ATTACK THE GAP!

By Gary Tubbs

You won’t want to miss the wonderful event the TOPS Staff and Diversity Issues Coalition have planned for Tuesday, January 23, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Two dynamic facilitators from the University of Washington, John Morefield and Ed Taylor, will lead a group meeting focused on overcoming the achievement gap.

John is my friend and mentor, and also a former school principal, national consultant, and “Courage to Teach” facilitator. Ed is a renowned expert on race and race relations, and one of the most popular professors on campus. Both are amazing men who have been working as a team for a few years. They are excited to have this opportunity to work with the TOPS staff and community. We are certainly delighted they have agreed!

Achievement Gap?

So, why are we focusing all this energy on the achievement gap? What is the achievement gap anyway? Well, as TOPS’ overall test scores rise, and the number of students making the honor roll increases, we are disturbed that the disparity among groups of students as measured by test scores and grades is NOT decreasing. For example, on the ITBS last spring, there was a 20-percentile gap between the scores of white students and those of African-American students. This gap is unacceptable to the TOPS staff and community.

Certainly this is not about fault and blame. That accomplishes nothing. Certainly it is not about lack of hard work. Have you ever seen a harder working staff or more supportive parents? Yet the challenge to narrow the gap persists. We continue to develop strategies for students experiencing learning challenges, but as yet we have seen little improvement in overall results.

That’s why we, as a staff, have decided it’s time for ALL of the TOPS community to rally together to ATTACK THE GAP! We can’t do it alone. Let’s get together, learn what the research is telling us, discuss, and plan TOGETHER! That’s what a learning community is all about. And won’t it be exciting when we have results to show that we are, in fact, narrowing that gap until it is gone?

Once again TOPS will set the example by holding itself accountable for that which we must do; no excuses and “by any means necessary!” We need you present on Tuesday, January 23, 7:00 p.m. (Childcare will be provided.) This will be great!

The 2nd Grade celebrate Mickey’s 72nd birthday in November. (2nd grade teachers, Louise Chacartegui and Willie Jones with Mr. Tubbs.)
ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the fifth monthly newsletter of the 2000-2001 school year, edited by Julie Pickering. Cindy Suzumura handles the layout and design. Coach Don Zemke always provides great photos, and Gretchen Chambers is supplying informative news. Bruce Pulmano maintains the mailing list and gets the newsletter out to you.

We welcome your contributions—news from the classrooms, faculty, committees, and the larger community, opinions, profiles, compliments, congratulations, kids' art, photographs, additions to the calendar, and anything else that needs to "get out there."

Submit your contributions to the newsletter box in the Main Office or to Julie Pickering (by e-mail at jpick@halcyon.com or by snail mail at 2624 East Olive Street, Seattle 98122-3144).

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES FOR 2000-2001

January 12, February 16, March 15, April 20, May 11, and June 29.

Anyone interested in working on the newsletter should contact Julie at 720-4552.

SITE COUNCIL MEETING DECEMBER 13

By Gretchen Chambers

The Stage Looks and Sounds Great! Thanks, Penny!

At the opening of the meeting, members and observers acknowledged Penny Bolton, heartily thanking her for spearheading and orchestrating the tremendous improvements to the gym and stage, so very apparent in the Middle School's excellent drama production in December. With determination, creativity, and great effort, Penny Bolton is realizing the gymnasium-and-theater-in-one concept, which had been planned but not finished in the school reconstruction.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Budget Is Cool

Peggy Riehle, Treasurer, presented a final report on last year's budget and a report for this year's period of July 1 through November 30. Monthly reports will ensue. The report on this year's budget notes a total of $114,794 in the bank, of which $87,267 is reserved, including the permanent cash reserve of $40, the balance of the Facilities Budget, and reserves in other categories.

PRINCIPAL REPORT

Closing the Gap and Improving TOPS’ Writing Conventions and Math Facts

Principal Intern, Thalia Nawi, reported on the Super SIT (Student Intervention Team). The Super SIT includes administrative staff and elementary teachers who are identifying 1st to 5th graders who may be "falling through the cracks," and designing tutoring programs to help them.

Mr. Tubbs commended TOPS teachers participating in the District-wide Literacy Initiative training program (Carla, Willie, Louise, Tracy, Katie, Joe, and Gretchen). The Initiative aims to equip teachers and administrators with new information and skills to close the gap between test scores of minority and majority children. The teachers give up a Saturday each month to attend lectures and workshops.

TOPS now has four tutors working, including Neesa Sonoque, our AmeriCorps member who has decided to stay with us! Mr. Tubbs, Staff, and parents are very pleased.

Mr. Tubbs also reported that the staff is addressing TOPS' relatively lower performance in writing conventions and basic math facts. Staff is developing a timeline identifying when various levels should be mastered.

Initiative 728

Citing the overwhelming approval of I-728 by 71 percent, Mr. Tubbs said the Initiative was a great victory and would have significant effect at TOPS in decreasing class size. Lacking space for new classrooms, TOPS will achieve a decreased student-teacher ratio through natural attrition, decreased enrollment, and possibly new staff positions. These actions will be phased in over the next 5 years. The Initiative will permit us to fully fund both fulltime K teachers.

Upcoming School Levy—Please Help at the Phone Bank on January 18!

Mr. Tubbs announced that TOPS parent Heather Worthley is the campaign team captain for the Seattle School Levy election in February 2001. Up for renewal are Phase II of Building Excellence (TOPS was rebuilt by Phase I) and the Educational Program and Operations.

Betsy asked for a group of 15 Site Council members and other parents and staff to call voters for two hours on January 18 (after the Skate King field trip). The phone bank is at 1015 Republican. The members voted to make a donation of $250 to the levy campaign fund.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP REPORT

Dance Date moved for Hanukah, Peer Mediation Training Set

Mr. Tubbs filled in for Student Leadership Team members whom he guessed were absent because of fears (i.e., hopes) of snow. He reported that the team had learned a lot from working out a conflict between the winter dance date and Hanukah. The students moved the date up one night.

Counselor Jennifer Murray said that she had arranged for volunteer consultants to start peer-counseling training for Middle School students, and that the kids were very enthusiastic.

COMMUNICATIONS

Great Opportunities at the Hospitality Desk!

Marlies Van Bergeijk, Volunteer Coordinator, reported that the Hospitality Desk was in place and several parents had signed up for shifts as greeters. She urged Site Council members to sign up for a shift as the task represented a great opportunity to introduce themselves to parents and solicit their input. The members thanked member Jerry Galloway and Caldwell Banker, Inc., one of Jerry's clients, whom he persuaded to donate the desk. She also noted that teachers should bring down busy work for greeters to do during slack times.

Volunteer Background Checks

Marlies said that she is in the process of instituting volunteer screening in which the criminal history of volunteers is checked. So far, she had heard from one parent who felt the requirement was offensive and invaded privacy, especially since she, a fellow parent, would be running the checks. Marlies distributed a handout summarizing the state law requiring the measure and the various offenses that would be captured by the screening.

Continued on page 8.
FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR,
MARLIES VAN BERGEIJK

It seems that time is flying this year with a number of new policies and initiatives. The most exciting one has been the creation of a so-called Hospitality desk in the main hall in front of the office. Jerry Galloway arranged for the donation of an impressive desk, and Mr. Tubbs is giving up a nice big chair. A number of parents have signed up for a weekly shift of up to three hours.

The desk volunteer is the first contact as people enter the building. The volunteer assists visitors with questions and signing in, refers them to the appropriate person, and does some hallway monitoring and small tasks for teachers or office staff as time allows. Expect to see someone at the desk on most days after the holiday break, and please introduce yourself if you haven’t met that person yet.

VOLUNTEER BACKGROUND CHECKS

On December 13th, a letter went home with all students. It included background check forms and return envelopes. At its October meeting, TOPS Site Council decided to begin implementing a Seattle School District policy of asking all parent volunteers to submit information for a background check via the State Patrol WATCH program. It was decided that we would not subject anyone to fingerprinting at this time.

Most organizations that use volunteers who have direct contact with children require such background checks. While we are entering uncharted territory by implementing this at TOPS, it is my sincere hope that parents will cooperate with this request.

At present, Helen Hundley and myself are the only people authorized to conduct these checks, and we are committed to treating all information obtained in a confidential manner.

SCHOOL TOURS

Elementary tours will begin on Tuesday, January 9th, and run through the end of February. Middle School tours will occur on four Wednesdays in February and March. Please consider assisting with a tour during that time. You may call the school for specific times. This information will also be announced in take-home bulletins, and feel free to call me at 328-3064 to sign up for a date.

SOME RECENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What kind of badge should I wear? When am I a visitor and when am I a volunteer?

Many regular TOPS volunteers have badges with their own names on them. If you don’t have one yet, you can ask a Hospitality Desk volunteer or an office staff person to have one made for you. Until that time, please wear a yellow Visitor badge. If you are planning to spend some time at school helping out in the classroom and such, sign in on the volunteer sign-in clipboard, so your hours will be recorded. For brief visits to school, e.g., to have lunch with your child, you may sign in on the visitors’ sign-in clipboard.

How are those documented volunteer hours used?

Every three months the volunteer coordinator is required to report all volunteer hours to the District Volunteer Services Office, with some specificity as to how they were spent. Failure to do so may lead to not being eligible for levy grants and stipends. We also use these documented hours when applying for other grants, as a way to underscore how active the parent volunteers are and how we deserve grants for additional programming.

One other way they are used is to document compliance with certain funded grants, e.g., matching volunteer hours with monies obtained for special projects, such as Franklin Green Street.

What is a typical amount families contribute to individual class funds and how is the money used?

At the beginning of the year, Room Reps request, usually via a letter, that each family in a class contribute an amount to the class fund, typically around $20. These funds are used to organize class socials, pay for materials for the auction project, and purchase end-of-year gifts for teachers and miscellaneous items. It is understood that some families can’t pay the full amount, and that they will contribute to their ability.

The past two years the Auction Committee has added a request for additional donations, later in the year, to make a class theme gift basket.

How does TOPS handle proof of insurance for fieldtrip driving?

At this time, we do not hand out forms at the beginning of the year to obtain driver’s license numbers and proof of insurance because the insurance information may be subject to change. Our policy is to get this information prior to each fieldtrip on which private vehicles are used to transport students.

Please let me know if you have other questions! Thanks!
THE WAY IT WAS
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SEWARD SCHOOL

By Julie Pickering

Recently I’ve been editing a book on the history of Seattle’s school buildings for the District, and I’d like to share a little background about the Seward buildings.

The District purchased the property for the school in 1892. The site was in what was then called the Denny-Fuhrman Addition, named for realtor Henry Fuhrman who owned most of the land from Edgar Street to the channel between Lake Union and Portage Bay, and David T. Denny, who owned land to the south. At the time, northwest Capitol Hill was heavily forested, and only a few houses were scattered through the area.

STARTING SMALL

In 1893, a small, two-room wooden school was built on the eastern part of the site. It was called the Denny-Fuhrman School and housed all eight grades in one classroom until 1899 when they started using the second classroom. That school is our lunchroom today!

By the early 1900s, the Eastlake area was getting more populated. A streetcar ran from downtown to where Louisa Street is today. Portables were needed to hold all the students in 1904-05, and the School Board recognized that a new building was needed.

The new school, today’s elementary building, was first named Marcus Whitman School, after the Walla Walla missionary, but in September 1905 when it opened, the school was renamed for William Henry Seward, U.S. Secretary of State who initiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867.

Seward’s facilities were pretty nice for their time. A large furnace was located in the basement of the new building, and every Wednesday the teachers brought in T-bone steaks, which they barbecued on coals prepared in the furnace by the janitor. They’d probably bring veggie burgers today.

MORE SPACE!

Enrollment grew rapidly in Seward’s first decade, from 254 students in 1905 to 462 in 1915-16. The school became so crowded that at least one class was held in the upstairs hall and another in a portable. Sounds familiar!

In March 1908, a committee from the Eastlake Avenue Improvement Club urged the School Board to tear down the 1893 schoolhouse. Instead, the old wooden building was moved to the southeast corner of the site and used as an annex for primary grades. In 1911, 8th grade students went to Lowell one afternoon a week for shop and home economics. Those were the days!

EASTLAKE GROWS

The growth of the University of Washington and especially the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition held on the university campus in 1909 spurred city growth and brought new roadways and streetcars in the Eastlake neighborhood. That meant even more kids.

To meet these new enrollment needs, in 1917, the brick building was constructed on the east side of the site, and the 1893 building was moved again, this time to the southwest corner. It became a shop and home economics classroom. Since 1922, it’s been used as a lunchroom. The new brick addition housed eight classrooms, an auditorium, and two playrooms.

Enrollment has fluctuated in the years since, and many programs have passed through the building. The construction of the freeway in the 1960s was a hard blow to the local community, and beginning in the 1970s, the School Board threatened to close the school. In June 1988, they finally did, but that’s when the TOPS community suggested moving their program from Stevens.

And we’ve lived happily ever after . . . Well, it took a lot of hard work to upgrade these buildings, which were designated landmarks in the 1980s, but since TOPS moved back to Seward in fall 1999, life has been good, hasn’t it? Enjoy!
LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

As a parent, I have serious concerns about the WASL, its effect on education, and on learning at TOPS. One District-wide byproduct of the race for ever-higher test scores is the pressure to skew existing educational programs, particularly in science and math, in order to “teach for the test.” Yet the narrowing of what, when, and how things are taught carries the danger of leading to uniformity of thought at the very times in students’ lives when expansive knowledge, exploration, and self-discovery are instrumental to their growth and future learning.

At risk, perhaps particularly at the high school level, are science programs that teachers have honed and polished for years to teach science to the students within their schools. Within the Seattle School District’s pamphlet “A Parent’s Guide to Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Communication and Mathematics” (all WASL-tested areas) is an extensive and distinct list of expectations for students at each grade level. The expectations are remarkable for the great degree to which they are bereft of innovation and imagination. The writing standards, for example, provide no reward or request for creative thought. Analytical reasoning and following directions seem to be the hallmarks of the standards, as defined in specific guidelines for each grade, as if students were being processed through a rote mill designed to produce measurable outcomes yet homogeneous thought.

District wide, an effort towards uniformity of curriculum, and of teaching concepts in order to align with the WASL, threatens the fabric of the programs that have made many classrooms great, that allow teachers to truly teach, and that open doorways for students to develop a joy in learning that will take them the furthest along their unique paths.

Sincerely,
Nancy Dickeman
TOPS Parent

WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THOSE HOLIDAY GIFTS THAT JUST AIN’T QUITE RIGHT

Well, they could make fine auction items! The TOPS 2001 Auction is Saturday, May 5, at the Asian Resource Center. Each family is asked to procure three items that can go into either the silent or live section of the auction.

All it takes is a few quick conversations with people who can donate a product or service to the auction. These are people you talk to every day: your grocer, soccer coach, hair stylist, book authors, ice cream store owners, restaurateurs, theater operators, bookstore managers. Everywhere you usually spend your time or money—that’s where the items come from.

Other ideas? Collaborate with friends to create and serve a theme dinner, a year’s supply of chocolate chip cookies, wash cars. Can you donate a week at your summer cabin in the mountains? Mariner season tickets? Art lessons? The possibilities are endless.

Be sure to fill in your procurement slips and bring your items to the TOPS office by Friday, March 30. If you run out of slips, pick up additional forms at the office. Please fill them out completely and correctly.

It’s also time for your class to start working on their auction art project. The class projects are often the highlight of the live auction . . . and bring in a lot of money! The kids are really proud of their contribution to their school, and the projects themselves are wonderful.

Last year for the first time, many of the classes created theme baskets that were very successful and fun to put together. Usually one person coordinates and lets the class know the theme (sometimes the kids come up with the idea). Families then send in their contributions, and the coordinator puts it all together in some kind of interesting basket or container. To avoid duplications, please have the coordinator call Janet Morrison at 634-2203 as soon as you know what theme your class has chosen. We’ll need a procurement form filled out so we know it’s coming, but the basket itself can be delivered, if necessary, on the day of the event. Please be sure to attach a typed list of the contents and a value to the outside, just in case some of the goodies are hidden from view.

Any other auction questions? Please call Dan Tobin at 325-8155.
2000 –2001 NO BAKE BAKE SALE DOING WELL!

100% participation is the goal.

Thanks so much to the families, friends, and faculty who have made their gifts and pledges to the 2000 No Bake Bake Sale, TOPS annual fundraiser. We have raised over $56,700 as of December 18th. Our goal is $90,000. We are over half way there!

It’s exciting to know that when we ask for your support, you are there. The TOPS community has upped their average donation to over the per participating family!

Matching funds and payroll deductions account for almost $11,000 of the total. If you wanted to charge your donation, you will see the charges on your January 2001 bills.

Our goal is still 100 percent family participation. As of mid-December, we had over 200 households contributing. This is about 50 percent participation so far. We appreciate any donation you can make. Our smallest donation has been $10 and our largest $1250 (plus the same in a matching donation!). If you haven’t sent in your share of the pie, please do so as quickly as possible. Donation forms are still in the office! Attach any matching funds paperwork to your form. Questions? Please call Laurie Black(285-7079) or Elaine Moberly (284-1066). And thanks!

**NO BAKE BAKE SALE DONORS AS OF DECEMBER 18, 2000**

Virginia Abaog  
Anne Adolphson  
Gayle Allworth  
Lisa Allworth  
Sorayya Aly  
Paul & Diana Abson  
William Ames & Gretchen Chambers  
Kathy Barker  
Scott Barnhart & Ouri Mallaris  
Luis Enrique Barrias Quintana  
The Bengtsson Family  
Sandy Berger & Fred Smith  
RR Bilyeu  
Tom Blue & Maude Scott  
Penny & Vernon Bolton  
Braybrooks & Simon Family  
Thomas Caldarola  
Dana Carey-Twight  
Deb & Bill Carpenter  
Richard Cassell  
The Castor-Peck Family  
Virginia & Roger Chambers  
Mary Chao  
The Chapel-Lombard Family  
Ed & Kay Chapin  
Michael Chapko & Marcia Weaver  
Eric Chiappinelli  
The Chima Family  
Andrea Chin & Vance Martin  
Leanne & Gaylord Clark  
Mike & Carol Clay  
Judy & Sarah Cohen  
Piyale Comert  
Hilary Costin  
The Cox-Czosnyka Family  
Robin Cox  
Gordon Davenport & Xue-Qiao Zhao  
The Dawson Family  
The Demorhynes Family  
Ishbel Dickens  
Elizabeth Dickinson & Joe Merrill  
Cynthia Domingo & Garry Owens  
Linda Downing  
Bill Enger & Judy Debel  
Frank Fabens  
Martin Fleck  
Gregory Flood  
Paul Framson & Marlies Van Bergeijk  
Sue & Steve Frost  
The Frost/Johnson Family  
Jerry Galloway  
The Gille-Atlas Family  
The Gilson/Kounts Family  
Joseph & Remy Ginez  
Jeffrey & Anne Girvin  
Kim Gittere Abson & Michael Scupine  
Galen Goff  
George Goodall & Sandy Kurtz  
Karen Gottberg & Martin Cole  
Sandy & Jim Green  
Barbara Green & Anne Gage  
Tom & Elaine Greggs  
Leo Griffen & Leslie Cossitt  
The Griffen/Burmeister Family  
The Griswold Family  
David Grossman & Cezanne Garcia  
Amy Hagopian & Stephen Ludwig  
The Hahn Family  
Jeffrey Heft & Tammy Luthy  
The Bob Hale Family  
Randy Hall  
Pat & Mike Helgren  
Robert Heller & Rebecca Fox  
Esther & Larry Hexter  
Melora & Henryk Hiller  
Nancy Hom  
June Hom & Bill Swerbenski  
Marcy Harty & Randy Price  
The Holub Family  
Laura Hopkins & Brett Baba  
Mark Huck & Nadine Schultz-Huck  
Carolyn Hughes & Harry Ehlers  
William Hurley & Jill Rollkoetter  
Kristen & Alex Johnston  
The Jamieson Family  
Janis Jones  
Julies James & Alex  
Janet Kavadas  
Kathleen Kettner  
George & Linda Keylon
THANKS FOR ADOPTING A FAMILY!

From Junne Park, Family Support Worker

Thanks to all for the fantastic support with this year’s “Adopt-A-Family.” We were able to provide 15 families with gifts, clothes, and food for the holidays. We couldn’t have done it without everyone’s unselfish and unconditional help for those who are financially less fortunate. Next year Linda Downing and I hope to make this event even grander, and with your continued assistance, I know we will succeed! Thank you.
INTERVIEW WITH MARIA KOVACS

By Lauren Gill and Kadri Welsh, 8th Grade

We here at TOPS have just been given a new AmeriCorps member named Maria Kovacs. Born in Guatemala, this 23-year-old has traveled all over the U.S., but she spent her high school years in Napa Valley, California where she attended Vintage High School. Later she attended college at the University of Oregon in Eugene. Her favorite food is Japanese, especially making and eating sushi. Her favorite color is burgundy, and her hobbies are traveling, gardening, snowboarding, and salsa dancing. So you can see why we were excited to ask her a few questions and learn more about the friendly new volunteer at our school.

Why did you choose to work here at TOPS?

Maria: I didn’t plan on working as an AmeriCorps member. I felt like trying new things, and when I read the requirements for a volunteer worker, I liked the sound of it. I liked the tight-seeming community TOPS offers, and I liked the fact that TOPS is kindergarten through eighth grade because of the variety of kids.

What do you do here at school?

Maria: I don’t have any set responsibilities. I can do pretty much what I want. I can work with whatever age groups I like or prefer. So I do pretty much a little of everything. I tutor some of the little kids, especially the Spanish-speaking kids whose first language isn’t English, and I am very involved in TOPICS, the elementary activities that happen three times a week in the afternoons. I also do office work and odd jobs for teachers.

What do you think you bring to the TOPS community?

Maria: I haven’t really been here long enough to say for sure, but I think that I am a creative person, so I bring creativity to the school and kids. I think working with the kids really brings out my creative side. I would also wish to kind of . . . enforce equal respect for all the people here.

What do you hope to get out of this experience? And do you plan to stay in Seattle because we know you like to travel . . . ?

Maria: I would like to use this term at TOPS as a learning experience. I don’t know yet what I want to do for sure. I might like to become a teacher so this helps me learn about kids and what the ups and downs of teaching are. I hope to, some day, move to San Francisco and go to graduate school at Berkeley. It’s a nice dream and goal. In high school, I never really did community service, so this is a new learning experience for me as well. I guess I just want to try new things, and this is one of those things!

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Penny Bolton reported that the No Bake Bake Sale has a healthy total so far of $56,700 in pledges, checks, and charges. Over 150 families and their relatives have contributed. (See update on page 6)

FACILITIES

Penny reported that the gym work is not done and that more volunteer opportunities are pending, e.g., making coverings for the two windows on the west wall.

Reporting for Rebecca Sadinsky, Betsy said that the January 8th Facilities meeting would address grounds upkeep, Rogers Playfield progress, and the Classroom Lighting Project, which will improve lighting in rooms on the east side of the elementary building and is expected to be completed in January. Betsy said that, though the reconstruction down at Rogers will make the field unusable for all of next year, great play equipment will be in place and available to the students. She has heard that the play equipment offers lots to older kids as well as little ones.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Kevin Crozier reported that computer use is growing steadily. Willie noted that he has enjoyed seeing people helping each other learn the various machines and programs. Kevin said that we are getting two more computer projectors, one for general use in the Library and one for Steve Haines to demonstrate checkout procedures. TOPS’ new digital cameras are being used two and three times a day.

DIVERSITY ISSUES COALITION

Teaching Skills for Anti-Bias Action

Gary Owens reported that the Coalition is making fast progress in choosing a selection list for the Multicultural Book Collection. The Coalition is planning a parent study group for January to help parents help their kids develop skills with which to respond to bias they may experience or observe.
TOPS FAMILY SKI WEEKEND
FEBRUARY 22-25, 2001

Many TOPS families have a tradition of meeting on the slopes of Mission Ridge, “the dry side of the Cascades,” for a family ski weekend during Winter Break. Please join us as we once again head out for some fun in Wenatchee, Washington. All ages are invited.

Mission Ridge Ski area, 12 miles up from Wenatchee, offers alpine skiing, snowboarding, and a tubing and Nordic area that is open only on the weekend. Special lift ticket prices are available to Honor Roll students; see details below.

The Cedars Inn in Wenatchee has set aside 30 rooms for TOPS families to reserve. They will need your reservation by February 8th in order to hold your room.

The Cedars Inn is just 20 minutes from Mission Ridge with rooms that have a Ridge to River view! They offer continental breakfast, 24-hour indoor pool, outdoor hot tub, free local calls, and satellite TV. Micro-fridges and mini-suites with whirlpool tubs are also available. Lift tickets are available at the hotel.

A Family Potluck is planned at the hotel for Friday night, Feb. 23rd at 6 p.m. Please bring a dish for eight, some beverages, and plates/utensils for your group.

Check out the Mission Ridge Ski area and their ski lessons/programs/daycare at: http://www.missionridge.com or call (888) 75-RIDGE or (509) 663-6543 to reserve your private lesson.

Students in grades 6-12 are eligible for the Mission Ridge Three O Club, back for its third year! Just show them your Student ID card and your report card with a 3.0 g.p.a. or better, fill out their registration form with a parent/guardian signature, and you will get $11 lift tickets!

Registration/permission form for Mission Ridge 3.0 Club for Honor roll students: http://www.missionridge.com/guest_services/rates/i30club.html, and it is available at ski shops and at the ticket window.

For Cedars Inn Hotel reservations, please call (800) 358-2074 or (509) 886-8000 by February 8th to reserve your room, or send email via their website at: http://www.cedarhotels.com/CedarsInn-Wenatchee.html

To learn more about this fun tradition, please contact: Julie Schott at (206) 324-6546 or Carla Griswold at (206) 632-6710 or ctgwold@jps.net

TALKING ABOUT HARASSMENT

By Janet Moore

During the last week of November, I taught classes for the Middle Schoolers on issues related to harassment and how to improve our school. We talked about what constitutes harassment and what the kids can do if they observe or experience harassment.

The kids talked about various names and ways in which they tease each other. Much of what they said would constitute harassment, such as referring to race, calling another student names regarding their sexual preference, etc.

A interesting study found that males who were described as strong, standing up for their beliefs, and rallying other students were considered leaders, yet when girls were ascribed the same list of qualities, they were referred to as “bitches.” This is happening at TOPS too.

In my experience working with companies on reducing harassment, I have found that they first must admit there is a problem. The same is true for TOPS. I do not think we have a big problem, but I have heard words exchanged between students that need to be addressed. Many of the kids said that their families do not talk about issues of harassment. I challenge you to find out what your children think, what they have experienced, what names they use, and more.
KIDS MARATHON!

By Christoph Krumm, 6th grade

I think that the 2000 Kids Marathon was a great success. This year, we had over 2,000 people. To run the full 26.2 miles, we had to run 25 in advance of the race and then finish the 1.2 at Memorial Stadium.

After waiting a bit in Memorial Stadium, we went to the start line. Once everybody arrived at the start line, the race began. It started next to the Experience Music Project and then along the borders of Seattle Center. After that, we ran past Key Arena and around Mercer Arena. Then we ran into Memorial Stadium.

After the race, everybody got a T-shirt and a certificate. You could also go to Mercer Arena for refreshments and other food. There were soups, fruits, drinks, and lots of other things.

I think the marathon was great. I hope that next year there will be more kids. See you next year!
1ST ANNUAL TOPS MARATHON

By Don Zemke

Congratulations to the over 75 TOPS students who participated in the 1st annual TOPS Marathon. A special awards ceremony was held to recognize and honor the students who participated in the program. Certificates were given to all who participated, and special TOPS marathon medals were given to the 18 students who accomplished their goal of running 25 miles or more.

The assembly was a great conclusion to the five-week Seattle Kids Marathon PE running program and was a great motivator for next year’s event as we hope to have even more students involved.

A special thanks to the McKinstry Company (Doug Moore) for sponsoring this event. Also, thanks to Janet Moore and Ann Johnson for all of their organizational help!

COME WATCH TOPS BASKETBALL!

The TOPS girls’ basketball team, coached by Eric Herndon, and the boys’ team, coached by Thomas Walker, began league play on November 29. Come cheer them on! Here’s their schedule and results as of mid-December.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>OPPONENT</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
<th>BOYS</th>
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<td>Dec. 7</td>
<td>McClure</td>
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<td>2:45</td>
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<tr>
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<td>NOMS</td>
<td>4:00</td>
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</table>

On Tuesday, February 13, the #1 Teams from each division will host the #2 Teams from the opposite division. The winners from each game will play for the championship on Thursday February 15, 5:30 at Ingraham High School. North division will host games for teams third through eight.

*Hamilton plays their home games at the Wallingford Boys and Girls Club.

*NOMS plays their home games at the Ballard Community Center.

TOPS PE ONLINE

Check the TOPS PE web page (http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops/pe.html) for information on our program, basketball (including schedules and results), track, volleyball, after school sports, and photographs!
WHAT’S HAPPENING WITH THE DIVERSITY ISSUES COALITION

By Susan Davis

Years ago, a friend who was researching African-American self-identification asked me when I realized I was white. He reacted with surprise when I responded with a clear memory of that moment from my elementary school years, especially because I grew up in an almost exclusively white neighborhood. What he didn’t take into account is that I am part of a white minority, which, especially in the Northwest, pushes me toward the edge of “white.” As a result of my place, I have spent my professional life working in fields that satisfy my amateur-anthropologist need to learn how people live and function in the world. That is why I am a member of the TOPS Diversity Issues Coalition. Are you familiar with the TOPS Diversity Issues Coalition? The Diversity Issues Coalition serves our school in making sure all of our voices get heard with respect. The group is made up of TOPS parents (anyone can join!), teachers, and administrators working together as an information, social, and action network to maintain a positive and welcoming environment for all.

GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

For those of you who went to the auction last year, you may remember lots of your TOPS friends raising their bid cards to donate money for buying multicultural books for the library. You may have even joined them in the endeavor because we managed to raise $6,000 just for that project. The Diversity Issues Coalition asked the Auction Committee to make that special request for funds to make sure all our students see themselves represented in our library.

Were you at the Taste of TOPS last year? Although the school sponsored it, we were there to help with the planning and day-of-event activities. During our meetings, we began discussions about our own ethnic groups and submitted our talks to the TOPS newsletter. We had a slow start this year, but soon we will get that column running again. Hearing from all people (you!) who can educate us about their experience would help all of us. We are asking community members to present a 15-20 minute talk that will be submitted to the TOPS Newsletter as well.

Last year we learned that there were people missing from the school directory. One of our members worked hard to track down people who weren’t included to make the directory complete. We quickly resolved the issue before people perceived it as a personal/ethnic rejection.

Erik Ward from the Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity spoke about bigotry at one of our meetings. He is such a powerful presenter that committee members requested and received funds to have him do a series of training sessions with TOPS teachers and one for all TOPS parents. Watch the newsletter and the TOPS website for the parent forum and other school events that the Diversity Issues Coalition sponsors to celebrate our cultures.

WORKING THROUGH ISSUES TOGETHER

It all sounds neat and clean, but it hasn’t been. We’ve had lots of discussions and struggles trying to figure out the goals of the group, which was actually founded by several African-American parents the year before and whose original purpose was to confront and pursue remedies for the “performance gap” of students of color (still one of our goals). How were we going to define ourselves to be an effective group? It took months of personal reflecting, agitation, silence, and growth for us to come out of the fog to the place we are now. Of course, we do not have all the answers, but we have evolve beyond our own personal frustrations to the higher plane of community and system level solutions.

Involving more people in the Coalition is important, and we ask that each of you consider sparing four or five hours a month to help us further our important work. Just because the concept of the Diversity Issues Coalition has been created doesn’t mean that we are established and rigid. TOPS needs your energy to continue our process until everyone in our TOPS family feels included. Seem like a lofty goal? Where would we be if we didn’t believe we could do it?

PLANS FOR 2001

Garry Owens, the chair of the Coalition, is forming a study group to look at issues of hatred and inclusion. There has been interest in doing this for at least a year, and we are now ready to engage in this study. Please join us as we battle the ugly monster of exclusion and grow into better people as a result.

Here is what we are planning to work on this year:

• Selecting and purchasing $6,000 worth of books for the library
• Multicultural assemblies
• Learning forums for teachers as well as parents
• Middle School curriculum development
• Garfield High School Leadership forums
• Study circle on issues of racism and race relations
• Dialogue on holiday celebrations at TOPS
GYM & PERFORMANCE SPACE UPDATE

From Penny Bolton

Wow! What an improvement! Anyone who went to a play in our gym last year knows how hard it was to understand the great actors on stage. However, now we have completed Stage One of the necessary improvements in the space, and you all will be pleasantly surprised with the results.

TOPS received a City of Seattle Neighborhood Matching Fund grant to improve the space for drama and everyday gym use. Acoustical surfaces have been installed over the upper half of the walls to soak up echoes. Lights have been set up on stage, and we have more lights all around, so it feels like a real theater.

The Middle School play was performed without microphones, a feat that would have been impossible last year, and our PE teachers can now be heard when they talk to kids in class! If you have a chance to attend a basketball game or assembly, you’ll see and hear the improvements.

We still need to rack up more volunteer hours finish the work and match the City grant money. Mark Morales has already volunteered his time to build some wonderful all-purpose cubes for stage settings, and Vernon Bolton built a heavy duty—but portable—staircase for better stage access.

In January and February, parents and kids will be needed to paint and finish our stage cubes and stairs, build and install shades for the windows backstage and in the gym to keep light out during plays, and put together moveable bleachers. Hope to see you there!

WELCOME JUNNE PARK

Junne Park, TOPS new family support worker, joined the staff on November 1 and is working actively with Jennifer Murray and the teaching staff to provide counseling and support to K-8 children and their families.

Junne comes to TOPS from Whitworth Elementary, and, before that, from several years working as a Special Education teacher. She is a graduate of the University of Washington in psychology and philosophy.

According to Junne, the family support worker serves as a bridge between teachers, students, and community and school resources. At TOPS, she works largely with the families of children in the Bilingual Orientation Center (BOC), but also with children and families of “mainstream” classes.

Among her tasks are:

• Helping families understand and get involved with the educational process.
• Supporting families so their children come to school ready to learn.
• Assisting families in identifying and using community resources and services.

Specific tasks include addressing food, clothing, transportation, health insurance, childcare, and housing concerns, and arranging for social service assistance. By performing these tasks, Junne helps reduce teaching time spent on social service assistance, boosts parental involvement in the education of at-risk children, and improves the educational achievement of at-risk students.

The Family Support Worker Program was implemented in the Seattle Public Schools in 1988. It receives support for the City of Seattle, United Way, and the School District.

To contact Junne, call her direct voice mail at 252-3529. Her office is located in the Middle School at B-212.

Diversity Issues Coalition continued from page 12.

• Deepen knowledge of “performance gap” of students of color
• Promote and support inclusive participation in TOPS community
• Initiate events that highlight our differences

Our next meeting is on Wednesday, January 17th, at 6:30 p.m. in the library. If you have any questions you need answered before you attend our next meeting, contact Garry Owens (a TOPS parent), Gary Tubbs, or Clara Scott.
TOPS STUDENTS WIN $200 WORTH OF BOOKS

By Steve Haines

In October when our students performed on the Kidspeak stage at Northwest Bookfest, they were entered in a drawing for a gift certificate to the University Bookstore. Well, well. Look who won!

After the initial excitement of winning died down, we decided that a field trip to the bookstore was in order. With the help of parents, we met on a Friday evening in November. We had a special treat because on the same evening Karen Cushman, author of The Midwife’s Apprentice, was giving a reading and signing her new book, Matilda Bones.

The children had a great time selecting books. The challenge came when we had to make the final selections. Our library now has some new fiction books, as well as new poetry, folktales, picture books, and beginning reader books, which the students proudly cataloged into the system.

Chess Club Policies

By Mark Morales

Chess Club gives kids a great opportunity to spend time together outside of regular school hours learning about chess. During that one short hour each week, we learn new moves, study new strategies, and hone our skills. We hope every TOPS student feels welcome to join Chess Club. Chess Club is organized and operated by caring and committed volunteers. To make sure that we all get the most out of our Chess Club time, we ask that parents and students understand and follow some simple rules.

Coaches, Staff, and Parent Volunteers agree to:

• Provide a safe and fun environment where students can learn to play chess.
• Be available during or after Chess Club to answers questions from students or parents.
• Support each student at his or her level of chess play.
• Contact parents when a child is disruptive or unable to follow the Chess Club rules.

Chess Club Students agree to:

• Respect each other.
• Make sure all pieces are reset and put into their bags after each game.

Chess Club Parents agree to:

• Respect Chess Club and school property.
• Listen to the coaches, staff, and parent volunteers.
• No running around or horseplay before, during or after chess club.
• Come to Chess Club prepared to play chess and learn about chess.
• Have fun!

Chess Club Parents agree to:

• Support your child in learning about chess.
• Support the coaches, staff and parent volunteers in their efforts to teach your child.
• Offer to assist—we need help with snacks, clean up, one on one coaching and crowd control.
• Pick up your child no later than 4:30.
• Respect our efforts to teach: If you come early, sit down, and play a game or ask how you can help. Please do not stand in the classroom or the commons talking and distracting the players.
• If your child has a behavioral problem, please support the program by staying with your child or offering other solutions to address the issue.
CHESS NEWS

By Mark Morales

TOURNAMENT REPORTS

Over 550 students participated at the Bryant Chess Tournament held on December 2nd. Representing TOPS were Koji Pingry (17th place 2nd grade), Eli Davis, Jackson White (15th place 1st grade), Timur Maraghe (18th place 2nd grade), Rebecca Ehlers, Asa Palagi (2nd place 1st grade), Anna Ludwig, Taizo Pingry, Nolan Li, Cuzak Bailey, Eric Nelson (15th place 5th grade), Eric Moberly, Joe Miller (12th place 4th grade), Katherine Ehlers, Ross Holzworth, Alex Enger, and Marcus Morales (15th place 4th grade). It was a long day for the kids, but fun was had by all.

Lakeridge on Mercer Island attracted over 300 participants in their first tournament on December 9th.

Representing TOPS in the K-2 section were Eli Davis, Sean Gallagher, Nicholas Morales (7th place 2nd Grade), Asa Palagi (14th place 1st grade) and Mitchell Porras-Foye. Our representatives in the 3-5 section were Cuzak Bailey, Ross Holzworth, Nolan Li (8th place 5th grade) Eric Moberly (8th place 4th grade), Marcus Morales (2nd place fourth grade), and Zach Porras-Foye. The TOPS team finished in 4th place and received a beautiful award.

At the Stewart Middle School Tournament on December 16th, Marcus Morales placed 3rd overall in the grade 4-6 section. Congratulations to Marcus on being one of the top ten chess players for his grade in Washington State for the 2nd year in a row.

UPCOMING CHESS TOURNAMENTS

1/20 Northwest Grade Level (Seattle)
1/27 St. Michael’s Winter (Olympia)
2/3 UCD K-6 (Seattle)
2/10 SCD K-6 (Seattle)
2/17 Bryan Essman Memorial 6-12 (Puyallup)
2/24 Assumption K-8 (Seattle)
3/3 Spinning K-6 (Puyallup)
3/17 Strategy on the Green K-9 (Tacoma)
3/31 STATE (Vancouver)
5/12 Co-ed Challenge K-12 (Tacoma)
3/3 Spinning K-6 (Puyallup)
4/26 Nationals, Kansas City

If your child is interested in playing any of these tournaments, please contact Mark Morales (325-4079, memoral@flashcom.net) as soon as possible. Many tournaments sell out a month in advance.
### **2001 TOPS Calendar**

#### **January**
- **8 (T)** School starts again
- **10 (W)** Site Council meeting, Library, 5-7 p.m.
- **15 (M)** Martin Luther King Day. No school
- **17 (W)** Diversity Issues Coalition meeting, Library, 6:30 p.m.
- **19 (F)** Skate King
- **23 (T)** Attack the Gap talk, 7-8:30 p.m.
- **29 (F)** End of semester (Middle School)

#### **March**
- **14 (W)** Site Council meeting, Library, 5-7 p.m.
- **16 (F)** Teacher workshops. No school

#### **April**
- **4 (W)** Site Council meeting, Library, 5-7 p.m.
- **9-13 (M-F)** Spring break
- **23-May 11** WASL

#### **May**
- **5 (S)** TOPS Auction, Asian Resource Center
- **9 (W)** Site Council meeting, Library, 5-7 p.m.
- **18 (F)** Teacher workshops. No school
- **28 (M)** Memorial Day. No school

#### **June**
- **8 (F)** TOPS Art Festival
- **8-9 (F-S)** Elementary School Play
- **13 (W)** Site Council meeting, Library, 5-7 p.m.
- **20 (F)** Last student day
- **21 (M)** Last teacher day
- **24 (S)** Site Council Retreat

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