



# Plainville Board of Education's Community Letter

Winter 2016

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

## Message from the Board of Education

2016 finds some very exciting things happening at Plainville High School in the areas of science and technology. For the past couple of years, students have had the opportunity to enroll in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) related courses and activities. With a newly renovated STEM Lab, students can explore courses in Engineering, Robotics, Architecture and CAD that provide real world applications with project based activities. Students can create projects in several ways from building with basic hand tools and materials, to using specific design software to translate a file that can be printed out of plastic with a three dimensional printer.

The STEM Lab has allowed our faculty, students and district staff to collaborate in a variety of capacities. The "Go Baby Go" project is one such example. Students and staff from the middle and high school, together with faculty and students from Central Connecticut State University, therapists from the Connecticut Children's Medical Center, and a group of local families, formed teams to customize and re-

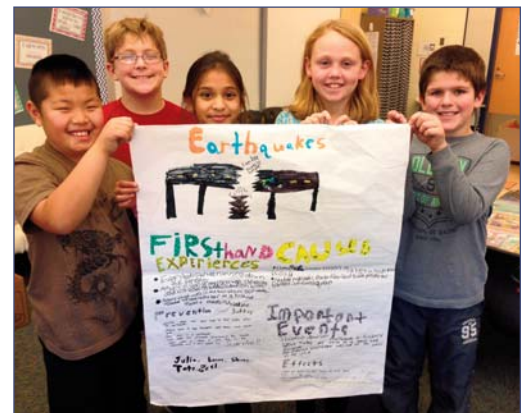
design electric cars for several special needs children. This gave each of the children the opportunity to drive and control their own vehicle. Other projects included designing and 3D printing a prototype gear that is utilized in the high's school HVAC system, creating injection molding keychains, constructing small scale VEX robots and student participation in the Digital Devils Robotics Club TEAM 5129, which competes at the highest level robotics competition held world-wide. Plainville High School students have the opportunity to join this club and compete against other teams at local, regional and national competitions.

On April 20, the district will be hosting the Superintendent's Update & Information Showcase at Plainville High School, which will be sure to include highlights of programs and projects from the STEM lab. Please come check out the amazing things our students are learning and how they are gaining knowledge and expertise needed for successful careers in an ever changing world. For further details visit our website at: [www.plainvilleschools.org](http://www.plainvilleschools.org)

### Spotlight on...Linden St. School

Our fourth grade teacher, Ms. Buccilli, said that we would be researching extreme weather and natural disasters this year. Our team researched facts on earthquakes using chromebooks to access digital resources. As research members, we were responsible for our own subtopics. We put all of our research on our subtopics together to completely study earthquakes. Lucas Grafton focused his research on causes of earthquakes. "When two plates rub against each other it creates pressure and all of a sudden...SNAP! An earthquake occurs!" Grafton said. "Did you know that you could protect yourself during an earthquake?" asked Zeel Patel. Patel focused her research on earthquake prevention and safety. "You should hide under the strongest structure in your house, for example, a metal table," advised Patel. Shane McCormick researched important earthquake events. "Did you know that the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 was one of the deadliest earthquakes in the U.S.A.?" asked McCormick. Tate Stevens was surprised by the fact, "severe earthquakes can be as strong as 2,000 atomic bombs." Woah! Julia Maksymiw focused her research on the effect earthquakes have on people. "People lose their homes and can be in danger during earthquakes," shared Maksymiw.

### Reading Units of Study in Action



LEFT TO RIGHT: Linden fourth graders, Lucas Grafton, Tate Stevens, Zeel Patel, Julia Maksymiw, and Shane McCormick from Ms. Buccilli's class

# Elementary Schools' Reading Units of Study

The elementary schools' Reading Units of Study curriculum continues to flourish in Plainville Community Schools. The reading program, implemented last June from the Teachers College at Columbia University, has been well received by students and staff alike.

This past summer the Reading Implementation Team, comprised of approximately 25 elementary level faculty members, met regularly to learn about and plan to support the implementation of the reading program at the elementary level. According to district Curriculum Coordinator Tawana Graham-Douglas, the program represents the newest thinking and methods, based on decades of research conducted by Teachers College representatives at Columbia, with a fundamental focus on preparing students to become "college and career ready" even at the elementary level.

The Reading Units model was developed with the Connecticut State Standards in mind, and meets 21st century global standards based on worldwide research on best practices in teaching and learning relative to elementary level reading. The program features job embedded professional development for faculty members supporting and teaching teachers how to deliver material and share resources with students

most effectively. "It's no longer about pencil, paper and memorization of facts," explained Graham-Douglas. The Reading Units of Study focus on supporting student learning of how to assimilate and synthesize information--it is a "thinking" curriculum with an emphasis on collaboration and research." Through the Reading Units of Study model, students learn from different structures and work in teams, sharing their individual expertise with peers to collectively solve real life problems and extend learning. As a result of this collaboration and conversation, they are able to think more deeply, share ideas, and discover from varying perspectives, which ultimately benefits students at all levels of understanding. The reading program also supplements traditional "book" resources with audio, video and internet links as part of instruction.

The Reading Units of Study curriculum is supported by teacher leaders, Literacy Resource Teachers, Media Specialists and the Reading Implementation Team through co-teaching classes, sharing resources and working collectively toward meeting the needs of students as they continue to learn and hone 21st century reading skills.

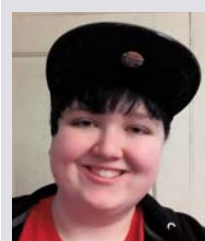
*(See Page 1 for Units of Study in Action)*

## Adult Education: "Edible Beauty" Review

Plainville Adult and Continuing Education recently held an enrichment class called "Edible Landscaping." This class, like the title implies, was about creating a garden that not only looks beautiful but is also edible! This class was instructed by MG Trask, who is very knowledgeable in everything gardening related.

She began by talking about the history of landscaping and how many ancient civilizations used landscaping as entertainment and to beautify the land. Also, she spoke about World War II Victory Gardens. The majority of the class was spent on how to create a garden that functions to its fullest potential. Trask also provided information on how you can make money from your garden, along with many useful tips on how to create a garden and help it grow.

The most enjoyable parts of the class were the introduction when Trask talked about the history of landscaping, and later, when we enjoyed a delicious salad and many scrumptious vinaigrettes. This class was very educational and everyone enjoyed learning about growing healthy and organic food with very good explanations and gardening tips.



*This review was written by Alexis Klesitz, an Adult High School student (left).*

*The Plainville Adult and Continuing Education Spring 2016 Program Guide (featuring Master Gardener MG Trask's new class, Nature's Wild Gourmet) will be delivered to all Plainville residents mid-February.*

## Let's Chat With...



*Scott Martin  
Facilities Manager*

**What attracted you to the position of Facilities Manager?**

I saw it as an opportunity to grow professionally. I welcome the challenge to excel in this position.

**As Facilities Manager, what are your primary responsibilities?**

I am accountable for managing supplies and equipment. I review work orders daily. I meet with contractors and review proposals for repairs to our buildings. I manage the custodians and oversee payroll and attendance. Our department works together to provide and maintain clean and safe environments for staff, students and the community use of our buildings.

**What is your number one priority?**

It is to ensure clean/safe environments in all of our school buildings. Our custodians and maintenance staff do a great job keeping up with the demand throughout the district. It is not always an easy job, but teamwork gets it done.

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

### PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

A group of Plainville High DECA members attended the Ultimate DECA Power-Trip in Austin, Texas. Members who attended the conference participated in competition events and attended workshops based on entrepreneurship, leadership, and communication skills...Plainville High School hosted the fourth annual Career Day program for students with more than 40 speakers participating in the event including representatives from a variety of career fields such as engineering, graphic design, culinary, computer programming and more...Plainville High School **Honors and Advanced Placement Biology students**, together with biology students from several other Connecticut high schools gathered for a genetics conference led by Dr. Sam Rhine. The title of the conference was *GWAS and STEM Cells Revisited - Genetics of Common Human Traits and Diseases and their Multifactorial / Polygenic Origins*...16 members of the **French Honor Society** donated 16 "shoe boxes" of toys and gifts to the national Operation Christmas Child program...the **Science National Honor Society** hosted a Toy Drive for the Connecticut Children's Medical Center for kids hospitalized over the holidays...The **Interact Club** supported several charitable causes over the holidays including the sale of paper "turkey legs" with funds going to the Plainville Community Food Pantry, cookies and baked goods made and delivered to the Plainville Senior Center, and volunteering at the "Out of the Cold" soup kitchen at the Salvation Army in New Britain.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE

**Middle School students and staff** donned "tacky apparel" during "Tacky Sweater Day" to raise over \$300 for the Plainville Community Food Pantry...**Five teams from the Middle School** competed at the first VEX IQ event of the season, held at South Windsor High School. Team Brain Bots - - **Nathan Masco, Aiden Payne, and Chris Brojek**, took home trophies for Teamwork and Robot Design. Team Ice-Breakers - - **Kori Jones, Alicia Quirion, and Ellie Keegan** won the Skills Challenge Award. Also attending were Team NeoTechs - - **Emily Savage, Emma Lopez, and Allie Chambrello**, and Team Za ChrisBirds - - **Ella Schwartz, Aidan Minervini, Chris St. Lawrence, and Travis Lavigne**...**Plainville Youth Services' Kids in the Middle program student volunteers from the Middle School** made holiday cards to send to American soldiers serving overseas, assembled and decorated song books to hand out at the annual Plainville Tree Lighting Ceremony, participated in "Bell Ringing" in the Gnazzo's lobby to benefit the Salvation Army, sang holiday carols to residents of Apple Rehab, and played holiday themed bingo, trivia and crosswords with residents of the Jerome Home as part of the "Adopt a Grandparent" program.

### LINDEN STREET SCHOOL

The **Linden community** held a winter clothing and food drive for the Plainville Community Food Pantry and the entry "fee" into Linden's Fall Festival was a non-perishable food item for

the Food Pantry...**Linden Office Professionals, faculty and staff** sponsored a holiday collection on behalf of two local families...Over \$300 was raised and donated to a local Veterans home as a result of a student planned bake sale held during school conferences.

### LOUIS TOFFOLON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Toffolon **fourth graders**, (with help from family members and staff) participated in their annual tree decorating activity. The small holiday trees, once decorated, were donated to the Plainville Senior Center, the St. Philip House, the BellMarie Assisted Living facility and the Plainville Community Food Pantry...**Toffolon students** have been busy in the school's library enjoying the Maker Space, where they build, tinker, experiment, and create. The Maker Space incorporates **STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math)** initiatives and builds a culture of discovery and creativity through computer coding, building circuits, knitting, crocheting, building with Legos, exploring engineering principles with Structure blocks and K'Nex, creating stop motion animation videos, producing videos with the use of a green screen, folding origami, taking apart old electronics, and more...**Toffolon students** collected 10,000 pieces of candy which were sent to military troops overseas.

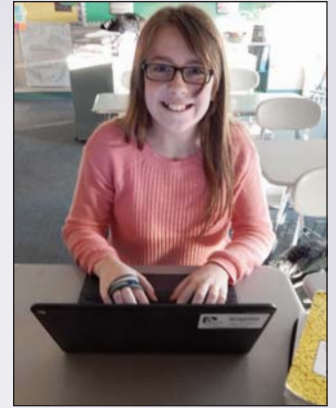
### FRANK T. WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Third graders at Wheeler** visited the Indian Rock Nature Preserve in Bristol. The students learned about the life of Native Americans of the Eastern Woodlands including shelter, clothing, food, tools, beliefs, celebrations and more. The nature preserve outing kicked off the next social studies unit of study for the **third graders**...**Eight members of the Wheeler Student Council** teamed up with the **Education Association of Plainville** to collect nonperishable food items for Plainville families...**Wheeler students and staff** supported the high school's Adopt A Family program, donating items for those in need during the holidays...**Fourth graders** traveled to the Connecticut Science Center where they challenged themselves to think like scientists and explore unique inventions...**Students in the Wheeler After School Program** enjoy participating in the Kelly's Kids Program - a play and care-taking program that involves live animals.

### DISTRICT

In December, and in conjunction with National Computer Science Week, December 7-13, all **Plainville elementary school students** participated in the "Hour of Code" program where they began to "code" - learning how to create text to operate computer functions...**The Plainville Board of Education** received the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) highest leadership recognition; the *CABE Board of Distinction Award - Level 2* for the seventh consecutive year; the district also received three *2015 CABE Excellence in Educational Communications Awards*...**Adult Education students and staff** participated in a holiday gift drive for families serviced by the Prudence Crandall Center.

The Middle School of Plainville has been encouraging students to have a Growth Mindset, a concept that expresses people should always keep trying, and your brain can grow with more challenges. Students engaged in three lessons during September and October to emphasize the importance of having a Growth Mindset. In a Growth Mindset, people believe that basic abilities develop through dedication and hard work, while an individual with a fixed mindset, believes their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. Growth Mindset is based around challenging your brain and believing that you can increase your skills. A lot of amazing and talented individuals, such as Michael Jordan and J.K. Rowling, have succeeded through their hardships because they had a Growth Mindset, and they never gave up. Students that have a Growth Mindset see the good in failing and making mistakes, and that makes them better learners. At the Middle School, teachers are always encouraging students to have a Growth Mindset.



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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.