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connecting school and community



The Education Report of the Woodbridge School District

woodbridge.k12.ct.us

summer 2019 no. 13



I'm in Nepal right now. p 3



We learned to swim in our elementary school. p 6



We can build this. p 11

TO THE CITIZENS OF WOODBRIDGE:

IT IS ONCE AGAIN AN HONOR AND PRIVILEGE to provide a copy of THE BRIDGE to every household in Woodbridge. This 13<sup>th</sup> annual Education Report of the Woodbridge School District provides an opportunity for us to share the latest news and information about our programs, teachers, and most importantly, our students with the greater Woodbridge community.

In this edition you will find updates on many of the initiatives that have grown out of our strategic plan. You will also enjoy pictures of annual events, read about some of our awards and, of course, our newly selected Teacher of the Year. The Beecher Road School Faculty and Staff take pride in bringing this and more to you.

Each year we thank the residents of Woodbridge for their vocal and financial support. This year is no different. With increasing, rather than declining, enrollment and a growing prevalence of students requiring special support, we have never been more grateful for your collective backing that reflects the strong partnership between school and town.

Sit back and enjoy reading this edition of THE BRIDGE. And as you read, please take pride in not only the accomplishments of our amazing elementary school, but also take pride in the way our community supports education and our youngest citizens, the leaders of tomorrow.

Robert "Bob" Gilbert, Superintendent of Schools



Water inspired us. p 6



We analyzed the data. p 8



I'm in a 1-room schoolhouse! p 5



Grab a book. Let's read. p 5



CONNECTICUT MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION



CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE Beecher musicians who had the unheard of distinction of auditioning and being selected to perform in the Connecticut Music Educators Association annual statewide festival this spring. They were awarded their seats in the Honors Orchestra and Band in the middle school division where they were competing against 7th and 8th graders. BRS was to get two seats. Instead, seven were awarded. More about our music programs on page 4.



Principal Gina Prisco (left) and Superintendent Bob Gilbert flank Woodbridge's new Teacher of the Year, Mary Vincitorio, 3rd grade Beecher teacher.

**M**ARY BARTEAU, AS SHE WAS KNOWN WHEN SHE WAS HIRED IN 1999, started at Beecher as a teacher assistant in kindergarten. The following year she became a sixth grade teacher, and also became Mrs. Vincitorio. She taught sixth grade for seven years, transferred to grade 4 and is now a third grade teacher.

Peers describe Mrs. Vincitorio as talented, creative, inquisitive, bright, passionate, extremely organized, determined, friendly, supportive and a team player.

Her classroom promotes a positive learning environment through clear, friendly, enthusiastic communication. She sees students as unique individuals, listens carefully to them and considers their curiosities in nurturing their learning paths. She demonstrates patience, care and concern for each student.

Having earned her Masters Degree and Sixth Year, Mary has played a leadership role for many years, being active on numerous committees, involved in summer curriculum writing and a key player in the implementation of *Reader's and Writer's Workshop*, a schoolwide literacy program.

Well respected by administrators, colleagues, children and parents, a true professional and a self-directed learner whom children will remember long after they leave BRS, we are proud to name Mary Vincitorio, 2019-2020 Woodbridge Teacher of the Year.



**I**N THE STEAM\* LAB, STUDENTS get a chance to engage in hands-on learning and complete engineer and design challenges as part of their science units. Students use skills from every subject to design, create, test and improve their ideas in order to solve real-world problems.

This year, first graders found out that sounds were made through vibrations and used this new knowledge to create instruments out of recycled materials. Third graders used *Virtual Reality* goggles to visit a village in Nepal, then designed a model TarPul (wire bridge) that could be used to help villagers cross a river.

Our award-winning *First Lego League Robotics* teams and their advisers and coaches from BRS were recognized for their participation in the 2018 Festival and competition at Shelton High School this past fall. The teams were also recognized for being selected to showcase their projects and work for all Connecticut Superintendents and Board Members at the 2018 CAPSS/CABE Convention in Mystic. The 4 teams are The Orbiting Owls, Space Eagles, Space Cadets, and Space Surfers.

*\* STEAM is an educational approach to learning that uses science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics that guide students in their critical thinking process. This approach creates students who take risks, experiment, solve problems, collaborate and employ the creative process.*



Our award-winning robotics teams.



**State Accountability Report shows growth for Beecher Road School**

**NEXT GENERATION STUDENT**

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT for the 2017-2018 school year was presented to the Board of Education in March. It provides a more complete picture of the school and district by looking at multiple indicators. At the elementary level those indicators include:

- academic achievement and growth in math and language arts (gr 3–6)
- participation rate on the *Smarter Balanced Assessment* and the *Next Generation Science Assessment*
- chronic absenteeism
- state-mandated physical fitness assessments

Woodbridge made progress on areas of focus from the previous year including physical fitness and our school's participation rate. BRS was above the target rate of 95% or greater. The assessment pointed out there is room for growth in some of our student subgroups, including our high needs students. Student subgroups are defined by race, ethnicity, income levels, English language learners and special education.

The state ranks schools into five descending categories. For the 2017-2018 school year, we remained a category 2 school.

Next steps include analyzing achievement to inform instruction and improve student outcomes and continue strategies to further increase participation and address chronic absenteeism.

## ★ Pointer Power ★



- Point under each word.
- Say only one word for each finger point.

**W**E HAVE SUPER POWERS IS SOMETHING KINDERGARTNERS REALIZED after being immersed in hard work in the school's *Phonics Units of Study* program. After completing their unit of study, teachers and students celebrated the achievement by staging a parade. The parade featured the children in their new-found super powers costumes.

Complete with capes and masks that were made with the help of teachers and parents, students marched proudly holding signs declaring the superpowers they have gained from their hard work. Those powers included: pointer power, picture power and sound power, among others. As they marched, older students lined the hallways to cheer them on and holding signs of their own to congratulate them. It was a very exciting and uplifting day for the kindergarten students when they realized, "We really do have super powers!"



## NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS

For States, By States

**B**RS STUDENTS WORKED with our new science curriculum that aligns with *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS). NGSS emphasizes the use of scientific inquiry to make sense of the world around us. Fourth grade students built electrical circuits, cars that use a propeller to move and designed model ecosystems to learn more about important scientific concepts.



paperless!

**B**RS HAS INTRODUCED ONLINE registration for new and returning families.

The process reduces paper waste and ensures that the district has current, up-to-date and accurate information about our students and families.

The technology department began a recycling initiative that has a positive impact on the school budget. We have been working with recycling vendors who compensate us for obsolete items. This has helped save the district money while keeping technology current and available for student and teacher use.



**V**IRTUAL REALITY, VR, IS GIVING students experiences thought impossible just a few years ago. By deepening understanding and making connections the learning is solid and more permanent. Say, for example, as an adult you'd like to experience a horse race from the jockey's point of view. Put on the VR "goggles" and with the appropriate software you can get on the horse, hear the trumpet sound, see the gates open and hear the announcer's "they're off." Out you go and experience the sight and sound of the race as a jockey with your brain totally immersed. In fact VR can be so real some people may become disoriented by the experience – depending on what program they use. No disorientation in school, however. All the scenes are still scenes.

### So how is it being used at Beecher?

Third grade teachers and students used virtual reality goggles, *Expedition* software, and Google tablets to tour locations on virtual field trips whose essential elements were part of the curriculum. These VR tours brought students to different biomes to learn about habitats.

Students made observations and learned information about the various places as though they traveled with a tour guide. This provides experience observing the characteristics of different habitats including underwater, grasslands, rain forests, desert and mountains as they relate to the natural environment of their animal research.

## Virtual Reality Provides New Learning Opportunities



The third-grade team found the virtual reality goggles and software to be a valuable new resource that increased student engagement about curriculum topics in a more interactive way.

- A tablet guides the tours that the teacher controls.
- The teacher is provided facts and guiding questions at each location.
- Teachers may point objects out from their tablet that students are directed to observe from arrows that appear on their VR screen.
- The experience is a 360-degree look at each location.
- Student partners are spotters for safety.
- Rules of how to use the goggles are explained and practiced before use.



Example of a virtual reality headset.

# MUSIC

Playing the national anthem at the Bridgeport Sound Tigers professional hockey game has become an annual tradition.



**W**ITHOUT A LARGE TEAM of people coming together for a common purpose, doing the big stuff, the small stuff and everything in between, the Beecher Music Department wouldn't tick.

What's the expression, "all in?" Supportive parents, enthusiastic students, accomplished staff members, passionate administrators, a supportive community and an educationally sound philosophy are all necessities to do what we do.

Instrumental and vocal music performances at events throughout the year are a staple of our school and community life.

Our instrumental music program lets students explore all types of music from classical, to jazz, to marches, pop-rock and more. Our orchestra performs alongside a brass ensemble that gets out to the public beyond the school doors.

In April we were accepted into the CMEA (Connecticut Music Educators Association) Elementary Honors Band and Elementary Honors Orchestra. (See photo on front page.)

Students were nominated by their music teachers throughout the state and BRS had one of the highest if not the highest representation in Connecticut. We were guaranteed at least two students but because of the specialized instruments that some of our students play, they were vital to the ensembles. Not every elementary school has a string bass player! Seven students were selected.



One great challenge and accomplishment this year was using iPads. We performed all year with minimal use of paper – and the constant support of our technology department.

Singing is a life-affirming activity that people have brought about since humans came to be. In our schools, formal music education in a chorus setting provides students the chance to make music together and hone their singing skills. As a group and as individual members, Beecher's chorus has taken what they've learned and performed for others in many settings.

This year the BRS chorus has featured their voices at several events:

- *Veteran's Day*: BRS and community vets
- *Winter Concert*: BRS and community
- *ArtsWeek Concert*: BRS and community
- *BRS Invitational Adjudication*: for judges; earned a Gold rating
- *Interdistrict Courtyard Cabaret*: at Amity Middle School Bethany for the Bethany and Woodbridge communities

One highlight of our general music program is in kindergarten where children learn to explore, make and enjoy music through a variety of singing, dancing and movement activities. Through vocal exploration students learn to identify different types of voices such as our singing and humming voices as well as our speaking and inner voices. They learn to match and follow pitches and listen for patterns in music. Students use music to find and keep the beat as well as explore the tempo and timbres. Just like words, music can be written down and read. Kindergarteners learned to read quarter and eighth note rhythms to poems and songs. During *Military Appreciation Month*, music recorded by each branch of the service was explored, the beat found and then kept by little feet while learning to march. They're ready for a parade!



*The Beecher Chorus performing this spring at the Interdistrict Courtyard Cabaret*

Simply put, the 2018-19 school year exemplifies what a high-performance school produces in music. There is no other elementary school music department quite like it, a statement backed up by numerous annual awards in the platinum and gold range.



*Right – BRS Marching Owls show their stuff in Memorial Day Parade.*

A BEECHER READING MARATHON was held for all grades this winter. The marathon was a community event to help build reading stamina. Teachers and students dressed in running/workout clothes and selected a variety of reading materials. Students prepared for the marathon by stretching and warming up before their long read. Grade levels set appropriate goals for how long their marathon would last, ranging from 20 minutes to 1 hour. Genres included: fiction, poetry, articles, comics and magazines. Some students surprised themselves by how long they continued reading.

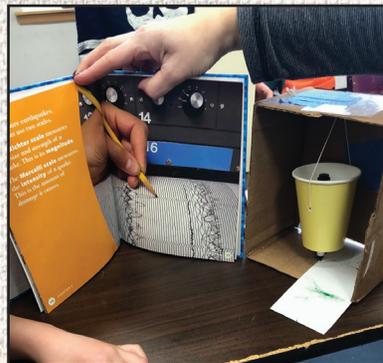


Grab your book and head outside.

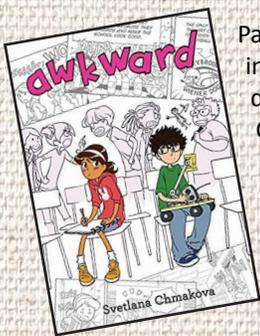
THIS YEAR THE BRS library staff collaborated in and out of school. Here are a few of the highlights. The *Fall Outdoor Read* celebrated all the summer reading accomplished by our students. Everyone gathered books, blankets and shades for an hour of reading on the playground.

Ms. Crocco from the school library and Ms. Cantor from the Woodbridge Town Library co-hosted after-school book clubs for upper elementary students. *Sneak Peek* continued for students in grades 5-6 who heard about the latest books available, crafted dragon eggs for the *fantasy* genre, snacked and chatted about books.

In the *Nonfiction Book Club* for grades 3-6, students would first read a book about a given topic then come together to share a fact or do a related project. Some of the themes were *extreme conditions* about which students read books on floods, weather and earthquakes. They created a seismograph and simulated earthquakes. Other popular topics were the *Titanic*, space and insects.

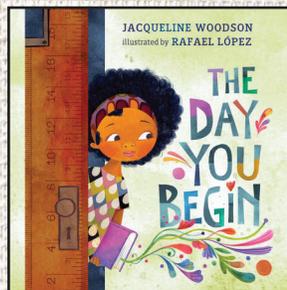


At the right, as a result of the non-fiction book club, the student-made seismograph (yellow cup) records vibrations and transcribes them to paper.



Part of the townwide initiative, students in grades 5-6 were invited to a special *Diversity and Inclusion Book Club* that met to discuss the award-winning graphic novel *Awkward* by Svetlana Chmakova.

BEECHER IS A COMMUNITY of readers. Sixth grade teacher Ms. McCollom spearheaded a *One School One Read* week-long event in conjunction with *Read Across/Empathy Across America Day*. A committee chose *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson. This book inspires students to be positive community builders while affirming the individual identity of each child.



5<sup>TH</sup> AND 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE students could join *El Club de Español*, and over 50 did. The first BRS Spanish Club, its purpose is to promote enthusiasm for different aspects of Spanish culture and language. The club allows students to gain more exposure to the Spanish language outside their regular world language classroom.



Cultural activities such as Mexican holidays were celebrated including *El Día de los Muertos* and *Cinco de Mayo*. A classroom ofrenda (altar) was created to remember and honor the memory of ancestors for *El Día de los Muertos*. Students made papel picado (tissue paper designs), calaveras de azúcar (sugar skulls), and flowers for the altar. The Spanish Club also celebrated *Cinco de Mayo* by creating *Ojos de Dios* (God's Eyes).

Spanish Club students also designed and labeled places in the school in Spanish, completed a Spanish scavenger hunt and created their own dictionaries based on their findings, and played authentic Hispanic games.

## time warp

BEECHER'S LIBRARY SPECIALISTS and the *Amity & Woodbridge Historical Society* members teamed up to have students and teachers travel back in time at the *Old South Schoolhouse* on Johnson Road.



The Old South Schoolhouse comes to life for third graders.

As part of their third-grade social studies curriculum, students not only explored the physical aspects of the historic schoolhouse, but also participated in elocution lessons, practiced writing in cursive on slate tablets, looked at historical primary source school records, and enjoyed recess complete with 18th century games.

YALE  
CENTER  
FOR  
BRITISH  
ART

FOR THE FIRST TIME in a number of years, all fifth and sixth grade students were able to visit the *Yale Center for British Art* in New Haven. Such a trip unites art, social studies and language arts for an understanding of the importance of fine arts.

The fifth graders discovered Britain through art, Britain in the Age of the American Revolution. They were introduced to the people of England and the places they ruled from the time before the English Colonies in America were established, until the time of the American Revolution. Students saw images related to British imperialism and the political, economic and cultural domination of foreign lands and peoples.

The students also saw the work of George Stubbs, the 18th century British artist who so vividly depicted animals. Returning to school, the children created observational drawings based on their visit. Stubbs' painting, "Lion Attacking the Horse," was the subject matter on which each student was encouraged to create a backdrop that differed from Stubbs' to express a personal experience, real or imagined, that illustrated a moment of conflict.



6th grader rises to assignment's challenge: *Lion Attacking Horse in the Living Room*



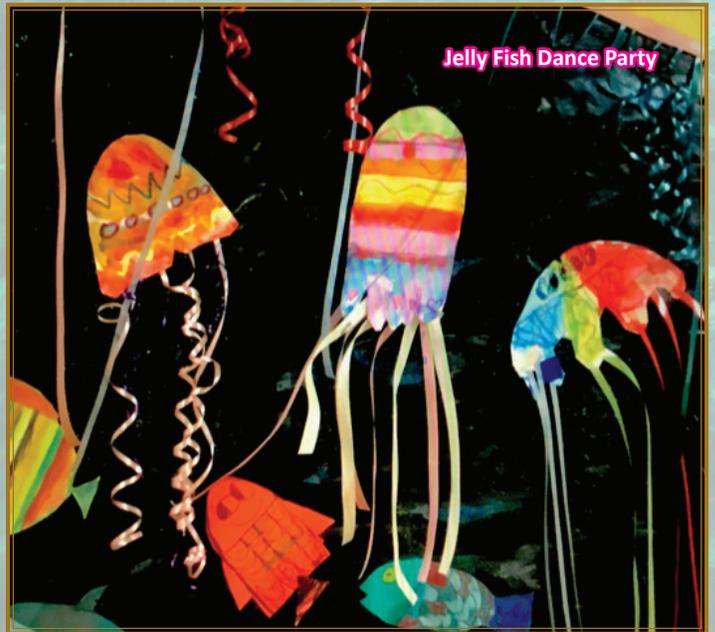
water inspires



Wave of Dreams Project for Artsweek12.

ARTSWEEK12, THE ANNUAL SCHOOLWIDE FOCUS on the arts, focused on *water* as the source of inspiration. Water showcases the single most unifying component in our shared worldwide community – from a tear to an ocean, from a running faucet to a waterfall. Water is everywhere. In this case, seas, lakes and rivers are the themes. This theme has been the focus of artists since time immemorial, and today's creators continue the tradition, showcasing their creativity and originality.

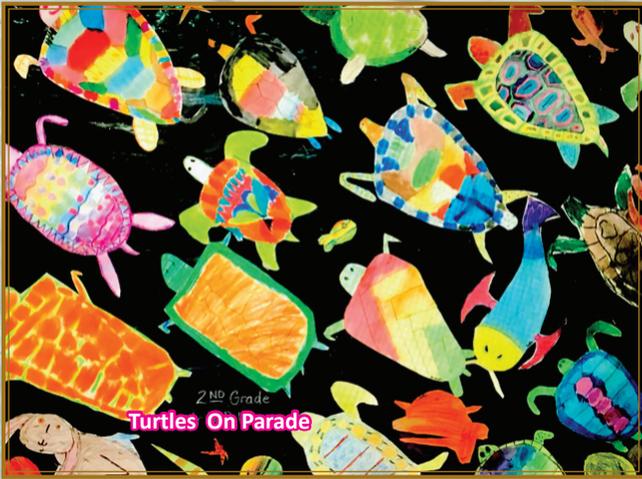
Jelly Fish Dance Party



Life-saving aquatic safety and swimming – only at Beecher



DO YOU KNOW BRS IS THE ONLY elementary school in Connecticut that teaches students about aquatic safety, how to swim, stroke development and aquatic fitness? In May, *National Water Safety* month, the Physical Education and Health teachers integrated water safety content in grades K-6. that included exposure to a water safety course called *Longfellow's Whales Tales*. Fifth graders participated in an hour-long swimming showcase displaying skills that were modeled and learned. Sixth graders participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> annual *Swim for Heart* program that challenged students to swim a total of 2019 laps within 25 minutes. The students swam 2918 laps during this time.



2<sup>ND</sup> Grade  
**Turtles On Parade**



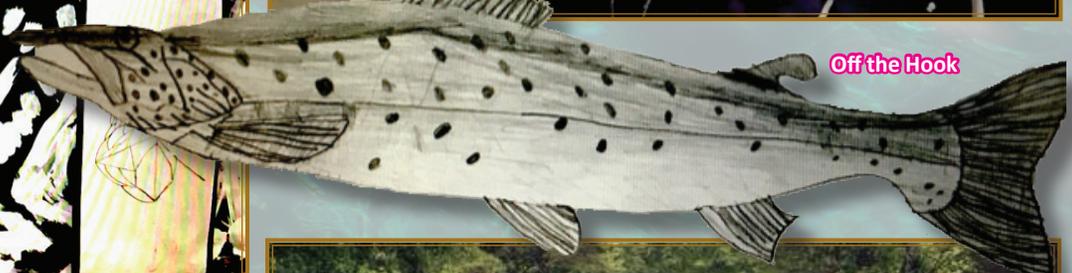
**Rainy Day Woman**



**Hard Water**



**Being Coy**



**Off the Hook**



**Wave of Dreams  
[ á-la-Christo ]**

## IN PHYS. ED. CHILDREN LEARN TO SAVE LIVES

OUR PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH program focuses on comprehensive lifelong wellness. Connecticut physical fitness assessments include cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular strength and endurance and flexibility. Developing these skills is our highest priority.

One of a handful of elementary schools, BRS has a state-of-the-art fitness room where children are introduced to fitness training activi-

ties at a very young age. Fifth and sixth grade students set a goal and maintained a fitness log over the duration of the year. The knowledge acquired and independent thinking connects with their lifelong health and fitness goals. How to handle a choking emergency and steps to clear an airway was modeled and then performed by each sixth grader. Students also learned how to handle a cardiac arrest emergency. Instructed on the hands-only

method of CPR, students were required to perform CPR for two consecutive minutes on manikins.



**Life-saving hands-only CPR in grade 6**



**F**IFTH GRADE MATH TAG (TALENTED AND GIFTED) STUDENTS STUDIED the midterm elections of 2018 for an in-depth workout with mathematical concepts and applications. They began with discussions about the United States Congress, covering topics including the number of members in each house, the length of each member's term, the work of senators and representatives and how many seats each state has. Gaining more knowledge, the students read articles and consulted different websites, including one which allowed them to zoom in on any state in the country to see the various districts in that state.

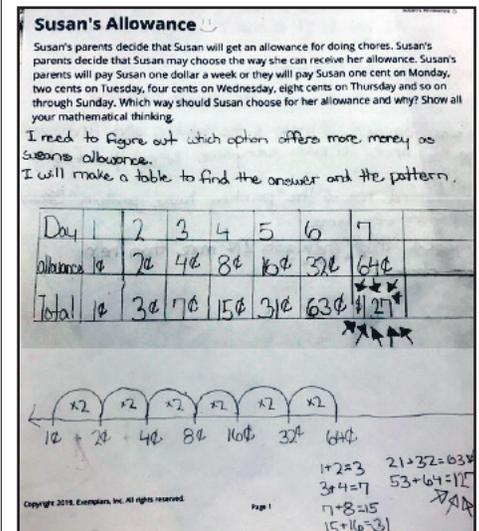
With data collected, students examined the election from the Connecticut Secretary of State Election Center. They analyzed information about the votes cast for different candidates statewide and compared voting data for Woodbridge and Bethany. They also discussed voter turnout and looked at voter turnout rates over the past century, comparing voter turnout statistics in the United States with other developed countries, and examining rates for presidential elections versus midterm elections.

This unit offered students numerous opportunities to apply mathematical skills and concepts to real-life issues while gaining an early understanding of one aspect of America's election system. Students worked with decimals and percents when they analyzed voting statistics and voting trends, and when they considered how the states are represented in Congress. They used mental math strategies when they estimated the total number of votes from a particular town. Students also examined many charts and graphs, evaluating the information and discussing its relevance.

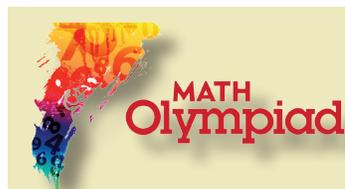


**I**T WAS THE MOST FUN MATH in the world! These are the words of fourth grade students as they solve *Exemplars* problem-solving tasks. Every week students looked forward to working cooperatively with their classmates to solve a real-world problem. Math Specialist Maureen Krawec, and Reading Specialist Teresa Nakouzi partnered with classroom teachers to provide a different twist on math – incorporating language arts.

Teachers used reading and thinking strategies, along with math strategies to work out problem-solving tasks. Students progressed through each problem, step-by-step, beginning with recording, wondering and noticing vocabulary. Conversations among students focused on their plan for solving the problem and the different strategies they could use.



Representing thinking on paper to solve real-world problems, like allowance.



**F**ROM OCTOBER TO MARCH, 30 BRS MATHEMATICIANS met weekly as members of the Math Olympiad Club. Students learned a new problem-solving strategy each week and bonded over a common love for math. They applied problem solving strategies with practice Olympiad problems, *KenKens*, *Cryptograms* and other math puzzles. Members of the Math Olympiad Club

participated in monthly math competitions through the national organization *Mathematical Olympiads for Middle and Elementary School* (MOMES).

The mathematicians learned that there is no easy road to becoming a successful problem solver. In order to solve some of the enormously challenging math problems, the students needed to recall their newly learned strategies, be resourceful, reasonable, logical and to rely on their ingenuity. Congratulations to all of the Math Olympiad participants on a job well done.

BRS Math Olympiad Team



Students realized that words such as *pattern*, *days*, *hours*, and *rate* were important math words to pay attention to. *Communication* and *representation* became terms the students were comfortable with. They discovered new ways to represent their thinking by making tables, using number lines and drawing models. And, they loved singing the math song *Problem Solving Time*, sung to the tune of Kool and the Gang's *Celebration*.

# For 6th Graders



## SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS TOP OFF THEIR YEARS AT BRS

with a *capstone project*. A capstone project is a multifaceted assignment that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students, typically during their final year of high school or middle school, or, as in our case, at the end of elementary school. Capstone projects may take a variety of forms, but most are long-term investigative projects that culminate in a final product, presentation or performance.

At BRS, this year's theme was an interdisciplinary year-long study of heroes and their impact on the world. Students began the year discussing the heroism witnessed on September 11, 2001, such as first responders, everyday citizens and the evacuation of lower Manhattan by sailors and boaters who decided to help out.

Students interviewed and wrote reflection pieces for Veteran's Day, again highlighting the fact that heroes can be found among us. Throughout the study of fiction and nonfiction, students unpacked traits, actions, decisions and relationships that defined a hero in literature and history.

Direct research into various characteristics of six hero "types" emerged.

### Student Council serves others

THE BRS STUDENT COUNCIL is comprised of 5th and 6th graders who engage in community service and community building.

Two such activities this year were: *Ronald McDonald House* – students prepared meals for residents of Ronald McDonald House in New Haven one Saturday; *Winterfest* – students provided after school activities for 2nd and 3rd grade students in collaboration with Amity Teen Center.

Students spent time applying these concepts to an exhibit that had three elements:

- 1) To analyze a piece of literature and the heroic qualities that emerge through a character and ultimately the message of the novel;
- 2) To perform a cross-genre synthesis by supplying and evaluating a real-world example of a person, past or present, who displays similar traits and to reflect on that person's impact on the world;
- 3) To present their findings in a display and presentation to the rest of the BRS community.

This year, we also added a service component in which students were required to provide at least two hours of service in order to leave BRS "better than they found it."

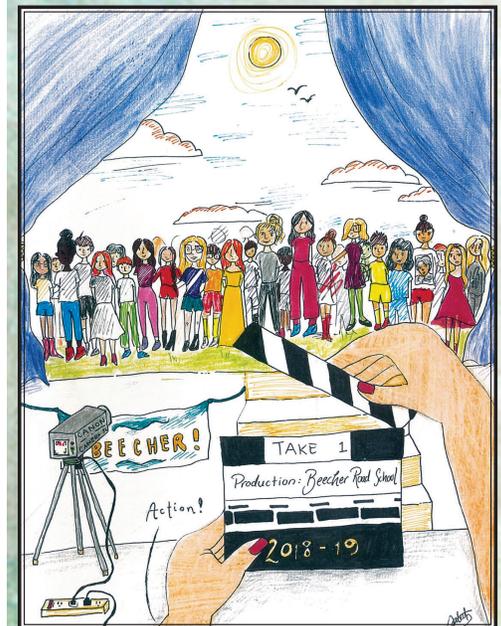
After reflection, students decided on a teacher, department or activity that had an impact on their time at BRS and wrote a proposal. In the end, students worked throughout the school providing heroic efforts for leaving a positive legacy. Among others, some projects included singing to senior citizens off campus; working to organize new library collections; helping teachers clean, organize or develop new materials; organize a 5K run; building bat racks at area baseball fields; helping teach younger students to swim.

Throughout the year, the Student Council raised funds for local and worldwide charities through bake sales, coin drives and a movie night.

BRS Student Council 2018-19



ELEVEN SIXTH GRADERS (above) formed the Yearbook Team for 2018-19. A truly cohesive group came prepared to each meeting, proposed suggestions, brain-stormed ideas and tabulated class surveys. When assigned tasks, with specific deadlines, the students met the time frames ahead of schedule without hesitation. They chose "The Movies" as this year's theme. The front and back covers were truly special this year, as one of our team members devoted many hours to sketch and bring them to life with color. In the end, the students produced a beautiful journal of their last year at Beecher Road School.



BEECHER ROAD SCHOOL CLASS OF 2019 Yearbook. The theme of the yearbook is "The Movies." Artwork by a talented 6th grade student.

## 2nd grade digs into community helpers and gets help



THE SECOND-GRADE INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM augmented the social studies unit *Community Helpers in Local Government* using principles

and practices of the *Responsive Classroom* and a book called *Purposeful Play* this year. A core component of this unit is student choice. The team identified five major departments of Woodbridge Town Government to focus on: education, police, fire, public works and finance. After some initial reading and discussion, students chose the department they wished to learn more about. Over several weeks each second-grade teacher facilitated instruction in one of the departments.

Students focused on some aspect of the work of one department. Groups had expert visitors who talked to the students about the day to day operations in their department. The students then chose a mechanism to teach other students about what they had learned. Some students made presentations on posters or their iPads. Some made physical representations of things found in their department, for example public works trucks and police cars.



The unit concluded with a grade wide gallery walk where students from each department informed the students from the other four departments about what they had learned. The judgment of the second-grade team is that this rich learning experience will help to make the students better citizens, wherever they choose to live.

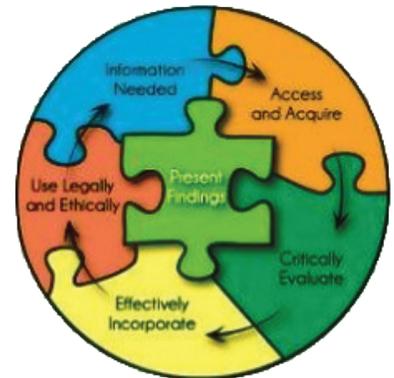
## We develop skilled information consumers

INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS\* start early and build throughout the years. A main focus of this curriculum is building digital citizens in this ever-expanding digital age. Students learn how to create multimedia presentations and how to access and navigate multiple resource formats, including the internet, as tools for basic and appropriate research purposes.

They learn note-taking and citation techniques, infographics, databases, computer animation, coding, word processing and other technology and library topics. Students have access to subscription-based online reference materials and software.

Students in K-2 engage in curriculum-related activities where technology is used for problem-solving activities, creating simple publishing projects, painting and drawing.

The library is used to learn early research skills: identifying the traits of nonfiction, navigating nonfiction text features, introducing note-taking, early citation and intellectual property.



Through this process, resource evaluation criteria are discussed and applied. The combined efforts of the Library-Tech Departments provide comprehensive instruction to develop the capabilities needed to effectively *access*, *evaluate* and *apply* information in an ethical and responsible way.

*\* The American Library Association: "A set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information."*

## Making school beautiful and safe

THE BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE, made up of school and district staff and a Board of Education member, meets monthly to improve the physical environment of the school. Principal Gina Prisco heads the group which also gets input from students. The meetings include a walking tour where members focus on the building and look for ways to improve it for students and staff. When items are brought up they are discussed and prioritized based on need and cost.

One example: the problem of "lost and found" items in a large elementary school can get out of hand. Hundreds of items pile up. The committee told parents and students about the need to do something. Parents were urged to label children's clothing and other items. Students in the *Extended Day* program now run a program with daily deliveries to "labeled" owners. Examples of accomplishments this year include a visual **WELCOME** project in the main entrance underway now, wall stripe in the main hallway, water filling stations, new shades in the cafeteria and painting the south gym.

THE SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE COMMITTEE is comprised of teachers, parents, staff and administrators. It meets regularly and reviews the *Safe School Climate Action Plan* to continue to improve the social climate at BRS.

Students and staff participated in activities and lessons during the month of March with a focus on being kind and showing empathy. Kindness Month was kicked off with *Empathy Across America* with a shared reading of the book, *The Day You Begin*

by Jacqueline Woodson.

The rest of the month included a song for the whole school, art lessons and



connections to art and literature that emphasized kindness.

*Peaceful Bus* included bus drivers, students, staff and bus leaders to provide a community on the bus where students feel connected to adults and where they can get to know other students on their bus.

Expectations were reviewed to encourage appropriate bus behavior.

On a daily basis, members of the Student Council made announcements about ways to show kindness. *WBRS News* also included a *Word of the Week* feature to broaden students' vocabulary pertaining to kindness.

# Growing Minds

## Enrichment through student choice

**F**OURTH GRADE LAUNCHED enrichment clusters to carry on the work started in third grade. Students were able to choose enrichment opportunities from several offerings including comic book writing, mythology, solving mysteries, bridge building, coding with ozobots, and origami. Their teachers along with our librarian and STEAM coordinator planned and facilitated the clusters. Clusters ran in 4–6 week sessions allowing students to really dig into their area of interest.



*They can solve crime scene mysteries.*

**I**NSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AT BRS use technology differently from other schools with an emphasis on student creativity over consumption of content. Students use technology as a tool to share their knowledge in original and innovative ways. It's used for problem-solving, coding fundamentals, creating simple publishing projects, painting and drawing.

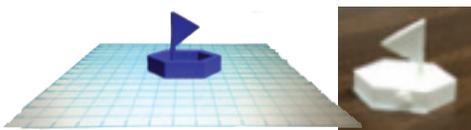
As students moves up the grades their use of technology becomes more sophisticated to communicate ideas through many modes.

## MAKERSPACE

A MAKERSPACE IS A PLACE WHERE students can gather to create, invent, tinker, explore and discover using a variety of tools, materials and equipment to design, build and create all sorts of different things.

The goal of *Makerspace* is to empower students to see themselves as inventors, builders and creators. Makerspace allows learning new skills through trial and error, experiencing failure of an initial idea, the exploration of possible alternatives and then problem solving to improve on the idea.

A state grant awarded to the district has allowed the technology, library and STEAM teachers to begin the process of creating BRS "Maker Spaces." We have purchased several small 3D printers, facilitating the printing of large quantities of designs. The first project was created by third graders in conjunction with the *ArtsWeek* theme of *water*. They designed 3D boats and learned how to use CAD software to create their designs, which were then produced on 3D printers.



*left - CAD software used to design the boat  
right - design sent to 3D printer for production*

## Wanna be an expert? Fifth graders learn how.

THIS YEAR FIFTH GRADE TEACHERS INCORPORATED *Genius Hour*, a planned time that is scheduled regularly, into nonfiction reading and writing units. Students chose a topic of study about which they had a passion. Because students had the freedom to choose, it helped develop intrinsic motivation and a positive learning environment. The process for each student results in research compiled from books, internet and personal interviews. They learn as much as possible on their topic. Students then share their learning with the entire 5th grade community. Sharing their learning is a vital part of the experience, as students present what they learn with methods they choose such as creating posters, tri-fold displays, PowerPoint® presentations, and art displays.



*At left – This fifth grade student studied bees and the need to protect them. Her interest is so great she received a bee keepers suit for her birthday. She will be getting bees of her own to start a backyard hive. To promote awareness of this important topic, she gave all students a packet of seeds that they can plant at home. The seed mix was specifically made to attract bees.*

## STEAM

SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING ARTS MATHEMATICS

In our STEAM lab, students are hands-on as they figure out, engineer and design challenges as part of their science units. STEAM is an educational approach to learning that uses science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics to guide students' critical thinking. This inclusive approach creates students who take risks, experiment, solve problems, collaborate and work through the creative process. The boys at the right have just designed, and are constructing, their solution to solve a problem.



# AT OUR CORE

## MISSION

BEECHER ROAD SCHOOL IS A CARING, CREATIVE COMMUNITY THAT MODELS AND INSPIRES THE JOY OF LIFE-LONG LEARNING, EMBRACES DIVERSITY AND CELEBRATES THE UNIQUE QUALITIES OF EACH PERSON.

## VISION

TO PROVIDE A DYNAMIC EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT THAT CHALLENGES AND EMPOWERS STUDENTS TO PERSEVERE AS INNOVATORS AND COLLABORATORS IN PREPARATION FOR THEIR ROLE AS RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL CITIZENS.

Town of Woodbridge  
Woodbridge School District  
40 Beecher Road  
Woodbridge, CT 06525

PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM RETAIL

LOCAL  
POSTAL CUSTOMER  
WOODBRIDGE, CT 06525

Learning through virtual reality.



### Award Winners

TWO STATEWIDE Excellence In Communications awards came to Woodbridge for The Parent/Student Handbook and The Beecher Calendar.



## THE BRIDGE

... for 13 years, connecting school and community by informing Woodbridge residents about the work of their school district and its student and staff accomplishments.



BR teachers were feted at the annual end-of-year staff breakfast, as was Board of Education Chairman Margaret Hamilton (far right) who is retiring from the Board after many years of service.

## Taxpayer's Guide to the 2019-2020 Woodbridge Board of Education Budget

THE WOODBRIDGE BOARDS OF EDUCATION, Selectmen, and Finance approved the funding plan for the school district, effective July 1, 2019. The budget increase is 3.61% over the previous year. This budget is respectful of the taxpayer while continuing to move the educational system forward. The operating budget is the legal plan under which the school system is funded. It puts in place the financial wherewithal to pay for one year's worth of education programs and expenses.



Budget Category	Last Year 2018-19	This Year 2019-20	\$ Amount Change	% Change*	% of Total Budget*
Salaries and Benefits <sup>1</sup>	\$ 11,381,329	\$ 11,671,064	\$ 289,735	2.55%	76.77%
Utilities and Heat <sup>2</sup>	244,432	259,875	\$15,443	6.32%	1.71%
Student Transportation <sup>3</sup>	671,259	757,216	\$85,957	12.81%	4.98%
Tuition - (out of district) <sup>4</sup>	631,959	653,821	\$21,862	3.46%	4.30%
All Outside Services <sup>5</sup>	1,268,809	1,373,126	\$104,317	8.22%	9.03%
General Supplies <sup>6</sup>	299,482	317,737	\$18,255	6.10%	2.09%
Furniture and Equipment <sup>7</sup>	97,400	95,600	\$(1,800)	-1.85%	0.63%
Dues and Fees <sup>8</sup>	77,615	73,515	\$(4,100)	-5.28%	0.48%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 14,672,285</b>	<b>\$ 15,201,954</b>	<b>\$ 529,669</b>	<b>3.61%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

- \* Percents rounded to the nearest one-hundredth of a percent
- Salaries and benefits include savings from early retirement incentives, in addition to 1.5FTE new positions in response to Special Education Needs
  - Electricity, water, sewer, and heating.
  - In addition to regular school buses, some children require special transportation due to special needs (\$333,228). We also buy the diesel fuel for the buses through the purchasing consortium, at a cost of \$31,920.
  - Because some children, due to special needs, require school settings outside of Woodbridge, we pay tuition (\$653,821) for their special education.
  - Services we purchase or lease. Examples include telephones, insurance, internet, postage, professional development, legal, technical and professional services, substitutes, school resource officer, building repairs, improvements and maintenance.
  - Paper, pencils, books, wax, soap, paper products, band aids, software, envelopes, library books, subscriptions, etc.
  - In most cases, furniture and equipment items purchased are replacements.
  - Ezra Academy school nurse (required by state law), unemployment, memberships in professional associations, miscellaneous expenditures, other fees, etc.

Note: For a more complete and detailed look at the operating budget, go to the district website and click on 2019-2020 budget.

## SCHOOL STARTS AUG. 28

### THE BRIDGE

The Education Report of the Woodbridge School District  
No. 13,  
Summer 2019

### Woodbridge Board of Education 2018-19

Margaret Hamilton – Chair  
Steven Fleischman – Vice-Chair  
Maegan Genovese – Secretary  
Claire Coleman – Todd Jokl  
Garett Luciani – Lynn Piascyk  
Joyce Shavers – Paul Testa  
Robert Gilbert – Supt. of Schools

The Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools gratefully acknowledge the dozens of staff members who made contributions to **The Bridge**, and to all the staff who make programs and children's minds come alive every day. Thank you.

The Woodbridge Board of Education does not knowingly condone discrimination in employment, assignment, program or service, on the basis of race, gender, color, religion, natural origin, age, sexual orientation, disability or unrelated abilities to perform the duties of the position.