



Dr. Stella

PARENT UPDATE FROM DR. STELLA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

January 9, 2013

www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us Woodbridge School District

40 Beecher Road (south) - Woodbridge, CT 06525 - 203-387-6631

Happy New Year to all of our Beecher Road School families! It was a pleasure to welcome your children back to school last week. The administrators and key staff members, along with 20 members of BRS's safety patrol and School Community Officer Vincent Lynch, were at both the North and South entrances to greet our students. What a joy it was to see so many smiling faces – definite signs that the members of our school community are happy to be together again. During the past several days, school administrators and I have had the opportunity to visit classes and programs throughout the school. We've seen lots of stand-up teaching and hands-on learning taking place in a calm and nurturing environment.



SPECIAL FOCUS ISSUE OF PARENT UPDATE: SAFETY AND SECURITY



One of our key goals is to establish a calm, nurturing, orderly and safe learning environment for the students at BRS. As you know, the tragic events in Newtown have caused school systems across the country to step back and review measures that are necessary to keep everyone safe and secure at school. Over the past two weeks, in consultation with the Woodbridge Police Department and the state, we have done exactly that. Simultaneously, we began the process of on-going communication with parents on this issue (See Superintendent's letters of December 16, 2012 and December 20, 2012 on the district's web site under Superintendent's Messages.) Let me provide you with a brief update on safety and security. Here are some of the questions that have been asked of us.

Is there an existing school safety management plan? Who developed the plan and how is it being implemented?

Yes. There is a school safety manual that has been developed over the past years by the *District Safety Committee* in consultation with administration and the Woodbridge Police and Fire Departments. The manual contains protocols with specific plans to deal with emergencies such as fire drills, school evacuation, shelter-in-place, lock downs and lost child situations. There are regularly scheduled practice drills throughout the year based on these plans.

What measures were instituted to improve security at BRS after the Newtown tragedy and what future steps are planned?

Since December 14, the following additional measures have been instituted:

1. A Community Police Officer has been assigned on a full time basis to BRS.
2. All safety plans and protocols have been reviewed and updated as needed.
3. A new system for entrance into the school has been initiated; the card/swipe system for parents and participants in the recreation program has been suspended.
4. Doors have been secured throughout the building during the school day and during the hours of *Extended Day*. When doors are open for morning ingress of students and afternoon egress, comprehensive oversight is provided by administrators, staff and the school's community police officer.
5. Direct radio connections are being established with the Woodbridge Police Department.
6. Perimeter checks are made throughout the day.
7. Other steps have been taken that are confidential but designed to enhance security.
8. School administrators and counselors circulate throughout the day to support students and staff in any way that is necessary.
9. On-going communications on the topic of safety and security have been established with the BRS community.

Future Steps

The District Safety Committee, in col-

laboration with the Woodbridge Police and Fire Departments, the School Board and the Recreation Department look for ways:

- to enhance the security and safety of BRS while at same time maintaining BRS as a community school with a warm and nurturing atmosphere
- to enhance surveillance of facilities and grounds
- to use modern technology to improve communications
- to collaborate with and tap the resources of state and national agencies to enhance security
- to maintain communication with key school community constituents

The District Safety Committee will work with the superintendent to present additional plans and/or suggestions for improvement of school security to the Board of Education.

Please be aware of the following:

There is a District Safety Committee that is chaired by Principal Gina Prisco. The committee includes representatives from the administration, faculty, staff, school board, PTO and police department. The committee meets at least twice a month and many times on a weekly basis. The committee has developed safety plans and procedures, which I have reviewed and approved. Key areas include fire drills, shelter-in-place, lock downs, lost child, intruder and evacuation procedures. In addition, the committee assists the administration in facilitating monthly drills.

We have excellent communication with the police and fire departments as well as key town departments on matters of school security and safety.

The Board of Education, administrators, faculty, and staff care deeply about our children. Their safety has always been and will continue to be our highest priority.

Thank you for the support you have given us in helping to create the safe, caring, and supportive environment that exists at BRS. The paralyzing events in Newtown have created a new reality. After we have a chance to learn the full extent of what happened, we will come together to reexamine our existing practices, plans and policies and make any needed changes.

How do we promote a calm, nurturing environment that supports a positive and friendly learning environment?

- Actively engaged counseling staff including 2 psychologists and a school counselor
- A safe school climate coordinator and committee that focuses on promoting a positive safe school environment (Safe School Climate Plan and a Behavior Support Plan. See district web site)
- Well established rules and routines for classrooms, hallways and cafeteria
- Two new playgrounds
- Classroom and student focused initiatives such as classroom Yoga, grades K-3, early intervention programs for social/emotional development, grades K-6
- A Responsive Classroom philosophy that permeates the building (See main tenets of this philosophy on back of student hand book)

Full-time Community Police Officer assigned to BRS

As you may know, Officer Vincent Lynch has been the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Instructor at BRS for the past three years. In that capacity, he comes into 6th grade classes and presents a curriculum that emphasizes making good choices in life. The Woodridge Police Department has assigned Officer Lynch to the position of full-time Community Officer at BRS. This action comes with the cooperation of Town officials - First Selectman Edward Sheehy, Police Chief Gene Marcucci, the Woodbridge Board of Education and me. The appointment of Officer Lynch went into effect immediately following the incidents at Sandy Hook Elementary School last month.



Woodbridge Police Officer Vincent Lynch is now assigned to BRS as a full-time Community Officer

A member of the Woodbridge Police Department for 12 years, Officer Lynch has been our trained and certified DARE instructor at Beecher Road School. What became apparent over his years here is that Officer Lynch engaged the whole school community, including students, staff, administrators and parents. His contagious smile, love for the children, and expertise in community building, bring great value to BRS.

A veteran of the first Gulf War, Officer Lynch served as a paratrooper in the US Army. Hamden native, and father of 9-year-old twins, Officer Lynch loves sports and coaches student baseball and basketball teams.

When asked about his new assignment as full-time community officer at the school, he had this to say: "It's a great experience for me to work with the children, staff, and parents of BRS. I really like interacting with and helping children on a daily basis."

Be sure to introduce yourself to Officer Lynch when you next see him, and thank him for taking such good care of our children.

BRS Team attends Connecticut School Security Symposium

In our effort to gain new insights into looking for ways to provide a safe, nurturing learning environment for our children, a representative team from BRS attended the all day *Connecticut School Security Symposium* on January 7. The symposium was sponsored by the *Connecticut Association of School Superintendents* and the *Connecticut Association of Boards of Education*. National speakers presented on the essential components of emergency management planning and preparedness. There was also a presentation on *Building Design Strategies for Securing School Buildings*. We gained many insights and walked away with a myriad of useful resources, all of which will be brought back to the District Safety Committee. Team members included Sheila McCreven (Board of Education), Gina Prisco (Principal & Chair of Safety Committee), Peter Halsey, Tim Rourke (Teacher representatives), Nada McGovern (PTO representative from the safety committee) and me.

New procedures for parents and visitors

Safety and security are a concern of the school community. In order to ensure the integrity of the learning environment, promote successful learning experiences for children, and provide a safe and orderly school environment, it is necessary to identify procedures that provide guidance and direction for appropriate access to the school facility.

To that end, every person entering the school building or present on school grounds during the school day is required to report their visit using the following protocols:

1. Press buzzer at entrance, state your name, specify purpose and destination for visit.
2. Report directly to the North office, sign-in and obtain a visitor's pass. Upon completion of the visit, sign-out.
3. Be prepared to show identification.

Other guidelines:

- Notify your child's teacher in writing of any change in dismissal procedures.
- Come into the building and report to the Main Office and Nurse when your child is ill, or to pick up and drop-off your child during school hours.
- Bring forgotten items to the Main Office.
- Bring medications, as required by policy, directly to the Nurse after signing in at the Main Office.

**Superintendent's
Parents Academy**
**Supporting a Safe, Calm
and Nurturing School
Environment**



Part 1 of a 2-part series
Jan. 29, 6:30 - 8:00 pm in the *Rotunda*

- **School safety and Security**
- **Rules, Routines and Procedures**

Send any questions concerning safety and security at BRS that you would like addressed to the following email address: mdgennaro@woodbridgeps.org. In the subject area, write "safety question".