



# Superintendent's Message

News from the Superintendent to help inform parents, staff, and community of current school district news, events and issues.

*"Working together as a school community, we must put children first . . . we all have an obligation to touch children's lives and make a difference."*

Superintendent  
Kurt Wachholz

November 2009

## State Testing is an important Time of Year *Tips for Parents on Preparing your Children for WKCE and MAP Tests*

It seems like the 2009 - 2010 school year has just begun and we are already in November. We would like to remind all parents/guardians that testing of students will soon be starting. In the WAMW School District we do two types of State tests: MAPS and WKCE testing. MAP is "Measure of Academic Progress" and is given twice a year, once in the fall and again in the spring, to measure students growth in learning. The MAP tests began on September 22 and ended on October 13. The other tests are the WKCE tests which stand for "Wisconsin Knowledge Concept Exam." The WKCE tests will begin on

October 26 and end on November 25. This testing period is very important because state and federal funding is tied to the success of our students on these exams.

It is very important for parents/guardians to help us in every way possible by following a few important steps. First make sure that your child gets adequate rest by getting them to bed at a reasonable hour. Second make sure your child has the proper nutrition to help get them through the school day, a good healthy breakfast is highly recommended. Third make sure your child gets the help they need if they are having problems in any academic areas. Fourth please avoid scheduling doctor appointments or vacations during these testing times. Each school has specialists that can provide extra help for struggling students. If you have any questions, please contact your child's teacher and/or principal to see what their suggestions may be.

## Youth Risk Behavior Survey *Results Provide Valuable Information*

Since 1993 the Department of Public Instruction has administered a bi-annual Youth Risk Behavior Survey. This survey is conducted as part of a national effort by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor the health-risk behaviors of the nation's high school students. In order to comply with this survey the West Allis - West Milwaukee School District partners with the West Allis Health Department every two years to gather information about the health and safety of our students in grades 8 to 12. This survey provides important information about the extent to which our students engage in risky and unhealthy behaviors.

The key areas covered in the YRBS are:

- **Protective Assets**, such as feeling supported by their families and connected to their school and teachers.
- **Personal Safety**, such as wearing a seat belt while driving, or a bicycle helmet while biking.
- **Mental Health**, including depressions, eating disorders or self-injurious behaviors.
- **Risky Behaviors**, including alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use; fighting, using or carrying weapons, and sexual behavior.
- **Physical Health**, including exercise, television and computer use and nutrition.

In 2009 there were some significant findings like a majority of students (69%) reported having two or more adults in their life besides their parents who they could go to for help. Seat belt use remains high (82%) but helmet use is very low at (8%). A significant number of students (37% up from 20% in 2004) reported sustaining an injury requiring medical attention due to self-injurious behavior. A significant decrease (71% to 66%) of students reported having consumed alcohol in their lifetime, as well as having had a drink in the past 30 days (from 48% to 44%). However, WAWM youth under age 21 are consuming alcohol at a significantly higher rate than students statewide or nationally. From 2004 to 2009 there was an increase (26% to 35%) of students who were classified as overweight and a similar downward trend in vigorous exercise during three or more days in a week (69% to 53%).

The West Allis - West Milwaukee School District is committed to doing all we can to ensure the health and well-being of all our students. We have taken a careful look at all of the YRBS data, and together with the West Allis Health Department and the Police Departments of both West Allis and West Milwaukee, we are continuing to address these issues with safety and wellness initiatives and ATODA Prevention Grants. A community ATODA coalition has also been formed. By directly teaching children and youth about the importance of health decision making, how to deal with peer pressure and how to get help the WAWM School District fully anticipates reducing the number of students engaging in risk-taking and unhealthy behaviors by 2011.

## Various Programs are Key to Building Relationships

*FISH and TRIBES are a Few Examples of Connecting with Kids at our Elementary Schools*

The Elementary Schools in the West Allis - West Milwaukee School District use a variety of programs to help their students feel empowered and part of their school's community. Two of these programs are the FISH and TRIBES programs.

The FISH philosophy includes four main areas: Be There, Play, Make Their Day, and Choose Your Attitude. Be There is being present every day and respecting others. Play is to encourage students to have fun, be creative and inquisitive. Make Their Day is to teach students to do nice things for others and in turn they will do nice things for you and remember that you were nice to them. Choose Your Attitude is students holding each other accountable for their attitude and being responsible for your attitude. It's also about being aware of how your attitude affects others. The FISH philosophy looks to build stronger relationships with team members (fellow classmates) and those around school.

TRIBES is another commonly used in some of our Elementary Schools. TRIBES is a research based program that hopes to: Create and maintain a climate that is safe, caring and motivational for both students and staff. Increase student performance through participation in active learning groups. Reduce classroom disruptions, leaving more time for instruction. Increase respect for multicultural, multiethnic and diverse student populations.

TRIBES builds off community agreements which we have adapted as our THINK SMART, ACT SMART agreements. As students participate in the TRIBES program they travel through different stages like inclusion, influence, and community. These stages teach students about creating a sense of belonging, valuing differences, and working together creatively. Classrooms participate in community circles which are times when individuals share information about themselves, appreciations are given, or problems are solved. Community circles use the agreements as its base. Many activities that happen throughout the year enable students to move through the stages and become a community. The goal of TRIBES is to reach all students.

Other Elementary School programs in our District include: Hoover Hearts and Minds, EAGLE, ROAR, Filling The Bucket, PRIDE, and STARS. These programs incorporate many of the philosophies and activities mentioned above and their aim is to teach students about respect, accepting diversity, and taking responsibility for their own actions.



## Former School Board Member Will be Missed

*Robert Kitchen Was a Good Partner and Friend of the WAWM Schools*

With the passing of Board of Education Member Robert Kitchen we have lost a good partner and a dear friend to our School District and our children. Mr. Kitchen was a great listener and sought to understand. He worked tirelessly to ensure that his actions and decisions were in the best interest of children and the communities that make up the WAWM School District. Bob treated everyone fairly and with respect and he carried himself with honor and dignity.

Mr. Kitchen was first elected to the Board of Education in April of 1990. He served six years as School Board President, one year as Vice President, and four years as Clerk.

Bob also headed up several committees such as:

- Business Services Committee: 7 years as Chair, 2 years as Vice-Chair
- Personnel Committee: 4 years as Chair, 1 year as Vice-Chair
- Curriculum & Instructional Services Committee: 1 year as Chair
- Committee Member of: Community Relations, Curriculum & Instructional Services, Personnel/Policy Services, Business Services
  
- Negotiations Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee

Mr. Kitchen and his wife Marlene were residents and homeowners in West Allis for over 45 years. Bob also served on several committees for the City of West Allis and was active in the community and a great advocate for public education. West Allis Central's outdoor marquee says it best "Mr. Kitchen we will miss you!"

The Board of Education is currently in the process of filling the vacancy on the School Board due to Mr. Kitchen passing.