



# Plainville Board of Education's Community Letter

Winter 2019

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

### In this issue...

- BOE Message, 1
- Milken Award, 1
- Student Spotlight, 2
- Vermiculture, 2
- Adult Education, 2
- Let's Chat With, 2
- Good News, 3
- Best Buddies, 4

Happy New Year! We are well into the school year and 2019 is upon us. Plainville schools are bustling with activity, spanning everything from academics, to community service, school renovations, and new staff members! In November, we welcomed Carl Johnson as the new principal of Plainville High School, and at our January 14th Board of Education meeting, we appointed Plainville High School faculty member Jen DeLorenzo to the position of assistant principal. In addition, we welcomed the district's new Food Services Director Mike Koch this year and Linden faculty member Melissa Orfitelli was appointed to the position of assistant principal at the Middle School and Linden. The Board of Education and Town Council members toured Phase 1 of the Wheeler School renovation project on December 18th, and on January 2nd, teachers, staff and students in the Phase 1 section of the building moved back into their beautiful, brand new classrooms with much excitement! Principal Batchelder and the Wheeler staff members and students continue to do a wonderful job focusing on teaching and learning throughout the renovation process. The school district also distributed a Thoughtexchange survey this fall, gathering feedback from all district stakeholders. Results of the survey were exceptionally positive overall, and will be used to guide the ongoing strategic plan areas of focus relative to students, teaching and learning. We are

well into budget planning for the 2019-20 school year, and will continue to provide information about the budget process over the next several months.

## And the Winner is...Mike Zaba!

Louis Toffolon Elementary School Art Teacher Mike Zaba received the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award on January 23rd at a surprise recognition program assembly held at Toffolon School. The program was attended by several state and local dignitaries including Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont and Commissioner of Education Dr. Dianna Wentzell, who served as speakers during the program. The award was presented by Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley. Zaba is the only award winner from Connecticut this year, and is among 33 honorees across the country for the 2018-19 school year. As part of the award package, he received an unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize and membership in the National Milken Educator Network. Through this membership, he will attend a Milken Educator Forum this March in New Orleans.

According to the Milken Family Foundation, the Milken Educator Awards are known as the "Oscars of Teaching" and recognize and celebrate innovators in the classroom.



*Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley, State Senator Henri Martin, Commissioner of Education Dr. Dianna Wentzell, Toffolon Principal Lynn Logoyke, Governor Ned Lamont, Mike Zaba, State Representative William Petit Jr., and Superintendent Dr. Maureen Brummett.*

## Student Spotlight: "MSP FRED Day"



**By: Mikayla Dimock and Natalia Rollo**  
Grade 7 students,  
Middle School of Plainville

On January 9, the seventh grade students at MSP participated in a fun day of activities called "FRED Day." FRED stands for Feel Relaxed Every Day. It is a day where we learn how to be relaxed and control our bodies. We learned to clear our minds and

focus on the present moment. When we are mad or stressed about something, like taking a test, we can use some of the strategies that we learned. Some of the strategies included concentrating on our breathing, writing about what we are grateful for, doing yoga, coloring, and others. When we were doing this in school at first we thought it would be boring, but by the end of the day, most kids realized that it was quite helpful. For example, after FRED Day we were taking a social studies test and at first, we were stressed but then we used what we learned to help get through this test, and it worked! What we learned really helps a person to connect with him or her self in the moment. It was a fun experience and we really enjoyed the program. Maybe you can use it too!

**Plainville Adult and Continuing Education offers programming, free of cost, in the following areas: Adult Basic Education, Adult High School Credit Diploma Program, Citizenship Preparation, English as a Second Language, GED Preparation, and PARC Adult Basic Education. In addition, a wide variety of enrichment courses are available and moderately priced. Visit: [www.plainvilleschools.org/departments/adult\\_ed](http://www.plainvilleschools.org/departments/adult_ed)**



## Vermiculture at Linden

Can you imagine eating paper shreds? Cardboard? Banana peels? It may sound gross to us but for worms, it's their idea of a delicious meal. Red Wigglers worms are an important part of vermiculture. The fourth and fifth graders at Linden had an awesome opportunity to learn all about vermiculture during a presentation from farmer Mark Brochu. According to fourth grader Darren P., "Vermiculture is worm farming. It was interesting to learn about because worms eat things that humans can't even imagine." Fourth grader Anna R. said, "Mr. Brochu taught us that worms make a fertilizer for soil that helps make plants more organic and stronger." Fourth grader Savannah C. added, "The worms decompose food waste by turning the waste into nutrients in the soil. It is money-saving and a good way to reuse materials on earth." If you would like to learn more about vermiculture, check out the youtube channel, EVE Growing.



**Written by Linden Street School students: Anna Radziewicz, Savannah Cabrera-Arocho, and Darren Paznokas**

## Let's Chat With... Carl Johnson, Plainville High School Principal



### Describe your leadership style.

*I try to listen more than I speak. I also try to gather different perspectives and solutions whenever faced with a challenge or problem at PHS. I try to be as transparent as possible when a decision has to be made that affects PHS. I think useful and clear communication is probably the essential skill needed for this role.*

### What is your top priority?

*My top priority is to continue the proud tradition of PHS being a high school with rigorous and deep student learning while also maintaining the positive school culture and climate we have fostered. I also look to continue to find the best practices to improve instruction and ways to increase our offerings for students. Over the next few years, we will be implementing a Vision of the Graduate at PHS, and throughout PCS. I genuinely look forward to that work and believe it is going to have an incredibly positive impact on our schools.*

### What is your philosophy about education?

*My philosophy for education is that relationships drive all student learning. If positive and productive relationships aren't fostered between and with our students, then nothing else can occur successfully at PHS. I will continue to work tirelessly at this for as long as I am principal of PHS.*

### What do you enjoy most about serving as principal?

*The relationships I have been able to form with students, staff, parents and the community of Plainville. I genuinely believe we have some of the best people calling this high school home on a daily basis. Since the day I arrived almost three years ago I have been welcomed by this community.*

### What advice would you give to students?

*I have always given my students the same advice for the 15 years I have been an educator. You will get out of PHS what you put into PHS. The more you contribute to PHS, whether it be academically, athletically or artistically, the more rewarded you will be after your four years here.*

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

### LINDEN STREET SCHOOL

**Fifth graders** enjoyed a performance by visiting musician / banjo player, Alycia Sandmeier. Sandmeier was joined by guitar player and **Linden Music Teacher, Marilyn Speranza**. The musical duo introduced students to the banjo to prepare them for an upcoming cardboard-box banjo building project...**Linden's fifth grade Community Outreach Group (together with advisors Cristine Bravado and Sarah Baker)** sponsored a toy drive in November to benefit the United Way of West Central Connecticut.

### LOUIS TOFFOLON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Toffolon Office Professional Michele Fischer-Paul** organized a conservation effort through the Crayola "ColorCycle" program to recycle used markers. Toffolon sent its first box of markers weighing nine pounds to be recycled and will continue throughout the school year...Thanks to funding from the Plainville Community Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation and funds raised by the **Toffolon PTO**, Toffolon held two Science Days in December. All students participated in three separate science programs and a hands-on science experiment...**The Toffolon PTO** hosted author Dana Meachen Rau to conduct programs for all Toffolon students. Rau has written over 350 books in many genres...NBC30 Meteorologist Kaitlyn McGrath visited **Toffolon fifth graders** with "Snow Monster," a state of the art, customized weather vehicle. McGrath provided an overview of her role as a meteorologist, and gave the students a tour of the vehicle!

### FRANK T. WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Students in Maria Hitt's third grade class** at Wheeler participated in "student run" conferences this year...**Wheeler faculty member Cheryl Michaud** was recognized as a district Everyday Hero for the month of November, and **Wheeler Nurse Julie Simard** was recognized as a district Everyday Hero for the month of January...Each week Wheeler students collaborate with **Media Specialist Zack Smith** to create video announcements for the following school day. The students use the school's "Green Screen" and a video editing app to make their own morning announcements for Wheeler.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE

**Plainville Community Schools volunteer mentor/Webster Bank employee Prashanth Narayanan** and his **Middle School student mentee Ameer Alhameedawi** were selected to appear in a Webster Bank mentoring video as part of National Mentoring Month in January...**28 students at MSP** participated in a Bystander to Ally work-

shop led by representatives from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL)...**Eight officers of the Middle School's Technology Student Association** participated in a leadership event at Cabela's in East Hartford...**MSP faculty member Camille Westfall** was honored by the Connecticut Technology and Engineering Education Association (CTEEA) at their annual state conference held at Portland High School.

### PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

**The PHS Physical Education Department** held their end of the semester "Breakfast of Champions Breakfast" for **64 freshmen** and **58 sophomore students** who passed all four components of the CT Fitness test. The event was catered by Dunkin' Donuts...**PHS students Zoe Leider and Ryan Espinoza-Ortiz** were named recipients of the first semester "Students Rock Award" recognizing their outstanding contributions at the high school...**Students in the Marketing and Entrepreneurship** classes attended the Jets High School Marketing and Business Day event with **faculty members Trevira Boatright and Steven Michaud** at the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey...**PHS Paraprofessional Michele Morel-Tavernier** was recognized as a district Everyday Hero for the month of November.

### DISTRICT

**Plainville Community Schools** received a grant from the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain to improve high school security. The grant was used to purchase 23 additional security cameras at Plainville High School, and was funded by the Schaller Auto group...The local VFW Madeley-Roberts Post No. 574 sponsored the **district Reading Partners program** with a financial donation for books...**Plainville Adult and Continuing Education students and staff** collected holiday gifts to benefit Victorian Gardens, a local residential care home for adults in Plainville...**PHS** hosted the 4th annual "Go Baby Go" event December 7th & 8th, during which toy ride-on cars for children with special needs were modified, refurbished, and presented to local families. The two day workshop included Central Connecticut State University students working together with **Plainville High School and Middle School of Plainville students**, under the direction of the Technology Education faculty members from all three schools, and Rosie Flammang, physical therapist from the Connecticut Children's Medical Center.



*The PHS Boys Soccer Team was honored at the December 10 BOE meeting for making history, winning the Class M Championship.*

# Middle School Students Launch Best Buddies Program

*Riley Lasko and Trevor Garrow-Cooke*



This past summer, Riley Lasko and Trevor Garrow-Cooke, students in Stephanie Gagne’s Developmental Program at the Middle School of Plainville, created their own business, “Best Buds Bookmarks and Magnets.” With the help and support of their families, they set up, created, and manned a “booth” at the Farmer’s Market in Plainville. The business venture has given them the opportunity to not only work on the life skills they have been learning at school but also to interact and connect with the community in a fun and meaningful way. Proceeds from sales of their products over the summer were donated to PARC, a local non-profit organization that provides support services to people with developmental disabilities. Riley and Trevor are continuing to keep their business going strong and brought their traveling booth stocked with holiday themed magnets and bookmarks to the Middle School during the holiday season for staff members to shop. To “market” their products, they produced a video commercial with the support and guidance of Kim Coyle, MSP Technology teacher. The duo sold a total of 176 bookmarks and magnets and the proceeds from the holiday sale were donated to the school district’s “Go-Baby-Go” program and to the MSP Robotics program. Riley and Trevor truly are “best buds” and appreciate all of the support they have received from the Plainville community. For more information, you can visit “Best Buds Bookmarks” on Facebook.

Plainville Board of Education  
 Plainville Community Schools  
 1 Central Square  
 Plainville, CT 06062  
 Phone: 860.793.3200  
 Fax: 860.747.6790  
[www.plainvilleschools.org](http://www.plainvilleschools.org)

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**@PlvComSchools**

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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