



5512 N. Kent Ave.  
Whitefish Bay, WI 53217



## *Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay*

Presents

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

New and updated website!

An independent source of information and discussion of issues for parents of children in Whitefish Bay Schools

AFE forums & events

Links to education resources

AFE newsletter archives covering curriculum, testing, Capturing Kids' Hearts and many more school topics and current issues

School funding updates

Teacher & administrator profiles

*Advocates for Education. Your link to quality schools in Whitefish Bay.*



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

Fall 2005

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

## WHO'S NEW IN WHITEFISH BAY *Schools Add Principals, Teachers*

### Lisa Gies

#### *Whitefish Bay Middle School Principal*

*Please share highlights of your own education and your background in the field.*

*I graduated with a bachelor's degree in social studies and history education from UW-Whitewater and began my teaching career with the Kimberly Schools in January 1986. I earned my master's degree in educational leadership from Marian College and was fortunate enough to become the middle school principal for the Kimberly Schools in 1991. I have been very active in the Wisconsin Association of Middle Level Educators, serving on the board of directors and as president. I have given presentations to other educators on many topics and really just love to learn and share the learning.*

#### *Why were you interested in a job with Whitefish Bay Schools?*

*Over the past several years I have learned a great deal about the Whitefish Bay Middle School through my affiliation with middle school state organizations. I was always*

*impressed with the pride and enthusiasm teachers displayed when talking about their school. I knew there was genuine care and concern for the whole child and that staff would go the extra mile.*

*When I resigned in Kimberly I was not sure I wanted to pursue another job in public education but after speaking with Dr. Rickabaugh, several*

*Middle School students and staff members, I could not pass up the chance to work for such a quality organization.*

#### *In what areas do Whitefish Bay Schools need the most improvement?*

*I believe the focus plan created by the district is a realistic vehicle for continuous improvement. We work in the people business and each human has a unique set of needs. Trying to create a system that is responsive to all learners is a tremendous task. I believe the Whitefish Bay School District is similar to most in that striving to help ALL students achieve is a constant challenge.*

#### *What are your goals for your first few years at Whitefish Bay Schools?*

*One of my first goals is to get to know the 650+ students and to better understand how our Middle School responds to the variety of learner needs. I believe it is crucial for me to study the terrain and serve where the needs arise. The great thing about*

*continued on page 2...*

### Advocates for Education Forum

#### **The WHY, WHAT and HOW of homework**

*What's the right amount?  
How can you help your child?  
How much help is too much?*

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20TH**

7 p.m.

**Whitefish Bay High School  
Room 47**

*Details at [advocatesforeducation.org](http://advocatesforeducation.org)*

*Please share highlights of your own education and your background in the field.*

I graduated from UWM in 1981 with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education with a focus on the fine arts. I was able to do the last placement of my student teaching assignment in Paris at the International School. Upon my return, I worked in day care at UWM and at La Causa Day Care as the lead teacher. I was hired by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee for three years, where I taught third grade and K5 at St. Rose of Lima.

In 1984, I began my 20 years with the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). I taught K4 and K5 at LaFollette Elementary for seven years. In 1991, I transferred to Elm Creative Arts to teach K5. In 1992, I completed my master of science in administrative leadership at UWM. I was promoted to assistant principal at Elm in 1996 and then principal in 2003.

I stay current in my field by taking continuing education courses and attending professional conferences and workshops. I am a member of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), and Phi Delta Kappa (PDK).

*Why were you interested in a job with Whitefish Bay Schools?*

I have always heard positive things about the Whitefish Bay School District. Having been in MPS for twenty years, I was interested in how another school district conducted business and was looking for a way to grow professionally. Active community involvement, high academic standards and achieving success for all students were some of the characteristics I found that described WFB Schools. These characteristics are congruent with what I believe to be necessary for a strong academic program.

## Gies...continued from page 1

coming to this school is that so many essential learning opportunities are already in place. Taking the time to recognize the efforts of our learning community is very important for the sustainment of the "can do," positive attitude that prevails here. Working with the staff on how we can make our school even greater for more kids is a high priority. Additionally, I am looking forward to working with my fellow educators as we study the concept of teacher leadership.

*What inspires you most about working in education? How do you stay motivated and fresh?*

Teaching is an incredible honor and I believe everybody is a teacher. As a professional educator my passion is to try and influence others to see things from a different perspective, a larger worldview. As a social studies teacher I used to tell my seventh graders that different does not equate to dumb. I still find myself sharing that lesson to all who will listen! My motivation comes from just being grateful for the gift of life. If I can use my talents and abilities to help others, then what a great way to live! Living a balanced life is a fun struggle but when I really need to clear my head I jump on my Harley and hit the open road...ah, peace.

*Please tell a bit about your family and your interests outside of work.*

I have two older brothers who live in Texas and my father lives in Florida. We lost our mom to cancer last year, which has brought a renewed closeness to my immediate family. I am blessed to have many friends who have become family. I have a dog named Wrigley (Cubs fan) and my interests outside of work are many. I love reading, playing tennis, rollerblading, traveling and of course riding my Harley. My motto: Live, laugh and love!

# 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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# New Teacher Profiles

## *In what areas do Whitefish Bay Schools need the most improvement?*

*Being new to the district, I am unable to answer this question.*

## *What are your goals for your first few years at Whitefish Bay Schools?*

*My major goal this year is to learn about Richards School and how it operates. I am a firm believer in the importance of school culture and climate. My objective is to see how I can positively contribute to the "Richards Way" and keep the program moving forward.*

## *What inspires you most about working in education? How do you stay motivated and fresh?*

*Seeing the students successful and happy inspires me daily. Witnessing good teaching and observing its effect on students motivates me. I am always in awe of how much a student can grow in one academic year. I stay fresh by attending activities and dialoguing with colleagues. Being with the students keeps me on my toes.*

## *Please tell a bit about your family and your interests outside of work.*

*I live on the east side of Milwaukee with a housemate, two cats and two dogs. My two Boston terriers, Max and Olive, keep me busy. I enjoy working in my garden. I love to travel and try to take at least international trip a year. I collect art and antiques. I am an avid theatre patron and will go to New York to see current productions. My family is very close and even though we live in all parts of the country, we stay in touch with each other. I have five siblings. My parents live on the south side of Milwaukee.*

## *Dawn Abts*

### *Spanish teacher, Cumberland*

**D**awn Abts is from Grafton. She graduated from UW-Milwaukee in 1996 with a bachelor of arts degree in Spanish. She recently received her teaching certification through Cardinal Stritch University, where she is also completing her master's degree in education. Before teaching, she worked in international business for 10 years, handling

## *Lychelle Bruski*

### *High School English teacher*

**L**ychelle Bruski grew up in Central Wisconsin. She received her bachelor of arts in English from St. Norbert's College and returned to school a few years later to get her teacher certification. She is teaching English at the high school and pursuing her master's in education through Cardinal Stritch University.

## *Mary Defenbaugh*

### *2nd grade teacher, Richards*

**M**rs. Defenbaugh is originally from the Twin Cities area. She's lived in Milwaukee for nearly four years. Much of her experience is in teaching special education classes; this is her first grade-level class. Her undergraduate degree is in speech communication and she holds a master of science degree in education. She's married and has three children.

## *Karen Evers*

### *3rd grade teacher, Richards*

**M**rs. Evers is originally from Columbus, Ohio and has lived in Mequon for the last three years. She received her teacher certification in January of this year and started soon after at Richards working as a substitute for a teacher on maternity leave. Mrs. Evers is working toward a master's degree in teaching at Cardinal Stritch University. She is married and has four children.

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# Madison Update



**T**he Wisconsin state budget for 2005-2007 is now in place. In January, the two-year budget was proposed by Governor Jim Doyle, then debated and changed by the legislature. Governor Doyle signed the budget after using his veto power to restore many of his original budget priorities, particularly related to education. Education spending and property tax relief were top themes in the budget deliberations. The state budget is important for school districts because it determines the amount of spending allowed and the amount of state aid available to help pay for local schools. Some highlights of the state budget are that it:

- Preserves allowable spending increases under the inflation-adjusted revenue limits set by law more than a decade ago. This per-pupil adjustment is \$248 (2005-06 school year) and \$252 (2006-07 school year). The Whitefish Bay School District reduced its projected budget by about \$300,000 for the 2005-06 school year, and still may need to make further reductions to meet the revenue cap for the 2006-07 school year.
- Restores, almost completely, the state's commitment to fund two-thirds of the cost of education in Wisconsin. The percent of aid varies depending on property valuation in the community and spending per pupil. For Whitefish Bay, this means approximately \$1 million above the amount of aid received for the 2004-05 school year (this money can be used to pay for increased costs, and therefore would not be assessed to local property taxpayers).
- Maintains the Chapter 220 (voluntary integration) program with no changes in funding.

- Allows 100% use of unused revenue limit authority. Previously, if a school district did not need all of the spending authority allowed under the revenue limit formula, the district was not allowed to use that money in future years. This became a penalty for districts trying to be fiscally conservative, a "use it or lose it" rule. In recent years, school districts were allowed to capture 75% of the unused revenue for the next budget year. The new budget allows school districts to use 100% in future years.

The state budget as signed by Governor Doyle could face challenges. Legislators could vote to override the governor's vetoes. But this is not likely due to some partisan breakdown in the Senate and Assembly. It has been more than twenty years since legislators in Wisconsin overturned a veto. Questions have surfaced about the constitutionality of the governor's vetoes, but the attorney general's opinion is that the vetoes were constitutional. Senate and Assembly Republicans could sue the governor, challenging the vetoes, but this would not immediately affect schools because of the length of time for a court challenge. A constitutional amendment to limit the governor's veto power has been introduced as Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 33. Any constitutional amendment needs to pass two sessions of the legislature with no changes. It is then placed on the ballot for a public vote. The earliest this could occur would be 2007.

### *Future Legislation.*

TABOR - Over the past two years, the Assembly and Senate have been

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Profiles...continued from page 3

## Barb Green

4th grade teacher, Richards

Ms. Green has taught for more than 23 years, mostly in Pittsburgh. She moved to Milwaukee three years ago to be closer to family. In Milwaukee, she has taught at the Frances Starms Discovery Learning Center. Over the years, she's taught nearly every grade between 2nd and 8th.

## Stacey Isaacson

3rd grade teacher, Richards

Ms. Isaacson is originally from Wyoming and has been teaching for about eight years. Before accepting a position at Richards, she taught first grade in the Mequon-Thiensville School District. She has a master's degree in education. She's married and has two children attending Richards.

## Nathan Joynt

5th grade teacher, Cumberland

Nathan Joynt joined the fifth grade teaching team at Cumberland this year. He's from Green Bay and graduated from UW-Madison with an elementary education degree. He taught sixth grade in Mequon for the last couple of years. He has interesting stories to share with students about how he spent his summer vacation: he worked on an East coast oyster farm. Mr. Joynt enjoys coaching baseball and teaching chess. He comes from a family of educators; his brother is a teacher at the Middle School.

## Charles Mikulsky

Middle School guidance counselor

Charles Mikulsky is originally from Green Bay and graduated from UW-Madison in 1999 with a degree in elementary education. He taught

fourth grade in Green Bay for a few years before moving to Milwaukee in 2003. He recently received a master's degree in school counseling. His most recent job was teaching in Milwaukee Public Schools. Before accepting the Middle School position, he did field work there as part of his master's degree in counseling.

## Amy Rackowski

5K teacher, Cumberland

Amy Rackowski is Cumberland's new senior kindergarten teacher. She attended UW-Milwaukee, graduating cum laude in December of 1999. She spent three years teaching kindergarten and one year teaching first grade in several Milwaukee schools. She's planning to be married in May of 2006. She lives in Port Washington with two cats and a dog named Harley.

# What's My Child Studying?

## WFB Curriculum is Now on the Web

Learn what students are studying at each grade level. Follow Whitefish Bay curriculum in mathematics, reading, science and social studies. Read about standards in WFB schools and look at district test scores.

The Whitefish Bay Instruction Office is at [www.wfbschools.com](http://www.wfbschools.com). Select the "District Office" link. Then choose "Director of Curriculum and Instruction." Questions about curriculum? Call Tony Frontier, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, at [tfron.do.wfb@wfbschools.com](mailto:tfron.do.wfb@wfbschools.com) or 414-963-3927.



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working to pass legislation for a constitutional amendment to limit spending, affecting local units of government and schools. This legislation is called the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or TABOR. A new proposed constitutional amendment has been introduced as AJR 40. Advocates for Education is opposed to constitutional limits on spending because they take away local control.

**Senate bills concerning education currently pending:**

- SB 310 - school policies on bullying
- SB 167 - investment by school districts of funds held in trust to provide post-employment benefits
- SB 177 - services provided by a special education program
- SB 206 - transportation for pupils

participating in the open enrollment program  
SB 286 - human growth and development programs

**Assembly bills pending:**

- AB 84 - repeals 180 school days requirement but keeps minimum hours law
- AB 515 - permits school districts to switch health insurance carriers
- AB 518 - factors that can be considered by an arbitrator in contract disputes
- AB 519 - disclosure of health insurance claims experience
- SB 171 and AB 584 - limit school district referenda to "regular" election dates

**To contact your legislator about issues you care about:**

Senator Alberta Darling  
Room 316 South  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707  
Phone: (608) 266-5830  
Email: Sen.Darling@legis.state.wi.us

Representative Sheldon Wasserman  
Room 214 North  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708  
Phone: (608) 266-7671  
Email: Rep.Wasserman@legis.state.wi.us

Learn about pending legislation by checking out this website: [www.wisconsin.gov/state/core/government](http://www.wisconsin.gov/state/core/government). Click on "legislature" to learn more about Senate and Assembly bills.



# Did You Know?

Whitefish Bay Schools News Digest

## Testing and No Child Left Behind

The federal No Child Left Behind law means changes in the alphabet soup of standardized tests students will take this year. At Whitefish Bay High School, more and longer in-school testing of tenth grade students (eight hours this year compared to four last year) caused the traditional PLAN test to be moved to Saturday. The PLAN test is an optional ACT pre-test, useful to students for its detailed feedback and as a predictor of ACT scores. Also, because of the extended time now required for the Wisconsin tenth-grade test and the interruption of classes that contain both sophomores and juniors, the PSAT, taken by juniors, has also been moved to Saturday. The PSAT is an optional pre-SAT test and the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

In the elementary and middle schools, a new assessment known as the Wisconsin Criterion Reference Test, also required by No Child Left Behind, will test students in grades 3 through 8 and in grade 10 in math and reading. The language arts, social studies and science tests required by the State of Wisconsin will continue to be administered in grades 4, 8 and 10. At least for this year, students in grades 3, 5 and 7 also will continue to take the Iowa tests. The Iowa tests provide useful information about student performance and curriculum. The district will decide at the end of the year whether to continue using the Iowa tests.

## Middle School Dances

Whitefish Bay Middle School will not schedule dances for seventh and eighth graders this fall because of student behavior problems at the events in the past. The Whitefish Bay Recreation Department and Middle School administrators are working to improve supervision and discipline, and hope to offer dances again in the future.

## Art and Industrial Tech Spaces

The Whitefish Bay High School art and industrial technology spaces got a facelift over the summer. The school board approved \$50,000 for the project, and Friends of the Visual Arts contributed \$10,000 for a new spray booth and shelving. Private gifts of a display case and some art equipment rounded out the project.

## Bay Ball Planning Underway for Spring

There will not be a Bay Ball this fall, but the Whitefish Bay Public Education Foundation is looking at options for a spring event. The Bay Ball netted more than \$650,000 over the last few years.

# JOIN TODAY

Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

*Join the team of voices speaking on behalf of children to provide the best public education possible.*

- 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.

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