



Community Letter

Winter 2009

Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

Message from the Board of Education

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The previous Board of Education message this fall was written with the intention of encouraging all citizens to work together for the betterment of our schools and our community. Since the inauguration of our new President, this call has grown louder and become even more important. As parents, we can no longer concern ourselves only with the well being of our own children, we must also work to improve the education for all those who will lead the next generation. As community members we must consider the greater good. It is clear that for too long we have been going in the wrong direction and in order to change we must all make an effort. The Board of Education must create a budget that will provide the best program for students. As we finalize the budget, we will be required to make many difficult decisions that will not be popular, but they will be made in an effort to achieve a greater good. In these difficult times, we will continue to communicate how these decisions will impact students. We ask that all Plainville residents respect the spirit of these decisions and work with us as partners in this most important work.

District Collaboration Thrives with Plainville Public Library



Pictured L-R: Librarians Joyce Goldberg of Wheeler Elementary School, Ruth Whinnem and Margaret LeMasurier of the Plainville Public Library.

Plainville Community Schools is fortunate to collaborate with many town departments and local organizations. One particular partnership that continues to thrive is our affiliation with the Plainville Public Library. Over the years, the library and school district have worked together in support of student and family literacy, sponsoring a multitude of programs and projects that underscore the importance of life long learning and the love of reading. "These collaboration efforts have been ongoing for many years. They have been very successful and everyone in town benefits," said Peter Chase, Plainville Public Library Director. Kindergarten classes at the elementary

level visit the public library each year and library cards are issued for students who need them. Throughout the school year, the public library supports classroom assignments and projects, with books and resources made available on various topics. The elementary school and public library librarians also work collaboratively throughout the school year through "book talks" with classes and sharing of resources to supplement the school library collections. With reading and literacy a year long focus, the public library children's librarians visit classrooms to review and discuss the summer reading program formally known as the Governor's Summer Reading Challenge. The program features a unique theme each year developed by the public library that encourages children to set and reach individual book reading goals. Students are recognized by the school district and public library for their reading achievements when they return to school in the fall.

At the middle school level, the Nutmeg Summer Reading Program is also coordinated with the public library. The

Nutmeg Book Award encourages children in elementary and middle school to read quality literature and choose their favorite from a list of ten nominated titles. The Nutmeg Book Award Program is jointly sponsored by the Connecticut Library Association and the Connecticut Association of School Librarians. In January, middle school students vote on the Nutmeg book that they think deserves to win the Nutmeg Book Award. This is a unique Connecticut based book award program that allows students to vote on the winner. Paperback copies of the Nutmeg novels are processed at the middle school and made available to middle school students throughout the summer at the public library. At the high school level, students are encouraged to visit the public library on a regular basis and are reminded during freshman orientation about the importance of maintaining a library card. A link to the Plainville Public Library collection is available on the school's library resource page, so students are able to see if the public library has a particular book or resource they may be looking for.

See "Library Collaboration" Page 3

Budget News

The Board of Education has met several times over the last few weeks and will continue to meet on the 2009-10 budget. The Board met on January 8 to discuss Board goals. On January 12, the Board of Education held a joint meeting with the Town Council to continue discussions on budget issues. Budget development meetings were also held on January 15, 22, and 26.

The 2009-10 proposed budget currently includes no additional staff. The original budget had a number of new positions including additional teachers at Linden, additional STARS tutors, and an additional custodian, among other positions. Since additional staff have been eliminated, administration and the Board of Education have been working towards reducing the budget to an appropriate level without severely damaging programs and services. The Town Council has directed the Board of Education to approve a budget with no more than a 2% increase. Therefore, the Board of Education is looking closely at what a 2% budget means and how that will impact staff and programs as compared to a 4% budget and a 6% budget.

In light of the economy, Board members and administrators are trying hard not to contribute to the problem of unemployment and eliminating services that are needed now more than ever. In fact, in findings by economist Dr. Richard Sims, Sims states that an education dollar creates more jobs in communities than any other industry. In part, his conclusion is based on the fact that education spending is 80-85% labor driven, as opposed to the 50% or less typical of corporate, manufacturing, and other sectors. Dr. Sims' analysis indicates that education is heavily concentrated within the community being served. Nearly all education employees live

in or near the towns in which they work. The income they earn therefore is largely expended in the area, supporting all other facets of the local economy--housing, services, retail, and entertainment. Consequently, these non-education community industries also benefit if education employment stays intact, and conversely stand to lose, if significant numbers of education workers become unemployed.

There has been a renewed effort on the part of administration and Board of Education members to communicate with parents on the issues educators face. Board members and the Superintendent have formed a parent leadership group designed to brainstorm about issues such as improving the budget document to make it more reader friendly, investigating alternative funding sources and finding ways to get people more involved. At this point, a couple of meetings have been held and the results of those meetings have been extremely productive. However, while the district continues to achieve great successes, it will be impossible to maintain the current level of service with increases around 2% per year. Programs like the Bushnell are always in danger. Also, as we have seen from the loss of paraprofessional positions and STARS tutors from the current year's budget, the loss of the programs these staff provide cost a great deal to the students and the community.

For further information regarding the Plainville Community Schools budget for 2009-10, please visit:

www.plainvilleschools.org

Let's Chat With...Tom Laudadio, Dean of Students, Middle School of Plainville



What are your responsibilities as Dean of Students at the middle school? I have a number of responsibilities that support the principal's priorities and the school's vision of being "A Great Place to Learn." Some of these include overseeing our Positive Behavior Support (PBS) process, monitoring school-wide duties, and working with staff to ensure students have a successful middle school experience.

What do you enjoy most about your position? Working with the students on a day to day basis is the best part of the position. I've also enjoyed working with staff to develop school-wide processes like PBS, which have a positive impact on students and school climate. PBS at the Middle

School of Plainville is one of the professional accomplishments that I am most proud of.

What one piece of advice would you give to middle school students? I think successful students, like successful adults, should have clear goals and deliberately work towards those goals. Therefore, one piece of advice I would give to middle school students is to get into the habit of setting goals and working towards them. No matter how small the goal might be, developing the habit of setting a goal and working towards it is a great life skill.

The Long Range Plan

The Long Range Plan for the school district intends to improve the school buildings. There are a number of projects in progress.

LOUIS TOFFOLON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The students and staff returned to the refurbished Toffolon School on January 20. Much of the building is complete. February vacation will be used by various workers to finish up some last minute items (lights for the flag poles, back curtain for the band room, heat regulation, and hanging climbing ropes). Work on the canopy continues. Faculty and staff are busy putting materials away, and sorting books and science equipment. Physical education equipment has been moved out of the storage trailers and back into the building.

FRANK T. WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Wheeler roof project is underway, although construction is not slated to begin until closer to the end of the school year. Kaestle Boos was selected as the architect for the project and the drawings for the project have been approved by the School Facilities Unit of the State Department of Education. The project is currently out to bid, with bids due back on February 24. At this time, Kaestle Boos is estimating that the project will come in well under budget. Because the initial scope of the project contained replacing the roof over the west wing and cafeteria only, the Building Committee will look at possibly replacing the roof in other areas if the bids do come in lower than budgeted.

Student Spotlight: MSP Environmental Club



Pictured L-R: Zachary Jones, Katie Bernier, Jessica Brown, Sara Oakes, and Christina Kononov.

The Middle School of Plainville's Environmental club meets Wednesdays after school from 2:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. with Mrs. Kononov, a 7th grade science teacher at our school. We open our doors to all MSP students. Our club's goal is to promote "green" thinking throughout the school by recycling items that were once thrown away. We also discuss topics to help out the environment such as "going green," green projects, recycling, and ways to improve the environment. Our club members go to classrooms to collect paper and other recyclable items on a weekly basis. We have recycling bins located in the cafeteria, most classrooms, the nurse's office, the main office and the faculty copy room. Our club tries to encourage students and staff to recycle by going on the morning announcements and asking students and staff to put

paper, cardboard, cans, and bottles in the labeled blue bins and boxes we have distributed throughout the school. We have definitely noticed an improvement in recycling at MSP based on the increased use of the blue bins. "I am very impressed with the initiative and dedication these students have made to improve the environment. Everything we do, good or bad, has an impact on our planet, and these students recognize that they have the power to choose to begin to make a positive impact right here at MSP!" said Mr. Guarino, Principal of MSP.

Library Collaboration (Continued from Page 1)

A number of Plainville High School students also serve as volunteers at the public library, assisting with a variety of projects and initiatives.

Each year Plainville Community Schools presents an art show at the Plainville Public Library. The opening reception for this year's show will be on May 8 from 6:00p.m. to 8:00p.m. The artwork will remain on display throughout the month of May. The show was moved from the Plainville High School gymnasium to the public library several years ago. Holding the exhibit at the library provided greater visibility and access to the community. Also, the show, which was open for only three days at the high school, is now on display for at least three weeks at the

public library. The student work is selected by the art faculty members and all schools participate. "The town-wide art show is an event that underscores the importance of the fine arts as an integral part of a child's education. The work on exhibit demonstrates the extraordinary growth that occurs as students progress through the grade levels. The student work on display is also a tribute to an outstanding fine arts faculty," said Plainville High School Instructional Leader for Fine Arts, Jeff Blanchette.

As part of an inter-agency collaboration with the public library, families participating in the "Plainville Family Literacy Program: Skills for the Future," an initiative of the Plainville Adult and Continuing Education Department and

Plainville Family Resource Network, take part in a guided tour of the public library. The narrated tour includes an orientation of the technology and resources available to patrons, a calendar of family activities, and the issuance of library cards as needed. Print materials are also provided to families detailing library programs, services, hours, and contact information. As a culminating activity, a scavenger hunt for resources available at the public library is organized by the Adult Education staff.

"Supporting education and culture are two of the public library's highest goals. I am looking forward to many more projects with the schools in the future," said Chase.

***SPRING 2009 ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
 PROGRAM GUIDE ENCLOSED!***

Student Spotlight: Talcott Mountain Science Program

By: Caitlin O'Connor and Alex Zelasko

The Talcott Mountain Science Program has been working with Plainville Community Schools for several years. They provide after school enrichment programs for students in 4th and 5th grade. It is a very fun, creative, and exciting program that teaches students about science.

This year some of the classes have focused on energy, electricity, and fuel cells. One of the Talcott Mountain teachers, Mr. Meredith, taught us all about electricity. We learned how electrons and protons work together to create electricity and also learned how electricity flows through the wires, circuits, and batteries we use. He also taught us about the darker side of Thomas Edison. It turns out he didn't really invent the light bulb. Nikola Tesla invented it, and Edison perfected it!

We learned about how to make many different types of circuits. We were able to experiment with how much energy a solar panel can collect from different sources of light. Have you ever wondered how many hertz there are in a D battery? The answer is 1.4 hertz of electricity. Have you wondered what a battery looks like on the inside? We learned that a battery is made up of a casing, and on the inside is acid that flows through the battery and last, but not least, is a carbon rod, which holds most of the electricity and is the smallest part of the battery! If the acid were to get out of the casing, it would turn to a white, crisp powder.

In another session, we experimented with fuel cells. A fuel cell is made up of two tubes, with a small platinum card in the middle, which helps separate the two tubes. One tube is filled with oxygen and one is filled with hydrogen. We experimented with letting the fuel cells heat up under

lamps and watched as bubbles began filling up in the tubes. We then put one cell into a model car that was designed to fit the fuel cell. It quickly sped off and ran for several feet.

When students were asked what makes the Talcott Mountain Science Program so special, Julianna Christy said, "It's educational, and the experiments are exciting and teach us new things in science." Ryan Gorham added, "It's fun because the teachers are nice and do a great job of working with you when you need help." Isabella Fil said, "It is a great program that lets you learn about new things--like how atoms move." All of the students involved in the Talcott Mountain Science Program feel it is a real privilege and a very good learning experience. We are all very excited because our teacher gave us a sneak peek of what we would do next in class--dissection!



***Talcott Mountain Science Program participants
 Michelle Grenier and Emily Bienasz***

PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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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, literacy, and technology
- effective communication and collaboration builds trust and respect