
ATTENTION

Polling Moved Out of Richards & Cumberland

Concern about student safety has led to the relocation of polling places in Whitefish Bay. Richards and Cumberland Elementary Schools had been required to suspend building security procedures on voting days. Parents asked the village to relocate polls so that standards are maintained each day children are in school. General Elections will be held on Tuesday, April 6. Residents in

wards 1, 2, 3 and 4, who previously voted at Richards, now will vote at the Whitefish Bay Library in the upstairs program room. Residents in wards 10, 11 and 12, who previously voted at Cumberland, will now vote at Cahill Square Park Building. Residents in wards 5 and 6 vote at the Village Hall. Residents in wards 7, 8 and 9 vote at Lydell Community Center.



Advocates for EDUCATION

Winter 2004

www.advocatesforeducation.org

WRITE

The Right Place at the Write Time

Writing is a fundamental aspect of everyday life. Adults write in a variety of settings – home, work, community activity – for numerous purposes – to inform, to persuade, to educate. Students are faced with the same challenges to write effectively for a variety of reasons. It is clear that developing strong writing skills is crucial to our students' success in school and in life.

Whitefish Bay Schools face the challenge of how best to teach students to become strong writers. Director of Instruction, Tony Frontier says "The District is always looking for ways to meet students' needs better. We need to be in a mode of continuous improvement." Out of that thinking came a new framework within the writing curriculum. This framework, called 6-Traits, gives students

and teachers a more meaningful way to discuss how to break down and assess each piece of the writing puzzle. Frontier and Whitefish Bay teachers from both elementary schools, the Middle School and the High School talked about the new framework for writing instruction at the community forum sponsored by Advocates for Education on November 6, 2003.

A "Shared Language"

The role of 6-Traits in the writing curriculum is to provide a shared language teachers and students utilize to enhance the learning process. This shared language includes:

1. Ideas: the heart of the message
2. Organization: the internal structure of the piece
3. Voice: the presence

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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

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Updates: SCHOOL FUNDING

How best to fund public education is one of the key issues before policy makers, school districts and taxpayers. After ten years of revenue caps, increased pressure to limit property tax increases and mounting costs, all eyes are currently focused on a committee of twenty-eight people appointed by Governor Jim Doyle to the Governor's Task Force on Educational Excellence.

Michael J. Spector, retired chairman and managing partner at Quarles & Brady law firm, chairs the Task Force. Spector served for many years on the Shorewood School Board and represented numerous school districts in southeastern Wisconsin.

The Task Force is charged by the governor with studying and making recommendations in several areas:

How much money should be available to educate each Wisconsin student, and what combination of state and local taxes should fund education.

How to enhance student achievement and ensure that every student has an equal educational opportunity.

How to attract, retain and compensate teachers.

How to fairly finance special education costs, especially "high cost, low incidence" needs.

Wisconsin's current investment in early education and whether these should be expanded.

The Task Force held public hearings in November and December. It is meeting as a committee of the whole on the school finance issues and is organized into subcommittees for the other study areas. The Task Force is expected to make recommendations to the governor in late spring. The governor may then choose to introduce legislation based on the recommendations.

At its January meeting, the Task Force will hear presentations on alternative school finance plans that have been proposed by legislators and various groups. A summary of these plans is at .

Since its founding, Advocates for Education has closely followed and participated in school funding issues. Last fall, AFE reconvened its school finance study group, with veteran and new members. The study group is meeting regularly to learn more about current finance issues, to follow the Task Force's work, and to advocate for public policy consistent with AFE's mission to promote high quality public education and its policy statements.

Advocates for Education's study group met in December with Task Force Chairman Mike Spector, for a "kitchen table" discussion of the issues. Study group members also are

analyzing the various funding proposals, and are attending as many meetings of the Task Force as possible.

At the December Task Force hearing in Milwaukee, AFE study group members Rachel Taknint and Meredith Scrivner both spoke passionately and eloquently in support of adequate funding and local control. See Scrivner's presentation included on page three.

Advocates for Education school finance study group members are Barbara Beckert, Connie Gavin, Cheryl Maranto, Jim Phillips, Jim Schacht, Meredith Scrivner, Rachel Taknint, Pam Woodard and Cindy Zautcke, with input from District Administrator Jim Rickabaugh. If you are interested in becoming more involved in school finance issues, contact Connie Gavin at ckgavin@execpc.com.

AFE on WUWM-FM

Click on to hear Advocates for Education President-Elect Cheryl Maranto's interview on WUWM's At Ten show with host Dave Edwards. Cheryl was interviewed about Advocates and also about school funding issues. On the same program, Dave interviewed Michael Spector, the Chairman of the Governor's Task Force on Educational Excellence.

"No more money" is almost assumed in discussions regarding public education finance, because of the widespread belief that taxpayers are unwilling (or unable) to bear any more expense. However, a recent survey by the Wisconsin Realtors Association found that "education represents one of the most positive quality of life indicators." Moreover, a majority of respondents say they would support programs that would increase their property taxes by \$100 a year for initiatives such as increasing teacher training, school safety and discipline, and computers and other equipment in schools. Strong majorities would support increases in property taxes to ensure smaller class sizes (66%) and for instruction in core curricula (79%). Survey results can be found at . Advocates for Education has not analyzed this survey nor does the organization take a position on its results.

A F E

**AFE Testifies
on Future of
School
Funding**

On December 11, 2003 the Governor's Task Force on Educational Excellence held a public hearing in Milwaukee. Meredie Scrivner gave the following testimony She is a founding member of Advocates For Education and has two children attending the High School.

My name is Meredith Scrivner. I am speaking on behalf of Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc. In talking with you today, I ask you to take a step into the hypothetical future. Imagine yourself a decade or more from now.

The year is 2015. The setting is the state of Wisconsin, whose state motto "Forward" somehow was derailed around the year 2005. That was about the time our state stopped taking the long view, stopped seeing education as the key to the state's well-being, and started putting politics way ahead of children.

Perhaps at the same time, we should have officially changed our motto to "Backward," because that is where we seem to have gone.

Somehow, back in 2005, somebody decided there was no new money, no different money, and no more money for public schools. Ten years of spending caps, along with increasing state mandates, federal demands and a faltering global economy had taken their toll. Schools had been squeezed to the breaking point.

Rural districts faced declining property values as farms became less workable and less saleable. Urban poverty and its myriad effects on children put the large cities in the position of having to be both family and educator for thousands of disadvantaged children. The declining birth rate took significant amounts of per-pupil money

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from schools, but the schools couldn't realize true savings because the declines were scattered throughout the grades in each district. Money became a huge issue for every school district in the state.

But somehow, back around 2005, politics won over kids. The campaign promise of "no new taxes" was thrown in the face of the governor by those who would try to defeat him in the next election. "No new taxes" became "no new money for schools." And, all of a sudden, "Forward" became "Backward."

Already challenged districts declared bankruptcy. High achieving districts were forced to cut programs and lost outstanding teachers to other states with higher teacher pay. Taxes went up anyway, but the damage had been done, and those who could afford it abandoned the public schools for private and parochial education. The poor became even less educated, and the rich just ran away.

Ironically, the people who wanted property tax relief got it, but not in the way they wanted it. They got it when their property became less valuable, because nobody wanted to live where the public schools were failing. We should have anticipated that the surest way to achieve property tax relief was to have valueless property. Why did it have to happen before we figured that out?

Somewhere between 2005 and now, Wisconsin no longer stood tall as the proud, progressive state which once had provided a high quality public education for every child who needed it. Wisconsin became a second California, where the public schools had went from best in the nation to almost last, and the economy teetered on the edge of insolvency. Like California, Wisconsin went "Backward," to

continued on page 7....

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- of the writer on the page
4. Word Choice: precision in the use of words
 5. Sentence Fluency: finely crafted construction
 6. Conventions: the fun stuff, including punctuation, spelling grammar, capitalization, paragraphing.

Quality Versus Quantity?

The 6-Traits framework is not a curriculum. The content, form and genre of what students write about make up the curriculum. The 6-Traits provide a means of defining, discussing and striving toward quality. The goal of writing instruction is to help students understand the characteristics of good writing and apply them to their own writing. The 6-Traits are a qualitative language tool that define characteristics inherent in good writing and avoid rewarding the quantitative elements alone, such as length of a paper, number of paragraphs and numbers of errors. "We don't want students leaving school with the idea that if they write 'the five paragraph' essay that they've done their job," says Frontier.

You Be The Judge

Assessment plays an important role in 6-Traits writing. The ultimate goal of assessment used as a learning tool is to make students the best judges of their own writing. This can only happen if students are part of a continuous feedback loop of teacher, peers and themselves. Here, the 6-Traits framework acts as a way of defining a goal, assessing the current state of the written work, and talking about how to move the mark closer to the objective. In the end, students must be able to "think for themselves in ink."

Helping students develop into good writers means developing good readers who are critical thinkers.

Breaking Down To Build Up

The writing process is broken down into manageable pieces in order to provide success points within the complex process of writing.

1. Pre-writing: choosing a subject, gathering information, and planning what to say.
2. Drafting: writing ideas and establishing the structure for the essay.
3. Revising: reading and reviewing first draft, sharing it with others, making changes to improve writing.
4. Editing and proofreading: making sure words and sentences make sense; checking spelling, punctuation, paragraphing; writing final neat copy.
5. Publishing: sharing, displaying and/or publishing writing.

A good example of practical use of

assessment and working at breaking down the writing process is English 1 at the High School. Students write up to five drafts of a personal narrative before they receive a grade on the paper. Emphasis is placed on using the 6-Traits as a means of feedback and assessment. As a result, the writing process becomes a more effective learning tool because quality feedback, not the grade, helps students improve.

The Reading-Writing Connection

The 6-Traits are actively being implemented in kindergarten through grade five in the Reading Language Arts Program, comprised of reading, grammar, spelling, and writing. Pat Dillon, Whitefish Bay District Reading Coordinator, explains that in order for students to recognize and understand good writing they need to see writing samples and lots of them. Helping students develop into good writers means developing good readers who are critical thinkers. Ultimately learners need to understand that the reading and writing skills are intertwined. Students in kindergarten through grade five learn how to recognize and talk about "surface structure" in books they read - the letters, spelling, parts of speech. They also learn how to recognize and talk about "deep structure" or the meaning and type of literature they are reading. They can then use these tools when they begin to write.

Richards and Cumberland schools are "collecting" time from throughout the day so that students have longer periods of time with fewer distractions and interruptions and more valuable reading and writing experiences together. And at the Middle School, sixth and seventh grade language arts instruction is integrated into the literature curriculum through a shared two-period block of time providing opportunities for coordinated instruction between lit-

erature and language classes. In eighth grade, language arts is similarly integrated with the social studies curriculum.

Cross Curriculum Strategies

The 6-Traits framework is the fundamental method used to track quality writing. While the majority of writing instruction occurs within the Language Arts or English curriculum, teachers use this writing strategy across the curriculum to help students further their understanding of key content, express their current level of understanding, and develop critical writing skills for a variety of purposes. For example, at the elementary level in science, students keep a notebook to write observations, thoughts, questions or conclusions. At the Middle School, students use the computer to write a news story and create a layout using a graphics program. At the High School, students serve as attorneys and judges writing briefs and opinions before a mock Supreme Court.

Student and Teachers on the Same Page

The Whitefish Bay School Districts' commitment to providing new and improved opportunities for our students is alive and well. The value of this new framework is that it offers students more opportunities to develop strong writing skills. Students and teachers can use 6-Traits to break down and pull apart the writing process into manageable pieces, use a common language to track writing quality, assess areas that need improving and offer consistent feedback from teachers and peers. Advocates for Education hopes that if parents understand the new approach, we will be more effective participants in the process of teaching our children to be strong writers.

PROFESSOR & MOTHER OF FOUR

Has Unique Perspective on Teaching Writing

Judy Bentley shared a unique perspective as one of six panelists who spoke at the November 6, 2003 AFE Forum "Teaching Our Kids To Be Strong Writers." Judy, who has four children who have gone through Whitefish Bay Public Schools, previously taught high school English and writing and currently teaches in the English Department at Cardinal Stritch University. She is also a long-time member of Advocates for Education and contributor to this newsletter.

Judy cited four factors, in order of decreasing importance, which are important as students develop strong writing skills. The factors are discussed in detail in *The Writer's Way* by Jack Rawlins.

The most crucial aspect of learning to write is exposure. "Reading in and out of school is important so that a child recognizes sophisticat-

ed ways of organizing thoughts."

Second, students need motivation. "Grading is not usually a motivator. Writing for a purpose can be much more effective."

Third, students need practice. "They need time to write all wrong, then rethink and revise." Developing critical thinking takes time.

Fourth, students need feedback. "Feedback is only valuable before the paper is graded, when students can learn by revising."

Finally, Judy added that parents should trust this process of learning to write. All the systems are in place here in Whitefish Bay to help our students develop into strong, effective writers. She says that although it can be difficult, "as a parent, wait to be asked to help. Each student has his or her timetable when learning to write."

Middle School Enrollment

BULGING

Enrollment at Whitefish Bay Middle School is running significantly higher than projected when the school was remodeled nine years ago. Administrators say it's too soon to tell whether this is a temporary problem or the start of a long-term trend.

There are 691 students enrolled at the school this year, 596 Whitefish Bay residents and 95 students attending through Chapter 220 and Open Enrollment. When the former Henry Clay Elementary school was converted into a middle school it was built for 600 students, 200 students per grade.

This year, overcrowding is especially significant in sixth grade. With 240 students enrolled, class sizes are large. A full-time teaching assistant helps as needed in science labs or Language/Literature classes when teachers want to reduce students into smaller groups.

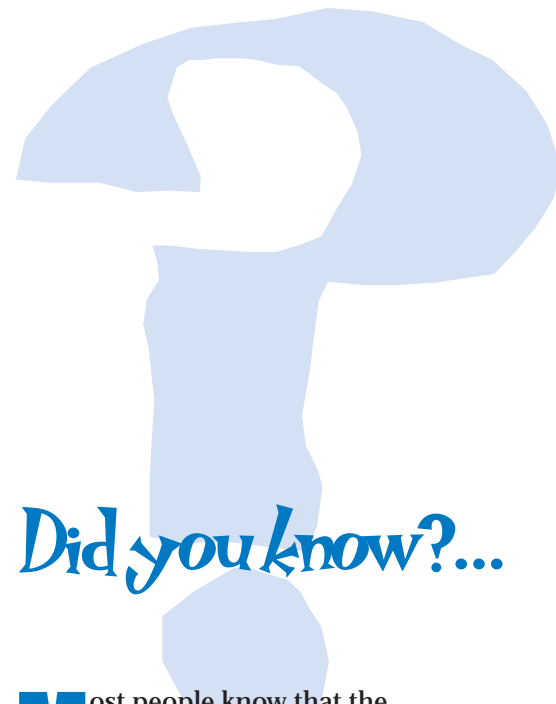
Principal Barbara Sonnenberg says sixth graders have adjusted well to

their large numbers. "This particular group of sixth graders really support one another, embrace one another," she says.

The class's ability to get along well is helpful in the cafeteria that was designed for fewer students "Often the kids love it, being crammed together," says Sonnenberg. "But it could be more difficult when they are eighth graders and they're bigger."

Administrators expect middle school enrollment to be tight again next year. There are currently no plans to expand the building to accommodate enrollment. "There are ways to expand, but it would be very difficult", says Sonnenberg.

District enrollment shows a dip at first and second grades. Administrators are closely watching the number of new families moving into the district to determine what impact new residents may have on future enrollment at the middle school.



Did you know?...

Most people know that the Whitefish Bay High School sports teams are referred to as the "Blue Dukes," but not very many people know why, or even what a Blue Duke is. In 1987, an oral history was recorded by Bay alum Larry Roth, claiming that he created the name in 1939 while serving as editor of the High School newspaper, the Tower Times. According to Roth, the Bay teams had no formal nickname, and were commonly referred to as "the scrappy Bays," usually in a losing context.

Roth "came across a story about Duke University's Blue Devils." Inspired by the across-the-board success the Devils were enjoying in those days, Roth, not wanting to copy them exactly, chose "Blue Dukes." He referred to the football team as the Blue Dukes in the Tower Times the next year, and asked the Milwaukee Journal and the Milwaukee Sentinel newspapers to follow his lead.

No one ever came up with a better nickname, so the Blue Dukes it remains. The Blue Dukes have been represented over the years as a mustachioed man in a blue suit, a kangaroo wearing boxing gloves and a dancing hat (which was destroyed several years ago by pranksters in a hatnapping incident that remains an unsolved mystery.)

VOLUNTEER

Volunteer Needed for Website Work

AFE is seeking a volunteer to assist with maintenance of the AFE web site, www.advocatesforeducation.org. Responsibilities include ongoing site maintenance and preparing monthly updates. All web site content will be supplied by AFE board members and will include the AFE newsletter, program announcements, and advocacy updates. We are in need of a volunteer who is able to convert our computer files into HTML format using the standard page layout and standards from the AFE web site and upload the files to the site. The estimated time commitment is 1 - 2 hours per month.

If you care about quality public education and are experienced with web site maintenance, please consider sharing your technical skills with AFE. We have a great group of volunteers on our board and we would love to have you join us! For more information, please contact Barbara Beckert at 964-1034.

New High School Course Recommendations

The Whitefish Bay School District is recommending that the School Board approve four new elective courses for the High School for the 2004-2005 school year: Accelerated Pre-Calculus and Introduction to Calculus, AP Calculus BC, AP Statistics, Intensive Art. New high school courses are brought to the board each fall. Once approved by the board, staffing and curriculum writing are considered based solely

on enrollment for the course.

Tony Frontier, Director of Instruction, said the school district recommends new elective courses after examining changes in course interest among students; identifying gaps in what should be taught and shifts in college expectations. "It's all about meeting the needs of our students. The landscape of students' expectations and needs is always changing."

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be sure. Today, in 2015, it seems Wisconsin may never go "Forward" again.

Luckily, we can now return to the real world of 2003. Fortunately, the gloomy scenario I just described has not yet played out in Wisconsin. Today is, in fact, just the end of 2003, not 2005, and not 2015. Although we stand today on the edge of disaster in terms of school funding, the good news is that we are just on the edge. There still is time to stand up for the children and the future of our state.

If we want our state to live up to its motto "Forward" any time in this century, we must take the steps now to make that happen. We must assure, now and in the future, that the decisions made by the legislature regarding school funding are made for kids, and not for politics.

A high quality public education for every Wisconsin child who needs it is the best investment our state will ever make. Our current dip in state revenues will only worsen, year after year, if we do not educate youth so they can work at productive jobs. If jobs are the key to tax revenue, surely people can see that education is the key to a productive workforce. Cutting school fund-

ing and programs in higher spending districts, taking from one district and giving to another, and fighting among ourselves as to who has, needs, deserves or wants more are all completely counter-productive for our state.

Instead, let's figure out how to fund public education for every child. Sure, the wealthy may have to pay a bit more and the poor may get more help than others. We may have to add sales tax revenues to the school funding pot. We may have to ease the state's mandates, some of which could use revision anyway. We may have to close such loopholes as providing 2/3 funding for glitzy building projects. And we will have to find a way to educate, attract and retain the very best teachers possible without incurring truly backbreaking health insurance costs.

But, one way or another, we must go "Forward." Let us recognize that continued cuts will harm our children, our property values and our state as a whole. Let us recognize that all children are equally valuable, and that it is our responsibility to give each and every one of them an education that will carry them "Forward" for a lifetime.

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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