



Advocates *for* EDUCATION

Fall 2008

of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

www.advocatesforeducation.org

AFE Forum

AFE to sponsor state senate candidate forum; seeks advance questions from members

Advocates for Education will sponsor a forum featuring Sen. Alberta Darling and Rep. Sheldon Wasserman, candidates for Wisconsin's eighth district senate seat, at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 23 at the Schlitz Audubon Center, 1111 E. Brown Deer Road, Bayside. The forum is free and open to the public.

The forum will be devoted to education issues. Moderators will be Jane Hampden, UWM lecturer in broadcast journalism and former host of WUWM's *Lake Effect*, and Jack Linehan, Executive Director of the Southeastern Wisconsin

Schools Alliance (SWSA) and retired Superintendent of Shorewood Schools.

AFE members who have questions for the candidates are encouraged to e-mail them to the AFE website at afe@advocatesforeducation.org no later than Friday, Oct. 17.

Co-sponsoring the event with AFE are the Alliance for Strong Mequon-Thiensville Schools, Shorewood Action for Education and SWSA. All of the sponsoring organizations are non-partisan.

***AFE encourages you to vote Nov. 4
and to consider public education issues
in your voting decisions.***



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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From the President:

As we settle into a new school year, I extend a warm welcome to our many new members. Thank you for joining! Welcome, also, to new board members Tom De Muth, Diana Del Rosso, Carolyn MacIver, Carol Ogorchock, and Patty Whaley. Special thanks to AFE member Melanie Ariens, who served as a non-board member on this year's nominating committee.

It will be an exciting year for public education. The outcomes of both federal and state elections will have important implications for our schools. In this newsletter you will find information about AFE's Oct. 23 state senate candidate forum. Let us know if you have questions for the candidates. Information about the state assembly candidates can be found at our website, www.advocatesforeducation.org.

In our own district, the school board continues its review of the District Facilities Committee report

delivered in February. Public information and comment sessions will begin soon, and AFE will be actively involved in that process. We encourage you to be involved, too! Regular updates will be available to members via e-mail and on our website.

AFE thanks outgoing board members David Froiland, Ted Matkom, Deb Schmidt, Betty Schroeder and Debbie Siebert for their service. Special thanks to Kristin Yunker, who reluctantly resigned as AFE president when her family had an unexpected opportunity to spend two years in Germany.

I look forward to a productive year for AFE and our schools.

*Kathy Rogers
AFE President*

Elementary Reading/Language Arts Curriculum Under Review

The K-5 Reading/Language Arts curriculum is being reviewed by a committee of teachers representing each grade level at both elementary schools, under the direction of Curriculum and Instruction Director Tony Frontier. The parent representative is Jennifer Wilkinson, whose children attend Richards School.

Central to the committee's review will be the structure and texts used for guided reading in the curriculum, and the district's current approach to teaching conventions in writing. A parent survey on Reading/Language Arts at the elementary level will be distributed shortly. The committee hopes to have recommendations for the School Board by spring, 2009.

Also in the spring, reviews of both the Art and Music curriculums will begin. Parents interested in serving on either committee can learn more about the process by contacting Dr. Frontier at 963-3927 or tony.frontier@wfbschools.com.

New website details investment lawsuit

A new website contains information and documents explaining the investment lawsuit recently filed by Whitefish Bay and four other Wisconsin school districts. The web address is www.schoollawsuitfacts.com.

Don't Miss Out on Our E-mail Alerts!

Please add afe@advocatesforeducation.org to your contacts/address book. If you do not wish to receive e-mails from AFE, please send an e-mail to afe@advocatesforeducation.org with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line.

School Board Continues Review of Facilities Recommendations

Public comment period to begin soon

The Whitefish Bay School Board continues to review the recommendations it received from the District Facilities Committee in February, with an eye toward a possible referendum in the spring. Since receiving the committee's report, the school board has toured each school to learn more about the condition of the facilities and to consider potential improvements.

The board is currently discussing how to prioritize the committee's recommendations, how to present the report to the public, and how to create opportunities for public review and comment.

The District Facilities Committee, which included parents, teachers, administrators and community members, was appointed to assess the condition of the district's buildings and make recommendations for their maintenance and improvement over the next 15 years. The committee's recommendations come shortly before the retirement of the district's debt for the renovation of the Middle School, incurred in the mid 1990's. If the district decides to seek funding for any of the recommended improvements, it will need to hold a referendum.

The committee recommended three possible options for maintaining and improving the district's facilities.

■ **The Stewardship Plan** includes basic electrical, plumbing and heating projects at each school, primarily infrastructure and maintenance that have been deferred due to the constraints of state spending caps. It also includes technology updates and building-related security modifications at

would include a music wing at the high school, a fitness center at the middle school, and multi-purpose cafeteria/auditorium space at each elementary school. Space vacated due to new construction would also be renovated. This plan would cost \$14.5 million beyond the Stewardship Plan.

■ **The Master Plan** would include all changes recommended in the first two plans, plus second-story library/media center additions at the elementary schools, a new gym and substantial renovations at the middle school, and additional performing arts enhancements at the high school. This option would cost \$12 million beyond the Educational Improvement Plan. (A more complete review of the committee's report is available at

School Board Meetings

School Board Committee Meetings take place on the second or third Wednesday of each month (unless otherwise noted), at 7 p.m. in room 47 of the High School.

October meetings will be held
Oct. 1 and Oct. 22.

All meetings are open to the public. By attending these meetings, you can learn important facts about this and other key issues affecting our children's education.

*For more information, visit www.wfbschools.com and click on the tab entitled *School Board* and follow to *School Board Meetings*.*

each school. The cost of this option, \$14 million, would not result in a tax increase for village residents because the payments would equal those the district is currently paying on the debt about to retire. A referendum would still be required, however.

■ **The Educational Improvement Plan** proposes adoption of the Stewardship Plan plus building additions at each school. These

www.advocatesforeducation.org; click on resources, past newsletters, winter 2008.)

The School Board will soon move into the public-comment phase of its consideration of the committee's recommendations. Information about how you can participate in this process will be available on the AFE website, www.advocatesforeducation.org, as well as the Whitefish Bay

Making Whitefish Bay Schools Green & Healthy

District to investigate official DNR/DPI recognition

Inspired by Whitefish Bay Schools' success in energy savings, a group of parents met last year to discuss what else could be done to make the schools green and healthy, educate students to be good stewards of the environment, and conserve costs for the district.

In March, the group proposed to the School Board that the district consider participation in the state's Green & Healthy Schools program, which recognizes environmental efforts made by schools. The program is jointly administered by the Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources and Public Instruction.

Under program guidelines, assessments and actions must be completed in three required areas: energy, water, and waste and recycling, and a choice of two additional areas from topics including mercury, chemicals, community involvement, facilities and grounds, integrated pest management, indoor air quality, and transportation.

Whitefish Bay is close to becoming a Green & Healthy school district,

as defined by program criteria, and even achieving the "reaching higher" status for going beyond the criteria. Some recent district initiatives include:

The district completed an energy assessment and implemented the recommended practices and changes, saving nearly one million in utility costs over the past five years and earning recognition for the schools as "Energy Star" buildings.

Buildings and Grounds staff have attended and conducted training seminars on reducing pesticide use, and received recognition from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The water management system installed in the new Lubar Stadium at the high school was designed to prevent run-off from overtaxing the village storm water system. The new system stores rainwater from the stadium until runoff has dissipated from the surface, then gradually releases water into the village system.

The Middle and High Schools have

moved to paperless communication with parents, and Cumberland and Richards Schools are working on reduction measures through the use of electronic Thursday folders and e-mail communication to parents. These efforts have reduced paper use by 20%, with further reduction anticipated.

The district is finalizing appointments to a Green & Healthy Committee, with representatives from the administration, faculty, student body and parents from each school, to explore the remaining requirements for achieving official Green & Healthy School designation. To date, that status has been conferred on only 11 schools in the state; Whitefish Bay would be the first district to receive district-wide recognition.

Additional information about the initiative is available from parents Melanie Ariens (964-9813), Christi Clancy (967-0105) or Andrew Warner (964-9505). For more information about the Green & Healthy Schools program, visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/greenschools/index.htm#mission>.

District Welcomes New Teachers

The following new teachers were hired for the start of the 2008-09 school year in the Whitefish Bay district schools:

Cumberland: Elissa Purvis, Library Media Specialist; Kittredge Bret Harte, Special Education; Rebecca Koch, Junior Kindergarten; Shannon Cassidy Cox, Junior and Senior Kindergarten; Kaila Davenport, Kindergarten; Chelsie Rennie, Junior Kindergarten; and Erin Watton, first grade.

Richards: Darby Nelson, Kindergarten; Megan Seghers, Special Education; and Keith Sohr, third grade.

Middle School: Jeffrey Shoemaker, Vocal Music; Linda Pom, Speech/Language; and Demaris Kenwood, French.

High School: Stephanie LaGue, Spanish; Michael Balkovec, Social Studies; Kristy Kaat, Special Education and Thomas Medved, Art.

Exploring the rationale for school fees

"It's my husband's least favorite time of the year," a Whitefish Bay mom sighed when asked if her family was ready for the start of school. Wistfulness at seeing the summer end? "No, it's the school fees! He hates writing those checks!"

This frustrated husband is not alone. School fees begin at \$40 for a student in Kindergarten, increasing to \$60 when the student enters first grade. Fees vary for Middle and High School students, depending on which classes they're taking, and all students pay a technology fee. Over the years, the very legality of school fees and their uses have been challenged, according to Shawn Yde, Whitefish Bay Schools' Director of Business Services.

The state Constitution has been interpreted to mean that school fees cannot be charged for teacher salaries or "capital items" such as building construction. But it is also clear from Wisconsin Supreme Court rulings that a school district is not required to provide all of the "consumable" items a student might need. Those it does choose to provide, it can charge for.

Some examples of these consumable items are paper, art supplies, headphones, gym clothes, and publications like Scholastic Magazine. "This has been the area of greatest growth," Yde said. Some curricular materials, such as elementary-level workbooks, are also considered consumable. Using supply lists developed by the schools, families shop for other consumable items on their own. School fees are also assessed for some field trips and both curricular and extracurricular activities. At the high school, a rental fee is assessed for textbooks.

Since 1995, the district has assessed a technology fee to pay for printer paper, cartridges, and individual student computer accounts. Once as high as \$40 per student, the technology fee is currently set at \$25 per student.

As school curricula have evolved to require more consumable materials, districts have struggled to cover the additional costs. "The revenue cap imposed on school districts by the legislature is a difficulty school districts are facing," Yde said. "Because revenue increases have been limited, many school districts have sought to keep up with rising costs by passing more costs related to consumable student supplies onto parents by way of user fees."

The Whitefish Bay School Board reviews all requests for increases in student fees. What if a family feels it cannot afford to pay them? Some may be eligible for fee waivers, according to Yde, if they meet federal guidelines. Applications for these waivers are available from the school secretaries in each building.



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.

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

\$ _____ donation enclosed.

Total enclosed:

\$ _____

Name(s) _____

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Send this form today to:

**AFE
PO Box 170123
Milwaukee, WI 53217**

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS OF AFE!

Since the summer of 2007, AFE's membership committee has made a point of attending the district's registration days and talking to parents about AFE's role in the community. The response has been fantastic! Membership in AFE is the ideal way for Whitefish Bay residents to keep informed about what's going on in public education locally and at the state level. Whether it is the facilities study review currently underway, a new curriculum being rolled out, or issues pertaining to the state budget, the AFE newsletter, e-mail alerts and forums keep members educated. As a result of the community's interest in public education, our membership has increased by more than 100 members in the past two years. We welcome the following people who have recently joined AFE:

Joanne and Nick Anton	Amy Gigure	Hetal Larsen	Rega and Larry Plaster
Gwyn Beagle	John Grych	Olga Lesinski	Yvonne Puerner
Kelly Boettcher	Dawn Hentzen	Lynn Ludke	Diane Rogers
Kristin Boudreau	Dan and Lisa Hess	Karen Mathu	Mary Ross and Bill Davies
Christine Cacopardo	Mark and Angel Hessel	Nancy McFarlin	Tom and Heidi Schmid
Steven Cohen	Jennifer Hoffman-Jonas	Julie and Ted McNamara	Sarah Skebba
Chris and Teresa Coplan	Holly and Phil Hoffmann	Bob Peterson	Sally Smaida
Elizabeth and Mark Crider	Ruth Joachim	and Molly Megan	Tracy Stockwell
Leah and John Dean	Amy and Joe Joyce	Jay and Beth Mesrobian	Dani Waedekin
Lise Everhart	Kate Kleinmann	Paula and Tim Mitchell	David and Barbara
Heidi Fallone	Chantal Knier	Ann Mort	Weinberg
Steve and Debbie Frensz	Marina and John Kuhn	Christine Mueller	Kim Winter-Reinhardt
Kari Frentzel	Christine and	Kate Muth	Kathy Zinner
Jody Furlong	Ron Kuramoto	Rosemary Stuart	Peter and Sarah Zwiefelhofer
Wendy Garcia	Lisa Kurtz	and Joe Otto	
Kurt and Krystine Giesa	Suzanne LaFleur	Sarah and Dan Patzer	