



# Parent Update - October 5, 2010

## From Dr. Stella – Superintendent of Schools

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### Thank you, Mrs. Torre

A farewell breakfast was held by administrators, faculty and staff for Mary Lou Torre, Principal of the Intermediate House on September 30, her final day of work at BRS. We were fortunate to have Mrs. Torre for nearly five years. During that time, she has brought great value to BRS through her dedicated service, extensive knowledge base and strong work ethic. Mrs. Torre, being the professional she is, had agreed to stay for the first month of school to make sure everything was in place before she left. We expect a very smooth transition as Dr. Tomasello, our new interim principal, takes on the principal's responsibilities.

### Welcome, Dr. Tomasello

Dr. Len Tomasello is the interim principal for grades 3-6 as a result of Mrs. Torre's move to another district. Dr. Tomasello brings an extensive experience, having served as a principal in New Canaan and several other Fairfield County districts. He has also served in several other interim positions. Dr. Tomasello brings an energy level and a passion for education that are second to none. He is very current with educational issues and familiar with district priorities. Dr. Tomasello started in his new position on October 1. We anticipate that he will be with us until February 28 or longer, if needed.

### Healthy tips for the family

**QVHD Tips**, a family health letter, is a publication of the Quinnipiac Valley Health District. The Fall 2010 edition can be found on our web site – [www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us](http://www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us) – under *news and announcements*. This edition includes topics of interest to parents such as: •Who should get a flu shot? •Instructions for children being vaccinated against seasonal flu for the first time •When to get children vaccinated •Behaviors to reduce the spread of flu and flu-like illness. Future editions of QVHD will also be posted on our web site.



As you know, the BRS Lunch Program now uses a POS [point of sale] system in the cafeteria. Lunches, beverages, and a-la-carte items may be purchased daily as students go through the lunch line. As in the past, funds can be deposited into your child's lunch account with cash or check. Now, as an added option, parents can use the *MealpayPlus* online prepayment system.

If you prefer to make payments or check lunchroom balances by phone, a toll-free number has been created for our district (866-984-7926). Funds deposited through *MealpayPlus* are usually available for student use within a matter of minutes. A convenience fee of 4.76% is charged on all *MealpayPlus* credit card transactions.

### Frequently asked questions about MealpayPlus:

*MealpayPlus* is a new tool that enables parents to monitor their children's lunch choices and pay for lunches and other items by credit card if they choose. What is important to understand is that every parent might want to set up a *MealpayPlus* account for their child. Once the account is set up there are several advantages.

**Q:** What are the advantages of setting up a *MealpayPlus* account?

**A:** With an account, you can monitor your child's food choices by seeing exactly what they purchased for lunch. Soon you will also be able to see the nutritional content of the food offered at school. If you choose, you can pay not only for lunches by credit card, but also things like field trips, the *Extended Day Program*, the *Summer Enrichment Program* and more.

**Q:** How do I set up an account?



**A:** Go the district web site and click on *MealpayPlus*. Follow the prompts. You will need your child's PIN (Personal Identification Number) that was included in the *welcome back* packet.

**Q:** Once I have an account, how do I pay for lunches?

**A:** You have three ways to pay for lunches: 1] Pay at the *MealpayPlus* site by credit card. A 4.76% fee will be added to the amount of the purchase. 2] Pay by check made out to *Woodbridge School Lunch Program*. You or your child can bring that check to school where it will be applied to your child's *MealpayPlus* account without an additional fee. 3] Pay by cash at school. The cash will be applied to your child's *MealpayPlus* account without an additional fee.

**Q:** Can my child still pay cash for lunch and other cafeteria items or is *MealpayPlus* the only way?

**A:** Cash is still accepted. However, once the *MealpayPlus* system is fully implemented, you will only be able to view your child's purchases online if you have set up an account and payments are made through that system – cash, check or credit card.

**Q:** What else can I do through *MealpayPlus*?

**A:** *MealpayPlus* is a convenient tool that also allows you to:

- Check your child's current account balance.
- Monitor the items your child has been purchasing in the cafeteria.
- Create settings to receive email notifications when the account reaches a low balance, or, if you prefer automatically replenish funds at preset limits through a credit card.

**Q:** If I don't pay for lunch through *MealpayPlus*, can I still have access the services listed above?

**A:** Yes. You can set up an account and use your credit card for other school purchases.



Recent arrivals to the Beecher Road School community include families from Alabama, California, Colorado, North Carolina, New York, Vermont, China, Israel and towns within Connecticut. When interviewed, each of the new families said that they came to Woodbridge for the school system. The current enrollment at BRS is 724 students, not including outplaced students. The projected enrollment from last year's demographic update was 708. (See ten-year study under district information on the district's web site. The October 1 enrollment figures are used for official purposes.)



### We're developing character in our students

The emotional and social development of students at BRS is as important as their academic growth. The two go hand in hand. New steps have been taken to support Goal #2 of the District's Strategic plan: "Build the foundations of character and wellness that are essential for responsible participation as a local, national and global citizen."

These steps include:

- Members of the discipline committee met during this past summer to update a school wide discipline plan which will be implemented this school year.
- Introduction of the *Responsive Classroom* into every Pre-K - 2 and MAG classroom.
- School wide support in *Responsive Classroom* techniques.
- Common expectations for behaviors in hallways, cafeteria and public places of the school.
- On-going professional training for staff in *Responsive Classroom* and levels of intervention for students with needs.

(*Responsive Classroom* explained: go to district web site and click *curriculum*.)

### Going, going, we're going

## Paperless

This newsletter will be the last large scale hard copy\* communication sent out from the district office. The only exception will be editions of *Bridges*, the district journal that is mailed to all taxpayers in Town. Therefore, it is extremely important that all BRS families are enrolled in the district's *Instant Alert System*. When a district communication is sent out, a green alert will be sent to families asking them to check the district web site for the communication piece. (Go to the home page of the district web site and click on *Instant Alert* for instructions.) You may also call or contact Larry Hurwitz at BRS for more information: [lhurwitz@woodbridge.k12.ct.us](mailto:lhurwitz@woodbridge.k12.ct.us) - or 203-389-2195 Ext. 6.

(\* A limited number of hard copies will still be available in the BRS office and the Superintendent's Office.)

### "It's on the web site..."

## [www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us](http://www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us)

The Woodbridge School District's web site is undergoing a transformation. This school year, James Crawford, newly appointed *Technology and Informational Literacy Specialist*, is responsible for keeping the school's and district's web-site up to date and dynamic. A wealth of information has been added to the website in many areas including district information, curriculum, assessment, special education and parent information. The *Parent and Student Handbook* and *Staff Directory* are ready for parents. *Connecticut Mastery Test* results are on the web site.

As the year progresses look for more information as teachers and specialists continue to add web pages. Recent additions and new information can be found on our math and Spanish specialist's web pages. This past spring the *Tri-State Consortium* visited BRS. Their final report is on the district site under *District Information*. The *Special Services* website has also been changed to provide great resources for parents.

The *Woodbridge School District* and BRS web sites are an ever-changing source of information for parents and citizens of Woodbridge. Continue to visit the web pages frequently as the district and school move through this initial phase and continue to add new information.

### Technology is part of our lives

The *Library Technology Team* at BRS is involved in a whirlwind of activity this fall.

The major projects underway include:

- SMART Boards are being installed in the rest of grade 1 & 2 classrooms and specialist areas throughout the building.
- The new Xerox color printer / copier has been installed in the Technology Center. Teachers and students are being trained to use this new cost saving, environmentally friendly resource.
- Students are engaging in extensive discussions and lessons on Internet Safety, responsible use of technology, and new software applications.

### A critical review of our school

Our school district invited a team from the *Tri-State Consortium* to examine our K-6 English/Language Arts program over a three-day period last May. The *Tri-State Consortium* is a learning organization that assists member districts in using student performance data to develop a rigorous framework for planning, assessment, and continuous improvement. The *Tri-State Consortium* assessment model is based on systems thinking; that is, it focuses on the degree to which the district is aligned with the model's eight indicators throughout the system. The consortium uses student assessment data to help guide curricular decisions, instructional strategies, best practices and programs.

Over the course of three days, the team analyzed documentation of curricula, processes, and practices directly linked to the teaching and learning of reading and writing, K-6. In addition they interviewed staff, students and parents. Members of the team also shadowed students in their language arts classes observing their level of engagement and interest. Ultimately, the team generated a series of commendations and recommendations for improvement. (See full *Tri-State Report* as well as *Tri-State Power Point Presentation* on the district web site - *District Information*.)

With my best wishes,

*Saeton F. Stella*