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Issue 07-02



Advocating on Behalf of Children

**Special
Interest
Articles:**

- Parent Guide to School Funding
- Message from Project ABC President
- Information on your elected officials

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Prepare Today's Children for Tomorrow's Challenges

School Funding Crisis Hits Waukesha

The School District of Waukesha voted on \$3.4 million in program cuts for the 2007-2008 school year. The final list of cuts, listed on page 4, was determined at the district school board meeting on March 14th, 2007.

Cutting valuable programs is not a new phenomenon. We started cutting programs in 1993. Waukesha cut \$1.9 million for 2005-2006 and then another \$3 million for the current school year 2006-2007. Each year the district suffers a deficit caused by two state laws, one that caps revenue and another that sets minimum increases for teacher's pay and benefits. There is a gap of about 1.7% between revenue increases and the higher cost increases. Program cuts are made to balance the budget at this revenue limit.

To meet the budgeted \$3.4 million in cuts, administrators recommended **increasing class sizes, cutting elementary guidance counselors, gifted and talented staff, school librarians, 4th and 5th grade orchestra and band classes, technology resource teachers, and special education staff.** The class sizes

for middle school and high school will increase from 27 students per teacher to 29 students per teacher; in first through sixth grades, class sizes would increase from an average of 26.5 students per teacher to 28 students per teacher.

State laws for school funding, since 1993, have forced many districts throughout the state to cut valuable programs. Some districts have voted to dissolve, some have come close to claiming bankruptcy, and others have passed referendums to provide short-term relief. There are some districts, however, that are not yet in as much trouble because the funding formula treats them more favorably.

As long as the state laws and funding model remain unchanged, Waukesha will continue to cut \$3 million or more (about 60-70 full time teachers) every year. This is an unsustainable situation in Waukesha and in the state of Wisconsin. Project ABC is a group of citizens, dedicated to finding and advocating for a solution that focuses on student achievement and fiscal stability.

March 12, 2007 * Education Forum on School Funding

A Very Special Thanks to our Legislators for participating in the Education Forum at North High School on March 12. **Senators Mary Lazich and Ted Kanavas and Representatives Mark Gundrum, Bill Kramer, and Rich Zipperer**

From the Hosting Organizations: Banting PTO, Bethesda PTO, Central Middle School Music Supporters, Hadfield PTO, Heyer PTA, Hillcrest PTA, Lowell PTO, Meadowbrook PTA, Parents of Special Needs Children, Prairie PTA, Project ABC, Randall PTA, Rose Glen PTO, SOPHIA, Summit View PTO, Triwauk Uniserv Council-Retired, Waukesha North High School Booster Club, Inc., Waukesha PAGE (Parents Advocates for Gifted Education), Waukesha Parents of Pre-School Children, Waukesha South Band Boosters, Waukesha South Band Students, and West High School Parent Volunteers.

Parent Guide to School Funding

TAX RANKINGS BY TYPE

<u>Tax</u>	<u>State Rank</u>
Property Tax	8
Personal Income	9
Fees	28
Business Tax	32
Sales Tax	38

Tax Rankings by Type

“Even if we cut all the extra-curricular’s such as sports, chess club and other co-ed activities, that’s only \$1.6 million out of another \$3 million we need to cut next year again,” Warren said. “And guess what? They’re next.”

Dan Warren, Waukesha school board member, speaking to local legislators. Waukesha Freeman, 2/3/2007

How are Waukesha schools funded?

Schools are funded 50% from local property taxes, 43% from the state income and sales tax collection, 3% federal, and the last 4% from the tuition, user fees, and grants.

What costs are in the school budget?

Employee salary and benefits make up 82% of the budget. The other 18% covers utilities, books, technology, busing, office supplies, and debt payments towards referendum items.

What causes school costs to increase?

Costs increase due to annual staff compensation increases of 3.8% driven by state QEO law, increases in utility costs, increases in busing when the price of fuel goes up, health care costs for some support staff, and inflation on purchased items.

Why have we cut programs in recent years?

The current revenue limit law only allows school districts to increase revenue by about 2.3%. Inflation for schools has been running closer to 4%. That means each year the school district must cut 1.7% to balance the budget.

What programs and other items have been cut in Waukesha since Revenue Limits were imposed in 1992?

Summer school enrichment, middle school athletics, gifted and talented program (twice), middle school summer band camp, public relations officer, elementary extra-curricular activities, high school classes, technology (the 2001 technology referendum provided funds to update very old technology), on-going building maintenance (the 2001 building referendum was only for capital improvement projects), kindergarten aides, health room aides, site budgets, special education, administration. Class sizes have increased and will likely increase again. Fees have also increased for band, athletics, driver’s ed, etc. See the chart on the next page for more details.

How much do I pay for schools?

The school tax levy for 2006 was \$7.78 per \$1000 of the full market value of your home. That means school taxes on a \$150,000 home are \$1167. Schools were less than 50% of the property tax bill in 2006 for those living in the city. The rest of the property tax bill goes to the local city or town, the county, and WCTC. Prior to 1992 schools took about 80% of the property tax bill and the school tax levy was \$20.16 per \$1000 of full market value.

How do my taxes compare to other states?

In comparing spending by state and local government as a percentage of income, Wisconsin ranks 18th among the 50 states. (See Rankings Chart).

When will the school stop cutting programs?

Answer: When the state enacts a new funding formula. As long as state law dictates a 1.5- 2% cost increase over revenue increase, the district will continue to cut about \$3 million or more every year. This amount increases with declining enrollment – a real possibility as parents look for other options and remove their children from the District.

What about a referendum?

A referendum will not fix this problem, but it could provide short-term funding and stabilize the situation for 2-3 years, allowing time for a state-wide solution. However, it’s too late to hold a referendum to save this year’s cuts. Do not rule out a future referendum to protect our valuable K-12 schools in Waukesha until the funding formula changes at the state level.

Is there a long-term solution?

There are several proposals in Madison to change the funding formula. The Joint Finance Committee will likely hold hearings on proposals in the fall of 2007. As Project ABC monitors the situation, they will invite speakers to Waukesha to increase our understanding of all the options.

Closing the Gap

Recent Program Cuts and Added Revenue Enacted to Balance the Budget

	2000-01	2003-04	2004-05	2005-2006	2006-2007	Total
Student Services	\$987,000	\$428,000	\$0	\$817,000	\$270,000	\$2,502,000
Art, Phy Ed and Music schedule changes	\$100,000					\$100,000
At-risk, Special Ed	\$350,000	\$215,000		\$259,000		\$824,000
Bilingual home liason	\$32,000					\$32,000
Co-curriculars MS/HS	\$24,000	\$75,000		\$80,000		\$179,000
COOP Reduced				\$82,000		\$82,000
DARE elimination				\$20,000		\$20,000
Environmental Ed Reduced	\$30,000					\$30,000
Gifted and Talented					\$50,000	\$50,000
Guidance Counselors	\$65,000			\$141,000	\$150,000	\$356,000
High School Aides	\$36,000	\$38,000				\$74,000
Kindergarten aides					\$70,000	\$70,000
Middle School Staffing	\$350,000					\$350,000
Summer School		\$100,000				\$100,000
Technology & Libraries: Media aides, media specialists, technology resource teachers				\$235,000		\$235,000
Administration/Supervision/Health	\$250,000	\$231,000	\$0	\$505,000	\$50,000	\$1,036,000
Administration	\$250,000	\$141,000		\$165,000	\$50,000	\$606,000
Health- Nursing Reduced				\$35,000		\$35,000
Health Room clerical				\$150,000		\$150,000
HS Secretaries		\$90,000				\$90,000
HS Supervision/security				\$155,000		\$155,000
Buildings	\$400,000	\$316,000	\$0	\$350,000	\$10,000	\$1,076,000
Custodial & Mtnc	\$400,000	\$316,000		\$350,000	\$10,000	\$1,076,000
Class Size	\$49,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,150,000	\$2,199,000
Class Size Elementary 26:1					\$850,000	\$850,000
Class Size MS/HS 27:1					\$1,300,000	\$1,300,000
Kindergarten Cap	\$49,000					\$49,000
Purchased Services	\$190,000	\$160,000	\$0	\$25,000	\$100,000	\$475,000
Reduce busing	\$68,000	\$135,000			\$100,000	\$303,000
Reduce district extended contracts	\$122,000					\$122,000
Reduce testing		\$25,000		\$25,000		\$50,000
Purchased Items	\$257,000	\$70,000	\$400,000	\$200,000	\$250,000	\$1,177,000
Classroom equip/furniture		\$70,000				\$70,000
Technology					\$250,000	\$250,000
Textbooks				\$200,000		\$200,000
Central office and school budget reductions	\$257,000		\$400,000			\$657,000
Revenue Generated	\$868,000	\$300,000	\$0	\$0	\$170,000	\$1,338,000
One-time land sale money	\$340,000					\$340,000
Revenue Generators	\$528,000	\$300,000			\$170,000	\$998,000
Total Gap: Cuts & New Revenue	\$3,001,000	\$1,505,000	\$400,000	\$1,897,000	\$3,000,000	\$9,803,000
<i>Note: 2001 Referendum prevented cuts in 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years</i>						
<i>Note: Revenue Generated category includes new revenue sources used to fill the gap and prevent additional cuts</i>						



Governor of Wisconsin

Governor Jim Doyle

Room 560
819 North 6th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53203
(414) 227-4344

www.wisgov.state.wi.us

*"Meaningful
change always
begins at the
grassroots ...
engaged citizens
working together
can accomplish
extraordinary
things."*

Barack Obama

Your Elected Officials

The **Waukesha School Board** consists of nine members who serve 3-year terms. Three members are elected every year during non-partisan April elections.

School District Web Site – School Board
www.waukesha.k12.wi.us/board/

William Baumgart, President

612 Elk Lane
Waukesha, WI 53188
(262) 547-2854
Term Expires: 2007

Barbara Brzenk

1903B Springbrook North
Waukesha, WI 53186
(262) 896-0956
Term Expires: 2008

Joseph Como, Jr., Vice President

331 S. Greenfield Avenue
Waukesha, WI 53186
(262) 524-8639
Term Expires: 2008

Frank Finman, Treasurer

418 Lemira Avenue, #1
Waukesha, WI 53188
(262) 524-0615
Term Expires: 2007

Ellen Langill

227 N. Charles Street
Waukesha, WI 53186
(262) 542-1270
Term Expires: 2007

Patricia Madden, Clerk

317 Cheviot Chase, #2
Waukesha, WI 53186
(262) 896-1744
Term Expires: 2009

Patrick McCaffery

1010 Belmont Drive
Waukesha, WI 53186
(262) 524-8254
Term Expires: 2009

Kurt O'Bryan

W251 S4439 Oakview Drive
Waukesha, WI 53189
(262) 549-6439
Term Expires: 2008

Daniel Warren

1259 Lambeth Road
Waukesha, WI 53189
(262) 547-2868
Term Expires: 2009

State Legislators

There are 99 members of the State Assembly, elected every two years in November. There are 33 members of the state Senate, elected every four years in November. There are three Assembly districts in each Senate district, each representing a specific geographical area. The school district of Waukesha is divided between 3 Senate Districts and 4 Assembly Districts.

Go to www.legis.state.wi.us for more information on the state legislature.

Wisconsin Senate

Neal Kedzie

11st Senate District
P.O. Box 7882 Room 126 South
Madison, WI 53707-7882
(608) 266-2635

Mary Lazich

28th Senate District
P.O. Box 7882 Room 109 South
Madison, WI 53707-7882
(800) 334-1442

Theodore Kanavas

33rd Senate District
P.O. Box 7882 Room 20 S
Madison, WI 53707-7882
(800) 863-8883

Wisconsin Assembly

Mark Gundrum

84th Assembly District
P.O. Box 8952 Room 119 West
Madison, WI 53708
(888) 534-0084

Bill Kramer

97th Assembly District
P.O. Box 8952 Room 18 West
Madison, WI 53708
(608) 266-8580

Scott Newcomer

33rd Assembly District
P.O. Box 8953 Room 19 North
Madison, WI 53708
(888) 529-0033

Rick Zipperer

98th Assembly District
P.O. Box 8952 Room 307 North
Madison, WI 53708
608-264-5120

Keep Our Schools Strong

Ruth Page Jones, President, Project ABC

Waukesha is so proud of its school system. Our above average test scores, our award-winning music, sports and art programs, and the successful programs that help struggling students are all evidence that we have created a strong school system in Waukesha.

For the prosperity of our community and the future of our children, we need to maintain this strength. Unfortunately, the state funding formula forces annual program cuts that puts our school system at risk. Some schools in the state are close to bankruptcy. All public schools in Wisconsin are in jeopardy. We need a new funding formula and we need financial stability.

Once the Waukesha District balances this year's budget, they still have to find more people to fire next year. When they increase class size in the elementary grades (some already have 36 in a class), children lose opportunities to learn and connect with their teacher. When they increase class size in the middle and high schools, class options are eliminated and teachers are assigned to classes they haven't taught in 15 years. This is not a formula for success!

We can fix our schools. First, we need to acknowledge that the solutions offered at the local level are just not adequate. We must elevate the debate and focus our energies on the true solution-changing the state funding formula.

School boards are not authorized to raise revenue to cover school inflation.

School boards in Wisconsin are told how much revenue they can raise each year by state law. This same state law imposes an inflation rate on costs that is higher than the allowed revenue - this year by \$3.4 million. The only decision the school board gets to make is which programs to save until next year's cuts.

Placing the burden on children and parents hurts more than it helps.

Higher fees and elimination of sports, music and all extracurricular activities will create a school system like Milwaukee Public Schools where those who can, move. Concerned parents will leave the

system by enrolling them in private schools or nearby school districts or by selling their homes and moving away. With a funding formula based on student population, this means even less money from the state and even deeper program cuts. When too many parents leave the system, they leave behind inferior schools and a declining community.

Cutting teacher compensation isn't enough. There are some who believe that if teachers only paid more for their benefits, the problem would go away. If every employee gave back \$5000, we'd be back at the cutting board 2 years later - and most of the good teachers would have moved to other school districts with higher pay and benefits. We owe much of our success to talented and dedicated teachers. We don't want to lose them.

Local taxpayers can offer a lifeline but they won't solve the long-term problem.

Voters in Waukesha made it pretty clear a few years ago they will not rescue the schools from a problem that never ends. They might be willing to support a tax increase for a short period of time, while the details of the long-term solution are finalized. Our citizens may not take us out of the flood water, but they could keep us afloat for a couple more years.

Only our Governor and Legislators have the power to provide the remedy.

They created the law. They can change the law. Comprehensive, long-term reform that provides adequate funding and stabilizes school budgets is the best remedy to take our schools into full recovery.

You and I must lead the charge. When we work together to convince the lawmakers to make a better law, we can look forward to a more prosperous future. Tell them you want long-term, meaningful and comprehensive school funding reform that focuses on student achievement and brings financial stability to our local schools and communities.

Let's work together within our communities and throughout Wisconsin to keep our schools strong and accomplish extraordinary things.



"The community needs to understand that without a good public educational system, the local economy is going to suffer because companies are not going to move to an area where their employees send their kids to insufficient schools."

David Schmidt,
Waukesha
superintendent,
speaking to local
legislators.
Waukesha Freeman,
2/3/07

1985 Schools
received 54.3%
of Property Tax
Revenues

2006 Schools
received 43.1%
of Property Tax
Revenues



Ruth Page Jones,
President,

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Waukesha, WI 53187-1994

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www.projectabc.org

Upcoming Dates

***April 16 - 7:00 p.m.**
Project ABC Regular Meeting, Ascension Lutheran Church, 1415 Dopp St, Waukesha

***April 25 - 7:00 p.m.**
Project ABC Discussion Series on School Funding Reform, Session 1, Guest Speaker-Tom Beebe, Institute for Wisconsin's Future, Location White House of Music, 2101 N Springdale Rd, Waukesha

***May 15 - School District issues layoff notices**

***May 21 - 7:00 p.m.**
Project ABC Regular Meeting, Ascension Lutheran Church, 1415 Dopp St, Waukesha

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.projectabc.org

Final Program Cuts in 2007-2008

	Item	Cost	FTE
A	Increase MS/HS Class Size - from 27:1 to 29:1	\$901,000	17.0
B	Increase Grades 1-6 Class Size - from 26.5:1 to 28:1	\$530,000	10.0
C	Eliminate Elementary Guidance Counselors	\$424,000	8.0
D	Eliminate Gifted & Talented Staff	\$397,500	7.5
E	Eliminate Elementary School Library Media Specialists (Librarians)	\$386,900	7.3
F	Reduce Elementary Band and Orchestra	\$265,000	5.0
G	Eliminate Technology Resource Teachers	\$212,000	4.0
H	Reduce Special Education Staff	\$106,000	2.0
I	Eliminate Energy Program Manager	\$100,000	1.0
Subtotal		\$3,322,400	
Revenue Generator: Transportation Contract Extension		\$100,000	
Total		\$3,422,400	61.8

About Our Organization...

Project ABC is a grass-roots organization dedicated to advocating for educational excellence in the School District of Waukesha.

We believe our quality of life, our property values, and especially our children's future are intrinsically linked to the quality of Waukesha's educational system. Achieving these goals requires informed and involved citizens. Prepare Today's Children for Tomorrow's Challenges

Project ABC Computer Camps

Project ABC has offered Computer Camps for Kids since 2000. These summer enrichment classes for ages K-6 provide children with opportunities to enhance their interest in a variety of subjects integrated with technology.

Classes are usually 4-8 days, for 1 or 2 hours per morning. The 2007 schedule will be posted in April, 2007 on our web site at www.projectabc.org.

Project ABC's activities involve Awareness, Education and Advocacy efforts.

Awareness

- *Sponsor public forums on educational topics
- *Conduct community surveys on educational issues
- *Produce and distributes newsletters and e-mail communications
- *Host School Board Candidate Forums

Education

- *Offer Computer Camps for Kids in the summertime

Advocacy

- *Provide testimony at School Board meetings and legislative committee meetings
- *Organize efforts for large groups of citizens to advocate as one-voice at the local and state level
- *Publicly advocate for educational excellence and adequate school funding at the local and state level.