



Plainville Board of Education's Community Letter

Spring 2021

Plainville Community Schools inspire and prepare lifelong learners to follow their passion, engage in their communities, and positively impact our global society.

Message from the Board of Education

This school year draws to a close and we are beginning to see some signs of returning to “normal” for many of the traditional year end activities. While the celebrations will be different, they will provide imperfect improvements over what we have experienced for the past 14 months. Staff, students and parents have worked incredibly hard this year and those efforts are starting to pay off.

We offer our congratulations and best wishes to the Class of 2021 as they move on to future endeavors. We also want to acknowledge the outstanding service of two longtime principals who are both retiring this year, Matt Guarino, Principal at the Middle School of Plainville and Lynn Logoyke, Principal at Toffolon School. These administrators have been pillars of our Plainville Community Schools culture. Their departure will leave a large void to be filled in both buildings and in our community. We wish them both a happy and healthy future and thank them for their dedication and stellar service to our students and our schools.

Student Spotlight: Plainville High School

Plainville High School Principal Carl Johnson recently interviewed PHS senior athlete and member of the 1,000 Point Club, Jaida Vasquez.

CJ: How did it feel to join the 1,000 Point Club?

JV: Honestly, it feels amazing! Since I was a freshman that was one of my goals and I felt like I had lots of motivation and confidence since I started my freshman year.

CJ: Did accomplishing this goal during this difficult year make it any more challenging or rewarding?

JV: Oh gosh, yes! I was about 205 points away from 1,000 and I only had 12 games and then an extra two for playoffs. In the middle of the season I was doubting myself because I was so worried and just over thinking so much about it.

CJ: Is there anyone who has helped you on this journey to this accomplishment that you want to thank?

JV: Yes, many people helped me through this journey. I would want to thank my dad and mom for all the support and for always pushing to be the best. I would also like to thank the Northstars family (an AAU organization), my AAU coach Ray Dacosta and his daughter Katie Dacosta; without those two, I definitely wouldn't be the player I am today. Also, I would like to thank my trainer, Wiggins. I've been working with him for two years but with those two

years, I felt like I have improved lots of things that I needed to work on. Last but not least, I would like to thank my high school coaches Jess, Katie, and Paul for believing in me and helping me reach my goals during these four years. [\(continued on page 4\)](#)

Jaida Vasquez, pictured below with her parents and teammates.



Let's Chat With...Dominic Talotta, Teacher of the Year, 20-21



Dominic Talotta, Music Instructor at PHS, is finishing his reign as Teacher of the Year. He is pictured here with some of his students from the Class of 2020.

What professional accomplishment are you most proud of?

I have 13 former students who are either teaching music now or in school preparing to do so. That is very gratifying.

What advice would you give to teachers just beginning in the field of Education?

TAKE NOTES! The first year is such a whirlwind, it's worth keeping a log of what worked and what didn't, then using that as you go forward. Someone gave me that advice when I started and I'm glad they did.

What do you think is the most important quality a teacher needs to be successful?

Well we all need to love kids and like being with them and connecting with them, right? Aside from that, I can't speak for all since my job is unique (and tremendous) but for me it's the ability to adjust. Rehearsing a band is a constant process of revising and adjusting on the fly depending on what's happening. But that's also what makes it exciting.

If you had one wish for your students, what would it be?

I would love them to perform forever but that's not practical! I would like them to be appreciative of the efforts it takes to make great music, and hope that appreciation evolves into being consumers of music in every possible way.

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

I had great band director role models when I was in school right here in Plainville. In fact they were the two gentlemen that the MSP and PHS auditoriums are named after, George Ventrelli and Mel Perry. Since I had much more success in music than any other subject, and really enjoyed playing the trumpet, wanting to be a high school band director was a no brainer. It's what I've wanted to do since I was 15.

What do you enjoy most about being a teacher?

I'm one of the few lucky teachers that get to work with kids pretty closely for four years, so getting to know the kids, and taking the journey of learning music and performing it together is great. And rehearsing--the day to day progress of rehearsing, getting better and enjoying ourselves while we do it is as good as it gets.

New Principals!

Alicia Atterrato, currently Elementary Math & Science Instructional Leader for Plainville Community Schools, has been named the next Principal of Louis Toffolon Elementary School, and Middle School of Plainville Assistant Principal, Aimee Roberts, has been named the next Principal of the Middle School of Plainville. Atterrato will replace current Toffolon Principal Lynn Logoyke, who will be retiring in June of this year, and Roberts will replace Matthew Guarino, who will also retire this June. Atterrato and Roberts were selected through an extensive search process conducted by the Toffolon and Middle School Principal Search Steering Committees, composed of Toffolon and Middle School teachers, staff, parents and district administrators.



Aimee Roberts
Middle School of
Plainville



Alicia Atterrato
Louis Toffolon
Elementary School

- Register for cost-free **Grammar and Writing Tips to Pass the GED** at Tunxis Community College. Classes will run in May 2021, Monday through Friday from 1pm-3pm. Open to Adult Basic Education students, too.
- Join the **Memoir Writing and Discussion Group**. Reminisce and record your most cherished memories within a structured, supportive environment, Thursday mornings through July. Please call for all of the details.
- CT Security Officer Guard License Training**: May 17, 2021, \$125. Train in one day, remotely on ZOOM.

**Plainville
Adult Education**

**Registration
and Information**
860.793.3209

Good News! Great things are happening in our school district.

LINDEN STREET SCHOOL

Linden first grader Romeo Baci, expanded his writing skills by creating an English/Albanian/Greek animal dictionary in his free time. He enjoyed learning about all of the animal names and noticing similarities and differences between the different languages. **Romeo** was eager to share his book with his remote writing class, and ultimately having it archived in the Linden school library for other students to check out and learn from...In celebration of National Children's Book Week, **Linden Street School's Reading Incentive Committee** kicked off the week with its 6th annual iHEART Reading Guest Reader event Monday, May 3. While primarily remote this year, guest readers across the district and in the broader community, stepped up to record videos sharing their favorite children's books.

LOUIS TOFFOLON SCHOOL

The Toffolon Student Council planned and hosted a school-wide "Golden Shamrock Scavenger Hunt." Students in each class followed clues around the building and outside to find the lucky rainbow with a pot of gold. Classrooms were awarded a Golden Shamrock certificate for their classroom doors as well as a morning "shout out" from **Principal Lynn Logoyke**...**The Toffolon Student Council** also organized a "Dress Like a Snowman Day" to support the local community, ultimately gathering 180 pounds of donated paper goods for the Plainville Community Food Pantry.

WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students in Samantha Woodward's fourth grade class at Wheeler School are participating in a Kindness Initiative. Using a stuffed bear named "Bertha," each day a student in Miss Woodward's class is able to host Bertha on their desk and fellow students are asked to share a positive comment about the classmate of the day. Those comments are documented in "Word Art" then printed and displayed for the entire class to see and enjoy...**The Wheeler Student Council** is working on creating a garden for the school to enjoy. Classes will begin to plant seeds in May in the newly planned space!

MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE

English Language Arts Instructional Leader Erin Georgini arranged a virtual author visit for eighth graders. Alan Gratz joined students to book talk his high interest historical fiction novels and share his story...**Two MSP VEX IQ Robotics Teams** have qualified to participate in the "Virtual VEX Worlds" competition. This year the CT region invited three elementary school teams and eight middle school teams across the state to participate in the 2021 Remote VEX Robotics World Championship. The two Middle School teams have qualified based on their skill scores this season!

PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

PHS Environmental Club members Liliana Ruffini and Gianna Rodriguez, together with faculty member Jill Miller, participated in the Climate Change Youth Summit, a two-day virtual event hosted by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)...**The PHS Theater Unlimited Club** voted to refurbish the high school's Choral Room into a black box theater. Under the guidance of **faculty members TJ Riccardo, Todd Helming, Dave Gaignard and Facilities Director Steve Busel**, the students are painting the presentation space, building a light and sound booth, adding projection, digital sound and digital lighting. Once completed, the multi-purpose theater can be used by the Plainville High School community for presentations with small to medium sized audiences...**PHS seniors Tianna Durham and Benjamin Royce** were named the Semester 1 Student Rocks Award winners.

DISTRICT

Plainville Community Schools' "Portrait Pioneers" award winners were recognized including: **PHS faculty member Jeff Smedick and Wheeler School Principal Andrew Batchelder (February), Toffolon School Custodian Greg Masse and PHS School Counselor Oneda Lamont (March), and Director of Human Resources Stacy Buden and School Nurse Consultant and COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison Julie Simard (April)**...**First graders across the school district** listened to a read aloud entitled "Say Something" by Peter Hamilton Reynolds. As a follow up activity, the students created post it notes and other kindness affirmations for display in their classrooms... Plainville Community Schools celebrated Read Across America Day on March 2 with various activities planned throughout the day... Plainville's Fire Marshal/Emergency Manager Ron Dievert named **Toffolon School fourth grader, Devon Landrette (Diane Lebel's class)** as the fourth grade Fire Safety Poster Contest winner in Plainville and **Wheeler School fifth grader Chloe Fangiullo (Sarah Miller's class)** as the fifth grader winner...**Plainville Community Schools Director of Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Tawana Graham-Douglas** was invited to serve on a Central Connecticut State University Teacher Leader Fellowship Program virtual panel with educators from across Connecticut together with Dr. Yvette Jackson, Executive Director of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education, who is internationally recognized for her work assessing the learning potential of disenfranchised students. The group discussed their practices as they work with diverse populations of students...As a result of two PJ Day for the Kids events held throughout Plainville Community Schools this year, a grand total of **\$10,671.50** was collected and donated to the Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

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CJ: What is your favorite memory from PHS besides that night?

JV: My last game was probably one of my favorites because the game was about love and wanting to win the game, knowing this is the last game I'm going to play.

CJ: What advice would you give to any student trying to accomplish a goal that may seem unattainable or daunting?

JV: Honestly just don't give up and just have a positive mindset because if you do those things you'll definitely accomplish your goals.

CJ: What advice would you give to a younger student-athlete who might be just starting to play basketball?

JV: My advice to the young student-athletes that are coming in is don't ever look down on yourself and just keep pushing because in the end, it's worth it!

Faculty Members Serve as Presenters



Plainville Community Schools faculty members Greg Wilfrid and Marilyn Speranza served as presenters at this year's Connecticut Music Education Association (CMEA)'s annual conference held virtually on March 27th and March 28th. The theme of the CMEA conference this year was "Innovate through CommUNITY." Marilyn's presentation was entitled "Assess and Engage with Drag and Drop Google Slides" and highlighted how to create drag and drop assessments and activities using Google Slides, applicable to all grade levels. Greg's presentation, entitled, "Storytelling in the Elementary Music Room" focused on engaging classrooms in child like story telling and demonstrating a unit on student created sound-tracks to children's literature using virtual music software.

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Belief Statements... We believe:

- Our public school system is the core of the community and has a fundamental responsibility to develop productive, educated citizens in a democratic society
- Optimal achievement for each learner is a responsibility shared by students, home, school, and community
- We must provide each student with a comprehensive curriculum and effective instruction to ensure meaningful engagement in the learning process
- A safe, caring learning environment promotes the academic growth, health, and emotional well-being of each student
- Communication and collaboration serve to increase knowledge, trust, and respect, and are the responsibility of everyone in the community
- Professional Learning Communities foster teamwork that results in the continuous improvement of teaching and learning outcomes