



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

Fall 2009

[www.advocatesforeducation.org](http://www.advocatesforeducation.org)

## TWO QUESTION FACILITIES REFERENDUM SCHEDULED FOR VOTE NOVEMBER 3

The Whitefish Bay School Board recently approved a two-question referendum for the voters in Whitefish Bay. The referendum will be the only item on the ballot in a special election to be held on November 3, 2009.

The referendum is the culmination of a three-year process that began in September 2006, when the School Board approved the formation of a Facilities Study Committee. The Committee met 19 times and worked with school staff, as well as Bray Architects to assess the condition of the school district's facilities and determine and prioritize infrastructure and educational needs.

In February 2008 the Study Committee presented its report to the School Board. The School Board initiated a review of the findings and began to solicit public input, but halted the process eight months later due to the deteriorating environment of the US economy. In February 2009 the process was restarted when the School Board updated and revised possible referendum questions. Recently, the School Board held four listening sessions to receive public input.

The two referendum questions that have been approved have been framed as the "Stewardship Option" and the "Educational Enhancement Option." The details about each option can be viewed on the school

district's website ([www.wfbschools.com](http://www.wfbschools.com)) and are outlined briefly below:

### Stewardship Option

- Replace school roofs
- Upgrade heating and ventilation systems
- Tuck point exterior walls.
- Remodel various bathrooms in all buildings to meet current building codes and save energy
- Update fire alarm systems
- Make necessary upgrades to electrical systems to improve functioning and save energy
- Reconfigure school entrances

The Stewardship Option's estimated cost is \$9 million; however this cost would be offset by \$9 million of current debt that is set to expire. Therefore, if this option passes, taxpayers should not see a tax increase as a result.

### Educational Enhancement Option

- Address technology infrastructure needs in all schools
- Add cafeteria/multi-purpose rooms to the two elementary schools
- Remodel vacated space in the elementary schools to provide additional art, special education, and regular classrooms
- Replace the gym floor at the middle school

*Two Question continued on Page 2*

## 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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## Two Question *continued from Page 1*

- Relocate the middle school orchestra room from the basement to the second floor
- Create an addition at the high school which will add new music room space
- Remodel vacated music space in the high school to increase science and pre-engineering laboratory space, as well as additional special education needs
- Create a passageway or atrium in the high school with enough space to allow students to pass between the field house and the main building indoors, and to congregate during the lunch period

The estimated cost of this option would be an additional \$13.6 million. The School Board estimates the impact on property taxes will be approximately \$250 per year for an average home with an assessed value of \$350,000.

While the School Board has offered cost estimates of the various options, the actual tax implications for either option will not be completely clear until after the decision is made to go forward and financing is determined.

**It is important to note that the referendum questions will be worded so that the two options are independent of one another. Therefore, it is important that you vote separately on each question. Neither option includes building or cost elements of the other. If both referendum questions pass, the School Board will be authorized to borrow a total of \$22.6 million (with the first \$9 million being offset as explained above).**

The School District has devoted a section of its website to specifically address any questions regarding the referendum. It can be found at: <http://www.wfbschools.com/dofacility.cfm>

AFE will continue to update its website with any new information we receive and will continue to send out e-mail alerts as events surrounding the referendum unfold.

We urge ALL of our members to avail themselves of these resources to become better informed. It's important that we are all educated on this subject and that we take the time to vote on November 3rd.

## Referendum 101

***Q: Why do we need a referendum to approve spending for the proposed facilities projects?***

A: State law requires that any spending above the designated spending cap be approved by voters.

***Q: Why can't we use reserve funds for capital projects?***

A: We can, and we do. Traditionally, the Whitefish Bay School Board has channeled some operating reserve money into capital projects. This is in the range of \$500,000 to \$750,000 per year. However, our reserves are not sufficient for a project in the multi-million dollar range, and additionally, board policy requires that reserves be maintained at a certain level.

***Q: What are reserves for if not to spend them?***

A: Each year, the reserve is used to "borrow from ourselves" because state aid payments are not received in time to cover all operational expenses such as salaries and benefits. In addition, the reserve fund is an emergency fund for just that...emergencies.

***Q: Why are we considering a referendum now?***

A: With the debt from the middle school project of the early 1990's retiring, the District has the opportunity to take on \$9 million in new debt and to keep the tax payment level the same. This opportunity often provides the stimulus for a District to do a periodic overview of its capital needs, which is what our School District did with the creation of the facilities study committee.

***Q: What are the implications of the unstable economy on the referendum?***

A: On the plus side, the District anticipates favorable interest rates and favorable contractor bids, and there may be some federal stimulus money in the form of low interest bonds. On the down side, many people are feeling the effects of income reductions due to the economic downturn.

***Q: Do we really need a music addition and cafeteria/auditorium additions?***

A: Everyone will have to decide that question individually. Enrollment at the two elementary schools is approximately 700 students each. The music rooms at the high school do not accommodate the entire orchestra or band, and poor acoustics make the sound so loud that the band cannot play comfortably at full level. Science classes at the high school do not have adequate lab space. Middle school gym classes contend with a slippery, dangerous floor.

***Q: Do families really "shop" for neighborhoods based on what they see at the schools?***

A: Cumberland principal Jayne Heffron reports that about 35 to 40 families tour Cumberland each year, in advance of either buying a house or choosing a school. Currently, Heffron estimates that over half those families eventually choose the school. For every student who attends school in the District, we receive approximately \$11,000 in aid. It is clear that maintaining enrollment is critical to maintaining quality programming.

# District Welcomes New Staff

## Cumberland

**Sheila Gardner** is a new Sr. Kindergarten Teacher at Cumberland. She graduated from UW-Milwaukee in Elementary Education and most recently worked as a substitute teacher and a Learning Support Instructor for the Elmbrook School District. Ms. Gardner is married to Mike, and they have three daughters – Anna, 11 years old in 6th grade; Erin, 10 years old in 5th grade; and Meghan, 5 years old in kindergarten. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her family camping, watching their many sporting activities and being outdoors. She also enjoys music, reading and spending time with friends. Ms. Gardner says, “My favorite aspect of teaching is having the opportunity to work with children and to be a part of their learning and growing adventure! I feel so, so lucky to be a part of the Whitefish Bay School district and the Cumberland team!”

**Jess Iwanski** joins Cumberland as the new Physical Education teacher. She graduated from UW-LaCrosse with a major in physical education and a minor in adapted physical education. Ms. Iwanski was a substitute teacher at Stormonth and also taught a strength and conditioning summer program in Grafton. She played softball for UW-LaCrosse for 4 years. She loves any sport, especially rock climbing and white water rafting in Colorado. “My favorite thing about teaching P.E. is seeing how excited and energetic kids are to learn new skills and how excited they are when they are successful” said Ms. Iwanski.

**Joanne Grych** joins the staff at Cumberland as a fourth grade teacher. She earned her B.S. degree in Education from UWM and has taught in both Milwaukee and Illinois schools. After raising her family, Ms. Grych returned to teaching and has taught 1st, 2nd, and 4th grades. She

was also a long-term and day-to-day substitute at Cumberland. Ms. Grych lives in WFB with her three children. Her favorite activities are golfing, gardening, reading and travel. “My favorite thing about teaching is comparing the growth a child has made from the beginning of the year to the end of the year knowing that I played an important role in that progress” said Ms. Grych. She is thrilled to be teaching 4th grade again.

**Holly Adams** is a new Sr. Kindergarten Teacher at Cumberland. She graduated from Indiana University and is new to Wisconsin, only moving here a year ago. Ms. Adams and her husband are renovating an older home in Port Washington but still find time to enjoy mountain biking, cheese eating and time visiting with family. Ms. Adams has four years of prior teaching experience and says “My favorite thing about teaching is being around the children because they are so honest and funny without even knowing it.”

**Heather Swanson** joins Cumberland and the Middle School as the Beyond Program GT Resource Teacher. She has a B.A. in Education from Wittenberg University (Elementary and Special Education), and an M.S.Ed. in Administration from Northern Illinois University. Ms. Swanson taught 2nd and 5th grade at Rockford Christian Schools, Rockford, IL (3 years), 3rd grade at Meehan Elementary School, School District of Belvidere, IL (6 years), and most recently spent three years doing Student and Instructional Support at Brookfield Elementary in Brookfield, WI. Her husband is a Children's Pastor at Elmbrook Church, and she has a two year old daughter. Ms. Swanson enjoys reading, cooking, and spending time with family. She states, “My favorite thing about teaching is that I have the opportunity to continually learn new things with students and colleagues.”

## Richards

**Aaron Dobberstein** is the new School Counselor at Richards. He received a BA in Communications with a minor in Sociology from UW-Milwaukee, as well as an MS in Educational Counseling from Concordia University Wisconsin. He was a school counselor at Deerfield Elementary in Oak Creek and previously worked in the graduate admission office at Concordia University Wisconsin. Other employment included United Way, Aflac, and the Milwaukee Admirals hockey team. Mr. Dobberstein is married to Amanda, and they have a daughter, Allison, who is almost 17 months old. He lived in Germany with his family for a year and a half, returning in August, 2006. He enjoys taking walks, going on bike rides, and playing at the park with his wife and daughter. He also plays basketball and softball in his free time and enjoys reading mysteries and watching movies. Mr. Dobberstein says “I am very excited to be here at Richards! I love being a part of the student's school family and having the opportunity to get to know them and help guide them through the school year. It is a pleasure to see them walk through the doors each day!”

**Shelli Daigle** is a new Math Support teacher at Richards. She graduated from Marquette University with a BS in Mathematics and a teaching license for grades 1-8. She previously taught middle school math at Our Lady Queen of Peace, a Choice school on the south side of Milwaukee. She also works at Marquette University supervising pre-service teachers (Marquette students) who are learning how to teach math. Ms. Daigle says, “I love that every day is different when you're a teacher. I never have the same day twice because the content is constantly changing, the research is always changing, and the students are always changing. Teachers play such an important role in the lives of their students, and I feel very lucky to be a part of each of their lives.”

**Melissa Rank** joins Richards Elementary this year as a School Counselor. She earned her undergrad in Psychology from UW-LaCrosse and her Graduate degree in Educational Counseling from Concordia University in Milwaukee. She was a counselor in the Valders and Sheboygan area school districts before joining the team at Richards. Ms. Rank lives in Sheboygan and enjoys playing the cello in a string quartet. When asked what her favorite thing about teaching is, she said, "I get to spend my entire day with children and I don't know what could be better than that."

**Susie Bond** joins the Richards staff teaching half-day Sr. Kindergarten this year. She has had many years experience as a parent, a paraprofessional and a substitute teacher in the Whitefish Bay School District. She has lived in Whitefish Bay for 15 years and raised 2 sons: Evan, a 2009 graduate and Noah, a freshman at Whitefish Bay High School. Ms. Bond fell in love with teaching as a paraprofessional and went on to earn her BS in Early Childhood Education from UWM. She said "I am thrilled to be teaching half-day K-5 at Richards."

## Middle School

**Stephanie Wagner** is the new 8th grade Math teacher at the Middle School. She was born and raised in Brookfield and went to the University of WI Eau Claire, graduating in 2001 with a degree in Elementary Education and a minor in Mathematics. She moved to Flagstaff, AZ where she was a substitute teacher and special education aide; then moved to San Francisco, CA where she taught 7th and 8th grade math and science for 5 years. Ms. Wagner and her husband just bought their first home in Wales. They moved back to Wisconsin to be with their families and to get support raising their baby girl, Grace, who is almost 3 months old. In her free time, Ms. Wagner loves to be outdoors and to travel. She also enjoys sewing and reading. Ms.

Wagner says "My favorite thing about teaching is getting children excited about learning. I hope that I am a positive role model for them to get excited about math and to better understand how to apply the topics we learn to their everyday lives."

**Katie Kasper** is a Reading and ELL teacher at the Middle School and a reading support teacher at Cumberland. She graduated with an education degree from Carroll College (back before it was Carroll University) and is currently going to Cardinal Stritch for a Master of ESL and Literacy. Previous to teaching in Whitefish Bay, she taught 6th grade math and reading in Sturgeon Bay, worked with English Language Learners in Brown Deer, and taught English in Japan. She loves traveling and also spent a year as a nanny in Germany. Ms. Kasper got married last year and lives in Milwaukee with her husband, Matt. She states, "My favorite thing about teaching is getting to know my students on a personal level and being able to continually learn new things each day."

**Geoffrey Pontus** is a new 8th grade Social Studies and Language Arts teacher at the Middle School. He attended Saint Louis University, where he received a degree in Marketing. When he decided to go into teaching, he attended Marquette University to obtain a teaching certificate. Prior to working in Whitefish Bay, he taught 7th and 8th grade Literature, Language Arts, and Science at Our Lady of Good Hope. He also worked in Greenfield as a long term substitute teacher. In his free time, he enjoys reading, camping, traveling (by car), and attending concerts. He tries to combine two or three of these interests by traveling across the country to see a favorite band. Mr. Pontus says, "The thing I enjoy most about teaching is that every day presents a new challenge. The "ah-ha" moments that come around also make all the struggles to get a student to that understanding worth the work."

## High School

**Derek Larson** joins WFB High School as a Chemistry teacher. He attended the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and earned a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering in 2001. He then went on to earn his Mathematics and Chemistry secondary teaching certification from Cardinal Stritch University in 2009. This will be Mr. Larson's first year teaching full time. Prior to joining WFBHS, he was a city engineer in Minneapolis for 4 years, a math and chemistry tutor, and a high school football coach. Mr. Larson is an avid sports fan and is coaching the freshman football team this year. His interests include camping, hunting and fishing. He is also planning a spring wedding. "What I love best about teaching is the new challenges it presents everyday. I enjoy the enthusiasm and personalities that each student brings into the classroom" said Mr. Larson.

## District

**Kent Stahlman** is the new Director of Technology for the school district. He received his BA in Mathematics from the University of Wisconsin - Madison and an MS in Educational Technology from the University of Kansas. He served as the Associate Director of 21st Century Cyber Charter School in Pennsylvania for 4 years. Previous to that he was in Technology Management for Edison Schools Inc., in the Kansas City School District and the Sycamore School District in Illinois. He also taught Computer Science in Omaha, Nebraska and Math in Menomonee Falls. Mr. Stahlman moved from Pennsylvania with his chocolate lab and a feeling that he was returning home since he graduated from a Madison high school and UW-Madison. He says, "I am excited to help support the excellent teaching staff in Whitefish Bay with the use of technology in teaching the students 21st century skills. I love going to work each day because I have the opportunity to learn something new - each and every day."

# President's Letter



Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay(AFE) welcomes you and your family to a new school year! The AFE website([www.advocatesforeducation.org](http://www.advocatesforeducation.org)) is an excellent resource to learn about current issues affecting our public schools in Whitefish Bay. AFE has a long and respected history of informing residents about education issues and advocating for public policies that promote high quality public education in Whitefish Bay.

Although there are many important issues facing our schools in the upcoming year, foremost in our mind is the November 3, 2009 referendum. On September 23rd, our members voted to publicly endorse both questions that will appear on the referendum ballot. The first question provides for maintenance and infrastructure work at all our schools, and the second question provides for additions to three of our schools as well as extensive renovations. A comprehensive explanation of the details of the referendum can be found at [www.wfbschools.com](http://www.wfbschools.com) or [www.yesyesnov3.com](http://www.yesyesnov3.com). By an overwhelming majority, our members who voted felt that the work done to our schools that would come with the passage of the referendum advances AFE's mission to promote high quality public education in Whitefish Bay. Comments made by our members on their ballots acknowledged that even though they were feeling the effects of the current economy, they felt our schools should remain a priority.

At AFE, we strive to meet our members needs and to communicate with concerned parents and community members about education issues in Whitefish Bay. Become an active member of the AFE community. Find your passion and get involved!!

Molly J. Zillig & Tara Serebin  
Co- Presidents, Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay

## ACT Score Soars

The Whitefish Bay High School class of 2009 hit a new school high with their average composite ACT score of 26.2. This is the highest score in at least a decade.

The ACT test, the most popular of the two main college admissions tests in Wisconsin, measures knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in English, math, reading, and science. The composite score is the combined performance of these four areas. Four-year colleges use this data to estimate a student's ability to be successful at their institutions.

Compared to 2009 national and state averages, WFB High School soared above their competition.

- The national ACT average composite score comes in at 21.1 and the state's average is 22.2. Whitefish Bay's average score is four points higher at 26.2.

- Of all WI public high schools, our ten year ACT composite average of 25.58 is second only to Madison West (25.61), and only two other schools have 10 year ACT composite averages of 25 or greater (Madison Memorial – 25.19 and Homestead – 25.04).
- We are the only school in WI over the past ten years to achieve an ACT composite average greater than 25 every one of those years.
- Fifty-one of the 192 students that took the test scored a 30 or higher. The top composite score possible on the ACT is a 36.

Area administrators agree that it is a reflection on the students as well as the work that goes on in the district throughout all levels of teaching.

For more information about local and state ACT scores, go to the Department of Public Instruction's website, [www.dpi.wi.gov/](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/) and click on Academic Achievement under the top tab labeled Data.

### 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:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

*renew*

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

eMail \_\_\_\_\_

- Check here to receive our Newsletter online.

*renew*

Send this form today to:

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

## ***AFE Welcomes new members:***

Greg & Lori Ahrenhoerster  
Michael & Marjie Arena  
Roger & Kim Axtell  
Heekyeong Baik  
Gregor & Jutta Baumeister  
Scott Beck  
Stephen & Pam Bednarczyk  
Lisa Blue  
Chris & Cathy Chappell  
David & Ericka Cipriano  
Annette Archie-Claiborne &  
Phil Claiborne  
Jean Cornell  
James & Susan Coyle  
Jay & Leslie Davis  
Barry & Barbara Diamond  
Jennifer Dragseth  
John & Jane Friesch  
Eric & Kitty Gaenslen  
Carolyn Gambill  
Debbie Gunnlaugsson  
Stephanie Lyons & John Haensel  
Michael & Melissa Halfenger  
Steven & Jill Hentzen  
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Benjamin & Lisa Waisbren  
Jon & Ruth Wallace  
Jean Kies & Lewis Wasserman  
Douglas & Nancy Weas  
Shannon Yenchesky

## **Whitefish Bay School District Referendum Forum**

Come join us for one of two forums being  
held on the upcoming School District  
Facilities Referendum

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15**

or

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 19**

**7-8:30 p.m.**

**Whitefish Bay Public Library**

Featured speakers include:

*WFB District Superintendent*  
**Jim Rickabaugh**

*Architectural Consultant*  
**Matt Wolfert, Bray Associates**

*Facilities Committee Member*

**THIS FORUM IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.  
Questions? Email [info@advocatesforeducation.org](mailto:info@advocatesforeducation.org)**