



THE B R I D G E

connecting school
and community



The Education Report
of the Woodbridge
School District

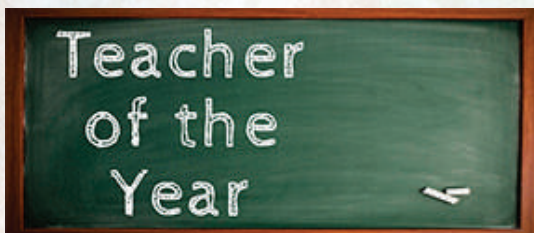
summer 2017
no. 11

woodbridge.k12.ct.us

MISSION STATEMENT

BEECHER ROAD SCHOOL IS A CARING, CREATIVE
COMMUNITY THAT MODELS AND INSPIRES THE JOY
OF LIFELONG LEARNING, EMBRACES DIVERSITY, AND
CELEBRATES THE UNIQUE QUALITIES OF EACH PERSON.

WOODBIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – JUNE 2017



Joanne Giaquinto has been named the 2018 Woodbridge Teacher of the Year. Ms. Giaquinto has been with the school district since 1995 and has served as a support teacher in several ways, first as a reading tutor, then as a language arts specialist.

When she saw a rising number of students entering Beecher whose language was other than English, and who required services, her interest in these children was piqued. She went back to school to become a certified TESOL*. Serving double-duty, she works with primary grade children who need support in reading, and she services the school's ELL** population in all grades.

Ms. Giaquinto is a strong advocate for all the children she supports. As the lone teacher for ELL, she continually attends meetings at the state and regional level, keeping up to date about best practices and service requirements for these students with their unique needs. She shares that knowledge with the BRS staff through school presentations and planning professional development activities for teachers.

Her goal is to work closely with the classroom teachers to modify assignments and studies, and ultimately, exit students from the programs when they are strong enough on their own.

Congratulations Joanne Giaquinto, our Woodbridge Teacher of the Year. 🐣

* Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages

** English language learners



Superintendent Gilbert and Principal Prisco, with Joanne Giaquinto (center) beaming with pride.

A New Beginning



To the Citizens of Woodbridge:

As I conclude my first year as Superintendent of the Woodbridge School District, I would like to

express my sincere appreciation to the citizens, town leaders, parents and staff for their strong support of Beecher Road School. In a year that has seen the uncertainty of funding at federal, state and local levels, Woodbridge continues to display tremendous financial commitment to an outstanding elementary education for our children. On behalf of the learning community of Beecher Road School, we thank you for your support and look forward to our continued partnership.

As you read this edition of our award-winning education report, **The Bridge**, take pride in all we've been able to accomplish together. And, please see more of my reflections and vision on page 8. 🐣

Sincerely,

Bob Gilbert

Look Inside !

A Sampling

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Setting the mic, arranging the paper, ready to expose her thoughts at the BRS Poetry Guild Cabaret.

The BRS Poetry Guild, established this year by grade 6 teacher Daniel Chase, is a place where 4th, 5th and 6th grade members took apart published poems to mine out nuggets of excellence that they then applied to their own work. What began as 12 individuals meeting after school for four months ended as a cohesive unit of writers who were available to lend advice and criticism, and who expected the same in return.

Guild members soon learned that writing honestly takes a great amount of courage. Poetry that endures can only be found deep within, dug out, refined and honestly shared.

On a February afternoon students shared some of their work in the school's Rotunda at the *Poetry Guild Cabaret*. Those present were washed in a sea of images, metaphors, bold ideas and spry perspectives.

What they concluded from their experiences together is that words matter. To labor over crafting an exact metaphor or hunting down the right word is worth the time and effort.

When asked why he established the Poetry Guild, Mr. Chase replied, "To explore, discover, uncover and elicit efficient, audacious and tenacious expressivity through the power of poetry." Now that's waxing lyrical. 🐞



International Math Olympiad Team at BRS

For five months 20 mathematicians met weekly as members of the BRS Math Olympiad team participating in international problem solving with students from around the world.

Students discussed and learned a new problem solving strategy each week after school with teachers Mrs. Smerekanicz and Mr. DePalma. They applied and honed their new problem solving strategies with practice *Olympiads*, *KenKens*, *Cryptograms* and other math puzzles.



BRS Math Olympiad sixth grade team with Mrs. Smerekanicz and Mr. DePalma.

Members of the team participated in monthly math competitions through *Mathematical Olympiads for Middle and Elementary School* (MOMES) with other teams across the world. Last year nearly 170,000 students from 6,000 teams participated in the Olympiads. All 50 states and about 30 other countries were represented.

Our mathematicians learned that there is no easy road to becoming a successful problem solver. In order to solve some of the enormously challenging math problems, the students needed to recall their newly learned strategies, be resourceful, reasonable, logical and to sometimes rely on their ingenuity. Congratulations to all of our Math Olympiad participants. 🐞



Each year BRS students in grades 3 through 6 participate in *Continental Mathematics League* meets. Student teams engage with other teams on the same grade level from schools all over the United States.

Third grade students take part in three meets while students in grades 4-6 participate in five. Students are given six challenging word problems and asked to solve them within a given time period. This experience gives students the opportunity to persevere and strengthen their problem solving skills.

We are so proud to announce that two of our fourth grade students, Adam Fleischman and Logan Matthews, were Regional Winners for the Euclidean division. There are 422 schools in our region including Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Congratulations to all of our young mathematicians. 🐞



In 2015, consultants from the *Tri-State Consortium*, a cooperative group of high performing school districts in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, visited BRS to look closely at mathematics instruction. As a result of this visit, a mathematics action plan was developed.

In March 2017, the team returned to evaluate the progress made on the plan. Two goals were identified: *recognize, nurture and meet the diverse mathematical needs of all learners*, and *continue to provide information to parents and the community*. Progress was made toward achieving both goals. Highlights of the work that has been accomplished around the first goal include creating differentiated lessons, projects and activities, meeting regularly with grade level teams to discuss curriculum and student needs, revising assessments and increased professional development around mathematics instruction. Some examples of the work that has been accomplished around goal 2 include providing summer math packets for students in grades 2-6, hosting a family math night with Bethany and Orange and ongoing communication with parents in a variety of formats. In the future, there is going to be continued focus on completing mathematics curriculum templates across all grade levels and implementing math workshop. 🐞



1st graders learn how to use personal flotation devices in their Learn to Swim program

The Pre-K – 6 Physical Education Program at BRS offers students multiple opportunities to move and exercise their bodies. A comprehensive B.O.W.A (Bethany, Orange, Woodbridge, Amity) K – 12 Physical Education Curriculum Guide was developed by all four districts. It focuses on the exit level skills of our graduating high school seniors and is aligned with state and national standards. Considered among the best in the state, here are some BRS highlights:

The Kucinkas Loop, a quarter-mile track, provides students a safe area to develop aerobic fitness. It also provides a place to train for the one-mile walk/run test, one component of the *Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment*, administered annually to students in grades 4, 6, 8 and 10.

The Fitness Room features state-of-the-art equipment, such as progressive resistance hydraulic machines, light barbells and kettle bells, abdominal exercise benches, agility ladders, mini-stair masters and more. Our goal is to make fitness fun and enjoyable so our students will continue exercising throughout their life. The entire program emphasizes *progress not perfection*.

The North Gym is equipped with matted walls, four climbing ropes, a cargo/spider climbing net, a rubber floor to reduce injuries and allow for better traction, and a climbing wall with its own mat system for added safety.

Jump Rope for Heart teaches students a myriad of jump roping techniques to make their hearts stronger. Proper nutrition that is *heart healthy* is also part of the learning.

“Boardwalks” are a cooperative activity. The group stands on 4X4’s, holds the ropes, and work together to walk forward.



Amazing swim program! BRS is the only elementary school in the state to teach aquatic safety, stroke development and aquatic fitness. Students in first and second grade participate in a 4-day program in June called *Learn to Swim* to get ready for the summer months of swimming in pools, lakes and oceans.

Students in grades 3-6 swim throughout the winter months for a total of 10 hours of swimming. They focus on locker room safety, aquatic safety, circle swimming, diving, treading water, lap swimming, entering the water from varying heights, underwater swimming, stroke development and more.



BRS is the only elementary school in Connecticut with an aquatic/swim program

The fifth grade swimming program ends with *Swimming Olympics*. This event is a celebration of the swimming unit of study, an important component of the physical education curriculum. In 2017 our six 5th grade classes rotated through various stations which focused on important components of swimming such as treading water, circle swimming and underwater swimming.

This year our sixth grade swim program ended with our 3rd annual *Swim for Heart*. The Swim for Heart Program challenged students to swim a total of 2017 laps within 25 minutes. All sixth grade classes swam simultaneously for 25 minutes and accumulated 2,264 laps.



The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection presents awards to businesses and public sector organizations for moving away from finite energy sources to sustainable ones. This year, the Government Sector awards went to the *Town of Woodbridge*, *Amity Regional School District* and the *Woodbridge School District*.



Woodbridge Town Hall has converted from oil to natural gas. The town installed a fuel cell as part of its planned microgrid project and Beecher Road Elementary School installed a solar electric system in 2016, along with exterior and interior lighting upgrades. The Amity Regional School District High School is using solar power to heat water and intelligent controls were installed for all motors in the building.

Congratulations for partnering with sustainability.



L-R: Woodbridge Superintendent Gilbert, Former 1st Selectman Scalettar, and Amity Superintendent Dumais accept state energy award on behalf of Woodbridge.



Technology

iPads in the Classroom

BRS uses technology differently from other schools. Our students are taught to use electronic devices as tools to share their knowledge in original and creative ways, not just use them as electronic workbooks. Through the experiences of coding, 3D printing, writing and team-developed projects and presentations, students develop computer skills and creative ways to express their knowledge in digital forms.

We believe in creating technology producers, instead of technology consumers.

Coding Across the Grades

Our students demonstrate coding and problem solving skills across all grade levels. It begins in kindergarten with group activities where students are asked to create a line of code to solve a puzzle in Kodable. During the students' technology classes, the curriculum builds their knowledge year by year. First graders use MicroWorlds and programmable Beebot robots to reinforce sequential directions and mathematical concepts and skills.

Students in third grade have been learning the rudiments of beginning computer programming through *Scratch*, a programming language developed at the MIT Media Lab. The program enables students to create interactive stories, games and animations. The goal of *Scratch* is to "help children become fluent with digital media, empowering them to express themselves creatively and make connections to powerful ideas." Students create scripts in *Scratch* by dragging blocks together, like a jigsaw puzzle. This method, "drag-and-drop programming," eliminates the need to type code line by line. Students are also introduced to computational concepts: sequences, loops, variables and the idea of debugging.

Learning to program offers benefits for everyone. It encourages higher-level thinking, problem solving, perseverance and collaboration. The BRS technology department's philosophy believes in creating technology producers, instead of technology consumers. 🐞

iPads are versatile learning tools because they provide students with choices and help them individualize their learning. They are especially powerful when students use them to demonstrate their thinking.

With six years of iPad use, students and teachers have created amazing projects. With the technology, resources and applications, students produce multimedia projects that surpass expectations.

Second graders use their iPads practicing math facts, learning place value and manipulating geometric shapes. Several projects and apps have made their writing experiences richer. Students wrote fairy tales and used the *Puppet Pals* app to stage and present them. Students created *book trailers* using the *iMovie* app to generate interest in a book they read. Besides being an exciting way to present information, the movie making process required careful analysis of the book.

The largest volume of iPad work has been in science where major units on soils and plants have focused on journals for recording predictions and observations.

4th graders also integrated iPads into their classrooms. They created interactive science notebooks that not only include informational writing about topics, but also document their investigations, observations and understandings about each topic with text, photographs and scientific drawings. In math class they have been creating teaching videos and games to learn new concepts. Several fourth graders created movies to document math workshop in our school and shared them with the Board of Education.

In literature studies, 6th grade students went back to the *iMovie* app to create skits and book trailers. Students learned how to write a script, record live videos, insert pictures and synchronize a sound track. Some students even composed their own music using the *Garageband* app. 🐞



¡Hablamos Español!

Complexity is the first word that comes to mind to characterize the World Language program at BRS. It's not just about reading, or writing, or listening, or speaking or Spanish culture. World Language includes all of these separate but overlapping skills.

BRS students start tackling this complex of skills in kindergarten with Spanish words for basic greeting, colors, numbers, classroom objects, etc. They even use Spanish in music class. As they progress through the grades Spanish encompasses the geography of our Mexican neighbors, the creation of an imaginary Spanish town, emails to exchange students, plans for a trip to a Spanish speaking country, even BRS News in Spanish. Technology helps along the way using SMARTboards and iPads.

The success of the Spanish program is evaluated by a sixth grade exit exam. This monitors and evaluates the progress of the students. 🐞



The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), once the

primary assessment tool in the state for reading, writing, math and science, is no longer used – except for science. Under state law all Connecticut public school students are assessed in science in grades 5, 8 and 10. The science CMT is used in grades 5 and 8. The Science CAPT test is used in grade 10.

At BRS, 5th grade students take the science CMT. They are tested on core science concepts as well as scientific inquiry, literacy and numeracy. Topics assessed include Life, Physical and Earth Science.

The results of the 2016 assessment, the latest for which we have results, show the following compared with the year earlier:

- 2015: 81% of our students were at or above state benchmark. *Average Scale Score: 282*
- 2016: 94% of our students were at or above state benchmark. *Average Scale Score: 307*
- Beecher students have the highest district score for 5th grade in the state of Connecticut. 🐞



D.A.R.E.

As part of the BRS D.A.R.E.* program, led by Woodbridge Police Officer Vincent Lynch, Trooper John O'Connor of the Connecticut State Police K-9 division gave students a look at the work that the highly trained dogs perform. One of 11 teams, Trooper O'Connor and K-9 Kaiser graduated from the 164th Patrol Dog Class in 2013. Together the pair travel throughout Connecticut and specialize in evidence recovery, drug detection and tracking of missing persons.



Left to right above: Trooper John O'Connor with K-9 Kaiser. 6th graders Logan Northrop, Kayla Wilkins and Mingyue Zha. BRS Resource Officer, Vincent Lynch, WPD.

In the one-hour demonstration students learned about the work of the K-9 team including detection of drugs.

The *D.A.R.E. Keepin' It Real* program teaches sixth graders about the *Dangers of Drugs, Decision Making Skills, Dealing with Peer Pressure, Risks and Consequences, Bullying, Internet Safety, Dealing with Stress* and many other topics that they may encounter while in middle and high school.

The long-standing national D.A.R.E. Program runs 18 weeks at BRS, November through May, in the sixth grade. 🐾

* Drug Abuse Resistance Education

STEAM power at the high school

Fifth grade students from BRS, Bethany Community School and Orange elementary schools were invited to Amity Regional High School (ARHS) to spend a day learning about all of the interesting experiences available to Amity Middle and High School Students in the areas of *science, technology, engineering, art and math* – referred to as STEAM.

ARHS student assistants greeted teachers and students at the *welcome table* where teachers picked up their STEAM Day Tote Bags containing student swag bags with bracelet, pin, pen, lanyard; student passport to be stamped at each STEAM booth visited; teacher name, school, student # and designated color coded start point.

Teachers were assigned 2-3 high school students, who had formerly been at BRS, to assist with their groups. Groups of 5-7 students rotated through several booths for each STEAM area, spending 15-20 minutes in each of the 5 zones, and moving to a new zone at the sound of a steam train whistle.



ARHS student demonstrates the power of pulleys as part of STEAM Day 2017.

For the first time this year, several activities were located in the *Black Box Theater*. Among them were a broadcast media activity, a print making activity, and a children's theater mask-making activity.

Other activities held in a gym included *Makey Make Boards, Magnetic Slime, The Spinning Stool, Pulley Systems, the eeSmarts section* with demonstrations about wind and solar power, and information about fuel cells, and a *Maker Space* where students could create and weave on a loom or make a scarf.

This is the second year the high school STEAM Team has hosted this wonderful learning event for feeder elementary school students. 🐾



Engineering EDUCATION starts here

In the fall of 2015 the state of Connecticut adopted the *Next Generation Science Standards*. These standards create the expectation that all students will have experiences in engineering that help them understand how to solve problems using the engineering design process. At BRS, first, second and third grade students became engineers using *Engineering is Elementary* during the 2016-2017 school year. There is a planned expansion of the program into the fifth and sixth grades next year while kindergarten and 4th grade students already have engineering experiences.

Engineering is Elementary presents students with realistic problems through a fictional story. They then set out to find solutions. Each grade level focused on a

different problem. The students learned about the properties of the materials they would work with and they worked in teams to reach a solution.

1st graders worked as civil engineers to design and test bridges for stability and strength using paper, tape, file cards, craft sticks and string. 2nd graders were agricultural engineers designing and testing hand pollinators for model flowers, complementing their study of plant and flower growth. 3rd graders were geotechnical engineers designing and testing the best sites for building bridges for transportation across rivers, drawing on their study of earth materials and erosion.

Indeed, one of the strengths of the engineering program was its integration with the existing science curriculum. 🐾

1st graders test their design for strength



Most stable and strongest bridge design





Art

THREE school wide projects captured the imagination and nurtured the talents of BRS artists of all ages. First, the Ambo Project about an orphaned African elephant. Second, Go Figure!, the theme of this year's ArtsWeek10. Third, Yale exhibit.

In the Stella Library at Beecher Road School you'll see a large herd of African elephants marching atop the book cases and across the shelves. These student-created pieces are part of a school wide project inspired by Librarian Larissa Crocco's adoption of a young elephant named **Ambo** for the BRS community. Ambo is a little bull who was rescued a year ago after being found trapped in a water hole at only four months of age. Luckily, for him, he was whisked to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust located within Nairobi National Park in Kenya. There he was introduced to a mini-herd of other orphaned elephants and their caring, round-the-clock human caregivers.

With the support of teachers, BRS students are raising awareness of the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's Orphan Project in a variety of ways. Music teacher Nadia Marroquin taught the kindergarteners a Spanish song about elephants. All first graders are becoming informational researchers as they learn about African elephants in the library. Technology teacher Danielle Ulacco and her sixth grade broadcasters are incorporating Ambo updates into the WBRS News program.

Art teachers Ashley Wagner and Linda Acheson are forging a path of creative activism. Every child and many staff members sculpted an elephant from clay. The "herd" of several hundred elephants spent time on Chapel Street in New Haven as part of the annual Yale Properties exhibit. In addition to the sculptures, all students made an observational drawing of an African elephant.

The Ambo project allows Beecher students to experience the joy of membership in a global community, empathy in action and integrated learning.



This "herd" of elephants found their way to the Stella library at BRS in search of snacks and fame.



Observation and drawing: The foundation of visual art. Student work.



Orphaned Ambo with his adopted mother, Altatayoni, in the Kenyan wildlife trust

Today he is a year-and-a-half old and thriving. One day he will graduate and integrate into Tsavo East National Park as a wild elephant. The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust is a pioneering organization and has successfully raised and released over 150 orphaned elephants.

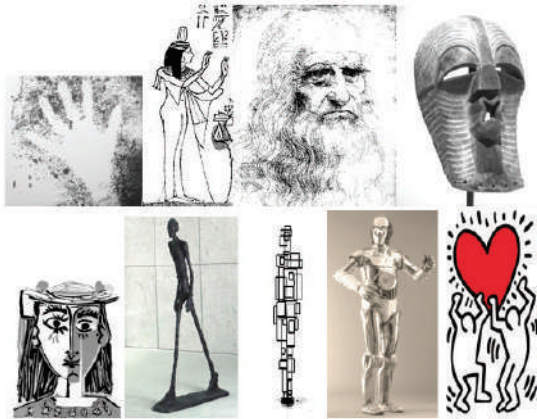


Ambo enjoying an afternoon snack with his adopted friend





GO FIGURE!



ARTSWEEK10 2017

BEECHER ROAD SCHOOL WOODBRIDGE, CONNECTICUT

ArtsWeek10 Each year, the BRS community celebrates the arts in a week long festival of events in the visual and performing arts. ArtsWeek, as it is known, marked a 10 year anniversary this spring with the visual arts theme *Go Figure!* Humans have been creating figures of themselves since man could hold an instrument. The poster promoting ArtsWeek (left) illustrates that point.

It represents a time line about the human figure. Clockwise from upper left:

- The hand print is from the cave man period in Art History.
- The Egyptians showed the human figure in profile. It looks very flat.
- Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) studied the proportion of the human figure.
- Songye-Kifwebe Mask. African Tribal Art.
- Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) Head of a woman (Jacqueline) with Hat (1962).
- Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) "Walking Man" (Both Giacometti and Picasso were influenced by African Art)
- Antony Gormley "Clasp 11," 2010 Linear Sculpture
- C-3PO, Anthony Daniels, 1977, Star Wars
- Keith Haring (1958-1990)



their way
rch of



ts create observational drawings of elephants.

At left: Ambo and his adopted mother drawn by BRS artist. Below: Pottery vessel with elephant motif in the making.



Hundreds of human figures gather in BRS woods.

Yale



Beecher Artworks Displayed at Yale Properties Exhibit

In November 2014 Yale University's Office of New Haven and State Affairs and University Properties started an Elementary Art Program, a collaboration with local retailers and restaurants in downtown New Haven. It is an effort to connect the vibrant downtown businesses to communities within and outside of the city. BRS students have been enthusiastic participants in this innovative arts program. The program was such a success that it has grown into a partnership with the Shops at Yale for the third year in a row. The theme for 2016-2017 was elephants: drawings, clay elephants, inventions based on the elephant, African landscapes and an elephant enlargement. 🐘



Elephant sculptures in the making. Heading to Yale exhibit.



Mission & Vision

What We Believe – What We Want To See From the Superintendent of Schools, Robert Gilbert



There have been many accomplishments during 2016 –

2017. These include strong student achievement as measured by state and local assessments. Of particular note, our fifth grade class scored first in the state in science. We also saw the completion and acceptance of our multi-year building project. Our school facility with energy efficiencies and safety initiatives is a model for others. The focus through all of this continues to be academic excellence and the social and emotional development of all students. It's no wonder new families come to Woodbridge because of the excellent education we offer.

Guided by a new *Mission and Vision*, the district has embarked on a Strategic Plan for 2017-2020 that will move our students and Professional Learning Community to even greater heights. Initiatives in curriculum, project based learning, school wide enrichment, community/siversity, student support (SRBI*) and professional learning have started to unfold and will impact our students for years to come.

On behalf of the learning community of Beecher Road School, we thank you for your support and look forward to our continued partnership.

Bob Gilbert

* Scientific Research-Based Intervention

Mission Statement

Beecher Road School is a caring, creative community that models and inspires the joy of lifelong learning, embraces diversity and celebrates the unique qualities of each person.

Vision Statement

To provide a dynamic educational environment that challenges and empowers students to persevere as innovators and collaborators in preparation for their role as responsible global citizens.

We believe that

- All students can learn and it is the responsibility of our school system to provide the supports needed to reach high standards and success.
- Academic skills must meet the expectations of the *Connecticut Core Standards*. The skills and attributes needed for success in the 21st century include critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, curiosity, problem solving and citizenship.
- Meeting academic, artistic, behavioral, social, emotional and physical needs is essential in educating the whole child.
- We have a responsibility to prepare our students for a rapidly changing world that includes the integration and use of technology.
- Our educational community will continue to grow and improve when all our staff members are expected and supported to learn.
- Our district has a responsibility to inform and engage the community as partners in education.
- Fiscal responsibility is a foundational tenet of our school system. 🚗

The reasons we assess children's academic achievement are

varied. Among them, we want to see how much students have learned and retained. We want to see if the instruction we have presented has been effective. We want to see trends in the assessment results that have implications for curriculum and professional development. And, the State of Connecticut wants to be certain all children are achieving at levels appropriate to their age and learning circumstances.

In Connecticut all public school students are given a series of tests developed by SBAC, or Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The tests are called *Smarter Balanced Assessments* and are given to children each spring in grades 3 – 8. They assess the areas of English language arts, or ELA (which includes reading, writing and listening), and mathematics. The *Smarter Balanced Assessment* is aligned to the *Common Core State Standards*.

Highlights of the 2015-2016 SBAC results for BRS follow.

Results are presented as achievement levels:

- Level 1 - Does not meet the standard
- Level 2 - Approaching the standard
- Level 3 - Meeting the standard
- Level 4 - Exceeding the standard

BRS Results: Percent of students scoring at Level 3 and above in English language arts:

- Grade 3: 76.2%
- Grade 4: 76.3%
- Grade 5: 85.4%
- Grade 6: 82.4%
- Overall average: 80.1%.

Percent scoring at Level 3 and above in mathematics:

- Grade 3: 75.2%
- Grade 4: 65.6%
- Grade 5: 71.9%
- Grade 6: 71.4%
- Overall average: 71.2%.

How do we compare to other school districts?

The Woodbridge School District ranks 5th in both ELA and math out of 21 districts in our DRG* for ELA and also 5th out of the 21 districts in our DRG for mathematics. When looked at from the state as a whole, the Woodbridge School District ranks 15 out of 188 for ELA and 17 out of 188 for mathematics.

Plans are in place for continuous improvement in these assessed areas:

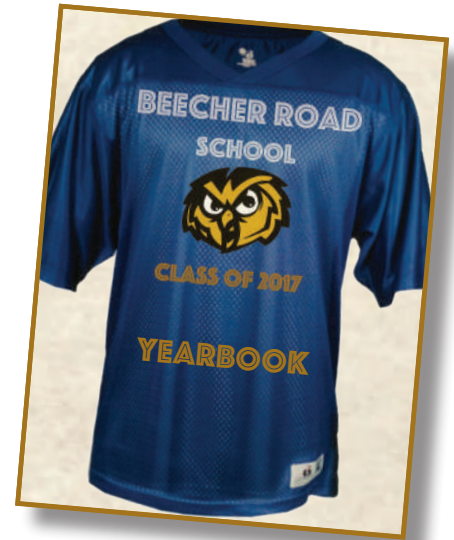
- continued focus on high quality instructional delivery and practice
- use of consultants and shared successful practices for continuous improvement
- continued use of multiple measures to assess student achievement and growth 🚗

* The state groups what they feel are similar towns based on socio-economic and other factors. and calls it the District Reference Group.



The BRS PTO spends countless hours on planning, developing and executing activities to benefit the students of the school. Among others, the events include fund raising projects, cultural enrichment presentations and visits by children’s book authors. It’s those fund raisers that make the cultural and fun stuff happen. 🐞

The PTO Executive Board planning for our children. Pictured at left, clockwise from lower left are: Amit Mahajan, Jessica Cebulski, Joi Prud’homme, Jessica Artemchuk, Lauren Miller, Andrea Polinsky, Aimee Meacham, Lauren Esposito.



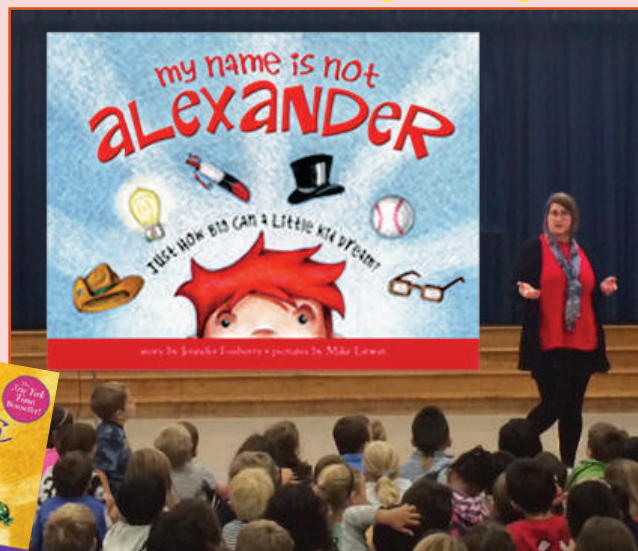
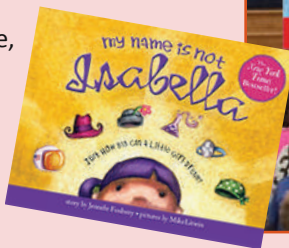
Being pictured in a school yearbook is a rite of passage when students advance from one level of education to the next, or leave at the end. Elementary yearbooks have become more common in modern times and certainly offer opportunities for younger students to learn about the associated tasks like photography, editing, meeting deadlines, choosing artwork and making design and graphic element decisions. It’s a big job.

At BRS, 28 sixth grade students formed the Grade 6 Yearbook Committee that met weekly after school. The committee members worked as equals to achieve a common goal. At those meetings they shared ideas, created surveys, and tallied votes to determine the theme of the yearbook and class favorites, and collected artwork for the publication.

The **BRS PTO** funds the entire cost of the yearbook project to ensure all students and sixth grade classroom teachers have their own yearbook that chronicles Beecher’s history for that year. We are grateful. 🐞

PTO Sponsors Published Authors to Talk About Reading & Writing

Jennifer Fosberry, whose book *My Name is Not Isabella* is a NY Times Best-Seller, was one of the authors who visited BRS this year to talk to our young authors about writing, expression and finding their voice. Ms. Fosberry is a science geek turned children’s book author. After working in the high-tech industry in Silicon Valley and running away to Costa Rica for a few years, she returned to the States to read, write, raise kids and get out of doing the housework. She lives with her husband and three children – and her little dog, too.



With her books as backdrop, Suzy Kline visited BRS. She is a Connecticut author and retired Torrington teacher who loves to talk to kids about reading and writing and how she does it. She wrote her first book 24 years ago and now has dozens of books about *Horrible Harry* and *Song Lee*. She says her books are based on experiences she had as a teacher. Lots of good stories to tell. Wonder if she had *Horrible Harry* in class? 🐞





MUSIC

Action is a hallmark of the music department. Instrumentally, students in the various bands and ensembles perform throughout the year,

often from the very first day of school and sometimes before that. The Marching Band, the *Marching Owls*, represents BRS at community events here in town, from Veterans Day to Massaro Farm Family Fun Day and off to Orange for the Memorial Day parade.

Concerts and competitions during the year, in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey, offer performance opportunities to the *Brass Ensemble*, *Jazz Ensemble*, *String Ensemble*, *Advanced Band* and *Chamber Ensembles*. The music department seems like New York in the song “New York, New York.” It never sleeps.



Above: In one of many public performances, Beecher’s Marching Owls, band and flag guard, were crowd-pleasers at the 2017 Memorial Day parade in Orange.

Below: The BRS choir performs a concert outdoors this spring.

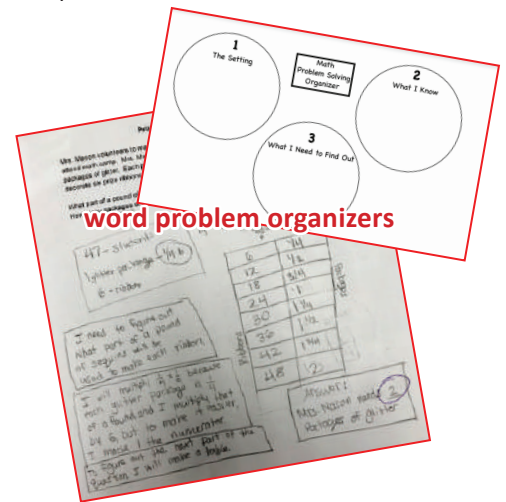
The BRS choirs performed in two major concerts this year. Forty-five students led by Mrs. Marroquin sang at the Woodbridge Center during the 2016 holiday season. In the spring the choirs performed with the Amity Middle School Bethany, Amity Middle School Orange and Bethany Community School choirs in the second annual *Cabaret Courtyard Concert* at Amity Middle School Bethany.

In addition, the choirs sang for the Yale-New Haven community outside on Broadway Island in December as part of a Yale holiday celebration. Finally, the choirs included a community outreach with their performance at the Veterans Day ceremony here in Woodbridge.



Solving the Problem of Solving the Problems

During the 2015-2016 school year teachers observed students having difficulty comprehending and solving mathematics word problems and clearly articulating math ideas. This led to an intervention integrating math and language arts. In grades 2 and 5 students applied reading strategies to solving math problems. They learned to use a problem-solving checklist and to represent their thinking in a variety of ways such as using tables, number lines and graphs. They also focused on communicating their ideas in a clear, sequential and organized way. Students improved using this approach of attention to, and analysis of, process.



Advocates of this program, Principal Gina Prisco and Asst. Principal Analisa Sherman delivered an informative presentation to the Board of Education on the *Workshop Model* of instruction. This method is currently used in the teaching of reading and writing and soon to be expanded to mathematics instruction as well.

The workshop model is researched based and requires student-centered, responsive, assessment-based instruction. The goal is life-long independent engagement in reading and writing on the part of the students. BRS is a leader in the use of this instructional practice and has had many teachers trained at *Teacher’s College Columbia University* to implement the *reading and writing workshop* in their classrooms.



Community–Service–Vision–Spirit and ...

The above four words are the four values that drive the **BRS Student Council*** and this year, we add *global citizens* to the list. A number of new actions were started this year.

The Council worked with *K-9 First Responders of Connecticut* to host an in-house field trip for fourth grade students. At the *Woodbridge Center Holiday Fair* in December, they volunteered to help.

This spring the Council members visited the *Woodbridge Center* for a variety of intergenerational activities that included Bingo, live music and great conversation over lunch.

Back at school, the Student Council spearheaded two door decorating events, Spirit Week, *Beecher History Fact Fridays*, a cup stacking event and *BKindness Week*.

At year's end, a breakfast honoring the advancing 6th grade students was held. In addition



Top: Student Council donates \$500 to the Woodbridge Food & Fuel Fund. Above: Intergenerational fun and conversation at Woodbridge Center. Below: BKindness Week



to a visual representation of all the accomplishments the Council has had this year, the program included remarks from Superintendent Bob Gilbert, a

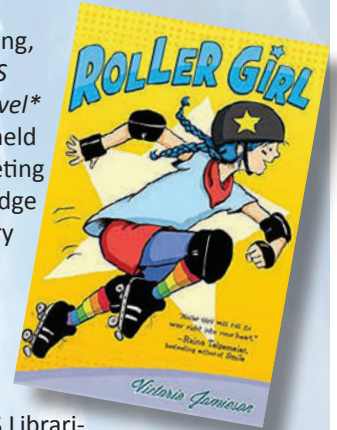
presentation by BRS alumnus Spencer Rubin about government, and well-wishes from Woodbridge Town officials.

The BRS Student Council made three generous monetary donations of \$500 each: 1) *Woodbridge Animal Shelter* 2) *K9 First Responders* 3) *Woodbridge Food and Fuel Fund*.

*The BRS Student Council is comprised of 22 fifth and sixth grade students and four faculty advisors.

Town and School Libraries Team Up

This spring, the *BRS Graphic Novel** Book Club held its first meeting at Woodbridge Town Library with Sarah Mellinger, Town Librarian and Larissa Crocco, BRS Librarian.



Participants were fourth and fifth graders from BRS. In fact, 25 students attended.

The students focused on the graphic novel "Roller Girl" by Victoria Jamieson, winner of a 2017 Connecticut Nutmeg Award. In addition to reading the novel, club members discussed it and engaged in some activities related to the book like coming up with their Roller Derby alias, creating name tags, competing in relay style team races, eating snacks, and making brightly colored duct tape pouches.

Plans are underway to select the next graphic novel for the fall meeting and to develop a third grade club.

*A graphic novel is a book made up of comics content. Although the word "novel" normally refers to long fictional works, the term "graphic novel" is applied broadly and includes fiction, non-fiction, and anthologized work. It is distinguished from the term "comic book," which is generally used for comics periodicals.



Did You Know . . .

Did you know BRS students and staff came together to participate in three **CARES** assemblies this year? **CARES** stands for Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self Control. Students viewed videos and skits and participated in activities. Each assembly ended with students being asked to draw or write how they demonstrated the trait. Their pieces were then displayed on a large bulletin board outside the cafeteria.



Did you know *Amity Regional High School*, *Beecher Road School* and the *Woodbridge Public Works Facility* are now **Energy Star** certified buildings? The town has received more than \$500,000 in incentives, and has made comprehensive energy upgrades. These efforts to the municipal and school buildings have resulted in an estimated annual energy reduction equal to the amount of energy consumed by 78 homes, and in greenhouse gas reduction equal to the exhaust created by about 213 cars. Overall, the town is saving an estimated \$439,809 annually in energy costs.



Did you know *Beecher Road School* students rank #1 in Science in the state of Connecticut?



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

PRSR STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EDDM RETAIL

LOCAL
POSTAL CUSTOMER
WOODBRIDGE, CT 06525



Did you know each year Beecher Road School honors veterans with school wide events on Veterans Day?

THE BRIDGE

... for 11 years, connecting school and community by informing Woodbridge residents about the work of their school district and its student and staff accomplishments.



SCHOOL STARTS AUGUST 28

THE BRIDGE

The Education Report of the
Woodbridge School District
No. 11,
Summer 2017

Woodbridge Board of Education 2016-17

Margaret Hamilton – *Chair*
Steven Fleischman – *Vice-Chair*
Lisa Conner – *Secretary*
Karen Kravetz – *Garett Luciani*
Nancy Maasbach – *Keri Matthews*
Emily Melnick – *Lynn Piascyk*
Robert Gilbert – *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.

Taxpayer's Guide to the 2017-2018 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 takes effect July 1, 2017. The budget increase is 4.17% 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 2016-17	This Year 2017-18	\$ Amount Change	% Change*	% of Total Budget*
Salaries and Benefits ¹	\$ 10,900,499	\$ 11,118,442	\$ 217,943	2.00%	77.52%
Utilities and Heat ²	236,356	275,098	38,742	16.39%	1.92%
Student Transportation ³	678,809	683,161	4,352	0.64%	4.76%
Tuition - (out of district) ⁴	416,182	618,735	202,553	48.67%	4.31%
All Outside Services ⁵	1,099,797	1,237,559	137,762	12.53%	8.63%
General Supplies ⁶	333,304	305,859	(27,445)	-8.23%	2.13%
Furniture and Equipment ⁷	29,100	32,092	2,992	10.28%	0.22%
Dues and Fees ⁸	74,989	72,557	(2,432)	-3.24%	0.51%
TOTALS	\$ 13,769,036	\$ 14,343,503	\$ 574,467	4.17%	100%

* 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 (\$238,375). We also buy the diesel fuel for the buses through the BOWA purchasing consortium at a cost of \$27,600.
- 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. Also included this year, for the first time, is the school resource officer – formerly paid from the Police Department budget, now in the Board of Education budget.
- 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.

Note: For a more complete and detailed look at the operating budget, go to the district website and click on 2017-2018 budget.