



Parent Update – June 1, 2007

From Dr. Stella – Superintendent of Schools

Making changes to improve our school

Next year will see some changes as we seek to reorganize how we deliver instruction to meet the goals of the school district. In planning for the new school year, our administrative team looked carefully at the school district's two major tasks: 1] improve student performance 2] nurture the social and emotional development of students. One of Woodbridge's hallmarks is that we expect high levels of learning for all students. It is the fundamental purpose of our school. Because of that, we examine all instructional practices in light of their impact on learning and achievement. And, we did.

Schools across the country are using professional learning teams as a tool to improve classroom instruction. We plan to do the same. By combining the strengths of teachers (team members) in areas such as mathematics, science, technology skills, reading and writing we have created strong teams at every grade level. In addition, we have placed teachers who were trained, or will be trained this summer, in the Columbia University *Writer's Workshop* and the national *Responsive Classroom Program* on each team.

Next year, the grade-level teacher teams will work together in a systematic way to respond to questions such as: 1] What do we want children to learn? 2] How do we know that they are learning? 3] How can we do a better job? 4] What if children don't learn?

As a result of the reorganization, class sizes in K-2 will be lowered. A new teacher will be added to both Grade 1 and Grade 2. A grade 3 teaching position has been eliminated. Teacher teams in grades 3-6 have been reorganized to combine individual strengths of members and create the professional learning team addressed above. In total, five new teachers will be hired. We are actively recruiting top talent for the open job positions. We attended the *Fairfield Job Fair*, collected dozens of teaching applications, and are currently conducting multi-step interviews.

We expect the reorganization of teachers into strong professional learning teams will result in *consistency of practices* and *increased student learning*. Understanding that change can sometimes be difficult, we ask for the support of parents and staff in this reorganization effort.

Beecher Road School Teachers by Grade Level: 2007-08

Pre-K
DePalma, Maria

Kindergarten
Belisle, Elizabeth
Coleman, Adrienne
Dempsey, Jeanne
Salinardi, Catherine
Wyman-Anctil, Shannon

Grade 1
Hutchinson, John
Navadu, Teresa
Piascyk, Lynn
Regan, Ellen
New Teacher

Grade 2
Don, Dolores
New Teacher
Krawec, Maureen
Nakouzi, Teresa
New Teacher

Multi-Age
Burness, Richard
Dempsey, Jessica
Golden, Louise
New Teacher

Grade 3
Halsey, Peter
King, Diane
Lavigne, Elena
MacDonald, Monique

Grade 4
Hines, Kristen
Katzen, Steve
Reizfeld, Naomi
Russo, Bev
Vincitorio, Mary

Grade 5
Blinstrubas, Sharon
Bruch, Katie
Chase, Dan
Kucinskas, Kevin
Mumford, Leigh
New Teacher

Grade 6
Holowienko, Joe
Lyssy, Connie
Osborne, Monique
Waldron, Michele
White, Nancy
New Teacher

Note: Ms. Halsey and Ms. Buzzard are on leave for the 2007-2008 school year.



New school budget has some gains for students

The Woodbridge *Boards of Finance* and *Selectmen* approved our *Board of Education* budget for next school year that addresses the needs of the school district while being mindful of the taxpayer.

Although we are not able to implement all that we sought, several gains have been made:

- class size reduced by adding one first grade teacher
- technology funding is substantially increased
- the strategic plan to bolster core subject areas and new initiatives is on track
- employee contracts have been fully funded including health benefits

What Your Child Learns: A Parent's Guide To The Curriculum

One of the most frequently asked questions we hear from parents is, "What will my child learn this year – and next year – and the following...?"

The teachers and administrative staff have been working throughout this school year to develop an *all-in-one-place* reference for parents that details the answer to that question. Scheduled for a September distribution, a parent-friendly booklet that delves into the topics taught at every grade level includes everything from *learning about the seasons* in kindergarten science, to *classifying polygons into sets and subsets using relationships of sides and angles* in sixth grade math.

We expect that the new guide will strengthen teachers and parents as partners in the education of their children by opening topics for discussion and reflection. Since curriculum is ever-changing, regular updates to the parents' guide will occur.

The last day of school is June 19. What are you doing this summer?



<http://www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us>

Have you ever visited the Woodbridge School District website? It is loaded with all sorts of information. Right now you may be wondering about what the schools have going on this summer. All of the information below can be found online and is spelled out in a lot more detail. Here's a sampling:

SEP, the *Summer Enrichment Program*, runs for five weeks, June 25 –July 27, 9:00 – noon. Transportation is available at additional cost. **SEP** features dozens of classes geared toward all ages and all interests of children.

Here's a sample list of classes: *summer science, cake decorating, treasures from the sea, slide guitar, children's theatre, digital photography, drawing, clown college, clay is the way, discover Connecticut, puppet creations, latch-hook rugs, and so you're coming to kindergarten.*

The Woodbridge *Extended Day Program* and *Summer Camp Program* are also offered. These programs are especially geared toward working parents who need a safe and educational environment for their children while they work.

Some parents choose to piggy-back the *Extended Day Program* with the *Summer Enrichment* and *Summer Camp* programs. It's all possible.

Go to the district website for complete details. But remember: classes fill, and registration deadlines are approaching.

What does your child need in a teacher?

In Woodbridge we are extremely fortunate to have a staff of competent, caring, professional educators. Because of that, children will thrive in any classroom.

At this time, we are making classroom placements for students for next school year. The process is done through a comprehensive team approach and considers many factors. Parents may not select teachers, but may provide input by sending letters to the principals outlining the learning style and needs of their children.

Thank you

As your superintendent for the past 18 months I have been delighted and encouraged by the parents in our town. Your interest in education, support for the school, and your feedback contribute substantially to improving the quality of education our children need in the 21st century. Led by the PTO, this kind of parent involvement will make Woodbridge a lighthouse school district. And by the way, the annual PTO meeting will be held Monday, June 3, at 7:15 in the BRS Rotunda. You're encouraged to attend.

I look forward to seeing you all soon at the end-of-year celebrations.

My best wishes for a healthy summer filled with fun and adventure for you and your children.

Sincerely,

Gaeton F. Stella, Ph.D.