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School District of Whitefish Bay NEWSLETTER

November 29, 2011



Dear Community Members,

I am pleased to welcome you to the first issue of the School District of Whitefish Bay's e-newsletter. This newsletter was created to provide parents and other community members with news, updates, and information on district efforts and events.



This is a new endeavor for our school district, so we welcome your [feedback](#) and urge you to invite others to subscribe. Sign-up is easy: just go to the district home page at www.WFBschools.com and enter your email address. You may unsubscribe at any time. The next issue of the WFB e-newsletter will be in April of 2012.

Our first issue features news and articles on some important events that are happening in the school district, which build on the tradition of excellence at Whitefish Bay schools. As a community, we have much to be proud of, from the district's newly enhanced facilities to our high school's most recent ACT composite score, which was the best in the school's history and the highest of all public schools in the state of Wisconsin. Simply put, we have great news to share and are excited about the future of the Whitefish Bay Schools!

While we have much to celebrate, we also remain focused on continually raising the achievement levels of all of our students while being fiscally responsible. These are the themes that will be included in future issues of this e-newsletter.

The success of any public school district is a reflection of its community. I would like to thank you for your ongoing support of our schools and students, for your trust in our school district, and for your commitment to young people across Whitefish Bay.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary J. Gavigan, District Administrator
mary.gavigan@wfbschools.com

Whitefish Bay District Visioning and Planning Initiative

The School District of Whitefish Bay enjoys a long, rich tradition of excellence in meeting the needs of its young people and achieving outstanding successes. Last school year, a district visioning and planning initiative began, which was designed to update and refresh the district's current strategic plan or focus plan, taking into account the

Did you know?

On the average, 94% of Whitefish Bay High School graduates go on to post-secondary education.

Whitefish Bay Schools have an excellent student attendance rate of 96.8% which is among the highest

assets, challenges, and culture of Whitefish Bay's students and educational community.

Historically, the development of a plan to establish goals and priorities, guide the allocation of resources, and establish benchmarks for improvement efforts has been an important priority for the district. The district's current focus plan was developed in 2001, and as regional, state, national, and global competition increases, we are committed to expanding and enhancing the educational experiences the district provides to students.

Beginning last March, 30 individuals began investing in the success of the School District of Whitefish Bay by participating in a visioning and long-range planning process. The visioning and planning team consisted of school district administrators, teachers, board members, parents, students, and community organization representatives. The visioning team was convened at Cardinal Stritch University for four days and engaged in a process that was facilitated by two Cardinal Stritch professors who also live in Whitefish Bay. A visioning and planning report with more details can be found on the district's website at http://www.wfbschools.com/cms_files/resources/Final%20-%20Visioning%20and%20Planning%20Report1.pdf.

The goals of the visioning and planning team are to be proactive in educational direction and decisions, and to create a plan for the best possible future for Whitefish Bay students. The district's current focus plan ensures that every student:

1. Develops effective strategies for continuous learning
2. Is presented with multiple options and opportunities for success
3. Experiences a supportive learning environment
4. Is prepared for the future

The visioning and planning initiative began by focusing on Whitefish Bay's rich history and looking boldly into the future. A combination of large and small group discussions, with presentations from district employees, gave participants insight as they created an analysis of the district's opportunities for ongoing improvement. More than 140 staff members and residents also participated in focus groups conducted in April and May, providing additional input for the process. More staff feedback occurred this fall as the draft of the plan continued to be refined and strengthened.

The district's visioning team will be reconvened in December at Cardinal Stritch to celebrate the updated and refreshed focus plan, which will then be forwarded to the Board of Education in the coming months. Moving forward, implementation plans will be put into place and the district will continue to aspire to help students fulfill their potential and enter the new global workforce ready to pursue their dreams and become major contributing members of communities around the world.

Community members can be assured that the School District of Whitefish Bay is working each day on behalf of all our students and positioning our young people for even greater success in the future.

96.6% which is among the highest rate of attendance among North Shore schools of comparable size

The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators and the Department of Public Instruction recognized Whitefish Bay Middle School as a 2011 Exemplary Middle School.

Over 80% of Whitefish Bay Middle School and High School students participate in academic, athletic and arts-related co-curricular activities each year.

Whitefish Bay School District has an excellent Energy Conservation Program reducing energy usage of 20% in the past 8 years and saving more than \$1.65 million dollars.

Recent WFB School District Points of Pride

This past summer, Money Magazine identified Whitefish Bay as number 65 out of the top 100 communities to live in within the United States, and the quality of the schools was noted as a significant factor. Recent school district points of pride include:

ACT Academic Achievement: Whitefish Bay High School's 2011 ACT composite score of 26.6 was the highest in school history and the highest of all public schools in the state of Wisconsin last year. The most important aspect of the ACT results, however, is that they were achieved with 88.4% of last year's graduating seniors participating in the ACT College Readiness exam. Whitefish Bay High School is the only public high school whose ACT composite has exceeded 25.0 consistently over more than the past ten years. With almost nine out of ten graduating seniors participating in the exam, this is truly excellent academic achievement that has resulted from quality teaching, a rigorous K-12 curriculum, and consistently excellent parental support.

Financial Responsibility: The School District of Whitefish Bay is a good steward of taxpayers' money. The recent school building construction project was approved by voters for \$22.6 million in the 2009 referendum. The project has now been completed ahead of schedule and under budget through careful management of the project and a favorable bidding environment. The entire building project came in approximately \$2.6 million under budget.

These enhanced facilities opened this fall, providing modern instructional and performance spaces and improved infrastructure for our facilities. A few of the resulting improvements include state-of-the-art high school science classrooms, a Project Lead the Way engineering classroom, a new high school music wing with rehearsal spaces, new multi-purpose rooms at both Cumberland and Richards Elementary schools, secure entrances, upgraded fire alarm systems, and electrical system upgrades designed to address facility needs for the next 15 years.

These updates will be a community asset for years to come and truly make up a great success story, speaking to the power of a community working together and continuing a long tradition of excellence in Whitefish Bay schools for the benefit of students.

Whitefish Bay High School Recognized for Excellence in STEM Education

*Project Lead the Way Ignites
Imagination and Innovation through
Learning*

Project Lead the Way (PLTW) of Wisconsin has recognized Whitefish Bay High School for excellence in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. The high school began offering Project Lead the Way courses in the 2008-2009 school year,

recognizing the important role of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics-related fields in our complex global economy.

Leaders across Wisconsin and the United States have recognized the need for increasing the number of graduates entering the workforce in these important fields. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce released a new report in April of 2011, calling for the creation of "a system that encourages excellence in STEM." PLTW schools are ahead of the curve, providing rigorous STEM curricula that will help school leaders exceed the demands of the new Common Core Standards in both science and math. A Harvard Graduate School of Education Pathways to Prosperity study also recently highlighted PLTW as a model for integrating career and technical education into core academic content areas.

Through project-based learning, PLTW students put their knowledge to the test by solving real-world engineering problems using technology. According to a national report, PLTW students continue to outperform their peers in school, and they go on to pursue careers in STEM fields at significantly higher rates than their non-PLTW peers. Approximately 60-65 WFB high school students participate in PLTW courses each school year. Last year, 60% of the 20 graduating senior class students chose an engineering major.

Most recently, the newly renovated high school facility enhancements resulting from the 2009 referendum created a specific PLTW classroom that readily supports students' engaged, hands-on learning and labs based in real-world experiences. Whitefish Bay High School has made a significant investment in time, resources, and staff for STEM, and has been recognized by Wisconsin PLTW for leadership in workforce development, student achievement, teacher leadership, college readiness, and community partnerships. It is another great example that Whitefish Bay School District is preparing students for the future!

On the Horizon: Engaging Students with Technology

"Today, we live in a technology and media-driven environment, marked by access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools, and the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale. Effective citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills." (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009).

How do educators prepare today's students for their future world? One of the many methods to enhance learning and prepare students for the future is through the use of technology in our classrooms. In fact, a synthesis of 25 meta-analyses of 1,200 primary studies indicated that an average student will perform 12 percentile points higher when technology is used to support teachers' instruction compared to when a traditional classroom with no technology is used (Review of Educational Research, 2011). However, it is easy to predict that throwing devices into a classroom without deliberate purpose, planning, and training will likely result in using technology for technology's sake, rather than actually improving learning.

According to the National School Boards Association, the features of technology that truly promote engaged learning and effective instruction include:

- **Access & Resource Location:** Connectivity to devices and the Internet, and equitable use by students.
- **Operability and Ease of Use:** User-friendliness, speed of operations, effective help, training and support.
- **Capacity for Engagement:** Information is just in time and just enough, authentic and challenging tasks, adaptable learning opportunities customized for interests, abilities, and learning preferences.
- **Functionality:** Prepare learners for a diversity of technological functions used in the homes and workplaces of the 21st Century, for authoring and programming and for project design/implementation.

How does the School District of Whitefish Bay currently use technology to improve students' engagement and learning? Teachers at all schools within all subject areas use various technologies to enhance learning. They receive training, both mandatory and voluntary, depending on numerous topics, programs, and devices. Then, during the unit and lesson planning processes, teachers determine when the integration of technology will be advantageous to students' learning and/or to their own instruction. Just a few examples include:

- **Lower Elementary Levels:** Waterford Early Learning software provides struggling readers with individualized, multi-modal reading instruction and assessments.
- **Upper Elementary Levels:** Interactive SMART Board math lessons allow students to produce and manipulate graphs or geographic figures.
- **Middle School:** Students use digital and document cameras and individual netbooks to research, produce, and present human ecology projects.
- **Middle School:** Students develop video and audio projects in a digital production studio equipped with a video mixer, camcorders, and specialized software programs.
- **High School:** Kindle e-readers are checked out from the library media center, including features to make reading more accessible and engaging like adjustable text, highlighting, reading aloud, and embedded dictionary.
- **High School:** Students in various classes have 24/7 access to lesson materials, assignments, visual aids, quizzes, and more through the district's Moodle server, an e-learning course management system.

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School District of Whitefish Bay
1200 E. Fairmount Avenue
Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin 53217
US

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