

A Letter to Plainville Public School Parents and Town of Plainville Community Members

A recent article in The Sun Chronicle listed educator ratings from the 2014-2015 school year for sixteen (16) area school districts and/or schools even though its author noted that the MA Department of Education (DESE) stated that “these statistics are not meant to be used to compare districts, but to determine whether expectations for high-quality instruction are consistent across each district.”

Under the new educator evaluation system mandated by DESE, evaluators use descriptive rubrics, classroom observations, and a review of artifacts like lesson/unit plans and student work to give educators feedback and rate them as Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory. When this new process and accompanying materials were first released by DESE, Plainville had already identified a set of high-level rubrics upon which to base its educator evaluation system. In fact, as we studied and compared our rubrics to the DESE rubrics, we considered ours superior to those developed by the state. Unfortunately, The Sun Chronicle article failed to reference the use of different rubric sets among the schools and districts listed. Rather, each reader is left to assume that each educator is rated using the same tool and in the same way. That is not the case.

In Plainville, we developed and are employing a rigorous educator evaluation process which promotes professional growth. As teachers and administrators set their annual professional practice goals and as goals are aligned with school-wide and district-wide improvement priorities, we work together collaboratively to meet these goals in a way that supports individual, school and district improvement and more importantly, benefit student learning.

Regarding the difference in rubric sets, the state requires that teachers be rated in four (4) areas:

1. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment,
2. Teaching All Students,
3. Family and Community Engagement, and
4. Professional Culture.

Within each area DESE defines a number of sub-area or elements; thirty-three (33) altogether.

Plainville, like all school districts, is required to report educator ratings in the same four (4) areas; however, it measures educator performance against forty-two (42) sub-areas or elements. Plainville teachers and administrators have willingly taken ownership of their own and their colleagues’ success and are highly motivated to continually improve student learning. As evidence of this commitment and prior to the introduction of the new state system,

Plainville teachers created common assessments (for each grade level) in order to ensure equitable learning experiences for all students. They also institutionalized the practice of teachers meeting to:

- Analyze students' performance on these common assessments
- Identify patterns that reveal common areas of difficulty, poorly worded questions, or the need for change in instruction
- Problem-solve together and share instructional strategies

Plainville is a district that believes strongly in accountability, and we hold ourselves to a high standard. We believe that our parents and community members have a right to see a broad array of data about their children's progress. But teaching and learning is too complex to be reduced to a single quantitative measure, as The Sun Chronicle article would suggest. And, when we try to use these measures to evaluate individual teachers and/or districts, we instill a level of fear and defensiveness that is destructive to the learning process.

As Superintendent of Schools, I am extremely proud of the performance of our teaching staff and administration. We hold ourselves to high standards and as a result, provide Plainville Public School students with a high-quality education.

David P. Raiche
Superintendent of Schools