



Message from the Board of Education

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Please check the websites for times and prices of any activity that might interest you.

To quote an ancient Chinese proverb,

" Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere."

The holidays are over, the presents are unwrapped and our children are getting back to the job of learning. As we start this new year you may be looking for ways to expand your child's education on weekends and during school vacations. Consider some local activities right here in Connecticut. The following are

10 possible suggestions:

1. Connecticut Science Center - Hartford
2. Wadsworth Atheneum - Hartford
3. Peabody Museum of Natural History - New Haven
4. The Dinosaur Place at Nature's Art - Oakdale
5. Mystic Seaport - Mystic
6. Mystic Aquarium - Mystic
7. Submarine Force Museum - Groton
8. Riverquest Connecticut River Expeditions - Haddam
9. Earthplace the Nature Discovery Center - Westport
10. New England Air Museum - Windsor Locks

Student Spotlight: Extra Innings at MSP



Seventh graders Bethany Pelletier and Elizabeth Dinielli interview Kelli Wallace, Extra Innings Program Coordinator.

Q: What is the Extra Innings Program?

A: The Extra Innings Program is an after school program for middle school students. Students participate in a variety of fun and engaging academic and enrichment activities.

Q: What is a typical day like in the program?

A: Students are provided with a nutritious snack and get help with their homework, as well as an opportunity to participate in a variety of classes such as: Trivia Time, Cooking, Sports, Mad Science Experiments and more.

Q: What do you think is best about the Extra Innings Program?

A: I really like that the program gives students something fun and constructive to do after school instead of being home alone or engaging in risky behaviors.

Q: How do you choose what classes will be offered in the program?

A: Classes are chosen based on input from students and parents, as well as the individual talents and interests of program staff members.

Q: What do you think students enjoy most about the Extra Innings Program?

A: Students tell me that they really enjoy being able to get their homework done early and doing activities that they don't get to do in the classroom as a part of the regular school day. Also, students really like that they have a structured, but fun place to spend time with their friends after school.

Budget News

The budget season is now fully underway. The budget calendar is listed on the Plainville Community Schools website and all meetings are open to the public. Meetings will take place throughout January with a Board of Education budget scheduled to be approved at the February Board of Education meeting. The Board meets throughout January to develop the budget through a discussion of budget goals, program priorities, budget impacts and budget solutions. Topics often include contractual salary increases, changes in anticipated benefit and utility costs, the budget for athletics, and special education tuition costs. Throughout March and April, the Board of Education will meet with the Town Council to discuss educational needs and there will be public hearings on the budget for community input. The budget process will culminate with at least one all-day

budget vote at the end of April. As work begins on crafting the 2012-13 budget, there are a number of areas that are being examined that will have an impact on the overall budget increase. First, Plainville will no longer be receiving federal stimulus funds through the Education Jobs Fund. This one-time federal grant allowed the Board to offset approximately \$550,000 in salary and benefit costs in its 2011-12 budget. Because these funds will no longer be available, the Board will need to find an alternative for funding the 7.5 positions and \$168,000 in benefit costs currently paid for through this grant. Second, the district needs to begin implementing its six-year technology replacement cycle. There is a significant portion of the technology inventory that needs to be replaced because it no longer meets the needs of the students. It is expected that the imple-

mentation of this replacement cycle will add \$250,000 to the 2012-13 budget. Third, it is imperative that the Plainville Board of Education implement a new K-5 math program in order to be aligned with the Common Core State Standards, as required by the state for all Connecticut schools. The purchase of new math textbooks to meet these standards will require an increase of \$100,000 in the 2012-13 budget. Finally, the Board must always budget for contractual salary increases for current staff, increases to health insurance and other benefits and costs associated with tuitions for outplaced special education students and students who are attending magnet schools. While there are a number of areas that may result in an increase to the overall Board of Education budget, there are some possible solutions as well. *continued on page 4*

Technology Today

Plainville students and staff use a variety of software. Open Source is one software type used districtwide. It is liberally licensed to allow users the right to use, copy, study, change, and improve its design through the availability of its source code. One of its applications is Open Office, an open alternative to Microsoft Office. It has many of the same components including a word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation options. Additional Open Source software utilized are Web tools, including Moodle--a free web application used to create effective online learning sites. Teachers also use Moodle to give assessments and provide an online forum. Deploy Studio is used to image and install much of the software on district computers. These Open Source tools, combined with many of the free products available, help Plainville schools keep software costs at a minimum.

An interview with Frankie T. Wolf

What is it like being the mascot of Frank T. Wheeler School?

It's a great job. I get to show up at special occasions like the Summer Reading Celebration, the Fall Festival, and my favorite, the first day of school. The kids get really rowdy, but they are always respectful.

Does being a leader of the P.A.C.K. mean a lot to you?

Yes, because being a leader of the P.A.C.K. means you are a successful student. **P** is for Participate which means being safe and being on task. **A** is for Achieve by giving 100% effort to learning. **C** is for Cooperate and **K** is Know that I can!

What do you think the most important letter in P.A.C.K. is and why?

I think they are all important but, I would say **K**, which stands for "Know that I can!" because confidence is everything.



*By Riley Millette
Grade 5 Wheeler School*

LINDEN STREET SCHOOL

In December, Steve Wowk from the VFW joined **Linden students** and their General Electric Reading Partners for a holiday reading of the *Polar Express* by **Principal Paula Eshoo**. Thanks to a generous donation from the Plainville VFW Post 574's Community Outreach Program, each student in the Reading Partners Program received a copy of the *Polar Express* book in support of literacy...**The Linden Student Council** collected toys donated to the Plainville Community Food Pantry over the holidays.

LOUIS TOFFOLON SCHOOL

Toffolon third, fourth and fifth graders demonstrated good citizenship, using recess time to make holiday placemats and cards for the Plainville Senior Center and local home-bound seniors...**Toffolon students** recently participated in "Crazy Hat Day" donating one dollar to wear their craziest hats. All of the money raised was donated to the Plainville Community Food Pantry for food gift certificates and warm blankets.

FRANK T. WHEELER SCHOOL

Wheeler School sent home 233 Golden Paw Awards to students who did not have any office referrals in semester one. 87% of the student population at Wheeler met this high level of "Leader of the PACK" expectations by earning this award..."Math in Oz" Family Math Night was held recently.

The program, presented by faculty members **Marianne Hogan** and **Reggie McConachie**, was based on an activity published in *Teaching Children Mathematics*. Wheeler students and families enjoyed Wizard of Oz themed activities immersed in mathematical experiences.

MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE

MSP Music Instructor Todd Helming has been named Connecticut's 2011 "Director Who Makes a Difference" in the 50 Directors Who Make a Difference Report by School Band and Orchestra Magazine...The Middle School's "Wear Jeans to School" faculty fundraiser, coordinated by faculty member **Joanne Muldoon**, raised \$2,400 for the Plainville Community Food Pantry.

PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

The Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) Club, lead by faculty members and co-advisors **Steven Michaud** and **Mary Jobs**, hosted a holiday toy drive to benefit the Marines Toys for Tots Program of Hartford County...The artistic works of PHS faculty members **Mario Pires** and **Michael Richters** were showcased at an art exhibit at the Artspace Gallery in Hartford...**Plainville High School** held its first annual Curriculum and Activities Showcase, an interactive opportunity for parents, students, and the community to experience academic, co-curricular, and extra-curricular opportunities for students at the high school.

What is your top priority as principal?

Safe, happy, healthy scholars who have the skills socially, emotionally, physically, and academically to make choices and behave in such a way that will enhance their lives.

What do you see as your biggest challenge?

Budget cuts. Increasing federal and state mandates have raised standards, rightfully so, however no funding is ever allotted to implement the legislation. My experiences in education have given me insight that Plainville's commitment to small class sizes and increased resource personnel is truly a major factor to achievement. Our schools can not meet these demands effectively and efficiently without the support.



Principal Paula Eshoo,
Linden Street School

What are you most proud of in your career as an educator?

Earning awards like Principal of the Year and Teacher of the Year has been an honor. What I am most proud of are the relationships that I have had with children and when one of them says with pride, "I am a scholar" and there is true belief in their ability--that is what it is all about.

What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

I love learning and watching children learn and grow, and when scholars have "Ah-Ha" moments. Their spirit keeps me young, their belief / innocence gives me faith, and their energy awes me.

What one piece of advice would you give to Linden students?

Make it a great learning day or not scholars...the choice is always yours!



Budget News (continued from page 2)

First, administration is investigating a proposal put forth by Energy Education which, when implemented, would reduce energy costs. Second, the state has increased the reimbursement rate under the Open Choice grant program. If Plainville remains at its current rate of participation of 3%, the district could realize at least an additional \$350,000 in revenues. This would help offset the revenue lost through the sun setting of the Ed Jobs funds.

While there are many challenges to crafting an appropriate budget to meet the needs of Plainville's students, it should be pointed out that Plainville taxpayers receive a great deal of quality and value for their tax dollar. In a joint presentation to

the Town Council and Board of Education on December 13th, both the Superintendent and Town Manager provided a number of facts to support this notion. The Superintendent provided data showing that Plainville is below the state average in terms of expenditure per pupil and Plainville's figure is in line with the rest of the district's reference group. He also pointed out that state standardized test scores are in the top quarter of the reference group, but average teacher and administrator's salaries are second lowest in the group compared to neighboring districts. Also, school suspension rates at the high school and middle school continue to decline dramatically even though Plainville is in the

bottom half of the reference group as measured by the number of administrators per student. On a town-wide basis, the Town Manager reported that tax increases and budget increases--both on the town and education side--have been very low over the past five years.

Overall, the Board of Education budget is expected to focus on students, teaching, and learning in all aspects of the decision making process. It will involve an open and collaborative process and will include a discussion of needed items that are not in the 2012-13 budget in the context of planning for realized savings in the current fiscal year.

PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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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 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