



5512 N. Kent Ave.
Whitefish Bay, WI 53217

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- *10 years of Parent Advocacy for Whitefish Bay Schools*
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- *How to Raise a Voter*

New Parent Group on School Scene

A new group promoting cultural understanding, academic achievement and representing parents of minority students in Whitefish Bay schools is spreading its name and mission in the community. **Pace³, Parents Advocating for Cultural Equality and Educational Excellence**, sponsored a successful workshop in September called "Unintentional Intolerance: What NICE People Need to Know."

Advocates for Education board members met over the summer with leaders of "Pace Cubed" for a potluck dinner. The gathering included a discussion of challenges facing minority children in Whitefish Bay schools. AFE looks forward to working with "Pace Cubed" to help all our children learn the importance of a diverse and inclusive school community.





10th Anniversary

Advocates for EDUCATION of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

October 2004

A Decade of Advocacy for Whitefish Bay Schools

State Leaders Listen When AFE Speaks Out

The sidewalk outside the kindergarten door at Cumberland Elementary School is often crowded with parents, dropping off their four- and five-year-olds and standing to chat as younger children run through the grass or lounge in strollers.

This was the scene in 1993, when Anne Rothacker and David Scrivner were kindergartners. Their mothers, Connie Gavin and Meredie Scrivner, were among the parents getting to know each other at the door. They talked about picture books and sleep schedules and the new routines of school.

But Gavin remembers the thoughtful group gathered at the door that year had weightier issues on their minds as well:

“Our discussions were often about public education policy. This is when Gov. Thompson proposed, and the legislature enacted, two-thirds funding of the schools by the state to reduce property taxes. Several of us were aware of this, and how similar plans had played out in other states and the loss of local control that followed. We talked about the fact that there was a vacuum for advocating in support of public education.”

*10 years ago...
“there was a vacuum for advocating in support of public education.”*

-Connie Gavin, Whitefish Bay parent

Meredithe Scrivner came up with the idea for a parent group called “Advocates for Education.”

But a year passed before a troubling issue turned the idea into a movement. A referendum to approve upgrades to the middle school failed, and parents could not believe it.

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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

President

As I write this, another school year is upon us, and another year of activities for Advocates for Education. The older I (and my kids) get, the faster the years go by. (My mother told me it would be like this!) It is hard to believe that Advocates for Education is already a decade old. I hope you'll find time to read the excellent article in this newsletter looking back over those ten years.

I also hope you'll take advantage of the enclosed membership renewal form to join - or rejoin - AFE for the coming year. We think our organization adds a lot of value to our community, but we are only as strong as our members make us. Together we can make a difference. If even a dozen of us respond to an AFE e-mail action alert and call our legislators to express our desire for local control of our school tax levy, we will get their attention. If fifty of us attend an AFE forum on our local math curriculum, our school administrators respond to our input. If parents in other districts learn from our website of AFE's efforts to quash the state's high-stakes graduation test, the addition of their voices multiplies our impact.

All of the funds for our activities to promote high quality public education in Whitefish Bay come from member dues and contributions. Your membership makes possible our forums, website, mailings to legislators and newsletters. Please join us and invite your friends and neighbors to join also. If you would like us to contact someone to offer information, please call me or any of our board members listed here in the newsletter. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Jim Schacht
332-2834

**Be An Informed Voter! Everyone is
Welcome!**

Legislative Candidates Forum

*Focusing on Issues Affecting Public Education
In Whitefish Bay*

Thursday, October 28 at 7 p.m.

Whitefish Bay High School Cafeteria

1200 E. Fairmount Avenue

Enter through Door 3 on Marlborough

Featuring:

22nd Assembly District Candidates

**Jay Hintze &
Sheldon Wasserman**

8th Senate District Candidates

**Alberta Darling &
Jennifer Morales**

Sponsored by Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

*Whitefish Bay School District
Whitefish Bay Middle School PTO
Richards Elementary School PTO
Cumberland Elementary School PTO*

LOCAL CANDIDATES

Local Education Issues

The presidential election will draw thousands of Wisconsin voters to the polls on November 2nd, but local races will have a big impact on the lives of families in our community. On the ballot will be contested elections for the 8th State Senate district and the 22nd State Assembly district, both of which include Whitefish Bay.

In the 8th Senate District, Republican incumbent **Alberta Darling** is seeking a fourth term, running against Democrat **Jennifer Morales**, a Milwaukee School Board member. In the 22nd Assembly District, Democratic incumbent **Sheldon Wasserman** is seeking a sixth term. He faces Republican **Jay Hintze**, mayor of Glendale.

Advocates for Education interviewed all four candidates, asking each the same questions about issues in public education.

THE 8TH SENATE DISTRICT

Republican **Alberta Darling**, 60, is a former high school English teacher and businesswoman. In the 1980s, Darling served on numerous not-for-profit community boards before being appointed to, and then running, for the State Assembly. First elected to the Senate in 1992, Darling is seeking a fourth term. She is the former chair of the Senate Education Committee and the current chair of the Joint Finance Committee, a position that carries significant influence in terms of legislative gatekeeping and agenda-setting.

Democratic challenger **Jennifer Morales**, 34, is development director of 9 to 5 National Association of Working Women. Additionally, Morales is a member of the Milwaukee Board of School Directors. She was first elected to the MPS Board in 2001.

On the taxpayer bill of rights (TABOR), the proposed state constitutional amendment which would, in a still undetermined way, constitutionally limit spending increases in all public jurisdictions:

Darling supports the concept of keeping state and local spending in line with the taxpayers' ability to pay, and she sees taxes as a huge problem for the state. She sees state spending as way out of line and believes the state economy will only grow if spending and taxes are reduced. However, she is "not certain that a constitutional amendment is the way to go," and states perhaps spending limits should be addressed by changes in the law, not the constitution. Since the actual language of TABOR was never introduced in any public arena where it could be analyzed and debated, Darling states it is hard to discuss TABOR in any but a theoretical way.

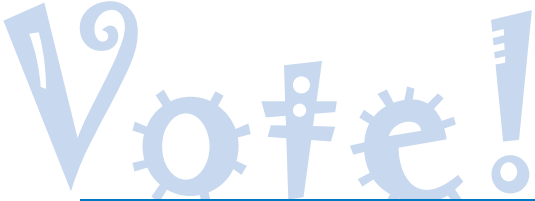
Morales sees TABOR as a "myopic and clumsy way to solve a legitimate problem, namely that homeowners need property tax relief." She sees the relatively low corporate tax burden in Wisconsin as problematic, causing the higher-than-average individual tax burden for Wisconsin taxpayers. Morales advocates a "thorough overhaul of our tax structure, that will protect homeowners and local services" and she pledges to provide the leadership necessary to accomplish this.

On a state-mandated tax freeze, not achieved through constitutional amendment:

Says Darling, "I supported it. I think it is a good idea to limit tax increases to the rate of inflation, as a three-year trial. In that three years, we need to limit spending, to cut through the layers and layers of state programs, and to bring in the experts to help us cut spending. We need to do zero-based budgeting and we don't. We just keep adding and adding."

Morales states the push for a state-mandated tax freeze was "an impressive effort by state legislative leaders to shove their fiscal management problems onto local policy makers." Though Morales believes local property tax relief is much needed, she says the state legislature simply "depleted the resources for children's education and local services and put the burden to raise this revenue on cities and school boards."

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On the current school funding formula and possible changes for the future:

Darling notes the current formula has withstood three legal challenges and has been found, each time, to be constitutionally sound. She believes the current formula needs reevaluation, but knows finding an acceptable alternative would be difficult. She believes North Shore districts are particularly hampered, and that our money “goes out but doesn’t come back.” She believes “fairness” must be defined, and realizes that every district sees the funding formula from its own point of view. Sen. Darling sees the building boom in school facilities around Wisconsin as a drain on the whole state, and believes that spending caps on just the public K-12 schools are not fair, citing MATC as a local example of a taxing entity which has not had to control its spending as the public K-12 schools have. “We have increased school spending overall, but it has all been eaten up by health insurance costs and special education. Something must be done.”

Morales states the “way we fund public schools in Wisconsin has to change dramatically, and soon.” She says she will support a reformed school finance system which meets all of the following criteria:

- 1) adequate resources for all students to meet academic standards, including additional resources for English language learners, special ed students and children in poverty;
- 2) it must work for all districts;
- 3) it must provide local property tax relief;
- 4) it must maintain local control over children’s education; and
- 5) it must happen now.

What do you see as the single most important education issue in the upcoming term?

Sen. Darling sees the need to create opportunities for success for all children and to find ways to do educational things better, according to best-practice research. “We need to close the gap between the top and the bottom and have high expectations for all kids, regardless of race, income, or culture.”

Morales states, “We need school funding reform now.”

THE 22ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Democrat Sheldon Wasserman is seeking election to a sixth term in the Wisconsin State Assembly.

Wasserman, 40, was first elected in 1992. A practicing obstetrician-gynecologist, Dr. Wasserman has maintained his medical practice at Columbia-St. Mary’s during his years of serving in the Assembly.

Republican challenger Jay Hintze is the current mayor of the city of Glendale, first elected in 2000. Hintze also runs the Hinzte Group, a consulting firm concentrating on facilitation and strategic planning for municipalities and other public sector clients. Hintze states that, if elected, he would continue as Glendale mayor until the April 2006 election. Hintze has consulted the State Ethics Board regarding this plan and he reports there is no legal conflict.

On the taxpayers bill of rights (TABOR), the proposed state constitutional amendment which would, in a still undetermined way, consti-

tutionally limit spending increases in all public jurisdictions:

Rep. Wasserman opposes TABOR, stating “I believe in local control.” Wasserman believes that all elected officials should keep tax increases to a minimum, but that the state constitution should not dictate across-the-board tax limits. He says it is ironic that pro-TABOR legislators want to control local units of government when “in past years Madison couldn’t control itself.”

Hintze points out that “nobody really knows what TABOR is. Conceptually, I support the need for tax reductions, but I do not believe it should be a state constitutional amendment. We need to revise the tax structure and reform spending, but we elect people to do this at the local level, and that is where it should happen.”

On a state-mandated tax freeze, not achieved through a constitutional amendment:

Wasserman reiterates the position that “individual municipalities and school districts should limit taxes if the local voters so desire.” He opposes a mandated tax freeze unless it is locally decided.

Hintze points out that “nobody wants service cuts or tax increases.” Hintze shares that view and advocates an overall look at state mandates and state spending to see where money really should be spent. Hintze “worries that when the economy improves, we will just stop being concerned about spending and we will not have solved any problems.” He supports some state-mandated spending controls, but only if they “allow local government to grow at sensible, adequate levels, with carve-outs for schools districts with declining enrollment and exemptions for police and fire services.”

On the current school funding formula and possible changes for the future:

Wasserman believes the current formula shortchanges North Shore districts. He points out the “North Shore is considered property rich, but that doesn’t necessarily mean we can pay huge taxes to get shortchanged in return.” Wasserman pledges to advocate for the North Shore in any proposed formula change.

Hintze would like to “return school funding to more local control.” He believes the formula unfairly targets the wealthy, who have to “give it out and not get it back.” Hintze states strongly that, if elected, he would represent the 22nd District strongly and be accountable to the voters to “bring something back to the district.”

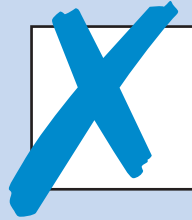
What do you see as the single most important education issue in the upcoming term?

Wasserman sees school funding as the clear front-runner issue in the upcoming term. “The governor’s task force has done its work, it is a budget year, and there will be a new legislature. School funding is going to be addressed in the upcoming term. It is a crucial issue and I will be there fighting for the North Shore.”

Hintze sees the effects of the federal No Child Left Behind Law as the key educational issue. He believes NCLB has “caused us to create systems for outcomes, not opportunity. Music, art and sports need emphasis also and we must not lose sight of this.”

Advocates for Education does not endorse candidates. AFE’s goal is to help inform local voters on education issues and processes of public policy, and to encourage voters to exercise their rights of citizenship. Election Day is Tuesday, November 2nd.

How to Raise a Future Voter



1. Always vote, without fail, even when you may not really like any candidate.
2. Take your kids to the polling place with you, and let them watch you vote. Let them put the ballot in the machine. Let them make the marks on the ballot if they are old enough.
3. Talk about the election at dinner. Who are you supporting and why?
4. If you vote absentee, be sure your children know you are making this extra effort and why. If possible, let them vote with you at the Village Hall or let them see the absentee ballot.
5. Have a yard sign if you support a candidate strongly enough.
6. Tell your kids that one of the greatest things about America is the right to disagree and still be friends. Point out that friends often do not think alike on politics, but that good discussion is part of American life.
7. Talk about the right to vote in America, especially the history of who could and could not vote during critical times in American history. Your kids will be amazed the first time they hear that only white, land-owning men could vote in early America.
8. Obtain a copy of the U.S. Constitution and see that voting is in Article One. It was one of the first items addressed by the framers of the Constitution. A printable version of the U.S. Constitution can be downloaded at:
<http://www.house.gov/Constitution/Constitution.html>
9. Obtain a copy of the Amendments to the Constitution and discuss the 19th amendment, which gave women the right to vote, not fully ratified until 1920. Point out that perhaps your child’s great-great-grandmother was among the first women voters in America. A printable version of the amendments can be downloaded at:
<http://www.house.gov/Constitution/Amend.html>.
10. On election night, color in a “Tim Russert” map of the United States, showing the presidential results state-by-state. A printable blank map can be downloaded from:
<http://geography.about.com/library/blank/usa3.jpg>.

Did You Know?

Whitefish Bay Schools Facts & Figures

- *The Whitefish Bay School Board seats held by Tim Somers and Pam Woodard are up for election next spring. Incumbents must notify the district by December 24th if they will not be candidates for reelection. The filing deadline for non-incumbents is Tuesday, January 4th. Thinking about getting more involved in the schools? See "School Board Service: Is it for You?" at www.advocatesforeducation.org. Click on archives, then December 2000. The spring election is April 5, 2005.*
- *The Whitefish Bay School District and the Whitefish Bay Education Association (the union representing teachers) have reached a contract settlement for 2003-2005. In what looks to be a win-win situation, the union agreed to accept health insurance coverage through a choice of managed-care plans in place of the previous indemnity coverage. This resulted in significant cost savings to the district. Savings for active employees were applied to salaries, making Whitefish Bay more competitive in hiring. Savings on retirees' benefits are a savings for the district. Kudos to all involved!*
- *How do you judge school performance? The Whitefish Bay School District is developing a process to measure the success of a school district, and decide which performance indicators should be considered along with test scores, attendance, co-curricular participation and volunteer service. If you are interested in being part of a focus group to help develop these performance indicators, call the District Office at 963-3901.*
- *Using the traditional measure of success, the ACT exam, Whitefish Bay is doing well. In 2002-2003 Whitefish Bay High School students scored an average of 25.9 on the ACT college entrance exam, the highest public school district score in the state and one of the highest in the nation.*
- *Composite math scores in grades 3 and 5 were the highest they've been in ten years. Overall, 3rd grade scores were in the 99th percentile of public and private schools across the country. Fifth grade scores were in the 98th percentile of public and private schools across the country.*
- *Despite steadily rising costs, the district limited the increase in next year's tax levy to 5.34%, or about \$142 per year for a home assessed at \$250,000. This comes at a time when the state has decided not to continue funding two-thirds of the cost of public education, and as Whitefish Bay's equalized property values have increased, which, under the state funding formula, reduces the amount of state education money Whitefish Bay receives.*
- *The Whitefish Bay School District engages in a continuous cycle of curriculum review, with each subject area getting a complete review by a curriculum committee every seven years. Committees include teachers, administrators and people from the community. New committees are forming now for the district's mathematics, gifted-and-talented and guidance programs. There is also an opening for a community representative on the Curriculum Evaluation Council, which reviews the committees' work. If you are interested in serving, call the Instruction Office at 963-3927 by October 8th for an application.*

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Hundreds Mobilize for Middle School Referendum

Scrivner recalls, "When the middle school referendum was defeated, parents and school supporters were both dumbstruck and annoyed at ourselves that we had let the defeat happen. We realized we should have mounted a positive campaign and that complacency had cost the community dearly."

Parent Linda Olsheska remembers that middle school science students at the time were using coffee cans as sinks. She believed the physical school environment was essential in the critical middle school years. Olsheska's daughters were in 3rd grade and senior kindergarten at the time, and she was looking to the future. Five parents met in Olsheska's living room on a hot August evening to revive the middle school improvement issue.

The result was a grassroots effort to get the hundreds of signatures needed to encourage the school board to put the measure back on the ballot the following spring. The new kernel of volunteers gathered friends and went door to door over a Labor Day weekend, secured the signatures and began the process that returned the issue to referendum.

The Vote Yes campaign came next in the spring of 1995, employing 700 volunteers who worked persuading friends, neighbors and strangers that the quality of Whitefish Bay's education was at stake. They hosted coffees, canvassed neighborhoods, passed out flyers, even dressed in animal costumes on Silver Spring, anything to draw attention to the middle school issue.

Meredie Scrivner says, "The way the community came together in support puts a lump in my throat to this day. The second vote, held in the spring of 1995, had a 69% voter turnout, which we believe was a state record for a spring election. Our calculations at the beginning of the

campaign were that 3000 yes votes would be needed for victory. The referendum passed by a margin of 80 votes, with 2992 people voting yes. Advocacy had worked.”

Incorporation, Structure and Tackling New Issues

Following that great success, Advocates for Education created an organizational structure, wrote and adopted formal articles of incorporation and bylaws, and elected their first board. They trademarked the name. Members hammered out policy statements, the basis for AFE’s advocacy, which are now posted on the group’s website.

Two big issues in Madison during those years were school funding and the standards and assessment movement, including the “no social promotion law” and the high school graduation test. AFE members pledged to become experts on these issues. They formed study groups to research and recommend advocacy. AFE began earning its reputation in Madison for being well informed.

Connie Gavin was deeply involved in the testing issue. “It made no sense to us that major decisions in the life of a child be based on one test. We worked to preserve the parent opt-out from these tests, when the governor proposed removing it. At the end of the day, the tests in 4th and 8th grades were only one factor in the promotion decision, the parent opt-out remained law, and the graduation test was not funded.”

Parents’ Voices Respected in Madison

From the testing campaign, AFE members learned that parents are an important voice in educational policy. They found that parents have special credibility with policy makers because they are not politicized or part of the educational establishment.

State School Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster says, “I commend Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay for supporting authentic assessments and rigorous curriculum rather than an overemphasis on standardized testing.”

Whitefish Bay’s state representatives are supporters

Whitefish Bay’s representatives in Madison also admire the work of AFE.

State Senator Alberta Darling says, “AFE should be particularly proud of its effectiveness in the State Capitol. I know of no other grassroots educational organization that has played such a critical role in the development of statewide educational policy. Whether it’s school funding, academic standards or testing, AFE has been able to break traditional boundaries in order to make change. Leaders from across the state, in both parties and in different branches of government, all know to listen when AFE talks – a tremendous accomplishment.”

State Representative Sheldon Wasserman frequently attends AFE events. “I was first elected to office when Advocates for Education was just getting started. I remember thinking back then that the organization was poised to make a major impact at the local and state levels of government, and I was right. AFE members are a wonderful, smart, dedicated group of people who truly have made a difference. Through unique leadership and effective grassroots organizing, education in Whitefish Bay and the landscape of the local school board have been directly influenced. And North Shore residents as well as state officials look to AFE for non-partisan information on a wide range of education issues. This is a distinction that only a select few groups can claim.”

Careful, Thoughtful, Strong

As Linda Olsheska says, “Everyone is so busy, and the news media doesn’t cover smaller local issues. AFE gives parents the opportunity to learn and take action, and that’s really what they need.”

In recent years, AFE has addressed class rank, foreign language in the elementary schools, homework, writing and math instruction. The group organizes well-attended forums and writes newsletter articles on issues of local concern, always providing feedback to the school district.

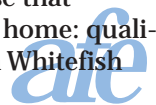
Whitefish Bay School Superintendent James Rickabaugh has high regard for AFE. “It’s independent advocacy for education; careful, thoughtful people looking at education issues from the perspective of parents. Most organizations of this nature come and go, and AFE’s longevity is a testament to its leadership. I’m not aware of any other organization with this strong impact and level of commitment anywhere else in the state.”

The Next Decade

Perhaps the most effective principle adopted by Advocates for Education is the group’s commitment to remain positive and polite, respectful of all points of view. As a result, AFE is viewed as reasonable and well-prepared, qualities that make its voice even stronger.

AFE’s founders believe one of their missions is to recruit new leaders. Cumberland parent Marie Greco is a first-year member of the AFE board. “It is an honor to join a group that has greatly influenced our community for the betterment of education for our children,” she says.

The kids whose parents met at the kindergarten door back in 1993 are in high school and college now, but this year’s kindergartners have the same chance to benefit from a grassroots group working for a cause that couldn’t be any closer to home: quality schools for children in Whitefish Bay



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:

- ▲ Informative, well-researched newsletters
- ▲ Community forums on wide-ranging topics
- ▲ E-mail alerts on pending state and local issues
- ▲ 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

AFE is not a Section 501(c)(3) organization.

Name(s) _____

Total Enclosed:

Address _____

\$ _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

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

- Member(s) at \$20 per family (I live in WFB or my child attends a WFB school)
- Supporting Member(s) at \$20 (I'm not a district resident, no child attending)
- I'm renewing at \$20 and would also like to make an additional gift.
- Additional Gift of: \$10 \$20 \$30 \$ _____

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.

Please send my sponsored newsletters to:

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

I am interested in volunteering for AFE. Please call me: _____