

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, November, 2018

Several years ago, a calendar change was implemented for Plainville Community Schools, making Veterans Day a full school day. When this change was initially presented to the Board of Education for consideration, it was done with a commitment to using the time to further educate our students on the significance of Veterans Day, with an emphasis on the importance of honoring our nation's veterans. That commitment has continued each year and is evidenced in the exceptional programming that takes place annually in each of our five schools. This year, Veterans Day programming was held in Plainville Community Schools on Monday, November 12th. Students and staff district-wide came together to honor veterans with activities and programs that were educational, respectful, thoughtful, and moving.

At the elementary level, students, staff and veteran guests participated in flag raising and wreath laying ceremonies, followed by programs honoring veterans both near and far. The school programs featured patriotic musical selections and the recognition of veterans in a variety of ways. At Wheeler School, Plainville Board of Education member and veteran Foster White shared his experiences as a veteran with those in attendance, and girl scouts presented poppies, the flower often associated with Armistice Day and the poem *In Flanders Fields*, to those veterans in attendance. Throughout the day in all three elementary schools, assemblies were held that featured patriotic songs, poetry, essays, and tributes to each branch of the Armed Forces. Students and staff members donned red, white and blue, and students created thank you signs, notes and small gifts of gratitude for veterans who visited. Patriotic Walls of Honor and artwork were on display in the school buildings, depicting the names and

photographs of local veterans, and individual classrooms held a variety of learning activities focused on the meaning of Veterans Day.

At the Middle School of Plainville, a comprehensive, school-wide assembly was held that featured patriotic musical selections, guest speakers from the military, recognition of veterans and more. Military vehicles and equipment were also on display for students to view outside of the school building, and guests were invited to a patriotic themed brunch in their honor. In addition, Middle School students were invited to participate in a military boot camp style fitness challenge, and the Middle School Health Classes sponsored "Operation Sweaters for Veterans!" collecting gently used coats, gloves and hats for veterans in VA hospitals, homes and shelters.

Plainville High School began the day with breakfast for local veterans, and those in attendance received photographs with their families. At 11:11 AM, student musicians played "Taps" in designated areas throughout the building. Plainville High School art students created digital posters to honor veterans and the high school community held a patriotic door decorating contest throughout the building, which was also adorned with visual displays of artwork relative to the Veterans Day program. Prior to the home football game on November 9th a "Salute to Veterans" was held with specially designed hats and other athletic gear that was sold during the game; over \$500 in proceeds will be donated to support local veterans.

During the Veterans Day programming on November 12th, and in the days that followed, I received a number of extremely positive comments from several local veterans, community members, and even a member of the local television media who indicated that she had never seen anything like the Veterans Day programming held in our school district. While each school's Veterans Day program was unique, all five schools shared a similar vision of providing meaningful, respectful, educational events

and activities in honor of our veterans. The entire Plainville school community was filled with pride and admiration as we celebrated those who served our country and fought for the freedom we enjoy today in Plainville and across the world. From the extended learning for students, to the thoughtful observances in each school in honor of our veterans, November 12th in Plainville Community Schools was an exceptional day of reflection, recognition and honor. I am extremely proud of the faculty, staff and students who contributed to this stellar tribute.

(To view photos from the Veterans Day programs in Plainville Community Schools please visit www.plainvilleschools.org)