

Did you know?....

Where is the Media Center? The English wing? Who are the guidance counselors? What's the difference between ISH, study hall and academic support? What activities can I join in the fall? Freshman can get answers and a head start at the high school by attending an **orientation program August 18 - 21**. Incoming students may attend either of two sessions: 9:00-11:00 or 12:30-2:30 to learn about policies, activities, student support, and the layout of the building. The fee is \$25. Sign up for orientation through the Recreation and Community Education Summer Schedule of Classes. Registration forms are also available at the Middle School.

Registration on August 22nd is required. During Registration, students will register for classes, pay fees and meet in Homeroom groups. Groups rotate through 15-minute mini-sessions to tour the building and discuss policies, support, activities and more. ❖

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.

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Send this form today to:

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5035 N. Diversey
WFB 53217



Advocates *for* EDUCATION

Spring 2003

www.advocatesforeducation.org

NEXT ERA IN SCHOOL FUNDING:

GAPS, CAPS & CUTS

Whitefish Bay schools will likely see significant changes as state school funding is revised in the coming months. Possible changes include a gap of \$1 million between state aid and district spending authority within two years (which could result in higher property taxes), the elimination of funding for junior kindergarten, or even a revenue cap freeze, which would require significant cuts in programs and/or staff.

A complete overhaul of the school funding system is expected after Governor Jim Doyle appoints a School Finance Task Force, reviews the issues, and makes recommendations. In the meantime, the governor's budget released on February 18 contains a number of seemingly minor changes to K-12 funding that could have a significant impact on school districts and property taxes. The budget must win approval of the Joint Finance Committee and both houses of the legislature before being implemented.

The source of the school finance problem is the state's \$ 3.2 billion budget deficit. With public education making up 40% of the state's budget (\$9.38 billion in the 2001-03 biennium), the question is not whether

education budgets will be affected, but rather how severe the impact will be. Some Republicans in the legislature want to freeze all school funding at current levels to avoid property tax increases. This would necessitate significant cuts in staff and/or programs.

To understand where revenue cuts may occur, we offer an overview of the present school funding system.

Current Law

Currently the state has a commitment to fund two-thirds of school costs or "partial school revenues" composed of state aid and the school

property tax levy. State school funding has three basic components: general state aid to schools which is allocated to school districts based on property wealth, "categorical" aids such as special education, and the school levy tax credit (which is state-funded property tax relief, but is counted toward the two-thirds commitment). Each year the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Legislative Fiscal Bureau estimate the amount of money required for general school aid that is sufficient to cover the state's two-thirds funding commitment of partial school revenues. Since the legislature must fund whatever it takes to cover its two-thirds commitment, this is known as a "sum sufficient" approach.

Revenue limits restrict the amount by which a district's total per pupil revenues can increase. Districts receive an annual per pupil increase in their revenue caps, based on changes in the Consumer Price Index. In 2002-03, the per pupil increase was \$230.08. (If next year's budget retains the automatic inflation adjustment, it would increase per pupil revenues by \$236.98.) The revenue limit can be exceeded only by voter approval of a referendum.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Member Survey
- Evaluating Evaluators
- No Child Left Behind Update
- Legislation and course requirements

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As the school year draws to a close, it's useful to reflect on one of the year's successes as well as the great challenge ahead.

In the success category, we should be very proud of our teachers and district leaders for settling the 2001-03 contract without the contentiousness that has characterized the bargaining process in other school districts. While both district officials and the Whitefish Bay Education Association admit there is more work to be done, the changes made to the teachers' compensation package as a result of the successful negotiations have allowed the district to move from the bottom of Milwaukee-area compensation rankings to a more competitive spot. In addition, teachers agreed to work with the district to examine options for controlling health insurance costs, a major piece of the overall compensation puzzle. The committee appointed to work on this issue is expected to report its findings in time to negotiate the 2003-05 contract.

In the district's near, and possibly long-term future, the greatest challenge will undoubtedly be state support for school funding. With a multi-billion dollar state budget deficit looming, and over 40% of the state budget spent on K-12 education, there is a possibility that school funding freezes or even reductions will be approved by the state legislature, potentially as soon as the next budget cycle. Please read the up-to-the minute article in this issue by Cheryl Maranto, one of our Advocacy Vice Presidents, summarizing where this issue currently stands. Every Wisconsin school district will be affected by the legislature's decisions over the next six to eighteen months.

With the budget crisis unresolved, it will be

critically important to stay informed and let our state representatives know what you think about proposed legislation and its effect on your children and their schools. Advocates for Education is committed to keeping members informed, and it is likely that, due to time constraints and the pace of developments in the legislature, updates will be sent to members by e-mail. If you have not yet shared your e-mail address with us and would like to do so, call Sarah Nesbitt at 332-3876 or e-mail afe@advocatesforeducation.org.

Finally, on behalf of Advocates for Education, I would like to pay tribute to Bruce Kestelman, who has stepped down from the Whitefish Bay School Board after nine years of service. Throughout his tenure as a school board member Bruce always kept what was best for our students in the forefront of his decisions. He has also been supportive of advocacy in general as a cornerstone to an effective and high quality public education system. Advocates for Education extends its sincere thanks to Bruce for his hard work and dedication on behalf of our children and our schools.

We are proud that on April 1 former Advocates for Education President John Hainze was elected to serve as the newest member of the Whitefish Bay School Board. We wish John the best in his new position and thank him for volunteering his time.

If you have neighbors or friends who are not members, tell them about Advocates and encourage them to become members. If you are a member, please take a moment to fill out the survey included in this newsletter so that we can better serve your needs.

Elizabeth Lentini

WHO EVALUATES THE EVALUATORS?

One of the key responsibilities of the principals and other administrators in the Whitefish Bay School District is evaluation and development of the teaching staff. But who evaluates the administrators? Are administrators “tenured?” When are their contracts renewed and what is the process?

The administrators’ evaluation process is determined through a combination of local policies, state statutes and employment contracts. There is also an overlay of “tenure” for those administrators who achieved tenure status as teachers before they became administrators in this district.

The Bottom Line

In this district, principals evaluate their associate principals. The district administrator, Jim Rickabaugh, evaluates principals and the directors of instruction, personnel and pupil services and business affairs. Dr. Rickabaugh is evaluated by the school board. The school board also enters into employment contracts with each administrator, and receives recommendations from the superintendent about whether to renew those contracts. Contracts are usually for two years, with annual renewals in June.

Policies and Practice

School board policy requires annual evaluation of administrators, and provides that observation of work will be one method of gathering data for the evaluation. The principals and central office administrators also meet formally with Dr. Rickabaugh at

least three times each year; first, in the fall to establish their job performance goals and then to update him mid-year on their progress. Progress is reviewed again in the spring. Final evaluations are usually in May or June and recommendations for next year’s goals are made. Contracts are renewed then and salaries are determined.

The administrators do not belong to a collective bargaining unit.

Statutory Overlay

Whitefish Bay’s policies and practices also follow Wisconsin Statutes Section 118.24, which governs contracts for school district administrators. The statute includes a detailed timeframe for notice and a hearing procedure if a district elects not to renew an administrator’s contract. That notice must be in writing, be given at least five months prior to the expiration of the contract and state the reasons the board is considering not renewing the contract.

However, a school board may notify administrators not covered by the tenure statute at contract renewal time (usually June in Whitefish Bay) that it is not going to renew the administrator’s contract for the next following year. So, for example, the school board could notify an administrator in this category in June 2003 that the individual’s contract would not be renewed for 2004-2005, in essence stopping the automatic renewal of the contract extensions. The administrator’s contract for 2003-2004 would continue.

The statute also states that noth-

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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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No CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Whitefish Bay students are likely to encounter more tests with higher accountability, according to Director of Instruction Tony Frontier speaking at a March parent forum sponsored by Advocates for Education.

About 25 parents listened to Frontier's presentation on President Bush's "No Child Left Behind" legislation and how it will affect children attending Whitefish Bay schools.

All public school districts in the U.S. must implement proficiency testing and demonstrate that students are making progress toward stated goals or they face sanctions. Goals include reading and math proficiency, English proficiency, high standards for teachers, ensuring safe schools, and raising high school graduation rates.

Target proficiency scores were set by the state of Wisconsin in late April. The school district must demonstrate that students in fourth, eighth, and tenth grades who took the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam in November have met those goals. For the 2003-05 school years, 37%

of students must demonstrate proficiency or advanced knowledge in math, while 61% must demonstrate proficiency or advanced knowledge in reading. Test scores were received by the district in early May, but cannot be publicized until June, according to Frontier.

The federal law requires school districts to analyze test scores by subgroups and show that each subgroup has demonstrated proficiency. Subgroups include economically disadvantaged students, racial or ethnic minority groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency.

Whitefish Bay schools, however, may some day have the ability to opt out of the standardized testing required by the No Child Left Behind act. Legislation introduced by Senators Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Jim Jeffords (I-VT) would give states and local school districts the ability to seek a waiver if they have demonstrated academic success. The Student Testing Flexibility Act of 2003 was introduced in Congress in late April. ❖

FOCUS PLAN SESSION

Past and present board members of Advocates for Education met with District Administrator James Rickabaugh on March 24 to offer feedback on the district's focus plan. The focus plan, developed by staff, student and community focus groups in 2002, highlights four strategic goals for educating every student in the district. The four goals are developing effective strategies for continuous learning, presenting multiple options and opportunities for

success, creating a supportive learning environment, and preparing students for a rapidly changing and diverse world. In a brainstorming session, board members listed examples of how the goals are already being implemented in schools, as well as examples that show the district is falling short of its goals. District Administrator Rickabaugh said the focus plan helps administrators concentrate efforts where they can make the most difference. ❖

Thanks

Advocates for Education would like to express its gratitude to the following individuals who help achieve the mission of the organization through volunteer committee work:

- **Judy Bentley**, for beautifully researched and professionally written newsletter articles;
- Members **Susie Bond**, **Gerry Steele** and **Ann Homstad** for serving as non-board members of the Nominating Committee;
- Former AFE President **John Hainze** for information and advocacy on the issue of high school athletes; and
- Former board member **Rachel Tahnint** for continued advocacy and expertise on school funding.

Advocates would also like to thank the following for service to the organization in excess of the fees charged:

- **Kris Hunt**, for regularly updating the content of AFE's web site;
- **Jennifer Vulpas** for three years of professional newsletter design services; and
- **Noah Christianson** at the Shorewood Press for quality work, fast turnaround and belief in the mission from the beginning. ❖

Athletes & Gym Class

Last year's proposal to grant high school students physical education credit for participating in extracurricular sports died at the end of the legislative session, but a new, similar bill is pending in the current legislative session.

The Assembly Education committee, chaired by Representative Luther Olsen (R- Berlin), recently held a hearing on Assembly Bill 68. If enacted, this bill would allow students participating in high school extra-curricular athletics to gain credit towards the three-semester of physical education required to graduate.

The bill was presented in testimony by its author, Representative Mark Pettis (R- Hertel.) Most of the questions from the committee to Representative Pettis focused on how the bill would be administered. Would coaches grade athletes? What would happen if a student were ruled ineligible or injured during the sea-

son? Most significantly, the bill requires that a licensed physical education teacher coach the sport in order for a student to receive credit. It was pointed out that athletes on a boys' basketball team might receive credit, because a PE teacher coaches their sport, but the girls' team (not coached by a PE teacher) would not. Interestingly, this is currently the situation at Whitefish Bay High School.

Seven PE teachers and a PE teacher association representative testified in opposition to the bill, and two parents testified in support of the bill. Generally, the PE teachers argued that if credit were granted for extracurricular sports, then the students would not be exposed to an opportunity to learn lifetime sports and fitness skills. The parents spoke about time pressures on high school student athletes and the duplication of fitness activities in PE courses and after-school athletics.

For a more detailed analysis of the

pros and cons of granting PE credit for participation in sports, see "Gym Class for Athletes: Too Much of a Good Thing?" from the May 2002 Newsletter archived at www.advocatesforeducation.org.

The next step for Assembly Bill 68 will be consideration by the Assembly Education Committee and a decision on whether to amend the bill, bring it to a vote or shelve it for this legislative session.

If you are interested in this bill, send your comments to Representative Luther Olsen at rep.olsen@legis.state.wis.us, or Representative Mark Pettis at rep.pettis@legis.state.wi.us. Mailed correspondence may receive more attention than an email. Both legislators' mailing addresses are P.O. Box 8953, Madison WI 53708. It is also effective to send copies to Representative Sheldon Wasserman (same mailing address) and Senator Alberta Darling (P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707.) ❖

EVALUATORS...

...continued from page 3

ing in it prevents the modification or termination of an employment contract by mutual agreement of the parties.

Tenure

If a Milwaukee County administrator was a tenured teacher in the district before becoming an administrator, that person enjoys statutory protections in the event of layoffs. Also, employment contracts for administrators who have tenure status must be renewed unless the district can show good cause for termination for specific reasons stated in the statute, similar to those required to terminate

a tenured teacher.

Only Richards Principal Elaine Gehring and Middle School Associate Principal Chuck Orvold are subject to the tenure protections of the statute. Because of changes in the tenure laws, all other administrators are not and will not be tenured.

Parental Input

Is there an opportunity for parents to participate in the evaluation of school district administrators in Whitefish Bay? There are several, according to Dr. Rickabaugh, and this input is welcome. Parents are encouraged to use the midyear par-

ent survey form that is sent directly to Dr. Rickabaugh as an opportunity to give feedback, either signed or unsigned. If parents have specific concerns they are unable to resolve with another administrator directly, Dr. Rickabaugh is happy to talk to them. However, his belief and experience is that the "best solutions come from the people involved in the issue." Parents are also free to contact school board members with praise or concerns, but must realize, Dr. Rickabaugh cautions, that "school board members have relatively few tools to deal with specific situations." ❖

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General school aids from the state are comprised of several different components. Those of greatest importance to Whitefish Bay are equalization aid and integration aid.

The bulk of state aid to schools is allocated according to a complex three-tier equalization formula. All districts, including those with the most property wealth, are guaranteed \$1,000 per pupil in funding in the "primary tier". The secondary and tertiary levels allocate additional funding differentially based on current per pupil spending and property wealth. A district's level of funding in the second or third tiers can be negative. Because of the "hold harmless" provision in current law, wealthy districts that are negative in the second tier still get the \$1,000 per pupil primary aid from the state, even if the formula indicates that some funds should be deducted from their primary aid. Districts that are "negative in the third tier", such as Whitefish Bay, have some funds deducted by the second tier of the formula. The purpose of this formula is to guarantee that every school district receives school funding as if their property valuations were at the legislated guarantees, in order to reduce disparities in school funding due to differences in ability to pay.

Another category of state school funding is integration aid, via the Chapter 220 program. Chapter 220 provides funds to both the district "sending" racially diverse students and to the "receiving" districts, as an incentive to voluntarily improve the racial balance between and within school districts. Receiving districts, such as Whitefish Bay, are paid their average expenditure per pupil for each Chapter 220 student. The state also pays receiving districts 75% of their average expenditure for each student they send, but must cover transportation costs.

Governor's Budget Proposal

The Governor's recommended budget provisions that would have the greatest impact on Whitefish Bay include:

- Deleting the state's two-thirds (sum sufficient) funding commitment.
- Maintaining the current funding of general school aids from general revenues at the 2002-03 level (sum certain) for each of the next two years, but increase school aids by \$40 million in 2003-04 and \$60 million of 2004-05 through a one-time transfer from the transportation fund.
- Delete the "hold harmless" provision for the districts with the greatest property wealth per pupil, so that these districts are no longer guaranteed \$1,000 in state aid per pupil.
- Repeal the QEO, or qualified economic offer, that effectively limits combined wage and benefit increases for teachers to 3.8%.

Impact of Governor's Budget Proposal

Although the transfer of \$100 million in transportation funds to the education budget would increase overall state funding of schools, this increase is less than what would be required to fund 2/3 of partial school revenues (state school aids plus property taxes). The state share would drop to 64.7% in the first year of the biennium and to 63% in the second year. This funding gap, which the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) estimates at \$155 million in 2004-05 and \$307 million in 2005-06, is due to the \$236 per pupil increase in district revenue limits to account for inflation, which exceeds the increase in funding.

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau has estimated the impact of the governor's budget proposal if it had been in place for the 2002-03 school year. Statewide, all of Doyle's proposed changes would reduce state school funding by 2.9% in the first year of the biennium and 6.0% in the second

year. While some districts would sustain a large percentage cut, their total state funding is so small that the actual budget impact would be negligible. For example, Nicolet's state school aids would decline by 24% in year two-- roughly \$500,000. Whitefish Bay is projected to lose about 13.9% of state school aids in the second year-- exceeding \$1 million. The projected impact on Oshkosh would be only a 5.7% decline, but over \$3 million. The combination of reduced state funding and maintenance of the inflationary adjustment to revenue caps would result in a shift from state funding to the local property tax. No referendum would be required to increase property taxes to cover the state funding shortfall because the revenue authority would already exist.

The proposed change in the hold-harmless provision for wealthy districts would be more symbolic than substantive, because an 85% special adjustment aid (you cannot get less than 85% of your prior year's aid) cushions the change. This proposal would shift approximately \$2 million in total aid from 13 high-spending, high property wealth districts and redistribute it among nearly 400 less property wealthy districts.

Chapter 220 is a fairly expensive program (costing the state \$82 million in 2002-03) and provides Whitefish Bay an additional \$2.5 million in revenues (for 287 pupils). Although some rumblings of reductions in this program have surfaced, no changes have been proposed at this time.

Proposed Changes to the Governor's Budget

In the next stage of the budget process, the Joint Finance Committee (chaired by Whitefish Bay's state Senator Alberta Darling) will develop its version of the budget for a legislative vote. Republicans have stripped the state budget of 21 non-spending items, most prominently Governor Doyle's proposed repeal of the QEO

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(qualified economic offer) that limits teacher pay and benefit cost increases to 3.8%.

Some Republican legislators (including Luther Olson, chair of the Assembly Education Committee) are proposing a freeze on revenue caps by eliminating the CPI adjustment per pupil, in order to eliminate the otherwise inevitable increase in property taxes to make up for the shortfall in state funding. Rep. Olson argues that this is a “freeze” and not a cut. This is true only in a narrow sense. The reason is that, with the QEO intact, over 80% of school budgets (for salaries and benefits) will increase by 3.8%, while total revenues would remain frozen. According to Shawn Yde, Director of Business Services for Whitefish Bay, the elimination of the inflation adjustment to the revenue cap would result in the loss of between \$600,000 and \$700,000 in spending authority—money needed to cover the increase in teacher compensation. This loss would necessitate significant cuts in either current programs and/or staff. If the QEO were to be repealed, as Doyle proposes (and which is arguably an equity issue for teachers, who are the only public employees whose pay has been capped for close to a decade), Whitefish Bay’s budget gap would likely be even greater. Another proposal being floated is the elimination of all state funding for K4 programs. This would also significantly reduce school revenues flowing into our district.

It is difficult to predict what changes to the Governor’s budget will be effected by the Joint Finance Committee, which started its budget meetings only recently and, as of the writing of this article, had yet to consider education funding. As indeterminate as the outcome of this legislative session is, it is a prelude for potentially much broader changes, when a (yet to be constituted) Governor’s Task Force on School Finance examines the entire school finance system. ❖

It's REQUIRED

Four credits of English, three credits of social studies, two credits of mathematics, two credits of science and one and one-half credits of physical education. Wisconsin state law requires that students take these classes in order to receive a diploma. Local school boards may, and do, expand this list and determine, by local policies, other graduation requirements.

A bill pending in Madison before the Assembly Education Committee would expand the state required courses to include a one-semester course on personal finance, beginning with the class of 2008.

At a recent hearing on Assembly Bill 94, the banking community testified in support of the bill. Lead sponsor, Representative Luther Olsen (R-Berlin), stated that he believes the bill will help students better manage their finances after they graduate. He also believes this bill will help students better understand business and produce a better business climate in the state.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards opposed the mandatory nature of the bill. The Department of Public Instruction testified for informational purposes only (neither in support or opposition) that the material could be covered in current curriculum offerings without a new requirement.

If the bill becomes law, \$50,000 would be appropriated at the state level to create a task force to outline the course content, identify resources, publish materials and conduct training sessions for local districts throughout the state. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the cost to local districts is “indeterminate,” because it would depend on whether districts needed to hire additional staff to teach the new course.

Whitefish Bay currently offers a consumer business course at the high school, taken by a section or two of students each semester.

While most parents and educators would agree that students should have a better understanding of personal finance, the question is whether a state mandated semester course is appropriate for all students. In Whitefish Bay, only a small percentage of students take the course when it is offered as an option.

According to Whitefish Bay’s Director of Instruction Tony Frontier, “The curriculum is full as it stands. Adding another requirement means students will have to give up an elective or not take a study hall. Those options are both important for kids as they try to find a balance between expanding their horizons or meeting their current obligations.”

Whether or not it is a good idea for the state to require all students to take a personal finance course, a new mandate would further strain local district resources. Either a new teacher would have to be hired to teach this course, or resources would have to be shifted from somewhere else. If the state required the course to be taught by teachers with economics or business certifications, the many new positions throughout the state would be very difficult to fill.

If you are interested in speaking out on Assembly Bill 94, send your comments to the Assembly Education Committee, Representative Luther Olsen, rep.olsen@legis.state.wis.us, P.O. Box 8953, Madison WI 53708, with copies to Representative Sheldon Wasserman (same mailing address) and Senator Alberta Darling (P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707.) ❖

Advocates for Education

As the 2002-2003 school year draws to a close, the Advocates for Education (AFE) Board is looking ahead to the next school year. AFE holds several forums each year and we welcome your ideas about topics for future forums. Forums support the AFE mission of informing residents about education issues and encouraging public participation in matters affecting schools. Forum topics should have broad appeal and address community concerns. Recent forum topics have included Bullying, Homework Policies, Town Hall Meeting with Legislators, and Foreign Language Curriculum.

- Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. To return by mail, fold, staple, and stamp. The mailing address is preprinted on the reverse side.
- The survey will also be distributed by e-mail to all AFE members who have previously provided an e-mail address.
- To share your ideas by phone or to be added to the e-mail list, please contact Barbara at 964-1043 or bpbeckert@aol.com.

FORUM TOPICS

Survey

1. Indicate your interest in the following forum topics:

	Very Interested.....No Interest				
	1	2	3	4	5
School funding update	1	2	3	4	5
Effective communication with teachers and administrators	1	2	3	4	5
Town hall meeting/legislative update with state legislators	1	2	3	4	5
How Kids Learn/ Different Learning Styles	1	2	3	4	5
Transitioning Between Schools	1	2	3	4	5
The College Application Process	1	2	3	4	5
District Focus Plan	1	2	3	4	5
District philosophy on teaching writing	1	2	3	4	5

2. We welcome your suggestions. Please list your ideas for future forum topics.

3. AFE members are encouraged to join us in helping to plan future forums. Interested in getting involved? Please list your name and number below and a board member will contact you.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Help us get to know our members by circling the school(s) your child(ren) attend and their current grades:

Cumberland	Richards	WFB Middle School					WFB High School				Other: _____			
K4	K5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	

Thank you for your time and input!

..... *Fold here*

*Barbara Beckert
5100 N. Hollywood
Milwaukee, WI 53217*