

May 23, 2006

Dear Families of Beecher Road School:

One of my goals as Superintendent is to communicate directly with you on an on-going basis. In this letter, I would like to share the challenges we face in light of new budget reductions adopted by the Board of Education as a result of the Woodbridge Boards of Finance and Selectmen's actions earlier this spring.

I would like to review a few facts with you. I presented a School Board approved budget with a modest 2.67% increase over the current school year. The Boards of Finance and Selectmen reduced that budget proposal by \$300,000. In effect, next school year's budget represents a .3% decrease in funding when compared to the current school year. The School District is being asked to provide higher quality education in a more economical way.

Budget reductions are never easy to make. What stays? What goes? My guiding principle has been to keep the cuts *as far away from the children as possible*. With that in mind, I presented these recommendations to the Board of Education and they were approved.

- 1. Eliminate the position of Curriculum Coordinator. Savings: \$113,300**
This position serves an important function and is needed for the operation of a modern school system. Eliminating this position does not mean it is gone forever. However, Beecher Road Schools' co-principals are very strong in curriculum, testing, supervision and evaluation. By working closely with all support staff, we shall rethink the way we develop, implement, and monitor curriculum.
- 2. Eliminate the position of PPT (Planning and Placement Team) Coordinator. Savings: \$51,119**
Eliminating this position will have no effect on Special Education programming currently in place. This work will now be added to the responsibilities of the Special Services Director, who will collaborate with the Special Services Secretary and Special Services personnel.
- 3. Reduce the number of school busses by one. Savings: \$20,000**
In working with the Coordinator of the BOWA Transportation Network, reducing one bus is a prudent cost-savings measure, and will not unduly affect children or families. There will be no effect on bus stops or walking distances.
- 4. Reduce teacher substitutes by implementing a teacher intern model. Savings: \$13,000**
Teacher interns are in effect, adjunct members of the school staff. They are in training to become teachers and are at the school every day. When a substitute is needed a teacher intern will often be placed in that position. The advantage of teacher interns is that they know the school, the teachers, the programs, and most importantly, the students.

5. **Reduce the cost of the Instant Alert System.** **Savings: \$5,000**
The *Instant Alert* system is an automated program that notifies parents and guardians in the event of an emergency or unexpected school closing. After negotiating with *Instant Alert* we are able to provide improved service at a 50% reduction over the current school year's expenditure.
6. **Eliminate the position of one TAG (Talented and Gifted) teacher.** **Savings: \$69,500**
Servicing the needs of all students is paramount. We are not eliminating the TAG program. However, it will be restructured. Building on the current strengths of the program and working with staff who understand the needs of these students, a new model will emerge. We expect to have a program prototype as early as the start of next school year.
7. **Eliminate the position of one TA (Teaching Assistant).** **Savings: \$23,000**
Teaching assistants provide valuable and much needed service in today's schools. In many cases, a teaching assistant's services allow children, who might otherwise be sent out of the district because of special needs, to stay at Beecher School in the *least restrictive environment* (a legal term applied to special education cases). Other teaching assistants work with the regular classroom teachers and provide a wide variety of services. Eliminating one position, in my opinion, will not adversely impact student learning.
8. **The remaining \$5,000 needed to meet the imposed budget reduction will come from various school district accounts.**

One additional program change that does not affect the total budget amount is being implemented next school year. That is the elimination of teaching Spanish in Grades K-2. Those dollars will be used instead to increase Art instruction in the lower grades. As a result, Foreign Language instruction will now start in the third grade, and the Art program will be strengthened.

In preparing these reductions, my Administrative Team and I looked at every account, every position, and every program. Nothing was considered *untouchable*. Our final decision was based on keeping the impact of these cuts *as far from the children as possible*. The Board of Education deliberated at length on each of these budget recommendations. Faced with the reality of finding \$300,000, they approved these reductions.

These are difficult times, but also times of great hope. Together, we will do wonderful things for the children of Woodbridge. I look forward to working with you and serving your children for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Gaeton F. Stella, Ph.D.
Superintendent

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