



MR. GILBERT'S PARENT UPDATE



Superintendent of Schools Woodbridge School District

MISSION
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.
woodbridge.k12.ct.us March 4, 2019

Dear Beecher Road School Families:

Funding your schools and other Town services is an essential undertaking. The Board of Selectmen held a meeting in February to review budget requests from all Town departments prior to sending the proposal to the Board of Finance. With the Woodbridge Board of Finance budget workshop meeting coming this Thursday, March 7 at 6 p.m., I would like to give you an update on next year's (2019-20) Woodbridge School District Budget. Two budgets, a capital budget* and an operating budget** make up our complete Town budget request.

Capital Budget: This past fall, a tour of the Beecher building and grounds was conducted for the Boards of Selectmen, Finance and Education. Following that tour, the district administration brought forward a robust 6-year capital budget request totaling \$3,074,101. This focused on facility and grounds/campus needs. The proposal included a request to fund a project in the first year for our HVAC system, which urgently needs to be completed to address humidity and other issues.

HVAC

In February, the Board of Selectmen reviewed all Town department capital budget requests. They made a number of reductions, including to the Board of Education. The initial request for HVAC funding was adjusted to start work sooner. Therefore, HVAC improvement will go forward using current year funds available to the Town of approximately \$100,000, with the balance of \$40,000 to be funded in FY 2020. We are grateful for the Town's continued support for this HVAC project. The Board of Selectmen also maintained our funding request for technology infrastructure as well as our request for needed exterior doors. They reduced our grounds request from \$50,000 to \$25,000 and cut/deferred our paving request.



Woodbridge/Beecher Road School is the second highest district in Connecticut for increasing enrollment.

Operating Budget: Woodbridge enrollment is growing rather than declining. In fact, State data indicates that Beecher has the second highest district-level rate of enrollment growth in Connecticut. That is, we are the second highest of all 169 Connecticut public school districts, grades K thru 12. Current BRS enrollment is 846 students, a total increase of 80 students over the last 6 years.

The FY 2020 proposed budget request stands at \$15,519,603. This represents an increase of \$847,318 or 5.77% over the current year budget. The Board of Education unanimously approved this budget proposal at its December meeting. While this budget increase is the highest request in recent memory, it truly reflects the needs of our school community.

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Hang On In There



Student Council members and their advisors recently set out on a team-building activity at a nearby ropes course. The purpose of the event was to build skills in collaboration, caring and leadership that help them in the outreach activities they engage in.



YOUNG ENGINEERS

First Lego League Robotics teams and their advisers

from BRS were recognized at the February Board of Education meeting for their participation in the Fall 2018 festival and competition at Shelton High School. Team members had an opportunity to share their projects and experiences at the meeting. The teams were also recognized for being selected to showcase their projects and work for all Connecticut Superintendents and Board Members at the 2018 CAPSS/CABE Convention in Mystic. The 4 teams are The Orbiting Owls, Space Eagles, Space Cadets, and Space Surfers.

First Lego League was founded in 1998 by Dean Kamen and the owner of the LEGO group, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen. Its purpose is to introduce the next generation to the excitement of STEM. FLL worldwide engages more than 320,000 participants in 40,000 teams across 98 countries.

If adopted, this budget does this:

1. maintains all current programs and staffing
2. meets all contractual obligations
3. adds needed positions for enrollment growth
4. addresses increase in our special needs population
5. maintains class size guidelines (some grade levels are close to exceeding maximum ranges)

Another factor in our budget

Also evidenced in this reporting is that our staffing has not kept pace with our special needs population growth. The profile of today's special needs students continues to grow in complexity. Each student's needs are unique and require an individualized education plan (IEP). The goal is to provide the child with the most appropriate education program that is possible in their hometown school environment.



Our special needs students account for approximately 11% of the total student enrollment. Special education expenses include both in-district as well as outplaced students for whom we pay tuition.

calendar dates

- Mar 14: Report Card Distribution
- Mar 14: BOE Curriculum Meeting - Technology 4:30 PM
- Mar 15: No School for Students - Teacher Workshop Day
- Mar 18: BOE Regular Meeting - 7:00 PM
- Apr 2-4: PTO Spring Book Fair
- Apr 8 and 10: **1:10 PM Dismissal** - Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Apr 15-19: Spring Break
- Apr 22: Public Hearing on the Town Budget - 7:30 PM Center Building
- Apr 23: BOE Regular Meeting 7:00 PM

Why such an increase?

Of the \$847,318 requested increase for FY 2020, nearly half, \$377,000 (44%), of the total increase is related to the costs of special education for students at BRS, as well as those educated in programs out-of-district.

Budget Summary: All budget requests that the Board of Selectmen received from Town departments, including both Beecher and Amity, totaled \$53,356,811. That represented a Town budget increase of 7.8%. The Board of Selectmen reduced that total to \$51,501,640 through reductions to town department capital budgets. The original 7.8% increase was lowered to 4.05%.

The Selectmen approved a motion to send the budget to the Board of Finance with the goal of having the Board of Finance work with all departments (including Beecher) to reduce the overall town budget by an additional 3%, which for Beecher equates to approximately \$450,000. A reduction of this magnitude is only achieved through staff and program eliminations at Beecher



Meeting: The Woodbridge Board of Finance has called a budget workshop meeting this Thursday, March 7, at 6 p.m. at the Woodbridge Town Hall to take the next steps in this process. Our next steps are to attend that Board of Finance budget workshop. In the interim, I continue to be in contact with town officials about the needs of our school.

- * Plan for considering long-term sums for investment in plant and machinery, over a greater time period than considered in the annual day-to-day operating budget.
- π Annual financial plan to carry on the business of the school district for one year.



Enrichment Programs

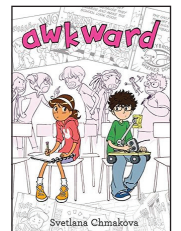
Perhaps you've heard about Beecher's enrichment clusters. They are a means to engage students in choosing learning opportunities that capitalize on their interests, enthusiasm and multiple intelligences.



How it works is being presented this month by third grade teachers (above) at the Connecticut Superintendents IGNITE Conference that highlights innovative educational programming and projects in the state.

diversity The Community Diversity Committee is a group of parents, administrators and teachers created "...to build partnerships, promote and celebrate the diversity and multi-dimensional aspects of the school, local, regional and global community."

Recently, members of the committee partnered with the Town for two town-wide events geared towards children. For younger students, a presentation of the book *Soulful Sydney* resulted in the students making fleece blankets for a charitable organization. At the Town Library, older students were invited to read and discuss the book *Awkward* about making friends and avoiding troublesome situations.



kindness **compassion** **others** In a related event, a PTO-sponsored Superintendent's Academy offered a program where The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) presented an informational night for parents. The ADL also held sessions for all students in grades four, five and six supporting the school's emphasis on "developing kind, caring and compassionate members of the community."

With that focus, curricular connections for students may include social issue book clubs in grade six, intentionally selected titles for Read Aloud across grade levels or school wide events such as *Empathy Across America*.

