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connecting school and community



The Education Report of the Woodbridge School District

summer 2015 vol 9

woodbridge.k12.ct.us



### Exemplary School District – Committed Community

To the Citizens of Woodbridge

As I approach my eleventh year as Superintendent of the Woodbridge School District, my appreciation for the citizens and town leaders continues to grow because of their strong support for education on every level.



There are many indicators of that support, e.g. major facilities upgrades and the annual support of district budgets. There is also the close ongoing collaboration between Town and School District that has brought many benefits to both the school community and the taxpayers. Areas of collaboration include – STEAP\* grant from the state to cover the cost of badly needed paving and sidewalk work at Beecher Road School,\*\* installation of solar panels that will provide clean energy and cost savings to taxpayers. With support for education from both Town and school community, it is no wonder that many new families continue to come to Woodbridge. BRS is a Connecticut School of Excellence. At Beecher, we seek to prepare children for their future not our past. The focus is on academic excellence, the social and emotional development of students, as well as on instilling lifelong habits of wellness. There is a strong emphasis on preparing students as good local, national and global citizens.

THE BRIDGE highlights some of the existing learning opportunities, updates on facilities, budget and stories of success that make your exemplary school district one that stands out in the state, region and country. Without your support, none of this is possible. As we look back on another successful year, we anticipate your continued support in the future. ♣

Gaeton F. Stella  
Gaeton F. Stella  
Superintendent of Schools

\* Small Town Economic Assistance Program

\*\* Throughout this report Beecher Road School is often referred to as "Beecher" or abbreviated BRS.

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# THE DIGITAL AGE

## From Kindly Resident's Mainframe: 36 Years of Technology Advancement

**T**hirty-six years ago when Rick Wood started teaching sixth grade at Beecher Road School, he found something familiar in the math center that was actively engaging students in problem solving. It was a teletype terminal

connected to a mini-mainframe computer housed in the home basement of a Woodbridge resident. This was the school's computer.

That year students created programs to conduct mock elections at Beecher,

to print banners, to solve math problems and to do other things, now lost to time.



*Vintage "mini" mainframe computer sits in a basement.*

As *Apple II* computers became available in the 1980s, students began using them for a number of skill reinforcement activities in their own classrooms. They also continued to write programs to solve problems. Teachers began to incorporate computers into regular instruction. The school office developed lists of students, addresses, and phone numbers using a simple database designed in-house.

A major leap forward came in 1987 after a year of pilot tests using computers with whole classes of students. The first computer lab was created and Mr. Wood became full time *Computer and Technology Coordinator*. Classes of students began to use the computer lab regularly for word processing and problem solving. In 1990, Beecher was the first elementary school in Connecticut to have a network where students could sit at any computer in the building and access their own menus and files. By

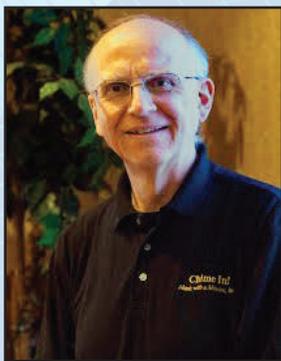
1997, the Internet was accessible throughout the school.



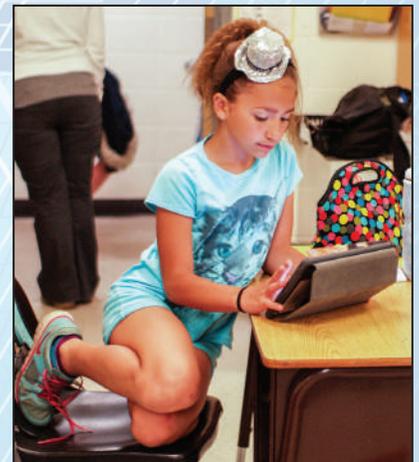
*In the 1980s and '90s, students used Apple II stand-alone computers to reinforce skills.*

Even with these early innovations, it has been during the past ten years that technology has become fully accessible and fully integrated, bringing access to information, creative tools and instant communication into the hands of teachers and students throughout the their school experience. Integrating SmartBoards into all classrooms, placing iPads in the hands of each student throughout the school day and the addition of Google Apps and

Google Classroom for older students provide an extension of learning well beyond the walls and hours of the school. Beecher has a powerful model for technology implementation led by an experienced Library Technology Team working in concert with the District Administrative Team. Technology has indeed become as ubiquitous as the pencil, a worthy goal set forth more than 25 years ago. ♣



*Rick Wood, Beecher's first computer and technology coordinator, was instrumental in bringing BRS students into the digital age. He retired at the end of this past school year after 36 years of service to Woodbridge.*



*Today, students are connected to the world and their teachers by personal digital devices.*

### FBI Ranks Beecher #1 in America for Internet Safety

**B**eing a savvy and safe Internet surfer is not only wise, it's essential in our ever-evolving technological world. Developing *Safe Online Surfers (SOS)* is a challenge the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) put forth to America's schools. With the cooperation of the administration, teachers, technology team and school



resource officer Vincent Lynch WPD, sixth grade classes got involved with the FBI's online Internet safety competition. (See [sos.fbi.gov](http://sos.fbi.gov)) 6,000 students from 562 schools in 49 states participated in the online contest – including 103 BRS sixth graders. After scoring the events, the FBI notified BRS that BRS had scored #1 in America!

FBI agents presented the school with a plaque celebrating the accomplishment. ♣



## It's Online at Woodbridge.k12.ct.us



Our district and school website is a critical means of communication with parents, the community and the world. The new website, launched a year ago, captures the essence of the Woodbridge School District. We have used this time to redesign, update and refresh content. The new site takes advantage of a revised Board of Education policy regarding student pictures and work, permitting a careful and considered use of these on the website.

Two goals of the website are to use pictures of our students to show “BRS in action” as well as improve ease of communication and the flow of information. James Crawford, a member of the BRS library and technology team, has worked with Superintendent Stella and the administrative team over the last year to achieve these goals. The new site integrates photographs and video to bring content to life.

### Website Wins Kudos From International Hosting Company

The other focus over the last year has been on district level information and communication. The administrative team has embraced the transition to digital communications with an increasing use of the email notification system, *eNotify*, that allows the district to send important information directly to parents’ email inboxes. This method of *pushing* information to parents versus asking parents to go to a website to find information fulfills the requests of

many respondents to last year’s website survey. Developing the website is a continual process. New information, news and features will be added over the coming months. The new website design and features haven’t gone unnoticed either. Along with compliments from community members, portions of the district website were recently highlighted as examples of *best practice* by our hosting company, *Finalsite*, at its annual national conference. *Finalsite* represents public and private schools in every major city in the US and in 60 countries on 6 continents. Our district website is on the leading edge, not only locally but globally as well. ♣

**On the web:** Hundreds of additional pieces of information are on the Woodbridge School District website. Take a look at [woodbridge.k12.ct.us](http://woodbridge.k12.ct.us)

### Welcome Analisa Sherman and Clare Kennedy – New Administrators at BRS

Starting this summer, BRS staff and students have a new assistant principal and a new director of special services. Assistant Principal Nancy White retired after 32 years of service to the children of BRS. To replace Ms. White the Woodbridge Board of Education undertook an extensive interview process and unanimously voted to approve Analisa Sherman as the new assistant principal. Sherman comes to Beecher from Fairfield, where she was a classroom teacher, an instructional coach, a curriculum leader in mathematics and science and the administrative design-



Assistant Principal  
Analisa Sherman

nee at Burr Elementary School. As a young girl, Ms. Sherman went to BRS and then went on to Amity. She earned a B.A. in Psychology/Education from Mount Holyoke College and her Master’s Degree in Elementary Education from Boston College. She earned her administrative degree from Sacred Heart University.



Director of Special Services  
Clare Kennedy

retired from BRS after nine years. The district’s new director of special services, Clare Kennedy, comes to Beecher with a comprehensive background and experience in special education. Having served in West Hartford for many years, Ms. Kennedy’s positions included that of special education teacher, school administrator and supervisor for pupil services. Following that, for three years, she was the executive director of special education for Hartford Public Schools. Ms. Sherman and Ms. Kennedy look forward to getting to know our community. ♣



Thinking about music, the end of a school year is a time for reflection. The student work has been exceptional in class and in the community all year, never backing down from any challenges. Students are becoming great musicians and we hope they continue to grow musically over the summer and into the future.

This year has been a banner year for the Instrumental Music Department at Beecher Road School in so many ways. We maintained an exceptional level of performance and established some wonderful benchmarks for the program. Most notably, the Platinum and Gold Medal Awards at our Annual Adjudication, First Place in the Elementary Concert Band Competition at Lake Compounce, four students seated in the Southern Regional Middle School Orchestra and Concert Band, great performances throughout the year by Advanced Band, Jazz ensemble, String Ensemble and Brass ensemble recognized the hard work of our young musicians. In addition, we had special performances by our students where they played wonderfully at a packed Bridgeport Sound Tigers hockey game, honored our veterans with a Veterans Day celebration, marched skillfully at Memorial Day, and created fun entertainment last fall at both the PTO Halloween Hoot and the opening day baseball ceremony here in town.

In June, music students presented a final spring concert, performed at the New Britain Rock Cats baseball game and defended their title of Best Musical Unit at the Bethany Fireman's Parade. All of this

would not be possible without a team of people coming together with a common purpose for the good of our young people. Supportive parents, enthusiastic students, accomplished staff members, passionate administrators, a supportive community and an educationally sound philosophy are all necessities that allow us to do what we do. ❀

# Teacher of the Year



Dr. Stella, superintendent, and Ms. Prisco, principal (far right), congratulate Michelle Shepard, second grade team leader at BRS. She is the *Woodbridge Teacher of the Year*. Innovative, creative, reflective and a “consummate professional,” best describe this teacher.

## Thank You, PTO

The PTO established physical wellness as its main goal last year. As a result of fund raisers, they donated \$18,000 to construct a climbing wall in the gym, and buy a CPR training dummy and other PE equipment. ❀

## Chinese Class Explores Language & Culture

The successful after school Chinese program continued with a summer Chinese program as part of the *Summer Enrichment Program*. Classes were led by an exceptional faculty, including several Yale professors. Children in grades 1 to 6 learned Chinese language and culture through games, songs, art projects, outdoor exploration and simple plays. Wide ranging themes varied each week and included Chinese cuisine, Kungfu, Chinese calligraphy and painting. ❀



# CHET\*

## BRS Student Wins Grand Prize in CHET's Dream Big Competition – \$1,000 Toward College

**The Essay Topic: “How I will change the world after I go to college,” by Matthew Breier.**

**I** will change the world after I go to college by saving endangered species and forests. I would like to study biology and become a scientist involved with conservation.

Primates are in significant danger – of approximately 600 species and subspecies, nearly half are at risk for extinction. This is due to the loss of habitat through deforestation; diseases like Ebola virus; bushmeat hunting (when humans kill and eat primates); and climate change, which affects food availability and spread of disease.

I will focus on deforestation, which is when people cut down trees. It is a serious threat to Earth because it takes away habitats, as well as affecting the water cycle, temperatures and greenhouse gases. I think primates are important because they are our closest living relatives. They play important roles in their food chains as consumers and seed dispersers.

\* The Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET), Connecticut's direct-sold 529 college savings plan, is a tax-advantaged, low cost savings program designed to help families save for college. > [www.aboutCHET.com](http://www.aboutCHET.com)



BRS student Matthew Breier, with State Treasurer Denise Nappier, is one of four Connecticut grand prize winners in CHET's Dream Big competition. The prize of \$1,000 will go toward Matthew's college savings program. Over 4000 entries were received. Matthew is entering grade six.

*As a scientist, I would like to travel to rainforests in Africa and South America to study primates. I will not only study their habitats, but also their diseases, because many of them also affect humans. With my observations, I will try to make changes for the better.*

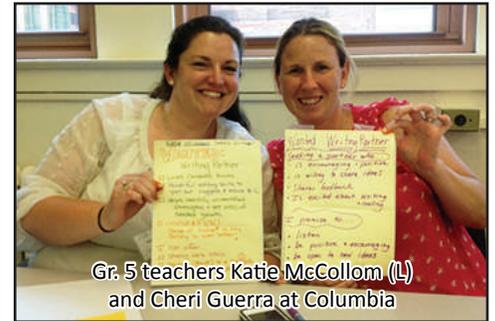
*As a citizen of this world, I realize that we only have one Earth and we must work together to save it. By being a scientist, I know that I will be able to use my observations not only to help the primates, but also to save our forests and our world in all its amazing green beauty. ♣*

## Summer School for Teachers

**E**leven teachers volunteered, without pay, to attend week-long summer institutes at Columbia University's Teachers' College to enhance skills in reading and writing instruction, using the *Workshop* approach.

### Teachers reflect on their learning:

- In small groups, teachers played the role of students and practiced 'doing' *Reader's Workshop*. This activity helped them understand how best to reach students.
- Teachers learned more about the theory behind *Workshop*, which will help to build voracious, curious, lifelong readers.



Gr. 5 teachers Katie McCollom (L) and Cheri Guerra at Columbia

- Teachers engaged in rich discussions with group leaders and colleagues from around the world about best practices.
- Teachers learned how to reach struggling readers, and how to encourage advanced ones.
- The main message: all children have a talented voice. Children, at all ages, are readers and authors. It is the responsibility of teachers to support students in exploring their lives as innovators and inquisitive learners. ♣

## 10-Year Tradition Continues With MAG Feast

**I**n June, MAG's\* annual *Fourth Year Feast* took place in the MAG "restaurant." Chef Robin Bodak, a MAG parent, and MAG children, originated the idea of a feast over ten years ago. It was conceived as a "thank you" to the MAG community before the *elders*\* moved on to a regular fifth grade.

This year's theme was "A Day at the Beach." The fourth year elders debated before reaching consensus about the theme, menu and decorations for the tables and rooms. Children then formed committees to execute their plans. Math was integrated at various points of this endeavor. Seating was calculated, tables measured and coverings cut to size. On the weekend before the feast, the

children gathered at each others' homes to prepare food and drinks from scratch. All manner of measuring was employed.

On the day of the feast, the elders dressed up to fit in with the theme. They were assigned tables and guests to seat and serve. The guests were the other MAG groups from year one two and three, parents and BRS staff.

The guests chose from a variety of dishes on the three-course menu. Parents of the fourth year children staffed the MAG kitchen while the elders hurried back and forth serving and bussing tables. Everyone agreed that the waiters provided outstanding service. ♣

\* Multi-Age Group – Grouped together, a class organized around students of different ages and identified age levels. At BRS there are four groups: year 1, 2, 3 and 4. The "elders" are the fourth year students.



MAG "elder," decked out in summer attire, waits tables at the Beach-Themed annual MAG Feast.



Artsweek is a week long celebration of the arts at Beecher. Now in its eighth year, this year's focus was on abstract artists from Kandinsky and Picasso to Pollack and Rothko and many more. BRS students created numerous paintings to display throughout the school.

Each year every student is involved in a whole school project. This year's *Towers Project* allowed every student to prepare a length of wood to be incorporated into eight towering sculptures. Math was an important part in the creation of this sculpture project, from computing the materials needed, budgeting the cost and engineering the logistics of installations.

Artsweek's big event is Artsnight, when parents and the Woodbridge Community came to explore the many galleries of student art and create pieces in one of the open studios throughout the building. They constructed Noguchi-inspired sculptures out of cardboard, played with large scale shapes in our shapes studio, participated in a Pollock style painting or created their own mosaic. Between visits to the open studios, they relaxed and enjoyed listening to our students perform in the Rotunda during the open mic performance while feasting on delicious foods at the Artsnight reception.

During the week students enjoyed watching and participating in the BRS Band concert. Students also enjoyed the performance of Brazilian dance troupe *Ginga Brasileira*. Artsweek is made possible by the generous support of the BRS PTO. ♣



One of eight towers from the school-wide *Towers Project* (right - detail of north Tower A)



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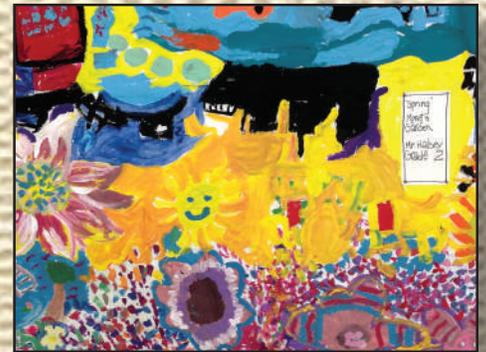
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*These huge abstract murals resulted from the contributions of many individual artists.*

### Artsweek 8's Theme: Abstract Expressionism



**Meet the Artist**

Megan Ding

Megan Ding has a full-time job and is a student. She did not have time to draw during school. Besides, who can read the signature on a painting?

She currently lives in Woodbridge, CT and is 12 years old.

All original life-drawings, sketches, notes, and files will be preserved!



*Anything is possible in the free flowing imagination of a child artist.*



**Beecher's Megan Ding  
Self Portraits**



There has

been a lot of activity in the *Food Service Program* in the past few months, and lots more coming up this school year. It's all part of bringing new, wholesome menu items to our students in ways that make it tasty and fun to eat healthy.

For our first project we enlisted the help of a professional chef, Suzanne Beck from Bloodroot Restaurant in Bridgeport. She created a special recipe for us using a blend of herbs and oil to jazz up green zucchini and yellow summer squash.



Tester tries jazzed up zucchini

Students had a chance to sample bite-sized pieces of the new item a week before they appeared on the regular lunch menu. All students who tried the new food were given an "I Tried It" sticker which then was used to register their vote. The consensus: squash was a hit.

Suzanne will also be developing new recipes that include nutrient-rich foods like quinoa, beets, bulgur, sweet potatoes

## BRS Turning to More Healthy Menu Choices

and spaghetti squash. Each new food will be introduced in a tasting event before making its appearance on the regular lunch menu. New food items will appear each month as we embark on a year-long adventure in eating.



Guest chef Suzanne Beck talks to students about healthy foods

Some new foods will be coming from local growers. We have established an initial partnership with Woodbridge's Massaro Farm to provide us with seasonal produce as it becomes available. We continue to identify other local farmers who can add variety and volume to our menu offerings. *Farm to School* initiative is gaining momentum across the country and in Connecticut. ♣



## SCIENCE

### BRS Joins Students and Scientists from Around the World in Global Video Conference

At Beecher, fifth-grade students participated in Alan Alda's fourth annual *Flame Challenge*, in which real scientists were asked to answer the question, "What is sleep?" Along with others from around the world, BRS students had the opportunity to judge the scientists' responses. Fifth-grade teachers created excitement among the students with an assembly to kickoff their involvement in the challenge.

The teachers used *Google Classroom* to distribute the scientists' entries to the students. Then the teachers created a survey in *Google Forms*. The students viewed the entries and entered their ratings via their iPads. The teachers collected and tallied the results. During this process, the students reflected on the idea of sleep and continued to build on their own understanding as they learned more and more from each entry. Students also identified qualities

*continued on next page*

BRS children study Spanish from kindergarten through grade six. We are preparing children to participate in the global community. The world language classroom is designed to make language come alive through the use of technology and enhanced curriculum.

What do you experience when you walk through the doors of a world language classroom at BRS? Here's a peek:

- ❖ students immersed in the Spanish language and culture
- ❖ students involved in listening, speaking, reading and writing activities
- ❖ students engaged in interactive activities
- ❖ consistent use of technology (smart board and iPad)
- ❖ a learning environment with authentic

### Español

Why is it important for our students to learn Spanish? Because:

- ❖ learning a language helps learn about and appreciate different cultures
- ❖ it can have a profound impact on basic cognitive abilities
- ❖ language learning leads to the discovery of more about others and underlying humanity
- ❖ studying a foreign language yields understanding of other people and cultures.



### Está Aquí

- ❖ acquisition of another language enhances communication skills
- ❖ exposure to language of another country helps understanding that culture and view of the world

Our current world language curriculum is being enhanced each year in order to accommodate all of our students' needs and to improve overall language instruction. In the coming year, students at BRS will refine their speaking, listening, written and reading skills in Spanish. Our students are well on their way to becoming proficient language learners. ♣





# SCIENCE

## What's new in science? Engineering.



5th graders participate in a worldwide science video conference surrounding the question, "What is sleep?"

of successful nonfiction writing as well as effective presentation skills, directly connecting this work to the nonfiction literacy unit. They noticed strategies that scientists used to communicate their ideas, such as adding humor or making comparisons, and they critiqued these skills. There was also an assembly in which schools from around the world held discussions through a video conference about the finalists' entries. BRS fifth graders were able to watch this conference live, and were promised a spot to participate in the worldwide assembly in 2016. ❀

In 2013, the *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS) was published. A new feature of the standards is the integration of engineering skills and practices with inquiry skills.

The introduction of new engineering experiences at BRS began with a fourth grade unit of study called *Motion and Design*, whose content is related to the physics of force and motion. In this unit students experience the *engineering cycle* when they design, build, test, redesign and retest vehicles made from K'NEX\* that meet specific criteria.



4th graders collect data on performance of their own design K'NEX vehicle as part of engineering activity

\* K'NEX is a construction toy building system consisting of interlocking plastic rods, connectors, gears, wheels and other components. When pieced together they form a variety of models, machines and structures.



As part of an engineering activity, kindergarten science students work to build a suitable hut to keep a snowman from melting.

Kindergarten students had their own engineering experience. The activity, called *Engineering a Snowman Hut*, integrated kindergarten science standards related to weather, temperature and the properties of buildings and building materials. They also shared and discussed a picture book, *Sadie and the Snowman* by Allen Morgan, whose main character kept having a problem keeping her snowman from melting. A major premise of the NGSS is that science and engineering help people answer questions and solve problems. In a series of science lab visits, students used their knowledge to design, build and test a house to protect a 'snowman' (three ice cubes fused together) from melting when placed in a student-built hut under a bank of grow lights. ❀

# Math

## Measurement Olympics

Fourteen educators from high performing school districts in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut spent three days at BRS examining our mathematics program. The group, from the *Tri-State Consortium*\*, looked at our efforts to build a stronger program as we look toward a new chapter in mathematics education.

Although our students' mathematics achievement, as measured by the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), is among the best in Connecticut, the way we teach and learn is changing.

Recognizing that fact, we spent a year of self-study and analysis culminating in this professional visit. As part of their work, the Tri-State team observed, analyzed and interviewed teachers, administrators, students, parents and Board members. A formal report with commendations and recommendations will be presented at the September Board of Education meeting. ❀

\* [tristateconsortium.ny.schoolwebpages.com](http://tristateconsortium.ny.schoolwebpages.com)

Second graders participated in the first annual *Measurement Olympics* celebrating student learning about measurement and data. Many events integrated important measurement concepts. Key concepts explored during Measurement Olympics included accurately using measurement tools, estimating lengths and determining differences in lengths. The students participated in several events in order to continue to build their understanding of measurement. These events include *Hot Wheels* car races, paper airplane throw, pool noodle javelin, *Wiffle Ball* shot put and frog hop long jump.

This celebration was a great way to include other members of the school community. Members of the Student Council supported their younger schoolmates by facilitating games and Helping to chart measurement data that students collected. It was great for the second-graders to have help from their older peers. Members of the BRS staff and parent volunteers joined the students in their learning. The second grade team of teachers looks

forward to making this event an annual tradition at BRS. ❀

Preparing the launch ramp for Hot Wheels car races.



## Word Problems: How we solve them

BRS Students focus on problem solving strategies using a *PQRST* mnemonic. It stands for *Picture, Question, Relevant Facts, Solve, and Thought*. When students picture they visualize what the problem is and retell the problem in their own words. Then They highlight the question they need to answer and the relevant facts they need to solve the problem. The students plan out the steps they need to take to solve the problem and then think, "Does my solution make sense?" Language Arts specialists and Math specialists worked together to teach problem solving strategies. They made many connections between reading strategies and problem solving in mathematics. The students are able to use strategies and discuss the different ways they are solving problems. ❀



# PE Fit



The Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 6 Physical Education Program at BRS offers students multiple opportunities to move and exercise. Signs that hang outside our fitness room express our philosophy of how physical well being is connected with intellectual well being: **Healthy Bodies = Healthy Minds**

A comprehensive BOWA (Bethany, Orange, Woodbridge, Amity) Physical Education Curriculum Guide – Grades k-12, serves as the backbone of the program. This document, developed by all four districts, is aligned with state and national standards, and focuses on the exit level skills of our graduating high school seniors. The Physical Education Program at BRS is among the best in the state. Here are some highlights:

**Kucinskas Loop**, a quarter-mile stone dust track provides students from kindergarten through sixth grade a safe area to enhance and develop their aerobic fitness. It also provides a place to properly train for the one mile walk/run, a component of the Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment which is administered to all students in Grades 4, 6, 8 and 10.

**Fitness Room** provides state of the art progressive resistance hydraulic machines built specifically for children, as well as additional equipment. Fitness is an element of our physical education classes. Our goal is to make fitness fun and enjoyable so our students will continue exercising throughout their lives.

**North Gym** is equipped with a brand new climbing wall installed this summer, matted walls, four climbing ropes, a cargo/spider climbing net and a rubber floor to reduce injuries.

**Our swimming program** is the only elementary program in Connecticut that teaches students about aquatic safety, how to swim, stroke development and aquatic fitness. This year our sixth grade swim program ended with our first ever *Swim for Heart 2015*. BRS is the first elementary school in Connecticut to participate in this national Heart Association fund raiser.

**Gymnastics** is also a part of our curriculum. Students are exposed to a variety of exercises and equipment. ♣

With a goal set for 2,000 laps as part of Swim for Heart, BRS sixth graders beat that and swam 2,150 laps.



Building strength for hand, eye and muscle coordination.

### “Upperclassmen” Help Little Buddies

Fifth and sixth graders work with some of our youngest children. Over 40 older students volunteer to meet with their “buddies” two mornings a week and work on reading and math skills. These partnerships have yielded amazing results.

*Little Leaders and Little Readers*, designed to help strengthen reading and speaking skills, is now in its second year at Beecher. *Owl Pals* helps third graders practice math facts in a game-like atmosphere. A third group of volunteers works with first graders on reading skills, practicing some new and tricky words.

The teachers involved are thrilled with the results. The fifth and sixth graders showed maturity and responsibility, and emerged as leaders. The younger students improved reading and math skills, and had fun in the process. Most importantly, all of the students learned the value of helping each other and making new friends. ♣

### Amity High Seniors Consider Careers as Teachers

For a number of years, Amity High School has had a *Senior Learning Program* during the students’ last month of high school. Its purpose is to give students meaningful work experience as they transition from the classroom to life in the world. During May and June, Beecher Road School hosted ten senior interns who were interested in exploring a career in education. Many of the Amity interns had formerly been BRS students themselves. Mentors included classroom teachers



from kindergarten, first, second and fifth grades as well as special area teachers.

The interns performed a range of

tasks, including preparing and distributing materials, engaging students in learning activities and assisting with storage of materials.

One intern, who worked with a Beecher technology teacher, repurposed several of the school’s iPads and assisted students with technology projects. He wholeheartedly enjoyed his month at Beecher, saying, “Even though things can get pretty hectic, it’s still really fun to help other people.”

Likewise, mentors appreciated the interns’ assistance, and Beecher students enjoyed having student role models from the high school.

Amity’s Senior Learning Program is a wonderful example of collaboration within the education community that benefits students and staff from both schools. ♣



# CONSTRUCTION UPDATE



This summer the entire BRS building facility, including the pool and grounds, has been a construction zone – off limits to the public due to renovation work on the school for the second summer in a row.

The Town of Woodbridge signed a contract with Energy System Group for renovations at the school. The project includes energy conservation measures and security enhancements. Beecher Road School was built in 1960, and has been expanded since then, including additions in 1970, 1994 and 1997. The current \$13.4 million renovation project was approved by a referendum in 2014.

“We are extremely grateful to the Woodbridge taxpayers for the support they have given us,” said Superintendent Dr. Guy Stella. “We are also appreciative of the support and flexibility that our school community has demonstrated during all phases of this construction project. Our children and citizens will be the beneficiaries of all this for years to come.”

“Beecher Road School staff and students will soon enjoy a building as excellent as the learning that goes on inside,” said First Selectman Ellen Scalettar.

As part of the energy upgrades, the project includes an *energy performance contract* that will guarantee energy cost savings. The school will see upgrades which include energy conservation measures such as lighting upgrades, building envelope improvements, security enhancements and more. Last summer’s work focused on the A-Wing as well as the replacement of HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) delivery systems in one wing.

Last winter a micro turbine was installed on the school roof to provide critical power such as emergency lighting in the event of an outage. During the spring break a sally port was installed in the school’s north entry to enhance security.

This summer’s work saw the installation of security enhancements to the building, canopies at the building’s north and south entries, installation of a new HVAC system, new window walls, case work and fresh paint in more parts of the building. This fall, we anticipate the installation of hundreds of solar panels on the roof that will provide significant savings on electricity. ❀

**CONSTRUCTION** continued at an exhilarating rate this summer. Here are a few highlights:

- » Canopies constructed over the north and south entrances
- » New roofing added and tested on several areas
- » This fall, hundreds of solar panels to provide electricity cost savings
- » HVAC equipment and upgrades installed
- » Remote terminal units (RTU), microprocessor-controlled electronic devices
- » This fall, installation of energy recovery ventilation units (ERV), providing for the exchange of stale air for fresh air
- » Insulated window walls installed in B-wing, faculty room and language arts room.
- » Micro turbine, for emergency power, installed
- » New emergency lighting installed
- » Security upgrades
- » Case work and fresh paint continues in remaining classrooms



## Summer Scrapbook



### Reading All Summer

Last summer, students were thrilled to have their photo taken with the BRS Reading Robot located at the Woodbridge Town Library. It was part of

Beecher’s reading campaign encouraging students to read and “Give Us Ten!,” a challenge to students to read ten or more books over the summer.

This year, sixth grader Josh Foote stepped forward and offered to create *Beecher Batman* to coincide with the Governor’s Summer Reading Challenge, *Every Hero Has a Story*. He designed the colorful life-size superhero that stands on the second floor of the Woodbridge Town Library. ❀



Josh Foote, 6th grade student at BRS, created *Beecher Batman*, to partner with the Governor’s Summer Reading Challenge, *Every Hero Has a Story*. *Beecher Batman* is in the Town Public Library.



Town of Woodbridge  
Woodbridge School District  
40 Beecher Road  
Woodbridge, CT 06525

PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
EDDM RETAIL

LOCAL  
POSTAL CUSTOMER  
WOODBIDGE, CT 06525



**C**ommunity. Service. Spirit. Vision. These words describe the mission and values of the BRS Student Council, which just completed its second year. The Council, comprised of 26 fifth and sixth graders and four advisors, has completed a number of noteworthy projects over the past two years to support its mission. In fund raisers, the Council has donated hundreds of dollars to organizations such as the *Woodbridge Food and Fuel Fund*, *Save the Children*, the *National Disaster Search Dog Foundation*, and the *Jeremy Saxe Foundation*. In addition, the Council has given their time to help others at all types of events from field days to ice

cream socials to serving as ambassadors for the highly anticipated *Tri-State* visit held in May. A breakfast honoring the sixth grade members advancing to middle school was held in June. Included in the program were remarks from Superintendent Dr. Stella, retiring Woodbridge Board of Education Member Carl Lindskog, and a YouTube video from Wilma Melville, the founder of *Search Dog Foundation*, specifically thanking Beecher for its generous donation. The Council also sponsors events for the Beecher student body like movie nights, spirit weeks and various initiatives to help make the culture at Beecher the best it can be. ♣



Student Council displays a check bound for the Search Dog Foundation



### Taxpayer's Guide to the 2015-2016 Woodbridge Board of Education Budget

The Woodbridge Board of Education, Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance approved the funding plan for the school district that took effect on July 1. The budget increase is 3.44% over the previous year. This budget is respectful of the taxpayer while continuing to move the educational system forward.

This operating budget is the legal plan under which the school system is funded. It puts in place the financial wherewithal to pay for one year's worth of education.



Budget Category	Last Year 2014-15	This Year 2015-16	\$ Amount Change	% Change*	% of Total Budget*
Salaries and Benefits <sup>1</sup>	\$ 10,370,031	\$ 10,758,487	\$ 388,456	3.75%	79.72%
Utilities and Heat <sup>2</sup>	314,446	308,777	(5,669)	-1.80%	2.29%
Student Transportation <sup>3</sup>	629,601	614,854	(14,747)	-2.34%	4.56%
Tuition - (out of district) <sup>4</sup>	249,525	253,175	3,650	1.46%	1.88%
All Outside Services <sup>5</sup>	1,033,635	1,122,080	88,445	8.56%	8.31%
General Supplies <sup>6</sup>	339,101	327,991	(11,110)	-3.28%	2.43%
Furniture and Equipment <sup>7</sup>	39,280	38,680	(600)	-1.53%	0.29%
Dues and Fees <sup>8</sup>	70,449	70,669	220	0.31%	0.52%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 13,046,068</b>	<b>\$ 13,494,713</b>	<b>\$448,645</b>	<b>3.44%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Percents rounded to the nearest one-hundredth of a percent

- Salaries and benefits would be a higher percent increase but through the monitoring of our staff profile we have been able to offer early retirement incentives and meet all contractual obligations.
- Electricity, water, sewer and heating
- In addition to regular school buses, some children require special transportation due to special needs (\$133,000). We also buy the diesel fuel for the buses through the purchasing consortium. That cost is \$47,125.
- Because some children, due to special needs, require school settings outside of Woodbridge, we pay tuition for their special education. This line item also includes \$17,025 for participation in the regional *Wintergreen Magnet School* in Hamden.
- Services we purchase or lease. Examples include telephones, insurance, Internet, postage, professional development, legal, technical and professional services, substitutes, building repairs, improvements and maintenance.
- Paper, pencils, books, wax, soap, paper products, band aids, software, envelopes, library books, subscriptions, etc.
- In most cases, furniture and equipment items purchased are replacements.
- Ezra Academy* school nurse (required by state law), unemployment, memberships in professional associations, miscellaneous expenditures, other fees, etc.

For a more complete and detailed look at the operating budget, go to the district website and click on 2015-2016 budget.

### School Starts August 31



The Education Report of the  
Woodbridge School District  
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**Woodbridge Board of Education**  
Margaret Hamilton – *Chair*  
Steven Fleischman – *Vice-Chair*  
Christianne Jaffe – *Secretary*  
Lisa Connor – Karen Kravetz  
Garret Luciani – Emily Melnick  
Keri Matthews – Lynn Piasczyk  
Gaeton F. Stella – *Supt. of Schools*

The Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools gratefully acknowledge the dozens of staff members who made contributions to *The Bridge*, and to all the staff who make programs and children's minds come alive every day. Thank you.

The Woodbridge Board of Education does not knowingly condone discrimination in employment, assignment, program or service, on the basis of race, gender, color, religion, natural origin, age, sexual orientation, disability or unrelated abilities to perform the duties of the position.