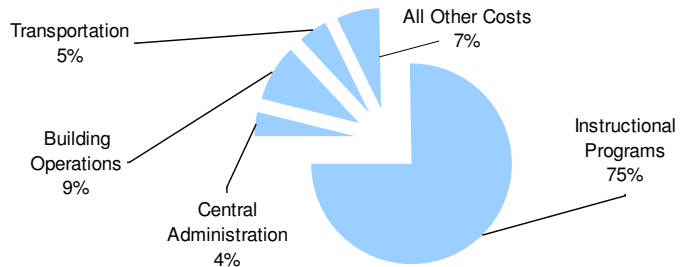
Message from the Board of Education

As we head into budget season for the upcoming fiscal year, we again face the struggle to balance the needs of our students with those of our own town's taxpayers. Our schools are facing cuts in state aid, demands from the federal legislation, No Child Left Behind, contract obligations and general increases in the cost of basic supplies. These factors particularly strain the BOE budget and make fiscal planning more difficult. At the same time, the board understands that these same increases are felt at home.

Consider, however, how dramatically the quality of public schools impacts property values. There is abundant research that clearly demonstrates that quality schools produce benefits for tax-paying property owners. The BOE has a responsibility to maintain fine schools for this purpose, in addition to our primary mission--to prepare our children to successfully compete in a global, hi-tech, diversified economy.

For more information about how quality schools effect property values, refer to: www.realtor.org/libweb.nsf/pages/fg307

Operating Budget FY05



Important Budget Dates

- **March 17th, 7:00PM, Municipal Center, Town and Board budgets presented to public**
- **March 18th, 6:30PM, Municipal Center, Board-Council budget meeting. The public may observe.**
- **May 3rd, 7:00PM, PHS Auditorium, Annual Town Meeting and budget vote**
- **May 10th, May 17th, PHS Auditorium, additional votes if needed**

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Linden Street School Project Update

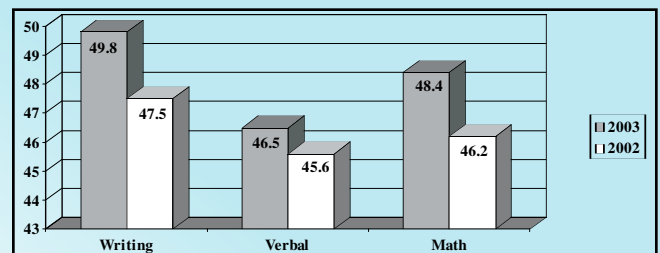
The Linden Street School Building Committee continues to refine the project. The engineering firm of BVH Integrated Services was selected to provide commissioning, security and technology services.

Commissioning is a term used to describe the services of an engineering firm to evaluate all building systems installed during a construction project. BVH will ensure that the mechanical systems function as expected and will assist with the design and installation of a building access system and computer network. The first review of architectural plans for site work was submitted to the State Department of Education and the Department of Environmental Protection in early March. Additional phases of the project will be submitted with construction scheduled to begin this summer. Project completion is anticipated in the fall or winter of 2005.

The Building Committee meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at Linden Street School at 6:30 P.M. Meetings are open to the public. Plainville Community Schools' Steering Committee is gathering ideas for the next step in the Long-Range Plan for Plainville Schools. The renovation of Toffolon Elementary School and the conversion of storage space into classrooms at the Middle School are part of that discussion.

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

PSAT Performance of College-bound PHS Juniors



A critical component of the District's Strategic Plan is to improve student achievement in mathematics, science and language arts. Over the past three years the district has worked to align curriculum in these areas and to provide professional development to teachers that would enable them to use a wide variety of instructional strategies and techniques to help all students achieve at higher levels. Examining standardized testing data helps us to develop plans for instructional improvement to benefit all students. In our last newsletter we highlighted student performance on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). This information helps us to understand how well our students performed in comparison to their peers across the state. This time, we will look at national test-

ing data in the form of the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).

The PSAT is a standardized test that is administered to students across the country. It measures a student's verbal reasoning, critical reading, math problem-solving and writing skills. In addition to serving as first-hand practice for the SAT, the PSAT/NMSQT serves as a qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. A number of Plainville High School students have been named Commended Scholars and National Merit Scholars in the past, and we look forward to learning how well this year's juniors fared in the competition. The chart above shows that, in addition to our demonstrated improvement on the statewide CAPT, Plainville

High School students continue to improve on a nationally administered test - the PSAT. One hundred and five PHS juniors took the exam in October of 2003. This number is slightly lower than the 121 students who took the test in October of 2002. However, performance in all three areas increased. In each test, scores are reported on a scale between 20 and 80. In the area of writing skills, the average score in 2003 was 49.8 compared to an average score of 47.5 in 2002. Similarly, in mathematics, the average score for the junior class in 2003 was 48.4 compared to 46.2 in 2002. Finally, in the area of verbal reasoning, the average score for 2003 students was 46.5 compared to 45.6 in 2002. The chart above demonstrates the growth in performance between 2002 and 2003.

Professional Development Builds Teacher Expertise



Classroom and office paraprofessionals gain new computer skills.

Plainville teachers and paraprofessionals gathered in January for a day of learning on the state's coldest day in 20 years. While the state fought arctic temperatures, educators in Plainville participated in professional development designed to improve teaching and learning in Plainville Community Schools. The district's professional days are critical to continuous improvement and student achievement in the district and are

devoted to developing the teaching expertise of staff members. Expectations for what teachers know and do have increased in amount and complexity over recent years. New state and federal requirements are added yearly. Teachers must master subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills, understand the cultural and psychological factors that affect student learning, as well as how to accurately assess and measure a student's learning over time.

The benefits of professional development to a teacher's practice are significant and impact the overall school, not just individual classrooms. Teacher learning takes many different forms on these professional development days. This time provides the opportunity for teachers to focus on student learning with colleagues from around the district and collaborate on

special projects that advance professional expertise. Staff also consult with subject experts, strengthen curriculum, and practice new teaching strategies. The Board of Education's vision to "promote a challenging environment" and "create an extraordinary community of learners" is possible when our *educators* come together as an extraordinary community of learners too.



Members of the Unified Arts Department met with State Consultant, Dan Gregg.

Let's Chat With...Betsy Neave, Teacher of the Year

Betsy Neave is the 2004 Plainville Teacher of the Year. Betsy has been a first grade teacher at Toffolon Elementary School for the past seven years. She received her B.A. from Hampshire College, received TEFL and ESL Certification from the Language Center of Ireland, earned an Ed.M. from Smith College, Reading Recovery Certification from the University of Connecticut, and is a Connecticut BEST Mentor. She is a member of the International Reading Association, the National Education Association, the Connecticut Education Association, the

National Council of Teachers of English, the Reading Recovery Council of North America, and the Plainville Education Association. In addition, Betsy has co-authored Frommer's Guidebooks on Ireland and Greece.

The Plainville Community Schools Teacher of the Year Program provides the opportunity to recognize outstanding educational leadership, exemplary teaching skills, and a passion for teaching.



What do you think is the most important quality a teacher needs to be effective?

"I think one of the most important qualities is to be reflective. The most effective teachers I know constantly think about students and their learning and what they, as teachers, are doing or not doing to foster a learning situation. These teachers take action to meet student needs and are avid, proactive problem solvers."

What advice do you have for future teachers?

"Be ready to be a student all your life and be honest with yourself as a learner. Get plenty of sleep and develop a fulfilling, well rounded life so you have creative energy to draw from. Find something to love in all of your students."

If you had one wish for your students, what would it be?

"To realize themselves as capable, valuable people who find pleasure in striving and show compassion for others in their actions."

TECHNOLOGY CORNER

Plainville Community Schools' Technology Plan has been accepted by the state. The plan



will guide the growth and implementation of technology in the district through the year 2006. The district has used plans designed to guide technology growth for three to five year increments since 1997. State and federal grants require school districts to have a current approved plan on file with the state in order to be considered for technology funding.

Plainville Community Schools will develop a society of active, independent, lifelong learners who possess high quality skills and knowledge needed to succeed in an evolving digital world.

This vision statement and the technology plan were developed by a committee during a six month period early last year. The plan provides for the district's infrastructure to grow to support a better than 3 to 1 student to computer ratio by 2006. The curriculum integration focus will be supporting the curricular revisions in the areas of math and science. Professional development will also be targeted in the math and science areas providing for student activities like WebQuests and using and taming the vast resources found on the Internet. The technology plan also provides for the development of resources to better communicate, evaluate and plan for the future.

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, which is funded through a number of grants. The grants include Title V Federal Funds and a Strategic Planning Grant from General Electric.

Plainville Board of Education
Plainville Community Schools
47 Robert Holcomb Way
Plainville, CT 06062
Phone: 860.793.3200
Fax: 860.747.6790
www.plainvilleschools.org

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #47
PLAINVILLE CT
06062

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Belief Statements

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

Did You Know?



Daniela Rosado
PHS Preschool

Did you know that as part of the state and federally mandated Special Education services in Plainville, there are two preschool programs? The classrooms, located at Plainville High School and Linden St. School, offer services to 3 to 5 year old Plainville children with special needs. Typically developing children are included in the program as role models for their special friends. Children and their families benefit from the enriching and exciting activities offered as well as from the unique friendships that develop among them. Celebrating diversity and learning tolerance occur naturally as students work and play together. The program, entitled The Early Childhood Program of Plainville, is staffed by special education teachers, speech/language therapists, occupational and physical therapists as well as paraprofessionals.
For more information, call: (860)793-6306.

Did you know that Plainville Adult and Continuing Education offers a wide variety of programs meeting the educational needs of our adult community? As a requirement of the state's Adult Education funding, the following courses are offered (spring/fall) at no cost to all Plainville citizens: Adult Basic Education, GED preparation, Adult High School Credit Diploma Program, Citizenship, English as a Second Language, and PARC-Basic Education. The community is encouraged to sign up for spring enrichment classes as well.

For more information, call: (860)793-3209.



*ESL Students at
Linden Street School*