



Community Letter

spring 2010

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

Message from the Board of Education

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Public education is facing great challenges; there are doubts about the ability of the education system to meet the needs of our country. Economic conditions have eroded funding at every level. The students who come to our schools continue to have greater and greater needs; they bring social, emotional, economic and medical issues with them. How will we find solutions to our challenges? Who will commit to this difficult work? We need champions in our schools, our communities and our homes. A champion is an individual who supports an idea or a person, who is driven by hope and not fear. The Board of Education, superintendent, principals and teachers are champions for our schools and our students. Parents, and the community as a whole, must commit

to help find solutions and lend support because the success of our schools and our students benefits all of us. For far too long public education has been the punching bag of the media. There is no organization, business or governmental agency that is perfect. We, as members of this community have two choices, we can stand by and criticize or we can choose to be a champion and work constructively to help find the solutions that ultimately help us all.

Student Spotlight: Plainville High School



Sarah Provost
PHS Class of 2010

While Plainville High School may not be the largest high school in the state, a look at our list of school sponsored activities shows we are a school that has something for every varying interest. From baseball to business to biology, PHS offers something for everyone! Spring sports are in full swing and promise a season of excitement in the new conference. Baseball, softball, golf, tennis and track teams have been practicing hard and the early news is that they look strong and are hoping to greet the

warmer weather with a barrage of wins and successes. For those students not so athletically inclined, PHS boasts incredible academic clubs ranging in topic from business to science. Both DECA and National Ocean Science Bowl (NOSB) teams did an amazing job of representing Plainville in the statewide competitions. PHS supports us not only academically, but helps us grow as individuals by allowing us to experience diverse activities!

Budget News

The Board of Education approved a 2010-11 budget of \$33,254,942 at its February meeting. This budget represented an increase of \$808,495 or 2.49% over the current fiscal year. The Board also passed a capital budget that included items totaling \$215,000. The Board of Education's budget contained funding sufficient to maintain most existing services and avoid laying off existing staff.

On March 1, the Town Manager and Superintendent presented the town and Board of Education budgets to the Town Council. On the town side of the budget, one of the main points made by the town manager was that any tax increases that may result from the final budget would be attributable more to an anticipated decline in revenues than in increased expenditures. Under the Town

Manager's budget proposal, 63% of the mill rate increase would be the result of an estimated \$1.98 million in decreased revenue. Town and BOE expenditure changes would only account for 11% and 26% of the proposed mill rate change, respectively.

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Let's Chat With...*Donna Cavallaro, Coordinator, PFRN*



Donna Cavallaro

Plainville Family
Resource Network

860.793.6304

What is the Plainville Family Resource Network ?

The Plainville Family Resource Network is a school, family, and community partnership working to support all families as they help their children grow, acquire literacy skills, and foster academic success.

What do you enjoy most about your position?

One of the most rewarding aspects of the program is being able to make connections early on with families. These connections help foster positive relationships between families and the school system who share the common goal of student success. Comfortable families develop the confidence needed to take an active role in their child's education.

What resources do you have for child care providers?

We have a variety of resources, including: the Parents as Teachers program providing personal visits, Play and Learn groups, resource and referrals, a lending library, and a monthly newsletter and calendar with daily learning activities for children.

Why is the Plainville Family Resource Network helpful to families with children who have not yet started school?

Children are engaged in learning from a very young age, through enjoyable age-appropriate activities, thus building a strong foundation for school success and excellent skills for the future.

Budget News *Continued from page 1*

On March 3, a public hearing was held on the Town Manager's proposed budget. Many who spoke at the public hearing spoke in support of the education budget and cited Plainville's outstanding educational system as a factor in moving to Plainville.

On March 16 and March 23, district administration and Board of Education members appeared before the Town Council to give presentations on several budget related topics and to answer many of the questions the Town Council had furnished the Board of Education in advance of these meetings. On March 16, Maureen Schiffer, Director of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Anne Walsh, Supervisor of Special Education, gave a presentation on special education programs and David Telesca, Assistant Superintendent, spoke about state and federal mandates. Board of Education Chair Becky Tyrrell, Superintendent Binkowski and Richard Carmelich, Director of

Finance and Operations, also gave insights into the Board of Education's budget and answered questions from the Town Council. On March 23, Mr. Telesca gave another presentation on class sizes and staffing levels; Principals Matthew Guarino and Greg Ziogas spoke about additional staffing requests and the athletic budgets at the middle and high schools respectively; Steve Busel, Director of Facilities, spoke about the facilities budget and Linda VanWagenen, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, spoke about student achievement on CMT and CAPT testing.

At these sessions, examples of the questions posed by the Town Council include inquiries about the items included in the professional operating and technical services areas of the district's budget, the grant money received by the district and how those funds are used, and the number of special education and districtwide positions funded

through the BOE budget.

On March 29, the Town Council voted to reduce the Board of Education's budget to \$33,129,942 -- or an increase of 2.1%. This budget set by the Town Council reduced the Board of Education's approved budget by \$125,000. At this level, the Board of Education would likely not have required any layoffs or significant reductions in educational programming from the current year. However, this budget failed at the all day vote that occurred on April 27.

As the budget process continues, the Town Council will continue to make adjustments to the town budget until the budget either passes at the all day vote or becomes enacted after a failed third all day vote. Once the budget is approved, district administration will work to provide the Board of Education with options to address additional reductions to their approved budget.

Good News!

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

PHS STUDENT ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM (SALT) student members, together with advisor JOHN ZADNIK recently attended two state conferences where they presented workshops on decision making and communication. ALLE CAPONIGRO, CARLY MARTINO, CHRIS KUZIA, and MATT THOMAS presented at the *Middle Level Leadership Conference* at Quinnipiac University and BRETT LITKE, MARCQUILLE JOHNSON, MILLIE MILLS, and ALEX BRUNO presented at the *Elementary Leadership Conference* at Asnuntuck Community College...the LINDEN STUDENT COUNCIL, led by second grade teacher JILL MULLINS, recently sponsored a sports team day during which \$461 was collected for relief efforts in Haiti...PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REBECCA SLIVINSKY, MELISSA AVERY, JILLIAN POTZ, NYIA GIRAUD, and JACKIE NIMRO received *Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards* for the 2009-10 school year...LOUIS TOFFOLON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHER KENNETH QUESNEL performed in a Bach concert presented by CONCORA, Connecticut's premier professional choral ensemble...the PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL THEATER UNLIMITED CLUB under the direction of faculty member THOMAS RICCARDO, produced "*Seven Crazy Plays.*" The production was created to raise funds to enhance the high school theater...the PROJECT H.O.P.E. (HELPING OUR PEERS EXCEL) program, coordinated by LINDEN STREET SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST SUZANNE SCHWEITZER and PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL JONATHAN COE, was recently featured on the NBC 30 "*Making the Grade*" television news segment...MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION TEACHER CAMILLE WESTFALL presented a workshop entitled "*Lego Robotics in the Classroom*" at the New England League of Middle School's annual conference... PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TIANA SARACENO, NATALIA KRUPSKI, KAITLIN BOUCHARD, and SANDRA REYES were award winners in the *2010 Connecticut Women's Art Competition*...MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE EIGHTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSES, led by faculty members PETER COLACCINO and DIANE ROTTIER donated butterflies to a synagogue in Willimantic, Connecticut that is collecting the butterflies for the Holocaust Museum in Houston, Texas...as part of the FRANK T. WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' "*Dog Gone It! I Love to Read!*" reading incentive program, coordinated by WHEELER LIBRARIAN JOYCE GOLDBERG, the students are participating in the Fidelco Guide Dog organization's "*Watch Me Grow*" program, where they have "adopted" puppies currently being trained as guide dogs and receive photos and weekly updates about the litter...the PHS SALT STUDENT TEAM MEMBERS attended the *Spring Student Leadership Conference* co-sponsored by the *Connecticut Association of Schools and the State Student Leadership Advisory Board* where PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL was one of four state high schools to receive the *Gold Honor School Award* for its commitment to developing student leadership, while PHS SALT PRESIDENT ALYSE LAMARRE received the *Daley Hawley Award* in recognition of her outstanding service and leadership at the state level over the past two years...WHEELER FIFTH GRADER TYREKE HENDON AND LINDEN FIFTH GRADER SAMUEL LYNES were winners of the *Plainville Coalition For Positive Youth Development's Community of Concern* contest on substance abuse prevention...the PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL DECA CHAPTER had eight state winners at the State Career Development Conference including: ALEXA ALLAIRE, ADAM JAMES, JENNIFER KANDIC, JILLIAN NEWTON, KRISTI PRATT, DEVIN PUGLIESE, KHUSHBU SHA, AND MIKAYLA WELLS...the MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE'S MATHCOUNTS TEAM recently participated in the *Hartford Region MATHCOUNTS* competition where a number of MSP STUDENTS earned personal best scores...the PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL OCEAN SCIENCE BOWL TEAM placed fifth overall at the *Quahog Bowl Regional Competition* with team members RACHEL ORZECOWSKI, NICOLE ORZECOWSKI, DARIA BEDNARCZYK, DAVID BENOIT, and LAUREN MANKOWSKI.

DID YOU KNOW?

Plainville Adult Education offers summer school to Plainville High School students, *plus* the following summer programs to adults: GED Preparation, Adult Basic Education, Credit Diploma Program, and English as a Second Language. For more information, please call the Office of Adult and Continuing Education: **860.793.3209**

Technology Today

The use of technology throughout the Plainville school district is extensive as well as diverse. One area where technology plays a vital role is in data collection, through the use of the Power School system. This system is utilized to collect daily attendance, grades, health information, parent and emergency contact information and much more. Through our vast communication network, we are able to communicate this important student information to parents. Students also use technology in the classroom districtwide. Projects in the schools range from research initiatives, to music and video projects created on the computer. In addition, there are a number of courses that integrate technology including a computerized art class that uses Photoshop to create, edit and produce beautiful works of art. At the middle school, students produce a daily live news video for the school's morning announcements. These videos can be viewed daily on the middle school web page: <http://msp.plainvilleschools.org>

Middle School students also use technology to compete in a Lego League tournament, a robot competition where each team must design, build and program a robot. Students in the Lego League this year came in first place for Innovative Robot Design in the statewide championship competition. In addition, there are classes in engineering and design that teach students how to use AutoCad to create and design a

wide variety of items. Students and staff are also using technology for distance learning. Through the use of technology, they are able to connect to other schools, scientists, authors and other experts--all through the use of video conferencing.

Children today have grown up in a "connected" world and want to learn this way as well. One way teachers infuse this technology based connectivity into learning is through the use of interactive white boards. In the high school, mathematics teachers use this tool to teach and to demonstrate mathematic applications. Social Studies teachers use video and Google Earth to explore various topics with students. Science teachers also use video and animation to demonstrate many concepts in science, while art instructors may show pieces of art work from museums around the world. Elementary teachers also utilize interactive white boards in classroom instruction. In kindergarten, teachers may use the white boards to review the morning calendar, while third grade teachers might conduct a spelling or grammar lesson via the interactive white boards.

Through the use of technology, we are able to extend resources, expand communication, enhance instruction and maximize learning for all students.

PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Board Members:

Jesse Gnazzo
Anthony Goldberg
Lorri Goldsmith
Cheryl Provost
Patrick Ringrose
Andrea Saunders
Becky Tyrrell
Barbara 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 and sciences, with a focus on literacy, mathematics and technology
- effective communication and collaboration builds trust and respect