



5035 N. Diversey Blvd.  
Whitefish Bay, WI 53217

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# Advocates for EDUCATION of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

Fall 2002

## WFB Enrollment: On the Rise

**F**orecasts have shown the number of children in Whitefish Bay is shrinking, but school administrators have discovered the number of school-age children is actually on the rise and may lead to far-reaching decisions for the school district.

Total district enrollment on the first day of school this year was 3.7% higher than first day enrollment in 2001. "The numbers grew pretty substantially in August," says school superintendent Jim Rickabaugh, "and that's the most difficult change to plan for."

The enrollment increase, while beneficial, caught school officials off guard.

"Last year we had projected a slight decline in enrollment. This year we projected flat and we were up some. The difference resides in families moving into the community over the summer," according to Rickabaugh.

School administrators made several adjustments to accommodate the influx of students. Extra sections were added to K-4 and the first grade at Richards and to the fifth grade at Cumberland. Schedules were shifted

and additional courses were added to the eighth grade at the middle school. A significant surge in enrollment at the high school required no changes because the extra students were evenly distributed at every grade level.

"It's much more a good news scenario than it is a bad news scenario," says Director of Personnel and Pupil Services Pam Ryder. "The fact that we're gaining students improves our ability under the spending caps to provide services for our kids."

School administrators have cited four reasons for the surprising enrollment increase. First, there was a larger than usual number of Whitefish Bay resi-

dents transferring from parochial schools into the public schools. This enrollment surge was especially apparent at the middle school. Second, the number of students who moved into the district over the summer far exceeded expectations. Raw data provided by Sales Executive Essam Elsafy of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage suggests the extra students are the result of a 25%

*"The numbers grew pretty substantially in August, and that's the most difficult change to plan for."*

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## MISSION Statement

**A**dvocates 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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Election  
Day is  
Tuesday,  
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5.

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|  | Issue  | Scott McCallum  | James Doyle  |
|--|--|---|--|
|  | Budget   | Opposes tax increases and would reduce state spending. Has proposed constitutional amendments to create a rainy day fund and to require that any increase in the state sales, income or corporate tax must survive a statewide vote before taking effect. Says economic development depends upon removing structural disincentives for businesses to locate in state. | Opposes tax increases and would reduce state workforce by 10,000 jobs through attrition. Says economic development is dependent on continuing to support Wisconsin's base industries while also attracting better jobs in emerging industries. |
|  | School Funding and Revenue Caps. Revenue caps limit the total amount a school district is entitled to receive in state aids and from local property tax levies.                              | Would continue state's commitment to funding 2/3 of school costs. Vetoed budget provision which would have relaxed spending limits on schools   | Favors eliminating revenue caps and reforming Wisconsin system to end disparities in spending per pupil by increasing financial support for districts with inadequate resources.   |
|  | Qualified Economic Offer (QEO). Under the QEO law, teachers cannot petition to take a contract to arbitration if the school board offers at least a 3.8% combined wage and benefit increase. | Supports QEO but has said it should be changed  | Favors eliminating QEO   |
|  | Teacher education and certification  | Would allow people with expertise but without bachelor's degrees to be certified by local school boards. Favors merit pay for teachers.   | Proposes financial incentives to encourage teachers to continue to upgrade their skills. Opposes residency requirements for teachers.  |
|  | State standards and testing  | Would integrate financial education into state standards. Supports mandatory yearly testing and retaining under-performing students in grades 4, 8. Supports statewide high school graduation test.   | Supports state standards and testing but would offer support to low-performing schools rather than punishing them. Opposes using tests alone to make decisions about student advancement or graduation.  |
|  | Special Education  | Proposed cutting the state's reimbursement rate for special education.  | Favors increased state funding for special education to offset the shortfall in federal contributions.   |
|  | Student Guarantee in Education (SAGE) funding to reduce class size   | Favors restricting full K-3 SAGE funding only to schools with a 50% or greater poverty rate. Schools above this level would be funded only for K-1.   | Would continue full K-3 funding for all schools currently enrolled. Would expand the program to more schools and more grade levels.  |
|  | K-4 and K-5  | Would continue funding at current levels for pre-school to K-5. Vetoed proposed \$14 million cut in state funding for K-4.  | Would expand access to K-4 and make K-5 a universal part of the system with a uniform full day program.  |
|  | School Choice  | Supports expanding school choice. Wisconsin has hired private attorneys to prepare a brief supporting Cleveland's school choice program.  | Opposes expanding school choice. Supports holding choice schools to the same standards as public schools.  |
|  | Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction   | Would shift authority for certain functions to an appointed Board of Education and Accountability under the Department of Administration.   | Supports keeping authority in education matters under an elected Superintendent of Public Instruction  |
|  | The candidates online:   | <a href="http://www.mccallum2002.com/">http://www.mccallum2002.com/</a>   | <a href="http://www.doyle2002.com/">http://www.doyle2002.com/</a>  |

# TEACHERS AS STUDENTS

## *Bringing New Knowledge to Class*

**W**hitefish Bay teachers not only lead the class; sometimes they are the class. Four of the ten Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure will provide direction for teachers, professional development in Whitefish Bay this year. They are:

1. Teachers understand that children learn differently.
2. Teachers know how to manage a classroom
3. Teachers know how to assess for student progress.
4. Teachers are connected with other teachers and the community.

The year's focus was chosen by the district's professional development committee, made up of three teachers and an administrator from each building and a representative of the school board.

Whitefish Bay teachers attend two full-day professional development workshops each year and are required to complete an additional six hours of after-school activities.

For both the full-day workshops and the after-school sessions, teachers can select from a menu of presentations by colleagues and/or professionals from outside the district.

On Sept. 30, for example, elementary teachers heard Debbie Miller, author of *Reading with Meaning*, discuss reading comprehension strategies in order to prepare for the 2003-04 district-wide implementation of a new Reading Language Arts program.

Middle and high school teachers could select two of six offerings: "Legal Issues in Special Education," "Effective Parent Communication," "Using Rubrics Across the Curriculum," "Students Who Struggle—Effective Strategies for the Regular Classroom," "Marco Polo: An Interactive Website for Enhancing Curriculum," and "Stop Spinning Your Wheels" (strategies for meeting the diverse needs of students while minimizing repetitive tasks and paper-work).

The 28 fall/winter after-school sessions are keyed to the Wisconsin standards and grouped into four strands: "Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment"; "Productivity and Wellness"; "Professional Dialogue"; and "Technology for the Benefit of Student Learning."

## **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**W**elcome to the first newsletter of Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay for the 2002-2003 year.

A larger than usual number of members attended the Advocates for Education annual meeting in May. After election of the new board of directors, members were asked to speak out about topics of interest to them. Many were interested in more effective parent/teacher communication, a topic we hope to address through one of our forums later this year. Others were concerned about teacher retention, especially with contract negotiations unresolved at that time.

As I write this, the teachers' contract has just received approval from both the teachers' union and the school board. We should be very proud of both our teachers and our district administration that this process, which began almost two years ago, was concluded without apparent rancor or disruption. And most importantly, Dr. Rickabaugh says the terms of the contract have positioned the district "to be more competitive in attracting and retaining quality staff members" according to the *Whitefish Bay Herald*. Congratulations to everyone involved in the process.

There appears to be some momentum for change to our existing school finance system. The person elected governor next month will influence that process. Advocates for Education urges you to learn as much as you can about the positions of the candidates on school funding and other educational issues, and to let your voice be heard by voting on November 5. Begin by reading a summary of the candidates' positions in this newsletter.

This issue is the result of hard work by new board members and Co-Vice Presidents for Communication, Betsy Hoylman and Joan Kuehl. We welcome and thank them along with our other new board members, Loren Leys and Sarah Nesbitt. I'd also like to thank Connie Gavin for serving as VP-Communications for the past two years. Connie's keen intelligence, unerring good judgment and dedication produced a steady stream of excellent newsletters with much good information and insight for the benefit of our membership. We're glad she agreed to stay on the board for another year as advisor.

Finally, the beginning of the school year is also the time to renew your membership in Advocates. Renewal forms were mailed recently to all members. Thank you for responding promptly and for your support.

*Elizabeth Lentini*  
964-6465

# Did you know?

? Advocates for Education's Meredith Scrivner was quoted in the September 1, 2002 issue of **Woman's Day** magazine.

The magazine looked at the growing use of standardized tests to determine whether kids are being successfully educated. It noted that a growing number of communities like Whitefish Bay and Scarsdale, NY have begun to resist such testing because curricula are geared toward the test, rather than learning. In a lengthy quote, Meredith explained there is no one recipe for testing that is right for every child. Advocates for Education has worked hard to abolish a proposal for high school graduation testing in Wisconsin.

? Whitefish Bay schools ranked highly in a recent report published by the Public Policy Forum, an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to providing timely, objective information on community issues. According to **Public Schooling in Southeastern Wisconsin 2002**, Whitefish Bay schools have the highest attendance rate among 94 districts evaluated. The report explains "...attendance rates are an objective measure. In order for a school to teach its students, the students must attend classes. Attendance rates in schools and the districts are very important for the success of the schools. When attendance rates are high it gives the students more learning time, and so attendance rates can be linked to how well a school or district performs." Whitefish Bay's attendance rate is 96.7%, with the average child absent 5.61 days per year.

? The Whitefish Bay school board seats held by incumbents David Kern, Bruce Kestelman and Nancy LeGrand will be up for election in the spring. The election calendar is not yet determined, but usually incumbents must notify the district by sometime in December if they do not intend to seek re-election. Other persons interested in running must file papers with the district office shortly after that. See "School Board Service: Is It for You?" from the AFE December 2000 newsletter, at [www.advocatesforeducation.org](http://www.advocatesforeducation.org). Click on "Archives."

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increase in the number of homes sold in Whitefish Bay this year over last year. More significantly, there has been a 38% increase in the number of four bedroom homes turning over to new owners.

"Both of these statistics anecdotal-ly point to a larger number of families moving into the community, especially given the number of four bedroom homes that have sold," Elsafy says. "Those homes tend to be in great demand by larger families."

The greater than usual turnover of four bedroom homes appears to be linked to two economic factors: last year's village reassessment and the rapid price appreciation of Whitefish Bay homes. Shorewest realtor Jim Young, who says 80% of his customer base comes from Whitefish Bay, has noticed that empty nesters have

become increasingly eager to take advantage of what may be a price bubble, especially after seeing their property taxes balloon. "Those two

*"It appears there is a growing number of people who are choosing Whitefish Bay as a destination."*

factors have a lot to do with it," he explains.

The third reason for the surge in school enrollment appears to come from recent publicity that praised Whitefish Bay schools as the top district in the Milwaukee area. A survey by **Milwaukee Magazine** ranked Whitefish Bay number one. Susan Han Paul and her husband moved to Whitefish Bay from Pittsburgh this summer, bringing along their two sons who are in kindergarten and pre-school. "I did research on the Internet, all kinds of statistics like student teacher ratios and SAT scores," Paul says. "Then on one of our house hunting trips **Milwaukee Magazine** came out. That's how I picked the school district."

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Paul's Internet research appears to be part of a growing trend, according to Pam Ryder.

"There were two websites that identified Whitefish Bay schools as a top performing district nationally. With the advent of the Internet, people are accessing that information."

It's not just people moving to Milwaukee from other states who choose Whitefish Bay schools. Rickabaugh has also noticed many families moving to this community from elsewhere in Southeast

Wisconsin. "It appears there is a growing number of people who are choosing Whitefish Bay as a destination."

Leanne Talbert and her husband moved here from Elkhorn, enrolling their four children at Cumberland, the middle school and the high school. "By researching on the Internet we learned that Whitefish Bay is well-ranked on a lot of websites," Talbert says. "As we researched, we discovered these schools are tremendous. Always number one or number two."

Flawed enrollment forecasts that predicted the number of Whitefish Bay students would decline sharply account for the final reason administrators were caught off guard by the surge in enrollment. Pam Ryder says she realized the district's historic method of doing enrollment projections was inaccurate when she began her current position as director of personnel and pupil services. Over many years, the district had mistakenly included non-resident Chapter 220 students and Open Enrollment students in their enrollment formulas. "There was a flaw in doing it that

way because we control the non-resident enrollment," she explains. "The non-resident students - their numbers had been declining slightly, and

that was influencing our projections when those weren't really the students we were basing projections on." As non-resident students declined, they masked the growing number of resident students.

Ryder has provided corrected numbers to the national firm that forecasts Whitefish Bay school enrollment. "I'm going to be real interested to see where the enrollment projections come out this year," she says.

"We will have two years in a row of what I believe to be more accurate data on which to base the projections."

But local realtors are seeing a trend that may make traditional projections obsolete. School districts historically rely on annual census letters to determine the number of future kindergarteners in the pipeline. Recent trends may make those kindergartners harder to spot. "Given recent (price) appreciation," Coldwell Banker's Elsafy says, "Whitefish Bay is no longer a community for first-time homebuyers. It's a community for people who are moving up. And by the time you're ready to move up, you've already got kids."

Superintendent Rickabaugh acknowledges that changing demographics may lead to a longer term phenomenon of increasing enrollment in Whitefish Bay schools. "If it's the case that regardless of turnover rates more families with school age children are choosing to come here... that may well be sustainable and would be very good news."

*"As we researched, we discovered these schools are tremendous. Always number one or number two."*

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/guardian of WFB School District student)  
 @ \$20 per household

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