



Community Letter

summer 2010

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

Message from the Board of Education

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Neil Young's lyrics "In the field of opportunity, it's plowin' time again" must have been written with this time of year in mind. It is a time of great change and excitement as we realize that the field of opportunity is vast and limitless.

The perception that each year yields a fresh start is encouraging, but flawed. Truly every day offers that fresh start. Together we have been successful as we plow the fields of Plainville. We have worked hard and made the best of those situations beyond our control. The fruits of our labor continue to make us proud in all facets of our community.

We offer our congratulations and best wishes to the Class of 2010 and school system retirees. We welcome the new principal of Plainville High School, Steven LePage, a new ninth grade class to PHS, new sixth graders to the Middle School, and our incoming kindergartners--the Class of 2023. We celebrate our students' academic, athletic, artistic, and civic accomplishments. We celebrate our staff and a new Teacher of the Year, John Girard. We celebrate and thank our volunteers and mentors who help make so many of our accomplishments possible. Whether you are leaving or joining the Plainville school system or somewhere in between, we want you to know our accomplishments are only possible because of what we do as a team. We thank you and look forward to continuing that work in the future.

Let's Chat With...Plainville High School Principal, Steven LePage

What is your vision for Plainville High School?

My vision for Plainville High School is reflective of the ideas captured in the current mission statement. I believe that Plainville High School must prepare students for success in the competitive 21st century global society. In order to do so we must teach students to communicate effectively, to analyze, evaluate and problem solve. We must prepare them to adapt to the ever-changing demands of our modern society. My belief is that Plainville High School is on the right path and we will continue to move in the right direction.

What is your top priority as principal?

My top priority as the new principal is to ensure high levels of student achievement, student success and increasingly positive outcomes from Plainville High School. With this priority in mind, I will act as a member of the PHS team to consider any opportunities for enhancing student learning while fostering a positive and supportive school climate.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I believe that school leaders, like all leaders, must carefully consider those who will be affected by our decisions. Building administrators must work together for the improvement of their school; however, they cannot be effective in isolation. Leaders must build capacity within their school faculty. They must utilize the expertise and dedication within their professional learning community in the change process.



"My belief is that Plainville High School is on the right path and we will continue to move in the right direction."

Plainville High School Principal, Steven LePage

Student Spotlight: What's Happening at Linden Street School



By: (L-R, Back-Front)
Paige Miller, Caitlyn Erb, Jessica Gorski
Alexis Ouellette, Jared Demmons

The Techadon Club is a fun after school program.

We learn about a lot of different things such as science, art, music and modern technology. We also learn about languages. One fun thing about Techadon was learning how to make music on a website called Garageband. On this site we could make different music by choosing a track and adjusting the rhythm. Dr. Smayda is the music teacher at Linden Street School and he ran the Techadon Club. One of our favorite parts of Techadon is the field trips. We went to the New Britain Museum of American Art and saw a painting of the Twin Towers symbolizing the cycle of terror and tragedy. Another attraction was the cup wall. This section had thousands of cups formed into a giant picture. Another neat thing was the sculptures made of blown glass. As you can see, Techadon is an awesome after school program to be involved in.

Calling All Alumni!



We would like to extend an invitation to all Plainville High School alumni to send us your good news, including professional accomplishments, awards, educational achievements, etc., to share via the new *Alumni Update* column in the Board of Education's *Community Letter* newsletter. We are proud of the outstanding graduates of the Plainville School system and look forward to celebrating your varied accolades. Please send 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, via telephone: (860) 793-3210 x 404.



By: Angela Zheng & Shaun Simoneau

Students in fifth grade have an opportunity to play an instrument in the school band.

Band is an extra curricular subject to have fun, learn to read music, and to enjoy the music. All the band students have an instructor named Mrs. Senatore. Mrs. Senatore is a fun loving, caring teacher who meets with every school in Plainville except the high school. Mrs. Senatore says, "My two favorite subjects in school were band and math--those two teachers inspired me to do my best in everything! I love playing trumpet, as well studying music and math. I believe these are important in developing our minds. I love being the instrumental music teacher at Linden Street School, and being a part of developing the fifth graders' minds." One of the fun activities we do in band is music math. Music math is an activity where students add or subtract beats in a measure. You may also play around with notes and try to make a song. We play a variety of songs that many of you will recognize. Band is not just about playing an instrument, it is about learning and feeling the music and of course, having fun. We get to show off our hard work for our parents and school during our concerts. Just don't forget to practice! So for all of you future fifth graders, get ready to join the Linden Street School Band!



By: Lian Wei Yuan & Isabella Pugliese

This year in fifth grade we had an amazing opportunity called French Club.

Every Tuesday after school we gathered in the office and sat with some of our fellow classmates and other fifth graders. We had two great teachers, Lauren Davis and Katie Willard, who are now high school students, but went to Linden for elementary school. They came back to share their love for the French language with us. We learned the alphabet and numbers, different greetings, and many other words. The best was picking a French name and using it through the whole program. Also, we got to have some delicious snacks. This fun program was a great way to learn a new language!



Good News!

*Great things are happening in our school district all the time.
Following are some of these "good news" highlights:*

The PHS CONCERT and JAZZ BANDS under the direction of BAND DIRECTOR DOMINIC TALOTTA participated in a band competition in Williamsburg, Virginia, where the jazz band took first place and the concert band received a second place award. Outstanding soloist awards were presented to BRITTANY ROGAN, KAREN BUTLER, and MICHELLE ZDUNCZYK...MSP SIXTH GRADERS enjoyed a visit from meteorologist Art Horn who presented his program "How the Weather Works." A grant from the PETIT FAMILY FOUNDATION supported the program...PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ROB RIVERA, DAVID CARON, and AMANDA LEA designed and produced signage for the ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION AND CENTRAL OFFICE areas of the school district...The TOFFOLON SELECT CHOIR, under the direction of TOFFOLON MUSIC INSTRUCTOR KEN QUESNEL performed as part of the "Evening of Jazz" program at Gloria Dei Church, the April 12 PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION meeting, the May 10 New Britain Rock Cats game, and at numerous area nursing homes...PHS GIRLS TENNIS COACH CHUCK RADDA was recognized by the United States Tennis Association as part of its national program for high school tennis coaches who implement a "no cut" policy for high school tennis teams...the ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM received a grant from Farmington Bank to provide a scholarship to a graduate of the ADULT HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT DIPLOMA PROGRAM...TOFFOLON STUDENTS ELIZABETH DINIELLI, KLOE HIDRI, DWIGHT BURNS, and CALEB WELLS were chosen to share work using the website Voice Thread at the Connecticut Educators Computer Association (CECA) Technology Expo...MSP STUDENTS JACOB MASCO, DYLLAN MARTIN, NICK ZALESKI, ALEX GIRARD, NICK VIOLETTE, JARRED KARAL, PETER LAWSON, SARAH WARNER and KATIE GEDDES, together with TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR CAMILLE WESTFALL, traveled to Hamden to compete in the Technology Student Association State Competition where each student earned a trophy...PHS STUDENTS RACHEL WISK and MARCQUILLE JOHNSON received the 2010 CABE Student Leadership Award from the Connecticut Association of Board's of Education...Five students were winners in an essay contest developed by STATE REPRESENTATIVE ELIZABETH BOUKUS on the topic of "What Veterans Day and Memorial Day Mean To Me?" Winners included JACOB NEWTON - LINDEN, DREW PACE - TOFFOLON, ASHLEY ROY - WHEELER, MICHELLE GRENIER - MSP, and SARAH HEAP-CROSBY - PHS...THE PETIT FAMILY FOUNDATION and the PHS CLASS OF 1974 honored the 2010 "Be The Change" award nominees and scholarship recipients including PAGE CASEY, BRIANNA FRANCESHINI, LAUREL UNDERWOOD, REBECKA MOUSCH, NICOLAS D'ADDABBO, SAMANTHA DOW, JENNIFER FARINA, SARA PROVOST, and CHARLES SCHADLER...SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS DR. KATHLEEN BINKOWSKI was featured in the spring 2010 edition of UCONN Magazine as part of a roundtable discussion on educational leadership...PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE TEACHER JOHN GIRARD was named the 2010-11 Teacher of the Year...PLAINVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS honored Volunteer of the Year CATHY CASSINERI and Mentor of the Year BRENDA TELLA at the annual volunteer recognition ceremony held on May 25...TOFFOLON AND LINDEN elementary schools have qualified for Energy Star Certification under the federal government's Energy Star Program...PHS STUDENT BRITTANY ROGAN has been selected as a 2010 Governor's Scholar...THE LINDEN SCHOOL COMMUNITY held a fundraiser for Relay For Life, resulting in a donation of \$1,340 to the American Cancer Society...PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS MELINDA LE, ALEXIS RODGRIQUE, MARCQUILLE JOHNSON, and REBECKA MOUSCH attended the annual Rotary Youth Leadership Award Program.

Budget News

The Board of Education and staff spent a considerable amount of time reviewing and reducing the budget for fiscal year 2011. Since November, 2009, the Board worked to set budget goals and priorities for the operating budget and capital plan that are aligned with district strategic planning. Again, this year was challenging as the district dealt with increasing mandates and a decrease in expected revenues; nevertheless, it is our responsibility to recommend a budget that is sufficient for the proper functioning of the schools. Prior to meeting with the Board of Education, administrators reduced the budget request to a 6.1% increase. Then, in meetings with the Board, additional reductions in staffing, professional operating services, supplies, conferences and equipment were made. This brought the operating budget request to a 2.49% increase, which would have

been sufficient to maintain existing services and which contained no layoffs.

On Monday, June 14, 2010, the Board of Education approved a final budget to comply with the Town Council appropriation of \$32,689,795 or a 0.75% (\$243,348) increase over the fiscal year 2010 budget. Throughout this process, difficult decisions were made using the district's major strategic planning themes for direction. These themes are as follows: 1)Promote higher student achievement in English/Language Arts, Mathematics and Science through continuous improvement. 2)Increase levels of parental and community involvement in the schools. 3)Support strong co-curricular programs for students. 4)Promote a safe, secure and positive learning environment.

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Budget News *continued from page 3*

As a result of this appropriation, the Board of Education included a number of additional reductions to their approved budget. First, the Board decided to delay the hiring of both the assistant superintendent and the Middle School of Plainville assistant principal positions. Second, the Board will be instituting a pay to participate program at both the Middle School of Plainville and Plainville High School for the upcoming year. The Board of Education also voted to implement cost containment procedures at the Plainville High School pool including leaving the pool unheated from April to September. Finally, the Board of Education budget again reduces a number of supply accounts, library and textbook accounts, and professional development.

Plainville was fortunate this year that a teacher wage freeze was negotiated for next year. As a result of this wage freeze, the Board did not have to lay off any existing employees or eliminate positions. However, class sizes continue to remain a concern and the reduction over the last couple of years of both teaching positions and other non-certified positions means that the district will not be able to provide the same level of support to our students as effectively as we have in the past.

For the 2009-10 school year, the Board of Education eliminated 11 certified positions including elementary classroom teachers, a high school English teacher, and a health and world languages teacher at the middle school. The Board also eliminated non-certified positions including a maintenance position, a tutor position, a monitor position and two 0.5 part-time office professional positions.

For the 2008-09 school year, the Board eliminated ten paraprofessional positions, three tutors, and two monitor positions. Despite these reductions, the Board of Education and administrators are proud of the education that is provided to the students of Plainville. The district has been recognized throughout the state and nationally for the quality of the programs our students enjoy.

The Board of Education has worked hard to manage its appropriations over the last few years to the end that we maintain a quality education for Plainville students. Nevertheless, the reductions will have a negative impact across the district and balancing future budgets will necessitate higher increases than the Board of Education has been receiving over the last five years.

PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Superintendent of Schools

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Belief Statements

We believe:

- that a quality school system is the core of our community and increases the quality of our lives
- in a safe, caring learning environment that respects individual difference and rejects discrimination of any form
- that optimal achievement for all learners is a responsibility shared by home, school and community
- that all students, faculty, staff, and parents are accountable to participate and maintain a positive learning environment throughout the district
- a high quality curriculum emphasizes the arts and sciences, with a focus on literacy, mathematics and technology
- effective communication and collaboration builds trust and respect