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In case you haven't heard, ***Plainville Community Schools ROCK!***

Here in Plainville Community Schools, we have completed our most recent round of Strategic Planning. The Strategic Planning process brought together various members of our school community and provided stakeholders the opportunity to reflect on the advancements made over the past six years, and to collaborate and craft goals to propel us into the future. The Strategic Planning process yielded, among other things, a new district Mission: *To Inspire and prepare lifelong learners to follow their passion, engage in their communities, and to positively impact our global society.* In addition to a new district mission, an action plan with anticipated outcomes was drafted. A task force was also created with individuals from across the school district charged with identifying district needs around culturally responsive teaching practices and implementing targeted strategies to address student needs. Members of this committee have attended leadership institutes and professional learning opportunities, all in an effort to identify learning experiences designed to increase cultural and diversity awareness for educators, students, their families, and the Plainville community as a whole.

In a workshop held last March, CREC Specialist, Gloria Mengual, shared, "Participants explored their own definitions of culture and diversity as well as learned some widely accepted definitions. They also learned historically relevant information about various groups in the U.S. and explored the relevance of the historical frames of reference on their classroom practice. Participants explored

their multi-cultural competencies and discussed the next steps for their own development.”

“Strategies to Counteract Implicit Bias in Education” was another workshop that invited participants to learn more about implicit racial bias. Biases are attitudes and stereotypes that affect our understanding, decisions, and actions in an unconscious manner. The presentation focused on where and how implicit bias surfaces within education settings, the impact it has on student outcomes, and strategies to counteract it.

Committee member and Middle School of Plainville School Counselor Jessica Pepin, shared these thoughts based on a workshop she facilitated last November, “The feedback I have received from my conversations in district and at the state level are that people would like more opportunities to have meaningful, solution focused conversations about race and culture and culturally relevant pedagogy. Each person’s journey is different; many people have come and had one on one conversations seeking assistance, resources, or advice on what their next steps might be personally. Some teachers chose to participate in the Open Choice Book Club and/or the Social Justice Symposium as the next steps in their journey to cultural competency.”

To further gather information about needs, the committee will be administering a staff survey to gather baseline information about cultural competencies, attitudes, and ideas. The survey results will be analyzed, shared with members of the school community, and used to further design learning experiences such as book studies, building based professional development and

more. These opportunities will enable educators to feel more equipped and prepared to educate ALL learners.

We firmly agree with Gloria Ladson-Billings that: "Culturally Responsive Education/Teaching empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes." To this end, Plainville Community Schools is dedicated to creating an environment wherein students engage in their communities and positively impact our global society.

We invite you to join us through this wonderfully exciting journey into Culturally Responsive Education as it enriches us and prepares us all for life in the 21st century and a global society.