



PARENT UPDATE FROM DR. STELLA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

October 16, 2014

woodbridge.k12.ct.us Woodbridge School District
40 Beecher Road (south) - Woodbridge, CT 06525 - 203-387-6631

Dear Beecher Road School Families,

We are part of a town that supports education and community involvement.

I was reminded of this last weekend as our Beecher Road School families participated in the 33rd annual Woodbridge 5K Road Race – rain or shine. To see children, young adults, parents, grandparents and town residents splash their way to the finish line with such enthusiasm was uplifting.

Then Sunday's Massaro Farm Family Fun Day arrived, with beautiful blue skies, and our families were present in abundance at what has become another annual town event. Children and adults painted faces and pumpkins, made scarecrows and learned about nature in an organic farm setting.



BRS students show off scarecrows at Massaro Farm's Family Fun Day

And, we recently learned about the honors earned by **Amity High School**. NEWSWEEK named the high school #1 in Connecticut for all the right reasons and the US Department of Education gave AHS the highly acclaimed status **BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL 2014**.

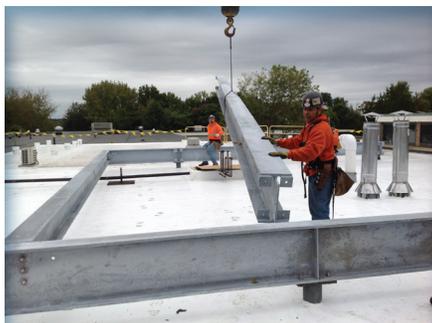


We are a town proud of our heritage of investment in education and community.



Gaston F. Stella

See the construction progress online



Laying in steel I-beams on the roof during a "no-school" day in September

We have devoted many Update columns to the major upgrade to BRS. Therefore, I'll keep it simple. I am happy to report that the construction plans are moving along on schedule with noticeable daily progress.

I encourage you to take the time to visit the district website for some amazing construction photos and videos. The remarkable videos were made by *First Grade Teaching Assistant Vicky Burford*. She has captured the process in time-lapse fashion. Marvel at them all at: woodbridge.k12.ct.us/construction

THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT

This is really important
This is really important

Honeywell

Instant Alert® for Schools

BRS uses the *Honeywell Instant Alert* system to notify parents about school closings, schedule changes, emergencies and other important information. The information is sent out electronically to your email, home, work or cell phones. However, you must sign up for this free service and create an account. Even if you are enrolled, we urge you to update your emergency contact information in *Instant Alert*. To review your current information or to sign up for the first time this is what to do:

1. Open the school district website home page at: woodbridge.k12.ct.us
2. Click on the PARENTS tab along the top and select **PARENT INFORMATION** in the drop-down menu.
3. Once you are there, click on the blue rectangle that says **INSTANT ALERT**.
4. On the *Instant Alert* page click the **DOWNLOAD INSTRUCTIONS** link at the bottom of the page.
5. Follow those instructions for registering or updating your information.

This is how we contact you quickly as situations arise. But you must take the time to make sure your information is accurate and you are in the system. That's your job.

If you need assistance accessing the system or entering your information we are here to help. Call the BRS office at 203-389-2195.

During the winter months, there is always the possibility of a power failure due to fallen trees, storms, malfunctions, etc. If power is not restored within 90 minutes, we are required to evacuate the building. With *Instant Alert*, you'll know right away and can plan accordingly.



This Saturday
10/18

Get a head start on Thanksgiving

Just a reminder: There is **no school** for students on the day before Thanksgiving, November 26. Starting last school year, we instituted a professional development day for teachers on that day.



Mathematics program goal: move every student further, no matter where they are on the achievement continuum

At BRS, student achievement in mathematics has been a source of pride for many years. Our students consistently score in the top levels in the state. With so many students achieving at the *advanced levels*, our challenge is to bring them even further.

During the past few years a great deal of work has been done with reading and writing. As your superintendent I feel it's time to focus on mathematics, a core subject area critical for later success in life. With a major emphasis on math this year, the administrative team, the faculty and the School Board have rallied behind this goal.

This focus on mathematics is or will be supported in the following ways:

- Lead administrator to oversee and support the school wide mathematics initiative.
- Two BRS mathematics specialists provide professional in-classroom support as well as direct services to children.
- Mathematics consultant Emily Freel, from ACES, our regional education support center, provides additional professional support throughout the year.
- Comprehensive summer curriculum work has been done to support instruction in the classroom.

THIS IS A YEAR
OF CRITICAL
SELF-STUDY IN
MATHEMATICS

- *Investigations*, supplementary anchor materials for grades 1 – 5, both on-line and hard copy, and new mathematics support material for sixth grade have been purchased.
- Additional work on developing relevant, comprehensive assessments.
- Ongoing participation in a statewide mathematics consortium.
- Collaboration with the *Amity School District* to align the mathematics program at BRS with the middle school program.
- We will undergo a year of self-study related to the current mathematics program. The self-study will be critical to preparing a long-term strategic plan for improving student performance in mathematics.

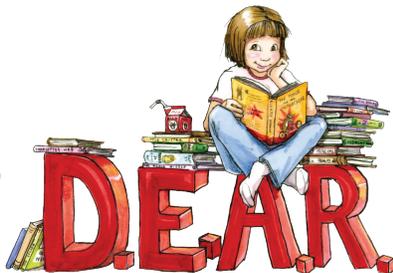
At the end of this school year, a team of approximately 10-15 educators from the *Tri-State Consortium*—a group of high performing districts in Connecticut, New Jersey and New York—will conduct a three-day visit serving as critical partners to help analyze our self-study. The visiting team will produce a document of commendations and recommendations that will guide the development of a new strategic plan. We underwent a similar consultation with language arts in 2010 with great results.

Reading event captivates students and adults

Recently, on a warm fall day, we held a celebration of reading on our beautiful outside campus. The whole school dropped everything, and went outside for a sustained silent reading event.

The school's focus on literacy started before school let out last summer. A team of teachers had planned a summer reading program focused on encouraging students to read 10 or more books over the summer break. *Give us Ten* was the rallying cry. This initiative created much enthusiasm that carried over into the school year. The teachers channeled the enthusiasm and suggestions of the children into an event that involved the whole school in celebrating a love for reading. Many children dressed in their pajamas, brought stuffed animals and sat on blankets, while others sat on benches, rock surfaces or the grass. Children and adults brought their books and engaged in reading. There was magic in the air.

Students who read over the summer were honored during a literacy award ceremony held in September. The *DEAR - drop everything and read-* activity was the culmination of the months-long literacy focus.



On behalf of the teaching and administrative staff, I can say with certainty that it's our goal to create a generation of life-long readers, writers, thinkers and learners. A big *thank you* to our teachers and administrators for promoting such a worthwhile initiative.

COATS & Clothing Drive

Collecting good, wearable winter coats and clothing in all sizes is part of *service to others*. In cooperation with the *Woodbridge Rotary Club*, now through November 12, we are participating in this effort to provide local for families in need. You can bring coats and clothing to school and drop them off in boxes located at both the north and south entrances.



A pick-me-up at the south entrance

As you may know, a vending machine was purchased by the school district. The purpose of the vending machine is to increase cafeteria revenues through the promotion of healthy snacks as well as to provide a service to the wider BRS Community. The vending machine is now at the south entrance of the school. The hours of operation are all day on Saturday and Sunday, while *Recreation Department* programs are active. During the week the vending machine will be in operation from 8:45 AM to 3:00 PM, and then again from 3:45 PM to 8:00 AM. The vending machine will not be in service when the children are coming to or from their buses. The machine will take cash or assigned lunch pin numbers. All snacks and beverages sold follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards.

