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lar PE requirement, in college admissions. These students have the opportunity to take additional academic courses, a study hall or broaden their background in the arts. Further, if after school athletes are not required to take PE classes it will likely result in smaller PE class sizes and a less intimidating atmosphere for those taking PE that are less athletically inclined. It might also be argued that during a time of budgetary restraint it is not necessary to provide duplicate activity if a student is getting needed exercise through after school sports activities.

What do you think? Let us know, or even better yet, send your comments



*This winter Advocates for Education members met with State Senator Alberta Darling and State Representative Sheldon Wasserman to discuss state budget issues related to education. Pictured above are Advocates for Education members Elizabeth Lentini, Rachel Taknint, and Cheryl Maranto with State Senator Alberta Darling.*

to our legislators, Senator Alberta Darling and Representative Sheldon Wasserman, at the addresses contained in the Speak Out box in this newsletter. You might also send your thoughts to the bill's author, Representative Pettis, PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708.

Advocates for Education is not

currently taking a position as a group on this issue, but encourages its members to be informed and to participate in the policy-making process.

*If you are interested in getting involved if this issue comes up in the next legislative session, let us know today at*

**[afe@advocatesforeducation.org](mailto:afe@advocatesforeducation.org)**.



# Advocates for EDUCATION of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

May, 2002

*WFB School District:*

## Setting New Goals

Ten strategic planning issues identified by the Whitefish Bay School District last fall have been narrowed to four broad areas that will guide long-range policy in the coming years. "These goals allow us to focus and ask questions more directly," according to District Administrator Jim Rickabaugh.

The goals were distilled from ten strategic issues identified by citizen focus groups in 2001, and presented to the school board by an outside consultant in December. The four goals are derived from six of the original strategic issues.

The first goal, ***Producing Tools for Learning*** stresses the importance of teaching both information and putting the information to work. For instance, students must learn the process of writing effectively, but they must also learn the proper content of good written communication: grammar and punctuation. In math, they must learn different strategies for problem solving, but they must also master basic facts. This goal was derived from two strategic issues that expressed concern over what students are learning and the quality of homework.

The second goal, ***Providing Options for Learning*** recognizes that success may be measured in many

ways. Rickabaugh points out that not all students are visual or auditory learners. "If we teach students in ways that match better how they learn, they're more successful," he says. For instance, some students are like engineers who need to take apart an object and manipulate it to learn how it works. One way the district is implementing this goal is by asking students to demonstrate what they've learned rather than relying solely on traditional testing.

Parents' concern that expectations for achievement put students under too much stress prompted the third goal, ***Promoting a Supportive Environment***. While recognizing that some pressure is useful, the district will look for ways to relieve unhealthy stress that interferes with learning. "The concept is to nurture and channel the positive pressure that increases performance in a healthy way," according to Rickabaugh. The recent proposal to eliminate class rank at the high school is an example of how this goal may be put to use.

***Preparing for the Future*** is the district's fourth long-range goal. "Part of our mission is to prepare students at Whitefish Bay Schools to be successful in a world that is very diverse and rapidly changing," Rickabaugh

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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

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## Gym Class for Athletes:

# *Too Much of a Good Thing?*

**H**ere is a scenario that is all too familiar to parents in Whitefish Bay. Our daughter leaves the house at 6:35 a.m. for her "zero hour" PE class, returning home twelve hours later, exhausted, after track practice. On days when she has a meet, she might not get home until as late as 10 p.m. After dinner and a shower, she is up very late completing her homework for the next day. This doesn't sound very healthy given that high school age children need nine to ten hours of sleep each night.

This scenario is not unusual for students at Whitefish Bay High School who participate in extra-curricular athletics. Many of these students are taking two music classes, advanced placement courses or other academic extras. Unfortunately, they are not able to fit all of this in with the state mandated physical education requirement and so opt for "zero hour" PE, a class offered prior to the start of the school day. In one sense, Whitefish Bay is fortunate to have an option that allows students to find another way to fit in the PE requirement. On the other hand, do students really benefit from taking PE when they already run countless miles and learn about team work first hand in track or cross country?

### *State Law Requirements*

The State of Wisconsin requires that each student earn 1.5 credits in physical education in order to graduate from high school. Students at Whitefish Bay High School generally achieve this through taking a one semester, 0.5 credit, PE class in each of their freshman, sophomore and junior years. Students in these classes participate in a variety of sports and games. The curriculum is oriented

towards fitness activities that can be lifelong pursuits. Unfortunately, there are only so many hours in the day and the PE requirement competes with academic requirements, music, art, and advanced placement classes necessary to meet increasingly competitive college admissions requirements.

There is little room for argument that youth today are increasingly less physically active. Children are involved in many passive activities, such as video games, watching television and surfing the net, that leave less time for physical activities. Childhood obesity is now considered something of an epidemic in the United States. It's no wonder that concerned legislators, school boards and educators have emphasized providing physical education opportunities for students.

On the other hand, should students that are already physically active be required to use precious hours in the school day to meet the PE requirement?

### *A Proposal for Change*

In this past legislative session, Wisconsin State Representative Mark Pettis introduced Assembly Bill 706, which would give school boards the option to allow physical education credit to students for participation in extra-curricular sports. This bill was introduced too late in the session to pass through the legislative process before adjournment. However, Representative Pettis' office says that he will submit it again next session, if he is re-elected.

As drafted, Assembly Bill 706 would have exempted students who participate in sports from the PE requirement provided that they are "watched" by licensed physical edu-

cation teachers. If "watched" means coached, as suggested by Representative Pettis, very few students at Whitefish Bay would be able to take advantage of the bill if it became law. This is because non-teachers or non-PE teachers coach many sports at our high school. This issue, which would affect most Wisconsin high schools, could be addressed if the bill is re-introduced.

### *Pros and Cons*

What are the positives and negatives in providing participants in athletics credit for PE classes? The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has argued that Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for PE are not met in extra-curricular sports. These standards include: providing motivation to develop and maintain a healthy, physically active lifestyle; demonstration of competency in many forms of movement and proficiency in some; application of concepts and principles of movement to the learning and development of physical skills; providing opportunities for self-expression, social interaction, group membership and meeting challenges; achievement of a health enhancing level of fitness; demonstration of responsible personal and social behavior towards safety, rules, cooperation, teamwork, positive social interaction; understanding diversity among people in physical activity settings. Aside from all of this, there is the concern that a participant in a single sport may not learn physical activities that can be pursued over a lifetime.

One wonders whether the PE requirement puts our students at a disadvantage compared to students in most other states, without a simi-

# Class Rank Dropped

*Weighted Grades Issue on Back Burner, for Now*

The Whitefish Bay School Board unanimously approved the proposal to eliminate class rank at the high school, beginning with the class of 2003. Moreover, the district will not release information that enables college admissions offices to extrapolate a student's approximate rank.

In discussing the proposal, both Principal Bill Henkle and several members of the school board praised the community forum cosponsored by Advocates for Education and the Whitefish Bay School District. The forum provided the administration with valuable feedback regarding what issues needed to be further addressed, and also gave the school district an opportunity to explain in detail the reasons it sought the change.

Earlier in the class rank and weighted grades discussion, the administration decided to separate the two issues. Weighted grades will remain unchanged, for now. However, at an April school board meeting, Mr. Henkle indicated that he believes that the weighted grade system, as currently implemented, is flawed, and still needs to be examined. He also stated that there is no consensus yet among the high school faculty on a resolution. Mr. Henkle intends to begin discussions about weighted grades with subject area coordinators at the high school this fall. For an analysis of the weighted grades issue, see Class Rank and Weighted Grades: Time for a Change? at [www.advocatesforeducation.org](http://www.advocatesforeducation.org).

## SPEAK OUT

Call or write your elected officials and express your education concerns.

**Gov. Scott McCallum,**  
115 East State Capitol, Madison, WI 53702  
Tel: (608) 266-1212  
Fax: (608) 266-3970  
[wisgov@gov.state.wi.us](mailto:wisgov@gov.state.wi.us)

**State Senator Alberta Darling, P.O.**  
Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707  
Tel: (262) 250-9440  
[sen.darling@legis.state.wi.us](mailto:sen.darling@legis.state.wi.us)

**Representative Sheldon Wasserman, P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708**  
Tel: (608) 266-7671  
Fax: (608) 282-3622  
Toll Free: (888) 534-0022  
[rep.wasserman@legis.state.wi.us](mailto:rep.wasserman@legis.state.wi.us)

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asserts. "We need to give students the exposure, the experience, the connections to be successful in a world that is different than the community in which they're growing up." Commitment to the Chapter 220 program is one way the district is implementing this goal.

Rickabaugh cautions that the long-range goals are not meant to be a timeline, checked off as each one is

accomplished. "I think these issues call for a different approach, grounded in ongoing dialogue," he says. The administration expects to revisit the long-range goals in three to five years. "We need to ask what difference has it made," Rickabaugh says. "Do they remain as important as they were? Or do we need to reframe them because of other things that have happened?"

TODAY

# JOIN

## 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/gardian of WFB School District student)  
@ \$20 per household
- Supporting Member(s)  
@ \$20 per household
- I am interested in volunteering for AFE. Please call me.
- Enclosed is an additional donation to support AFE. Due to the lobbying mission of AFE, donations are not tax-deductible.  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ donation enclosed.

Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State and Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Please detach this form and mail today to:*

**Meredith Scrivner**  
4626 N. Cramer Street  
Whitefish Bay, WI  
53211.

## Other States' PE

### Requirements

Only thirteen states require PE credits for graduation. Of these, four allow participation in athletics to satisfy the PE requirement. Six of the states require only one year or less of PE. Here are several examples.

- **Florida:** Participation in an interscholastic sport, whether at the freshman, junior varsity or varsity level for a full season, shall satisfy the 0.5 credit requirement in PE.
- **Illinois:** Allows a school board to excuse pupils enrolled in grades 11 and 12 from engaging in PE for 1) ongoing participation in an interscholastic athletic program; 2) enrollment in academic classes required for admission to an institution of higher learning; 3) enrollment in academic classes that are required for graduation from high school. Allows a school board to excuse students in grades 9-12 enrolled in marching band for PE credit. School boards may also excuse students in grades 9-12 enrolled in a Reserve Officer's Training Corps program (ROTC) from PE.
- **New Mexico:** With the approval of the local school board, participation on an athletic team or in an athletic sport during the school day may count toward fulfillment of the required PE unit.

## For Those In The Know,

# Did You Know?

? Beginning with the class of 2006, the SAT may take on a new look. Under pressure from the University of California, the College Board has announced it is studying significant changes in the nationwide test that determines college placement.

The revised SAT is likely to include a writing sample and a beefed up math section. Analogies are likely to be dropped from the verbal section because they require students to demonstrate awareness of subtleties within the English language -- difficult for students who speak English as a second language.

The College Board is considering these changes because the nation's largest college system has proposed dropping the SAT as an admission requirement. The University of California contends that the test discriminates against disadvantaged students. Nearly 1.3 million students have taken the SAT this school year. Thirteen percent of them are from California.

The College Board's trustees will vote on the proposed changes in June.

? The Whitefish Bay Middle School fields one of the state's largest forensics teams, with over 100 members this past season. Students from the sixth, seventh and eighth grades practice after school and compete on Saturdays at tournaments, where they perform two or three times in a day. Students compete in such diverse areas as informative speaking, persuasive speaking, impromptu speaking, storytelling, special occasion speaking, poetry, prose, solo and group acting and news reporting.

Whitefish Bay Middle School Forensics is open to every student

willing to commit the time and effort. There are no cuts and no tryouts to be a part of the team. Students experience growth in public speaking skills, enjoy being part of the team, and bring home many ribbons and trophies for their excellent performances.

Whitefish Bay's dedicated forensics coaches are Patti Lynch, Julie Smurawa, Diane Wells, Ruth Zarling and State Middle Level Forensics Coaches Association President and WFB Head Coach Barb Hoppe.

? The Whitefish Bay School District has a proactive plan in place to monitor and remove mold from district buildings. Frequently described as "the next asbestos," mold has caused some school districts to close buildings. While it is almost impossible to guarantee that pre-World War II buildings (which have experienced roof leaks and other water intrusions over the years) are mold free, the district has conducted baseline inspections and purchased specialized cleaning equipment to deal with any mold that may be discovered. Gary Siegman, Whitefish Bay's Director of Buildings and Grounds/Safety Coordinator, says that vigilance is the most important aspect of controlling mold. Towards that end, a mold remediation specialist has been designated and trained in every district building to spot mold or places where mold might develop, and deal with the conditions before the mold can grow.

? The Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials recently named Whitefish Bay's Gary Siegman School Facilities Manager of the Year.

# Junior Art Docent Program *Revised*

Slight changes to the district's junior art docent program have made it more flexible while lowering costs. The program, introduced to Whitefish Bay about ten years ago, teaches grade school students to appreciate art at new levels.

The Milwaukee Art Museum created junior art docents as a pilot program at Golda Meier School 27 years ago. Today, 14 Milwaukee area schools, including Cumberland and Richards, send children to the art museum for enhanced instruction in art analysis. Sharon Steinmetz, MAM school program coordinator, says, "Once a school gets involved it tends to stay in the program because of good results."

Whitefish Bay students participating in the junior art docent program visit the Art Museum two or three times each school year in

third, fourth, and fifth grades. They work with the museum staff to learn about line, color and style, then immediately follow-up on those lessons with their school's art and Beyond teachers. The program culminates with a final presentation in fifth grade where students offer their own study of a MAM artwork. Steinmetz says as a "direct result of the work done back at school" the final presentations of Whitefish Bay students are among the best.

In Whitefish Bay, art docents falls under the district's Beyond program, serving gifted and talented students. Previously, students were nominated for art docents at the end of second grade when 15 students were selected based on talent and interest in art. These students need not be otherwise identified for Beyond programs. Students are nominated by classroom and art teachers. Parents may also nominate a student for the program.

This year, both Cumberland and Richards wait to make their nominations until the end of third grade. Richards Elementary School Beyond teacher Jeff Widder says, "It allows the kids another year of maturity before we narrow it down." All third graders now attend two visits to the Art Museum before 15 art docents are identified.

The change means that third grade parents now pay for bus transportation to the Art Museum as part of the regular field trip schedule. That has allowed the district to cut down on transportation costs, paying only for the fourth and fifth grade art docents to visit the museum as part of the Beyond program. The change also means more flexibility if a child in the program

moves out of the district in fourth grade. "We can fill the slot with the child who was next in line because they were exposed to the concepts in third grade," according to Widder. A child moving into the district could be considered to fill an open slot in the program if he or she participated in a similar program at his or her previous school.

While Whitefish Bay students are nominated for art docents, other schools handle the selection process differently. Sharon Steinmetz says some parochial and MPS schools allow every student to participate in the program. Shorewood's Lake Bluff Elementary School allows students to write applications for the program at the end of third grade, according to Jayne Heffron, Cumberland principal and former coordinator of the Lake Bluff Challenge program.

Obstacles to the inclusion of every student in this program include the limited time of the art and Beyond teachers to do the follow up instruction at school after visits to the museum and preparation for the student presentations in fifth grade. The art docent program could, conceivably, be made part of the overall curriculum, but that would require the elimination of something else.

Selected third, fourth, and fifth graders in Whitefish Bay are also invited to participate in art workshops at the elementary schools, a hands-on experience with a variety of media. Next year, art will be offered as part of the Beyond program at the Middle School.