



Advocates *for* EDUCATION *of* Whitefish Bay, Inc.

Winter 2011

www.advocatesforeducation.org

ELIMINATE K4?

What's this I hear?

With Wisconsin facing up to a \$3.3 billion deficit over the next two years, cuts in K-12 funding is probable. One idea that has been getting press recently is to eliminate four year old kindergarten. How will that affect the state budget, and what would that mean to our community?

4-year-old kindergarten is now in 85% of the state's school districts and costs the state about 140 million dollars a year. The Whitefish Bay school district has had K4 for over fifty years.

The district currently employs four K4 teachers and four paraprofessionals that teach half day kindergarten to 177 children. Those kids start developing social and emotional skills, working towards literacy and pre-math objectives, and receive a once weekly dose of art, music, library and physical education.

Senior kindergarten teacher in the Whitefish Bay school district, Laura Armstrong, appreciates the value of K4. "The students learn so much more than their colors and shapes. K4 students now learn to be critical thinkers, how to problem solve and work in a group. They are emergent readers and writers on a daily basis."

Losing the K4 program would adversely affect the education of our children in the district. Specifically, it would decrease the effectiveness of early intervention programs such as speech therapy and reading readiness, reduce the overall hours of education and terminate vital teaching positions. Eliminating those positions and educational services from our school buildings won't equal the approximate one million decrease in state aid.

"I think my 4-year old benefits on so many levels from the junior kindergarten program. It's arming him with both the social and academic skills he'll need to start strong next year and beyond," says mom Amelia Zastava. "He's not only developing a love of learning and questioning the world around him, he's learning to think independently and critically which will be invaluable as he grows."

Jayne Heffron, Cumberland principal, agrees. "This is the first opportunity for many children to separate from their families and learn positive social skills. To have that experience before they enter K5 gives them a firm foundation to stand on as they take on more and more difficult curriculum."

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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Fair Funding

At the recent state education convention the Wisconsin Association of School Boards passed a resolution supporting “Fair Funding for Our Future,” the school finance reform plan advanced by State Superintendent Tony Evers. Since this plan was introduced last fall there has been a lot of discussion. If you have an interest in the issues surrounding school financing, The Fair Funding plan warrants a closer look.

The plan indicates its primary objectives are to simplify the school funding formula and improve equity across school districts. With the plan, every district will receive more state aid, thereby reducing their gross tax levy. School funding would be weighted by student income levels rather than property values in the district. Most interestingly, the School Levy Tax Credit would be

redirected into general school aid. Currently, this appears as a line item on your property taxes, a sort of rebate from the state. Although labeled as a School Levy Tax Credit, none of that money actually goes to the schools. Instead it is to soften the local property tax impact of school levies. Overall, the goals of the plan are to put more of the state money back into the classrooms. 93% of the state’s school districts would benefit from the plan. In the analysis provided, Whitefish Bay would come out slightly ahead.

For more information you can visit the website: <http://www.fairfundingforourfuture.org/>. You’ll find a great deal of information there, including links referencing responses and discussion, both positive and negative.

Charter vs. Voucher



Vouchers, most simply are a gift certificate from the state that students can use to attend a private school. Supporters believe that vouchers improve the quality of all education by creating competition and cost efficiencies.

In the state of Wisconsin the voucher program was set up in 1989 for students in the city of Milwaukee. It is called The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. The base level for a student’s participation is a family income below 175% of the current federal poverty rate. Students are required to apply through the private school they wish to attend. If the cost of educating the student is less than the standard amount paid, the school is required to refund the difference to the state. This year the schools are being paid \$6,442 per student. That money comes in part from the state budget and in part from the tax revenue received by the city of Milwaukee.

This year there are 102 voucher schools in the Milwaukee area. Schools that wish to participate in the voucher program are subject to review by the State Department of Instruction and can be eliminated from the program at DPI’s discretion. Although there are over 82,000 students enrolled in MPS, the state legislature has capped the number of vouchers to be issued to 22,500. The number of students who use the program varies from year to year but is currently at 20,996, the cap has never been implemented.

In the state of Wisconsin there are two ways to charter schools, those chartered by local school boards and those chartered by other entities authorized by the

state like the University of Wisconsin. They are called charter schools because they are founded on a contract between the authorizing agency and the school. In most cases those contracts are short-term (3-5 years) and the schools are subject to review before the contract is renewed.

There are currently 206 charter schools in Wisconsin with 37,173 students enrolled. The charter school answers to and is subject to the rules and regulations set up by its authorizing body. Since 2003 the state has also allowed for chartering of virtual schools that provide the bulk of a child’s education via the internet. This year there are 14 virtual charter schools in Wisconsin with a total enrollment of 3,927 students.

Charter schools are primarily funded by the state though most report that they need to do additional fundraising to meet their budgets. In exchange for some freedoms from state rules and regulations charter schools are subject to higher expectations for achievement. Advocates for charter schools suggest they can be successful because the charters are constructed to meet the needs of the population they are serving. Most charter schools employ non-union teachers. Reports conflict on the costs and benefits of this choice. Some reports indicate a high level of teacher burn-out and turnover while others suggest that the cost containment achieved allows for more money to go directly to educating the student.

To get more information on both charter and voucher schools; check the Wisconsin Department of Instruction website at www.dpi.wi.gov and select topics from the tabs at the top.

CANDIDATES FOR SCHOOL BOARD

Remember to vote on April 5

Voting by Absentee ballot begins March 15 at Village Hall

This spring, there are three seats up for election on the School Board: two 3-year positions, one 1-year position. Three candidates, profiles below, are running for the two 3-year positions. One candidate, Pam Woodard, is running uncontested for the 1-year position.

Marie Greco - Incumbent

- Resident of WFB for fourteen years (Attended St. Monica's Elementary School); Four children (younger two are currently attending WFB HS)
- Currently Co-owner and Vice President of Lexicom Corporate Services, Inc., a telecommunications consulting firm; President of WFB School Board; Volunteer in WFB schools
- Previously Parent Teacher Council at Cumberland Elementary (2 years); PTO President at Cumberland School (2 years); Board member of the Music Parent Association (2 years); Co-Chair of January Pops concert (2 years); Attended University Wisconsin-Milwaukee

"As the owner of a small business for 23 years, I have a broad base of experience which includes strong fiscal responsibility, employee management and client/vendor contract negotiation. I understand the importance of maintaining a high-quality public school system, which helps to maintain our property values and provides our state with a highly educated workforce. Also, I understand the reality of our economic constraints and the necessity to make hard, thoughtful decisions."

Anne Berleman Kearney

- Resident of WFB for seven years; Three children, two children enrolled in WFB schools
- Currently is principal of Appellate Consulting Group and practices complex civil litigation; Adjunct Professor at Marquette University Law School; Vice President of the Board of Directors for Rosalie Manor (social services organization providing pregnancy prevention education)
- Previously worked with Foley and Lardner; Graduated from Harvard Law School

"My background in law and finance gives me experience in analyzing complex issues, resolving conflicts, and forging compromise—skills that are highly relevant to a number of critical issues facing the district today and that I will therefore put to immediate work as a School Board member. I also look forward to using my skills as an attorney and law teacher to maximize the value of the upcoming planning process, and to improve upon communication with the community regarding School Board issues and actions."

Jim Phillips- Incumbent

- Resident of WFB for thirty years; Three children graduated from WFB schools
- Currently is shareholder with the law firm of Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.; (tax and corporate areas); Board member of the Whitefish Bay Public Education Foundation, Inc.; Board member of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Inc. (Oshkosh); Board member of ARC of Milwaukee, Inc., (advocacy, resources and counseling for developmentally disabled individuals)
- Previously taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School; Board member of the Whitefish Bay Public Library Board; Graduated from the University of Iowa (math, physics, JD)

"...knowledge about many of the issues facing schools today, [has been] acquired in part through my six years of prior school board service, and participation on the board of Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc...extensive experience in advising profit and nonprofit organizations on many aspects of operation, including planning, structure, finance, and personnel, [and] a willingness to listen and consider all viewpoints before drawing conclusions."

Questions on School Issues?

At some point or another, most of us find ourselves saying “I think this needs to be changed”. When it’s a problem with our public schools, it can be hard to figure out how to approach a solution.

Open meeting laws and WI state statute can make it appear complicated to discuss an issue. By law, the School Board can’t discuss anything that isn’t on the agenda. The law requires that any issue discussed has to be posted for the general public beforehand. This can be frustrating for residents who go to the meeting expecting resolution. But the Board needs to be sure they get information from all parties involved. For example, if there was a group of parents planning to demand the banning of your favorite book, would you want to have a chance to respond? Probably. Open meeting laws ensure you get that chance.

Ideally, concerns should be addressed and resolved as close as possible to their origin. Like most companies, Whitefish Bay’s school district has policies and procedures to address most issues; if resolution starts closest to the issue, it is more likely the correct policy will be initiated. Take the book example; ideally, any discussion should start with the librarian. She would know that the District has a procedure that applies when a book is questioned. If you were unsatisfied with the process or course, you could talk with your principal. If you still didn’t feel satisfied, you could call the District or a School Board representative. But if

you start in the right place, you may be able to save yourself some time and hassle.

Sometimes issues are of a much bigger scale and time sensitive. In the event of an issue that affects the community as a whole, the best approach is to start with a phone call. Within the last year, the School Board was contacted regarding a bigger issue. When they realized how many questions there were, a public hearing was scheduled. As part of that hearing, property owners who would be directly impacted by the outcome received written notice of the meeting. Imagine how much better the feedback was because all of the stakeholders had a chance to voice their opinion.

School Board members are available to talk. Their contact information is on the District website. They know the District policies and can help guide you down the right path. With some experience, you will learn that one of the most effective ways to voice a concern and work toward resolution is starting with a simple phone call.

For more information go to www.wash.org

Courageous Conversations about Race Book Club

It is not too late to join the book club. The first meeting will be held on Monday, February 21, 2011, at the North Shore Library at 7:00PM. Send an email to pacecubed@earthlink.net for more information.

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SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES FORUM

**Monday, March 14
Whitefish Bay Library at 7PM**

Moderated by Mike Strehlow, TV 58 News Anchor

**3 Candidates:
Marie Greco, Anne Berleman Kearney and Jim Phillips
are running for 2 seats.**

Submit questions for the candidates at our Web site
info@advocatesforeducation.org by Monday March 7th.

Community Encouraged To Take Communications Audit

The on-going engagement of the entire Whitefish Bay community is critical to building upon Whitefish Bay School District's tradition of excellence. With countless methods of communication available today, the District is committed to using the most effective ways to engage our staff and community members.

To that end, a Superintendent's Advisory Committee made up of School District staff, administration, School Board members and community members has been formed. Their charge is to collaborate with the Superintendent in the creation and execution of a comprehensive Communications Plan which considers the communication needs of our stakeholders.

The input and participation of our community and staff are key components of our School District's success. And so, we invite our stakeholders to participate in the first step of the process which includes completing a Communications Survey. **Surveys will be available February 1-22, 2011.**

Mr. Joe Donovan of the Donovan Group, LLC will compile and analyze the Communications Survey results. The Communications Advisory Committee, assisted by Mr. Donovan, will then use survey data to create the Whitefish Bay School District Communications Plan.

If you have any questions about the Committee or its work, please contact Dr. Mary Gavigan at (414) 963-3901 or by email at mary.gavigan@wfbschools.com.

If you currently are a parent of a child attending a Whitefish Bay School, please participate by going to: <http://parent.WFBsurvey.com>

If you do not currently have a child attending a Whitefish Bay School, please participate by going to: <http://www.WFBsurvey.com>

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S INVESTMENT LAWSUIT?

Dr. Gavigan reported to AFE that "The School District's investment lawsuit continues to be in the hands of the District's legal counsel. The WFB School District has employed legal counsel to protect the District's interests, and we have been advised to not comment on any of the details of the case at this time. The case is in what is called the discovery phase and is scheduled to be heard in pretrial in State Court in Sept. 2011."

For additional information about the CDO please check www.schoollawsuitfacts.com/

DID YOU FORGET?

RENEW

TODAY!

Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

RENEW TODAY ONLINE WITH

PAYPAL

www.advocatesforeducation.org

or use the form below and send with membership fee

Active Member(s) (WFB resident or parent/guardian of WFB School District student) @ \$20 per household

Supporting Member(s) @ \$20 per household

AFE Scholarship Fund
\$ _____ donation enclosed.

Enclosed is an additional donation to support AFE. Due to the lobbying mission of AFE, donations are not tax-deductible.

\$ _____ donation enclosed.

Total enclosed: \$ _____

I am interested in volunteering for AFE. Please call me.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State & Zip _____

Phone _____

eMail _____

Check here to receive our Newsletter online.

Send this form today to:

AFE
PO Box 170123
Milwaukee, WI 53217

Construction Status Update: February, 2011

Cumberland Elementary

Site Concrete 90% Brick and Cast Stone 100% complete Glass and Glazing 99% complete Painting 90% complete Floor Tile 20% complete Boys bathroom 1st floor 95% Complete Permanent Power Week of 2/7/11

Richards Elementary

Site Concrete 95% Brick and Cast Stone 100% complete Glass and Glazing 100% complete Painting 100% complete Floor Tile 20% complete Boys and Girls Bathroom 1st wloor 98% complete Permanent Power week of 1/31/11

High School

Steel Joists and Deck are about 100% Block is 100% complete for bearing walls Roofing 85% complete MEP rough in ongoing Slab on Grade 90% Ornamental Stairs 95% complete Cast Stone and Brick 65% complete Administrative Offices Complete 1/31/11

AFE Scholarship Established

The Advocates For Education of Whitefish Bay (AFE) Scholarship was established in the Fall of 2010 to honor Meredith Scrivner, one of its founders. The purpose of the scholarship is to recognize a student who, like Meredie, has demonstrated a record of advocating for a cause that has benefited his or her community. The student will have a problem solving attitude--- a person who looks to find solutions. The student will display leadership qualities, have a history of community service and will be someone who has made a tangible difference in his or her community. No minimum grade point average is required. All high school seniors are eligible to apply. The scholarship will be a one time award of \$500 and will be paid directly to the student.

Selection criteria:

- Student must be a graduating Senior from Whitefish Bay High School.
- Student must have shown initiative in advocating for a specific cause.
- Student must have a history of community service.
- Student must have leadership qualities.
- Student must display a “problem solving attitude.”

Please apply using the standard Whitefish Bay Scholarship application form as well as the separate Advocates For Education of Whitefish Bay application form.