



# PARENT UPDATE FROM DR. STELLA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

January 27, 2012

[www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us](http://www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us) Woodbridge School District

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As we reach the half-way point in the school year in just a few days, I'd like to reiterate a core value: Academics are very important at Beecher Road School; the Arts are equally as important. In fact, we believe that both areas complement one another. In this Parent Update, I will focus on music and music opportunities for students. Let me start by sharing our philosophy of music education.



- Music is an art form that allows individuals to develop their aesthetic potential.
- Music expresses human feeling with all shades of intensity and quiet, expansion and withdrawal, movement and rest.
- Music provides an outlet for student creativity and self-expression. It enables them to express their noblest thoughts and feelings. It engages their imagination and allows them to assert their uniqueness.
- Music exalts the human spirit and enhances the quality of life.

- The **Beecher Road School Chorus** is a non-auditioned group comprised of students from fourth to sixth grade. Anybody who loves to sing and has an interest in singing can join. The focus is on learning how to read and interpret two-part octavos. The Chorus meets Thursdays in the north music room from 3:10-3:45 after school – unless otherwise announced.

Soon, students will embark on what many consider their favorite unit when they learn the fundamentals of making music and then create and write down their own musical thoughts and ideas. Fifth graders will also have an opportunity to take their thoughts and ideas and use the music writing software, *Finale Notepad*, to “type” their compositions into a computer. This allows them to hear their music as they type as well as play it back as a complete composition.

We have two full-time music teachers and one part-time. Mr. William Letsch is the full-time instrumental music teacher, Mrs. Nadia Collado-Maraquin is the full-time primary and choral music teacher and Ms. Janine Lempke is the part-time intermediate music teacher.

As witnessed at last December’s concert, our children have many opportunities to engage in musical activities. Here are some of the possibilities:

- Jazz Ensemble\*** is offered to students in grades 5 and 6, however, some younger students in grades 3 and 4 have been promoted to this performing group. The Rhythm section of this group is auditioned in the beginning of the year. Students will be added and dropped throughout the year depending on their individual level of achievement.
- Advanced Band\*** is offered to students in grades 5 and 6, however, some students in grades 3 and 4 have been accepted to this performing group.
- String Ensemble\*** is offered to any student at BRS, regardless of grade, who has completed at least one year of instruction on a string instrument and is capable of note reading.

[\*Students in the above three groups perform a varied repertoire of literature many times throughout the year at concerts, ceremonies, competitions, and adjudications.]

- Beginning Band** is offered to students in grade 4. In addition to their in-school instruction, students rehearse together as an entire band ensemble from 8:30 - 9:00 on Tuesday mornings. Students learn basic note reading and perform basic band literature throughout the year.
- Colorguard / Winterguard** is offered to students in grades 4 - 6, however, some younger students in grade 3 have been promoted to this performing group. Students in this group perform many times throughout the year through their own competitive circuit, in local parades, and adjudications.
- The **Recorder Club** is open to 6th graders who have an interest in furthering their recorder skills. Students learn advanced two-part baroque recorder music. The club meets once a week in the north music room.



Mr. Letsch and the brass section ham it up for our holiday camera.

## Music students continue their unprecedented awards streak

Highlights from the 2011 - 2012 School Year (so far...)

- 5 students auditioned and made *Regionals* - one of the larger groups BRS has ever had at Middle School Regionals
- Winterguard:
  - 3rd Place Finish in MAC at Championships; New England Open Champions USSBA; Other 1st, 2nd, 3rd place finishes throughout the season [www.musicalartsconference.com](http://www.musicalartsconference.com) for list
- Percussion Ensemble:
  - Perfect Season in MAC - 6 Years; 2010 MAC Champions Marching Novice; New England Open Champions USSBA
- Advanced Band & String Ensemble:
  - Marching Band Parade - Bethany Fireman's Carnival; Memorial Day Parades in Orange; 7th Annual BRS Invitational; Bridgeport Sound Tigers National Anthem; Sept. 11th Firehouse Memorial; Veterans Day Ceremony at Town Hall; Winter & Spring Concerts; Chamber Music Performances



## Interested in being part of Alice In Wonderland?

Drama Club is back!

This spring, the newly formed drama club will be performing the fun and whimsical play *Alice in Wonderland*! We will be looking for students in grades one through six to become cast members, stagehands, and artists for set design. The first meeting will be held on Thursday, February 2, 2012 with a snow date of Thursday, February 9, 2012. Look for more information to come on our website and in a flyer that will be sent home. The drama club and play will be under the direction of Cathy Salinardi and Ashley Wagner.

### Playground replacement plans underway

The north and south playgrounds were dismantled, with the help of the Town, over the December holiday break. The playgrounds were 24+ years old and did not meet current safety standards. Our plan is to replace both playgrounds starting with the North. A playground committee was formed in December consisting of representatives from the administration, staff, PTO and district office staff. The firm of Fuss and O'Neill was selected to oversee the project. Representatives from Fuss and O'Neill have been meeting with the committee to get feedback as to what type of equipment and ground covering would be desirable, and, at the same time, meet rigid safety standards. Their charge now is to bring 2-3 scenarios of a holistic playground design with costs estimates to our next meeting which will be on February 6. Recommendations from the playground committee will be shared with the school board's facility committee and school board. Bids and contract documents will then be prepared. We anticipate breaking ground for the north playground in late April of 2012. The district requested funds for the south playground as part of its capital budget. If that request is approved, we would like to have the south playground in place by the beginning of the new school year.

### Search for new principal has begun

As you may already know, the administrative structure of Beecher Road School will be changed, beginning with the 2012 – 2013 school year, from a co-principal model with a principal for the primary grades and a principal for the intermediate grades to a one school one principal/one assistant principal model. Mrs. Bequary, as has been announced, will retire in June. Mrs. Page's term as an interim principal will also end in June. The search for a new principal has begun.

NESDEC (*New England School Development Council*) has been hired to do a professional search. The position is being advertised on multiple professional web sites, through newspaper ads on a local and national level and through direct mailings throughout the state and region. (See district web site for a copy of the brochure that is being sent out). We anticipate having a Principal appointed on or before the School Board's May meeting. A search for an assistant principal will also be conducted.

I feel confident that we will have a strong pool of candidates from which to choose.

### Parent Academy addresses essential technology questions

On January 11, an open forum for parents was conducted as part of the Superintendent's Parents Academy. A rich discussion took place about how BRS students use technology, social media, and the policies that affect current technology trends.



The essential questions that were asked of the group were:

- Social Networks and Your Child: *How much experience should students have with Social Networks in school?*
- Digital Media: Sharing School News and Students work: *What should the school be able to share on the Internet and through other media about children in school?*
- Mobile Technology: *Potential Impact on Student Learning both in and out of school*
- *Should students be able to bring personal mobile devices to school for educational purposes? If so, who would be responsible for the device, content, and connectivity?*
- Digital Communication: *How can we improve digital communication between school and home?*

The discussion that ensued provided valuable feedback to be considered as the district crafts technology policies and the district's new 3-year technology plan.

Here is an excerpt from an email we received commenting on the recent **Parent Academy**:

*"What an incisive and important presentation and discussion you led last night. The fact that Beecher has initiated such a conversation speaks volumes about the school and the value it places on the forward-looking work of the tech/media staff. And most important – it is the students who will benefit from an administration and teachers who have the courage and vision to create a school policy that truly equips students with 21st century skills."*

Jonathan Furst - Arts and Media, Chair  
Amity Regional High School

### Next Academy - mark your calendar

Superintendent's Parent Academy: *April 12, 6:30 PM*  
Topic: **Readers/Writers Workshop: Creating a Generation of Lifelong Readers, Writers, Learners, Thinkers**



**Important budget presentation. Your attendance encouraged.**

I will be presenting the proposed school board budget for the 2012 - 2013 school year on Tuesday, January 31st, at 6 PM in Town Hall. That presentation to the *Boards of Selectmen and Finance* formally puts the funding request in their hands. The budget calls for a 3.8% increase over our current year. Any reduction of the proposed budget may result in elimination of staff positions. Stay informed. Parent representation at this meeting is encouraged.

My best wishes to all,

*Gaston F. Stella*