

# Transitions

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instance saying my student has anxiety taking tests. We give that to all teachers.”

Both Perina and Primakow stress that guidance counselors are eager to help each student make a smooth transition to the new school. If parents are concerned about their child's apprehension level, they are urged to contact the guidance counselors before school starts.

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*a difference in the ongoing pursuit of high quality public education in Whitefish Bay.*

**Corrections:** *On another note, we would like to defend the honor of our fellow board member Meredie Scrivner. Although she may not be perfect on the computer, we can attest that Meredie does know her grammar. Our last newsletter included a printed version of Meredie's testimony in December to the Governor's Task Force on Educational Excellence. Unfortunately, the printed testimony Meredie provided included the*

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# President

*term “had went,” caused by a word-processing error when she intended to change “had gone” to “went.” Also unfortunately, those of us responsible for editing the article (myself included) failed to notice the error. (The good news is that the testimony presented to the Task Force was correct.) We also erred in our statement that Meredie has two children attending the high school; her oldest graduated last year and she now has one child at the high school.*

**Jim Schacht** (414) 332-2834



# Advocates for EDUCATION

Spring 2004

[www.advocatesforeducation.org](http://www.advocatesforeducation.org)

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*and more...*

## 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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# Curriculum Evaluation and Improvement Cycle

The School District of Whitefish Bay is dedicated to continual improvement of the curriculum. An evaluation and improvement cycle of six years is used to systematically look at what areas are working or in need of change. "Currently, the district is in the implementation year of the new reading/language arts curriculum in the elementary schools. Next year, the district will implement updated health and social studies curricula. The review of mathematics, gifted/talented, and guidance curricula begins next year," says Tony Frontier, Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

Parents may serve on review committees. A call for members takes place in the fall with meetings beginning in January.

Cycle Year	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
<b>One</b>			
Jan: Begin major review Resource/pedagogy evaluation	Language Arts 6-12 Physical Education	Mathematics Gifted/Talented Guidance	Science Library/Media Vocational Education
<b>Two</b>			
Jan/Feb: Instruction Committee proposal Feb/March: Board approval	Health Social Studies	Language Arts 6-12 Physical Education	Mathematics Gifted/Talented Guidance
<b>Three</b>			
Aug: Program implementation	Language Arts K-5 Reading, Writing, Spelling, Handwriting	Health Social Studies	Language Arts 6-12 Physical Education
<b>Four</b>			
Sept: Program reconsideration	Computer Literacy Art	Language Arts K-5 Reading, Writing, Spelling, Handwriting	Health Social Studies
<b>Five</b>			
Sept: Program adjustments	Music Foreign Language HGD	Computer Literacy Art	Language Arts K-5 Reading, Writing, Spelling, Handwriting
<b>Six</b>			
Sept.: Program continuation	Science Library Media Vocational Education	Music Foreign Language HGD	Computer Literacy Art

**The Human Growth and Development (HGD) Advisory Council** oversees the district's HGD curriculum. The council is made up of two parent representatives from each school, a local medical professional, a local clergy member, a school board representative, a school administrator, and the director of instruction. The council oversees and approves curriculum outlines, the district's sensitive issues documents, any published materials used for the courses, and instruc-

tional media such as videos. Three parent meetings are held annually before teaching the fourth grade, fifth grade, and middle school curriculum. The curriculum covers a broad range of topics including respecting differences, problem solving skills, decision-making processes, grade level appropriate anatomy, and reproduction. This core scope of the district's curriculum has been in place for nearly 25 years. The council reconvenes next

school year as part of the three-year review.

Richards School principal Elaine Gehring and Director of Instruction Tony Frontier will serve as the council's school administrators. Dr. Paul Hunter will serve as the community medical representative. The representative from the school board has not yet been determined. Nomination forms will be available at the start of the next school year to fill the parent representative and clergy positions.

# Transitions:

*How to help your child cross the bridge to middle or high school*

**M**oving from one level of education to the next can be a stressful time for children and adolescents. Guidance counselors from Whitefish Bay Middle School and Whitefish Bay High School offer these suggestions to families with children making the transition to a new school in the fall.

## Middle School Transition

For most children, meeting their STAR teacher and fellow STAR group members in June is an important transitional activity, according to middle school guidance counselor Sheryl Primakow. "It gives them a connection right off the bat," she explains. "They met some new kids and one teacher so they get to leave with a familiar face, and then when they start school the very first day they recognize their STAR teacher."

Over the summer, Primakow urges parents and students to become familiar with the layout of the middle school. "I encourage them to do walk-throughs in the summer. The building is open and they can come through at any time. Just check in with the front office and walk through the building," she suggests.

Middle school parent Charmaine Gunderson says it was useful for her sixth grade daughter to tour the building with a neighbor. "The biggest fear for her was having to switch classrooms and not being able to make it to the next class on time," Gunderson recalls. "I think having an older child who has gone through the middle school give a tour of the middle school was very helpful."

Primakow says the experienced sixth grade teaching team does an excellent job helping most students through their transition. When prob-

lems do occur, she says they often become apparent at the end of the first quarter. "As that first quarter winds down, that's the point where I would say parents should start to be very vigilant. That can be the beginning of friendship issues. As that first quarter winds down adolescence is kicking in and we begin to see some struggles."

## High School Transition

Whitefish Bay High School guidance counselor Anne Perina has several suggestions for students and parents hoping to make the high school transition easier. First, she also recommends that students walk through the building during the summer. "Come in, walk around, and see where your classes are located," she says.

Second, she suggests incoming freshmen sign up for "Freshman Orientation and High School Survival Skills" offered in the Whitefish Bay Recreation Department handbook. The course, taught by Associate Principal Greg Kabara, is offered August 9-13. Sara Alter says the class was very beneficial to her daughter who entered ninth grade in the fall. "She came home every day with something new she learned about the high school." The orientation class is separate from the freshman orientation picnic offered the week before school starts.

Parents can aid their child's transition to high school by filling out a "Parent Information Form" mailed to all families in July. Perina says the form is used by teachers and guidance counselors to understand students' concerns or anxieties. "More and more parents fill it out, for

From the

# President

**T**his newsletter marks the end of another year of activities for Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay. We have had a very active year, beginning last summer when we monitored the state budget process and advocated with our elected representatives for more money for education and for local control of school spending. We also began a study group that has provided input to the governor's task force on the financing of public education. Currently, we are communicating with our state leaders about the constitutional amendment and legislative proposals that would limit spending on education.

We were very pleased to see many of you at our forums this year. They included excellent presentations and lively discussions about our local school budgeting process; how writing is taught in our schools; and our math curriculum. Thank you to our school district officials who so willingly participated in those programs. We also had a great turnout on a rainy night for our school board candidate forum, as people gained information in the first contested Whitefish Bay school board election in years.

The coming year promises to be challenging in the area of public school funding, both at the state and local level. We thank all our members for your support and invite your input at any time. Please write or call me, or any of the board members listed in the newsletter, to share your thoughts. Together we can make

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# *Equal Opportunity with Equal Results:* *The Challenge for Elementary Class Placement*

In late April, Cumberland and Richards Elementary Schools sent home letters to parents explaining that the initial stages of the class placement process for the 2004-2005 school year had begun. "It's a little like having two 650 piece puzzles. We fit each piece together to make a new puzzle every year," says Elaine Gehring, principal of Richards School.

The goal is to create balanced classes. "This is a process, not an event. We look at nearly forty factors as they relate to each student," says Jayne Heffron, principal of Cumberland School.

Factors considered in the process of placement include academic effort and achievement, physical, social and emotional strengths and needs; learning styles and special learning needs, levels of independence and/or need for structure, classroom gender balance, abilities and personalities, and equitable class size. In weighing

such factors, the ultimate goal is for each classroom to have a balanced group of children where no child is isolated because of a particular learning style or need.

Parents are given a voice in the class placement process. At Cumberland, parents receive a letter of explanation and a "placement information form." This form gives parents the opportunity to provide input about their child's style of learning and needs. Richards parents are encouraged to share information they deem necessary with their child's teacher in letter form. Parents of children entering the school district are also able to share critical information with the district by filling out a data sheet.

Teams of teachers from each grade, "specials" teachers in the areas of art, physical education, music, and library, and education specialists providing support in math, reading, writing, and speech work together

with guidance counselors to share information about the students. This is an ongoing process of reviews and revisions for several weeks at the end of the school year.

Class groupings for the nearly 60 homerooms at the two schools are tentative until the end of August as students move in and out of the district. Both principals remark that this is not simply a decision of "which student goes with which teacher." The schools do not consider requests from parents for specific teachers. Instead, teachers emphasize careful consideration of each child's needs as they work toward providing a positive learning experience for each student.

While some other districts use a random selection method, the Whitefish Bay School District views class placement as a partnership between students, parents, and teachers.

## *Did you know?*

Parents of minority students who attend Whitefish Bay schools have formed an organization to address their common issues and concerns. Known as "Parents Advocating for Cultural Equality and Educational Excellence," or PACE<sup>3</sup> (Pace-cubed), the group has identified these goals:

- ◆ To collectively address issues of racial and ethnic inequalities that discourage academic achievement.
- ◆ To provide resources that assist parents with effectively advocating for their student(s) regarding educational issues.
- ◆ To encourage increased parental participation in school activities and school district leadership roles.
- ◆ To create a forum for beneficial discussion on topics related to cultural diversity and academic achievement.
- ◆ To work with school administrators, staff, and teachers to develop programs and activities for students that encourage racial and ethnic equality.
- ◆ To encourage the development of productive relationships between parents and school administrators, staff, teachers, and other community organizations for the purpose of meeting the educational needs of all students.

Anyone interested in learning more about PACE<sup>3</sup> should contact chairperson Phyllis Richards at 358-8304.

# School Board

# Update

As members of the Whitefish Bay School Board begin a new term of office, Advocates for Education profiles them and urges residents to contact school board members to express concerns or support for our schools.

**J**ohn Hainze is beginning his second year on the school board. He says he looks back on his first year as a great learning year. He considers it a pleasure to serve on an experienced board that works so well together on the important issues facing the community. Phone: 961-7079 (evenings and weekends) Email: [jkhainze@hotmail.com](mailto:jkhainze@hotmail.com)

**R**e-elected to a third term in April, Tom Scrivner says it's important that Whitefish Bay schools offer "diverse programs that work for all kids." He says he's proud to have been part of educational policy decisions that have improved educational offerings for Whitefish Bay children, such as all-day kindergarten, world languages at the elementary level, and expanded advanced placement offerings at the high school. Phone: 332-1377 (evenings and weekends) Email: [tscrivner@wi.rr.com](mailto:tscrivner@wi.rr.com)

**D**avid Kern begins his tenth year on the Whitefish Bay School Board. He thinks it's important to improve upon previous improvements. "We should always be making sure we're doing the right thing at the right time," he says. Phone: 332-0244 (evenings and weekends) Email: [david.kern@bankmutual.com](mailto:david.kern@bankmutual.com)

**T**imothy Somers begins his ninth year on the school board. Elected to the position of treasurer this year, Somers says he is watching out for the impact of declining enrollment and possible legislated revenue limits. "Our teachers, staff and administrators have done an excellent job helping our students meet the very high expectations our community places upon them; their continuing commitment will be essential for us to ensure that the challenges ahead do not prevent future students from achieving similar levels of success." Phone: 765-5379 (days) 332-4768 (evenings and weekends) Email: [tws4781@yahoo.com](mailto:tws4781@yahoo.com)

**R**e-elected vice president and clerk of the school board, Nancy LeGrand just completed her tenth year of service. "The funding of education in Wisconsin will need continued observation and/or action in the coming year and in the future," she says. "We will need to pay particular attention to soaring health care costs and how they impact budget decisions. Attracting and retaining exceptional teachers and improved student learning will continue to be of primary concern." Phone: 332-3999 Email: [kisscnctn@aol.com](mailto:kisscnctn@aol.com)

**E**lected to the school board in April, Cheryl Maranto is excited by the opportunity to be more involved with the workings of our schools and advocate on behalf of parents and students. Phone: 963-1583 (evenings and weekends) 288-1441 (weekdays) Email: [cheryl.maranto@marquette.edu](mailto:cheryl.maranto@marquette.edu)

**T**he longest-tenured member of the school board, Pam Woodard is starting her twelfth year of service. Elected board president in April, Woodard enjoys looking at public education from the long view and how the years from kindergarten through twelfth grade lead up to college. She considers herself a strong proponent of public education, but stresses Whitefish Bay schools must do more with less. Phone: 963-1423 Email: [pamwoodard@yahoo.com](mailto:pamwoodard@yahoo.com)

# AFE Math Forum

**A**dvocates for Education thanks those who attended our forum on April 27 titled “*Mathematics Education in Whitefish Bay: How does it all add up?*” Below are resources on math education compiled by panelist Susan Pustejovsky, Associate Professor of Mathematics at Alverno College.

## Some Resources on Mathematics Education

The first two books in this list are very informative, jargon-free, and engaging. The National Research Council is an executive agency of the NAS. The National Academy of Sciences is charged with providing expert advice to the federal government on scientific and technical matters.

National Research Council. 2001. ***Adding It Up: Helping Children Learn Mathematics***. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. To read this book online, or to order it: <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/9822.html>

This book synthesizes the best knowledge we have about effective mathematics learning. It is the result of 18 months of work by a National Research Council work group, composed of individuals with a variety of perspectives.

National Research Council. 2000. ***How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*** (expanded edition). Washington, DC: National Academy Press. To read this book online, or to order it: <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/9853.html>

This book synthesizes research about the human mind and brain, and examines implications for teaching and learning.

US Department of Education Publication “Helping your child learn mathematics.”

To read online or order: <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/math/index.html>

## Web sites with high quality material about mathematics and math education:

**National Council of Teachers of Mathematics:**

[www.nctm.org](http://www.nctm.org) and especially [www.nctm.org/families](http://www.nctm.org/families)

Math teachers’ professional organization web site contains a wealth of info and resources. You can read the NCTM Principles and Standards for School Mathematics at this site.

**The Math Forum:**

[www.mathforum.org](http://www.mathforum.org)

For families, students, teachers, educators, and citizens who are interested in math education. Includes fun interactive opportunities like “problem of the week”, Ask Dr. Math, etc.

**Eisenhower National Center for Mathematics and Science Education (ENC):**

[www.enc.org](http://www.enc.org)

This a good site to find links to virtually all other online resources that might be helpful in finding information or discussion related to math education.

**Mathematical Association of America**

[www.maa.org](http://www.maa.org) and <http://www.maa.org/students/career.html>

One of the two major mathematicians’ professional organizations, the MAA takes a special interest in education. The site contains information about careers in which math is important.

**American Mathematical Society**

[www.ams.org](http://www.ams.org)

The AMS is the major professional organization for mathematicians. The site contains a wealth of links, and you can find articles by diverse professional mathematicians expressing their views on school mathematics.

## Curriculum Information

Benchmarks-based mathematics and science textbook evaluations by the **American Association for the Advancement of Science:**

<http://www.project2061.org/research/textbook/default.htm>

**The K-12 Mathematics Curriculum Center:**

<http://www2.edc.org/mcc/>

Provides detailed information about standards-based mathematics curricula.

Some perspectives on mathematics curriculum:

[www.mathematicallysane.com](http://www.mathematicallysane.com)

# WEB

## WEB LINKS TO EDUCATION ISSUES

**F**or further information on education issues, a comprehensive list is on the AFE web site at <http://www.advocatesforeducation.org/resources/resources.htm> These resources have proven useful in keeping abreast of education information. This list is for your information only. AFE is not necessarily aligned with any of these groups.

[http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/imt/wi\\_pk12.html](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/imt/wi_pk12.html) Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction e-mail discussion for the state's PK-12 education community (this is a list serve to which you can subscribe).

<http://www.edweek.com>  
Education Week online newspaper  
<http://www.fairtest.org>  
National Center for Fair and Open Testing

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/index.html>

Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau  
<http://www.dpi.state.us>  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

<http://wasb.org>  
Wisconsin Association of School Boards

<http://wasda.org>  
Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators

<http://www.weac.org>  
Wisconsin Education Association Council

<http://www.wfbschools.com>  
Whitefish Bay School District

Further information on the Governor's Task Force on Educational Excellence is available at <http://edexcellence.wisconsin.gov> These are the reports (final or discussion draft) of the various subcommittees. The recommendations regarding finance, which will be made by the committee of the whole, were not available as this newsletter was printed. This site also contains links to more sites around funding.

A very detailed analysis of TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights) and its potential impact in Wisconsin. [http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/publications/otherpublications/economics/2004/TABOR-solution\\_or\\_prescription.pdf](http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/publications/otherpublications/economics/2004/TABOR-solution_or_prescription.pdf)

Other sites that are good for keeping abreast of legislative actions that relate to education (as well as other areas) are

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/>  
<http://www.wispolitics.com/>

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel will also have articles of interest. Two recent articles on the Taxpayer Bill of Rights can be found at <http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/apr04/220129.asp> and <http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/apr04/219935.asp>

# JOIN TODAY

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
- 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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\$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Send this form today to:

**Susie Bond**  
5512 N. Kent Ave.  
WFB 53217