LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

By Annie Gage

To talk with Ms. Scott and Mr. Tubbs about their work together is to witness a mutual admiration and respect society that extends to the whole TOPS community. I spoke with the two of them in mid-December to learn how they feel about their upcoming transition, what their experience together has been like, and what their hopes are for the future.

Our co-principals spoke glowingly of working together. They describe themselves as friends who share a similar vision and philosophy. Working intentionally at having an equal partnership, they made the shift to being co-principals in as subtle ways as putting Ms. Scott’s name first on the TOPS letterhead. Because of all the cooperation and collaboration that it requires, they agree that a co-principal arrangement should not be imposed upon a school. Mr. Tubbs felt that his “more brusque” style was complemented by Ms. Scott’s warm people skills. She in turn learned from Mr. Tubbs how to narrow her focus from the global to the practical.

Mr. Tubbs’ last day at TOPS will be on January 31st. From here, he will become the full-time principal of South Shore School. It is a brand new school that is being developed in South Seattle by Seattle Public Schools in partnership with The New School Foundation. In its first year, it will be home to pre-K and kindergartners. Each year, a grade will be added until it includes pre-K through eighth grade. Features of this new school include small class size and year-round school.

I asked Mr. Tubbs to name a unique contribution that he made to TOPS. He quickly replied that it was his unrelenting focus on children who are historically under-served. He explained that he helped raise the consciousness of staff so that they can embrace the concept of Attacking the Gap. He appreciates the experience TOPS gave him of working at a school in which parents are engaged in meaningful ways.

Ms. Scott shares Mr. Tubbs’ passionate commitment to Attacking the Gap. She hopes to integrate its goal, decreasing the achievement gap among school students, into TOPS culture in such a way that staff and parents will welcome it and be comfortable with the ways it enhances the schools’ culture. Eventually, she would like to see TOPS serve as a model for other schools that are Attacking the Gap.

Growth that evolves organically is a hallmark of Ms. Scott’s dreams for the future of TOPS. She spoke of her hopes that TOPS can eventually integrate programs in music, world-languages, and service learning into the regular curriculum. However, both she and Mr. Tubbs emphasize that such growth must happen at a pace the school can withstand. Without adequate time, money, and space, it is not possible to build these new programs well. Ms. Scott requests patience! Along with Attacking the Gap, she named staying focused as one of the biggest challenges at TOPS. For instance, in such a dynamic school, it is crucial to keep track of how a variety of budgets tie together. Otherwise, money gets wasted and opportunities get lost. During our conversation, Mr. Tubbs commended the site council for its work in aligning energies and monies at TOPS.

SAV E THE DATE

Gary Tubbs’ Farewell Celebration

Wednesday January 23rd, 2002
6:30 – 8:30 P.M.
TOPS Lunchroom
Details to be announced in early January

TOPS at Seward
2500 Franklin Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102
Phone: (206) 252-3510
Fax: (206) 252-3511

Co-Principals:
Clara Scott
Gary Tubbs

Site Council Chair:
Betsy Scott

NEWSLETTER ONLINE

The TOPS newsletters are available online in PDF format, usually before the printed copy arrives in your mailbox! From the TOPS home page (http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops), click on Hot News Spots, then TOPS Newsletters.
NEWS FROM THE SITE COUNCIL

DECEMBER 11, 2001

By Monica Hinckley

PRINCIPALS REPORT

Gary Tubbs announced the Young Authors upcoming event on December 20. Derek Munson was hired to come in and read from his book, Enemy Pie. Parents are invited to participate by reading to students between 12:45 and 1:45. Council was also informed of other upcoming events: the Middle School dance (12/19), the choir performance (12/18) and the Nickelodeon Sponk assembly on Friday which will be attended by all elementary students who returned permission slips from parents.

The Assistant Principal search has been narrowed down to seven applicants who will be interviewed over two days in January. Clara Scott has formed a volunteer committee for this process. TOPS can then make a strong recommendation to the superintendent, but ultimately it is the latter’s decision. We can, however, opt to hire only as an interim position, or re-advertise if necessary.

Lastly, the Adopt-A-Family program is underway and much is needed this year. Everyone can help by getting the word out and sending in items.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Carla Griswold reported that the building committee of staff, faculty and parents met last week to discuss how to spend the surplus ($30,000) from the previous budget. Items mentioned were to catch up on supply budget, start up funding for Nicole Titus, ESL teacher, share bilingual tutor cost, copier supplies (lease is more than originally anticipated), nursing supplies, $2,000 for volunteer coordinator, BOC camp, BOC field trips, family support workers, and staff and faculty stipend for Leadership Team meetings.

The make-up of the Leadership Team membership was discussed and it was recommended that it consist of one parent (at large), one Site Council parent and also from the executive committee of the Site Council. A two year term with a one year break between terms was also discussed. The need for a diverse membership in both the Leadership Team and Site Council was stressed.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer Peggy Riehle presented the July-November financial report. Budgeted expenses were on the art, drama and music programs ($6,265.47), multi-cultural assemblies ($300.00), classroom supplies ($4,900), technology ($2,977.03), world languages ($4,960), newsletter and roster ($2,599.88), chess club ($1,000), immediate assistance ($579.58), auction and no-bake sale ($1,328.34), lunchroom loans ($75.00), Site Council/finance ($892.50) and staff appreciation ($202.86). Rogers playground has been fully funded by the auction – $36,700 in total.

That said, the No-Bake revenues have been trickling in very slowly. (More discussion of this in the Fund Development report below.) $6,000 has been received for December. The prior year’s United Way No-Bake funds are still arriving.

Funding has been requested to improve the gym’s volleyball courts as TOPS has been selected as an arena for Middle School volleyball competition. Equipment needed to do this would be a referee stand and a safety net and pads. $1,000 was approved by Friend of Tops for spending on these upgrades. In addition, the basketball hoops need to be moved due to a design flaw which prohibits all four hoops from being in use at the same time. Because this would entail some structural reworking, estimated cost is around $6,300. Members are looking into a cheaper, movable style and the potential sale/disposal of old hoops for possible funding of new ones. It was noted that a Facilities Committee is needed to address such issues. Lastly, climbing wall mats have been ordered.

The Thursday lunchtime Choir now has 90 students. Friends of TOPS approved a request for $350 for sheet music.

The Americorps budget ($6,000) is untapped this year and it was decided to reserve this for the Counselor position for which TOPS lost funding from district for the 2001-2002 school year, the importance of which was remarked on by many members.

COMMITEE REPORTS

FUND DEVELOPMENT – Jennifer Shaw reported that the No-Bake sale hasn’t really taken off. The goal is $60,000 and we are only up to $18,000. Announcements in the newsletter, go-homes and mailings will be forthcoming. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. The Thursday lunchtime Choir now has 90 students. Friends of TOPS approved a request for $350 for sheet music.

DECEMBER 11, 2001

By Monica Hinckley

PRINCIPALS REPORT

Gary Tubbs announced the Young Authors upcoming event on December 20. Derek Munson was hired to come in and read from his book, Enemy Pie. Parents are invited to participate by reading to students between 12:45 and 1:45. Council was also informed of other upcoming events: the Middle School dance (12/19), the choir performance (12/18) and the Nickelodeon Sponk assembly on Friday which will be attended by all elementary students who returned permission slips from parents.

The Assistant Principal search has been narrowed down to seven applicants who will be interviewed over two days in January. Clara Scott has formed a volunteer committee for this process. TOPS can then make a strong recommendation to the superintendent, but ultimately it is the latter’s decision. We can, however, opt to hire only as an interim position, or re-advertise if necessary.

Lastly, the Adopt-A-Family program is underway and much is needed this year. Everyone can help by getting the word out and sending in items.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Carla Griswold reported that the building committee of staff, faculty and parents met last week to discuss how to spend the surplus ($30,000) from the previous budget. Items mentioned were to catch up on supply budget, start up funding for Nicole Titus, ESL teacher, share bilingual tutor cost, copier supplies (lease is more than originally anticipated), nursing supplies, $2,000 for volunteer coordinator, BOC camp, BOC field trips, family support workers, and staff and faculty stipend for Leadership Team meetings.

The make-up of the Leadership Team membership was discussed and it was recommended that it consist of one parent (at large), one Site Council parent and also from the executive committee of the Site Council. A two year term with a one year break between terms was also discussed. The need for a diverse membership in both the Leadership Team and Site Council was stressed.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer Peggy Riehle presented the July-November financial report. Budgeted expenses were on the art, drama and music programs ($6,265.47), multi-cultural assemblies ($300.00), classroom supplies ($4,900), technology ($2,977.03), world languages ($4,960), newsletter and roster ($2,599.88), chess club ($1,000), immediate assistance ($579.58), auction and no-bake sale ($1,328.34), lunchroom loans ($75.00), Site Council/finance ($892.50) and staff appreciation ($202.86). Rogers playground has been fully funded by the auction – $36,700 in total.

That said, the No-Bake revenues have been trickling in very slowly. (More discussion of this in the Fund Development report below.) $6,000 has been received for December. The prior year’s United Way No-Bake funds are still arriving.

Funding has been requested to improve the gym’s volleyball courts as TOPS has been selected as an arena for Middle School volleyball competition. Equipment needed to do this would be a referee stand and a safety net and pads. $1,000 was approved by Friend of Tops for spending on these upgrades. In addition, the basketball hoops need to be moved due to a design flaw which prohibits all four hoops from being in use at the same time. Because this would entail some structural reworking, estimated cost is around $6,300. Members are looking into a cheaper, movable style and the potential sale/disposal of old hoops for possible funding of new ones. It was noted that a Facilities Committee is needed to address such issues. Lastly, climbing wall mats have been ordered.

The Thursday lunchtime Choir now has 90 students. Friends of TOPS approved a request for $350 for sheet music.

The Americorps budget ($6,000) is untapped this year and it was decided to reserve this for the Counselor position for which TOPS lost funding from district for the 2001-2002 school year, the importance of which was remarked on by many members.

COMMITEE REPORTS

FUND DEVELOPMENT – Jennifer Shaw reported that the No-Bake sale hasn’t really taken off. The goal is $60,000 and we are only up to $18,000. Announcements in the newsletter, go-homes and mailings will be forthcoming. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth. A renewed effort will be made to let the parents know just what the fund raiser is for, i.e. where the money is spent. The TOPS web site will begin posting this information. Parent Room Reps can keep parents informed when an activity is sponsored by Friends of TOPS. Areas of developing student involvement in fundraising were suggested. A Support Your School Montana program is still coming forth.

COMMUNICATIONS – Thanks to funding, Marlies Van Bergeijk can continue to do the excellent job she has graced us with so far. She announced that there will be a Room Rep meeting in January after Site Council at 7:00. The Wednesday Go-Home Bulletin will be sent out every other week due to high cost of copying. Announcements that need to be made in-between will be on the electronic Go-Home on the web. There was discussion of limiting

Continued on page 2
WHAT ARE YOU DOING NEXT YEAR?

Spend money! Meet new people! Find out what’s really going on at TOPS – and be a part of it. It may feel like the school year just got underway, but now is the time to think about running for TOPS Site Council for the 2002-2003 school year. Site Council is the body of parents, teachers, and parents that manages the Building Budget (that’s the money the school receives from the district) and sets academic goals and policies.

TOPS students benefit from a high degree of parent participation, and the Site Council is one of the longstanding ways for parents to get involved. (This month, for example, the Site Council allocated $350 for sheet music for the new choir and approximately $1,000 to upgrade the volleyball court for district-league competition.)

Looking Back continued from page 1

With a new mission statement and the school’s focus on attacking the gap, parents may be wondering what qualities are being sought in the new assistant principal. Ms. Scott explained that a team, which includes teachers and parents, will begin interviewing for a vice-principal in early January. They intend to find someone who loves and respects kids in the whole TOPS K-8 range and believes in using teachable moments when disciplining children. The team wants a person who is very supportive of TOPS’ mission, receptive to the study circles and how we are attacking the gap, and who can kindly, lovingly tell parents “we can’t do all that” when we parents get excessively ambitious for our childrens’ school. And, they must be able to laugh!

Next year, the Site Council will need a new Chair, Assistant Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary in addition to specific grade representatives. The Site Council sends 5 parent representatives (4 from its members plus 1 parent at large) to the Leadership Team – the group of administrators, teachers, and parents that manages the Building Budget and sets academic goals and policies.

TOPS students benefit from a high degree of parent participation, and the Site Council is one of the longstanding ways for parents to get involved. (This month, for example, the Site Council allocated $350 for sheet music for the new choir and approximately $1,000 to upgrade the volleyball court for district-league competition.)

There are 6 meetings left in the 2001-2002 year; you are invited to come by and see what it’s all about. Meetings occur the 2nd Wednesday of every month from 5-7 pm. Got questions? Send an email to Gary Luke, this year’s Assistant Chair (gluke@sasquatchbooks.com).

Looking Back continued from page 1

With a new mission statement and the school’s focus on attacking the gap, parents may be wondering what qualities are being sought in the new assistant principal. Ms. Scott explained that a team, which includes teachers and parents, will begin interviewing for a vice-principal in early January. They intend to find someone who loves and respects kids in the whole TOPS K-8 range and believes in using teachable moments when disciplining children. The team wants a person who is very supportive of TOPS’ mission, receptive to the study circles and how we are attacking the gap, and who can kindly, lovingly tell parents “we can’t do all that” when we parents get excessively ambitious for our childrens’ school. And, they must be able to laugh!

Consistent with her value of patience and allowing things to evolve so that they can be done well, Ms. Scott reassures parents that if there is no top-notch candidate, TOPS will continue with an interim assistant principal and re-interview in the spring.

Final words?

Mr. Tubbs says that he has heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to serve here. He states that he has always felt supported – even in announcing his new endeavour. Despite her sadness at losing a close colleague, Ms. Scott feels happy for Mr. Tubbs and is excited at the opportunity to lead TOPS. She also reports feeling very supported by parents.

Site Council continued from page 2

the distribution of these (now) bi-weekly bulletins to the youngest student in the family to save paper (and trees).

DIVERSITY ISSUES COALITION – Gary Owens has stepped down as facilitator to focus on Middle School events. The second round of multi-cultural book purchases is under way. A study group is starting up and a new kick-off event is being considered. The Elwha/Klallam assembly was very successful.

DRAMA – The attendance at the production of Hamlet was good and it went very well. It was noted that the prop budget is low.

TECHNOLOGY – Kevin Crozier announced that the paid intern from the UW, Kim Lee, is working out well. Kevin is now conducting teacher trainings on Tuesdays. He would like to set a goal of having on-line report cards and additional communications via the web. He informed Council that next year’s budget should include funds for new and/or replacement computers.
SEPTEMBER 11: A PARENT’S REFLECTIONS

By Sally Buckley

As I viewed the searing sight of a great landmark exploding into dust, scores of floors and rooms full of people, the tower helplessly cascading into itself and into the streets below, I felt aware of a profound sense of darkness. I gazed into the midnight face of the anger and hatred that brought so many unnamed souls to sudden death.

Simultaneously, my thoughts flashed ahead; what can we say to our children, what assurance can we honestly give them that the world’s peoples are not on the brink of WWIII? What will our children learn from the modeling of a President who talks about swift vengeance? What lessons of citizen participation will they take from a Congress who, save Barbara Lee, quickly votes blanket support for whatever policy of armed pursuit the President declares?

From their classrooms, our youngest fashioned their own, hopeful wishes into the beautiful greetings of peace and love that graced our school’s entry hall this Fall.

Teachers, students, and staff poured their concern, anxiety, and care into delicious lunch time bake sales. They contributed the proceeds to the Red Cross relief for families of those injured, killed, or displaced in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania.

Margie and Mrs. B. led first graders in sending school supplies and support letters to Lower Manhattan first graders whose school was closed.

Ms. Hart’s eighth grade geography students, set to learn about the Middle East and Central Asia, suddenly found a more real world urgency motivating them to master the geography, economics, cultures, and history of Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In late October, they briefed the President (a.k.a. Clara Scott) on their country’s policy and resources in the U.S.-led search for terrorists.

Deep thanks to our teachers, staff, volunteer parents, Ms. Scott and Mr. Tubbs for guiding our kids to help the victims, discussing alternatives to violence, and in modeling the kind of dialog which is the very heart of our democracy.

THE TRANSFORMATION

By Clara Scott and Jeannie Kuban

All schools in our district have crafted School Transformation Plans. These plans are based on seven attributes that guide reflection and analysis by:

- Common Focus/Shared Vision
- Small, Safe, Personalized Learning Community
- Healthy, Supportive School Culture and Climate
- Academic Rigor and High Expectations for All Students: A “Culture of Excellence”
- Effective Curriculum and Instruction
- Flexible Structure
- Learning Partnerships

We will discuss one attribute of the TOPS plan every month in the school newsletter.

ATTRIBUTE #1: COMMON FOCUS/SHARED VISION

Tops Mission (what we do): We are committed to educating our students by using an anti-bias, multicultural approach in a safe and stimulating environment. We help all students to learn, to understand and honor diversity, to respect and care for themselves and others, to be responsible, and to achieve a high level of academic excellence. By eliminating the achievement gap, all students will meet or exceed standards, including students historically under-served by the public school system.

TOPS Vision (where we're going): We are creating a school that empowers students to be active participants, leaders, learners, and contributors to social justice.

TOPS revisited and reevaluated its vision and mission statements in August 2001. Staff and parent representatives clarified the ideals that drive our work and created plans for realizing our goals. We spent an entire day brainstorming, revising, and distilling what is most important to us as an educational community.

At TOPS we are fortunate to have an inclusive school community that supports our strong academic goals. We also nurture our students’ social and emotional well being, believing that a variety of factors contribute to success.

Working together as a school team is a large part of our common focus and shared vision. Our passionate and committed staff engages in a high level of communication, and respects diverse ideas. Fourth grade teacher Mary Chao engages her students in a challenging project about discrimination. She encourages her students to discuss the many forms discrimination takes by learning about diverse cultures and how people respond to differences. By working with their parents on this project, students make important connections that create a particularly meaningful learning experience.

Our staff shares a focus and commitment to increased collaborative time for planning and discussion in order to continuously improve the teaching and learning at TOPS.

Kevin Crozier, fifth grade teacher, keeps students excited

Continued on Page 5
TOPS CALENDAR
JANUARY 2002-JUNE 2002

DEC 22-Jan 6 ........ Winter break

JANUARY
9 (W) ............... Site Council, 7:00 p.m.
18 (F) ............... Martin Luther King Jr. Assembly
21 (M) ............... Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
22 (T) ............... 6th-8th grades attend The Wrestling Season at SCT, 10:00 a.m.
25 (F) ............... Skate King
30 (W) ............... K-3rd grades attend Charlotte’s Web at SCT, 10:30 a.m.
31 (TH) ............. End of the semester

FEBRUARY
1 (F) ............... Day between semesters, no school
8 (F) ............... Storytelling Speech Tournament
13 (W) ............... Site Council, 7:00 p.m.
14 (TH) ............. Kindergarten 100th day party
Grandparent’s day for 1st & 2nd graders, in the lunch room
15 (F) ............... Expository Speech Tournament
18-22 ............... Mid-Winter Break
25-March 1 ........ Direct Writing assessment

MARCH
1 (F) ............... Oral Interpretation speech tournament
4-8 ............... Direct Writing assessment
7 (TH) ............. Editorial Comment speech tournament
8 (F) ............... Professional Development day, No School
11-15 ............... ITBS Testing
12 (T) ............... 2nd-4th graders attend Into the West, SCT, 10:00 a.m.
13 (W) ............... Site Council, 7:00 p.m.
Room Rep meeting, 7:00 p.m.
14 (TH) ............. Showcase Assembly of all speech trophy winners
15 (F) ............... Professional Development Day, No School
18-22 ............... ITBS Testing
20-22 (W-F) ........ 6th Grade Camp, Camp Moran

APRIL
4 (TH) ............... 1st & 2nd grade poetry festival in the morning
5 (F) ............... Taste of Tops in the evening
8-12 (M-F) ........ Spring Break
17 (W) ............... Site Council Meeting @ 7:00 p.m. in the LRC
19 (F) ............... Third Quarter ends

MAY
2 (TH) ............... Class Picture day
4 (Sat) ............... TOPS Auction
8 (W) ............... Site Council @ 7:00 p.m. in the LRC
State of the School Address
14 (T) ............... 2nd-7th graders attend Holes, SCT, 10:00 a.m.
14-16 (T-TH) ........ 7th grade camp
17 (F) ............... Learning Improvement Day, No School
27 (M) ............... Memorial Day Holiday
29 (W) ............... Room Reps Meeting, 7:00 p.m.
31-June 1 (F-Sat) ... Art Fair and Elementary School Play

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

Transformation continued on page 13

about learning by teaching the American Revolution through the multiple perspectives of all groups of people involved during that time period. While the majority of TOPS students meet or exceed standards, we have a number of students who approach standards. TOPS teachers consistently engage in dialogue regarding the instructional changes necessary for each individual TOPS student to succeed. We are committed to increasing our own understanding of truly individualized learning for academic achievement. Willie Jones, Tabitha Beaupain, and Margie Butcher tutor students before school on a regular basis in order to meet these individualized needs.

We know that, in order to keep our mission and vision alive and vibrant, we must continue to revisit our common focus with all of our stakeholders. To keep our goals for TOPS students at the center of all we do, our staff development activities must be planned around a common, agreed-upon focus. A current example of this is the Study Circles organized for both staff and parents that encourage learning and understanding regarding the issues of race and education. We will continue to create a new balance and integration of intellectual, spiritual, and physical well being for our children.
MY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE GIRL’S BASKETBALL TEAM SO FAR…

By Tracy Tate, 7th grade

I really appreciate that the TOPS team has been so supportive of me considering that this is my first time playing on a team. My teammates have encouraged me and helped me feel more confident about what I am doing on the court.

My thoughts about our first game against McClure…

When we first started practice I thought that I would never be able to play in a game because I knew nothing about it. After we practiced and went over plays I began to learn more and more as I saw my teammates do the drills and got some patient coaching from Eric and Carmen. They began to help me a lot once they understood what I was going through.

When the game began I saw that Eric was going crazy because of what some of our players were (or weren’t) doing, so from then on I tried my hardest. I was able to get in the game, get a few rebounds and take a few shots which was a blast just getting into the game. We got some real strong play from Carolyn, Karlin and Sylvie. We ended up winning 40 to 30!

After the game I realized that this is a team sport and no matter what you did you still played a part in winning the game!
B-BALL GAME #1

By Michael Magista and Alec Springer, 8th grade

The basketball game on December 6 started off with the TOPS team coming out pretty nervous. The McClure team arrived rather confident. One of the main reasons for this was because one of the McClure players had a full beard and sideburns.

“That’s a grown man!” said #21 Elgin Hall, sounding worried.

The game started out pretty even with almost a steady tie throughout the first half. Near the second half, the TOPS team came ahead and dominated the challenging team in all-out, last ditch effort. The home team played it cool after they had established a ten-point lead. They held an acceptable lead for the remainder of the game and came out victorious, 53-43.

TOPS got some exceptional play from Zach, Taylor, and Lane. As always, Thomas coached a good game and managed to get all the players into the game.
TOPS FAMILY SKI WEEKEND

FEBRUARY 22-25, 2001

Many TOPS families have a tradition of meeting on the slopes of Mission Ridge for a family ski weekend during the latter part of winter break. We head east for dry snow and a chance for sun! Please join us as we once again head over for some fun in Wenatchee, Washington. Take your kids and a friend or two! All ages are invited.

Mission Ridge Ski area, twelve miles up from town, 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 January 20th 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, a 24-hour indoor pool, an outdoor hot tub, free local calls, and satellite TV. Micro-fridges and mini-suites with whirlpool tubs are also available.

A Family Potluck is planned at the hotel for Friday night, Feb. 22nd at 6 P.M. Please bring a dish for 8, some beverages, and plates/utensils/cups 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. Just show your Student ID card and your report card with a 3.0 GPA or better, fill out their registration form with a parent/guardian signature, and you will get $15 lift tickets! Registration/permission form for Mission Ridge 3.0 Club for Honor Roll students: http://www.missionridge.com/guest_services/rates/i30club.html or it is available at ski shows and at the ticket window.

Cedars Inn Hotel reservations: please call (800) 358-2074 or (509) 886-8000 by January 20th to reserve your room or send email via their website at: http://www.cedarshotels.com/CedarsInn-Wenatchee.html

To learn more about this fun tradition, please contact: Mary Sue Galvin at 323-6439

Clara Scott introduces the native American dancers who came to TOPS on December 14.
HAMLET – A REVIEW

By Logan Powers – 8th grade

For some Friday night entertainment my mother and I went to see the debut of the TOPS middle school performance of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, and “WOW!” is the only word that is able to do it justice. All right, that is perhaps a small exaggeration, but the overall play was astounding: the actors, the effects all added to the brilliance of this play.

The all star cast is composed of Mac Hamilton (8th grade) playing the evil uncle, Luz Garcia (8th grade) as the queen and the mother of Hamlet, Graham Downing (7th grade) as Horatio, and Soren Kounts (8th grade) as Hamlet. Others that I recognized involved in the success of the play were Will Harris (8th grade) as the gravedigger, Gregory Smart (8th grade) was in charge of the lights, and Katrina Nelson was the stage manager.

One of the effects that made this performance of Hamlet special was the use of other cast members simultaneously speaking the same words as Hamlet giving it an echo effect. The interesting echo effect of Hamlet’s thoughts were ingenious, although during the classic “To Be or Not To Be,” speech, my feeling was that the director should have left it a capella because with the echo it kind of took away some of the power of those famous words. But other than that, the echo effect was nothing less than fabulous.

Other simple objects were used to perform tasks for perfect sound effects, such as spinning ropes to create the sound of whipping wind.

The cast’s performance was just as breathtaking as the effects. Soren Kounts’ performance of Hamlet would have received a standing ovation from the Bard himself. Also, Mr. Downing’s performance of Horatio was so grand, a better portrayal could not have been done by a professional actor.

Altogether, the play was amazing. I was so impressed, that I came away wanting to try being in a school play and see if I could make as good of a performance as the actors that night. “To grunt and sweat under a weary life” or to excel as an actor, that is the question. In short, we were entertained.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON HAMLET

By Karlin Castor-Peck, 8th grader

The classic Shakespearean play “Hamlet” was brought to life by a talented cast of middle school students. With the help and guidance of play director Todd Jamieson, the students performed their play to classmates, parents and teachers on two different nights.

Although you are probably saying to yourself that when you have seen one “Hamlet”, you’ve seen them all, that is a false statement. The audience’s attention was captured by making the entire TOPS gym the stage of this shortened story, and, even though the cast had a limited time to practice, it was all pulled together by a well-played Hamlet, Soren Kounts.

Each actor and actress showed an outstanding amount of concentration and dedication, and acted as if they dealt with their characters within and outside of the play.

This tragic love story ended with a standing ovation from the audience and a proud cast taking their bows.

SCHOOL TOURS

Tours of TOPS elementary classrooms will begin on January 15th and continue through February. They take place on Tuesday mornings from 9:30-1:00 a.m. No appointment is necessary, but visitors need to check in at the main office.

Middle School visits will take place on Wednesdays from 9:30-11:00 a.m., on the following dates: Feb 28, March 7, March 14, and March 21.
INTRODUCING CHOIR DIRECTOR
SARI BREZNAU

By Laura Bohor Roth

If you’ve found yourself in the TOPS hallways on a recent Thursday, you might wonder about the small army of kids pounding up the middle school stairs during lunch. These 48 second through fourth grade students are making their way to the music room for 30 minutes of singing with TOPS’ new choir director, Sari Breznau.

Sari (rhymes with “Mary”) was hired in late October to direct and build a choral program, beginning with those students who wish to sing in a choir on a volunteer basis. And volunteer they did. By the end of the second week of choir this November, the elementary choir was filled with 48 enthusiastic kids. The middle school choir (which includes fifth graders) has about 28 students. Both choirs sang at the Winter Assembly on December 18 despite having met together only three times! They were a big hit, and Sari hopes they can perform at another assembly soon.

In the meantime, the choir will have a chance to settle in and learn some great music for a performance with the instrumental music program this spring.

“It was a bit overwhelming at first,” Sari admits, “but the kids are really engaged and so enthusiastic about what we’re doing that I didn’t want to have to turn anyone away.”

Sari knows what it’s like to really want to be in a choir. As a sixth grader, she got permission to cut school early each week so she could hop a bus from Edmonds all the way to downtown Seattle – for rehearsals with Seattle Girls Choir!

Sari attended Western Washington University in Bellingham and graduated in 1999 with a degree in music with emphasis in the choral arts. For the past year, she’s been an Americorps volunteer with one of the city’s premier choral companies, Seattle Pro Musica. At Pro Musica, Sari works as the “education outreach coordinator.” She organizes a program that brings a small set of Pro Musica singers to local elementary schools for workshops. For almost two years Sari has directed a women’s choir at the Church of Mary Magdalene, a non-denominational church that serves homeless women in downtown Seattle. One Sunday a month, Sari takes the choir out to perform at other churches throughout the city. Sari is also a member of “Circus Contraption,” a troupe which she describes as a “kind of high-energy cabaret circus” of jugglers, acrobats, aerialists, trapeze artists, and of course, musicians. Sari sings and plays trumpet with the eclectic orchestra which accompanies the group.

If you find yourself at school some Thursday, feel free to follow the stream of kids to the music room at lunchtime and see what they are up to. You might just be convinced to stay awhile. (See article below). In any case, be sure to say hello and welcome Ms. Sari Breznau to the TOPS community!

THE CHOIR NEEDS YOUR HELP TO MAKE GREAT MUSIC

The new TOPS choir was put together this year on a wing and a prayer. As a result, we need your help in a number of ways.

We need parents to come in and assist during choir rehearsals on Thursdays. This is a short but very important gig – and don’t worry, you won’t be asked to sing solo! We need a parent (or two) willing to assist Sari by simply being in the room and helping with logistics.

The middle school choir meets Thursdays from 11:45 to 12:15, followed by the elementary choir from 12:15 to 12:45.

The choir would appreciate donations (or loans) of musical instruments and equipment:

* a cd/tape player (boom box) for rehearsals
* maracas or shakers
* handdrums
* bells
* any other rhythm instruments you might dig up
FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

By Marlies van Bergiejk

Best wishes to you all for the New Year!

On December 4th, the building Leadership Team voted to grant the additional $2000 requested to fund the Volunteer Coordinator position for the remainder of the school year. After sleeping on it for a night, I decided to stay on as the VC. Thus, you can continue to expect me to make requests of your time and energy on behalf of our school community.

I regularly receive inquiries from people who live or work close to the school about opportunities to volunteer. You may find these wonderful people in the library (Summer Davy) as tutors (Curt Bolar, Kay Staeger and Jenna Ballestrino) helping out the BOC program (Nancy Brase) or helping in classrooms (Kevin Dix, Eriko Uchi and Carmen Powell.) Several more people are eager to start in January. They commit their time and energy because they heard good things about TOPS and they want to learn and to contribute. Please say hello to them when you encounter them in the building.

On to a few “communication” updates:

If your e-mail address changes, which frequently happens beyond our control, please let your room reps know right away. You can e-mail me with that info as well. Paul-marlies@worldnet.att.net.

Due to the huge costs of copying and the time it takes to prepare the Wednesday go-home on a weekly basis, it has been decided to move to an every other week schedule. The first January edition will go home on 1/9/02. Thanks to the list making efforts of Randi Niemer, we will also begin sending only one copy to households with more than one student. The go-home will be handed out to the student in the lowest grade, to enhance speedy delivery!

For those of you who are convinced there is a take-home black hole, please note that all Wednesday bulletins are posted on the school web site: http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops.

Keep me posted on how this new format works for your family.

As always: please continue to keep track of your volunteer hours and report them either on the sign-in sheets at school, or via a phone call or e-mail to me at the end of each month. Anything you do at home to prepare for an event at school (sorry, homework doesn’t count) or any committee meeting you attend is volunteer time. To date 400 hours for September have been reported for September; 1065 for October; 813 for November and 483 through December 12th. These are respectable figures, especially if you consider the savings in money if all these hours had to be paid ($27,610).

Still I am convinced that there is at least 1 hour that remains unreported for every 5 that are. And that’s why I am counting on you to keep me counting....

Elementary tours for families interested in TOPS will begin on Tuesday January 15th (9:30-11:00 A.M.) and continue through February. If you would like to be a tour guide on one of those Tuesdays, or if you would like to staff the Hospitality desk to sign in visitors on tour days, please contact me at 252-3510.

Photo by Brendan Griffin
TOPS P.E.

By Claire Simon and Linnea Scott

In P.E., we have a variety of activities that are all really fun and help us learn hand-eye coordination, help us get stronger and improve our ability to do sports.

Some of the activities include rock climbing, running, basketball drills, running, soccer, running, juggling, running, unicycling, running, learning about sports we have never heard about before, running, ultimate Frisbee, running, baseball, running, Olympic sports, running, and skateboarding to name a few. In P.E. we get a lot stronger while having fun with our friends. Don and Eric are the best!

First-graders in action.

Nathan(r) and Ben inspire each other.
Mikaela shows off her handling skills.

Sixth graders get a lesson in teamwork.

Must be a good book, huh, Eric?
MIDDLE SCHOOL ARTIST PRESENTATION SERIES

Patti Warashina will be the third presenter in the Artist Presentation Series. She will speak to the entire middle school in the auditorium at the Seattle Asian Art Museum on January 15th.

The following articles were written by 7th graders about Phil Borges, the second presenter in the Artist Presentation Series.

PHOTOGRAPHER

By Isabel Blue (7th grade)

The moment I walked into the art classroom on December 4, 2001, I knew something different was happening. The tables were pushed against the back wall and the chairs were in rows facing the front of the room. The overhead was up in the front like it was going to be used.

Luzita Roll, our art teacher, told us to sit down, short people in the first rows. I did. An eighth grader walked up and faced us.

"I would like to welcome photographer Phil Borges," he told us.

As he walked away and took a seat at the back of the classroom with the other eighth graders, a tall man with grayish-brown curly hair and glasses took his place. He introduced himself as Phil Borges. He said he takes pictures of tribes in Africa and India that have shamans. Shamans are like witch doctors. They tell the future, they’re healers, and they are priests.

I liked a lot of the pictures he showed us. It was interesting to learn about how people in other countries live. I especially liked a picture of about five girls lined up at the rear view mirror of his jeep. He explained to us that most people in that area of the world have never seen themselves besides in water. I think it would be really weird if you never saw your self.

Another picture I liked was one of a girl that looked about my age. She had a baby with her. Phil Borges told us that she had to take care of the baby, who was her sister. She had to take her with her everywhere she went – like to school. It would be really hard for me to do that.

Phil told us a lot about every picture. He told us that in families, each kid has a job. In one picture a girls had to walk about ten miles to get water every other day. That was her job. In another picture he explained that the two boys in it had to protect their corn crops from baboons. Usually only one child in each family would get to go to school.

He told us that kids that live in the areas he went to really know the area they live in. Like they know what kind of plants to eat and they know how to deal with certain animals. I thought this was very interesting because I could never do that with where I live. That shows that life is a lot harder for them and they have to work more. There are not any grocery stores or clothes stores so they have to make their own food and clothes. We never have to do anything like this. Sometimes I think my life is hard. The next time I do I will think, what if I had the same life but I had to watch out for monkeys or I had to take my baby sister with me everywhere? What would I do then?

By Sylvie Kovnat, 7th grade

On December 4, 2001, Phil Borges came to the seventh and eighth grades to speak. He is a freelance photographer who takes pictures of the indigenous people of the land. He goes all over the world for his books, exhibits and pictures. He has even been to Africa and Pakistan. He doesn’t focus on tribes everybody knows about, but instead he tries to focus on tribes not so well known. He told us stories about the tribes from Africa and Pakistan.

There was a picture from Africa that I really enjoyed. It showed a young boy leading his ninety-two year old blind grandmother. It was a great picture but the story Phil told us made it even better. He said that in African culture the young and old were paired up together. They were paired up together because the young had just come out of the spirit world and the old would soon be re-entering the spirit world. Therefore, they have the most in common. This is very different from American culture because instead of the young and old paired together, people of the same age are mostly paired together.

The pictures from Pakistan were also great. A group of pictures I found very interesting showed the strict rules in Pakistan. It was amazing how they could have such strict rules there, but here there are barely any rules. The group of pictures was of some women in Pakistan. Some women could show their eyes and nose and others could show their whole face. Phil said that some women can’t even show their eyes.

Phil had taken a lot of great pictures and told lots of great stories. He gets to know people and has a great time doing it. The presentation we had was just a little bit of all his wonderful work and I hope some day I will get to see all of it.
PHOTOGRAPHS, SNAPSHOTS AND MIRRORS

By Helene Williams, 7th grade

Ever have someone come up to your car and use the rearview mirror to look at their reflection that they have not seen in a very long time? Phil Borges has, when he was travelling to different tribes and countries to take pictures of the people there.

Phil came to our class to do demonstrations of some of his photos through a slide show. Every single picture had a different story to it, like one little boy lucky enough to be chosen out of his family to be the one to go to school. He had to walk many miles to get to school, with baboons around to steal the children.

Some of the places he went were Africa (many different places in Africa), Peru, and even Pakistan. He chose countries because of his project, studying shamanism: people born with a gift to tell fortunes and the past, through different types of mental thinking.

Another project that Phil Borges is working on is called “Bridges.” This connects people to the Internet and other technologies so they are able to communicate with children in our schools and even put a digital camera in so that we as students can see what their life looks like.

As everyone watched this presentation, I think that we got a sense that there are others out there with the same needs as us but they are different in many ways. I think there was some thought of thank you for showing me the world through your eyes and your photos’ eyes – thank you.

WHY I GIVE TO THE TOPS “NO BAKE” SALE
(AND WHY YOU SHOULD TOO!)

By Jennifer Shaw

Over the past nine years, since our daughter started at TOPS as a kindergartner, my husband and I have often marveled at what a blessing TOPS is in our lives. We have found a school and a community that supports our children in their education, gives them a safe environment for exploring the world, and reinforces the values that our family treasures.

And every year I am reminded that what we consider special about TOPS would not exist if not for the caring teachers, supportive staff and parents and the financial assistance provided by the “No Bake” Bake Sale donations to the Friends of TOPS.

Think for a moment about how the Friends of TOPS funding affects your child on a weekly, or maybe even daily basis. Friends of TOPS funds the part of the Middle School and Elementary drama programs. It pays for some of the incredible artists and performers who come to TOPS for assemblies. It pays for part of the salary for Jennifer Murray, our wonderful school counselor. It pays for extra art supplies, team uniforms, part of 8th Grade Passage and extra classroom supplies for our teachers.

Of course, TOPS is a public school and we do all pay taxes and our schools should all be adequately funded so that every school has sufficient resources to create the kind of environment that the TOPS community has created. But the reality is that the School District can only provide us with the necessities: teachers, administrators, a beautiful building, and basic supplies. To go beyond basics takes parent and community support.

Last year we had the largest participation ever in the “No Bake” Bake Sale. About 50% of TOPS families participated for a total of almost $70,000. This year, our economy has slowed and Americans are not feeling as able to give to important causes. But we should not let the economy or the depressed atmosphere of our world stop us from keeping TOPS the special place that it has always been. I am confident that with effort we can meet our goal of 100% participation and $60,000 and keep all of our programs and our counselor a part of life at TOPS.

So, when your child comes home talking enthusiastically about the class meetings led by Jennifer Murray, or about the dancers at the assembly, or about the fun things the class is doing in elementary art, think about Friends of TOPS. Remember that those things will only be a part of your child’s life if you give generously to the “No Bake” Bake Sale this year.

If you have misplaced your donation form, please look for a new one in the office or call Laurie Black at (206) 285-7079 or Elaine Moberly at (206) 284-1066.
MIDDLE SCHOOL GRANT FEATURES:

TWO GREAT JANUARY PARENT FORUMS

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

6th Grade Parents!

“What Happened to My Little Angel?” or “Welcome to Middle School”

Psychologist and adolescent behavior expert Victor Larson will help 6th grade parents figure out just WHY life seems so different now – using scenarios, humor and great information on this developmental stage of adolescence, he will help parents understand how to survive the onslaught of this amazing time in OUR lives! Please join in – it’s great to have input from everyone!

“What’s In, What’s Out, What’s Up, What’s Goin’ Down”

How do we work with our middle schoolers and their social ups and downs? When do we get involved and when do we let our kids work things out on their own? What about cliques? What’s “safe” socially – what’s acceptable and what’s not? Victor Larson brings his expertise in adolescent behavior to the table as parents work through scenarios and questions/answers about the broad range of social issues in middle school.

THANKS TO G&H PRINTING, 2370 EASTLAKE E. 329-9888

The Seattle School District is an Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action employer and employs individuals without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, handicap/disability or sexual orientation. The Seattle School District provides Equal Education Opportunity without regard to race, creed, color national origin, sex, mental states, handicap/disability or sexual orientation. The District complies with all applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to Titles VI, VII, and IX of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), RCW 49.60, Law Against Discrimination, and RCW 28A.640 “Sex Equality,” and covers, but is not limited to, all District programs, courses activities (including extracurricular activities, service, access to facilities, etc. The Title IX officer and 504 coordinator with overall responsibility for monitoring and ensuring compliance is: Rick Takeuchi, Manager, Affirmative Action Office, W/MBE, 815 4th Ave. N., Seattle 98109. Phone (206)298-7175.

Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against in any of the District’s employment or educational activities can file an internal discrimination complaint with the District’s Affirmative Action Office.