



PARENT UPDATE FROM DR. STELLA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

November 17, 2014

woodbridge.k12.ct.us Woodbridge School District
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Dear Beecher Families:

The academic development of our students is enhanced when it takes place in a positive, nurturing school environment. With that goal in mind, the Student Council in collaboration with the school's Safe Climate Committee will focus on a theme each month designed to promote a positive school climate at BRS. For the month of November, the Student Council is engaging in a good morning campaign. Student Council representatives have visited classes throughout the school to encourage children to greet each other and adults with a "good morning" each day. This simple gesture of respect is designed to build community and develop character. Please encourage your child/children to be active participants in this campaign.



Beecher Road School is more than a building of interconnecting structures. It is a living community with active involvement in the larger community of the Town of Woodbridge and beyond. Here are some examples of community building that have taken place over the past few weeks:

Halloween Hoot: This annual PTO-sponsored event attracted a record number of people and brought them together. In addition to many parent volunteers, there were a large number of volunteers from our staff. Town and regional businesses were generous with their donations of food. The Woodbridge Police Department provided three police officers to help control traffic. Fire Marshal Joseph Cappucci and our volunteer fire department worked hand-in hand with the PTO and administration to keep everyone safe.



PTO Halloween Hoot with volunteer BRS staff and parents



Trunk or Treaters at WFD on Halloween night

Trunk or Treat: On October 31st the Woodbridge Fire Department did a great community service by sponsoring a Trunk or Treat Halloween Event. Over 2500 people attended, including a large number of families from BRS. Over \$1500 worth of candy was given out to children. Hundreds and hundreds of hot dogs, hamburgers, dishes of macaroni and cheese, and bowls of clam chowder were given out. This community event brought everyone together in an atmosphere of joy and celebration. Kudos to Chief Sean Roland and team.



Woodbridge firehouse turned into haven for "trunk or treaters"

Visitors from Southern University: BRS has had a 5-year partnership with the Exercise Science Department at SCSU. Last week, 25 students from that department spent the day at BRS under the supervision of Mr. Taddei, BRS physical education teacher, and Dr. Jim Rauschenbach, supervising professor from Southern. The college students conducted exercises for our children at a series of 12 fitness stations. As part of the project, children used equipment made by the visiting students. The children particularly enjoyed working with suspension training equipment. That equipment included ropes of various length designed to exercise different parts of the body using one's own body weight. Everyone learned from the day's experience – students from SCSU, our students, Mr. Taddei and Dr. Rauschenbach. The equipment made by SCSU students was given to the school for use throughout the year. What a worthwhile experience!



SCSU students work with Mr. Taddei, BRS students



Dr. Miller demonstrates states of matter to kindergarteners

Parents Add to the Rich Learning Experiences at BRS: Last week I walked into a kindergarten classroom. There was Professor Scott Miller, the head of the Chemistry Department at Yale, giving a lesson to the kindergarten class on the various forms of matter. The children, including Dr. Miller's daughter, were enthusiastically making predictions.

Children thrive when they are part of a caring community. Thank you for the support that you give to our school and Woodbridge community events.

Stella F. Stella



BRS Celebrates Veterans Day with school wide programs and activities

BRS celebrated Veterans Day with a day of learning that focused on the importance of this holiday. The day began with entire student body gathered outside the main entrance to recite the *Pledge of Allegiance*, followed by the *Star Spangled Banner* performed by the BRS band. In my remarks, I charged the students with the task of learning something new and special about Veterans Day from the menu of activities that were scheduled throughout the day. I asked the children to discuss those new learnings at the supper table with their families that evening. (Parents: Did they?)

First Selectman Ellen Scalletar and Keynote speaker Retired Army Captain Barry Joseph joined us for the opening ceremony. Over a dozen veterans were in attendance; many visited classrooms afterwards to speak with the children. Mrs. Prisco introduced and publicly thanked the veterans who were present, including staff members and family members or neighbors of students. The marching band played another patriotic song, followed by *Taps*.



Keynote speaker Retired Army Captain Barry Joseph spoke to students, staff and veterans at the school's Veterans Day program

Taking stock on Thanksgiving

As we prepare to spend time with loved ones, let me extend warm Thanksgiving wishes to all BRS families and thank you for your support in our children's education. Happy Thanksgiving!

Gaston F. Stella

REMINDER: NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS ON NOV. 26, THE DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING.

School wide events included:

-  Principal Prisco continued with an annual tradition that she started when she first arrived by bringing cards and letters from the children of BRS to the Veterans' Hospital in West Haven.
-  Staff and students continued the annual tradition of adding to a school display highlighting the names and backgrounds of veterans who were family members of students and staff. The names of faculty members who were veterans were also added. The display already has over 1,000 names! Additional names will be added over the next several weeks. Please, send Mrs. Prisco names from your family. We want you represented.

Theme based projects across the various grade levels included:

-  Kindergarten students, through literature and a multimedia presentation, learned how veterans have served our country.
-  Grade One students wrote acrostic poems, and read *Scholastic News* to understand how we can honor the men and women who have served this country.
-  Second grade students wrote to veterans connected to their classroom community.
-  Third grade students, through conversation and literature, gained a greater awareness of what it means to be a veteran.
-  Fourth grade classes discussed the difference between *Veterans Day* and *Memorial Day*. They also created cards and wrote letters to show appreciation to veterans.
-  Grade Five classes read the book, *America's White Table*, as a community, and developed written responses focused on the book's theme.
-  Grade Six students have been interviewing veterans; they shared the interviews with their classmates.
-  MAG students used their whole class meeting time to discuss the meaning of Veterans Day.

Safety First

When dropping children off by car, always have them exit on the passenger side. Having children exit on the driver's side puts them at risk, even in the traffic circle. The risk can be that a car may accidentally go in reverse, as has happened on occasion, or move forward while the children are passing in front of the car. Let's protect our children. Let them exit on the passenger side.

A message about Ebola from the health department

There are no confirmed cases of Ebola in Connecticut. The outbreak in West Africa is currently limited to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The State of Connecticut has launched a website to keep residents informed regarding the Ebola virus www.ct.gov/ebola. Last week I met with the Woodbridge department heads that would be directly involved with any CT residents with a potential risk for Ebola and I feel confident that we will be informed and protected if the need arises. State and local response and communication plans have been designed to prevent the spread of the disease and are modified whenever new information becomes available.

The health and safety of our school community is a top priority and we will keep you informed of any changes.

*Leslie Balch, Health Director
Quinnipiac Valley Health District*

BRS iPad Initiative highlighted at regional technology conference

Last month teachers Michelle Shepard and James Crawford presented the model for using iPads in classrooms at BRS at the largest educational technology conference* in Connecticut. The well-attended two part workshop was called *Integrating the iPad into the Elementary Writing Workshop*. This annual conference attracts educators from public and private schools around Connecticut and neighboring states.

Supported by the library/technology team of Rick Wood, Larry Hurwitz, and Lori Patrick, the members of this integrated team of teachers have worked with the administrative staff to lead the 4-year pilot of iPads at BRS.

In its fourth year, our elementary iPad project has been a key factor in promoting differentiation of instruction at BRS. The team works from the perspective that what is most important is how teachers use the iPad as an instructional tool and how students use it to learn and express themselves.

The *Writing Workshop* is one of the areas of the curriculum where integrating the iPad has led to significant advances in the overall quality of student work. Students use the iPad to seamlessly move from one part of the writing process to another. Original art, voice recordings, and video promote creativity while at the same time support individual learning needs and different learning styles.

* *Connecticut Educators Computer Association and Connecticut Association of School Librarians*