



# Community Letter

fall 2010

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

## Message from the Board of Education

A recent story about the history of education in America shed light on an obvious, yet little considered point regarding the difference in expectations of our public schools over the years. The public school model remains very similar today to the original format when expectations were that students would emerge literate and a few exceptional students would excel. The expectations of our education system today are that all students will excel--we can leave no child behind. We no longer compete with other communities or states, but with countries around the world with larger populations and selective education systems that promote students based on their ability. The fact remains that we must improve our schools. We must prepare our students for their future. Yet we can not continue the same practices that were successful 50 years ago and expect a different outcome. This reality has intensified the conversation about school reform. It is important to remember that reform is an on-going process and must be carefully researched and monitored. In the changing landscape of public education, the Plainville Board of Education remains focused on improving the experiences and achievement of our students.

## Let's Chat With... John Girard



*Plainville  
Community Schools  
has named Plainville  
High School  
Science Teacher  
John Girard the  
2010-2011  
Teacher of the Year*

***How do you feel about being selected as Plainville's Teacher of the Year?*** I am truly honored and humbled that my peers hold me in such high esteem. I am a perfectionist and strive to be the best in whatever I do, so it's nice to be recognized by my colleagues.

***What do you think are the most important qualities a teacher needs to be successful?*** The most important qualities a teacher needs to be successful are humor, flexibility, and respect. Students will thrive if you can laugh at your mistakes and roll with the punches while creating a safe classroom environment.

***What advice would you give to teachers just beginning in the field of education?*** Challenge your students; don't be afraid to raise the bar too high because you'll be pleasantly surprised at what your students can do.

## Technology Today



Since the start of school our students have been working hard while utilizing technology. This year all middle school students and high school freshmen are required to take a brief online mini-course titled, "Mac Basics."

The course is designed to help students become more comfortable on Macs and to be more effective computer users overall. Reaction from students and teachers has been very positive.

All high school students have had an introduction to Gmail, their student email system, and Google Apps. Gmail gives students another means of communicating with teachers, each other, and subject specialists. Google Apps lets students work on word processing, spreadsheets, or presentations from home or school, using Mac or PC systems, provided they have access to the internet. This solves the problem of a student creating a file at home, such as a book report, and then not being able to open the file at school. Both Gmail and Google Apps are free to K-12 education and contain no advertisements. The district's enhanced wireless network has resulted in improved performance for students when working on district laptops for online research. Logins occur more rapidly and connection speeds are quicker, with fewer delays. With these changes students are working and learning faster and more efficiently.

## Budget News

On Monday, September 27, 2010 Board of Education Chair Becky Tyrrell, Superintendent Binkowski, and Director of Finance and Operations, Richard Carmelich, appeared before the Town Council to field questions on Fiscal Year (FY) 2009-10 purchase orders, final FY 2009-10 budget figures, and other questions related to the BOE budget. In an effort to provide clear and transparent information to the Town Council, administration provided council members with a copy of the Board of Education's state financial report and a list of all open purchase orders from the prior year. Mr. Carmelich also made the council members aware of the wealth of financial information publicly available each month in the packet prepared for every Board of Education meeting.

In addition to the object budget, monthly Board of Education packets also include a budget summary of energy costs, special education expenditures, and the food services budget. In September, administration provides the Board of Education with a detailed account of the amount budgeted in the prior fiscal year and compares those figures to actual expenditures. As part of the Board packet,

this information is available to the public.

The Board of Education makes the Board approved budget available on the district website every spring, and the final appropriation available on the website once enacted. Hard copies are also available at the public library and in other areas throughout town. During the 2010-11 budget adoption process, the Board of Education administration met with the Town Council and was prepared with responses to over 50 written questions from Town Council members. These questions on the Board of Education's adopted budget were on issues ranging from personnel to administration, and special education. The Board of Education also makes numerous presentations and holds many public meetings over the course of the budget adoption process.

The Board is different than private companies in that the school district is also held accountable through laws pertaining to freedom of information. In the last few years, the Board of Education has responded to a number of Freedom of Information requests by providing information on payroll, benefits, special education expendi-

tures, utility bills and reimbursement expenses. Administration also spends a great deal of time talking to the local media and providing information for reporters who request it.

At the end of every month, the Board of Education makes sure that our financial records balance with the town. Annually, the Board of Education's financial information is audited both by auditors hired by the Town of Plainville and by the Connecticut State Department of Education through a desk audit of the ED001 end of the year state financial report.

Both audits provide a detailed examination of the Board's operating and grant expenditures, grant revenues, special education costs and student demographic information.

From well before the beginning of any fiscal year until well after the year is over, the Board of Education's budget and financial information are reported, audited, tracked and made available through many avenues to Board of Education and Town Council members, citizens of Plainville, the media, and anyone else with interest in the finances of the Plainville Community Schools.

## Alumni News!



**Dr. Brian A. Mirante '02** has recently received a "Doctor of Medicine" degree from New York Medical College in Valhalla, New York. He earned a bachelor of science degree from the University of Connecticut and is completing his intern year in internal medicine at Danbury Hospital. He will be completing his Anesthesia residency at Yale, New Haven.

**Dr. Keith Mirante '99** received a "Doctor of Chiropractic" degree from Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa. In addition, he earned a bachelor of science degree from the University of Hartford. He is in private practice in Madison, CT.

**The Class of 2010** for the Plainville High School Sports Hall of Fame was recognized at a dinner program held on October 16. Honorees include: **Jim Salomone '65** (Football, Basketball), **Mike Debboli '76** (Football, Track) **Victor Paradis '77** (Football, Basketball, Baseball), **Sara Doncet '93** (Swimming) and **Brian Edge '93** (Soccer, Baseball). In addition, **Dr. Michael Lantiere '62** received the John E. Toffolon Memorial Distinguished Service Award.

*Please send **YOUR** alumni news to: Lynn Davis, Communications Specialist, via mail: C/O Plainville Community Schools, 1 Central Square (lower level) Plainville, CT 06062, via email: [davisl@plainvilleschools.org](mailto:davisl@plainvilleschools.org), via telephone: (860) 793-3210 x 404.*