

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE AWARD-WINNING BRIDGE

The Annual Education Report of the Woodbridge School District – Connecting School & Community



THE

B

R

I

D

G

E



WBRS News: On the Air for Six Years - pg 3



Science Discoveries: OMG look at that! - pg 7

A Bittersweet Farewell

To The Citizens of Woodbridge

Some of life's chapters have happy endings. Some have sad ones. For me, leaving Woodbridge is bittersweet.

I have fallen in love with the town of Woodbridge. In this town that truly values excellence in education, Beecher is a microcosm of what education should be in the United States. The synergy of a highly qualified, dedicated administrative team and staff is supported by a strong parent community and the citizens of Woodbridge.



Woodbridge also values community, and children give us reason to come together. Whether it's Town sponsored events like concerts on the green, Family Day at Massaro Farm, opening day of the BethWood Baseball League, PTO events or Fire Department, Library, or sports related activities, the constant interaction with community and all its constituents truly energizes me.

As for Beecher Road School, it's a place for learning. Anyone, child or adult, who comes to the school becomes a learner. We all learn from one another in formal and informal ways. In addition, the 43-acre campus of BRS serves as a refuge for wildlife and wildflowers. It's both an outdoor classroom and a place where children and adults can run, jump and play on rolling hills, move on the 1/4 mile exercise loop, have fun on multiple playgrounds and observe nature at work.

continued on page 4

Open Art Studio unleashes creative expression - pg 7



Beecher's blue roof? 970 solar panels now produce one-third of school's electricity - pg 11



Solving math problems by trial and theory and thought - pg 9



Below: Perhaps the top elementary school band in Connecticut. So say judges - pg 6



connecting school and community



The Education Report of the Woodbridge School District

summer 2016 no. 10

woodbridge.k12.ct.us



Special education teacher Doreen Merrill (center), flanked by Gina Prisco (principal) and Guy Stella, is the Woodbridge Teacher of the Year. Nominated by peers for handling the intense demands of her job with unflagging energy and humor, she is also patient, fair, sensitive and supportive. Congratulations to Doreen Merrill. 🌟



Healthy Eating

Food Services Works On Constant Improvement: Healthy Eating, Better Meals, Lifelong Habits*

Community and school collaborations have been key to many of the successful enhancements to the food service program. From monthly food tastings to displays of fruit and vegetable carvings, and from classroom nutrition presentations to guest chef appearances, the involvement of committed stakeholders has added diversity and pizzazz to the special food events at Beecher Road School.



Guest Chef Suzanne Beck

Our first guest, Suzanne Beck, took time from her busy schedule as a chef at Bridgeport restaurant *Bloodroot*, to construct a healthy vegetable side dish recipe and work with food service staff to prepare and serve it. The next

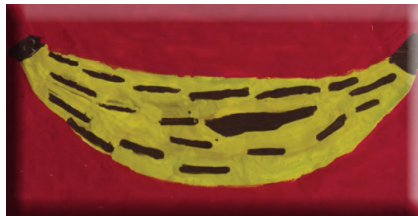
guest chef made a trip from New Hampshire to share his food carving skills with students as part of a fun food experience. In addition to the excitement that a break from daily routine provides, these events include lessons about nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices. Guest chef events also offer skill-building opportunities for food service staff as they work side by side with culinary experts. In exchange, these chefs gain insight into the world of school meal programs and their specific challenges. ♣

Food Services wraps up eventful year

It was a great year. The food service program this year at Beecher Road School was full of food activities and events, all designed to create a healthy school environment for students in and out of the classroom. The food service staff worked with a school nutrition consultant and the Superintendent's Cafeteria Task Force to increase healthy food items on the lunch menus, increase the use of locally grown produce through area farm sources and increase made-from-scratch menu items. Fresh, wholesome, made-from-scratch —these words create specific expectations. New popular offerings include hummus, fresh melons and roasted yellow and zucchini squash. Nutrition education plays an important part in preparing students to make good food and lifestyle choices. ♣

Visual arts serve as a means to communicate ideas. At BRS, our latest endeavor involves healthy eating. Step into our cafeteria, and you will observe that through art, our young artists have created works that are not only visually appealing, but educational as well, creating an environment conducive to eating proper foods. The professional artists who inspired us are:

- Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526-1593), an Italian painter best known for creating imaginative portraits made entirely of fruits, vegetables, flowers, fish
- Pop Artists, Robert Indiana, Wayne Thiebaud, Claes Oldenburg, and Andy Warhol ♣



BRS students at all grade levels created cafeteria art to inspire healthy eating

* In a commissioned 2016 survey of BRS parents' attitudes toward the school, the cafeteria topics made dramatic improvement over the last survey in 2014. See page 12.

Music reflections

by Bill Letsch

I've watched as our Music

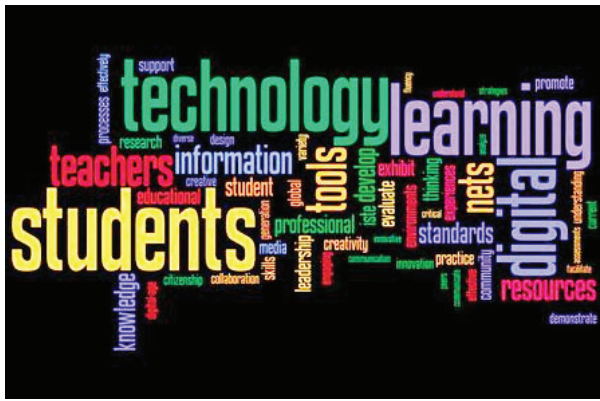
Department performs in the community for events in the first week of school, and even sometimes on the first day of the school year. The Marching Band performs in the community for events like the September 11th Memorial at the Firehouse, and Veterans Day. We've enjoyed the benefits of Fun performances like the Massaro Farm Family Fun Day and the Halloween Hoot. We have participated with the Musical Arts Conference in Winterguard and Percussion Ensemble. The Winterguard finished in the top 3 (Medaling) every year since 2004, and the Percussion Ensemble went undefeated and finished at the top of their division with Gold every year since 2004. The Jazz Ensemble performed in competitions around the state and performed alongside high schools from Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.

The Music Department at BRS has a rich history and an amazing future. ♣



Brag Board

- one of seven schools in the world selected to participate in Alan Alda science seminar
- #1 in country for FBI safe Internet practices
- #1 in country for individual 6th grade math student - pg 9
- 970 solar panels save taxpayer money, save planet too - pg 11
- art students exhibit work at Yale to well-received acclaim
- music students win gold & platinum awards usually reserved for much older students - pg 6
- parents love Beecher - say so on survey - pg 12
- Hundreds of additional pieces of news, features and information are on the Woodbridge School District website. Take a look at woodbridge.k12.ct.us



Beecher Road School has always used technology differently from other schools because the emphasis has been on student creation over consumption of content. Students are encouraged to use technology as a tool to share their knowledge in original and creative ways. Through the experiences of coding, 3D printing, writing and collaborative digital projects, students develop basic computer skills and creative ways to express their knowledge digitally.



TECH HIGHLIGHTS

3D Printing

The 2016 school year started with a brand new MakerBot 3D Printer in the Tech Center generously purchased by the Extended Day Program. Check out the student gallery on our district website >

woodbridge.k12.ct.us/3dprinter



3D objects designed and "printed"

Google Classroom

Google Classroom is a web-based platform that integrates Google Apps for Education with Google Docs, Sheets, and Slides. Teachers post assignments, announcements and can survey their classes. With iPads in hand, students can create work, view assignments and communicate with their teachers. In school, students work throughout the day with their iPads and Google Classroom and then at home, using their home computers, continue to work where they left off, just a tap away.

District Website

The Woodbridge District and Beecher Road School website is a critical means of communication with parents, the community, and the world.

The goals of the site are to show "Beecher in action" and to improve the flow of information and ease of communication. James Crawford, a member of the Library Technology team, has worked with Dr. Stella and the Administrative team to achieve these goals as well as plan for the future.

iPads in the Classrooms

The iPad is a powerful learning tool because it provides students with an array of supports and choices to help them individualize their own learning.

iPads are now available as centers in kindergarten and first grade and the school will be one-to-one with iPads from second through sixth grade in the fall.

On-the-Air with WBRS

WBRS News is a student created and directed televised news program that is produced by 6th graders with the help of Ms. Danielle Ulacco, BRS technology teacher. The weekly broadcast is shown throughout the school to answer the question, "What is happening at Beecher this week?"



Student reporters work with Ms. Ulacco to find important news and facts, and to incorporate them into a script to share with the school community. The student anchors share upcoming field trips, words of the week, the weather, and the cafeteria menu for the week. The students also learn to use a green screen, video cameras, and microphones to give the broadcast a professional feel. Students of all grades are eager to get to sixth grade to be a part of the WBRS crew. Since its first broadcast six years ago, WBRS news has become a weekly staple to kick off the start of the school week. ♣



On camera anchors prompted by off camera crew.

We all realize that technology is constantly, and swiftly changing. We see it in our personal and work lives in the way we communicate. New and changing technology is even in our HE washing machines, and of course our cars.



With this fact in mind, the technology we use in schools has to be well thought out and in sync with the world beyond our walls at BRS.

Updating school technology plans is not only important, but required by the state. Right now we are fine tuning a 3-year plan, awaiting Board of Education approval. Highlights of that plan focus on the essential question: *How do we promote personal learning, creativity and innovation among the BRS community?* Five areas will address

that question. They are:

1. *Professional Development* to ensure that all faculty use technology effectively in the classroom.

2. *Digital Workflow* to provide a seamless link between students, teachers and resources.
3. *Storing and Presenting Student Work* to create a portfolio for students, teachers and parents to monitor student progress.
4. *Home/School Connection* to continually improve the critical communication links between parents and educators.
5. *Infrastructure and Hardware* to ensure that all students and educators will have access to a comprehensive infrastructure for learning when and where they need it.

Details that expand each of these themes are part of the plan. ♣



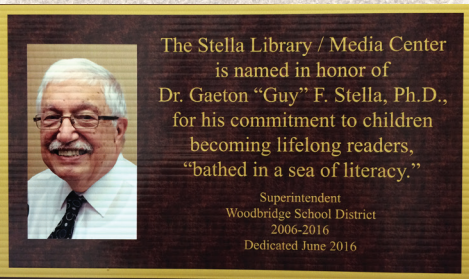
... continued from page 1

... Bittersweet Farewell

My ten-and-a-half years in Woodbridge have been the happiest in my professional career. Open communication, transparency and trust between the Town and School District have been built, and grow stronger each year. As I enter retirement, I want you to know that the district and the school are in excellent shape. The positive relationship among elected officials, town department staff, parents, administrators, teachers and staff has made BRS a school to be emulated, to be celebrated, to be loved.

I am truly humbled by the outpouring of love and respect for me that has been expressed in so many ways during the past several weeks by Town Officials and citizens, School Board, faculty, staff, Beecher Road Families, PTO and by our children. On June 7, I was given an honor that caught me completely by surprise and left me speechless. On that day, in a special after school event, it was announced that the Board of Education, with the support of a specially formed committee of School Board members, administrators and staff, as well as the support of the PTO and community representatives, approved a motion naming the Technology Center and the School Library after me.

In her remarks as emcee, Ms. Nakouzi said: "We are all very happy to be giving you this great honor. We admire your dedication to students and teachers. You have shaped our school and in doing so have put students, literacy and technology at the center, and it has had an effect."



Mock-up of plaque in Dr. Stella's honor

I am extremely humbled by all of the above. There are not sufficient words to describe the fulfillment I have gained in working with the Beecher Road School Community and the Town of Woodbridge during the past 10 ½ years. Once again, I say to you that this has been the happiest chapter of my long professional career. Thank you. ♣

School District Business Manager receives state awards



Alfred Pullo

The Connecticut School Indoor Environment Resource Team annually chooses a person who has shown leadership in addressing school indoor environmental quality, and has championed

the Tools for Schools program. We are very proud that the recipient of the 2016 Connecticut Tools for Schools Hero Award is Alfred Pullo, Business Manager for the Woodbridge School District. State officials presented the award this spring. Congratulations are also extended to the members of the Tools for Schools committee for their outstanding work. ♣

25 Years in School Nutrition

Our food services staff has been flexible and invested in making positive changes for our students. Experience and dedication to the program is exemplified in the Cafeteria Manager, Jane Roddy, who was recognized this spring at a state awards dinner for completing 25 years in the field of school nutrition.



Holding award, Jane Roddy (center), Food Services Manager, with Dr. Stella and state official

Ms. Roddy has led the staff in embracing new initiatives with professionalism and enthusiasm and looks forward to continuing in this role for years to come. We are excited about the progress made this year and are even more inspired as we plan for another exciting and successful year. ♣

PTO serves the BRS community from the President, Timothy Kelley

This year the PTO raised over \$30,000 with the help of many parent volunteers. The main events for the year included the Ice Cream Social, Halloween HOOT, Thanksgiving Food Drive, Book Fairs, Book Swap and social nights for every grade.

Robert Gilbert is New Superintendent



Robert Gilbert

We are pleased to welcome Robert Gilbert to the position of Superintendent of Schools upon the retirement of Dr. Guy Stella on June 30. Mr. Gilbert comes to Woodbridge after serving several Connecticut school districts.

Starting as a music teacher in Bolton and then East Windsor, Mr. Gilbert then became the Assistant Principal of a pre-K – 8 school in Woodstock. After growing in that administrative experience, he settled in Granby in 1994 where he was appointed principal of the Kelly Lane Intermediate School, grades 3-6. In 2013 Mr. Gilbert took a Granby district office position assisting the superintendent as Director of Teaching and Talent Development.

Mr. Gilbert sends greeting to the citizens of Woodbridge:

Hello To The Town of Woodbridge, I am excited and honored to have been appointed as your new School Superintendent. Over the coming weeks and months, I am looking forward to meeting the students, parents, and staff of the Woodbridge School District, as well as meeting the town officials and residents of this great town. I look forward to working tirelessly on behalf of our students as we prepare them for a rich, rewarding future.

Robert 'Bob' Gilbert ♣

We also paid for Special Activities for each grade which included authors, artists and multi-cultural performances. We were able



Looking for treasures at the PTO Book Swap

to donate a new weather station to support the STEM programs and also provide money to purchase classroom laptops for the teachers. Finally, we held the teacher luncheon, provided holiday trays and hosted the teacher appreciation staff meeting to show our support for the great staff at Beecher. ♣



**From “the other side of the desk”:
Amity High seniors reflect on Beecher**

By Kate Helfenbein & Audrey Grotheer

Thirteen Amity seniors, six of whom are Beecher graduates, were interns at BRS for the Amity High School *Senior Service Learning Program* for four weeks at the end of senior year.

Returning to Beecher was an eye-opening experience for those of us once enrolled there. Now on the other side of the desk, we realize what amazing opportunities were available to us in this school and how much of an impact it had on us growing up.

Upon our arrival, Principal Gina Prisco reminded us that we are now adults in the eyes of Beecher students. Many Beecher alumni observed that the school seems smaller now that we’ve grown up. Not only has the building changed in our eyes, but the school climate has improved as well. The biggest difference we found from our time at Beecher is the overwhelmingly accepting and positive environment.

We realize that we took a great deal for granted while enrolled at Beecher. Grayson Arndt (Woodbridge) returned to the MAG (Multi-Age Group) program for his senior internship. He said, “Seeing MAG from the other side emphasizes what MAG did for me. I realize how special MAG is.” As students we didn’t fully appreciate the efforts of the teachers and school.

Even the Amity seniors who didn’t attend Beecher recognized the unique learning environment Beecher offers its students. Tim Cannata (Orange), who worked in the art classes, marveled at Beecher’s ability to help all students find their interests and follow their passion. The idea of following one’s passion was the central theme at Amity High School this year.

Carli Atwood (Woodbridge) remarked how hard teachers have to work to find motivating activities, but then how rewarding it is when students begin to truly enjoy learning.

Our time as BRS interns has been a walk down memory lane as well as a learning experience. As we now go our separate ways, we realize this internship has taught us patience, acceptance, and a new appreciation for the work teachers do. Each of us will carry these lessons forward as we continue to follow our own passion. ♣



Principal Gina Prisco (center rear) with AHS students who concluded a 4-week intern program at BRS



A note from Dr. Stella:

In April, I returned from a 9-day trip to China. I was invited to speak at an international symposium in Beijing on the topic of early childhood education as well as address the faculty and graduate student body at Central China Normal University in Wuhan, one of the best universities in China. Dr. Kun Liu, a researcher at Yale and Capital University in Beijing, and parent at BRS, organized this symposium.

While in China, I also visited an outstanding pre-school program in Beijing and two elementary schools in Wuhan, one of which might be a potential new sister school for BRS.

Some ask, “Why did I go to China?”

There is an urgent need to prepare our children to gain the skills needed to live successful lives in a global community. Cross-cultural communication with both western and non-western cultures will benefit our students. I made a lot of connections and relationships during my trip that will provide our students with that opportunity. The trip was very productive.

We have worked diligently over the past several years in promoting global awareness. I wanted to make sure that the momentum continued. My trip has many implications for the students of BRS in this regard. ♣

The social-emotional development of our children is as important as their academic development. At BRS, one major goal is to build the social and emotional skills of students. During the past school year the following initiatives were implemented to support this focus:

- Anti-Defamation League workshop on Anti-Bullying conducted for all 6th graders; parent workshop also held during Superintendent’s Academy.
- Anti-bullying training and reporting procedures shared with all staff

Social Emotional



- and faculty
- Summer workshop held for staff on the *Responsive Classroom* approach
 - School-wide focus on BKind week and implementing CARES (Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self-Control)
 - Direct instruction offered through the School Psychologists and Social worker in the social skills identified in CARES
 - Development and implementation of a 3-year Safe School Climate Action Plan, based on results of a parent, staff and student survey



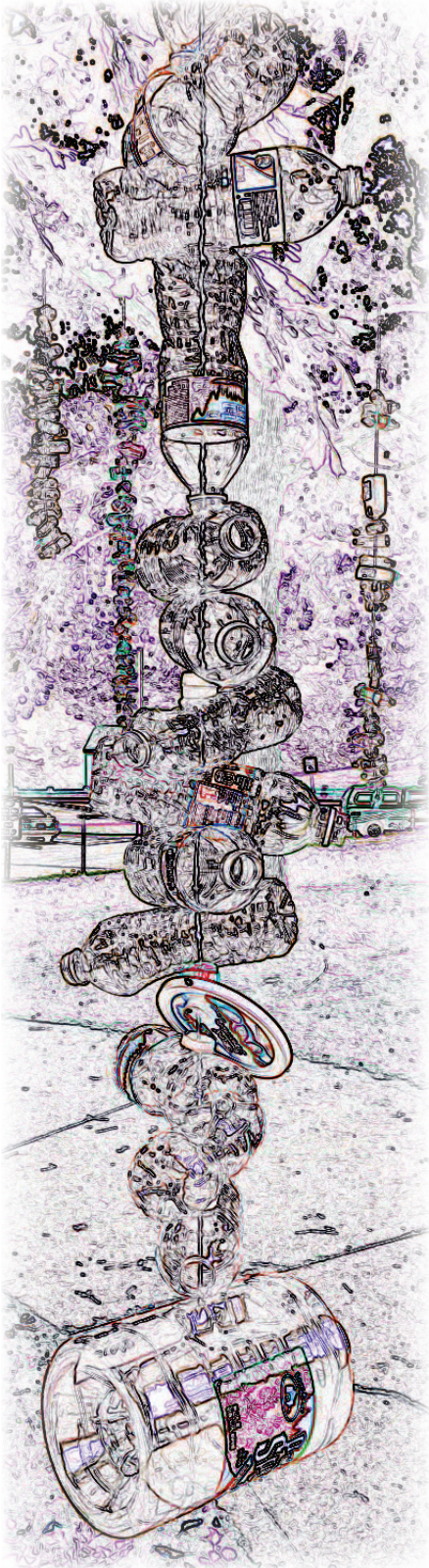
We will continue to direct these efforts with the guidance of our Safe School Climate Committee and our strong school team. ♣



Dr. Stella surrounded by excited Chinese children during his spring trip to China.



Each second 1,500 plastic water bottles are discarded in the US



ArtsWeek 9, the annual celebration of the visual and performing arts, engaged the whole school in music, dance, performance and interactive art creation. The visual art piece of ArtsWeek is theme based. This year's theme was "ArtsWeek 9 Goes Green." Students in every classroom were challenged to create art from plastic trash. The mobiles they created are testimony to the creative ideas children and their teachers exhibit.

BRS music groups performed and gave concerts for students and parents as well as participated in an intense musical evaluation program. The BRS music program nurtures musicians who want to excel vocally and instrumentally. And excel they do.



For the past several years the school has participated in a critical evaluation program called *Music Adjudication*, the purpose of which is to have experts make suggestions for improvement. The interesting thing about this program is that it is almost never extended to elementary schools unless they show exceptional ability. BRS does.

In this year's judging, we are proud to report that the highest *platinum* honor went to the String Ensemble and the Jazz Ensemble. The next level, *gold*, went to the Chorus and the Concert Band.

Congratulations to our teachers and their students for continued excellence in music education. ♣





Jason explores new potter's wheel



John develops his 2-finger roll

Open Studio Group

Open Studio Group is a place where children get a chance to explore the creative process. A child enters the studio with an idea for a sculpture, a painting, a print, a drawing, a collage, a piece of clay, wood, fashion, a building, a design for a product. Along the way they achieve not just artistic but personal growth, challenging the conventional, occasionally brushing against the avant-garde.

The studio offerings focus on myriad forms of visual expression designed by each child. We celebrate the willingness of our students to try new things. They work to discover not just what they want to build, but what they're trying to express. Until the idea is manifest, its outline is, at best, a bit cloudy. Marks are made, colors applied and the object is set in motion. The creative spark has been lit, but the fire needs tending. The "play" begins, mistakes happen, thinking is done, judgments are made. The next day decisions made earlier might look weak.

Adjust, destroy, rebuild. Some ideas last all year, others for a brief time. The decision is up to the child.

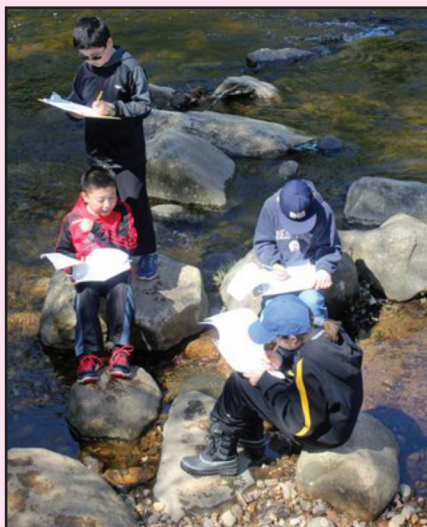
Artists must trust their instincts and intuitions, take risks. The children learn to transform their ideas into something of personal value, or are just given time to explore. Most of what they do is open-ended.

Pictured above are Jason, exploring our new potter's wheel, and Jon, who developed "The Two Finger Roll" working with clay. ❁

SCIENCE

Connecticut's Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) have as a major focus the idea that students should experience the world as scientists do, asking questions and defining problems related to real world phenomena. During the last three months of school, BRS students have had ample opportunities to address many such phenomena both at school and through field experiences. At each grade level students have been involved in science related activities and explorations.

In the seed unit, second graders use their iPads as tools for learning. After they observe seeds, they take photos, make notes and keep a journal as part of the study.



Fourth graders raise and hatch salmon. The process takes several weeks. Along the way many lessons about development, the "fry" (babies), environment and nourishment are learned. Data is kept. One day in early spring the classes go to Connecticut's Salmon River and set the fry into their natural habitat to grow into adults.



First graders learn about the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to cocoon to the emergence of a butterfly by watching the actual process in their classroom. Observations and recording information are part of the process. The day comes to release the butterflies into nature. ❁



LITERACY

Principal demands, “Stop reading!”



Words you’d never think you’d hear a principal say: “Please stop reading!” So says Principal Prisco. But a frequent sight in BRS is children walking down the halls engrossed in a book. They often need to be reminded to keep their eyes on where they are headed. This fact is just one piece of evidence that affirms the statement, “Beecher strives to develop lifelong readers and writers.”

The children have developed a passion for literature and other texts. Students have access to a plethora of titles in the classroom and from the expansive collection in the library. It is true when we say our children are “bathed in a sea of literacy.”

The adults are models of continuous learning. Our partnership with Columbia University demonstrates that as a school we believe that learning is a never-ending journey. Collaborating as teams, the faculty continues to research the most effective strategies for reading and writing instruction through the *workshop* model, and the children benefit from our learning. It is a compliment to BRS that we have so many visitors. We open our doors to principals and teachers from other school districts to share our knowledge about reading and writing. Every reading celebration, reader’s theater performance, student-parent book club and gallery walk of student writing is another example of what makes BRS more than a place that teaches reading and writing. Beecher Road School develops lifelong readers and writers. ♣

From learning letters to writing book trailers: The journey to literacy

As our 6th graders prepared to move on to middle school, many of them took time to reflect on their literacy pathway through BRS. Since kindergarten, these students have been taught to read and write through the *workshop* approach. They began their journey by learning letters and sounds, drawing pictures and telling stories.

Ekphrasis: The description of a visual work of art

Each week, sixth grade teacher Dan Chase devotes a day to developing the craft of reading and writing, a time called *Craft Workshop*. Mostly dedicated to poetry, students are exposed to a number of genres, perspectives, themes and devices authors use to express meaning.

As a culmination of this work, students go a step further to consider how two forms of expression, poetry and visual art, use parallel components to achieve a similar end. In order to accomplish this, they spend some time building on the concepts learned in art class: line, intensity, color, shape and form, and how the choices an artist makes directly impact the viewer. Then, they consider how those formal elements can lead to poetic reaction on the part of the viewer. In essence, this is the art of *ekphrasis*, the description of a visual work of art.

Here are two ekphrastic poems students created. The paintings offered students diversity. After lengthy group discussions about each piece, students chose one and composed a poem to reflect their reactions.

This year, they created fantasy book trailers and wrote essays for DARE graduation. *Readers and Writers Workshop* promotes choice, independence, and individualized instruction. Students learn to read and write in different genres, and each grade level builds upon the skills taught the previous year. Besides teaching the “nuts and bolts,” another important goal of workshop is to develop lifelong learners. We want our students to be proficient in the areas of literacy, but we also want them to enjoy reading and writing.

“I like being in a book club and learning about famous people.”

Our 6th grade students have fond memories of workshop. Recollections of some of their favorites projects are:
Kindergarten - “We made a book for Mother’s Day and put all of our mom’s favorite things in it.”
Grade 1 - “We were able to invent our own characters and put them in a story.”
Grade 4 - “My favorite unit was reading biographies. I liked being in a book club and learning about famous people.” ♣

The Deserted Beach (Wm. Chase Merritt)



Alone By The Seaside (M.B. 2016)

*Deserted
Alone
Nothing is alive
By the seaside
No waves crashing
Everything is calm and collected
The boats in the distance at a standstill
Taking in the beautiful view
The hot squishy sand
The cold refreshing water
The light blue sky
The white fluffy clouds floating in the sky*

The Great Wave Off Kanagawa (Katsushika Hokusai)



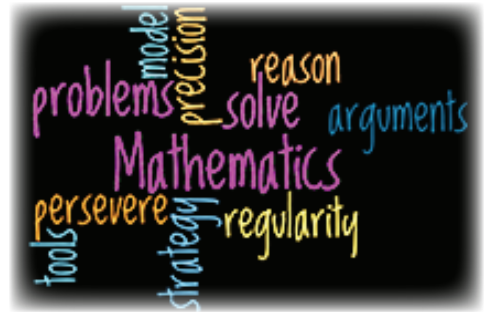
The Great Wave (C.T. 2016)

*A gigantic wave looming just above them
Controlling the small boats underneath it
Treacherous waves crashing into the ships
Putting the innocent people’s lives in peril
In the distance, a mountain stands alone
Watching the scene without mercy
But, almost seems peaceful compared to the ocean below
The tsunami about to destroy anything in its path
Even though nothing was ever done to provoke it.
The mountain knows that when it is over,
It will be standing alone again. ♣*



In National Math Competitions:

-  **BRS 6th grader places first in state and nation among 8,000 students**
-  **4th graders place #1 in New England out of 422 schools**



Each year, BRS students in grades 3 – 6 participate in *Continental Mathematics League** meets. Students participate with other students on the same grade level from schools all over the United States. Grade 3 students participate in three meets with students in grades 4-6 participating in 5 meets. 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 proud to announce that our fourth graders won a Regional first place for the Euclidean division. There are 422 schools in our region including Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Additionally, one of our 6th grade students, Berkan, was a National Student winner for the Pythagorean division. Eight thousand students across the nation participated in the sixth grade Pythagorean division. In the entire country, 25 students earned a perfect score and seven of those are from our region. Of those seven in our region, Berkan was the only student in Connecticut to receive a perfect score in the Pythagorean division. Congratulations to all of our young mathematicians. ♣



Berkan being cheered by fellow students on the news that he took first place in the nation.

* A national organization that oversees mathematical problem-solving competitions throughout the country.

- “I can do it.”
- “I tried a new plan.”
- “It’s challenging and I know I have to work harder.”
- “I have to persevere even when it’s tricky.”

As students at Beecher work on challenging math problems, they learn new ways to think about how to approach difficult tasks. Teachers share strategies that encourage persistence and grit, emphasizing that *meaningful struggle* can lead to deeper learning and understanding.

As you walk into a math classroom at Beecher Road School, you notice students talking in groups or partnerships about math. Students are engaging in discourse about their thinking processes. They use conversation techniques to explain their mathematical thinking and to share multiple strategies to solve a problem. Math talk develops students’ capacity to use math vocabulary and to revise, confirm or disagree with another student’s mathematical thinking.

Several sixth grade students are Math Peer Tutors. This program allows sixth grade students to develop leadership skills while being mentors to younger students. The sixth grade students meet weekly with students in third and fourth grade to help them with multiplication and division fact fluency. They play math games and show students various strategies to develop their math fluency skills. ♣

Mathematics Improvement Action Plan takes hold at BRS

Focus on mathematics improvement has been a BRS top priority for the past few years. That included establishing a mathematics task force to delve into the nuts and bolts of the math curriculum. The group looked at consistency through the school, materials, teaching strategies, the state framework for math instruction and existing student mathematics achievement – which was already quite good as measured by the formerly used Connecticut Mastery Test. The task force also sought the help of the *Tri-State Consortium** that came to Woodbridge to take an in-depth look at

current practices and offer recommendations and commendations.

As a result a *Mathematics Action Plan*, with two main goals, was put in place and is in effect now. Goal one is to “recognize, nurture and meet the diverse mathematical needs of all learners.” While goal two seeks to “continue to provide information to parents and the community regarding the math program, K-6.”

With these goals specific objectives are in place to bring about even better mathematics education at Beecher. ♣

* An organization comprised of high performing member school districts from NY, NJ and CT, whose goal is to assist each other in school improvement.

ENGINEERING STARTS HERE

Engineering, the application of math and science knowledge to solve problems, continues to be a focus at BRS. Student scientists are engaged as they answer questions about the world around them that include identifying problems and the engineering cycle: design, build, test and redesign products for solutions to problems. BRS student engineers in grade 3 designed and tested ways to clean up oil spills. Some fourth grade engineers designed and built

catapults to move an object from one place to another, while others, including some engineers from the multi-age group (MAG), used K’NEX to design and build functional models of devices to harness alternative energy sources such as wind, water and sunshine. *In the photo to the right, Kindergarten engineers applied their knowledge about weather, temperature and the properties of buildings and building materials as they designed, built and tested houses to*

address the problem of keeping a snowman from melting. ♣





PHYSICAL EDUCATION



Physical Education at Beecher promotes fitness, skill development, and teamwork. It is inclusive and non-threatening, providing students with opportunities to explore many activities. Through physical education students are inspired to strive for a lifestyle that is active and healthy.

A staff of three is responsible for the physical education and health education curricula at BRS. The campus has two gymnasiums and a fitness room that accommodates child friendly fitness, climbing, and gymnastics. Outside, the campus is extensive, with multiple fields, permanent fitness and play structures, swings, two full-sized



Keeping fit on the climbing wall

tennis courts and a .25-mile running trail.

A mainstay of the physical education program for children with special needs at BRS is the adapted swim program. These

students swim once a week from pre-K through sixth grade. While in the water students work one-on-one with staff to learn specific skills connected to their needs. The Woodbridge School District, in collaboration with the Woodbridge Recreation Department, purchased an automatic lift to enable all students to have equal access to the pool. There is also an adapted physical education program located in the gymnasium for primary and



Strength & coordination

pre-K students. These programs run year round. Physical education is an ideal discipline to integrate with other academics and activities at BRS. For example, during Bus Safety Week, pre-K through grade two students practice the safe and proper mechanics of exiting the back of the bus while in the gym. Math skills are reinforced throughout the physical education

curriculum in several ways: by measuring distances jumped in track and field events, by counting the number



Recess time is fitness time too

of laps swum in the pool or shots made in basketball and building ratios to show the relationship between “tries” and “scores,” and, by using stopwatches, measuring tapes, and pedometers to measure distances traveled and the time it took to travel those distances. Students also learn to read charts and graphs to develop an understanding of the effects of their efforts on their performances over time. History and physical education integrations are also easily accomplished. For example, children play Colonial games as they learn about the history of the United States – from the establishment of the colonies to the westward expansion.

In short, the physical education program offers something for everyone. At BRS students are exposed to various activities to develop a broad base of skills and knowledge about sports, games and fitness.



Skills, practice, perseverance

With a strong foundation at a young age, it is our hope that our students will grow into active adults, taking responsibility for their health, fitness and leisure time. ♣



World language connects ideas

The goal of Beecher Road School’s Spanish program is to provide students with the opportunity to acknowledge and embrace another language and culture and to develop communication proficiency in a language other than English.

During the 2015-2016 school year students had various unique opportunities to enhance their Spanish language skills through the integration of other academic areas. These academic areas included the visual arts, health, physical education, and technology.



Spanish, Art and Health come together to celebrate the centennial of Massaro Farm.

For example, students in grade six learned Spanish through an instructional unit centered upon health, nutrition, and exercise. They created a presentation in Spanish focusing upon healthy living.

Students in grade five had the opportunity to use an iPad during Spanish class throughout the school year. The iPad was intertwined into the World Language curriculum in order to support and enhance language learning.

Throughout this school year students developed basic communication skills in Spanish while content in other discipline areas was reinforced and enriched. They did this through various opportunities to listen, speak, read, and write. ♣

One of the unique activities to increase language competence: At left, 4th grade students created imaginary animals (like a cat and a turtle combo) and described its attributes in Spanish.



COMMUNITY-SERVICE-SPIRIT-VISION: these are the four values that drive the BRS Student Council and this year, global citizens could be added to the list. The student council is comprised of 22 5th and 6th grade students and 4 faculty advisors and has completed a number of noteworthy projects this year.



In addition to the annual bake

sales and movie nights, a number of new initiatives were started this year. The council met with the founder of the Jeremy Saxe Foundation to learn about Nepal and the education system there, worked with K9 First Responders of Connecticut to host an in-house field trip for the Fourth grade students and visited the Woodbridge Senior Center. Within the school, Student Council headed two door decorating events, spirit week, Beecher history fact Fridays, a cup stacking event and BKindness week.

After the fund raising efforts during the school year, monetary donations were made to the Jeremy Saxe Foundation, K9 First Responders* and the Woodbridge Fuel Fund. ♣

** K9 First Responders is a Critical Incident Mental Health Support organization in Milford, CT. The goal is to jump-start the process of restoring a person's emotional and cognitive equilibrium after a trauma, enabling a person's individual resilience and fostering community resilience. The use of dogs encourages and promotes these processes.*



Teachers and students help in the building process.

An amazing journey from local to global citizenship

The Jeremy Saxe Foundation for Education and Development

was founded in memory of a local citizen, Jeremy Saxe, who died suddenly in his sleep on September 4, 2008.

Jeremy had recently returned from four months in Nepal and an internship in Washington, D.C. He was a senior, majoring in philosophy at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania. Jeremy was profoundly moved by his experiences in Nepal. He was especially distressed about the poor educational opportunities for the Nepali children and was particularly disturbed about the school that his homestay “sister” Manisha attended in Pharping, Nepal.

It disturbed him that she would never reach her goal of becoming a nurse if her formative education continued to consist of a minimal curriculum. Jeremy wanted the children of Pharping, including Manisha, and brother Ashish, to receive a proper education.

The foundation intends to fulfill Jeremy's mission by providing educational opportunities for these children by creating a better Nepali school. And, the funds go directly to the school.

From the director of the foundation, Heidi Saxe:

We are deeply appreciative for the incredible support that Beecher Road School and the Student Council have given Jeremy's legacy foundation. Your generosity will once again have great impact in Nepal. ♣



School under construction in Pharping, Nepal



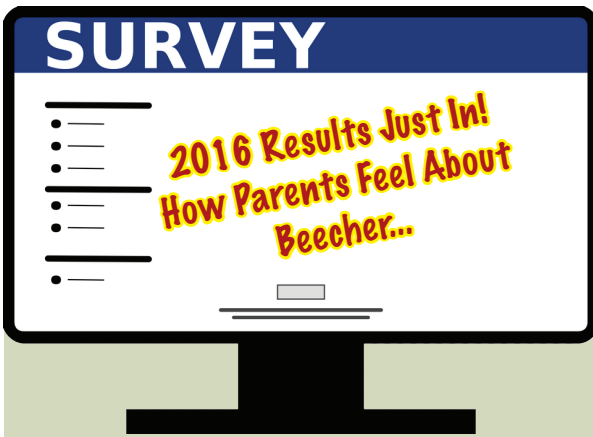
It's Official!

Early in June, the entire school community gathered at the north entrance of BRS with key town and state officials to ceremoniously cut the ribbon for the grand opening of BRS. The school has just undergone a two-year, \$14 million upgrade. Energy efficiency, climate control and security were the biggest items on the upgrade list.



970 solar panels help power BRS electrical needs

Although not easily seen from ground level, an impressive 242 kilowatt (KW) solar array now generates clean renewable energy at BRS. The 970 solar panels, located above the south wing and center “pod” roofs, will generate approximately 291,000 kilowatt-hours (KWH) of electrical energy a year, one-third of our school's annual energy usage. The panels, owned and maintained by a state agency and UI, produce electricity. We buy and use that electricity at a significantly reduced rate. The solar panel system has an annual gross cost savings of \$37,830; and an annual net cost savings of \$13,680. ♣



97% of parents would recommend Beecher Road School to a friend seeking a school for their child.

THE BRIDGE



A scientifically conducted survey of *Parent Attitudes Toward Beecher Road School* was completed this June. Panorama, the company that oversees the survey, did one for BRS two years ago. With the same 49 items on each survey, school officials are able to determine areas

that have improved since 2014, and those that have gone down in positive responses. This 2016 survey, emailed to all families of BRS students, had a 52% rate of return. Panorama says quite simply, "This is a phenomenal return. No other school district we work with has this kind of response."

With a 97% approval rating for both, the survey indicates that parents are satisfied with the leadership of the Board of Education and with that of the Superintendent. The survey is overwhelmingly supportive of the district, its staff and its leadership. More than one-third of the responses are at 95% or better, with the vast majority (88%), at 90% or better. For a complete look at the survey results go to > woodbridge.k12.ct.us/parentsurvey2016 ♣

Significant areas of Improvement*, showing a 10% gain or more since the last survey in 2014, are highlighted in the table at the right:

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

PRSR STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EDDM DETAIL

LOCAL
POSTAL CUSTOMER
WOODBRIDGE, CT 06525

Area	Approval	Increase Since 2014
My child's report card clearly communicates what my child is learning.	76%	13%
My child feels appropriately challenged in his or her classes.	91%	12%
BRS offers my child opportunities to explore areas of interest outside the core content areas.	88%	10%
BRS has clean and well-maintained facilities and properties.	96%	16%
BRS provides students with healthy food choices.	79%	16%

*There were no areas that decreased by 10% or more. In fact, any decreases noted were 3% or less, and according to Panorama are within the margin of error. Neutral responses are considered neither favorable nor unfavorable and are excluded from the results.

Taxpayer's Guide to the 2016-2017 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 on July 1. The budget increase is 2.03% 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 2015-16	This Year 2016-17	\$ Amount Change	% Change*	% of Total Budget*
Salaries and Benefits ¹	\$ 10,758,487	\$ 10,900,499	\$ 142,012	1.3%	79.2%
Utilities and Heat ²	308,777	236,356	(72,421)	-23.5%	1.7%
Student Transportation ³	614,854	678,809	63,955	10.4%	4.9%
Tuition - (out of district) ⁴	253,175	416,182	163,007	64.4%	3.0%
All Outside Services ⁵	1,122,080	1,099,797	(22,283)	(2.0%)	8.0%
General Supplies ⁶	327,991	333,304	5,313	1.6%	2.4%
Furniture and Equipment ⁷	38,680	29,100	(9,580)	(24.8%)	0.2%
Dues and Fees ⁸	70,669	74,989	4,320	6.1%	0.5%
TOTALS	\$ 13,494,713	\$ 13,769,036	\$ 274,323	2.03%	100%

* Percents rounded to the nearest one-hundredth of a percent
1: 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. In addition, the Board of Education successfully negotiated a high deductible health plan which resulted in a 4.3% decrease in medical insurance expenses.

2: Electricity, water, sewer and heating

3: In addition to regular school buses, some children require special transportation due to special needs (\$210,315). We also buy the diesel fuel for the buses through the BOWA purchasing consortium. That cost is \$26,646, a 43% reduction from last year.

4: 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.

5: Services we purchase or lease. Examples include telephones, insurance, Internet, postage, professional development, legal, technical and professional services, substitutes, building repairs, improvements and maintenance.

6: Paper, pencils, books, wax, soap, paper products, band aids, software, envelopes, library books, subscriptions, etc.

7: In most cases, furniture and equipment items purchased are replacements.

8: *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 2016-2017 budget.

SCHOOL STARTS AUGUST 29

THE BRIDGE

The Education Report of the
Woodbridge School District
Vol. 10,
Summer 2016

Woodbridge Board of Education
Margaret Hamilton – *Chair*
Steven Fleischman – *Vice-Chair*
Christianne Jaffe – *Secretary*
Lisa Connor – Karen Kravetz
Garett Luciani – Keri Matthews
Emily Melnick – Lynn Piascyk
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.