

Plainville Citizen Op Ed, April, 2015

At their February meeting, the Board of Education (BOE) adopted a budget proposal for the 2015-2016 school year that included a 2.5% increase in funding over the current year's budget. After reviewing the Board proposed increase, the Town Council made an additional reduction of \$100,000, bringing the overall BOE budget for next year to \$34,366,736, an overall increase of 2.2%. Once again this year the budget represents a collaborative effort between the school and town administration, the BOE and the Town Council. I believe it is extremely important for the community to understand how the budget was developed and what it means for Plainville.

Since arriving in Plainville, I have promoted a budget development process we now refer to as the "Three Rs." Each year this process forces our administration to review every resource, program, service and initiative in our schools before we make decisions on Reprioritizing, Reallocating and Reinvesting. This exercise allows us to ensure we are investing responsibly in only those items that we feel certain will bring the greatest return on our educational investment. The "Three Rs" process also assists in creating a budget that is connected and tightly aligned to the mission, goals and objectives outlined in the Board of Education's Strategic Plan and district Vision.

To be clear, the educational plan supported by the BOE's proposed 2.2% increase to the 2015-16 budget includes **no** new initiatives. Instead, it provides only the funding needed to sustain our current successful educational programs and maintain our school facilities. To put the budget increase into a different

perspective, consider the following - - to simply fund the contracts of all current staff in the school district, meet our obligations for transporting students to and from school, and fund our legal obligation for outside tuitions, the school district budget would have increased over 3% from last year. However, using our budget development process, we made significant reductions in over half of our budget accounts that allow us to keep the overall increase low while continuing the successful programs and services our students need and deserve.

A review of our budget increases over the last four years provides another important perspective. Since I began as Superintendent in Plainville in the 2011 school year, our budget increases year-to-year have been 0%, 1.1%, 0.9% and 0.7%, - a total increase over four years of approximately 2.7%. During that same four-year period, it is estimated by the U.S. Bureau of Statistics that the cost of providing public education in our country increased over 19%. What does this mean? Our budget process has allowed Plainville to avoid over four million dollars in expenses over that time, while providing important new programs, high quality teaching and learning, and increases in student achievement.

Whether it is in our classrooms, around our schools, or in the work done by our Board of Education to plan financially for the school district, ***Plainville is getting it right!***