

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, November, 2014

Last year, a calendar change was made for Plainville Community Schools, making Veterans Day a full school day. When this change was first presented to the board of education for consideration, it was done with a commitment to using the time to further educate our students on the significance of Veterans Day, with a focus on the importance of honoring our nation's veterans. Last year's Veterans Day inaugural school day programming was very well received, and provided the foundation for this year's exceptional tribute to our veterans.

At the elementary level, students, staff and veteran guests participated in flag raising and wreath laying ceremonies. These respectful tributes included patriotic musical selections and the recognition of veterans in many ways. At Wheeler School, Plainville Board of Education member and veteran Foster White shared his experiences as a veteran with those in attendance. Throughout the day in our elementary schools, assemblies including families and veterans were held featuring, patriotic songs, poetry, essays, and tributes to each branch of the Armed Forces. Students and staff members donned red, white and blue, and students created thank you signs, notes and small gifts of gratitude for veterans in attendance. Patriotic Walls of Honor were on display in the schools, featuring the names and photographs of local veterans, and individual classrooms held a variety of learning activities focused on the meaning of Veterans Day. At the Middle School of Plainville, students participated in interdisciplinary lessons with the Veterans Day theme. Additionally, each grade level participated in an assembly that featured patriotic musical selections, and the introduction and recognition of all veteran guests, many of whom are family members of the middle school students. Middle School students also wrote letters to be sent to

Connecticut soldiers in Afghanistan. Guest veterans were invited to a patriotic themed luncheon in their honor at the middle school. Plainville High School began the day with a breakfast for local veterans. Outside the main office, a "Welcome Wall" was created with a banner honoring veterans together with student essays and artistic depictions of Veterans Day from the "*What Veterans Day Means To Me*" Essay and Art Contest held at the high school. Video interviews of veterans were viewed by students during the day, and patriotic music was played throughout the building between classes. 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.

Throughout our school district on November 11, meaningful, solemn, and respectful events and activities were held in honor of our veterans. Students, teachers, veterans and guests were filled with pride as we celebrated those who served our country and fought for the freedom we enjoy today. From the extended learning for students to the meaningful recognition of our veterans, November 11th, Veterans Day in Plainville Community Schools, was an exceptional tribute providing significant educational opportunities and respectful reflection and recognition of our veterans. I am proud of the faculty, staff and students who contributed to this tribute in each of our five schools on this very special day.