

April 17, 2020

To the Woodbridge Board of Education and Board of Finance:

I am proud to be a “Beecher teacher.” Beecher Road School is one of the many wonderful aspects of Woodbridge, and I strongly believe that Beecher is truly the heartbeat of this great town. Woodbridge is among the top performing districts in Connecticut, ranking alongside other esteemed districts such as Greenwich, West Hartford, and Fairfield.

Given the most recent and tragic events of the global pandemic we are unfortunately experiencing, many are shocked at the lack of preparedness and the lack healthcare resources available in the United States. The idea of healthcare professionals being responsible for purchasing their own personal protective equipment, an essential healthcare tool, is appalling – but it is happening. Each year, educators spend hundreds, sometimes thousands, of their own dollars to fund their classrooms and to fill them with essential educational tools. Why isn’t this also shocking?

In most recent years, essential tools, such as printing paper, ink and toner, student desks and chairs, have all been in short supply at Beecher due to consistent budget cuts. This is *not* due to negligence of our school administration. Time and time again, I have witnessed the Beecher administrative team roll up their own sleeves and pitch in. The staff and faculty of Beecher Road School wear many hats; we are experts at “doing more with less.”

Beecher Road School’s budgetary scenario is unique in regard to many other departments in town. Each student who arrives at the school brings a different set of needs and strengths. In some cases, the district is legally obligated to provide the resources required in order to educate a student in their least restrictive environment. Just as in healthcare, each patient is unique and is provided with appropriate care based upon their individual needs. The Beecher Road School budget is constantly evolving to meet the prescriptive legal obligations for students. This means that budgetary needs change – sometimes by hundreds of thousands of dollars – with the arrival of just one student.

One of the most detrimental pieces to this most recent budget cut is the potential loss of faculty, our most valuable asset at Beecher. Quite frankly, there is nothing else left to “cut.” One of the things that makes Beecher a high-achieving school is the way in which our educators teach “the whole child” with various engaging and enriching learning opportunities. The students at Beecher impact the world. With the ever-growing student enrollment highly outpacing the consistent decrease in staff, we will soon be unable to provide even some of the most basic instructional supports for students.

I implore you to understand that this situation is dire for our school and for the town. There are already many “holes in the boat” that we are addressing daily with our hard work. At some point soon, the student population needs will far outweigh resources, and we will lose the

battle to keep the boat afloat. Please consider reinstating the .76% budgetary increase, as proposed by Superintendent Gilbert.

Thank you,

Nicole Rizzo

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Rizzo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "N" and "R".

Second Grade Teacher