

## **Plainville Citizen Op Ed, April, 2016**

At their February meeting, the Board of Education (BOE) adopted a budget proposal for the 2016-2017 school year that included a 1.48% increase in funding over the current year's budget. After reviewing the Board proposed increase, the Town Council made an additional reduction of \$50,000, bringing the overall BOE budget for next year to \$34,824,367, an overall increase of 1.33%. Once again this year the budget represents a collaborative effort between the school district and town administration, the BOE and the Town Council. I think it is extremely important for the community to understand how the budget was developed and what it means for Plainville.

During our budget development process we refer to the "Three Rs." Each year this process forces our administration to review every resource, program, service and initiative in our schools before we make the decision on Reprioritizing, Reallocating and Reinvesting. This allows us to ensure we are responsibly investing only in those things we feel certain will bring the greatest return on our educational investment. The Three R process also assists in providing a budget that is connected and tightly aligned to the mission, goals and objectives outlined in the Board Strategic Plan and to our District Vision.

To be clear, the educational plan supported by the BOE's proposed 1.33% increase to the 2016-2017 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 tuition, our budget would have increased over 4% for next 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 the 2011-2012 school year, our budget increases year-to-year have been 0%, 1.1%, 0.9%, 0.7% and 2.2%, that is a total increase of 4.9% over five years. During the same five year period, it is estimated by the U.S. Bureau of Statistics that the cost of providing public education in our country increased over 20%. What does that 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 classroom, 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!