

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, November 2013

For this first time this year, students in Plainville Community Schools attended school on Veteran's Day. When this calendar change was first presented to the Board of Education, it was done with a commitment to using the time to better educate our students on the significance of Veteran's Day, with an emphasis on the importance of honoring our nation's veterans. Once the Veteran's Day school day was approved by the Board, a Veteran's Day Planning Committee was convened, comprised of district administrators, Board members, faculty members, and veterans from the local community. The group met several times and created a comprehensive framework of learning and celebration at each school for November 11.

At the elementary level, flag and wreath ceremonies were held in the morning, and throughout the day assemblies including families and veterans were scheduled featuring the reading of the children's book *America's White Table*, patriotic songs, poetry and essays. Those in attendance donned red, white and blue, and students created thank you signs and notes for our veterans. Patriotic Walls of Honor were on display in the schools, with the names and photographs of local veterans. Veterans in attendance at the school assemblies and ceremonies were recognized by name and given a token of gratitude from students and scouting groups. Elementary school students also made items crafted for delivery to the Connecticut Veteran's Home in Rocky Hill, and individual classrooms held a variety of learning activities focused on the meaning of Veteran's Day. At the Middle School of Plainville, students participated in

interdisciplinary lessons with the Veteran's Day theme. They learned about the history of Veteran's Day and created a "Wall of Peace" featuring paper bricks with student written responses about ways to honor veterans, how students can show respect and loyalty for their country, and more. The Middle School's Military Mailroom group invited local veterans in to observe lessons focused on the meaning of the United States flag and background on various armed conflicts that our nation has been involved in. Eighth graders researched current topics related to our nation's veterans, and middle school students lined the hallways of the building to applaud and "high five" visiting Veterans. A patriotic themed luncheon was also held for the guests in the Media Center. Plainville High School began the day with a breakfast for local veterans. High school students then attended mentoring sessions with veterans visiting classrooms to meet with students for interviews and discussion. At 11:00 AM, Principal LePage read the World War 1 Armistice Announcement, followed by a moment of silence and the playing of "Taps" by student musicians throughout the high school building. High School students made more than 300 cards that will be sent to local veterans. Plainville High School faculty member David Gagnard also created "*Plainville Supports Our Veterans*" banners that were proudly on display in each school during the Veteran's Day celebrations.

Throughout our school district on November 11, meaningful, poignant, and respectful events and activities were held in honor of our veterans. Students, teachers, veterans and guests in attendance beamed with pride as we celebrated those who served our country and fought for the freedom we enjoy today.

Several veterans in attendance mentioned that they have never been recognized for their service, and were grateful for the outpouring of thanks at each school. Mr. David Dudek, a local veteran of service in the United States Army and member of the Veteran's Council, attended the Veteran's Day celebration at Toffolon Elementary School, where his granddaughter is a first grader. Mr. Dudek shared that he was first skeptical when he learned that students would attend school in Plainville this year on Veteran's Day, but once he learned of the agenda, focus and purpose of the district plans to honor veterans and extend learning about Veteran's Day, he was pleased, and hopes that the school district's Veteran's Day program will continue for many years to come. Mr. Dudek attended the Veteran's Day program at Toffolon School, noting that it was a great day and it made him feel good to be part of it. He shared that all of the veterans in attendance at Toffolon that day received red, white and blue wrist bands, in honor of Veteran's Day, and said that the wristband he received will remain on his wrist, in honor of fellow veterans.

Veteran's Day in Plainville Community Schools this year was exceptional. From the extended learning for students to the joyous recognition of our veterans, faculty, staff and students created an atmosphere of respect and recognition, as our school district swelled with pride and excitement throughout this very special day.