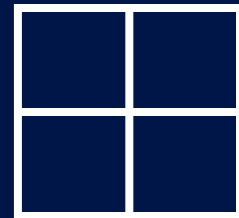


THE WHITNALL WINDOW

WINTER 2020



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THE SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

In the last issue of the Whitnall Window, I wrote about our strategic planning--how we were engaging in continuous improvement at a macro, district level. But continuous improvement doesn't occur only at that level; it also occurs on a micro level, as it has in our response to the pandemic. We have practiced the principles of continuous improvement throughout the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year, reviewing and revising our procedures to keep the Whitnall community safe and to keep our students learning. We will carry what we've learned into second semester, and some of what we've learned will endure far beyond this school year and this pandemic.



One process that was improved throughout first semester was our contact tracing. Through experience, we learned how to enhance the communication and collaboration with our local health departments, and we were able to better utilize mitigation efforts such as seating charts and student cohorts. We learned how to streamline symptom and case reporting by creating special email accounts for direct reporting from families and staff, which cut down on our notification times. We also improved our process for homebound instruction (continuation of learning for individual students quarantined or isolated). We sped up communication to parents, we were able to eliminate a "pause day" before instruction began, and we expanded our capacity for synchronous learning. Some operational processes were improved as well. We upgraded our technology support system, hired new technology and custodial staff, and adjusted our custodial staff's hours so we were adhering to best practices for disinfecting.

Some of what we've implemented will become more permanent. For example, with the ever-increasing advantages of technology, we don't foresee scaling back on providing almost all students with their own device (grades 2-12). Stakeholders have really appreciated us giving virtual access to things such as meetings, athletic events, and parent-teacher conferences. For the added convenience, we anticipate continuing to offer virtual options. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we have learned things about learning itself that we will carry with us. We have now seen first-hand how providing options aids in personalizing learning. One student may benefit from face-to face demonstration, while another may benefit from a virtual lecture. One student may benefit from group work, while another may benefit from working at their own pace. Our educators have had to explore creative delivery options and new ways of assessing learning. Although it has been challenging, we can say that we will emerge from this unusual school year with insight and adaptability we may have never accessed otherwise.

Lisa L. Olson

Dr. Lisa L. Olson, Superintendent

#whitnALLIN

BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS | SEMESTER 1, 2020-2021

PANDEMIC RELATED ACTIONS

- Provided flexible learning options for all families for 2020-21 school year by approving a dual learning model to allow for both in-person and distance learning
 - Requested and reviewed parent surveys
 - Expanded homebound instruction to include students in quarantine or isolation
- Allocated money from reserves for technology, curriculum, and staff to support a dual learning model for fall semester 2020-21. Approximately \$381,000 or 3.7% of fund balance (reserves)
 - Approved the hiring of additional distance learning teachers at the elementary level
 - Approved the hiring of additional distance learning teachers at the high school level
 - Approved the purchase of online learning courseware at the high school level
 - Approved the purchase of additional technology devices so that all students K-12 have a device
- Provided additional resources for staffing and wages for increased services and needs during the pandemic
 - Approved increase to district nurse position
 - Approved additional positions for custodial staff
 - Approved additional monetary recognition for employees
 - Approved telework policy to allow employees to work through quarantine or isolation

GENERAL ACTIONS

- Approved new position to support continuous improvement and the strategic plan - Director of Advancement and Analytics
- Participated in consultant-led work sessions focused on continuous improvement, strategic planning, and board monitoring
- Approved the 2020-21 budget, using strategies to stabilize the tax levy while decreasing the mill rate (see article on next page)

BOARD ACTIVITIES

NEW CAFETERIA RIBBON CUTTING

At the beginning of the school year, board members participated in the official ribbon cutting for Whitnall High School's new cafeteria, courtyard, and common area. The board members stuck around for the open house that followed to connect with parents, students, and community members.



MERRY & BRIGHT

On December 18, Greenfield Fire-Rescue hosted their annual Merry & Bright event. Each year, we are so grateful that the department includes Whitnall students in this very special evening. Students received a gift that was picked just for them, and each family went home with a Meijer gift card and a full meal (complete with candy canes). Students got to see Santa, Flash, and the most magical of all characters--a Whitnall school board member. Kevin Stachowiak helped hand out gifts and wished the students and their families a merry and bright holiday.



WASB STATE EDUCATION CONVENTION

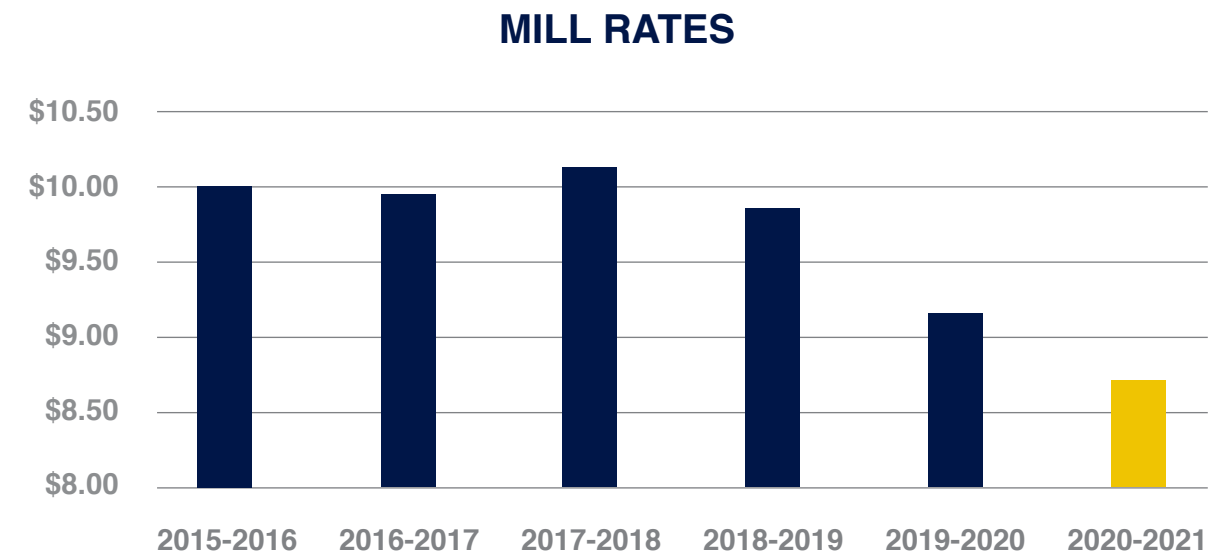
Members of the board recently attended the state education convention held by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. This year, the convention was held virtually. To the right is a photo of board members at *last* year's convention.



On October 23, 2020, the Whitnall Board of Education approved the tax levy for the 2020-2021 school year. The tax levy is \$94,094 less than in 2019-2020. This is roughly a 0.5% decrease in the overall levy.

MILL RATE

The mill rate decreased from \$9.12 to \$8.71--a decrease of 4.5%. Mill rate refers to, on average across the district, how many dollars a tax payer will pay in the school portion of their tax bill for every \$1,000 of property value. The school portion of one's tax bill can fluctuate from the average based on a number of factors including municipality property values. Specifically, this year, Greenfield residents will see an increase while Hales Corners and Franklin will see a decrease; this is based on an increase in Greenfield property valuation resulting in a greater share of the taxes. Whitnall succeeded in decreasing taxes overall, but we do not control how the taxes get allocated. The school district is able to report the average mill rate based on equalized values across the district as reported by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.



BOARD STRATEGIES

The board has utilized the following strategies to keep the tax levy stable and to continue to decrease the mill rate:

- Utilizing tax advantaged funds when taking on large capital improvement funds, such as Fund 41: Capital Expansion Fund and setting aside funds in Fund 46: Long Term Capital Improvement Fund
- Creating debt reserves in order to minimize fluctuations in the tax levy from year to year
- Replacing expiring non-referendum debt with debt from the State Trust Fund Loan in order to handle large operational projects with minimal impact to general operations. This spreads the cost out over time and minimizes tax levy fluctuations
 - The State Trust Fund Loan allows schools to borrow money at low interest rates, and any interest earnings go back to fund Wisconsin school library materials, including Whitnall School District's
 - The loan will allow Whitnall to replace nearly \$800,000 worth of roofing at the high school and Edgerton and all but eliminate any remaining roofing from 1967.

With unknown challenges ahead, the Whitnall School Board has created flexibility in order to maintain tax levy stability with the looming 2021-2023 State of Wisconsin Biennium Budget.

Earlier in the school year, Whitnall had students qualify for and compete in the state competitions for both tennis and swim & dive.

TENNIS

Whitnall High School seniors Autumn Bruno and Jenna Dundas both made it to state for tennis. Both girls competed fiercely, and Autumn Bruno ended up taking second place in the state competition. Congratulations, Autumn and Jenna!



SWIM & DIVE

Eight of our Swim & Dive girls qualified for state this school year, and the team ended up taking fourth place! Senior Bella Smith became the state champion in diving, and junior Kamyla Held took second! All team members contributed to the team's success with senior Alyssa Radant finishing seventh in diving, junior Rachel Lenz finishing third in both the 100 Backstroke and 200 Individual Medley, junior Grace Radke finishing fourth in the 100 Butterfly and eleventh in the 200 Freestyle, senior Eva Beier finishing ninth in the 100 Butterfly, and junior DeLaney McElvain finishing sixth in the 100 Breaststroke and fourteenth in the 200 Individual Medley. The team's 400 Free Relay finished fifth and the 200 Free Relay finished eleventh. Great job, girls!



BELLA SMITH

As if winning first place at state wasn't enough, Whitnall High School diver Bella Smith is also making a splash on social media. In the spring of 2020, Bella posted a compilation of her diving fails to the social media platform TikTok, and the video catapulted to over three million views. Today, she has over two hundred thousand TikTok followers and many diving videos with millions of views--one recent video has nearly ten million! Her account has become so popular that Olympians have taken notice. Olympic diver Steele Johnson and a few other Olympians have reached out to Bella about her videos. Fox6 did a story on Bella back in November. We encourage you to look it up!



We wanted to give the community a sense of how this school year is going directly from the student perspective, so we asked students at all levels and from both learning options (in-person and distance) to share their thoughts on this very unique school year. Below are their responses.

DISTANCE LEARNING

"As a distance learner, I have had to learn how to adapt to learning online, full-time. While it is different from attending school in person, I really enjoy being able to create my own schedule and work at my own pace in all of my courses. I am very grateful to have the opportunity to learn virtually this year, to protect myself, my family, teachers, and friends."

LINDSEY, 12TH GRADE

"Distance learning has definitely been a moment for us students to remember. This has been a way to learn while keeping us safe from Covid-19. It will be an experience that will always be with us."

JESUS, 8TH GRADE

My teacher is kind and thoughtful, and she makes distance learning fun. I enjoy distance learning, and I think that even though we don't see each other in person, my classmates and I are still close."

FINN, 4TH GRADE, HCE

"Distance learning is a lot different than going into school. You have to use a lot of online strategies but once you get used to it, it's not too bad. It also gives you a lot of time to be independent. It gives me more time to focus on my own."

EMMA, 4TH GRADE, EES

IN-PERSON LEARNING

"I think Whitnall opening their doors for in-person learning was an awesome opportunity for their students. In-person learning not only gives us some 'normalness,' but it has also given students and teachers new opportunities to get creative. This year, I was able to develop and contribute to extracurriculars such as SkillsUSA, DECA, and LEO Club. My extracurricular involvement has given me leadership experience that I would have never gotten if I was learning remotely."

SAMANTHA, 11TH GRADE

"I am happy that I get to learn in person and get to participate in the robotics club. I don't mind having to wear a mask if it means I get to hang out with my friends at lunch and work in groups in class."

KARA, 7TH GRADE

"In-person learning is actually very nice. I like being actually in school! I can eat school lunch (even if I don't like it), see my friends, and I like actually being able to raise my hand and talk when I want to and when I'm supposed to instead of being muted all the time."

ALI, 3RD GRADE, HCE

"I really like how we can see all of our friends and get taught in person instead of looking at a computer screen all day. I've realized that it's easier for me to learn when I'm in person instead of virtual. I like that my teachers are there to answer my questions and help me with my work."

NOLAN, 4TH GRADE, EES

6 | EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

One of our strategic objectives for our continuous improvement work is unifying culture. Until we begin measuring the culture within our district, we won't be able to track our progress. Therefore, we conducted the first of our employee satisfaction surveys at the end of November and into early December. The survey featured six categories: Personal Factors, Belonging (Work Environment), District, Advancement Opportunities, Administrative Team, and Compensation. The survey was created with a third-party consultant, who analyzed the results and provided us with the following data.

89.94%
RESPONSE RATE

=

313 RESPONDENTS



3.48 AVERAGE SATISFACTION RATING



HIGHEST RATED SATISFACTION STATEMENTS (PERSONAL FACTORS CATEGORY)

4.47 I FEEL THAT MY WORK HAS PURPOSE

4.09 I FEEL GOOD ABOUT WORKING IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

3.98 I FEEL PERSONALLY CONNECTED TO THE PEOPLE I WORK WITH

3.86 MOST DAYS, I FEEL I HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN MY WORK

GREATEST SATISFACTION OPPORTUNITY (PERSONAL FACTORS CATEGORY)

I FEEL THAT I HAVE A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE **2.93**

NEXT STEPS

A full report of the survey results will be shared with all employees and made available to the public. Whitnall will add a non-educator Building Leadership Committee. There is an existing Building Leadership Committee made up of educators. Both committees will meet to review the survey results, develop goals, and create action plans. Goals, actions, and timelines will be added to the strategic plan.



ADVANCEMENT BELONGING COURAGE ADVANCEMENT BELONGING COURAGE



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WSD BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Jonathan Cagle** President, Hales Corners, Since 2014
- Quin Brunette** Vice-President, Greenfield, Since 2012
- Kevin Stachowiak** Clerk, Hales Corners, Since 2015
- Steven Butz** Treasurer, Greenfield, Since 2018
- Karen Mikolainis** Member, Hales Corners, Since 2019
- Jesse Stachowiak** Member, Greenfield, Since 2020
- Nancy Zaborowski** Member, Greenfield, Since 2008



LIVE STREAMING

School board meetings are now being live streamed so community members can attend virtually! We are also live streaming all home athletic events! You can access the live streams by going to our YouTube channel.

Newsletter feedback?
Send to
lvasquez@whitnall.com

Follow us on social media!



@whitnallschools for all three!