

## Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, November, 2015

Several years ago, a calendar change was made for Plainville Community Schools, making Veterans Day a full school day. When this change was initially 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. That commitment continues each year and is evident in the outstanding programming that takes place annually in each of our five schools. Most recently, on a rainy November 11<sup>th</sup>, students and staff across the school district came together to honor veterans near and far with activities and programs that were educational, thoughtful, creative and respectful.

At the elementary level, students, staff and veteran guests participated in flag raising and wreath laying ceremonies. These respectful acts featured patriotic musical selections and the recognition of veterans in many ways. At Wheeler School, where students and staff raised funds for the Wounded Warrior Project, Plainville Board of Education member and veteran Foster White shared his experiences as a veteran with those in attendance, and girl scouts presented poppies, the flower often associated with Armistice Day and the poem *In Flanders Fields*, to those veterans in attendance. Throughout the day in all three elementary schools, assemblies including families and veterans were held with 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 who visited. Patriotic Walls of Honor were on display in the school buildings, depicting 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, 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 middle school students. In addition, several veterans provided an overview to students of their experiences in the Armed Forces, and answered questions about their service. The assemblies included a video of local veterans and their family members who were interviewed and thoughtfully reflected on the impact of service on their lives. A military vehicle from the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry CTANG of New Britain was on display for students to view outside of the school building, and guest veterans were invited to a patriotic themed brunch in their honor. Plainville High School began the day with a flag raising ceremony and breakfast for local veterans. After breakfast, veterans toured the high school and judged the patriotic door decorating contest held throughout the building. The high school students participated in a special interactive lesson that focused on what it means to be a veteran, and a poster and essay contest was held. Patriotic music was played throughout the high school building between classes, and at 11:11 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 school.

This year, while each school’s Veterans Day program was unique, all five schools shared a similar vision of providing meaningful, reverent, and respectful events and activities in honor of our veterans. Pride shone on the faces of students, teachers, veterans and guests in all of our schools throughout the day as we celebrated those who served our country and fought for the freedom we enjoy today in Plainville and across the world. From the extended learning for students to the eloquent observance in honor of our veterans, November 11th in Plainville Community Schools was an extraordinary day of reflection, recognition and respect. I am truly proud of the faculty,

staff and students who contributed to this tribute in each of our five schools on Veterans Day, 2015.

***(To view photos from the Veterans Day programs in Plainville Community Schools please visit [www.plainvilleschools.org](http://www.plainvilleschools.org))***