



Plainville Board of Education's

Community Letter

Winter 2015

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 put 2014 behind us and look ahead to the new year, there are many exciting things happening in Plainville Community Schools, including:

- The new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Lab at PHS
- Expansion of the Pre-K Program to all 3 elementary schools
- Chromebooks now available to grades 5-12
- The wonderful charitable works of our staff and students including food drives, clothing drives and the PHS "Can the Principal" event
- The "Read, Right, Run" program at MSP. The program is modeled after a "marathon." Students read a certain amount of books, do good deeds, and get plenty of exercise
- The great success of our energy conservation program which has allowed us to reinvest the savings back into our schools
- The new College and Career Center at PHS which assists students with researching colleges and careers
- Career Day at PHS which brings in approximately 40 businesses to speak to our students about potential careers

There are many offerings that keep our students very busy and engaged during the school year. On behalf of the Plainville Board of Education, we would like to wish all of the students, parents, and the community of Plainville, a very happy and healthy 2015!

Student Spotlight: Linden St. School



Written by: Kaydin Younger and Whitney Southall

The After School Program offers a wide range of options for the Linden scholars in grades 1-5. Our December session included Mad Science, Fun and Fitness, Let's Gogh Art, and Play-Doh & Crafts.

"The After School Program began with a grant," shared Mrs. Boudewyns from the Linden Street School office. A dream for students to have fun with each other after school sealed the deal! Ms. Tynik, the head teacher, said, "We have had about 153 students participate in Sessions 1 and 2 so far this school year."

My name is Kaydin Younger and I myself go to the After School Program. I do "Mad Science." In "Mad Science" we have been working very hard doing our projects. While learning about gravity and motion, we work together to learn from our instructors. We never know what is going to be next! Mad Science also offers kids a chance to have a snack and homework break. So, if you happen to want to do anything with science or have any scientific question ask me, Kaydin Younger. My good friend Whitney also goes to the After School Program. She does "Let's Gogh Art Painting." Whitney said, "I like it a lot! On Mondays we do crafts and on Thursdays we paint. We learn how to draw trees and use oil pastels. We enjoy it very much. The program teaches you to use your imagination while painting and drawing." Plainville schools should continue to have the after school programs so students can learn in exciting and interesting ways!

Growth Mindset *“mindset—a simple idea that can make a tremendous difference in learning”*

Based on decades of research on achievement and success, Carol Dweck, a psychologist working at Stanford University, discovered the concept of mindset—a simple idea that can make a tremendous difference in learning. Dweck categorizes people into two groups—those with a fixed mindset and those with a growth mindset. In a fixed mindset, people believe that intelligence and talent are fixed traits. In addition, fixed mindset people tend to spend time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing it and believe that talent or intelligence alone creates success. People with a growth mindset believe that abilities can be developed through commitment and hard work. They believe that intelligence and talent are just a starting point. Love of learning, resilience, and what Angela Duckworth (another Stanford researcher) calls “grit” are all a result of holding a growth mindset.

When teachers and students have a growth mindset, they focus on improvement and growth rather than on how smart they are. They work hard to learn and as a result, they get smarter. Students with a growth mindset are more engaged and motivated in school and consequently they earn better grades and higher test scores. In Plainville Community Schools, fostering a growth mindset begins with administrators as they support the learning of teachers. Administrators are responsive to honest feedback and seek to build their skills through professional learning side by side with teachers. Teachers collaborate with their colleagues

and strive to strengthen their own practice. They offer professional learning for their colleagues, and they develop their own professional growth plans. In short, teachers model life-long learning and emphasize the importance and rewards of hard work, perseverance, and grit (sticking with it even when the work is difficult). They truly believe that all students can learn and succeed, and they show it.

Students with a growth mindset are enthusiastic, hard-working, persistent learners who take charge of their own success. They understand the value of challenging themselves and accept that failure is part of the learning process. Like engineers, they understand that failure is just the beginning of the redesign process.

Parents, like teachers, can support children in developing a growth mindset by emphasizing the importance of hard work and challenging themselves. Praise is always focused on hard work, rather than intelligence. “You must have worked hard on this!” rather than, “You are so smart!”

Working together, parents, teachers, administrators, and students can foster a culture of growth mindset in our schools and in our community. By focusing on hard work and commitment to learning and growth rather than solely on the acquisition of high grades as a means of validating a belief in innate intelligence, we can help our students to gain the grit and perseverance necessary for success in college and careers.

Let's Chat With...Sue Bradley



Sue Bradley, Coordinator:
Volunteer Program and the
PHS College & Career
Readiness Center

What are your key responsibilities? They are two-fold. One, to ensure the mentor, tutor, classroom helper, and Reading Partners programs run smoothly and continue to link businesses and community members with students through these programs, and two, to build awareness for our new College and Career Readiness Center.

What is your number one priority for the areas you oversee? To connect great resources—people, businesses, opportunities—with our students across the school district.

What is your vision for the College and Career Readiness Center? To have the center be a place where students can explore possible career choices through conversation, online resources, and participation in the Shadowing for Success job shadow program. Also, to continue to expose our students to potential careers through business tours, guest speakers, and better connections to local job opportunities.

What do you enjoy most about your position? Meeting and bringing together amazing people with our students through mentoring, reading, tutoring, and job shadow opportunities.

What is your greatest professional accomplishment? I am proud of the collaboration and partnerships that I have been part of together with many colleagues, local businesses, and volunteers who have come together to provide so many high quality experiences for our students through the volunteer program and the Career Center.

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

PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Students in **Trevira Boatright's Marketing 2 Class** hosted the school's first annual International Day...the **DECA** and **FBLA Clubs** partnered to adopt families to feed over the Thanksgiving holiday...senior baseball player **Michael Munson** signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball at Post University in Waterbury, Connecticut...**PHS** hosted a college fair for students featuring more than 115 colleges and universities.

MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE

MSP students **Rebecca Beauchamp, Emma Lopez, Tanairy Barton and Nick Norman** together with MSP Dean of Students **Tom Laudadio**, were invited to participate in the Creating Safe School Cultures Stop Bullying program held in New Britain, Connecticut. The program featured the Middle School students and Laudadio speaking about the MSP ALLY Program...**Students and staff** at the Middle School recently donned "tacky apparel" as part of a joint fundraiser sponsored by the school's **Art Club** and **Student Council**. Participants made a donation to participate in "Tacky Sweater Day," and as a result donated over \$300 to the Plainville Community Food Pantry.

LINDEN STREET SCHOOL

Students and staff at Linden celebrated the fall season and supported their love of reading by decorating pumpkins with the theme of a favorite character from a book...**Students and volunteers** in the **Linden Reading Partners** program gathered for a holiday reading celebration featuring guest reader Superintendent of Schools **Dr. Jeffrey Kitching**. The Plainville VFW Post 574 donated copies of *Snowmen at Night* by Caralyn Buehner for the student participants in the Linden and Toffolon Reading Partners programs.

FRANK T. WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Wheeler **third graders** enjoyed a visit from "guest scientist Mr. Chris" from High-Tech/High-Touch, who was invited to introduce the first science unit on Matter...Over 100 **students** at Wheeler celebrated "Wheeler Loves to Read Day" organized by Library Information Teacher, **Joyce Goldberg**...**Third graders** toured the New Britain Museum of American Art featuring a quilt exhibition and made a quilt of their own.

LOUIS TOFFOLON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The **Toffolon Student Council**, assisted by retired staff member **Ann Bucchi** and Student Council Advisor and faculty member **Sue Fabrizio**, sponsored a "Treats for Troops" Service project where students and their families donated a portion of their Halloween candy to send to troops overseas. A total of 14,149 pieces of candy (340 pounds) were collected...**Toffolon staff members** presented a check for \$725 to the Plainville Community Food Pantry to support those in need during the holiday season. Each year the school's **staff members** donate money collected from "Dress Down Fridays" to support a local cause.

DISTRICT

The MSP **eighth grade choir** joined forces with **PHS** for the high school's Winter Concert...**The Board of Education** received the Connecticut Association of Boards' of Education's (CABE) highest leadership recognition--the CABE Board of Distinction Award-Level 2 for the sixth consecutive year; the district also received six 2014 CABE Excellence in Educational Communications Awards...**Parent teacher organizations** in each of the five schools received a donation thanks to an energy audit program spearheaded by Plainville's Clean Energy Taskforce, where a \$25 donation was made to the PTOs for every Plainville residence energy audit performed.

Elementary Mathematics



At the three elementary schools in Plainville, the enVision Math program continues to provide solid common core based instruction and practice for students. All three schools have started a "Monthly Math Madness" program with positive results.

This program features a monthly take home packet for students in grades 1-5, designed for review of math topics recently covered by their teachers. The intention is for students to voluntarily

complete the packet as a personal incentive to take responsibility for their learning. Students who return their packets are rewarded with certificates, class photos and pencils. The classes with the greatest return rate also have classroom celebrations. Family Math Nights are also planned at the elementary schools this year. These events are held at Linden, Toffolon, and Wheeler where parents, students and teachers gather to have fun playing games that involve simple math tools such as dice, cards, or dominoes. The idea is to show families how simple and easy it is to learn and practice math skills while enjoying family time together. Elementary school students will receive an informational flyer regarding registration for Family Math nights, which will begin in February.

The Plainville Adult Education Program Guide, to be mailed in February, features quality programs, including:

- HEALTHCARE TRAINING
 - FREE MANDATED COURSES plus Saturday afternoon GED® Preparation at the Plainville Public Library
 - New ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS with local instructors: 50 West Bistro Author William Hall, Master Gardener MG Trask, plus Berarducci Realtors, and so much more!
- Please call for details: (860) 793-3209

Chromebooks at MSP



*Written by:
Teagan Russell, Grade 7*

At the Middle School of Plainville, students in grade 6, 7, and 8 have received a Chromebook. The teachers and students agree that Chromebooks are beneficial. Reasons include the quick accessibility to the Internet, ease of writing assignments, and the saving of trees. Mrs. Muldoon and Mrs. Rogers, seventh grade teachers, stated, "Chromebook use allows students equal and ready access to technology and its benefits." Teachers encourage students to use all the benefits, such as spell check and websites like EasyBib that easily cite resources.

Seventh grade student, Rebecca Beauchamp, recalled writing minimally as a technique to not spend as much time handwriting assignments. Fortunately, kids find writing becomes easier when typing because it makes class more engaging and enjoyable. The students also enjoy the availability of going on math websites as opposed to bringing home a heavy textbook every day. They also assist in the Unified Arts classes. For example, looking up pictures in art is a benefit that students enjoy immensely.

Overall, the students and staff at MSP would agree that the Chromebooks have been a positive, helpful, and very useful addition to our school curriculum.

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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.