



DR. STELLA'S PARENT UPDATE



Superintendent of Schools
Woodbridge School District

woodbridge.k12.ct.us

January 22, 2016

Dear Beecher Road Families,

As I told you last week, I will be retiring at the end of this school year. I am announcing my retirement now to assure that there will be ample time to conduct a comprehensive search for a new superintendent.

The Board of Education is in the process of selecting a search agency to find suitable candidates. The Board will provide oversight and be responsible for choosing the new superintendent.

Please remember: I am not retiring tomorrow. There are six months ahead, and there is a lot of work to do. Be assured that I will remain engaged.

One of our major district goals is that of supporting the social and emotional development of our children. There are many programs already in place to do that. We are in the process of developing an updated action plan for the next two years. The plan will provide new opportunities to assist our students to realize this goal.

Here are two action items from our plan that will take place before the end of the month:

- **BKindness Week: A Comprehensive Series of Events**
- **Bullying Workshops: Sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League**

As we begin 2016, we extend best wishes to all BRS families.

Gaeton F. Stella

kindness

As part of Beecher Road School's Safe School Action Plan and in addressing the District Goal related to Social-Emotional Issues, the week of January 25th to January 29th will be designated as BKindness Week at BRS. Activities and events during that week will include:

Anti-Defamation League Workshops

Becoming an Ally: Responding to Name-Calling and Bullying for Upper Middle School Students:

- **When:** January 25th
- **Who:** All 6th Grade Classes
- **What:** Each class will participate in a 2 hour workshop to increase awareness, develop a common vocabulary, develop responses and improve understanding.

Morning Announcements

- **When:** Daily announcement addressing each CARES skill, one per day, to be discussed at morning meetings.
- **What:** Monday: *Cooperation*; Tuesday: *Assertion*; Wednesday: *Responsibility*; Thursday: *Empathy*; Friday: *Self-control*.
- **Who:** Prepared and announced by Student Council Members.

Theme in Art Classes

- **When:** Beginning the week of January 25th
- **What:** Skin Tones, acceptance.
- **Who:** All grade levels during art classes. Art teachers and students will be making CARES posters and BKindness banners.

Health Classes- Poster Walk

- **When:** Week of January 25th posters will be hung in specific areas
- **What:** Anti-Bullying posters made by 6th grade students.
- **Who:** 6th grade docents will share poster messages with "traveling" health classes.

Read-a-Louds – Various Titles

- **When:** During OWL Pals schedule and health classes.
- **What:** Various books selected on *Respect, Anti-Bullying, Kindness*. Media Center will also pull appropriate books.
- **Who:** 6th grade OWL Pals and health students will read to K, 1, and 2. BOE and community members also read to classes.

What Else?

- Compliment sharing activity
- BKind bulletin board
- Musical activities to promote kindness

Weather and school schedules

Once again we are in the time of year when New England weather can be very unpredictable and severe.



The Bethany, Orange Woodbridge and Amity (BOWA) school districts will continue to participate in a regional school transportation collaborative. This arrangement allows elementary schools to dismiss at similar times and for the Orange and Bethany Middle Schools to open and dismiss at the same time in coordination with Amity High School.

When one BOWA school district closes, delays the opening of school, or dismisses early due to inclement weather, all BOWA school districts will also close, delay, or dismiss early. The BOWA superintendents try to make a decision to close or delay the opening of school by 5:30 AM, based upon what is expected to happen in the next two to eight hours.

(See "Winter Advisory" on district website under *News and Announcements*.)



Speed Bumps Coming to the North Traffic Circle

As part of the State of Connecticut grant awarded to the Town, funds have been allocated for the installation of four speed bumps in the north parking lot. Since asphalt plants are closed for the winter, we anticipate the speed bumps will be installed sometime in March.



Superintendent's Parents' Academy/PTO

A New 3-Year Technology Plan

- **Mobile Technology:** Impact on student learning both in and outside of school
- **Digital Responsibility:** Students connecting with the online world
- **Digital Media:** Sharing school news and student work
- **Digital Communications:** Connecting school and home

Facilitators: Superintendent & Tech Team
Date: January 28, 2016 – 6:30 - 8 PM

Innovation and creativity on display

Students work on projects that call for creativity and imagination as part of a PTO-Sponsored in-school field trip in cooperation with the Whitney Museum.



Weekly Student Newscasts: Just One Way To Grow and Lead



news broadcasts, there are other groups students can join to develop leadership skills, team work, and exercise creativity and empathy. Those include *Student Council*, *Environmental Stewards*, and *Safety Patrol*.

Peace Corps Volunteer Addresses BRS Students

Recently, BRS alumna, Alexandra Buda spoke to our sixth graders about her volunteer work in a health center in a small Ethiopian village as well as what her daily life in that village is like. The children especially enjoyed seeing her many photos and touching the artifacts she shared with them – all of which helped them to learn more about the people, customs and foods of Ethiopia. Alexandra encouraged the children to be open to all kinds of experiences in their lives, especially experiences that involve interactions with people from other cultures. Alexandra, on a 1-week holiday break, flew back to Ethiopia recently. She will keep in touch with us through her blog.



Former BRS Student Alexandra Buda

21st Century Safety & Security Surveillance



As you are aware the building project is near completion. As part of the building upgrade, security enhancements have

been addressed throughout the building. Video surveillance upgrades have been completed within the building as well as around the grounds. All upgrades are in accordance with our *Video Surveillance Policy 5131.111*, which can be found on the district web site.

We have been advised that WPD officers, including Officer Lynch, will wear body cameras.

School Budget To Be Presented Next Week

As part of the process, the Board of Education approved the 2016-17 school budget proposal in December. I will now present this budget to the Town Boards of Selectmen and Finance on Jan. 26, at 7PM, in the Town Hall. You and all citizens are encouraged to attend the meeting and hear what is planned for next school year.

A Summary Look inside the Proposed 2016-17 Budget

- 1. Staffing:** When compared to current year actual staffing levels, we have added one-half of an art teaching position and a part time maintenance worker. Currently, there are 1 ½ art teachers for nearly 800 students. The recent facilities upgrade has brought great energy efficiency to BRS. The school has 173,000 square feet of space that must be maintained. A part time maintenance worker will allow for that, while at the same time reducing the costs for outside maintenance contracts.
- 2. Facilities Support:** The budget supports the custodial and material needs necessary to maintain the facility.
- 3. Special Education Costs:** In the 2016-17 budget, mandated special education



costs have increased substantially. Tuition for outplaced students increased by 64% and special education transportation increased by 60%.

- 4. Mandates Included:** The proposed budget supports federal and state requirements that include:
 - multiple elements of an *accountability plan*
 - teacher and administrator evaluation plans
 - *Common Core State Standards*
 - *Technology Adaptive State Standardized Testing Program (SBAC)*
 - *All mandated Special Education services*
- 5. Class Size:** Continues to comply with Board of Education *Class Size Task Force Guidelines*
- 6. Transportation:** The budget meets mandatory *transportation requirements* and all related transportation contract obligations.

7. Contracts: All current *collective bargaining agreements* and employee contract wage adjustments are included in this budget.

8. Interns: The budget continues to support the use of interns as the major source of substitutes

9. Insurance: This budget *assumes* a 12% premium increase for health insurance.

Most Importantly: The Budget Supports Teaching and Learning District Priorities

- a school-wide focus on challenging every student through differentiated instruction and improved performance
 - continue a school-wide mathematics initiative
 - develop/ implement updated curricula
 - enhance the balanced literacy model
 - enhance art education
 - implement new science standards
 - support for STEM instruction in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics
 - continue a comprehensive embedded professional development program
 - support core curriculum areas, wellness and fitness, the arts, world language, emotional and social development, integrated technology
- The 2016-17 proposed budget calls for a 2.48% increase over this year's budget.