



Plainville Board of Education's

Community Letter

Winter 2014

To provide rigorous and enriching experiences that prepare each student for success in a changing global society.

Message from the Board of Education

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As we look ahead to 2014, a lot of us will be making New Year's resolutions, such as going to the gym on a regular basis, looking for a better job or spending more time with our families. And while these are all great resolutions maybe some of you are just looking for ways to get more involved in the Plainville Community Schools. Here are a few things you can do to be a part of the education process in Plainville:

- Attend a monthly PTO meeting at one of our five district schools
- Become a volunteer or a mentor
- Attend a Board of Education meeting including our budget work sessions
- Vote at a budget referendum
- Read a book with your kids
- Attend a district sponsored event like an Open House or Information Session

All of these things will allow you to become more involved and informed about what happens in and around the Plainville schools. For more information please log on to our website at www.plainvilleschools.org. And from all of us at the Plainville Board of Education we would like to wish you a happy and healthy New Year!

Spotlight on...The Middle School



Helena Rose Yawin and Madison Schrey
Middle School of Plainville - Grade 6

Our school, MSP, recently hosted the Rachel's Challenge Program. Rachel's Challenge is the story of a young girl, Rachel. She was the kind of person that people met and instantly liked. She stood up to the cruelest bullies and once even saved a student's life without knowing. Unfortunately, there was a shooting at her school, and she was a victim. Even though Rachel's life came to an end so shortly, what she accomplished did not. To continue Rachel's work, staff and students at MSP started a club called the Friends of Rachel (FOR) club. This club works to emphasize how important it is to be kind to one another.

At the FOR club, students do many activities. Right after the program, students took little strips of paper and wrote small acts of kindness. Later the pieces were joined to make a chain nearly 100 feet long. The next thing they did in the FOR club was "Mix it Up" day. This is where students sit with new people in the cafeteria that they may never have sat with otherwise. They also participated in "World Kindness Day." All around the world, people were doing random acts of kindness. From helping someone stand up when they fall, to standing up to a bully, every act of kindness was appreciated. No school is perfect, and Rachel's Challenge and the FOR club have definitely affected us in a positive way. Rachel Joy Scott's impact on the world has absolutely made it a better place. Like she said, "People never know how far a little kindness can go."

Budget Development for 2014-15

Providing Quality for our Students and Value for the Community

Each December, Superintendent Kitching and the district administration begin to develop the Superintendent's Budget Proposal for the following school year. That proposal is presented to the Board of Education in early January for review and continued work to ultimately develop a final Board of Education budget for Plainville Community Schools.

The 2014-15 budget is being developed through a process of Reprioritizing, Reallocating, and Reinvesting. First, an extensive review of all current programs and initiatives is conducted. This provides the opportunity to reprioritize the school district's needs relative to the Board of Education's Strategic Plan, the focus on students, teaching and learning, and the goals and objectives necessary to continue to move the school system forward. Next, all resources and available funding sources are reviewed so that wherever possible, resources can be reallocated to educational needs that the Board and administration believe are the top priorities. Finally, decisions are made regarding the need to reinvest those reallocated funds and community tax dollars, into critical district programs and initiatives. Through this process, the Board and administration have been able to provide the high quality education that Plainville students deserve, while being sensitive to the economic situation within the Plainville community--providing quality for students and parents, as well as value to the community.

There are a number of items that will have an impact on the overall budget for 2014-15. First, the Board must plan to meet the legal and contractual obligations for items such as salary for current staff, health insurance and other contractual benefits, and costs associated with tuitions for students with special needs and students attending magnet schools. In addition, the district must continue implementing its plan for the replacement and updating of technology. The technology planning allows the school district to maintain a consistent annual budget commitment of approximately \$250,000 for replacing outdated equipment and upgrading the infrastructure. This helps the community avoid much larger, intermittent investments that can result in millions of dollars in expenses. Included in the Superintendent's budget proposal are changes and initiatives designed to assist students struggling to learn for any reason, an expansion of the district's current preschool program, and plans to reorganize our athletics and extracurricular programs. Finally, it is imperative that the Board continues to implement and support changes that help to align teaching and learning with the Common Core State Standards, 21st Century skill development, and the requirements of State mandated changes in teacher support and evaluation.

There will also be a number of factors that will have a positive impact on the 2014-15 budget and efforts toward reallocating and reinvesting to meet the needs of the school district. The Board and the administration expect to continue to

experience savings on utilities expenditures as a result of the district's energy conservation program, which has dramatically reduced energy consumption and utilities cost. Last year, the Connecticut General Assembly increased the amount of funding that suburban Hartford school districts receive for hosting Choice students, which will also have a positive influence on the overall budget. Efforts to provide a wider range of programs and services within Plainville schools for students with significant special needs will once again result in a decrease in the need for more expensive outside placements, and more importantly, better serve those students.

During their November meeting, the Board also approved a ten-year Capital Improvements Plan that includes a number of projects related to the facilities at the Middle School and Wheeler School, as well as addressing the Plainville High School driveway, parking lot and grounds repairs.

The Board received a presentation on the Superintendent's Proposed Budget on January 21. The Board then held two work sessions to review all aspects of the budget. At their February 10 meeting, the Board approved the 2014-15 budget with a 0.67% increase over last year's budget. The Board budget then goes to the Town Council for review and action as they prepare the municipal budget during the month of March. Finally, the community will have an opportunity to decide on both the Board of Education and Town budgets at the town's all day vote on April 29, 2014.

DID YOU KNOW? Plainville Adult and Continuing Education now offers Healthcare Training Programs: Medical Billing and Coding, Clinical Medical Assistant, Pharmacy Technician Certification, and Veterinary Assistant. Classes begin in March. Please call for further information: **(860) 793-3209**.

Good News! Great things are happening in our school district.

PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Three students recently received *2014 Connecticut Regional Scholastic Art Awards*: **Maggie Myszka**-Honorable Mention for her charcoal drawing "Portrait of a Friend," **Sarah Voisine**-Gold Key for her charcoal drawing "Branches" and **Devon Zirpola**-Honorable Mention for her untitled ceramic sculpture...Students **Alicia Gorski**, **Erin Kane**, **Sydney McGough** and **Shyanne Bradley** recently presented workshops at the Connecticut Association of Schools' Elementary Level State Leadership Conference held at Naugatuck Valley Community College...**Dan Costantini**, **Joey Chacho**, **Sarah Thompson** and **Emily Duda** served as presenters at the Middle Level Leadership Conference held at Trinity College...senior **Kaitlyn Bernier** organized a local "Jeans for Teens" clothing drive for homeless teens.

MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE

Students **Jessica Royce**, **Nick Costantini**, **Tanairy Barton**, and **Emily Savage** together with Dean of Students **Tom Laudadio** served as presenters at the "Changing School Climate Reducing Bullying Conference" in Hamden, Connecticut, highlighting the many ways the Middle School of Plainville challenges name-calling and bullying behaviors...**The Student Council**, with the leadership of faculty member **Demetrius Karapanos**, and the school's **Parent Teacher Club**, worked together to collect 97 coats to donate to the Salvation Army as part of the Coats for Connecticut project.

LINDEN STREET SCHOOL

Linden's Green Committee sponsored a reduce/reuse/recycle contest to kick off their new recycling program at school...**Principal Paula Eshoo** received a grant from the Plainville Community Fund to support the student initiated **Environmental Committee**, to purchase earth boxes and supplies to grow vegetables...The Linden community created the "Baby, It's Cold Outside" collection box filled with hats, mittens, scarves and gloves for donation to those in need.

FRANK T. WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Wheeler said goodbye to former Principal **Catherine Frayler** who retired in January, and welcomed new Principal **Andrew Batchelder**...faculty member **Jennifer Murrhly** received a grant from Target to fund a field trip to the Noah Webster House in May, where students will learn about colonial life in an interactive and engaging setting...**third graders** recently participated in a Native American Day, with an integration of the arts into their unit of study of Native Americans of the Eastern Woodlands.

LOUIS TOFFOLON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Toffolon Student Council, led by faculty member / advisor **Sue Fabrizio**, sponsored the Great Bedtime Pajama & Food Drive to benefit the Plainville Community Food Pantry... The Chefs Move To School Program recently debuted at Toffolon featuring Peter Lemnotis, Chef/Owner of Confetti! Restaurant and Chef Eric Molly, as they introduced an array of healthy luncheon food items to the Toffolon school community.

DISTRICT

Elementary Instructional Leader Math/Science **Phil Sanders** received a grant from the Plainville Community Fund to support the purchase of materials for Family Math Night at the three district elementary schools...**Plainville Community Schools** received the *Award for Energy Stewardship* from energy partner Cenergistic recognizing the school district's efforts in reducing utilities consumption and the positive impact on the environment through the district energy conservation program...**The BOE** received the Connecticut Association of Boards' of Education (CABE) highest leadership recognition; the *CABE Board of Distinction Award- Level 2* for the fifth consecutive year; the district also received seven *2013 CABE Excellence in Educational Communications Awards*.

Let's Chat with...



**Andrew Batchelder, Principal
Wheeler Elementary School**

What are your responsibilities as principal? First and foremost, my chief responsibility is to ensure a safe and positive learning environment for all students and staff. Additional responsibilities are to support teachers, parents and students in a way that ensures all Wheeler School students are successful.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I believe in building credibility with all stakeholders and students by doing what I say I am going to do and following through all the time. I also believe in gathering

input from all stakeholders through any change process before making a decision.

What one piece of advice would you give to Wheeler students? Always be honest with yourself and others, strive to give 100% effort 100% of the time in all that you do, and be the best "leaders of the pack" you can possibly be!

What do you enjoy most about being an educator? I enjoy interactions and developing positive relationships with all students and stakeholders.

What is your vision for Wheeler School?

To continue to strengthen the positive learning culture and climate that already exists at Wheeler School.

Math Madness Comes to Linden St. School

Written by:
Katie Guarco and Tessa Susco



Did you know that memorizing facts could be really fun? Our math instructional leader, Mr. Sanders, created a new incentive program called Monthly Math Madness. This program will help students in grades 1-5 get better at their basic facts. The facts are multiplication, division, addition or subtraction, based on each grade level.

Students get a packet of basic math facts and math puzzle activities every month. If students complete it by the end of the month, they will receive a prize, 10 tickets to use in our school store, a certificate, and a picture with fellow students in his or her class that also completed the work.

We think that Monthly Math Madness is a great program for students who have trouble with their basic facts. We hope this will help kids get a better education and solve harder math problems in their future!

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Belief Statements... We believe:

- Our public school system is the core of the community and has a fundamental responsibility to develop productive educated citizens in a democracy
- Optimal achievement for each learner is a responsibility shared by students, home, school, and community
- We must provide each student with a comprehensive curriculum and effective instruction to ensure meaningful engagement in the learning process
- A safe, caring learning environment promotes the academic growth, health, and emotional well being of each student
- Communication and collaboration foster knowledge, trust, and respect and are the responsibility of everyone in the community.