



Parent Update – May 28, 2008

From Dr. Stella – Superintendent of Schools

Dear Families of the Beecher Community:

Chinese earthquake victims need help

In an effort to promote the district goal of helping students become caring global citizens, student assemblies will be held this week to discuss a school wide read-a-thon to raise money to support relief efforts in China for earthquake victims. How can you help?

Students who choose to participate will ask family and friends to sponsor the number of pages they read (or are read to them) from May 28 through June 12. Pledge cards may be completed to sponsor a student. All money raised will be donated to UNICEF to purchase supplies such as blankets, tents, school-in-a box kits, recreation kits, medical supplies, as well as food and water. Each class will be encouraged to pick a UNICEF relief item and work toward that goal. Items can be seen online at: http://inspiredgifts.unicefusa.org/site/PageServer?pagina me=ig_cat_education

All pledge cards, accompanied by a check made out to BRS, will be collected on Friday, June 13th (no cash please). You may also choose to contribute by using your credit card through **PaySchools** on the district website: > *Parent information* > *PaySchools*. The *China Read-A-Thon* will be introduced by Dr. Stella and Grade 6 teacher Nancy White in grade level assemblies to be held on Wednesday, May 28 and Thursday, May 29.

As a point of information, the tragic earthquake fortunately did not affect our sister school which is located in the city of Heze in the Shandong Province of China. The tragic earthquake occurred in the Sichuan Province on Monday, May 12. Chinese officials and international aid organizations are working hard to get tents and supplies to the five million people made homeless by the earthquake. The official death toll is now more than 68,000, over 350,000 are injured and another 20,000 people are still missing. Your generous help would be greatly appreciated.

Nancy White, Sixth Grade Teacher spent spring recess in China

Nancy White spent her Spring Recess visiting our sister school in the city of Heze, in the Shandong Province of the Republic of China. She was part of a delegation of educators from Connecticut who went to China to visit their sister schools.

She has begun the process of sharing stories and artifacts with the staff and the children of BRS, reminding them of our *Sister School* relationship. We will use this new endeavor as a way of building excitement about the beauty of reaching out to world cultures.

The *Woodbridge School District* sent a gift to our Sister School with Ms. White – a beautifully framed aerial view of Beecher Road School, taken by our own Officer Tom Balch, who, in addition to being an excellent DARE instructor, is a skilled photographer and a licensed pilot.

You can read passages from Mrs. White's Diary and see pictures from her trip by visiting the District's web site: www.woodbridge@k12.ct.us. While you are on the web site, check out the China Gallery.

Superintendent's and district offices moving to Beecher Road School

The Town needs more office space at the Center School Community Building. The First Selectman has requested that the District Office, now in the Center, relocate to Beecher Road School. The Board of Education has approved the move.

As a result, the Superintendent's Office will occupy what is currently the Recreation Office in the south end of the building. The district's Business Office will be located in the area now used by the Special Education Department also in the south of *BRS*. We anticipate moving during the summer. The Special Education offices will move back to their original suite of offices in the middle of the building. The Recreation Office will be provided office space with a separate entrance on site in the south part of *BRS*. The Extended Day *base room* has been relocated to the Commons Area.

Building and grounds improvements are well underway at BRS

During this school year building and grounds projects have included:

Flooring

Rugs were removed and tile was installed in the south corridors, rotunda, and ramp areas. A new flooring system was also installed in the north gym. Contractors have been secured to perform abatement and installation of tile in the south assembly and four other rooms during the summer months.

Soffit/Insulation Repairs

Repair work to the soffit/roof areas in the South building are nearly completed. Insulation buffers were installed between the existing exterior soffits and the interior air plenum areas along the perimeter of the south building.

Lighting Projects

The Town and School District collaborated on an energy saving lighting project. The Town supplied the labor; the school district purchased the materials. The first project involved replacing old electrical ballasts and fixtures throughout the school with new energy efficient products. The new lighting ballasts enable us to reduce our electricity consumption and allow us to receive a rebate from United Illuminating resulting in a one-year payback on our investment. In the second project, the existing lighting poles and globes in the north parking lot were reworked. Many of the globes were damaged. The lamps were not working due to water infiltration and damage caused by rodents and pests. Globes were replaced and rewiring completed so that all of the parking lot fixtures are now in working order.

Painting

The north parking lot had a fresh coat of paint put on all of the markings in August. Painting in the B (Multi-Age) and C (3rd Grade) wing hallways took place during the February break.

Grounds

Swing sets in the playground areas had new borders and woodchips installed prior to the start of school last fall. More recently an area adjacent to the north parking lot was cleared of brush and undergrowth and filled with woodchips.

More projects planned for next year

Botanical gardens

We plan to develop the *BRS Botanical Gardens* by planting flora indigenous to Connecticut in the area cleared of brush and undergrowth adjacent to the north parking lot. The plan calls for labeling all plants with their English and Latin names.

Other projects

- additional clearing of brush and undergrowth
- painting
- upgrade the nature trail
- build a track that will service both school and community
- with a Town building committee, continue the process of requesting major upgrades to *BRS*
- apply for a Connecticut STEAP (*Small Town Economic Assistance Program*) grant to reorganize the traffic circle in the north parking lot.

Some changes in Teaching Teams next year

During the past year, there has been a major emphasis on establishing professional learning teams on each grade level at *BRS*. Schools across the country are using professional learning teams as a tool to improve classroom instruction. We are doing 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. *BRS* grade level learning teams for the 2008-2009 school year are as follows:

Gr	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher
Pre K	Maria DePalma					
K	Shannon Wyman	Cathy Salinardi	Liz Belisle	Adrienne Coleman	Jeanne Dempsey	
1	Nicole Cioffi	Ellen Regan	Lynn Plascyk	John Hutchinson	Teresa Navadu	Jessica Dempsey (MAG)
2	Maureen Krawec	Teresa Nakouzi	Dee Don	Jennifer Lloyd	Kerrin Fullam	Rich Burness (MAG)
3	Monique MacDonald	Naomi Reizfeld	Peter Halsey	Elena Lavigne	Connie Lyssy	Louise Golden (MAG)
4	Kristen Hines	Mary Vincitorio	Bev Russo	Stephanie Eleck	Open (MAG)	
5	Visna Ngov	Sharon Blinstrubas	Dan Chase	Kevin Kucinkas	Katie Bruch	Leigh Mumford
6	Nancy White	Michele Waldron	Nancy Smerekanicz	Monique Osborn	Joe Holowoenko	Steve Katzen

Next year, the grade-level teams will continue to work together in a systematic way to bring consistency to grade practices and 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 do we do if children are not learning?

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.

A busy month lies ahead for all of us.
My best wishes to you all,

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