ATTRIBUTE 4: ACADEMIC RIGOR AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS: A “CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE”

Every school in our district has created a School Transformation Plan. These plans are based on seven attributes that are meant to guide reflection on and analysis of the school. Last month, Clara Scott and Jeannie Kuban looked at how to have a healthy, supportive school culture. This month, they discuss how TOPS nurtures high expectations for all its students.

By Clara Scott and Jeannie Kuban

As we continue our discussion of the TOPS Transformation Plan, this month’s focus is the “Culture of Excellence” that is a part of all of our programs. Parents select TOPS for our high academic standards and student success. At TOPS, we enjoy a strong partnership with parents who share our high expectations. Parent commitment to academic rigor is expressed through countless volunteer hours devoted to the enhancement of student learning on a daily basis. Many parents often share their special skills and expertise with TOPS students.

Our school has an amazing number of activities and programs that enrich and enhance student learning. These wonderful programs include:

- Speech Tournament
- Young Writers’ Conference
- Book-It
- Sonics Reading Program
- Drama Performances
- Poetry Festival
- Math Triads
- Math Olympiad
- Visual Art Instruction
- NSL Inquiry-Based Family Nights
- Dance Instruction
- Science Program for all middle school students

Aligning curriculum in all core content areas is necessary for continuity of meaningful instruction in grades K-8. This seamless approach helps all students meet standards by clarifying instructional expectations in all grade levels. This year, TOPS teachers will complete an alignment of the writing curriculum. Skills, strategies, forms and purposes of writing, and assessments will be articulated at every grade level. In this way, our writing instruction will become more specific and intentional.

Teachers at TOPS continue to learn and implement new math curricula (K-8) and the new Pegasus reading program (K-5). Rethinking instructional choices at all grade levels is a frequent topic for professional reflection during staff collaboration meetings and through staff development. At TOPS we want to provide equitable, quality education for all of our students. In order to do this we need time for important dialogue. This year, the TOPS staff has been meeting for study circles to address our achievement gap. The information we receive and discover through study circles empowers us to focus on our disproportionality. By identifying appropriate, effective instructional strategies and support, we can meet the needs of every TOPS student so academic success becomes a reality for every girl and boy in our school. We absolutely desire to sustain and nurture our culture of academic excellence at TOPS as we explore ways to meet the needs of students with unique learning challenges.
WHAT IS MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION?
SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE TOPS COALITION
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

By Tilman Smith

TOPS has a rich and consistent history of working to reverse disproportionality, the idea that a disproportionate number of children of color do not succeed academically in the current educational system. From its beginning on the Stevens Elementary campus, TOPS has always had some sort of disproportionality committee set up to look at the ways in which education was organized to reflect the needs of white children more effectively than the needs of children of color. Since the early 1990’s, parents, administrators, and teachers at TOPS have met more formally to discuss these issues, first in the Diversity Committee, and then in the Diversity Issues Coalition (now the Coalition for Social Justice). These monthly meetings produced initiatives to recruit more families of color, provide more multicultural assemblies, and raise money for multicultural books for our library. In 2000, Gary Tubbs initiated a specific discussion about the achievement gap, which provided a framework for us to make more tangible and long lasting changes towards eliminating disproportionality. Also in 2000, TOPS held its first Race and Education Study Circles, where over 40 teachers, administrators, and parents came together to deliberately discuss the effects of racism in education and at TOPS. One of the results of these discussions was a growing understanding that multicultural education was an antidote to racism in education.

Now it is time for us to begin examining what multicultural education is, as well as what changes may occur in the classrooms with its integration into our curriculum. Race and education study circles will continue, with both TOPS teachers and parents meeting regularly to develop a collective understanding. Hopefully these study circles, which promise to deepen our understanding of the insidious nature of racism and its impact on all children, will become institutionalized, insuring that this important agenda is not compromised by shifting priorities. Below is a short article from “Rethinking Schools” that will provide a beginning description of what multicultural education is and why is it important for all of our children.

A FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

What is multicultural education? At its best, multiculturalism is an ongoing process of questioning, revising, and struggling to create greater equity in every nook and cranny of school life — whether in curriculum materials, school staffing policies, discipline procedures, teaching strategies, or course offerings. And it is part of a broader movement to create a more equitable society. It is a fight against racism and other forms of oppression, including those based on class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, or national origin and language. It is a fight for economic and social justice.

But this is not to say that multiculturalism is polemical or politically partisan in a narrow sense. In curriculum, for example, academic rigor is impossible without a multicultural standpoint. Suppose one is teaching about the American Revolution. Traditional — non-multicultural — curricular approaches to the revolution focus on the actions of Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and other “great men.” But in 1776, the majority of people in the 13 colonies were women, African Americans, or Native Americans. They pursued their dreams in ways that profoundly impacted the revolution. For instance, when enslaved African Americans in the South discovered that the rhetoric of freedom excluded them, they fled in droves, dramatically influencing the war, leading to what some scholars have called “the largest slave insurrection in American history.” There is no way to make sense of events following the Declaration of Independence — or any other historical era — without a multicultural perspective.

Such a perspective is not simply about explaining society, it is about changing it. Multiculturalism interrogates the world from a critical and activist standpoint: Who benefits and who suffers from any particular arrangement? How can we make it more just? At a superficial level, multicultural education celebrates diversity. More deeply, it equips educators, students, and parents to recognize and critique how some differences lead to deficit and others to privilege. And it compels us to seek alternatives.

In the classroom, multiculturalism means examining teaching materials for bias and omission, but also requires that we ask hard questions of ourselves and our classrooms. Are our students fairly served? Does our choice of lessons favor some students over others? Do our expectations of students differ based on race, ethnicity, nationality, class, or gender?

From “Rethinking Schools,” Fall 2000

For more information about joining the Race and Education Study Circles, please call Garry Owens at 206-782-2565, or e-mail at gomojo@earthlink.net. For more information about the Coalition for Social Justice, please call Tilman Smith at 206-526-0620, or e-mail at tilman4@attbi.com

Information is also available on the TOPS website.
A MESSAGE FROM CLARA SCOTT

Spring is a busy time of the year at TOPS. Staff members continue to reflect on their goals for the year and provide students with quality learning opportunities. We have many opportunities to celebrate student growth and achievements. Our speech tournament series has wrapped up for the year. It has been delightful to watch so many students deliver such well-prepared speeches. Judges recognized the following students for their exceptional presentations:

**Oral Interpretation**
- 1st Place: Catherine Means
- 2nd Place: Kevin Courtney
- 3rd Place: Raphael Furry
- 4th Place: Genna White

**Expository**
- 1st Place: Ryan Zemke
- 2nd Place: Abby Chin-Martin
- 3rd Place: Abigail Roth
- 4th Place Tie: Sam Woestin & Michael Haruta

**Storytelling**
- 1st Place: Ava Ames
- 2nd Place: Jessica Badgeley
- 3rd Place: Nick Thompson
- 4th Place: Jonathan Reingold

**Editorial Commentary**
- 1st Place Tie: Zoe Barker-Aderim & Adlai Pappy II
- 2nd Place: Zak Luke
- 3rd Place: Mikaela Winter
- 4th Place: Veronica Galvin

Third, fifth, sixth and eighth grade students have completed their ITBS testing and students in grades three and six have completed their Direct Writing Assessments. Later this month, students in 4th and 7th grade will be completing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. On March 27, we recognized 127 middle school students who made Honor Roll at the end of the quarter, with grade point averages of 3.167 or above. It is always a pleasure to celebrate the successes of TOPS students!

Spring is also a time to look ahead to our new school year. The Building Leadership Team faced the challenge of allocating our budget in a way that supports our mission and transformation goals. Just as TOPS is going through transformation, so is the district’s central office. Although there is less money to spend at the district level, schools are being given more choice in the services they receive. Rather than getting the services that the district feels are necessary, central administration has created a demand-driven system in which schools buy back the services they need. Unfortunately, we are facing a reduction in support services and facilities services. We know that the instrumental music program will take on a new form at TOPS and we are exploring ways to keep our building and grounds safe and clean through stewardship programs and parent volunteers. Though our decisions were difficult, it was reassuring to have our new mission statement to guide us as we continually thought about what would be best for TOPS students.

We are getting more and more excited as our auction approaches. Mr. Denton and I are planning a slumber party that will be auctioned off. With reduced funding in the state, district, and school, it is more important than ever that we all help to make our auction a huge success. We look forward to seeing you there!

Cheers!

Clara

Practicing throwing mechanics.
**REPORT FROM TOPS FORUM ON CHOOSING A HIGH SCHOOL**

By Leo Griffin

More than a dozen eighth grade students and at least thirty parents came in from the cold on February 26th to hear ideas about choosing a high school. Representatives from the Seattle School District, high school counselors, and most importantly, high school students, provided their opinions, experience and knowledge at the recent high school forum.

Ron McGlone and Wiley Carter, Enrollment Service Representatives from the district explained the highlights of the high school assignment plan. They included details about choices, waitlisting, and tiebreakers.

Students Jessica Paulson from Garfield and Sean Sweeney from Roosevelt gave articulate answers to audience questions such as: What do you like about your school? If you had to choose again would you pick the same school? and Give us one piece of advice about choosing a high school. Sean, who went to Blanchet as a freshman, was able to provide insight on the difference between his two schools and why he switched over to Roosevelt.

Victor Larsen (an advisor from University Prep who many may know as the facilitator of middle school forums) and Garfield counselor Carolyn Barge rounded out the program by offering information for students on how to keep from being lost in a big school. They also addressed ways to handle the situation of your kid wanting to go to a different school than the one their parents prefer.

Do you have a seventh grader and think you’ll be likely to have some of the same questions next year? Show up at next year’s forum on How to Choose a High School!

Thanks to Jennifer Murray and Mary Sue Galvin for putting on such a great event.

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**GOODBYE FROM LOREN SMITH**

Dear TOPS Community,

I left TOPS rather quickly in early February and did not get a chance to say goodbye and thank you to the many people who welcomed me and were so supportive of the BOC program. I agonized about leaving TOPS because I loved working there. However, when it became apparent to me in January that the district was planning to reduce the TOPS BOC Program to 40 students and 2 teachers for next fall I had to think quickly and hard about my priorities. I realized that I wanted to continue to be a BOC teacher. Since a BOC job became available at John Stanford in January and I would be losing my job at TOPS in June, I decided to apply. I am getting settled in at my new school and am excited by the challenge.

It was marvelous to work at a school where I made lifelong friendships with colleagues and where I knew many parents. I felt totally comfortable to be myself at TOPS. I believe that we can do a better job when we have the support and freedom to be ourselves. I regret that I was not better at expressing my thanks in a timely manner to the people who were so generous and supportive of the BOC program.

Here are some of my thanks (I apologize for not remembering many people’s names): Thank you to Debbie and her daughter for thinking of us on Halloween and making cupcakes for all our kids and helping us give them a sweet-filled party. Thank you to the family this year who made caramel apples for all 60 of our kids plus 25 ESL kids so that they could experience an American tradition. Thank you to all the families who donated books, toys and clothes. Throughout the year we send our students home with bags filled with these treasures, much to their delight. Thank you to the parents who have come on field trips with us and those who have helped Linda Downing assemble translated school information packs for our kids. Thank you to everyone who has donated food for the holiday food baskets and clothing and presents for the winter gift-giving. You can’t begin to imagine what it is like to deliver these items to our families. They are incredibly appreciative and grateful for your generosity. And, I believe it is one of the things we do that helps them feel part of the greater TOPS community. Thank you to the students who have worked with our students, helping them with reading and writing. Thank you to the parents that have volunteered in our classrooms, in particular thank you Ann. I know I have probably forgotten lots of other acts of kindness but know that they were much appreciated by the staff and students in the BOC program. I really miss TOPS. I am grateful for my two and a half years and wish you all well.

Warmly, Loren Smith
THANK YOU TO OUR NO BAKE SALE DONORS!

By Elaine Moberly and Laurie Black

Thank you to the following families, friends and faculty of TOPS who have given to the 2001 NO BAKE SALE fundraiser. We have raised $50,000.

The funding of our counselor, volunteer coordinator, drama and music programs, before/after school programs, and elementary school art depends on the dollars that we raised. Thank you to Carla DewBerry and Peggy Reible for all of their help with processing the checks and charges.

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Paul Franson/Marlies van Bergeijk
Peggy Riehle/Benson Low
Peter & Monica Hinchley
Peter Dewey/Marian Valentine

Continued on page 7.
TOPS Auction 2002 is set for Saturday, April 27, at the Asian Resource Center — the excellent venue we’ve enjoyed in recent years. We look forward once again to an extraordinarily successful event, one that we hope will fill in the gaps from serious budget cuts that are already in the works.

Thank you! Thanks to everyone who contributed items to the silent and live auction, to the parents and teachers and children who worked so hard on their class art projects, to the office staff who helped collect items and answer questions, and to all the volunteers who have already spent many hours working behind the scenes and those just gearing up for the final preparations.

What the committee does. As you turn in your items and their corresponding forms, committee members begin the daunting task of recording, cataloging, numbering, and sorting through the items for both the silent and live auctions. This year we have new software to help organize and keep track of everything involving the auction. After receiving all the items, the committee enters and details each item, writes descriptions of live auction items for the auctioneer, and creates bid sheets and display cards for things that are gift certificates rather than physical items. They then decide how everything will be displayed on the tables, sometimes combining items together to create a more compelling offering. Each item is evaluated as to whether it goes into the silent or live part of the auction, based on a number of factors. This is all done with the final goal in mind—maximizing the dollars that go to the school.

This year it was necessary to raise the price of the tickets. One of the basics of running a successful auction is to cover the costs with ticket sales so that most of the money raised goes to the school, rather than to expenses. In the future, we hope to get people to help underwrite some of the cost of putting on the event by donating money, services or food. If you’d rather not buy a ticket and stay for the dinner you can still come and bid on silent auction items.

New this year:
- Auction items will be posted on the TOPS website so you can see in advance what is being offered and maybe plan to go in with another family on one of the bigger items.
- A raffle! We might be able to sell tickets at the Taste of TOPS as well at the night of the auction, so even those who don’t attend can be in on the fun and help the cause.

Please help by volunteering. As of this writing, we still have some important volunteer jobs to be filled.

On an ongoing basis we need someone to take charge of the four home mailings we do each year and a Procurement Chair (a committee job) who helps our families with ideas and strategies for getting donations.

Right now we need people to help do the descriptive writing for the auction catalog and signs.

On the day of the auction we need someone to help with lighting, volunteers to help set up the site, people to work the registration table, help with banking, and someone to make a coffee run.

We’ll be sending out thank-you notes, and will need people to help stuff envelopes.

Please contact our Auction Volunteer Coordinator, Tammy Luthy at 322-3784 or jheft@seanet.com if you can help.

If you have any questions or ideas, or you’d like to volunteer to work with the auction committee, just call auction committee chair Dan Tobin at 325-8155. Thanks in advance for all your hard work. Now, more than ever our fundraising efforts are critical to keeping TOPS a great school!
TOPS CALENDAR
APRIL – JUNE 2002

APRIL
4 (TH) .................... 1st & 2nd grade poetry festival in the morning, Taste of TOPS in the evening
5 (F) ..................... Kindergarten ABC Party in lunch room
8-12 (M-F) ............ Spring Break
15 (M) .................... Race and Education Study Circle II, TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.
Growing Up Female, program by Planned Parenthood, 6:30 p.m.
17 (W) ................... Site Council Meeting, 5:00 p.m. in the LRC
18 (Th) ................... Growing Up Female, program by Planned Parenthood, 6:30 p.m.
19 (F) .................... Kindergarten ABC Party in lunch room
22 (M) .................... Race and Education Study Circle II, TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.
Growing Up Female, program by Planned Parenthood, 6:30 p.m.
27 (Sat) .................. TOPS Auction
29 (M) .................... Race and Education Study Circle II, TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.

MAY
2 (TH) .................... Class Picture day
6 (M) ..................... Race and Education Study Circle II, TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.
8 (W) .................... Site Council @ 5:00 p.m. in the LRC State of the School Address
11 (T) .................... 2nd-7th graders attend Holes, SCT, 10:00 a.m.
16 (TH) .................. Spring Choir Concert, time TBA
17 (F) .................... Learning Improvement Day, No School
22-24 (W-F) .......... 7th grade camp
27 (M) .................... Memorial Day Holiday
29 (W) .................... Room Reps Meeting, 7:00 p.m.
31-June 1 (F-Sat) .... Art Fest and Elementary School Play

JUNE
1 (Sat) ..................... Elementary School Play
4-7 (T-F) ............... 8th grade camp
5-6 (W-TH)............ 3rd-4th grade & BOC, Camp Arnold
11 (T) .................... Spring Concert, 10:45 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.
12 (W) .................... Site Council Meeting, 5:00 p.m.
12-14 (W-F) ........... 5th grade camp, Camp Kirby
14 (F)...................... 2nd grade Slumber Party
18 (T) ..................... 8th grade Passage
19 (W) .................... Last student day

NO-BAKE SALE DONORS
Continued from page 5.

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Roxanne Dover/David Robinson
Rustin Thompson/Ann Hedreen
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Sai Cheon /Sin Fong Kuok
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Steve Castor-Peck
Steven Sitco
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Susan Davis & Bruce Kochis
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Yumi Hiraga & Keith Cohon
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A TRIP TO MISSION RIDGE

By Sophie Raider, 7th grade

24 February, 2002

MISSION RIDGE, Wenatchee, Washington- The TOPS Ski Weekend in Wenatchee and at Mission Ridge went wonderfully. About twenty families came on both Thursday and Friday during mid-winter break. Most hung out at Cedars Inn in Wenatchee on Thursday, swimming in the pool, relaxing in the hot tub, and lounging in the lobby and their rooms watching TV and talking.

On Friday morning, TOPS families woke up early to get to Mission Ridge by opening at nine o’clock. The great thing about the motel is that it is only about twelve miles, fifteen to twenty minutes, from Mission Ridge. Once there, families could enjoy the beautiful view of the Columbia River and Wenatchee, plus the empty lines at the lifts. Tickets were only fifteen dollars (six bucks off) for students who got a 3.0 grade point average or higher. All they needed to bring was their report cards and I.D. to register. Lessons for both kids and adults, rentals, ski-check (only a dollar for all day), and childcare were all available.

One of the best advantages of Mission Ridge is its lifts. You can go to the very summit and still take a relatively easy run. The runs are for all skill levels but are all exceedingly long and with beautiful scenery. Unfortunately though, the lift to the summit was closed on Friday due to 90-mile-per-hour winds, although on Saturday it was open.

Another good thing about Mission Ridge is its quality. Everything is clean and in good condition. The staff is kind and it has a beautiful lodge with good food at reasonable prices. The lodge has an outside deck, inside seating, a restaurant, and casual food service. In addition, the lower floors of the lodge house the rental shop and bathrooms.

After skiing until closing at four, families returned to Cedar’s Inn in Wenatchee and lounged until six o’clock when there was a TOPS potluck in the lobby. There they shared a variety of fantastic foods, including tamales, sausage, calzones, chicken, pasta salad, and a delightful selection of cakes and chocolates for desert.

There was almost one hundred percent participation in the potluck and by the end of the evening there was still some food left.

Saturday morning dawned as another sunny day. And families once again woke up early, enjoying the hotel-provided donuts, bagels, coffee, and juice. At the slopes, the snow was kind of icy, but melted as the day went on. By noon, the bottom of the hill was a slush pit, but then at about two o’clock it started snowing and the snow quality went up from there. Many were reluctant to leave at four o’clock, just as the snow was becoming perfect.

Saturday evening was spent much like the last. Many watched the Olympics in their rooms or swam. For dinner, about ten families went to the same Mexican restaurant, La Fuente (The Fountain), there, they had a delicious dinner. There were all sorts of Mexican foods to choose from, all great. Even the smaller kids loved it because they had cheeseburgers.

On Sunday morning not many people went up to Mission Ridge. Most packed up early, checked out and drove home. Some explored the many antique shops and the little Mexican store where you can buy fabulous handmade tamales to reheat in your home.

The whole trip was filled with beautiful scenery and wonderful views. On the way back through the mountains, we passed through dozens of apple orchards and drove along snowy riverbanks. The weekend of skiing and snowboarding was definitely a magnificent one and I hope to see you all there next year.
This skiing stuff is FUN!

Lida takes a break.
ROGERS PLAYGROUND WORK PARTY

On February 9, 2002, Mayor Greg Nickels joined TOPS kids and parents for a work party at Rogers Playground in honor of Neighborhood Appreciation Day.

(Photo: Jules James)

VOLEYBALL, 2002

By Carolyn Papineau

“Success is a journey, not a destination.” Ben Sweetland

For those of you unfamiliar with our team, I’d like to introduce my assistant coach and myself. My name is Carolyn Papineau, and I played college volleyball at the University of Puget Sound and the University of Washington. My assistant coach is Angela Oakley. She played at the University of South Florida as a setter. Both of us began working with the TOPS program last year. I’ve previously coached at the high school and college level; this is my first experience with middle school athletes.

Practice has started and we headed into our first match on March 16th against a tough opponent: Whitman Middle School. We have a great group this year which has impressed, surprised and inspired us already. Our team graduated a big group of players last year, so it was great that twelve new players showed up for practice-most of them enthusiastic 6th graders. Nothing could make us happier than to have the foundation for a strong volleyball program at TOPS.

Teamwork, respect, commitment and FUN ... if I had to choose, these would be the concepts I’d love the girls to come away with from their experience in the volleyball program. I feel lucky to have young athletes to work with as they forge some of these important building blocks of life.

You are invited to come out, support us, cheer us on and encourage your 5th grade daughter to join the team next year!
Partners in P.E.

By Don Zemke

Partner and small group activities in physical education give students opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships, improve self-esteem, and learn responsible behaviors. By working together, students create new challenges that force them to use their brainpower to overcome obstacles.

The following photographs illustrate some of the partner activities we’ve been having fun with in P.E.
STUPID FAIRY TALES

By Annie Gage

Jon Scieszka, creator of such books as The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Fairy Tales, wants to encourage boys to read. A former teacher, he writes books to reach the boys in the back of the classroom who aren’t too fired up on reading. “Literacy statistics show that we are not giving boys what they need to be successful readers,” he says.

To help meet the need, he recently started Guys Read, a literacy program focused on the needs of boys. It offers parents, educators, and librarians tangible ways to engage boys in reading.

For more information visit http://www.guysread.com

(Adapted from an article in NEA Today)