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HOMEWORK: How much is enough? Public, private school officials weigh in



Ashley Haynes/Freeman Staff

Brookfield Academy students such as Rachel Vasan are part of a smaller school atmosphere, which Upper School Head Daniel Davis says makes it easier for students to voice concerns about workload.

By Ashley Haynes
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PEWAUKEE — No matter what age a student is, there is sure to be some grumbling when it comes to doing homework. Just how much homework students in each grade should complete each night is up for debate, and any guidelines as to an ideal amount of time could be difficult to enforce.

For Pewaukee School District students, there are no guidelines that spell out how much homework students should have.

"We wouldn't be interested in anything as prescriptive as saying you need X amount of minutes of homework per night," said Superintendent Mike Cady. "Research says that the value of homework increases in older students."

One study shows that overall, the amount of time spent on work isn't the most important aspect to student success. A group of Spanish researchers with the University of Oviedo studied over 7,200 adolescents to gauge their academic performances and how much homework they complete each night. Their findings show that the

optimum duration of homework for teenage students is an hour a night; however, autonomy when doing homework was shown to be the most important individual variable when it came to math and science, not the amount of effort or time spent on homework.

"When we talk about homework, it's about making sure we have a meaningful task that has been reinforced in the classroom," said Cady. "Homework is a tool, and it's really the domain of our teachers as well-educated professionals on how much to give."

See **HOMEWORK**, PAGE 2A

WAUKESHA WATER PROJECT

Return flow utility could save ratepayers \$26 million

Water Commission
postpones approval, awaiting
city administrator's analysis

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WAUKESHA — The Waukesha Water Utility is seeking to create a separate Return Flow Utility that would set rates and rate increases for all treated wastewater that will eventually flow into Lake Michigan via the Root River — saving an estimated \$26 million for ratepayers.

Although an ordinance that would create the new utility was written up and ready for the Waukesha Water Commission's approval at a meeting Thursday night, the move was postponed, awaiting further analysis by the city.

According to the water utility, the cost to return treated wastewater to Lake Michigan will amount to about \$177 million of the overall \$286 million project. Due to certain financing rules for the water diversion project, the water utility cannot pay back that portion of debt through increased water rates. Instead, the \$177 million must be paid back by raising rates through the wastewater utility or by creating a return flow utility, said Dan Duchniak, general manager of

the Waukesha Water Utility. If the city's wastewater utility takes out loans to pay for returning treated wastewater to Lake Michigan, it would have to raise rates to generate revenue that's 125 percent of the original \$177 million, due to different bonding requirements from past city projects, Duchniak said.

A return flow utility would only have to generate revenue that is 110 percent of \$177 million through raised rates, saving ratepayers about \$26 million over 30 years.

Greater impacts

While the water utility is pushing for a return flow utility, the city would stand to benefit from an additional \$26 million in revenue if the return flow debt is paid back by the city's wastewater utility. That additional revenue could go toward public works projects in the future that are unrelated to the Great Lakes water project.

See **WATER**, PAGE 2A

House OKs GOP tax bill; Senate fate less clear

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans passed a near \$1.5 trillion package overhauling corporate and personal taxes in the House on Thursday.

The near party-line 227-205 vote came as Democrats on the other side of the Capitol pointed to new estimates showing the Senate version of the plan would boost future taxes on lower and middle-income Americans. Those projections, coupled with complaints by some GOP senators about their chamber's proposal, suggest party lead-

ers still face a challenge in crafting a measure that can make it through Congress over solid Democratic opposition.

House passage raised GOP hopes that President Donald Trump would be able to claim a big victory in a year highlighted so far by the Senate crash of the party's effort to repeal President Barack Obama's health care law. The first major tax rewrite in three decades has been a career-long goal of countless House Republicans.

"Passing this bill is the sin-

gle biggest thing we can do to grow the economy, to restore opportunity and help those middle income families who are struggling," said House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis.

Thirteen Republicans — all but one from high-tax California, New York and New Jersey — voted "no" because the plan would erase tax deductions for state and local income and sales taxes and limit property tax deductions to \$10,000. Defectors included House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen, R-N.J., who

said the measure would "hurt New Jersey families."

Democrats derided the plan as a scheme to help the rich but do little for others.

Both the House and Senate versions of the legislation would cut the 35 percent corporate tax rate to 20 percent, while reducing some personal taxpayers' rates and erasing and shrinking deductions for individuals. Projected federal deficits would grow by \$1.5 trillion over the coming decade.

See **BILL**, PAGE 8A



Associated Press

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and House Speaker Paul Ryan smile Thursday as they talk with reporters after the GOP tax overhaul bill passed in the House on Capitol Hill in Washington.

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Volume 158, No. 166

Fun Things To Do This Weekend

Palmyra. Admission \$2. PEHS Band Boosters lunch stand. Nearly 100 booths of handcrafted items.

Delafield tree lighting, 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. today. Clock Tower Square, downtown Delafield. Holiday music & carols, hot cocoa and cookies, candy canes and a Letter to Santa box. Tree lit at 5:30 p.m.

Holiday Craft Show, 9 a.m. to 4

p.m. Saturday, Fish Hatchery, 417 Main St., Delafield.

Waukesha Christmas parade, starts 4 p.m. Sunday, goes along Main Street in downtown Waukesha.

Muskego's Country Christmas & Parade, 1 p.m. parade and Christmas activities from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Parade route is Pioneer Drive from Janesville Road to Veterans Memorial Park.

WEATHER

Tomorrow:
Wintery mix
High 41
Low 23

See complete forecast on 8A



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Library patrons share their stories

By Jill Fuller

"I'll never forget the day I discovered Mrs. Pickrel. I had finally advanced to chapter books. Mrs. Pickrel and the Geiger Counter broke open my world to mystery, intrigue, quirky female characters, and humor. The best feeling in the world was driving home from the library with 10-12 fresh new books for the week."

"Every month, I get the privilege in this paper to tell readers like you about what libraries offer and how libraries are changing their communities. But sometimes it's better to hear about these things from the people who actually use them. At the Southeast Wisconsin Festival of Books a few weeks ago, we asked visitors to write down or record their library stories for us. People young and old told stories about how the library has helped them, their favorite childhood memories of the library, and why the library is important to them. It was exciting to hear all of the ways a library can affect so many lives."

In talking with us, many people focused on the role libraries played during their earliest years. One story



Fuller

read, "I grew up going to the Waukesha Public Library with my parents. Every visit there was special to me. I knew I would walk away with a stack of books I could curl up with and enjoy being transported to new places." Looking back, another patron wrote, "By the time I was 18, I had moved more times than years I had been alive. Libraries were always a safe haven. They welcomed me, the librarians helped me find what I wanted and suggested new books for me to explore."

Some stories focused on the library as a unique place in the community. One patron wrote, "The library is my place to go for comfort and positive energy — soothing, restful but dynamic and exciting too!" while another said "I love the library because it feels like home." In one of our videos, a local historian mentioned that "libraries are one of those few, public funny spaces that bring a lot of different kinds of people together and I think that is valuable for the public good."

Others told us about the specific

library services they like to use. "Recently, I have been using the computers to practice my computer skills," wrote one woman. A teen shared that by attending teen events, "I made a lot of friends and I gained a lot of experience." Others talked about checking out audiobooks for their commutes, attending the Memory Cafes, and doing homework at the library. Another patron shared how the library made a difference for her child. "My son had an exam proctored at the library. He was ill and missed a lot of school and the library helped him catch up on his studies."

In a world that often asks, "Why do we need libraries?" we collected some real and powerful answers. In doing so, we found that everyone has a unique relationship to the library and an important reason for being there. Do you have a story about your library? Please consider sharing it with us on our new online form. It doesn't have to be fancy, it just has to be yours. Go to tinyurl.com/my-library-story to start. We can't wait to hear your story too.

(Jill Fuller is the coordinator of marketing & communications for the Bridges Library System.)

Homework

From Page 1A

Regarding the juggling act older students have to perfect when it comes to school work, extracurricular activities and family time, Cady says it can be tough to regulate, especially when a student has eight different teachers. He explained that the Pewaukee School District is focused in general on student agency and making sure students are confident and mature enough to take hold of their own education.

"We want them to advocate for themselves," said Cady. "The key, I think, is that we don't give too much busy work to students."

The Waukesha School District has a similar structure where there is no timed amount of homework a student should receive, but homework should be used as a reinforcement of classroom lessons. Homework Policy 2330 states that the number, frequency and degree of difficulty of homework assignments should be based on the ability and needs of the student. In addition, homework given to students should be directly related to a learning target, have a clear purpose and be an extension of learning done during the school day.

"We give this guidance out to all of the schools and ask that each school plan with their staff what is appropriate at each of the levels," said Dan Keyser, director of secondary learning.

Water

From Page 1A

Duchniak said the Lake Michigan water project already has a big cost impact to ratepayers in Waukesha and would like to avoid "unnecessary" revenue.

"We want to do it as cost effectively as possible for customers," Duchniak said. "It also makes it very simple for the public to hold us accountable to the fact that we've stated rates are going to double or triple. We want to be transparent with that."

Mayor Shawn Reilly and District 1 Alderman Terry Thieme sit on the Waukesha

Water Commission. Both asked that the group hold off on a vote regarding a return flow utility until the city and water utility have had a chance to discuss it further.

"I wish these talks would have happened a while back. I want a consensus between all bodies involved instead of one entity," Thieme said. "None of this is new, this should have been figured out long ago."

Reilly reminded the commission that the concept would also require approval from the Ordinance and License Committees and Common Council, which rely heavily on recommendations from the city administrator.

Reilly said the city administrator

invited him to the meeting Thursday and said he is analyzing the costs and "unintended consequences" of creating a return flow utility, as well as its impact on city residents, but the city is so far "not fully on board."

Launer said he first heard about the plan about a month ago, while the commission and water utility have been investigating the concept for three or four months. The Common Council has not dis-

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