

Plainville Board of Education's

Community Letter

Spring 2009



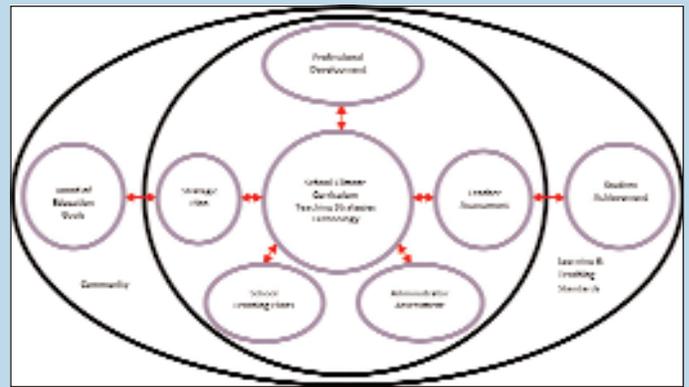
Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

Message from the Board of Education

What do you value in an education system? This question and others were asked of a sample of Plainville residents about a decade ago. The answers to those questions helped create our Strategic Plan. Often the mention of a Strategic Plan causes eyes to glaze over, but it is a very important document; a document that has served us well and gives us direction. The school system is a large organization, with five buildings and hundreds of employees; it can be challenging to keep everyone focused and moving toward a common goal.

Our Strategic Plan is embedded in everything we do; it guides our curriculum, professional development, our budget and the evaluation process. This embedding keeps the district and the Board of Education focused on what we know is valued by our community and what we know is best for students and student achievement. During these difficult financial times the Strategic Plan continues to guide the school system.

The Strategic Plan for Plainville Community Schools



Student Spotlight: Plainville High School



By: Lisa Stasaitis

Looking back on one's high school experience is much like viewing the metamorphosis of a butterfly. I started out unlearned and callow, intimidated by the same large building and faculty that, unbeknownst to me, would be the driving force to my personal evolution. It seems laughable now

that I look back on my first day at Plainville High School, and the now present scar on my knee, only to chuckle at the permanently-etched memory of tripping down the stairs in front of a gaggle of cool and collected seniors. Blushing, I gathered up my belongings and thought, "Well...this is going to be great." Little did I know, however, that it would turn out to be just that and much more.

Throughout my high school career, I have put forth an effort to be involved and reap the benefits of all that the extracurricular activities have to offer: appealing to my creative side is *"The Devil's Advocate,"* which allows me to publish editorial pieces regarding politics and global issues that I feel are crucial for teens to be versed in; the 2008 production of *"Thoroughly Modern Millie"* has taught me the true meaning of teamwork and dedication while forging lasting friendships; our softball and tennis teams have encouraged a fit and fun lifestyle that I am determined to continue; this year boasted PHS'

National Ocean Sciences Bowl team to an unbelievable third place finish, for which I am extremely proud to have been a part of; and lastly, our Anti-Defamation League has educated Plainville's middle-schoolers about the damaging effects of bullying and harassment, while providing communication skills that will be of great use during their lives. My interests are quite varied, and I feel lucky to have found some sort of club or group within PHS for every facet of my personality. For this I am quite grateful.

Four years ago, envisioning myself going off to college and the "real world" would have had me shaking in my boots. Today I stand firm as an empowered and optimistic youth with the tools to succeed and make a difference in our world. While the well-rounded curriculum helped mold my newly-acquired worldly perspectives, the extracurricular activities fueled my passions and added depth to my persona. I may have had a few trips along the way (literally), but they have only made me into a humbled person who is willing, and quite able, to laugh at her mistakes.

There are moments at Plainville High School that are forever imprinted in my memory, as well as a handful of balance-and-traction mishaps I'd rather forget. But it is these memories that will continue to mark me, albeit sometimes physically, throughout my lifetime, all thanks to good ol' PHS.

The Long Range Plan

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

FRANK T. WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The building committee for the Wheeler roof project selected MDM Engineering Company to do the work on the Wheeler roof. MDM was the low bidder on the project and received favorable reviews from the architect from Kaestle Boos, who worked with them on previous projects. The price for the base bid came in at \$186,600. The first alternate bid was priced at \$24,000 and the second alternate at \$88,000. The base bid covers the west wing of the building and the cafeteria roof. The first alternate provides for removal of the present glass block windows and installation of translucent insulated panels on the west side of the cafeteria. The second alternate includes the shingled portion of the roof adjacent to the roof contained in the base bid.

At this point, it has yet to be determined whether the budget will allow for the second alternate to be completed. There continues to be discussion with the State as to whether or not the second alternate is reimbursable. The contractor will start work on the roof the week before April vacation begins. During the week, work will take place only on weekends, vacations, and once school has been dismissed. It is anticipated that the project will take one to two months to complete.

Budget News

On March 19, the Town Council voted to reduce the Board of Education's 2009-10 budget request from \$33,482,988 to \$32,446,447 at a reduction of \$1,036,541. This reduction brings the Board of Education budget increase from 3.75% under the Board of Education approved budget to 0.54%. In a Town Council statement dated March 26, 2009, the Council cited as a reason for the reduction to the Board of Education budget, health insurance savings and the belief that every town employee, including Board of Education employees, should take a salary freeze for next year. However, while Anthem's insurance price has gone down since the preliminary estimate, there has been an increase in the number of teachers and dependents who are enrolled in our health insurance programs since the Board of Education budget was created. Therefore, at this point, any decreases to this line item will be minimal. To date, the administrators union and other non-bargaining employees are the only ones to have agreed to salary and/or benefit concessions. The remaining unions have indicated that they understand the circumstances

and are willing to work with the Board of Education through a less formal process to reach agreements that would lessen the impact to the students of Plainville. In the meantime, the Board of Education discussed a preliminary list of reductions at its meeting on March 30. Included on this list were reductions to staff (four reductions through attrition and 11 reductions through a reduction in force), the athletic supply budget, and facilities and technology needs. The items included on this list were not voted on at the meeting, but will be further discussed as the process moves forward. Also discussed at that meeting were more non-traditional options to balance the budget. Some of the ideas discussed included instituting a pay-to-participate program for clubs and athletics, requesting that the town pick up a portion of the cost of running the pool at the high school, and examining the feasibility of the town taking over the sports program. There will be a public hearing on the budget on April 27 at the Municipal Center followed by the first all day vote on April 28.

Adult Education Enrichment Offerings

Enrichment classes are *still* available through Plainville Adult and Continuing Education. Classes are held evenings and moderately priced. Pre-registration is required for all classes. For further information, please call Plainville Adult and Continuing Education: 793-3209. **May Class List:** *Beginning Guitar, Beginning Sign Language, day trip: Hidden Gardens of Beacon Hill, Boston, day trip: New York City Food & Markets, Kayaking for Beginners, Makeovers with Mineral Make-Up, Meeting Your Angels and Guides, Past Life Regression, Reiki Level 1, Tarot Cards (Advanced), Wall Street Secrets: Investing Money.*

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

The Plainville Board of Education received the 2008 CAFE Leadership Award from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education in recognition of leadership excellence. This is the third consecutive year that the Board has received this prestigious honor...Seventeen Middle School of Plainville students were accepted to the Northern Region Musical Festival's Honors Choir...Plainville High School junior Jamie Allen participated in the nationally recognized Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Seminar at the University of Bridgeport. Each high school is invited to send one student who demonstrates leadership potential, enthusiasm, good decision making, sensitivity, and communication skills...Toffolon School's Select Choir, under the direction of music teacher Ken Quesnel, features 32 singers in grades 2-5 who perform at festivals, sporting events, and at area hospitals...Middle School faculty and staff members collected more than \$2,000 for the Plainville Community Food Pantry through their "Jeans Days" initiative...Plainville High School senior Alana Tomaszewicz took first place in the "Business Interview" category at the Art and Academic Challenge hosted recently by Tunxis Community College...the Middle School's Counseling Department sponsored their annual "Costumes for Charity" fundraising event on Halloween raising \$450 for the Plainville Community Food Pantry... Plainville Community Schools has earned four awards in the 33rd Annual Awards of Excellence for Educational Communications Contest held by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE). Winning entries included the *Community Letter* newsletter - first place, Plainville Adult and Continuing Education Brochure - Honorable Mention, Plainville Community Schools website - Honorable Mention, and Linden School Calendar and Handbook - Honorable Mention...Toffolon School para-professional Ann Bucchi organized a "Trick or Treat Around the World" community service project with students gathering more than 184 pounds of candy for service men and women and children in Afghanistan...Plainville High School Visual Arts Teacher Mario Pires' artwork was recently featured on the cover of the Hartford Courant's I-Towns weekly edition. Pires' artwork was on display at the Barney Library in Farmington during the month of December...MSP Language Arts teacher, Bob Freimuth, was recently inducted into the *Bristol Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2008*...Wheeler School's "Green Team," 23 fourth and fifth graders, led by fifth grade teacher and advisor Jen Murrhiy, recently attended the *One Thing Expo* at the Connecticut Convention Center to learn about ways to save energy and protect the environment...PHS senior and Connecticut Association of Student Councils President Whitley Dozier provided the closing comments at a press conference at the Connecticut Association of Schools to discuss the partnership between Connecticut's Student Activities Conference and UCONN basketball coach Geno Auriemma's "Geno's Cancer Team" to raise money and create awareness for cancer research...the PHS Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and Student Council members collected toys in support of the Marine Corps *Toys-For-Tots Campaign*...The Plainville Adult and Continuing Education Department received a grant from the Women & Girls' Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation to provide a YOGA education workshop for women enrolled in the Credit Diploma Program...MSP's Mission Possible Team, led by Technology Instructor Camille Westfall, recently participated in the 10th annual statewide FIRST Lego League Robotics Championship at Central Connecticut State University...Plainville High School seniors Rebecca Reeve and Patrick Haggerty have been awarded the Farmington Valley Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents' (CAPSS) Superintendent / Student Recognition Award...Linden Street School students Sydney McGough and Jarred Karal, Louis Toffolon School students Amanda Peters and Jarod Romankiw, Frank T. Wheeler School students Madison Richardson and Jonathan Lindgren, Middle School of Plainville students Michael Costantini, Tyler Favreau, and Kelsea Fithian-Giantonio, and Plainville High School students Kristen Carroccia, Taylor Perun, and Whitely Dozier, received the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents' (CAPSS) Superintendent / Student Recognition Award and Certificate of Excellence at the 21st annual Superintendent's Award Presentation...Wheeler fourth graders led by Technology Education Specialist Ann Carnevale are working on a writing project with nine classes from around the country using a wiki(collaborative website)...Plainville High School students Kim Lopez, Valerie Knapp, Caitlin Lewis, Maile Mirmina, Jonathan Thibodeau, and Nicole Marquis received *Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards* for the 2008-09 school year...Plainville High School senior Marc Levandowski received the *Judges Choice Award* at the Berklee High School Jazz Festival where the Plainville High School Jazz Band placed fourth out of 15 similarly sized bands...the Plainville High School Boys' Basketball Team organized *Layups for Luke*, held in conjunction with the high school's basketball game against Rocky Hill. More than \$3,000 was raised to support the family of sophomore basketball player Luke Santhouse...Middle School of Plainville students participated in a Mythology Bee sponsored by Disney-Hyperion Books. Winners included Stephanie Justo - fourth runner up, Julie Tattersall - third runner up, Keriana Santana - second runner up, Sarah Simard - first runner up, and Jinsol Shim - Winner...Plainville High School senior Damian Hordejuk has been honored for his exemplary volunteer service with a *President's Volunteer Service Award* presented by the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards Program...Middle School of Plainville eighth grader Kurt Walker, Toffolon fourth grader Jared Boucher, and Linden third grader Dante Colagiovanni placed in the top five at the State Qualifying Wrestling Championships, while eighth grader Jake Ramos placed first in his weight class at the Mid State Middle School League Championship and placed second at the State Qualifiers. All four advanced to the State Championships with Dante, Jared and Jake finishing in the top five in the state...Plainville High School Principal, Greg Ziogas, was honored for his contributions to the Northwest Conference throughout the years...Plainville Community Schools Athletic Director, John Zadnik, has been selected as recipient of the "Boys Basketball Special Service Merit Award" from the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference...Plainville High School Girls Tennis Coach Chuck Radda and Boys and Girls Swimming Coach Randy Doucette have been selected to receive the Connecticut High School Coaches Association's *Coach of the Year Award*... 93 Wheeler School students participated in the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Math-a-Thon raising \$6,188 for children at the hospital...Toffolon School's Student Council raised \$167 to add new books to their Library Information Center...the Middle School of Plainville's Student-Teacher Basketball Game raised \$431 for the Wheeler Regional YMCA's "Strong Kids Campaign"...Toffolon School fifth grader Yulibeth Gonzalez was a 2008-09 Fire Prevention Poster Contest County Winner for Hartford County...Plainville High School DECA members Patrycja Jacewicz, Natalia Konieczkowski, Samuel Dostaler, Taylor Perun, John Kunda, Elizabeth Moriarty, and Stephen Underwood were winners at the State Career Development Conference for DECA chapters across the state and qualify to compete at the national level this spring...Plainville High School seniors Alicia Panetta and Kasey Olsen, together with Plainville Board of Education Chair Becky Tyrrell, participated in the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education's *A Day on the Hill Program* organized to raise awareness of education issues in the State Legislature.

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Let's Chat With...Cheryl Provost, Board of Education



Why did you want to become a Board Member? I was raised in Plainville, moving back years later to raise my children, and wanted to give something back to the community. My father, Robert Provost, was on the Town Council for many years and set a great example of what service to a community entails. I was a child of the 1960s and as such, took the "Think Globally, Act Locally" credo to heart. I am hopeful that as a nation we are returning to a more balanced global perspective, and wanted to participate in the most important way. To me that was to become a member of the Board of Education and an advocate for education.

What is the biggest challenge facing public education today? In tough economic times, the tendency is to treat education as another expense item to be reduced, rather than as an investment in the future. One of the most important factors in the

success of a town, state, nation or the world, is this investment in our children. The challenge is to promote this broad based vision for the future during a time when the focus is very much on day to day survival.

What do you feel will be your greatest contribution to the Board of Education? I believe that my experience as a parent, my work in the worlds of both technology and the arts, and my business background will allow me to add my voice to those dedicated individuals already on the BOE.

What is your vision for Plainville Community Schools? My vision for Plainville Community Schools is one in which the needs of all children can be met with the understanding and programs required for their growth as both students of the Plainville schools, and also as students of the world at large. My wish is that the importance of the schools as both a means for the education of our children, and as vital community centers, be recognized to a higher degree by the both the public and our town government.

PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Board Members:

- Jesse Gnazzo
- Anthony Goldberg
- Lorri Goldsmith
- Keith A. LaCombe
- Tabitha Manafort
- Cheryl Provost
- 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