



Community Letter

spring / summer 2011

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

Message from the Board of Education

What do public schools provide a community? The obvious answer is education of course--education for students from Kindergarten to grade 12. Education for adults who don't speak English or who need high school equivalent status. Education for students who excel and for those who struggle. Meeting space for Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and numerous civic organizations. Space for recreation programs and musical performances and a sense of community built through academic and athletic performances and challenges.

Public education is expensive and some are unable to see the value it brings to our community. That value is reflected in dollars through the price of our homes and socially through the culture created by administrators and teachers. Over 100 years ago Mark Twain said, "out of the public school grows the greatness of a nation." This sentiment is truer today than at any other time in our history. As we struggle to find a path to recover from this financial crisis, the quality of our public schools will determine how long it takes and how successful we are. Supporting our public schools may appear costly, however the alternative would be even more so.

Student Spotlight: Plainville High School



Fifth graders pictured above: left to right, Brianna Moore, Michael Khner, and Ryan Sookram

For the past three years, I have been part of a club at Plainville High School called H.O.P.E. H.O.P.E. stands for Helping Our Peers Excel. A group of students and I go to each of the three elementary schools once a year, and meet with the fifth graders. Our main goals are to try and eliminate bullying, substance abuse, peer pressure, and respecting differences. We break up in to small groups and get about six to seven fifth graders per group. The members of H.O.P.E. then put on short skits to show the fifth graders the scenarios that they might be exposed to. After the skits, we have discussions about what they saw, what they learned, and what they should do if they have to deal with any of that. Another goal we have is to make sure that the fifth graders know

that even though we go to a different school and are a lot older than them, they can come to us if they need help. To feel more connected, we all wear the same t-shirts that say "H.O.P.E.: Helping Our Peers Excel" on them. Being a part of this club for three years has taught me to look at fifth graders in a whole new way. I didn't realize that they had to handle some of the same things that we in high school are faced with. H.O.P.E. gives us all a feeling of satisfaction after the day is done. I hope that the fifth graders learned that they have many people to talk to when they are faced with bullying, substance abuse, peer pressure, or respecting differences. This year, I got to be a part of H.O.P.E. with my sister being a fifth grader. After talking with her, I indeed learned that they all did get a good message after spending the day with us. The H.O.P.E. members and I couldn't ask for anything more from a club than the feeling of helping our peers excel.



*Article written by:
Plainville High School senior, Jessica Tuczapski*

Budget News

The Board of Education approved a 2011-12 budget of \$33,508,282 at its February meeting. This budget represented an increase of \$818,487 or 2.50% over the current fiscal year. The Board also passed a capital budget that included items totaling \$576,400. The Board of Education's budget contained funding sufficient to maintain most existing services and avoid laying off existing staff.

On March 7, 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, over 50% of the mill rate increase would be the result of an estimated \$1.22 million in decreased revenue.

On March 10, a public hearing was held on the Town Manager's proposed budget. Some who spoke at the public hearing spoke in support of the education budget.

On March 22 and 24, Superintendent Binkowski, Director of Finance and Operations, Rich Carmelich and Board of Education Chair, Becky Tyrrell appeared before the Town Council to answer questions on several budget related topics and to discuss the details of the information that the Board of Education had furnished the Town Council in advance of these meetings.

At these sessions, examples of the questions posed by the Town Council include questions about health

insurance, grant funds received by the district and how those funds are used and about the number of special education students in the district.

At the end of March, the Town Council voted to reduce the Board of Education's budget to \$32,866,319 -- or an increase of 0.54%. This budget set by the Town Council reduced the Board of Education's approved budget by \$641,963. However, this budget failed at the all day vote that occurred on April 26 by a margin of 556 voting against the budget and 366 voting in favor of the budget.

The next round of budget deliberations included another public hearing on Thursday, April 28. On Monday, May 3, the Town Council took action to reduce an additional \$176,524 from the Board of Education's budget. This additional reduction left the BOE with a 0.0% increase from the previous year. The second vote was held on Tuesday, May 10 and once again, the budget failed.

In advance of the third and final vote, the Town Council reduced some funding on the town side of the budget, but did not make any further reductions to the Board of Education budget. By state statute, towns cannot reduce a Board of Education budget below the funding level from the previous year.

The adjusted budget approved by the Town Council after the second failed vote will go into effect for 2011-12 because the Town Charter calls for this budget to be enacted regardless of the outcome of a third and final vote, which was defeated on May 24. Now that the budget is set, district administration will work to provide the Board of Education with options to address additional reductions to their approved budget.

Alumni News

Superintendent of Plainville Community Schools **Dr. Kathleen Binkowski**, ('68), will retire June 30, 2011, after a 38 year career as an educator and leader in the Plainville school district. Raised in Plainville, Binkowski attended local schools, and began her career in 1973 as a faculty member at Linden Street School. She held a number of administrative positions in the district before becoming superintendent, for which she has served for the past ten years.



Please send **YOUR** alumni news to: Lynn Davis, Communications Specialist, via mail: C/O Plainville Community Schools, 1 Central Square (lower level) Plainville, CT 06062, via email: davisl@plainvilleschools.org, via telephone: (860) 793-3210 x 404.

Adult Education

Plainville Adult and Continuing Education will offer programming, free of cost, this summer. Multi-level English as a Second Language classes will be offered at the Plainville Community Food Pantry, on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., from July 5 to August 11. The Adult Basic Education and GED Preparation programs will take place at Plainville High School on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, from 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon, from July 5 to August 10.

**Pre-registration is required;
please call Plainville 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:*

THE TOFFOLON SCHOOL SELECT CHOIR performed the National Anthem at the May 4th New Britain Rockcats game...THE PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL OCEAN SCIENCES BOWL TEAM competed at the Quahog Bowl at UCONN Avery Point...A group of LINDEN FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS are collaborating with INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST ANN CARNEVALE to produce a newsletter entitled the *Lindy Current*...PHS STUDENT ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM (SALT) MEMBERS ALEXANDRA BRUNO, ERICA MIKULAK, KYLE DADDABBO, AND CHLOE LAMARRE presented a workshop on Decision Making and Communication at the Elementary Student Leadership Conference at Naugatuck Valley Community College...WHEELER SCHOOL STUDENTS participated in a PTO sponsored Walk-a-thon, walking a total of 2,417 laps, raising more than \$1,500 for the Parent Teacher Organization fund...The PHS JAZZ BAND participated in the Berklee Jazz Festival, the PHS PEP BAND performed at two Central Connecticut State University basketball games and senior trombonist SAM HAUSMAN performed with the Connecticut All-State Band...LINDEN STUDENTS AND STAFF participated in the national All Children Exercise Simultaneously (A.C.E.S.) Exercise Day on May 4th by doing Zumba...The PLAINVILLE DECA CHAPTER set a chapter record winning an all-time high of 20 awards at the State Career Development Conference held at the Aqua Turf...MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE FACULTY MEMBER GREG WARNAT organized the 4th annual Students vs. Staff Charity Basketball Event raising \$2,678 for the Petit Family Foundation...Members of the PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL'S ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB are creating a brochure for Plainville's Clean Energy Task Force....THE PLAINVILLE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER sponsored "Science Night" featuring a stage show and outdoor presentation by LINDEN SECOND GRADE TEACHER MELISSA DODENHOFF...the PLAINVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FACILITIES DEPARTMENT was recognized as part of National Healthy Schools Day on April 11...The Memorial Wall of Honor induction ceremony was held at PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, honoring its first inductees in memoriam, MR. THOMAS. L. WAZORKO, AND MR. THOMAS R. FERGUSON...Seven high school artists received awards in the 2011 Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards Program including ANNA DZILENSKI, REBECCA SLIVINSKY, JOSHUA FOSTER, SHANNON KASZUBA, CRISTINA MULLIN, NICOLE HOGAN, AND ASHLEY DANIELS...the TOFFOLON SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL held a paper drive to support the Plainville Community Food Pantry...Children's author CYNTHIA WHIPPLE visited WHEELER SCHOOL KINDERGARTNERS where she read to the WHEELER STUDENTS and discussed the importance of using good manners.

Let's Chat With...Maureen Schiffer, Assistant Superintendent



Maureen Schiffer, Ed.D.

What are some of your responsibilities as Assistant Superintendent? Some of my responsibilities include: districtwide coordinator of Positive Behavioral Supports, Response to Intervention, and Section 504 matters. I also assist the Superintendent with the district's strategic plan and goals, and personnel matters. I work closely with school principals regarding a variety of issues that impact staff and students.

What is your leadership style? My leadership style is very collaborative and team orientated. I believe in working with professionals from a strength based model.

What are the key issues or challenges that you face? We are constantly challenged by increasing federal and state mandates that we must comply with and don't get additional funding to do so. Our top priority remains higher achievement for all students.

What professional accomplishment are you most proud of? I am proud of the work that was done during my time as Special Education Director and hope to make an impact in my new role as Assistant Superintendent. I also recently earned a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Central Connecticut State University.

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Technology Today: *Social Networking Safety*

Today social networks proliferate our day to day lives, especially if you have a teenager at home. Facebook has become the mainstream media our students use everyday. Students share video, pictures and stories with “Friends” they have online. But do they know what they should and should not share online? Kids today may be “tech savvy” but they may not be “world savvy,” not thinking beyond tomorrow. They may not consider what that picture or video might say about them five years from now, when they are looking at colleges or for employment. National Business Week reports

that more than 53% of employers “Google” prospective employees. This means that anything that can be found online about a student will be found and could damage their chances of obtaining employment. Another issue to be aware of while on social networking sites is, who is watching? “Friends,” family, “Friends of Friends,” employers, classmates, and strangers. A good rule of thumb to follow is that you should not post anything on line that you would not want posted on a billboard. People think they are safe because only friends can see postings. Based on the average number of “Friends” a high school

student has, literally hundreds of people can see postings, and if the “Friends of Friends” setting is activated, then thousands of people can see postings. With this in mind, you may consider no longer using social networks. However, people sharing information online is one of the most powerful options the internet has to offer, and not being part of that can be limiting to a student. For more information and tips on social networking safety, visit:

<http://www.onguardonline.gov>

<p>PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION</p> <p>Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D. <i>Superintendent of Schools</i></p> <p>Jesse Gnazzo Anthony Goldberg Lorri Goldsmith Charlotte Koskoff Cheryl Provost Patrick Ringrose Andrea Saunders Becky Tyrrell Barbara Willard</p> 	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Belief Statements</h2> <p><i>We believe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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