

December 8, 2017

Dear Members of the Board of Education,

The members of the Woodbridge Education Association would like to comment on the 2018 - 2019 Board of Education budget process and the potential effects it may have on the students of Beecher Road School. We have always considered ourselves full partners in educational reform and want you to know that job security, tenure, compensation, and evaluation are clearly not the driving factors behind this letter. Our moral obligation is to provide the best education for every student who attends Beecher Road School and presently, the WEA membership feels compelled to inform you that this may be in jeopardy.

As you know, the culture of our school is one of high performance. It is the one reason why many people move to Woodbridge. Every teacher here shares the responsibility of creating a culture where every child can excel. It doesn't matter if they are English Language Learners, receive Math or Language Arts support, are TAG students or have special education needs because we all believe children should be able to reach their full potential. In stating this, it is clear that all schools today must provide students with multiple ways to learn. Here at Beecher Road School, in order to accomplish such a task, the Board of Education has provided the district with the following:

- Class size recommendations,
- Special area subject teachers (World Language, Library/Technology, Art, Music, Physical Education/Health, and Science),
- Support personnel for Mathematics, Language Arts, ELL and Special Services,
- Talented and Gifted education,
- Teaching Assistants.

Unfortunately, due to Connecticut's current economy and what seems to be "a climate of chaos in Hartford," our Administrative leaders are now being taxed with the challenging job of trying to continue to provide Beecher Road School's high quality education on

a budget that is limited by the 2% mandate from the town. This has implications for all that happens at our school, from books to desks to supplies, as well as to staffing levels. The current budget development process will be very difficult and we wish to raise several important considerations:

-The suggested budget increase will **not** cover contracted salary increases, healthcare compensation, supplies, technology resources, support programs/services for students and much more.

-We have experienced a greater increase in our school population than demographers previously predicted. While many districts in the New Haven County and within our DRG have experienced a decline, Woodbridge has not. Beecher's student population is on the increase and has been for the last several years. With more students attending Beecher, the need is great for **additional** teachers, support personnel and teaching assistants. Our current class size in many grades is approaching or has exceeded the guidelines developed by the Board of Education. While we understand that the town wishes budget requests be limited to 2%, this flies in the face of reality. The number of students we serve has increased.

-Our population of students with special needs is on the rise, including an increase of students with severe disabilities. With this increase, comes a greater demand for support services. This will have serious budget implications with few options to create savings. Our out-placement budget has soared, increasing multiple times in just the last five years. In addition, our Speech /Language Pathologists and our school psychologists are at their maximum level of students. We urge the Board of Education to make budget requests that will match the needs of the district's students, not an arbitrary percentage.

In order to continue Beecher's success within the new fiscal reality in Connecticut, we realize that the entire school community may need to look to do things differently. This may mean taking a hard look at policies and procedures, and the duties of those who execute them. These should be reviewed and, if possible, savings accomplished.

We urge you to please continue to support the students at Beecher Road School by providing the greatest possible **funding**

necessary to continue the quality education that has characterized our school. Presently, our needs are great and in order for our students to receive an education that would allow them to develop into responsible global citizens. We **need** your assistance. Our children deserve the best possible education and support that would enable them to persevere in this world as innovators and collaborators. Thank you in advance for your support.

Respectfully,

The Woodbridge Education Association