



# PARENT UPDATE FROM DR. STELLA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

September 22, 2014

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

Dear Beecher Families:

**A**s the new school year launched, we were pleased to receive yet more good news about the academic achievement of our students. Although the reading, math and writing portions of the Connecticut Mastery Test are no longer administered, the science section is. As in the past, our fifth graders were assessed on their knowledge and application of science. Beecher fifth grade students were among the top scorers in Connecticut. In our DRG (District Reference Group - 22 towns that the state considers much like Woodbridge), we scored #2. Throughout the entire state and its 165 school districts, BRS students ranked #5.

This year our focus on mathematics curriculum and practices will culminate with an on-site visit from members of the Tri-State Consortium\* who will take a critical look at the math program and give their report of recommendations and commendations.

The academic environment continues to be strong and the physical environment continues to be enhanced as the multi-million dollar building upgrade plan moves forward. (Read more in this Parent Update.)

With this, the first day of fall, we all can look forward to this beautiful season in New England.

My best wishes to you all,

*Stella F. Stella*



Science instruction gets a major emphasis at Beecher. As a result, our students are among the very top achievers in Connecticut.

\* The Tri-State Consortium is an association of 44 high performing public school districts in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The Consortium assists its member districts in using quantitative and qualitative data to enhance student performance and to build a rigorous framework for planning, assessment and systemic change. Collaborating as colleagues and critical friends, Consortium members apply the standards of the Tri-State model to benchmark member districts' progress in advancing teaching and learning.

## Prevent the flu. Be proactive.

**W**ith the flu season and the news of a confirmed case of the virus EV-D68 in Connecticut, we are working at school to take precautions against getting the flu. The EV-D68 virus has caused severe respiratory illness in children in several states, sometimes resulting in hospitalization, especially among young children with asthma.

The precautions are familiar, but putting them into practice takes reminding by teachers and parents. They include:

- The proven, single most important way to prevent spreading germs is to *wash hands often with soap and water*.
- Cough and sneeze into the inside of your elbow, not into your hands or open air.
- Wash hands after using and discarding a tissue.
- Keep fingers out of nose, eyes and mouth.
- Use railings only when necessary.

At this time, we have instituted the following additional precautions:

- Health teachers are teaching the unit on germs and proper hand washing and coughing/sneezing techniques.
- Every night, the custodians are disinfecting frequently touched areas such as door handles and hand railings.
- A hand sanitizer is placed at the entrance of the cafeteria and the tech center. An important note: *if hands are dirty from outside time they need to be washed first*.
- The nurses are monitoring absence rates at the school and assessing students with respiratory symptoms.

We and our medical advisor, Dr. Martinello, and the *Quinnipiac Valley Health District* will work together to monitor this virus and make relevant information available to the school community. If you want to learn more about this virus, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

## iPads' role expands in school/home

**B**RS is taking new steps to prepare students for life in our digital age. In grades 5 and 6 they will use iPads in the classroom as part of their daily learning. The iPads will remain in school, but students will be able to continue work at home through the use of *Google Apps for Education (GAE)*. GAE is cloud-based software that provides writing and presentation tools along with document storage via the Internet. Students may continue their written work in GAE from home. Teachers may comment on work in progress at any time. Learning 24/7 takes on a whole new meaning.



Through a rigorous evaluation, the use of iPads and GAE has been piloted, studied, tested and evaluated by teachers for the past three years. This year all students at BRS will have experiences with iPads and the rich collection of selected apps and resources.

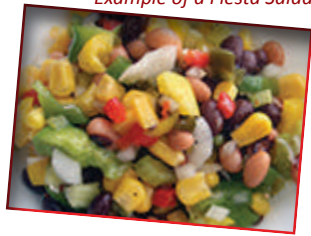
In order to manage all this technology in nearly two hundred *fifth and sixth grade* iPads, we have adopted a *Mobile Device Management System (MDM)*. To implement this iPad aspect of instructional technology we need your permission for two things:

1. We need you to respond to an email giving consent for Apple to create an Apple ID for your child. This ID will give children access to the iBooks and apps used on the iPad and enable them to have up-to-date resources. Updates can be done by the tech center and sent to *all* iPads with ID's at one time, rather than working with one device at a time.
2. We will also ask you to give the school permission to manage the *Google Apps for Education* for your child.

Information and details regarding both of these items will be available in letters sent home and online.

### ***New additions to cafeteria offerings***

Looking to create more healthy choices for students, the cafeteria offerings added during the last year include new entrée items such as baked potato with a meal, cherry blossom chicken, pulled pork and fiesta salad made with legumes and other ingredients. At the start of this year we added a frozen yogurt machine. Students can order this tasty treat from the cafeteria servers in a 3-oz. cup. We also have started a strawberry and banana yogurt parfait with rolled oats and raisins.



*Example of a Fiesta Salad*

During the course of this year, we will be reviewing our current food policies and practices. The National Dietary Guidelines will be one of the benchmarks used in the process.

### ***New vending machine offerings will comply with national and state school food laws***

During Open House nights, you may have noticed a vending machine in the cafeteria. The machine, that arrived just before school started, was placed there temporarily. In that location it had to be randomly stocked and calibrated, and interface with the food services computer network via hardware. That could only be done at that time in the cafeteria. Its intended permanent location was the south entrance lobby. Computer networking has now been extended to the south lobby and to the machine in its new location.

The vending machine will be used to provide a service, as had been done in past years, to the larger community. It will be in use during after school and evening hours as well as on weekends. The vending machine was purchased as a capital budget item that was approved by the Board of Education and Town Boards as a means of providing additional revenues for the cafeteria program.

The vending machine is currently empty. Federal and state regulations govern the sale of competitive foods and beverages at school. The Connecticut General Statutes apply to all public schools. What this all means is the vending machine items will meet the same guidelines as the items that we serve in the lunch program. They will all be selected from the comprehensive *Healthy Snack and Beverage* list that has been created by the State of Connecticut.

### **Upcoming Dates:**

**Rosh Hashanah – Thursday, September 25th**  
**Halloween Hoot – Saturday, October 18th**



*First Selectman Scalettar, Principal Prisco and Superintendent Stella welcome students to the first day of school.*

### **CONSTRUCTION GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN**

This is a busy week as our construction plans move ahead. Before moving ahead, however, I am happy to report that A-wing updates, housing the first grades, one second grade, and a music and art room went very well over the past two weeks. Excluding rooms A7 and A8 (art and music), all regular classrooms in A-Wing have had their entire outside window wall replaced, new ventilators installed, casework, millwork and painting completed. It was pretty amazing to see the construction crews remove and replace an entire exterior classroom window wall and install a new ventilator in one 24-hour period. Next day, they moved on to the next room. It went according to plan!



*Tear down the old window wall.*

*Put in the new window wall.*



*Put in the new ventilator.*

Work in rooms A7 and A8 is scheduled to be completed within the next two to three weeks. New lighting, already installed throughout the building with the exceptions of A, B and C wings and the pool, will be completed during the school year. (More information will follow.)

This week crews have moved to C-wing, home of the third graders. The process perfected in A-wing will now be applied to C-wing rooms. New window walls, new ventilators and casework are on their way to those rooms. Once again, we expect that no classroom will be disrupted for more than one day.

Other crews are replacing a section of the roof on the north building in the area over and adjacent to the boiler room.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The building is closed on Thursday, September 25, for Rosh Hashanah. During that day a construction crane will be loading large steel beams onto the roof as part of the new air-conditioning system. We expect the crane and the beams to be out of the way when staff and students return on Friday.

Through the cooperation of the construction company, the Town, the parents and the school, I am pleased with the progress of the update at BRS.