



PARENT UPDATE FROM DR. STELLA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

March 24, 2015

woodbridge.k12.ct.us Woodbridge School District
40 Beecher Road (south) - Woodbridge, CT 06525 - 203-387-6631

Dear Beecher Road School Families,

Academics are very important at BRS, and we all have much to be proud of in this area. Equally important is the social-emotional development of each student. There are several ways in which we seek to achieve this.

One way is through the work of a highly qualified pupil service team that addresses the myriad needs of our students. The team consists of two psychologists, a half-time social worker and two specially trained teaching assistants. This team does a variety of things to support children including: provide counseling for children and parents; facilitate small support groups for children; intervene in crisis situations; provide support for school staff in working with children; conduct Yoga classes in grades 1-3 to help children learn strategies of relaxation and stress relief; serve as a bridge in connecting families with outside organizations when help is needed.

Secondly, over the years the school has embraced a Responsive Classroom (RC) philosophy that permeates the school, and helps to support a nurturing culture at BRS.* There is also a School Climate Committee whose mission is to establish a positive school climate in which norms, values, and expectations make students and adults feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe. This committee recently updated a School Climate Plan for BRS.*

We greatly value our partnership with BRS families in our focus on the social-emotional development of children. Parent feedback is important. For example, the 2013 School Climate Survey* and last year's 2014 Parent Survey* gave us valuable data to work with. A new survey will be distributed in April. I encourage you to participate.

Maetm F. Stella

* More information about Responsive Classroom, the work of the School Climate Committee and the 2013 School Climate survey can be found at woodbridge.k12.ct.us/schoolclimate

* More information about the 2014 Parent Survey results can be found at woodbridge.k12.ct.us/parentsurvey

Healthy social-emotional development is top priority



Spring Recess It's a "Go"

As hard as it is to believe, the BOWA* school districts managed to close just four student days during this record-breaking bad winter. According to our planned calendar, these snow days will be made up at the end of the year starting Tuesday, June 16, with the tentative last day of school Friday, June 19. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the spring recess is in no danger of being lost. Enjoy your vacation!

* Bethany, Orange, Woodbridge, Amity

Watch for the new standards-based report card

The Superintendent's Parent Academy meeting was held on January 29 to provide orientation to the school's new reporting system, which uses a Standards-Based Report Card. This report card is very different from the one used over the past decades.

At this meeting groups of parents got together and formulated 19 questions regarding the new reporting system. These FAQ's and their answers can be found on the district website: woodbridge.k12.ct.us/reportcard. You will also find detailed information about standards-based reporting and how it fits with the Beecher philosophy.

Here are a few of the reasons we changed to a new reporting system:

- Our report card is outdated; it is 20+ years old.
- The decision to change the reporting system came from within the district with the support of the school board.
- A committee of teachers, curriculum specialists, administrators and members of the district's technology department worked to create this new standards-based report card over nearly two years.

Annual Read Across America Day at BRS

We were fortunate to have many valued members of our community participate in the Read Across America program held March 6th at BRS. Several readers including those from the Board of Education, Town officials, visiting educators, and others spent part of their day reading to children. Judging by the positive feedback from our readers and the smiles on students' faces, it was a complete success.

Read Across America



At right: Dr. Dillinger, Principal of Amity Middle School Bethany, came to BRS to read to 6th graders.

continued on back

Report Card - continued from front

- Standards-based report cards are not something new. Both Orange and Bethany elementary districts already are using this type of reporting system, as do other high performing districts such as Westport, New Canaan, Trumbull, and Simsbury along with thousands of school districts across the nation.
- The new report card does a better job of demonstrating what children learn; it aligns better with our curricula and the way we teach.
- It will assist parents and educators in identifying strengths and areas requiring further development and will include more personalized feedback in the form of narrative comments.
- It will also encourage rich on-going conversations between teachers and parents.
- The expectation is that this new reporting system will be used as a tool to improve student growth over time by promoting more personalized learning for every child.

“Look it up”

Woodbridge Rotary Club has an annual tradition of presenting each BRS third-grader with a personal dictionary. Rotarian Andy Skolnick is pictured here with the happy students and Mrs. Prisco.

Mr. Skolnick, an attorney, noted that even with the internet and electronic dictionaries, he always has his book-dictionary near him. “One word leads me to another,” he said.



Building upgrades on track

Building upgrades at Beecher are continuing on schedule, and, as promised, there have not been any serious interruptions to the educational program at the school. Although this winter has been one of our severest, with frigid temperatures, thanks to our new heating system it is the first winter in decades that children’s classes did not have to be moved because of heat issues. The only exception was a few kindergarten classes had to move because of problems with older malfunctioning heating units. These components will be replaced in the summer.

Anticipated work that will be done in the upcoming months include:

- Work in the evening to install wiring and network infrastructure – starting in April.
- Work shall include the transition of existing security cameras to new systems and the addition of cameras to cover all main entrance areas.
- Installation of a Sally Port Door installation, over Spring Break, April 20-25, including installation of security doors. The installation of the new Sally Port will require new security procedures. Everyone’s cooperation will be needed.
- Classroom locks and auto door closers installation is scheduled to begin the end of May. The doors will work with existing keys or blanks and the card readers shall be programmed to work with teacher issued cards. We hope to have all installed before summer break.

Want a job?



We are continuously looking to expand our substitute list. The following positions are

available. If you would like to help in either the Kitchen, Cafeteria, or with the Custodial staff, please contact an associate in the School District Business Office to complete an application. Substitutes are contacted as needed. Phone: 203.397.2445

Lions and tigers and bears

Join Dorothy, Toto and friends on their journey through the land of Oz. The Drama Club invites you to join them for the new and exciting production of the Wizard of Oz on Thursday, April 9, 4:30 p.m., and Friday, April 10, 6:30 p.m. in the South Assembly Room at BRS.



Tickets will be available at the door on a first-come basis. We are all looking forward to experiencing the excitement of live theater with our BRS families.



School administrators and police personnel review procedures after a recently held lock down drill.

Job #1: Safety and security of Children

Monthly practice drills are part of our safety preparedness at BRS. A recent lock down drill included participation and review by the WPD and the Connecticut State Police. Expect new procedures to screen visitors to building, a new Sally Port to be installed and other safety measures.

The annual South Central Area Superintendents’ Association Student Awards Ceremony was held recently at Cascade in Hamden. During the ceremony, I had the honor of presenting an award to Brittany Kupcho, a sixth grade student at BRS. Also attending were Mrs. Prisco and Ms. Echeverry as well as Brittany’s parents. The student who receives the award is representative of the many students at BRS who demonstrate daily a set of core values that serves as a model for others.

Award for Brittany Kupcho in 6th grade



Mrs. Prisco, Ms. Echeverry, Brittany and Dr. Stella flanked by the proud parents.