



5512 N. Kent Ave.
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Save the
DATE!

Advocates for Education 10th Anniversary
Celebration & Student Essay Contest

Tuesday, April 19, 2005

Join us to celebrate 10 years of advocacy
for Whitefish Bay schools, and honor
the winners of our student essay
contest, to be announced early
in 2005

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10th Anniversary

Advocates for EDUCATION of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

December 2004

French and Spanish are
Elementary

Je vois des
champignons au
bord de la rue.
I see some mush-
rooms at the side of
the road.

“Yo soy un chico. Ella es una mujer.” I am a boy. She is a woman.

“Agricola, agricolae, agricolae, agricolam, agricola.” Farmer, of the farmer, to the farmer, from the farmer.

Chances are, you remember the very first phrases you learned in foreign language class, listening, parroting and repeating in lilting cadence. Chances are, you were immersed in the sounds, words and culture of the language you studied. But chances are, you were not six years old.

How are today's Whitefish Bay students learning foreign language? When are they learning it? Why are they learning it? And, most important, how well are they learning it?

First, they are not learning “foreign” language; they are learning “world” language. This semantic

change was made a few years ago, recognizing that America is a land of many languages, and that the word “foreign” carries a negative tone.

The “why” of world language instruction needs little argument. Today's students will live and work in a global economy and culture. Their need to understand and appreciate



“I feel grateful that he has the exposure to French. It's all good for kids, no matter what the language is.” — *Whitefish Bay parent*

the languages, customs and beliefs of other cultures will grow every year.

Because America is so much more diverse, and because scientific and educational evidence concludes that the brain is ripe for language acquisition at a very young age, the Whitefish Bay

School District enhanced its world language curriculum starting in the fall of 2000. At the time, world language instruction began in middle school. The first significant academic component was level I, offered as an

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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 of Whitefish Bay

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www.advocatesforeducation.org

HELP!*Web Wiz Needed*

Advocates for Education needs help with its web site. Like any self-respecting organization these days, AFE has a web site. It's at www.advocatesforeducation.org. In fact, AFE actually got in on the ground floor and has had its web site for a number of years. And it has served us quite well as a way to let people know who we are and what we are about. It's a great place to find old articles from our newsletters in our "Archives" section. Some of those articles are still useful resources – like the ones explaining the school funding formula, or the one on bullying.

Unfortunately, we don't have anyone on our Board of Directors at the present time who has the know-how and time to update the web site. As a result, its usefulness has been somewhat reduced recently because we have not been able to quickly add information – such as notices of our public forums and action alerts about legislative activity.

We would like to change that. We are hoping that among our members and friends who read this, someone knows a charitable soul with web site management skills looking for a volunteer opportunity. It shouldn't be a big job, but it is a vital one – with lots of job satisfaction and the sincere appreciation of our board of directors.

If you think you might be that person, or you know someone who might be, please give me a call (332-2834 at home; 297-4245 at work). I would love to twist your arm!

Sincerely,

Jim Schacht
President

Capturing **KIDS'** Hearts

As students filed into her classroom at the start of each school day, fifth-grade teacher Susan Jones used to be seated at her desk, correcting tests or organizing work for the day. Now she's always at the door, extending a hand and a greeting to each of her students individually.

The Richards School teacher made the change after attending a "Capturing Kids' Hearts" seminar in the summer of 2003.

"I used to be sending the message to the kids that paperwork was more important than they were," Jones said. "They were essentially starting the day alone. Now I'm at the door and they walk up to me with their hands already out."

It's a small change, but taken together, the routines in the "Capturing Kids' Hearts" program result in big changes in classroom culture, according to teachers and administrators in Whitefish Bay.

Richards principal Elaine Gehring first heard about the program from an educator friend in Elm Grove. Gehring went to a training session at the Texas headquarters of the Flippen Group, which developed "Capturing Kids' Hearts."

Hearts and Minds

"The core of the program is, if you reach a child's heart, you reach his mind," says Gehring. "For all of us, what a difference relationships make in our learning."

The Flippen Group is a corporate consultant and motivator that offers "Capturing Kids' Hearts" training to educators around the country.

After Gehring shared the framework of the program with staff members, six attended training in the Milwaukee area and returned with rave reviews. Since the summer of

2003, 25 teachers from Richards, 12 from Cumberland, 19 from Whitefish Bay Middle School and nine from the high school have completed "Capturing Kids' Hearts" training in Milwaukee, Chicago and other locations. The Whitefish Bay Education Foundation helped fund much of the training with a grant.

Cumberland principal Jayne Heffron says some of her teachers call "Capturing Kids' Hearts" a life-changing experience.

"I've been in education a long time and have attended lots of things that are supposed to have an impact," says Heffron. "This was a very moving experience. It reminds people of the impact they can have on kids' lives and re-ignites that fire. We're all here because of kids but teaching is a hard and demanding job with ever-increasing pressures. This really re-focuses teachers, from brand-new to quite experienced."

Social Contract Sets Tone

The "social contract" you may have noticed in classrooms is a product of "Capturing Kids' Hearts." The students and teachers write the contracts together. They discuss priorities and decide how they should treat each other. Teachers say the contract prevents discipline from becoming personal when students behave inappropriately. The teacher can point to the contract and re-direct the student with the program's "big four" questions: What are you doing? What should you be doing? Were you doing it? What are you going to do about it? In this way, the teacher's response to misbehavior is uniform and fair.

Pam Ryder, Director of Personnel and Pupil Services for Whitefish Bay Schools, wrote the grant proposal to the Whitefish Bay Education Foundation. "We feel that it's so

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French and Spanish are Elementary

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elective in eighth grade.

Whitefish Bay now offers world language starting in first grade; our current fourth-graders were the first to take it. French is taught at Richards, and Spanish is taught at Cumberland. The goal of the elementary program is to develop students' comfort in hearing and speaking another language and to become familiar with basic vocabulary, cultural traditions and songs. First through fifth graders take language class for one hour each week, in two half-hour blocks.

One mother of a Richards second-grader says, "It's fun for the kids and fun for us to watch Matt, as French kind of begins to click for him. The other day we were doing our English spelling words, and out of the blue, Matt said, 'I know that word in French. It's la pomme.' It is great to see when they relate French to something outside of French class. I think it is really good exposure."

Spanish or French?

Some parents are concerned about which language their students take, holding the opinion that Spanish is the most popular second language in our country, and French is less desirable. Director of Instruction Tony Frontier says, "The purpose of the program at the elementary level is to get those brain cells receptive to learning another language. It is like teaching piano to young learners. Some of them will stick with piano and some of them will switch later to another instrument. But all of them will benefit from the exposure to piano."

Says Matt's mom, "When the time comes, Matt will choose whatever language he wants. Our family has strong German roots, and he may well take German. I don't feel disadvantaged because he isn't taking German now. I feel grateful that he has the exposure to French. It's all good for kids, no matter what the

language is."

In grade six, German joins the menu along with French and Spanish, and all students have two seven-week cycles of language instruction. One cycle is in their chosen language, and the other cycle is split between the other two languages offered at the middle school. The goal of sixth grade language instruction is to explore the academic aspects of language.

This year's sixth-grade class is the first group that has had world language since third grade. French teacher Julie Peterson says, "All the language instructors have noticed how much more comfortable our students are with world language. We are seeing them pick things up more easily, and there is just a different feel to it. It is way less of a struggle for everyone and the students just seem to like it more."

Formal academic language instruction begins in grade seven. Seventh graders choose from French, German and Spanish. They take the class every day for the full year, in both seventh and eighth grades, resulting in completion of one level (level I) of language (the equivalent of one year of high school language). Approximately 75 percent of students currently choose this elective. Eighth grade is not an entry point for world language. Because of the way schedules are blocked in the middle school, students must either start their elective world language in seventh grade or wait until high school.

Some have asked why it takes two years of middle school to complete the equivalent of one year of high school language. A big factor is the number of minutes of instruction per class period. High school class periods are longer than class periods in middle school. As a result, the two years of instruction in middle school equals about 75% more classroom minutes than one year of instruction at the high school. Therefore, students who start their world language in seventh grade learn level I on a gentler curve than those who start in high school. Interestingly, some parents feel that the strongest students

should consider foregoing language in middle school, but others believe the gentler curve may be just what such a student needs to get established in the language. Most agree that world language instruction at the high school moves at a fast pace. The grading scale is demanding; a score of 95% is required for an A.

World language offerings in high school are relatively unchanged, with Spanish, French and German taught through level V and Latin offered through level IV (the addition of level V is a possibility next year). The fifth level of world language is considered Advanced Placement ("AP").

What does all this mean for our students? Because Whitefish Bay is only in its third year of the revised curriculum, it is too early to fully measure the effectiveness of the changes. The current fourth graders will be the first class to enter middle school having taken world language since the first grade.

The school district is watching carefully to see whether early preparation will allow some students to move further and faster through the five levels of world language currently offered in the high school. If so, it's likely the district would consider higher levels of instruction.

New Offerings

Whitefish Bay also could consider adding a new language. Japanese, Chinese, Russian and American Sign Language are the most common extra offerings in districts around the country. However, new language instruction is expensive. State spending caps virtually require that any new courses come at the expense of established budget items.

For now, the Whitefish Bay world language program seems to be accomplishing its goals. Many students are comfortable with world language, and are continuing their studies through upper level courses. Parents are encouraged to share their thoughts about the program with teachers and administrators, and to continue advocating for a strong language program for all Whitefish Bay students.

Election Hits Home: *What It Means for WFB Schools*

Election day produced unmatched political drama in Wisconsin and across the country. What could the results mean for education policy in our state and in Whitefish Bay?

With heavy voter turnout across Wisconsin, Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry carried the state by a narrow margin. Incumbent Democratic senator Russ Feingold defeated Republican challenger Tim Michels by a 10-point spread.

In state races, Republicans fared better, picking up one state Senate seat and one state Assembly seat. The Wisconsin State Assembly is now heavily Republican, with 60 Republicans and 39 Democrats; the Senate has 19 Republicans and 14 Democrats.

In spite of their dominance, Republicans do not hold a veto-proof majority in either chamber. To become law, legislation must pass both houses by a 51% majority and then be signed by the governor. If vetoed by the governor, bills need a two-thirds override vote in both houses to become law. Overrides require 66 Assembly votes and 21 Senate votes, neither of which is assured today if legislators vote by party affiliation. Historically, when legislators break from party ranks, they become vulnerable to backlash or even recall. This balance of power phenomenon will be significant in the next two years, as Republicans promise to push a number of conservative initiatives, including tax freeze legislation.

In a post-election move that surprised even the best-connected insiders, the newly-constituted state Senate Republican caucus elected Richland Center Republican Dale Schultz as the new Senate majority leader. This reportedly happened "at the table," when some senators withdrew their support for presumptive majority leader Scott Fitzgerald. He had been selected in October, following the primary election defeat of former Senate Majority Leader Mary Panzer.

The choice of state Senate majority leader may not seem like front-burner news in Whitefish Bay, but it has important implications here. In a conciliatory move following the selection of Dale Schultz, senators extended an olive branch to runner-up Fitzgerald in the chairmanship of the powerful Joint Finance Committee. That means the removal of local re-elected Senator Alberta Darling from the position. Darling held the Finance chairmanship for two years. She will remain on the committee, but Whitefish Bay residents will no longer enjoy access to the Joint Finance chairman, which will likely mean a loss of influence for our constituency.

Last year in Wisconsin, public hearings focused on alternatives for public school funding and improving education. A special panel appointed by the governor recommended in June that public school funding be shifted from property taxes and onto the sales tax. Senator Darling says she "can't see sales tax dependency happening." Darling is especially concerned about the cost of health insurance for teachers, and wants new state funds to go toward education programs rather than teachers' health insurance.

Democratic State Representative Sheldon Wasserman, also re-elected in November, won't find out for several weeks which assembly committees he will serve on. Senate and Assembly committee assignments will be formalized in January.

Legislation to limit state and local spending would have a great impact on school funding in Whitefish Bay, and Advocates for Education will continue to monitor these initiatives. Wisconsin Assembly Speaker John Gard says enacting spending limits remains high on his agenda.

Advocates for Education will continue issuing e-mail updates to its members on news from Madison that affects our schools.

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important to look at the total learner, the total child. This is a means, not the only vehicle, for looking at how to involve the learner in the classroom and the environment."

Another tenet of "Capturing Kids' Hearts" is time for sharing "good news." Teacher Susan Jones says it doesn't take long for each of her fifth-graders to tell something positive about their day or, something lousy. "Many of us need to reframe and say,

'This is O.K.,' says Jones. "The kids eat it up. They have stories to share, and their hands shoot up. We need to give them time to do it. At the same time we work on the main idea, also modeling good writing, eye contact and hand shaking." Richards principal Elaine Gehring says the basics of "Capturing Kids' Hearts" work well even in the most challenging classroom situations.

"We had a class last year that had particularly needy kids, highly prone

to acting out," Gehring says. "In any class if that's not managed well it would impact the whole group. The teacher used 'Capturing Kids' Hearts' strategies and used respect as an important part. The whole class saw that even if one child makes mistakes, he's still an important part of the group and has something to contribute. It was a great year."

If you go to the "Capturing Kids' Hearts" website, you might think you've entered a land of corporate-

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speak, not educational innovation. The site is peppered with phrases like, "dynamic three-day training," and "develop relationships and processes that bring out the best in people." But talk with teachers and administrators in Whitefish Bay who've completed the program, and you'll hear genuine praise.

Gehring says she attends as many "Capturing Kids' Hearts" training sessions as she can because she learns more every time. One of the principles reads, "Emotional Intelligence can be taught and has a significant role in supporting student learning as well as preparing our students for the future." Gehring says, "It brings to the surface for us as adults how important relationships and connections are."

A teen leadership model of "Capturing Kids' Hearts" for students will start up at the middle school next year, and more teachers across the district are scheduled to attend training in coming months.

Did You Know?

- ▲ With a whopping 93% voter turnout in Whitefish Bay, 4511 ballots were cast for Senator John Kerry and 4467 for President George W. Bush. See complete election returns at <http://www.village.whitefish-bay.wi.us/>. Both of Whitefish Bay's Wisconsin legislators, Republican State Senator Alberta Darling and Democratic State Representative Sheldon Wasserman, were re-elected by comfortable margins. Due to shifting power bases in the Republican-controlled state Senate, Darling will no longer chair the powerful Joint Finance Committee (see the "Legislative Update" in this issue.)
- ▲ We heard the word "polarized" a lot during this election season. But voters in Wisconsin do not all follow party lines when it comes to choosing legislators. Each Wisconsin Senate district covers three corresponding Assembly districts. In Whitefish Bay, Republican Senator Alberta Darling represents an area also represented by Assembly members Sheldon Wasserman, a Democrat, and Republicans Curt Gielow and Suzanne Jeskewitz. Statewide, 15 of the 33 Senate districts have mixed-party Assembly representation, while 18 are represented by one senator and three representatives of the same political party. Of the 18 same-party districts, 12 are Republican and six are Democrat.
- ▲ School funding is tied to enrollment, so schools pay close attention to annual enrollment counts and projections. The official numbers are in for 2004-2005, and the count shows 3000 resident and nonresident students enrolled in the Whitefish Bay School District. The total represents an increase of 30 students over last year. Resident student enrollment is up by 20 students; the rest come to Whitefish Bay through the state open enrollment program. The official count also shows a total of 185 students who are new to the district, about half of whom transferred in from private and parochial schools. Sixty-four new students enrolled from public schools elsewhere in Wisconsin, 20 students enrolled from public schools outside Wisconsin, and 12 new students came from outside the United States. This year's four-year-old kindergarten enrollment is up significantly, which should have a positive impact on school district enrollment and finances in coming years.
- ▲ Beginning with the next school year, the federal No Child Left Behind law will require the

state of Wisconsin to administer reading and math tests in grades three through eight. Wisconsin currently tests reading in grade three, and several subjects in grades four, eight and ten. The School District of Whitefish Bay has also long administered the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in grades three, five and seven.

Will Whitefish Bay administer both sets of tests in the grades where they overlap? "Probably," says Director of Instruction Tony Frontier. The Iowa tests are different from the Wisconsin state tests. The Iowa test is a "norm-referenced test," in which student scores are compared to those of other students locally and nationally, and tied to the cognitive abilities test administered at the same time. In contrast, the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts exam is a "criterion referenced" test, in which students are scored on an absolute scale as minimal, basic, proficient or advanced in terms of their mastery of the defined state standards. Iowa test scores are returned to the district in late fall, and provide useful data about district and individual performance. The Iowa test also serves as a guide to curriculum evaluation over time. The Wisconsin test is less useful for these purposes, and is not returned until late spring.

Administrators and teachers agree students spend a great deal of time taking tests. The district intends to assess the impact of the two tests on students and staff in grades three, five and seven next fall to determine if the Iowa tests should be used in the future.

- ▲ This summer the Whitefish Bay School Board approved changes to the district's weighted grades policy at the high school. The changes take effect with the class of 2007, the current sophomores. The new policy eliminates half weights for courses in physics, pre-calculus and fourth-year world language classes. It also limits full weights to Whitefish Bay High School Advanced Placement ("AP") courses, AP courses completed at a prior high school but offered at Whitefish Bay, and AP classes taken at another high school as a result of insufficient enrollment to run the corresponding courses in Whitefish Bay. This change eliminated weighted grades for courses completed through colleges such as UW-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, or on-line college courses.

"Capturing Kids' Hearts"

Advocates for Education Forum

Tuesday, January 25th, 2005
7 p.m.
WFB High School, Room 47

Learn How Teachers and Administrators in Whitefish Bay are Capturing Students' Hearts and Minds

Teachers say a new training program is changing their approach to classroom relationships. Come find out how the program is working in your child's elementary, middle or high school classroom.

Please Renew Your AFE Membership Today!



Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc. has been working to promote excellence in public education in our community since 1994.

Locally and at the state level, AFE has been a respected, positive participant in the public policy process for a decade.

Your prompt renewal will allow us to fund these important services:

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- ▲ AFE study groups on issues such as testing, funding, the Chapter 220 program and open enrollment
- ▲ The AFE website at www.advocatesforeducation.org

To renew your membership, please complete this form and mail it today to:
AFE, 5512 N. Kent Ave., WFB, WI 53217. Questions? Call Susie Bond at 967-9565.

Please note that donations to AFE are not tax-deductible as

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If you provide an e-mail address, AFE will notify you of upcoming events and issues.

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- Supporting Member(s) at \$20 (I'm not a district resident, no child attending)
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If your additional donation is \$30 or more, we would be pleased to say thank you by sending this year's AFE newsletters as a gift to a person of your choice. (We can help determine whether the individual or family is already receiving newsletters for 2004-05.) This is a great way to introduce AFE to other families or teachers and helps us attract new members.

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