



Parent Update – May 8, 2008

From Dr. Stella – Superintendent of Schools

Dear Families of the Beecher Community:

Communication with Beecher Road School families remains a priority of my administration. Allow me, therefore, to share some important pieces of information.

Last day of school is set

The last day of school was originally scheduled for Monday, June 16. Because of snow days, the last day of school for children now will be, Wednesday, June 18. The adjusted calendar still allows 182 days of school for students, two more than required by state law.

Sixth grade graduation is set

You may recall, last year's sixth grade graduation took place at *Bethany Middle School*. The change from *Beecher Road School* was necessary because of issues of weather, space, air conditioning, acoustics and parking. A graduation committee consisting of parents, teachers and Mrs. Torre, Intermediate Principal, was formed this year for the purpose of making recommendations about the June '08 graduation. The recommendations were reviewed and approved by my administrative team and me. The sixth grade committee sent out an informational letter recently to all sixth grade students and their families. Details of the upcoming event are:

Place: Amity High School auditorium
Date: Wednesday, June 18
Time: 7 PM

The ceremony will be approximately an hour-and-a half. A reception with refreshments will immediately follow the ceremony.

The reason for changing the event from *Bethany Middle School* to *Amity High School* was to keep the celebration in Woodbridge, as close to Beecher as possible. In addition, Amity's new auditorium, which was not available to us last year, provides a spacious and comfortable environment. Dr. Brady, Superintendent of the Amity School District, is thrilled about our decision.

The sixth grade pool party (for students only) will take place this year at the Woodbridge Pool Club on Wednesday, June 18, from 1:45 PM to 4:45 PM.

Summer programs at Beecher

The *Summer Enrichment Program* is bigger and better than ever, offering a selection of 150 possible courses. (See program offerings on the district web site - www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us) In addition to Summer Enrichment, there also will be the traditional *Summer Recreation, Special Education* and *Extended Day* programs. We expect that there will be over 600 children participating in the various programs at BRS this summer. Dates of Summer Programs are as follows:

Summer Enrichment Program: June 23 – July 25
Summer Recreation Program: June 30 – August 8
Summer Extended Day Program: June 23 – August 8
Summer Special Education Program: June 30 – July 24

Traffic flow at Beecher is a safety issue

A caring school environment is one in which all adults take responsibility for all of the children at the school. One way that this can be done is in our school parking lots, particularly during morning drop-off. Here are a few recommendations that will help to provide a safer environment for our children:

- Maintain a proper speed when entering and leaving school parking lots. Safety for children is our number one concern;
- It's the law: Pull over to the side and stop if you must use your cell phone in the parking lots;
- Once you drop off your child, please keep your eyes on the road, not on your child entering school;
- Follow the legal pathway when driving in the parking lots. Do not enter the "Do not enter" roadway, even if there is an available parking spot;
- Consider sending your child by bus. There are many benefits to this: (1) provides your child with an opportunity to socialize; (2) supports the environment; (3) lessens traffic congestion; and, (4) helps your child to be more independent.

Woodbridge School Budget received positive support

Our budgeting process involves compiling both an *operating budget* and a *capital* budget for the school district. The operating budget is comprised of all expenses that we expect to incur to run the school district for the year. The capital budget provides the funding for large

equipment purchases and construction/repair projects required at *BRS*.

Although a final decision is not made until May 19, we are pleased to report that we have had great support for both of these budgets from all constituents involved including parents, the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen, and the Board of Finance. Our operating budget request was for \$11,907,906. That represents a 5.82% increase over this year's budget. This included funding of a new state law that requires towns and school districts to recognize the cost of *future retiree benefits* – a comprehensive set of State acronyms we'll call *GASB (gaz-bee)*.

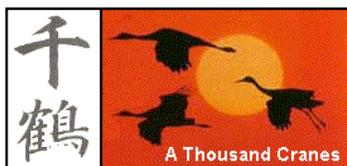
As of now, *reductions* to our proposed operating budget have totaled \$181,173, bringing our budget proposal down to \$11,726,733, a 4.21% increase over this year.

However, the largest percentage of these reductions does not adversely affect the instructional program or staff. The biggest reduction, \$135,000, was made as a result of health insurance premiums being lower than expected. Furthermore, the updated estimate on the amount of funding required for GASB is \$23,613 less than budgeted.

As for the *Capital Budget*, it includes requests for technology, a major renovation project for *BRS*, and various repair projects to the school totaling \$119,000. Funding the technology proposal in full has been recommended. The major renovation project has been conceptually accepted pending further action. Repair items will be considered on a project-by-project basis.

12-Year-Old Hiroshima survivor subject of new drama club play

Through the efforts of Mrs. Torre, Intermediate Principal, staff members Cathy Salinardi, Joe Holowienko, Lola Johnson, numerous parent and student volunteers, as well as the financial and active support of the *PTO*, a drama club has been started at *BRS*. *A Thousand Cranes*, performed by third through sixth grade students, is the true story of a lively 12-year-old Japanese girl in Hiroshima, Japan, who lived through the dropping of the atomic bomb when she was two, and who fights a courageous personal battle ten years later.



Performances May 15 & 16 at 7 P.M. Tickets are limited. Must be purchased online in advance. Go to woodbridge.k12.ct.us >PaySchools >Drama Club. No tickets at door.

World language program revamped. K-6 Spanish becomes reality

Acquiring a second language is integral to a *21st Century Model of Education*. Looking at the K-12 continuum, the question arises as to what skills we want our students to have when they graduate from high school.

All futurists agree that proficiency in at least one other language is essential. Our current model of language instruction has served our school well for many years. It's an exploratory model that has introduced our students to other languages and cultures. I want to build on the enthusiasm for world languages by moving to a FLES (*Foreign Language in Elementary Schools*) model that places the emphasis on proficiency rather than exploration.

A *World Language Curriculum and Practices Audit* was recently conducted to evaluate the instructional model and alignment of that model with Amity's programs. The Board of Education approved the following recommendations for next year: (1) Restore the K-2 component of the elementary language program; (2) Create a full year language program focusing on the development of one language (Spanish); (3) Promote articulation and alignment among the elementary, middle and high school world language programs; (4) Create a content related FLES program with emphasis on language proficiency; (5) Upgrade the curriculum to support the new model of instruction; (6) Develop a system of formal assessments to inform instruction.

There was also a recommendation to promote a love for both western and non-western languages in a variety of ways such as summer programs, after school courses, Saturday workshops, etc.

Beecher Wellness Committee working on creating more nutritious school lunches

The *Wellness Committee*, a parent/staff venture, continues its focus on nutrition. Last week a salad bar pilot and taste testing samples were presented to students and teachers in the cafeteria. Teacher and student surveys measured the results. More information will be forthcoming. Other areas of focus are the *physical education* and *health* curriculums.

Best wishes to you all,

Gaeton F. Stella, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools