



Advocates for EDUCATION

Spring 2010

of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

www.advocatesforeducation.org

WHITEFISH BAY APPOINTS *New Superintendent*

Dr. Mary J. Gavigan will become the next superintendent of Whitefish Bay Public Schools, succeeding Dr. James R. Rickabaugh, who will retire at the end of this school year. Dr. Gavigan, currently superintendent of the Stoughton Area School District, received her undergraduate degree from UW-Eau Claire, and master's and doctoral degrees from UW-Madison.

Advocates for Education recently had a chance to correspond with Dr. Gavigan to get her thoughts on several issues relevant to her new role as superintendent of WFB schools.

Why were you interested in becoming the next Superintendent of the Whitefish Bay School District?

Becoming the next Superintendent of Whitefish Bay School District provides an excellent opportunity for leadership and service in a school district that has a long and well-known tradition of excellence and is committed to moving to an even higher level of performance for students and staff. I am very attracted to Whitefish Bay's values toward quality public education and high expectations for students and staff and am excited to join the Whitefish Bay community in the next couple of months.

How do you see WFB as different from other communities where you have worked and what does that mean for education?

Community values and expectations are always evidenced within one's local school district and must be taken into account when planning for programming and services for students and allocating resources. The average education and income level of the Whitefish Bay community is higher than other communities in which I have worked. As a result, higher expectations and support from parents, staff, and the community at large exists for both students and the Whitefish Bay School District. Whitefish Bay's very notable ACT results and high student participation in Advanced Placement classes, coupled with the fact that an average of 94% of Whitefish Bay graduates go on to post secondary education immediately after high school reflect the values of the community. These values must be taken into account when planning for future programming improvements and services for students and families.

The WFB School District, like so many other school districts, is operating under severe financial constraints. Describe a budget process that you believe would lead to success in these financially trying times.

All Wisconsin school districts are operating under significant financial constraints that need to be monitored carefully during the district's annual budget development process. It is important that resources continue to support the high performance of our students and include supplemental support services, favorable class sizes and enrichment opportunities. In my current school district, we have been managing significant budget deficits while still

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MISSION Statement

Advocates for Education is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that works to promote high quality public education in Whitefish Bay by:

- *Informing residents about education issues and encouraging public participation in matters affecting the schools*
- *Fostering a social and political climate favorable to public education*
- *Advocating for public policies that promote high quality public education in Whitefish Bay*

Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay

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sustaining our capacity for student and program improvement. As budgets become increasingly tighter, it is essential that a responsible staffing plan is developed that is aligned with school enrollments. All efficiencies and possible reallocations need to be first maximized prior to starting any process that includes service reductions. Initially, the first thing I will do is work very closely with our Director of Business Services and all of our administrative staff to understand efficiencies and what has already been done to ensure strong fiscal management in all of the school district's allocations and within the overall budgeting process. I will also develop an understanding of the budget planning calendar that is presently used and how current resources have been prioritized to maximize student achievement.

Describe your leadership style and how you plan to build a rapport with the teachers and other administrators.

My leadership style is a collaborative and inclusive one always guided by decision making that will be in the best interests of students. I have a deep belief system, grounded in research, in which schools are able to support more of our students to achieve at even higher levels. I also have a deep belief system about "all" students - that everyone deserves access to rich, rigorous curriculum and equal opportunities.

I plan on creating rapport with staff and administrators by initially creating both informal and formal ways to meet and get to know people and for people to get to know me. In addition, I am interested in learning about what everyone perceives to be the school district's current strengths and next areas of growth. Initially, I want to spend time understanding the school district's culture, traditions and needs so that together we can take our school community's strengths with us to the future, while we establish our next priorities for future growth.

Whitefish Bay, like other school districts, has a diverse population of learners including special education kids, "regular kids", and kids traditionally known as gifted learners. What have you done in your current school district to deal with these differing types of needs?

Working with a diverse population of learners and supporting students to achieve at higher levels has been a strong area of focus in Stoughton Area School District's Strategic Plan. Great results are being achieved thru a multi-year focus on implementing strong rigorous, research-based curriculum with sustained staff development, along with a focus on inclusionary practices. We have been implementing an Integrated Service Delivery Model in all of our schools which has focused on meeting the needs of students of all abilities and closing achievement gaps. Creating tiers of intervention support for our students has also been an area of focus. This work has resulted in increased academic achievement for all

of our students, improved graduation and drop-out rates, and a decrease of special education incidence rates.

Have you ever worked with a parent advocacy group before? What do you see as the unique contributions such a group can make?

My experiences with parent advocacy groups include working with our "Working for Kids" parent groups within each of our schools, along with assisting the two parent advocacy groups which formed to support our recent successful referendum. I look forward to working with Advocates for Education and am very impressed with your website. You are a tremendous resource to the WFB School District and children of the community. You are a valuable resource in promoting good communications and information on important topics that are of interest to parents, along with being wonderful advocates for quality education. So many issues today are larger than our schools and require the whole community to be working actively together for the benefit of our children. Many of these same issues also require legislative advocacy. Advocates for Education provides a vehicle to have those conversations and influence topics/issues that matter to the future well-being and success of our children.

If you could wave a magic wand and make one good thing happen in education, what would it be?

Actually, I would like several magic wands. That would be very useful! The first magic wand would be used to support schools and communities to work more closely together in promoting healthy choices for our children. Many times our young people underestimate the importance and impact of their choices surrounding good nutrition, physical exercise, safety and drugs and alcohol. These are all issues that unfortunately are impacting young people's success in school and are truly best addressed by schools and communities working closely together.

Secondly, I would like to remove the fiscal barriers that exist and really get to work on reinventing the high school experience, making it more relevant for students, so they see their education as critical to their lives and the world around them. The fusion between college-preparatory, academic rigor and career-focused education to provide real-world connections can be very powerful and meaningful for our students. And, of course, technology needs to be meaningfully integrated within this experience.

Lastly, I would like to see a K-12 instructional delivery system that successfully supports ALL of our students to achieve success to meet their dreams, goals and desires in a personalized way!

AFE BOARD MEMBERS BID FAREWELL

Advocates for Education would like to thank exiting Presidents Molly Zillig and Tara Serebin, Treasurer Carol Ogorchock, Secretary Diana Del Rosso, Advocacy Anne Davis and long time Advisor Meredie Scrivner for all of their dedication and passion serving on the Board and in the community as representatives for our school children. Molly Zillig will continue her service as Advisor to the board. Please watch for more information on the fall gathering for founding member of 15 years Meredie Scrivner.

Social Networking Impacts Education

Advocates for Education sponsored a forum on Thursday, April 22, regarding "Social Networking: Outside and Inside of the Classroom" It was a very informative and positive discussion with the community about the advancement of social networking and its impact on our children's education.

The panelists included:

Dr. Michael Mazius, Clinical Psychologist

Dr. Mercedes Fisher, Associate Dean and Fulbright Scholar

*Laura Myrah, Director of Curriculum/Instruction,
Whitefish Bay School District*

*Dr. James Rickabaugh, Superintendent,
Whitefish Bay School District*

Each speaker presented a unique perspective for consideration regarding our kids and the use of various social medias as educational and communication tools.

Much of the discussion kept returning to the simple fact that today's student is familiar with and relies on many forms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to not only communicate with friends, but to complete school work. Educators need to keep up with these developments and adapt to the needs of our current students' learning styles. Laura Myrah stated that schools need to adjust to the changes in children's attention spans and provide more interactive learning, as well as cooperative student to student learning.

Dr. Mercedes Fisher shared the evolution of social media and its use in education at the primary and secondary level, including her experience with virtual classes and the use of technology as a tool to enhance critical thinking.

Ken Stillman, Director of Technology for WFB Schools, stated

"We are doing our students a disservice if we don't teach, support and use the new tools." The WFB School District views Facebook, Twitter, blogging and other digital media forms as positive tools and believes a model of knowledge sharing and knowledge management is the direction that the schools need to move toward. This "blended" environment would offer availability and access to many tools in the classroom setting

Issues of safety are always a concern, and all of the panelists agreed that parents need to talk to their kids about the use of these tools. Dr. Fisher urged parents to "build a relationship of mutual respect with your kids" so that they can have these tough discussions. Parents need to make sure that kids understand the permanence of postings on these social network sites and the present and future consequences. Safe computer practices should be established, including knowing who your kids are talking to, keeping a computer in plain view, and having access to your kid's accounts and passwords.

Dr. Rickabaugh concluded with these important points:

1. Maintain balance with use of media
2. Good decision making is still key
3. Relationships still count
4. Talk about using good judgment with your kids
5. Combination of online and face to face communication is best (blended)

The expert panel and parents agreed on the need to find a safe and effective way for our children to use these technologies both in and out of the classroom. Finding a balance to incorporating these advancements and encouraging in person communication was the advice of Dr. Michael Mazius.

For resource information on the forum, see www.advocatesforeducation.org

Bridging The Achievement Gap

In an effort to address the achievement gap between white students and students of color that exists in Whitefish Bay, as well as in many other school districts, members of the board of Pace³ and district teams from Whitefish Bay, Brown Deer, Mequon-Thiensville, Shorewood, and Wauwatosa have formed a consortium on equity and excellence in education. The school district teams each consist of administrators, teachers, parents and school board members. Each district has made a two-year commitment to the process, which began in August of 2009. Other goals of the consortium include changing policies and practices that hinder learning and addressing the needs of all students.

The consortium sought and received support from The Leadership Center at Cardinal Stritch University and began collecting engagement data from middle and high school students to help guide the

discussion and decision-making process. Other activities have included focus groups for students at the high school, as well as a series of workshops designed to help build cultural competency and team building among members of the consortium. The consortium will also be surveying parents to gather data in each of the five districts. Earlier this spring, the consortium hosted a forum at Whitefish Bay High School to share this process, as well as the data collected up to that point, with the public.

In conjunction with these efforts, the district has begun a series of book studies which focus on the book *Courageous Conversations About Race, A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* by Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton. In August of 2008, the school district conducted the first round of book studies with staff at the middle and high school levels, and has since had two more rounds. Teachers have been encouraged to join the book studies

and professional development credit has been offered. To date, approximately 70 staff members have participated.

Recently, AFE was invited to join one of the book studies, along with members of the board of Pace³, with Amy Levek and Lisa Gies as facilitators. An invitation went out to all of our members and was very well received, with nearly 20 members attending the first discussion. The book study and discussion will continue with two additional sessions. We're hoping that the discussion will spark greater conversation among all members of our school community which will continue well after the book study has been concluded.

For further information about the consortium or a possible future book study, please contact Lisa Gies at lisa.gies@wfbschools.com, Amy Levek at amy.levек@wfbschools.com, or Phyllis Richards at paccubed@earthlink.net

District Teachers Retiring



At the end of this school year, seven teachers will be retiring from the Whitefish Bay School District. AFE recently spoke with some of the teachers about their time spent teaching in the District and their plans for retirement.

Bruce Gill

Mr. Gill taught Computer Concepts and Computer Science at the high school for 26 years. For many years, he was also responsible for installing, repairing, and coordinating computer usage throughout the district. His favorite memories come from talking to his former students. He enjoys hearing about how the students are doing, especially when they continue in the computer field. His retirement plans include working in his yard and gardening, bike riding, traveling, and substitute teaching when the weather is too cold to be outside! He also plans to write some programs for his own learning and advancement.

Kathy Riebau

Ms. Riebau taught General and Choral Music at Cumberland School from 1979 through 1987 and at Richards School from 1995 through 2010. Her favorite teaching memories were the times she was able to take her students out into the community to perform. Her retirement plans include moving to Durango, Colorado to teach music classes at the Southwest Colorado Community College.

Cindy Graham

Mrs. Graham began teaching Special Education in Whitefish Bay in January 1990 after 12 years with Milwaukee Public Schools. Soon thereafter, she began teaching first grade at Richards, and this year completed her 17th year in Whitefish Bay. One of her favorite memories was making and sharing a Thanksgiving meal with her class. They arranged desks in a circle and shared family traditions. Her retirement plans are still in the works, but definitely include more family time and bike riding.

Carl Deblitz

Mr. Deblitz taught Shop at Richards School for 8 years and at WFB High School for 21 years. In the last two years, he also taught a course called Project Lead the Way, which included courses in Engineering and Design, Civil Engineering, and Architecture. His favorite memories involve helping kids accomplish something of real value by creating something from nothing in shop class. He has one particularly fond memory of a girl who wanted to make a pool table in class - a very difficult and time consuming project. It took the student two and a half years, but she did a great job, and he helped her wheel the finished table (disassembled) down the street to her house! His retirement plans include spending summers up north at his cottage and winters down south. He also wants to travel, golf, fish, water ski and sail. Mr. Deblitz serves in the Army Reserves as a Lieutenant Colonel and will continue with that for two more years.

Kathy Kupfer

Ms. Kupfer began teaching at Cumberland Elementary 23 years ago. After two years, she moved to the middle school where she has taught Social Studies, Writing Lab, Computers, Language Arts, and most recently 6th grade Mathematics. She states that she will miss the daily interactions with her students more than anything. Birthday celebrations are another highlight. Something that started out accidentally with a birthday button turned into the legendary "Kupfer Kiss" that has lasted for 20 years. She is thankful for the wonderful friends she has made, and will always remember with pride the tremendous group of dedicated professionals with whom she had the privilege to work every day. Her retirement plans include working on many neglected home projects and spending time with her elderly parents.

SURVEY RESULTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL OPEN LUNCH

Earlier this school year, High School administrators began a process designed to help them make an informed decision regarding the status of the open lunch period at the High School. Part of this process included a survey that asked which option the respondent would like to see implemented for the 2010-11 school year. Results are presented below.

	N	Status Quo	Parent Choice	Closed Grade 9	Closed All
Staff	60	26 43%	3 5%	27 45%	4 7%
Freshmen	233	187 80%	5 2%	41 18%	0 0%
Sophomores	196	158 81%	2 1%	34 17%	2 1%
Juniors	172	147 85%	3 2%	22 13%	0 0%
Seniors	199	124 62%	11 6%	38 19%	26 13%
All Students	800	616 77%	21 3%	135 17%	28 4%
Parents*	191	96 50%	20 10%	52 27%	23 12%

*Of those responding, 79 parents of freshmen, 55 of sophomores, 58 of juniors, and 46 of seniors.

This has been a year-long process, with many steps along the way, and we will soon know the outcome. After analyzing all the data that has been gathered, Bill Henkle, High School Principal, will be presenting the administration's decision to the School Board on May 12.

GROUNDBREAKING *Changes to Come*

A lot of work has been going on behind the scenes, as well as out in front, as the WFB school district moves forward on \$22 million in construction and renovation projects approved by village residents in fall of 2009. Over the past several months, the School Board and school district officials have been finalizing construction manager contracts and reviewing interior and exterior design plans presented by Bray & Associates, in collaboration with staff and administrators at each school. While design and site plans are being finalized, survey and boring work has begun at all three buildings with planned additions. Groundbreaking is anticipated in June.

According to Shawn Yde, the district's Director of Business Services, "There has been a lot going on concurrently. At the same time that the survey work and boring work is happening, the architects are working on the site plan and are trying to get approval at the state and local level. The next step is finalizing the plan and getting final approval, then moving forward with the construction documents and the various bid packages."

Construction managers, C.D. Smith & Associates, will lay out the proposed construction calendar at a meeting of School Board officials on May 26. The construction bid process is expected to take until mid-June, but officials hope to expedite several of the bids in order to begin construction work on the foundations as soon as school is out in June. During the summer construction, some summer school and other programs originally planned for Richards, Cumberland, and the high school may be relocated to the middle school this year. Planned security improvements at all buildings will be constructed this summer.

District officials have been working with Hutchinson, Shockey, Erley & Co., specialists in public finance, to determine the best method to issue the debt. Earlier this year, the district issued the first \$1 million at 3.5% for a 20-year issue. This was to see the preliminary work through until final approval could be made on the application for construction financing through a federally-subsidized program known as Qualified School Construction Bonds (QSCB's). These bonds carry a 0% interest rate. Yde expects the QSCB approval process to occur in early June and while the district applied for the full \$22 million, he doesn't expect to receive the full amount. "Last year they funded 33%, and if we got that, we would still have a balance due" said Yde. If the district is not awarded the full \$22 million in QSCB's, they will have to move forward with more traditional bond financing.

Recently, Moody's Investor Services downgraded the Whitefish Bay School District credit rating as a result of its 2006 investment in collateralized debt obligations, financed by DEPFA Bank. (See a more detailed article at our website, www.advocatesforeducation.org) When asked if the credit rating downgrade might impact the cost of district borrowing for any remaining financing needed, Yde stated, "I don't really want to comment because I don't agree with their ratings. It's too early to tell what the impact will be, if any, on the borrowing rate, but I think we will be vastly lower than the 5.5% in the original proposals. We're hoping to come back to the community with very good news on the interest rate for borrowing."

DID YOU FORGET?

RENEW

TODAY!

Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

Continue to be part of the team of voices speaking on behalf of children.

- Active Member(s) (WFB resident or parent/guardian of WFB School District student) @ \$20 per household
- Supporting Member(s) @ \$20 per household
- Enclosed is an additional donation to support AFE. Due to the lobbying mission of AFE, donations are not tax-deductible.

\$_____ donation enclosed.

Total enclosed: \$_____

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**AFE annual meeting will be held on Tuesday,
May 25, at 7 p.m. at Pandl's of Whitefish Bay,
1319 East Henry Clay Street. Elections will
be held to approve the proposed slate of
Board of Directors. All are welcome.**

RUMBLE ON CANAL STREET

Bay Ball 2010 is scheduled for Friday, June 4, at the Harley Davidson Museum. AFE encourages you to order your tickets now to attend this year's Ball, which provides much needed funds to supplement our school district budget.

The Ball is a fundraising event which supports the Whitefish Bay Public Education Foundation. The Foundation was established to provide additional financial resources directly benefiting our four public schools. All proceeds are split equally among the four schools and the Foundation. More than \$800,000 has been raised through the previous Bay Balls. Proceeds from this year's event will enhance the 21st Century Learning Skills and Technology Initiative to give students better access to valuable curriculum resources and learning tools.

Reservations are due May 17. For more information, contact Lori Kampschroer at 414.688.6244.