



connecting school  
and community

The Education Report  
of the Woodbridge  
School District  
woodbridge.k12.ct.us  
summer 2020  
no. 14

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*With support from Town Hall, BRS teachers Larissa Crocco and Ashley Wagner asked students and residents to participate in a community-building art project: create and display a heart in windows, mailboxes, doors or yards to show solidarity. This is one such window in town.*



### You need the internet

**D**ISTANCE LEARNING DEPENDS ON technology. The prerequisites are:

1. internet access
2. a device equipped with appropriate software
3. ability to use the device to interact

Fortunately, in most Woodbridge homes the prerequisites are in place. But there are a certain number of homes without internet access or any devices. Another problem has also arisen. Because of *stay at home* orders, some homes don't have enough devices to satisfy the needs of all the students at home and their parents who may be working from home.

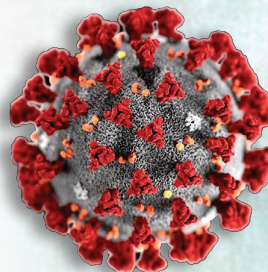
The school system has addressed these issues by loaning the needed devices to students, and in some cases has purchased *hot spots* that provide access to the internet.

Children have learned how to use the devices in school. Under this policy, with parent support every child has had the opportunity to participate in distance learning regardless of family circumstances.



### To the Citizens of Woodbridge

**T**HE BIG NEWS OF THE 2019-2020 school year is COVID-19. When the reality of the pandemic hit Connecticut all aspects of *normal* ended abruptly. The way we work, the way we shop, the way we interact, the way we find amusement, and the way we educate our children all changed. And so it was that Beecher Road School teachers and administrators were thrust into uncharted territory. "Teach from home, learn from home" became the new normal. But how?



*microscopic view of COVID-19*

Connecticut schools closed temporarily on March 17 and shortly thereafter the closing was extended through the rest of the school year. Teachers were expected to teach their students from afar. *Distance learning* became the

term of the day and teachers rose to the challenge. Through programs like Google Classroom, technology became the conduit of instruction, support, teacher and student interaction and assessment. Put yourself in the position of a teacher. One day you have 25 children in front of you and you weave your magic directly with them. You know what to do and how to do it. It's what teachers do. The next day you don't have students in front of you, but you're still expected to teach them.

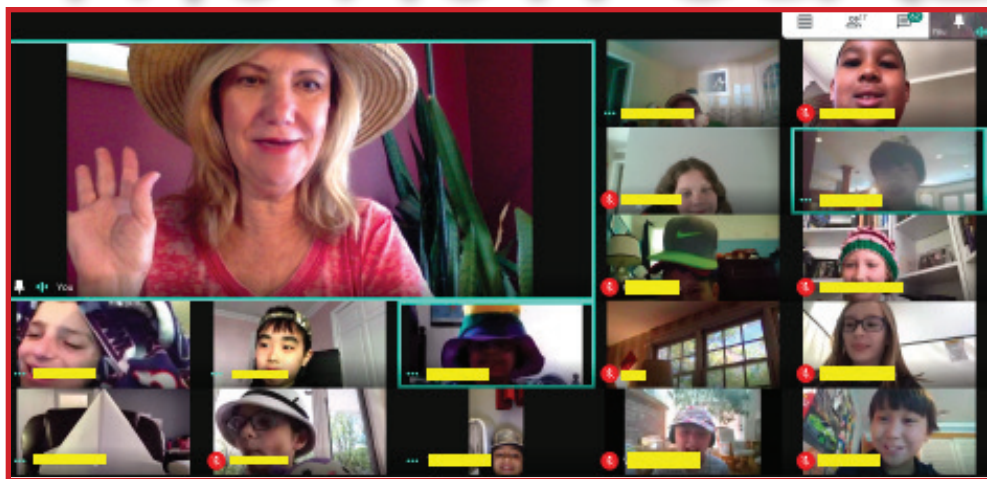
As you read and see what is included in this history-worthy edition of **THE BRIDGE**, I think you will be amazed and proud of our teachers, students and administrators. With the support of parents, new and creative ways to reach students were thought up, developed and shared.

Let me end by saying, we have learned that as good as some distance learning has become, nothing can replace the human bond and the social-emotional presence of children with their teachers. We can't wait for schools to reopen safely for all.

Robert "Bob" Gilbert  
Superintendent of Schools



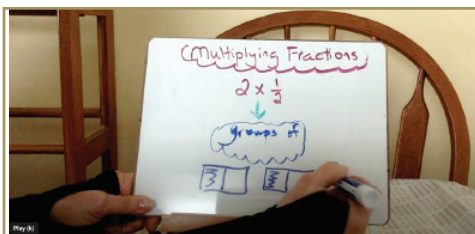
# THE NEW CLASSROOM



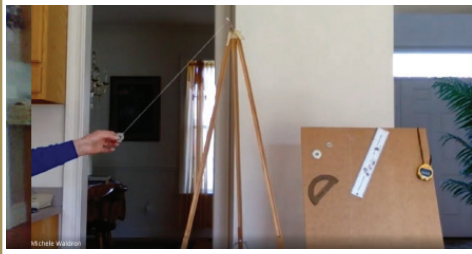
MS. LAVIGNE SAYS "GOOD MORNING" to her fourth grade class as she and her students wear a favorite hat to the morning meeting that starts the virtual school day.

**D**ESPITE THE SURPRISE OF LEAVING SCHOOL in March, teachers and students worked to build a rich learning environment away from the school building. Through Zoom and other apps students participated in virtual class meetings that gave them an opportunity to interact and socialize.

Teachers worked hard to create and record instructional video lessons that look and feel like the lessons in the classroom. With these lessons, however, students have a resource to refer back to – just push "replay." Students also met in small groups working alongside their teachers and classmates that created the environment we value in our actual classrooms.

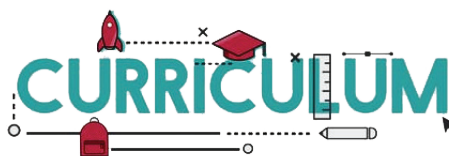
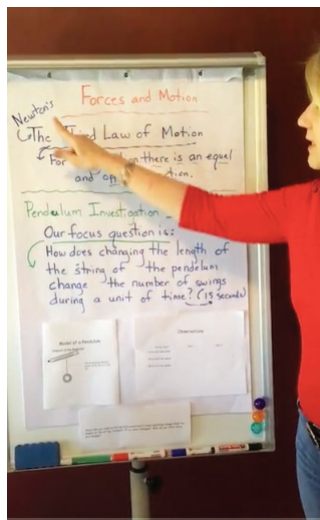


FROM THEIR HOMES, Ms. Don is teaching 4th graders about fractions (above) while Mrs. Waldron is producing a video about conducting a pendulum experiment. (below)



AS PART OF the science curriculum's Forces and Motion unit, Ms. Lavigne records a lesson on the laws and motion that includes several opportunities for students to experiment.

The 4th grade student below produced a YouTube video to illustrate what he learned about force and motion using a catapult to wreck the structure. Fun!



From the Principal -  
Ms. Sherman\*

AS THE 2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR ENDED, we reaffirmed something we knew but perhaps had taken for granted.



We knew that teachers did what some said was impossible, and yet we said to them, "Be ready to start your curriculum with distance learning lessons in one week." And they did. Teachers developed creative and engaging ways to reach students both academically and socially. They worked harder than ever to accomplish the impossible. Many student projects done at home were awesome. Students responded and, with the support of parents, did their best to keep "going to school."

Above all, however, teachers realized that what they've always cherished was missing – the kids. For them, the hardest part of distance learning was being physically away from their children.

When it comes to the students in their charge, teachers are very protective and caring. They think about students far beyond academic growth and assessment, and are deeply concerned with their social emotional health. In every class, each student is unique and requires an astute teacher to pick up on signals given by the child. These signals spur action, and teachers worked their hardest to take action to support their students. Nonetheless, teachers prepared ingenious lessons that engaged and excited their students to keep learning, even from afar. Be amazed. We are.

\* Analisa Sherman was appointed Principal by the Board of Education on Feb. 24, 2020.

Fourth grade students talk with each other about the books they've read at virtual book meets.





# Schoolwork Goes On

## DURING A QUARANTINE

FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS KEPT *online journals* of their experiences during their time in quarantine and distance learning. They created *time capsules* of written work and chosen artifacts to remember this important time in history. The students wrote letters to their future selves, and family members wrote letters to them to place in the time capsule.

This will surely become a treasured family keepsake.

**Here's one fifth grade journal entry:**

5-5-20 : ... I'm running a mile today and will time it. I will try to get less than 9 minutes. I did not hear anything about COVID19 yet today. I just heard Connecticut schools were officially closed. (for the rest of the school year)

5-6-20: Today, our class had a live morning meeting and it was fun and exciting. We shared something we loved and were asked questions about it. It was great to see all of my friends and I hope to do this again soon.

5-7-20: I made a sundial for science today and it was really cool and fun. I went outside every hour and marked the time and the length. It was fun to see the shadow move to a different place every hour."



As the writing curriculum continues, this fifth grader works on her time capsule.

## WHAT'S OOBLEK?

STUDENTS BEGAN DISTANCE LEARNING in science by learning about the senses, the brain, and how the body systems work together. They put their reflexes to the test and investigated how quickly they could catch a falling ruler. Students also engaged in several other experiments including:

- participating in a Fizz quiz in which students learned about how characteristics of materials change when combined with other materials.
- making observations of the Sun and Earth, paying attention to weather predictions and analyzing their accuracy. Students even created sundials to tell the time, helping them think about their surroundings.
- learning about Engineering and how to help solve real life problems. Students used the knowledge learned to take the marshmallow challenge.

This 5th grader is making oobleck, a substance that can mimic the qualities of a solid or a liquid, seeing how temperature affects sugar.



## Real-Life Math in the Kitchen

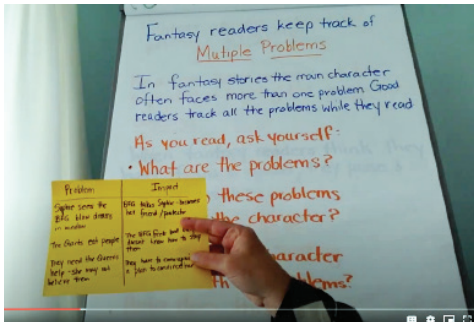
*"I need to make more than the recipe says."*

MATH STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN A PROJECT in which they used their creativity to show their learning. Students took a basic recipe and by multiplying fractions, they increased or decreased the amount of each ingredient based on a different number of servings. Students demonstrated their learning in various ways from creating videos of themselves actually cooking (right) to making booklets (above) to show their work. Some students even made the recipes and dropped them off to their teachers.

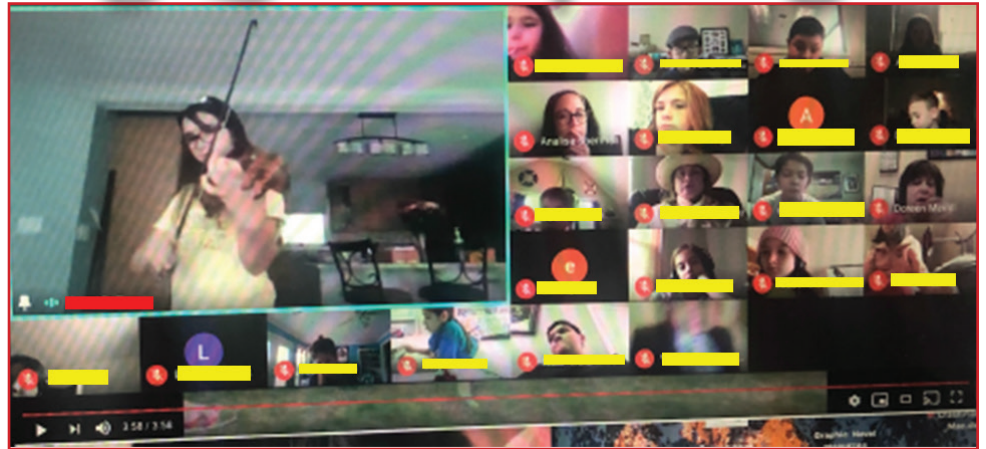




# Teaching & Adapting



THE CURRICULUM CONTINUES as Ms. Shepard presents a virtual lesson on reading the fantasy genre (above).



In one of many virtual talent shows, this 4th grade student shares violin skills with her class.

## green team

OUR BRS GREEN Team did not let distance learning stop us from bringing sustainability education to students and adults during April's *Sustainability Week*. Starting off with a survey we found the majority of people were turning off lights when they left a room and using LED bulbs, but not as many were using rain barrels, using solar panels or refusing single use plastics. Almost everyone was interested in learning more about water conservation, composting, reducing waste, conserving energy and especially gardening and how to handle invasive species. We also looked at our accomplishments:

- We bought another water bottle filling station to help decrease single use plastics and encourage healthy hydration.
- From September to February, we diverted over 4 tons of food waste from the trash by separating our waste in the cafeteria.
- We have a registered Monarch Waystation created and cared for by MAG - helping our pollinators.
- We increased cafeteria recycling and classroom food waste diversion, and started donating unopened cafeteria bought food to Haven's Harvest to help our community
- Our solar panels generate about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the energy used by the school, decreasing energy consumption and significantly decreasing energy costs.
- We are working to help our neighbors identify and remove invasive species such as Japanese Barberry plants. 🐞

IN THEIR REGULAR K-6 SPANISH classes, students continued to practice Spanish in a new online distance learning format. They were able to review past Spanish

### Spanish Distance Learning Choice Board

practice vocab on quietlet	PICK ONE OPTION PER WEEK	señor woolly
ginkit	Spanish show/movie	Spanish for a Day

instruction, as well as be introduced to new concepts and themes, through various *Spanish Choice Boards*. Within these Choice Boards, created for each grade level, students chose activities that interested them in order to practice Spanish. Teachers enjoyed reading to the students, practicing the calendar, and singing songs through recordings. They also provided them with different activities that could be done individually or involve their family members. We heard from many students and families that they enjoyed learning together through this unique Spanish language experience. Although our Spanish classes looked different, our students continued to make progress expanding their knowledge of the Spanish language and culture. 🐞

## ESPAÑOL

### Baby salmon get a virtual release

THIRD GRADERS WERE VERY EXCITED back in February when the salmon eggs they were nurturing and learning about hatched at school. To celebrate the births, a working party was held in the school's rotunda. The next step in the plan was to nurture and nourish the alevin (just born salmon) for two months and take an April field trip to the Salmon River in Colchester, CT to release the young fish into the wild. But, that part of the plan had to be revised.

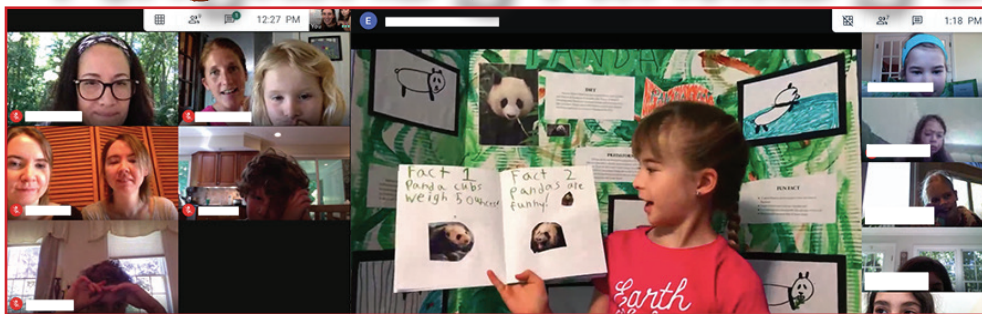


Instead of a field trip, with masks on Ms. Minardi and Ms. Vincitorio took the tiny fish to the river. They videoed the release and shared the event with the third grade students. 🐞





# Penguins & Pandas & Bats ... oh my



**D**ISTANCE LEARNING WASN'T GOING TO stop Beecher third graders from participating in this much-loved annual project. The students create an Animal Museum where they creatively display what they learned from their research about a chosen animal. Their teachers were determined to find a way to make the project happen during distance learning. An idea was born: *A Virtual Animal Museum*.

Maneuvering through new territory the teachers figured out how to get third graders the resources they needed in their own homes, teach the necessary prerequisite lessons about writing and research, and provide small group and individual sessions for students as they moved forward.

Science lessons directly related to the animal project on topics such as biomes, adaptations, and animal classification were taught as well as integrating Spanish vocabulary and adding an art component. Technology teachers provided lessons on how to bring their presentations to life.



For those students looking for deeper exploration, the teachers offered some optional activities such as creating animal costumes, recording videos of them sounding and moving like their animal, and even making clay animals and dioramas.

The teacher team worked together to provide a meaningful virtual experience that not only followed the core state curriculum standards but also proved highly engaging for the students.

Kudos to the BRS third graders, and their parents for all their hard work and perseverance in completing and presenting this project during distance learning. This was definitely an all-hands-on-deck learning experience. 🐼



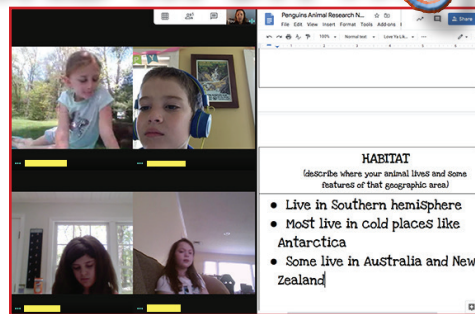
(above)  
Making her panda presentation virtually.

(left)  
Making her animal diorama on the family's front walk.

*Panda habitat diorama*



*Bat habitat diorama*



As they would in the school room, teachers met online with small groups of students to guide them through their penguin project.



**W**HILE AT HOME, grade 6 students tackled issues that needed to be researched before they wrote argument-based essays on the use of drones and competitive sports pros and cons.



*Drones at issue*

With more online research, the students investigated Japan's people, culture, history and geography, culminating in a project of the student's choice.

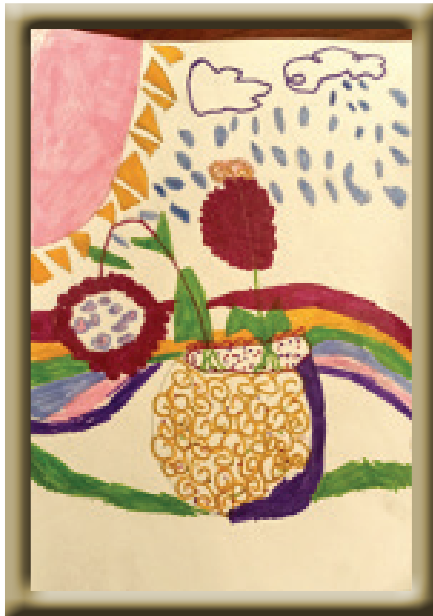


For BRS 6th graders, the phenomenon of population dynamics within ecosystems was cause for study in science, while applying their understanding of algebraic properties to constructing equations with two variables took their focus in math. 🐼





FROM THE ART STUDIO AT SCHOOL, we crossed a bridge to the studio at home. The home art studio became quite different. It included the family dog, brothers and sisters chasing around the room, parents on work calls, the family cat snuggling up to a pile of papers, music playing, constant news from the TV – many distractions and possibilities. BRS art teachers initiated online challenges with a list of 20 drawing prompts focusing on imaginative as well as observational thought. We are



(above) A drawing prompt inspired this student's interpretation of spring. Natural stones proved to be a useful medium for the mosaic below.



*Inspired by the colors and textures of spring*



surrounded by nature every day. This spring, we asked our artists to record the changes of their favorite tree over the course of a week this spring and use nature to create mosaics.

ARTSWEEK13 SKY. Students were asked to submit a piece of art using materials of their choice to illustrate "sky." The work on *The Virtual Gallery* on Beecher's website is impressive. We thank all the children and grownups who participated.

Flowers have been interpreted by artists for centuries. Georgia O'Keeffe, Henri Matisse, Claude Monet and others served as inspiration for our young artists.

The Mask: When we wear masks in crowded areas, we are showing concern for the people around us by not spreading our germs as well as keeping ourselves from getting sick. Our young artists designed amazing masks in the form of sketches and prototypes.

When completed, the children were asked to send us their work online. Work was placed in a file to be used for an art exhibit at a later date.

This new art bridge gave us the opportunity to communicate back and forth in a way that might never have happened. The pictures speak for themselves. 🐾



IF YOU CAN'T GO TO THE ART MUSEUM  
BECOME THE ART MUSEUM

## GETTY MUSEUM CHALLENGE

*During this quarantine,  
recreate famous works of art  
with items you have at home.*

*Children recreated their favorite piece of art with three or more objects they found at home.*



## ARTSWEEK 13 SKY

*Can you hear the sky? Yes we can.*



*All classes designed their wind catchers to hear the sky. Grade 3 (left) and Multi Age Group (below) are two examples.*



## MUSIC

### BRS singers selected for CEMA Regional Festival.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THREE 6th grade chorus students who stepped forward to audition for the Connecticut Music Educators Festival. They were given audition music and exercises in October 2019. They met weekly with their teacher, Ms. Lempke, to learn the music and audition requirements, as well as build the discipline and confidence needed to perform for an audition. In December, two of the three singers successfully reached the cutoff goal for two different choral ensembles.

Festival music was given to these students and they rehearsed weekly after school, learning and memorizing their music by the Festival weekend in early March. After an evening and a morning full of joint rehearsals, their Saturday performances were well received by families and teachers. Well done!

### BRS Band Members selected for CEMA Festival

AFTER AUDITIONING, an impressive group of seven instrumentalists were accepted and performed in the winter Middle School Regional Festival. For the big state spring concert, BRS students auditioned and four were selected for the *Elementary Honors Band* and *Elementary Honors Orchestra*. This was quite a feather in our cap because only two seats per school are generally allowed in this statewide concert. This spring concert, however, fell victim to the pandemic and was canceled. We extend our congratulations to the students and share their disappointment. 🐼

*BRS has distinguished itself in the state for consistent excellence in music education. The annual opening day of school parade (below) always starts the new year with a bang!*





# Creative Teachers & Kids



*"I think I'll like that Queen song 200 years from now."*

**I**N SOCIAL STUDIES, FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS learned about the events that led to the American Revolution. They did this through articles, political cartoons and videos. After learning about the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party, students had to come up with a playlist the Sons of Liberty would listen to that would help inspire their fight. Students came up with great song choices from artists like Bob Dylan, Metallica, Bob Marley, The Beatles and Queen.

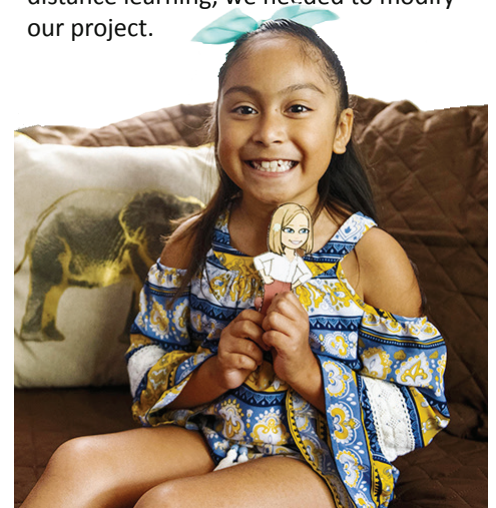
In Ms. Conroy's class, Drew chose this:

*I think that the people of Boston would definitely listen to the song, "I Want to Break Free" by Queen. The British Parliament made it so that the colonists had to pay tax for tea. On top of this, the colonists were not allowed to get tea from any other country besides Britain. The colonists were forced to either pay tax for British tea or not drink tea at all.*

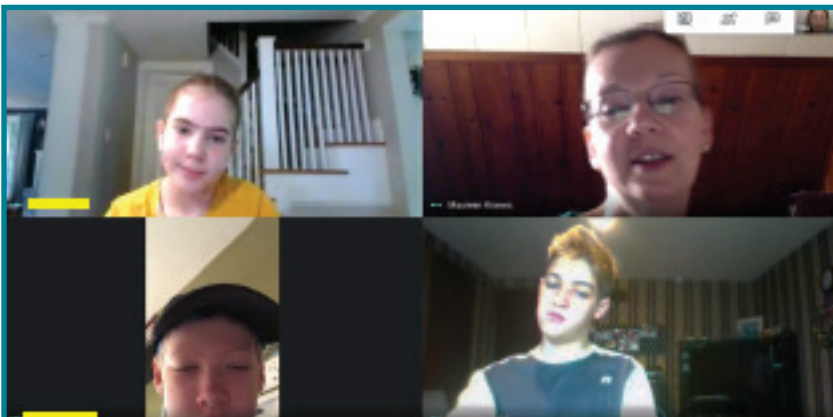
*This has to do with the song, "I Want to Break Free," because the colonists wanted to break free from the need to pay tax for their tea. The Boston tea party also made the colonists start to think about starting a revolution. There is a part in the song where it says, "You're so self-satisfied, I don't need you, I've got to break free." The line, "You're so self-satisfied," could mean that Britain already has so much, so why do they need even more money from taxing the colonists. The line, "I don't need you, I've got to break free" could be saying that the colonists don't need Britain and can take care of themselves. I think that the colonists would love this song.*

*Bye-Bye, Flat Stanley.  
Hello, Flat Teacher!*

**E**ACH YEAR FIRST graders complete a **Flat Stanley** project to be mailed all over the United States to facilitate the improvement of their reading and writing skills while also promoting an interest in learning about different people and places. However, due to distance learning, we needed to modify our project.



Since everyone was quarantined, the first grade teachers created **Flat Teachers**. These flat teachers were looking to spend time at their students' homes participating in different activities with them. It was a big hit and the students sent pictures of their flat teacher participating in baking, games, gymnastics, basketball, watching movies and even swimming.



**Teach the curriculum,  
assist the students,  
assess the learning.**



**FROM HOME, TEACHERS**

Ms. Krawec and Ms. Guerra work with a small 5th grade math group investigating volume via Zoom.

Assessment of students continued. Teachers created exit slips and online quizzes which allowed students to be assessed weekly on taught skills. The small group meetings offered math check ins with individual students based on completed daily math work and exit slip or quiz data.



# Learning & Thinking

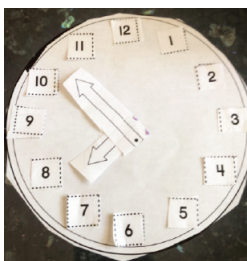
## MATH FROM A DISTANCE

**M**ATH TEACHING AND LEARNING has continued “virtually” using different technology resources. This type of teaching has marked a tremendous change in how we instruct learners. Most of the Kindergarten math activities are game-based and collaborative. With distance learning, they engaged in various activities including



measuring how far they could jump, comparing the lengths of different objects, playing games that offer opportunities to explore combinations of ten and solving word problems using different strategies.

**DURING DISTANCE LEARNING**, first graders worked on many different skills and concepts including representing data on a graph, solving word problems with unknowns in various positions, and telling time to the hour and half hour.



**DURING THEIR TIME AT HOME**, second grade students continued solidifying their fact fluency by playing games with another person as a partner as well as online. Students watched teacher-made videos explaining strategies for subtracting two-digit numbers, recognizing and counting coins, telling time, and solving word problems, and then completed worksheets that offered practice with those skills and concepts. Second graders also watched webcams from the San Diego Safari Park and then used homemade inch and centimeter rulers to draw lengths, including the length of a Burrowing Owl's tail and the length of its egg.

SAN DIEGO ZOO

## SAFARI PARK

Teachers worked together to develop engaging online lessons. Some lessons were done in Google Slides with an engaging video tutorial that included students showing all their work. Teachers made instructional video recordings of all lessons to explain and model new skills and concepts. Students met their teachers for online math support to answer questions and reteach any skills and concepts.

Students solved problems in different ways and explained their thought process using different visual models. Students reflected on their work using a rubric, and teachers provided feedback to students. 🐞

## Phonics

**A**S PART OF A NEW PHONICS program, Gus, the green purple-winged dragon, was officially introduced and adopted as the Grade 2 Mascot!



During distance learning, phonics instruction, word play and riddles continued. For example, the Grade 1 Mascot, Rasheed the dashing golden lion, made an appearance to the students via videos provided by the teachers, with contributions from the language arts specialists.



Mabel, the adorable and soft gray Kindergarten elephant mascot, has also visited Kindergarten during Morning Meetings.

These wonderful units provide a lean and concise instructional pathway in phonics that is both realistic and doable. The game-like activities tap into student's skills and energy for tackling the fabulous challenge of learning to read and write. Beecher students quickly learned to become word builders, and word collectors. Students learn that when it comes to multisyllable words, BIG words take BIG resolve! 🐞



## at Beecher Road School

**B**EES HAS A SMALL NUMBER OF 3D PRINTERS. While the size of our printers prohibits printing large items (such as masks) members of our technology department have been printing mask extenders for those wearing masks all day. The team donated over 1,300 extenders to area medical facilities such as Yale New Haven Hospital, Hartford Hospital, Saint Francis Hospital and Connecticut Hospice as well as local area essential workers and businesses. A mask extender keeps the elastic away from your ears and makes it more comfortable to wear for long periods.

The red mask extender at the right shows how they are worn. 🐞



**W**E TAKE PRIDE IN our Beecher library collection and cite the pioneering work of educator Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop who first put forth the idea that readers need

to see “mirrors” - reflections of themselves in books and “windows” - experiences and viewpoints that are different. In our selection choices we seek to affirm the history, culture, family background and other identities of all our students while building respect and empathy.

The library teachers made the leap to virtual support by training teachers and staff on using the online learning program Raz-Kids. Its uses include targeted reading instruction, building up our online eBook library Overdrive to meet the needs of our voracious 5th and 6th grade readers, and creating family friendly directions to encourage the use of Tumblebooks for our younger readers. To keep book talks going, a favorite activity for many 5th and 6th graders, library teachers Ms. Patrick and Ms. Crocco recorded virtual book talks for to encourage our 5th and 6th graders to check out our audio and eBooks. 🐞



# staying connected

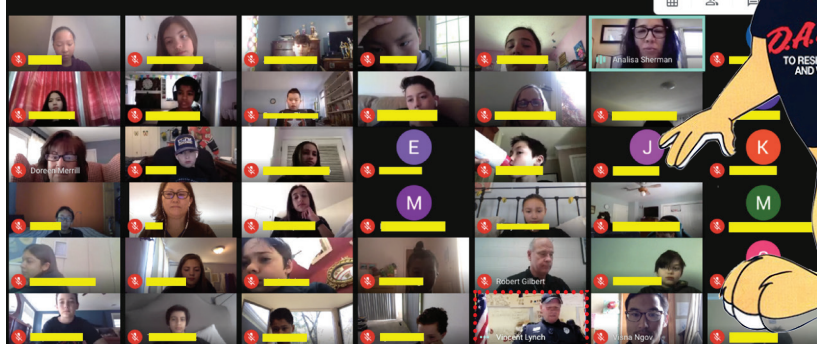
## Here they come!



With schools closed indefinitely, new technology ushered in distance learning on March 30. On April 2, BRS teachers and staff had a car and school bus parade that went around town to connect and encourage students and let them and their families know how much we missed them.

With all the bus drivers from B & B Transportation the parade followed the bus routes with teachers waving and honking their horns. Students, parents and family members stood outside waving and cheering as buses and cars drove past. 🐾

FOR SIXTH GRADERS, **DARE** HAS BECOME A RITE OF PASSAGE. After intense planned instruction over many weeks by WPD's D.A.R.E. Officer Vincent Lynch, a D.A.R.E. graduate is equipped with the knowledge to resist drugs and violence. The program envisions a world in which students everywhere are empowered to respect others and



choose to lead lives free from violence, substance use and other dangerous behaviors.

At the end of the instructional program a D.A.R.E. graduation is held. This year it was held virtually via Zoom with half of 6th graders shown above. The superintendent, principal and teachers attended the ceremony. 🐾

*"I need human teachers BAAAAAD" painted on the side of this family's van says it all.*



First Selectman Beth Heller, State Senator George Logan, the Woodbridge Fire and Police Departments, and families all drove through the school campus thanking teachers and staff by honking horns, waving, blaring fire truck sirens and showing their appreciation of all faculty and staff.

Families decorated their cars with posters, balloons, and streamers and waved wildly as faculty and staff lined the driveway. 🐾



On May 22 our BRS community and families participated in a 300-car wave parade on our school campus. This PTO-organized event turned into a "thank you" for all teachers and staff.

Our first virtual *Field Day* was held June 5. The BRS Health and PE team, Mr. Taddei, Ms. Buzzard and Mr. Lavaway put together many fun, challenging and exciting



activities for students and their families to enjoy in their own backyards. A virtual field day video was sent to all faculty, staff and parents to share with their students. 🐾



Sixth grade students marked a milestone in their education journey as they "graduated" from elementary school.

Unlike every other graduation ceremony, this year's event was done virtually on June 15. Beecher Road Principal Analisa Sherman led the ceremony. Words of encouragement for students and thanks to parents were offered by Superintendent Robert Gilbert, Board of Education Chair Dr. Steve Fleischman, First Selectman of the Town of Woodbridge, Beth Heller, and several others.

## CONGRATS GRADUATE!



6th Grade  
Beecher Road  
School

*Lawn signs throughout Woodbridge announced the good news for a child in that home.*

Students' names were read aloud by their teacher as their picture flashed on the screen. Families were invited back to the school campus to pick up their child's certificate, a gift from the PTO and to take photos in one of three locations festively decorated with balloons. Congratulations to all of our graduates, best of luck on your next adventure to middle school. 🐾



# Teacher of the Year

**B**Y NOW YOU HAVE SEEN A GLIMPSE OF WHAT BEECHER TEACHERS have done in these extraordinary times. When this year's *Teacher of the Year* nomination came around, a teacher at the school, who also is a parent of students at BRS, submitted her nomination for the award. Edited for space, in part it reads:

*No teacher at Beecher Road School signed up for teaching in the middle of a global pandemic. There is no class in grad school on how to build a classroom community while self isolating. No educator loves trying to impart important skills and lessons over glitchy internet connections while simultaneously trying to take care of their own families.*

*But here we are. And here's what I can say:*

*Beecher teachers may not have asked for this, but they are doing it. They are doing it because they care about their students.*

*As a parent at this school, I have an insider's glimpse into the extraordinary effort that my own children's teachers put in every day to create thoughtful learning plans, offer multiple daily video meetings to build community, and find creative ways to continue special traditions.*

*When I text with neighbors and friends, I hear so many stories of BRS teachers going above and beyond to do what they can to make their students feel loved and cared for. I overhear kids talking about fun Morning Meetings, special one-on-one check ins with their teachers, cool activities they are trying out, and so much more. I see teachers at students' birthday car parades on their "off" hours. I hear stories of teachers driving materials over to a student's house.*

*As a parent at this school, I am lucky enough to watch all the videos the specialist teachers make--finding unique ways to keep their art, music and other areas moving forward. My own girls love doing the activities and even better relish getting personal emails back from their specialist teachers acknowledging their hard work and wishing them well.*

*I see the special education teachers working tirelessly to reach their especially vulnerable students. I hear my own students talking about special one-on-one meetings they are having with our literacy and math specialists who give them the support they need.*

*As a teacher at this school, I know that regular school hours have gone out the window. So many of us are working more now than ever before. We are tired and overwhelmed but we keep going. We keep going because we know that we need to do what we can to bring some consistency, instruction, support and love to our students.*

*We video chat with teammates at all hours of the day and on the weekends to figure out ways to make distance learning better. As a teacher at this school, I know how hard all of this is. We fret over students who are struggling. We talk on the phone to parents who are struggling. We support our colleagues who are struggling. In this time when we can't be physically connected, we are doing what we can to comfort and support those who need it most.*

*It feels impossible to single out one teacher this year. This pandemic has shown the greatest act of global solidarity we will probably see in our lifetime. I stand in solidarity with all Beecher teachers and recommend that the entire Beecher teaching staff share the Teacher of the Year distinction this year.*

Aimee Meacham

**Done!**



*Beecher Road School "Teacher" of the Year*



**D**URING THE COVID shutdown, facilities maintenance and beautification projects have

been moving ahead. The custodial staff has worked to make BRS not only safe and sanitized, but long overdue projects have been completed. A short, partial list includes:

- paint halls
- disinfect classroom waste areas and walls
- steam clean and scrub wall mats
- deep cleaning in all bathrooms
- replace bathroom sink
- restore Rotunda area: paint, strip, wax, scrub
- restore cafeteria area: paint, scrub, replace ceiling tiles, strip and wax
- restore south assembly area: refinish wooden stage, paint stage walls, strip and wax
- carpet replacement, pool door replacements, ventilator replacements, ceiling tile replacements, threshold repairs
- repaint playground equipment
- HVAC filter replacements
- exterior work on overgrown bushes, cleaning windows, drainage work

*Photos below: 1] refinished stage and painted walls 2] maintenance at main office 3] steam cleaned wall mats 4] brush removal 5] carpets shampooed in media center*







BEECHER ROAD SCHOOL STUDENTS continue their academic growth and being among the top in the state. The charts below tell the story. (ELA means English Language Arts.) Levels of achievement range from 1-4. "3" is considered "at the goal." "4" exceeds the goal.

Smarter Balanced and NGSS Assessments	State Student Achievement Summary Percent of Beecher students Meeting and Exceeding Goal (Levels 3 and 4) In English Language Arts, Math and Science				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
ELA	73	80.1	76.8	74.8	80.5
Math	61.3	71.2	72.2	70.2	74.5
Science					83.5

Smarter Balanced Assessment	State Student Achievement Summary Percent of Beecher students Exceeding Goal (Level 4) In English Language Arts and Math				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
ELA	42.0	49.9	49.9	48.9	51.3
Math	35.4	39.9	43.8	41.3	45.0

Smarter Balanced Growth	Student Growth Data Average Percent of Growth Targets Achieved			Student Growth Data Growth Rate		
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
ELA	67.7	70.7	78.6 (5 <sup>th</sup> in state)	50.0	50.3	58.4 (6 <sup>th</sup> in State)
Math	74.2	72.0	85.7 (5 <sup>th</sup> in state)	53.4	52.5	67.9 (5 <sup>th</sup> in State)

## THE BRIDGE



... for 14 years, connecting school and community by informing Woodbridge residents about the work of their school district and its student and staff accomplishments.

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

LOCAL  
POSTAL CUSTOMER  
WOODBIDGE, CT 06525

Presorted  
Standard Mail  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Milford, CT  
Permit #2

## SUPERINTENDENT TO RETIRE SEPTEMBER 30



**S**UPERINTENDENT ROBERT "BOB" GILBERT ANNOUNCED his retirement, effective Sept. 30, 2020, to the Board of Education in June.

Mr. Gilbert has served in Connecticut's public schools for 38 years as a teacher, administrator, and superintendent in Woodbridge since July 1, 2016. "Second to none" is how he characterizes the students, staff, parents and administrative team at BRS, while also

including the citizens and town leadership. Because of their collaboration, he cites some major accomplishments achieved during his term as head educator:

- A Strategic Plan that has moved the district forward in curriculum, professional learning, cost savings and community/diversity.
- A school-wide Enrichment Model that benefits all students.
- Maintaining programs and staff during challenging fiscal times.
- A strong partnership with Boards of Selectmen and Finance.
- Preeminent state standardized test scores in math, language arts, science achievement and growth.
- Major improvements to the systems, comfort, cleanliness and beautification of our unique and large facility.
- Hiring new school leaders, department supervisors, teachers and staff.

Superintendent Gilbert writes, "I would like to thank the Woodbridge Board of Education for allowing me to lead and serve as Superintendent. Special thanks to Dr. Steve Fleischman, Lynn Piascyk and Margaret Hamilton for their support, confidence and leadership as Board Chairs and Vice Chairs."

A grateful town wishes "Bob" a happy and healthy retirement.

## Taxpayer's Guide to the 2020-2021 Woodbridge Board of Education Budget

THE WOODBIDGE BOARDS OF EDUCATION, Selectmen, and Finance approved the funding plan for the school district, effective July 1, 2020. The budget reflects a zero percent (0%) increase over the prior year. This budget is respectful of the taxpayer while continuing to move the educational system forward. The operating budget is the legal plan under which the school system is funded. It puts in place the financial resources to pay for education programs and expenses.



Budget Category	Last Year 2019-20	This Year 2020-21	\$ Amount Change	% Change*	% of Total Budget*
Salaries and Benefits <sup>1</sup>	\$ 11,665,564	\$ 12,240,585	788	4.9%	80.52%
Utilities and Heat <sup>2</sup>	259,875	260,663	(123,126)	0.3%	1.71%
Student Transportation <sup>3</sup>	757,216	634,090	(348,660)	-16.3%	4.17%
Tuition - (out of district) <sup>4</sup>	653,821	305,161	(37,468)	-53.3%	2.01%
All Outside Services <sup>5</sup>	1,380,627	1,343,159	7,224	-2.7%	8.84%
General Supplies <sup>6</sup>	315,737	322,961	(67,526)	2.3%	2.12%
Furniture and Equipment <sup>7</sup>	95,600	28,074	(6,253)	-70.6%	0.18%
Dues and Fees <sup>8</sup>	73,515	67,262	\$(4,100)	-8.5%	0.44%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 15,201,954</b>	<b>\$ 15,201,954</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

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

- 1: Salaries and benefits include savings from early retirement incentives, in addition to 2.0 FTE new positions in response to Special Education needs.
- 2: Electricity, water, sewer, and heating.
- 3: In addition to regular school buses, some children require special transportation due to special needs. We also buy the diesel fuel for the buses through the purchasing consortium.
- 4: Because some children, due to special needs, require school settings outside of Woodbridge, we pay tuition (\$305,161) for their special education.
- 5: Services we purchase or lease. Examples include telephones, insurance, internet, postage, professional development, legal, technical and professional services, substitutes, school resource officer, 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 2020-2021 budget.

## THE BRIDGE

The Education Report of the  
Woodbridge School District  
No. 14,  
Summer 2020

### Woodbridge Board of Education 2019-20

Dr. Steven Fleischman – Chair  
Lynn Piascyk – Vice-Chair  
Maegan Genovese – Secretary  
Dan Cowan – Jeff Hughes  
Dr. David Ross – Joyce Shavers  
Dr. Michael Strambler – Dr. Jeffrey Townsend  
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.