



PARENT UPDATE FROM DR. STELLA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

November 7, 2013

www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us Woodbridge School District
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Dear Beecher Road School Families,

Fall is my favorite season of the year. As I was driving along the roads of Woodbridge recently, I marveled at the canopies of trees filled with multi-colored leaves. Their presence gave both a warm welcome and a refreshing reminder of the beauty of nature. The falling autumn leaves also served as a reminder of the constant transitions in life.

At Beecher Road School, we take joy in our children as they transition from one grade to another. Our goals are to help children grow into happy, well-rounded human beings with a deep appreciation of the ever-changing world. At the same time, we seek to develop a generation of productive local, national and global citizens. As children transition from pre-K to 6th grade, the expectation is that they will evolve into independent thinkers and life-long learners. A love for the arts and the development of life-long habits of wellness are important elements of that journey. You are, and always will be, very important partners in this work.

Best wishes as always,

Dawn F. Stella



Wednesday, November 27th: Faculty Workshop. No school for children.

TOPICS IN THIS PARENT UPDATE

- Pertinent information concerning the facilities of BRS
- Major areas of focus for the school year
- Safety and security updates and information
- Important upcoming dates
- Other information of interest



BRS ranks at the top academically, near the bottom in energy efficiency. Plans to change that to be fully explained later this month.

BRS ranks among the top performing schools in the state and country academically; it ranks in the bottom 20% of schools nationally with regard to energy loss.

With Board of Education and Town support, a lot of money has been invested in technology over the years. The results show. BRS is at the cutting edge of schools in integrating the latest technology to accelerate learning and innovation. Yet, the building is aging. It has leaky roofs, windows and doors that are hard to open and close, uneven heating in different parts of the building that sometimes necessitates moving classes from one area to another. The A, B and C wings have original doors, windows and classroom casework – untouched in 40 - 50 years.

The equipment in the building is aging too. Many components are third generation parts and no longer manufactured. Air quality codes have changed substantially since 1960 through 1970, when a major part of the building was constructed. There is a need to be proactive in addressing air quality issues. With existing equipment, school maintenance staff is constantly responding to emergencies rather than engaging in preventive maintenance.

A comprehensive plan to address the school's facilities will be explained in detail at an informational meeting planned for Nov. 20, 7 PM, at the old Center School building cafeteria on Meetinghouse Lane.

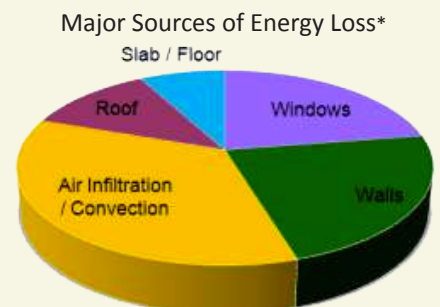
One piece of that plan came to the top of the list prematurely. Recently the Board of Education made an emergency request of the Town for funding to replace failing boilers. During the annual boiler inspection in August 2013, one of the two existing boilers that heats the entire school was deemed to be inoperable, leaving only one boiler to heat the school. Greg Kula, Facilities Director, reported that this boiler had a history of problems. He stated that: "Ratick Combustion, the firm that has serviced the two boilers for more than ten years, is unable to obtain repair parts, either through the original manufacturer or through any after-market supplier."

In October, the Woodbridge Board of Education approved a formal request to the Town for funding three high-efficiency natural gas boilers at BRS. The third boiler would be a replacement of the existing one that exclusively heats the pool. According to Town Finance Director Anthony

Genovese, replacement and installation of the three high efficiency gas boilers at the same time would result in future operational cost savings. Most importantly, installation of the new boilers will ensure continuous heat at Beecher Road School this winter and in the years to come.

At this week's meeting, the Boards of Selectmen and Finance unanimously approved funding for the three new boilers. It is anticipated that the boilers will be installed before the end of December.

The boilers are just one piece of what needs to be done at the school. Join us at the November 20 informational meeting to see what other important steps need to be taken to support an efficient and safe learning environment for our children at BRS.



* generic chart for illustrative purposes only

Halloween Hoot draws kids, families, staff and friends



Mrs. Prisco with Halloween Hooters!

This year's **Halloween Hoot** drew an overflow crowd. There were lots of creative, innovative and fun-filled activities for the children and their families, as well as plenty of delicious food, candy and other treats. Judging by what we saw, the many positive comments that were made by those in attendance, and the \$15,500+ raised, we can easily say that the affair was a tremendous success. Mrs. Prisco and I were deeply gratified by the number of parents, teachers, staff, and former BRS students who came in costume and served as volunteers.

We congratulate our PTO for such a successful event with special thanks going to Keri Matthews and Penny Zamkov who served as Co-Chairs for this year's *Hoot*. First Selectman Ellen Scalletar and State Representative Themis Klarides were in attendance, and had nothing but praise for the affair. It was a true community event.

Protect your child's safety. Exit on the passenger side.

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.**

Staff News

We extend best wishes and gratitude to Nathalie Tamagnan, who recently resigned, for her years of service as a TA. Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Ellen Stone who was recently hired as a TA to fill the vacant Pre-school/Special Education position. Ellen brings a comprehensive special education background to the position.

Are you set up to get emergency and storm information via Instant Alert?

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 and cell phones as desired. However, you must sign up for this free service and create an account.

Parents are urged to update their emergency contact information in *Instant Alert*. To review your current information or sign up for the first time, go to the *Instant Alert* link in the drop-down menu on the PARENT INFORMATION tab on the homepage of the district website.

During the winter months, there is always the possibility of a power failure due to fallen trees, storms, etc. If power is not restored within 90 minutes, we are required to evacuate the building. (Refer to Superintendent's Parent Update of August 28, 2013 and Principal's letter of November 8, 2013 for details of evacuation plan.)



BRS Marching Owls at Massaro Farm Family Day

BRS continues to excel in the use of technology

Beecher Road Teachers Present at Regional Conference to packed audiences

Six teachers from BRS presented *iPads Across the Elementary Grades* to two packed audiences at the CECA (Connecticut Educational Computer Association) 2013 Conference, the largest educational technology conference in Connecticut. The presenters highlighted three years of planning, testing, developing and piloting conducted at Beecher. They shared the rich classroom experiences of BRS students. This annual conference attracts educators from school districts and private schools from around Connecticut and neighboring states. The members of this team of teachers have worked with Dr. Stella and the administrative staff to lead this program at Beecher. Presenting at CECA were: Rick Wood, Stephanie Eleck, Michelle Shephard, James Crawford, Larry Hurwitz and Lori Patrick.



Town road race included hundreds of BRS children

Evaluation, curriculum, assessments major areas of focus for school administrators

The school year has gotten off to a great start. It is an unusually busy one for administrators, faculty and staff. New state mandates continue to focus our attention on three main areas: (1) new Board of Education approved Educator and Administrator Evaluation Plans (2) implementation of *Common Core Curriculum* in both Language Arts and Mathematics (3) transition to a new state test that assesses student achievement – the SBAC test.

The *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) were the work of the *National Governors Association* and the *Chief State School Officers Association*. It is not a federal government initiative. The CCSS provide fewer, but higher and clearer standards – comparable across states.

The *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium* (SBAC) is the next generation of tests required under *Common Core* for Connecticut. They are aligned to the Common Core Standards. SBAC is computer-adaptive (adjusts to student learning pathways) and must be taken online.

The State has given flexibility to districts to choose either: (1) continue with state CMT (Connecticut Mastery Test) this school year, but replace it in 2014-15 with SBAC, or, (2) replace the CMT this school year with SBAC testing.*

Along with 151 out of 168 Connecticut school districts, Woodbridge opted to start the new SBAC tests this year.

We anticipate having a series of Superintendent Parent Academy meetings to discuss these topics beginning in January 2014. More information will follow.

**The science portion of the CMT will continue in all public districts. At BRS, it is given in grade 5 only.*

Teachers and principal work on new evaluation system as one major focus of the district's intent to implement the new plan this year.

