

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, May, 2014

Providing the Resources for Success

On April 29 voters in Plainville approved the Board of Education Budget for 2014-2015 by a ratio of nearly 4-to-1. The Board and the administration are incredibly appreciative of this support and the confidence it shows in the direction we have mapped out for our schools. Our continued focus on students, teaching and learning has translated into success for our students. Over the last three years, I have been committed to developing a transparent financial plan for our school system that reallocates and redistributes resources toward new and needed initiatives before asking the community to invest additional funds. The Board of Education has been supportive of this process and has worked collaboratively with the administration to meet the needs of our students and those of the community as a whole. Success for our students, high quality programs in our schools, and value added to the community - - that is what the Plainville Board of Education 2014-2015 Budget offers. I would like to share some of the more significant changes that are part of the planning for next school year.

First, the budget provides for an expansion of our preschool program. Currently we have a preschool program designed for students age 3-4 who have been assessed and identified as having a disability and being in need of special education. That program is housed only at Linden Street School and meets the needs of approximately 35-40 children each year. The Board approved expansion will allow all three elementary schools to offer a high quality preschool experience for an additional 80-90 four-year-old children. Linden Street, Toffolon and Wheeler schools will have two full-time preschool teachers, allowing us to offer four separate half-day sessions at each school. The program will be designed to identify and provide services for all children, especially those at risk of experiencing difficulty once in kindergarten because they may not have had access to quality preschool. The funding for this expansion will be covered by reductions in elementary classroom positions across the district, the result of slightly lower enrollment. More information on this program will be disseminated to parents and the community throughout May and June.

The 2014-15 Board of Education Budget also includes additional administrative staff to cover two critical areas. The newly appointed Coordinator of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction will provide expertise and assistance at all three elementary schools, focusing on our alignment to the Common Core Standards, the enhancement of our science and social studies units in grades K-5, and the training and coaching of elementary classroom teaching in language arts and mathematics. At the middle and high school level the Coordinator of Athletics and Extra-Curricular Activities will manage and administer athletics, organize all after-school clubs and activities, and manage the finances of all student activities accounts. The responsibilities assigned to these two positions

will allow our building administrators (principals and assistants) to concentrate more time on classroom instruction and the supervision of teachers.

The 2014-2015 Budget also supports the Board of Education's continued commitment to integrating high-quality technology into our classrooms. Funding has been provided for the expansion of our 1-1 Chromebook initiative to include grades 6 and 7 beginning next year. Starting in September, all students at both the Middle School of Plainville and Plainville High School will have access to their own Chromebook. In addition, our Technology Department will continue to make upgrades and enhancements to our network, improving service and security for students and staff. Finally, the technology budget will include upgrades and additions to all elementary classrooms. As a result of the Chromebook deployment at the Middle School and High School, we have the ability to redistribute many quality laptops and desktops to the three elementary schools. In September, all grade levels will begin to see more equipment and greater access to computers for instructional use in every classroom.

The examples above outline only a few of the exciting changes next year will bring. There are of course many other aspects of our operations included in the budget that will come together to form the overall academic and financial plan outlined in the Board's 2014-2015 budget. This year we titled the budget document, *"Providing the Resources for Success."* I am confident that is exactly what this budget will do. The support of the community makes it possible for our administration, faculty and staff to continue our efforts toward improving teaching and learning, and as a result allows our students to experience even greater success.