ATTRIBUTE 3: A HEALTHY, SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

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. In the January newsletter, Clara Scott and Jeannie Kuban wrote about how TOPS addressed the attribute of Common Focus and Shared Vision. Last month, they looked at how we have a Safe, Small Learning Community. This month, they discuss how TOPS addresses the third attribute, a Healthy, Supportive School Culture and Climate.

By Clara Scott and Jeannie Kuban

TOPS enjoys consistently high attendance in grades K-8. This tells us that our students like to be here. The wait list for our school is long, and parents view TOPS as a desirable learning environment for their children.

The staff is committed to collaborative, personal relationships with students and families through effective communication. Regularly scheduled grade level meetings maintain highly functional professional relationships among teachers. The staff values honesty and respect for one another, which contributes to the positive morale among our staff, including teachers, administrators, and assistants. TOPS has a strong sense of caring and community because of the relationships that develop over the years in a K-8 school. Children who enter TOPS tend to stay at our school through the 8th grade, so students, families, and teachers get to know each other very well. Every grade level attends camp during the school year. Besides being a lot of fun, this builds healthy community among TOPS students.

TOPS has a unique approach to discipline. It includes a focus on the well being of the whole child. We attend to the growth and development of every child’s mind and spirit as we guide behavior and encourage students’ positive choices. We view our approach to discipline as a positive learning opportunity for students. Students need continued guidance regarding appropriate responses in all situations, as positive representatives of the TOPS community. We are committed to working with TOPS parents as partners in reinforcing behavior that are a part of our K-8 expectations.

Willie Jones’ second grade explores the idea of behavior expectations as TOPS Civil Rights. Students learn the connection between rights and responsibilities in their classroom and the real world. Respect for each other is one of the foundations of nurturing children towards thoughtful and productive citizenship.

Kindergarten teachers Joby Moore and Joan O’Connor create community in their classes through family stories. Parents are welcomed into the classrooms, and every student has a turn to participate. In the fourth grade, Joe Drummond implements an intermediate grade version of Family Histories.

First through fourth graders participate in TOPICS on select Thursdays and Fridays. Continued on page 7.
SITE COUNCIL MEETING

FEBRUARY 13, 2002

Note: Site Council meetings are open to everyone.

They are held on the second Wednesday of the month, from 5:00 – 7:00 pm in the school library. The next meeting is Wednesday, March 13, 2002.

By Monica Hinckley

Colleen Oliver attended the meeting this month to report on the Seattle School District’s decisions regarding the future of the BOC program at TOPS. The district will reduce our program from three classes to two beginning next school year. She explained that every year they look at the BOC program to review who is attending, where those students live and to compare the declines or rises in enrollments from previous years. The district’s primary criteria is to place the children in programs nearest their homes. The South and Southeast clusters have the highest concentration of families participating in the program. The immigration population in the north is declining. The John Stanford International School will continue to house their program – bilingualism being part of their language immersion program. The district’s long-range plan is for all BOC programs to be moved south (excluding John Stanford’s).

In addition, the district has decided to house a K-2 hearing-impaired/cochlear-implant group made up of about 4-5 students here at TOPS. As Ms. Scott has a background in this and the K’s have been introduced to some signing, the newly vacated space at TOPS seems ideal. The director of the hearing impaired program is excited that we are welcoming these students to our school and will attend a Site Council meeting and staff meeting to further explain the program. Students are expected to be with us for a year and then leave to attend Lowell. We will be losing 20 students with the exit of the BOC program, and would like to be able to gain at least 9. Ultimately, the district makes the final decisions regarding these matters, but any further plans will be looked at jointly with TOPS regarding how to fill those rooms which will be vacated by the exiting BOC.

We were also visited by the Eastlake Community Council’s representative, Laurie Stusser-McNeil. She is responsible for starting the Rogers Field playground project in 1999. She anticipates that the playground will be finished in April, with one more work party scheduled for Saturday, February 23 at 9:00 a.m. (The playfield is a separate project and is anticipated to be open for use by the start of the Sept. ‘02 school year.) The glass leaves will be installed in March. There will be a Department of Parks public opening and a separate school opening to be scheduled at a later date. She suggested some type of school wide project to give the students’ a sense of pride and stewardship regarding their new playground. Something along the lines of a poetry contest about play whereby the winner gets to be the first to go down the slide. A couple of trees have been put aside for celebratory planting; one is for the public opening so the other could be used for the school opening. Staff decided that a staff meeting and an all school assembly will be called for all to be educated in how to treat our new playground respectfully.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Ms. Scott announced that our new Assistant Principal, Mr. Bruce Denton, from the Edmonds school district, will begin tomorrow, Feb. 14. Everyone is encouraged to stop in and introduce themselves. Other staff changes are Kevin Crozier’s reduced schedule. His replacement is Jana White who will split the week’s schedule with him. Loren Smith, from our BOC program, is now at John Stanford, with long-term substitute, Suzanne Eddington, in her place. Harry Nelson will be back to help judge of the speech tournament.

The elementary visitations are typically attended by around 60 parents. (Other schools report about 10 -15 per visit.) The middle school students have been very helpful during these tours. Middle school tours will begin Feb. 28 and continue on through March.

Jennifer Murray has scheduled an 8th grade parent meeting on Feb. 26, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. regarding “How to choose a High School”. A representative from the enrollment services will be there together with Victor Larsen of the parent forums and a counselor from Garfield High School. Since high schools typically begin hosting their open houses in early January, thought was given to the school making a greater effort to get information out early to the eighth grade parents regarding visitation schedules, etc.

Thursday, Feb. 14, the kindergartners will be celebrating their 100 day anniversary. There were nutshells deposited in the flower beds on Franklin Street which caused an allergic reaction in a student and a 911 call had to be made. Calls have been made to ensure that the shells are removed as soon as possible.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer Peggy Riehle presented the July – January financial report. Deposits were made in No-Bake, the Middle School play and the Volunteer Coordinator position was funded.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FUND DEVELOPMENT - Jennifer Shaw reported on the No-Bake Sale fund drive. We have raised $45,000 so far and are still looking for the $9,000 from United Way funds.
A MESSAGE FROM CLARA SCOTT

I would like to thank everyone for all the courageous and supportive conversation that has occurred around the creation and implementation of our new mission statement and transformation goals. As we look at the attributes of any high achieving school, it is important to note that each and every school must be committed to equity. The whole school must be actively and continuously dedicated to producing fair and impartial work. The end results of equitable practices are that all students experience higher achievement, not only the select few. Furthermore, as the gap narrows, the negative racial predictability of the high and low achiever is eliminated.

All the principals, along with the superintendent, central administration, school board and community members were in attendance at a retreat where Glen Singleton presented a workshop on equity as a means to eliminate the achievement gap. He described equity as the key to raising the achievement level of ALL students, narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest achieving students and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student populations occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.

All schools in the Seattle School district have been mandated by the Superintendent to completely eliminate disproportionality by the year 2005. In other words, it is not only your child’s school that needs to eliminate disproportionality. This was not a new subject to TOPS. We began this journey long before the district made its demand because we believed that 15% of our students not meeting standards was not acceptable.

Please share with other parents at birthday parties, soccer games, swimming lessons, etc. that our refined direction is inclusive of all children and we have no intention of altering our rigorous instructions and activities that have historically worked so well at TOPS.

Our old mission statement was very nice and safe, much like a bicycle with training wheels. We got so used to riding our “bicycle” that we forgot what it feels to take risks. Now that we are presented with a bicycle minus the training wheels, we must take the risk and trust our own abilities to guide us. This is our new mission. Our new mission will challenge us in new ways, and we cannot do it alone. If eternity is too long then support us for three years… we need you on the journey. We need your support to ensure that no child is left behind.

Cheers!
Clara

Site Council Meeting continued from page 2.

which went to the Alliance for Education. Because of this delay in receipt and their 12% charge, the United Way contributions are now strongly discouraged. The children were enthusiastic about the “Support Our School” event thanks to the incredible efforts of organizer Randi Niemer. Thanks also to Jennifer for her contribution of the kettle korn for the kids’ popcorn party! The total raised by students was about $500.00.

The Auction Committee has asked for the Site Council’s recommendation for the receipt of this year’s “special project”. Last year’s went to the counseling position. It should be a different item each year to keep it “special”. Some suggestions were to finish locker rooms, equipment for gym, books for library.

DIVERSITY ISSUES COALITION – This committee has been renamed the “Coalition for Social Justice”. The first study circle is approaching. There appears to be some misunderstanding among parents regarding the multicultural efforts at TOPS; therefore, more communication is needed so parents can gain a better understanding of our goals. Ground rules were established for a “list-serve” e-mail distribution for group discussion.

Correction: A sentence in last month’s financial report regarding the playfield funding should have read: “Rogers playground has been partially funded by the auction ($10,025.00). Total budgeted expenses thus far - $36,700.”
The Passing of the Torch at TOPS

By Galen Motin Goff

“Whatever room you are in, contribute to the healing of that room…”  ~Gary Tubbs, January 23, 2002

As the TOPS’ community gathered to say goodbye to Gary Tubbs and to acknowledge the passing of the torch to Clara Scott – the Olympic flame “that burns and lights the fire within” passed by our school. Its presence perfectly illuminated the purpose of the evening and the continuation of the dream Gary supported during his years at TOPS.

Coalition for Social Justice member Susan Davis envisioned the event as a celebration of the past, present and future – a look back at the way the personal growth of TOPS’ principal began a journey to guide the school and take every child to new heights. This writer has heard Gary express to prospective TOPS parents in the past that the school’s reputation exceeds its reality. While 85 percent are doing fine, 15 percent of TOPS’ children – predominately children of color – continue to lag far behind.

Acknowledgment of this achievement gap motivated the creation of a new anti-biased, multicultural mission statement aimed at reaching and teaching all.

As described by Gary, the first steps toward TOPS’ new mission statement were taken years ago by parent Cheryl Pappy when she began holding group discussions on race. These discussions led the TOPS community and Diversity Issues Coalition (renamed the Coalition for Social Justice) to address the issue of disproportionality. Given this direction, Clara Scott came on board as an inspirational teammate with her strong conviction not to reduce, but to eliminate, the achievement gap. In January of last year, Dr. Ed Taylor and John Morefield, from the University of Washington, came to TOPS to “Attack the Gap” through strategies aimed at helping all children achieve academic success. Dr. Taylor came back to join Gary during the farewell celebration and support the multicultural mission now carried forward by principal Clara Scott and members of the TOPS community.

What is multicultural education and how will it eliminate the achievement gap? To speakers Clara Scott, educator and activist Fran Davidson, charter Coalition members and parents Garry Owens and Tilman Smith, Margie Butcher (Coalition member / first grade teacher), Mary Chao (fourth grade teacher) and Lori Eickelberg (middle school language arts teacher), multicultural education is not a new direction for TOPS. It is a continuation and refinement of a direction we’ve been moving toward and activities which have long taken place in many classrooms. Coalition member and second grade teacher Willie Jones says, “It’s not about taking something out, but about adding something in – it is about putting into place the pieces to enable all of TOPS’ children to succeed.” “Multiculturalism is not a new or separate curriculum,” adds Margie Butcher. “It will not replace any current curriculum, rather it will be a way to augment and enrich what is already happening.” For example, Margie, Willie, Tabitha Beaufain (first grade) and other teachers with flexible schedules volunteer their time for a before-school Homework Club. The club helps students who need extra attention keep up with their classmates. It also provides enrichment activities for students already on track. Although many improvements are intended to help the children TOPS is not effectively serving right now, research shows they will benefit all children. And, Margie says, “It is just good teaching.”

There will be changes, but they will be slow and thoughtful and they will evolve over a period of several years—hopefully with input and participation from the entire TOPS community. This journey we are on is about reaching to truly be the best. TOPS cannot rest on its reputation when there is an opportunity to make sure the fire of human possibility burns bright in every child. As the Olympic torch passed TOPS, parent and Coalition member Sheri Toussaint expressed a belief shared by many that night that “everything happens for a reason.” May the healing Gary brought into the “room” carry on through the leadership of Clara Scott – and the work each of us has just begun.

Become a part of TOPS vision of “creating a school that empowers students to be active participants, leaders, learners, and contributors to social justice”. If you would like to receive more information, or help guide the direction TOPS is heading, you are invited to attend the Coalition of Social Justice’s meetings, held the first Thursday of every month 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the library loft. You do not have to make a year-long commitment to get involved. To hear ongoing Coalition conversations, join the e-mail list by writing to TOPS_DICsubscribe@yahoo.com. You will be automatically subscribed to the listserv, and can read what others are posting as well as post your own thoughts and questions.
INTRODUCING OUR NEW ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

By Clara Scott

On Valentine’s Day 2002, we welcomed Bruce Denton to TOPS as our much-awaited new Assistant Principal. Bruce was raised in the Edmonds school district where his father was a middle school principal. Despite the fact that education was in the family’s genetic make-up, Bruce tried to be different and majored instead in Architecture at the University of Washington. It did not take too long for Bruce to realize that his heart was in education and that he needed to work with children. With that realization, Bruce enrolled in Seattle University’s Masters in Teaching program and began his journey in education. He completed his student teaching at T.T. Minor Elementary School in the Seattle School District, then began working as a sixth grade teacher in the Edmonds school district. His flexibility has allowed him to teach sixth grade, kindergarten and first grade. Bruce was also very involved in mathematics led the adoption of a new district math curriculum. He has supervised student activities, served on and led a variety of committees and has taught classes to staff members. Bruce earned his Principals Certificate at Western Washington University and completed his internship at Mountlake Terrace Elementary in the Edmonds School District. Later, Bruce served as the Dean of Students at Martha Lake Elementary School, which is also in the Edmonds School District.

Outside of school, Bruce enjoys reading, cycling and sewing quilts. He is very excited to be working at TOPS because this is a school whose mission and vision aligns with his own. He looks forward to getting to know the students, staff and the families at TOPS and making a difference in the lives of children.

PROGRAM AND STAFF CHANGES AT TOPS

By Clara Scott

Kevin Crozier, our fifth grade teacher reduced his teaching time to .5 (half-time) for second semester. This was due to personal reasons and we fully support Kevin’s decision at TOPS in lessening his workload to teaching on Mondays through Wednesdays only. We hired Jana White to take Thursdays and Fridays for the remainder of the 2001-2002 school year.

Suzanne Eddington, who has been a frequent substitute teacher in our building, has just been hired as a long-term substitute for Loren Smith, our Intermediate Bilingual Orientation Center (B.O.C.) class teacher. Loren has just accepted a position at the John Stanford International School at Latona as B.O.C. teacher at their school. Due to the district’s elimination of a B.O.C. class at TOPS, Loren felt it wise that she take advantage of an opening at John Stanford, so she could be assured of a position with the B.O.C. program next year. Although we will all miss Loren, I am sure that Suzanne will bring her own specialness to our school. Please stop by and welcome all our new staff!

BOC Changes- Due to an increase of enrollment of bilingual students in the southeast and West Seattle clusters, the district has decided to add one class each to Thurgood Marshall Elementary School and Fairmount Park Elementary School. The classes were added to the schools in the neighborhoods with the greatest growth. This allows the district to provide better service to students and families. The additional classes have forced the district to close one of the BOC classes at TOPS. While TOPS will miss the loss of one of the BOC classes, we are very proud to announce the addition of the K-2 Hearing Impaired Program.

This is a program that is designed for students with cochlear implants (hearing devices) that need to adjust to the sounds of a typical school building. After completion of this program at TOPS, the students will be mainstreamed into hearing classrooms at Lowell. The decision was made to have this program at TOPS because of the loss of a BOC classroom, hence an “empty room”. Whenever there is an empty classroom, the district uses it to implement new programs such as the hearing impaired program that we will be having here at TOPS. After being presented with two programs, my director, Colleen Oliver, was instrumental in helping me choose the K-2 Hearing Impaired Program at TOPS. We are very excited to have this program here at TOPS, as the culture is very open to kindergarteners and other grades learning to sign. If you have any questions, please feel free to attend the Site Council Meeting in March. The Director of the Hearing Impaired Program will be attending the meeting to answer any questions you may have.
SPRING 2002—RACE AND EDUCATION STUDY CIRCLES

The TOPS Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ, previously called the Diversity Issues Coalition) offers two Race and Education Study Circles for spring, 2002. The study circle process helps parents and school staff examine the relationship of race, education, and the “academic achievement gap.” It is based on the premise that facilitated, face to face dialogue, coupled with a “safe” setting and good information, is the foundation for creating change.

The CSJ is committed to offering every TOPS community member the opportunity to join a unique and challenging learning environment which highly values candor, respect, and hope.

Two Study Circles are planned for this spring:

**Study Circle I for Beginners—Academic Achievement and Racism**
Mondays, March 4, 11, 18, 25
6:30-8:30 p.m., TOPS Library,

Facilitators: Garry Owens (parent) and Fran Davidson (educator)

The curriculum includes a personal reflection on race, race and the achievement gap, racial justice in the classroom, and the pathway to a multicultural curriculum.

**Study Circle II—The Multicultural Curriculum Development Process**
Mondays, April 15, 22, 29, May 6
6:30-8:30 p.m., TOPS Library
Facilitators: Garry Owens and Fran Davidson

This session is designed for folks who have participated in Study Circle I and would like a more in-depth discussion about the implications of a multicultural curriculum at a public alternative school.

All sessions will have refreshments and childcare available. For questions or to register, contact Garry Owens at 782-2565 or email gomojo@earthlink.net

FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

By Marlies van Bergeijk

The Seattle School District hired a new Coordinator of Volunteer Services late last year. His name is Colin Sexton and he has begun organizing regular meetings for school volunteer coordinators. At the February meeting, he advised us that it is unlikely that the District will making funds/grants available to pay for a VC in each building during the next school year. It will be up to individual schools to fund them. The District will resume the reporting of volunteer hours as a requirement for insurance purposes. Thus, if there are hours that you haven’t reported since September, please add them up by month and drop me a note or an e-mail.

There were 652.5 volunteers hours reported in December: 913 in January and 682 through February 14th.

I continue to appreciate how responsive parents are to specific requests that appear here on a regular basis. This month, several parents have stepped forward to take on responsibilities for the newsletter:

Teresa Nemeth (parent of a 1st grader) will take over the editing job.

Heather Burgess (parent of a kindergartner) and Nancy Moore (parent of a 4th grader) will share the mailing responsibilities.

The layout duties will remain in the Cindy Suzumura’s and Margie Slovan’s capable hands.

We are aiming to make this a smooth transition before this school year is out.

TOPS remained a popular school during the Elementary School tour season. At least 50-60 visitors attended each Tour Tuesday in January and February. Thanks to the following parents for their time and energy: Shirley Bossier, Sandy Green, Toby Harris, Jules James, Alex Johnston, Randi Niemer, and Casey White.

I also want to recognize those parents who helped through Mid-February to make the MS ski program a success: Sorayya Aly, Julie Braybrooks, Mike Clay, Joan Demorest, Toby Harris, Mark Huck, Boyd Marts, Kirk McKinley, Janet Moore, Paul Nutter, Merrill Ringold, John Savage, Phil Smart, and Bob Weinstein.

Many Room Reps were busy organizing a number of different celebrations on February 14th. It was fun to see the many special guests who came to spend time at TOPS and the excitement and pride of the students. None of this could have occurred without the willingness of many parents to be there and help in lots of different ways. Thank you all!

The Auction Committee, a huge group of dedicated people, is in full swing planning the April 27th Auction. Your Room Reps may still be looking for someone to take on that special class auction project. They, too, appreciate your response to their e-mails, phone calls and announcements.

Some of you volunteer in quiet ways, every week, same time, same place. Thank you, and we do notice. The rest of the school year will be full of additional opportunities to be a part of your student’s life at TOPS.

A gentle reminder: to be a chaperone at camp, you will need to have a background check on file. Please ask the office staff or me for assistance.
To our school! The Middle School Student Leadership Team
consistency from all staff in order to enhance student
Representative of large knowledge base represented by the
small group exploration. The wide range of TOPICS is
Staff, community members, and parents select topics for
small group exploration. The wide range of TOPICS is
representative of large knowledge base represented by the
TOPS community.
At the middle school level, students need increased
needs. Jennifer Murray works closely and consistently with
teachers and principals as an integral part of our daily life at
school. Problem solving, mediating, and facilitating Student
Intervention Team meetings are some of the ways Jennifer’s
expertise contributes to the health of the TOPS environment.
In addition to tending the social and emotional needs of
TOPS students, it is extremely important to acknowledge
our students’ academic achievements. Quarterly awards
assemblies are held for middle school students to
acknowledge academic achievement. Elementary teachers
offer a variety of awards and celebrations for students in
their classrooms.
A healthy, supportive climate for everyone - students,
families, and staff - is a unique attribute of our school. We are
committed to sustaining our efforts to maintain this
environment for all members of the TOPS community.

**Auction 2002 Countdown:**
It’s Time To Get Your Items In!

By Susan Wells

We are nearing the deadline for procuring items for the
TOPS Spring 2002 Auction. All forms need to be turned
into the office by Thursday, March 28.

Right now it’s more important to bring in the forms than the
items themselves- you can bring your items in any
time up to and including the morning of the auction
itself. Additional forms are available in the TOPS office.

One part of auction life that doesn’t get talked about much
is expenses. The goal of any fundraising event is to at
least cover the cost of food/beverages and hall rental with
the ticket price. We have not succeeded in doing that for
a number of years. This year we are trying even harder to
hold down our costs so more of the money raised goes
straight to the kids. When you get your invitation in the
mail, you’ll notice that after several years of constant ticket
prices, this year, tickets have gone up. We hope that you
will still be generous in adding a few extra dollars to help
cover the cost of teacher and staff dinners Even if you’re
not planning to attend, a donation sent in with your
response card will be counted as an auction purchase. Also,
why not extend an invitation to a grandparent or special
friend? Another way of donating to the auction is to
underwrite some of the costs. You can donate either cash
or services from your business that can go towards covering
some of the operating expenses. Please call Dan Tobin,
Auction Chair, at 325-8155 if you can help in this way.

Thanks so much to all the families who have already
turned in items. It is an incredible help to not have 90%
of the auction items show up in the last few days as has
happened in auctions past. Now things can be recorded,
catalogued, and numbered calmly and rationally. The
auction committee appreciates this!

**Need Ideas?**

If you are still looking for more ideas, here are some favorites
from the past: Mariners, Sounders and Sonics tickets or gear,
home-cooked dinners, vacation rentals, theme baskets,
dance lessons, restaurant certificates, jewelry, haircuts and
massages, software, coffee wine and chocolates…almost
anything you can imagine someone else will want to bid on.
Keep in mind that small items can be combined to create a
special package once we have all the items in.

Please remember to fill in the forms completely and legibly.
For those who have given their time to supervise class art
projects and theme baskets, remember to hand in a form,
so your items will be accounted for. Then just bring them
to the Asian Resource Center the day of the auction. Theme
baskets will need a typed list of the contents attached to
the outside. You can call Diane Magasich at 633-0546 to
update the value as your items get turned in.

If you have any questions or comments—or better yet, if
you’d like to volunteer to help, please call either Auction
Chair Dan Tobin at 325-8155 or Volunteer Coordinator
Tammy Luthy at 322-3784.

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**Attribute 3 continued from page 1.**

Staff, community members, and parents select topics for
small group exploration. The wide range of TOPICS is
representative of large knowledge base represented by the
TOPS community.

At the middle school level, students need increased
consistency from all staff in order to enhance student
accountability. Our middle school students are the leaders of
our school! The Middle School Student Leadership Team
provides opportunities for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students to
practice leadership through team work, decision making,
and problem solving.

Middle school students can explore the issues unique to
adolescence during “Pizza Topics” which meets about once a
week during each quarter. Learning to talk about experiences
and concerns is an important avenue to developing
communication skills and a positive self-concept.

Our full-time counselor is indispensable to the health and
well being of our students. She assists with a variety of
instructional, behavioral, social-emotional, and interpersonal
needs. Jennifer Murray works closely and consistently with
teachers and principals as an integral part of our daily life at
school. Problem solving, mediating, and facilitating Student
Intervention Team meetings are some of the ways Jennifer’s
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A healthy, supportive climate for everyone - students,
families, and staff - is a unique attribute of our school. We are
committed to sustaining our efforts to maintain this
environment for all members of the TOPS community.
TOPICS Update

By Eden Malkoc

After many solicitations in the form of flyers and posters, the January 10-11 and February 7-8 TOPICS happened with great success. However, TOPICS still needs an infusion of time and energy from parents in order to thrive.

The goal of TOPICS is “to have small groups of differing ages and classes together, interacting and involved in a focused, learning, activity.” In the fall, classroom teachers had to teach groups of up to 25 students, which defeated the goal. Due to the low response from parents to teach a TOPIC, the staff agreed in November to introduce a new policy. There now needs to be a two-week confirmation of 8 or more parent/student led TOPICS or the upcoming TOPICS date will be cancelled. Parents must lead TOPICS in order to limit the class size for the teachers in the program.

Many parents have told me that the greatest difficulty for them in teaching a TOPIC is thinking of ideas. In an effort to increase the ease of teaching a TOPIC, the following resources are underway.

♦ Videotape called “A TOPICS Sampler” which documents TOPICS in action.
♦ Videotape called “How to Teach a TOPIC,” in which Mrs. Scott provides instruction.

The videotapes should be available in the office by early March.

♦ Check the TOPS website for the TOPICS link. You will find a new brochure that can answer questions and inspire more people to participate.

♦ Available also are TOPICS information brochures on request via the office (more will be printed as needed).

♦ Ready-to-use kits to teach a TOPIC are on their way. Volunteers are needed to put the kits together.

♦ A generous parent donated money to begin a TOPICS supply fund. This money will be provided to students who might not consider doing a TOPIC due to expenses for supplies. If you who cannot foresee volunteering to teach a TOPIC, please consider donating money to this fund. The kits will also take money to prepare.

Parents have varied opinions about TOPICS. Some parents want TOPICS to involve a stronger link with the curriculum. If you are thinking in this direction please contact Eden Malkoc. It would be helpful to hear from middle school students how TOPICS supported them in their earlier years and their ideas about what could be taught in TOPICS.

Other parents believe that TOPICS is one of the elements that makes TOPS unique. If you have ideas about the direction TOPICS needs to go in order for your involvement to flourish please speak up now. Some of us are inspired to make sure that TOPICS continues and thrives because of our idealism, and the shining faces of our children as they joyfully run off to join a new group of children and embark on a new experience.

I feel compelled to continue the challenge of floating the TOPICS boat through May. Please throw me a few dinghies, lifesavers and plenty of engine juice... Remember: whether TOPICS endures is primarily in the hands of those parents whose children are directly effected.

Please contact me at (206-723-3519) or memalkoc@hotmail.com

At the right is a list of TOPICS dates, the number of spaces we need filled and the date by which we need to hear from parents in order for that TOPIC to take place. Also included are themes of TOPICS that parents can lead each week, if they choose.
SUMMER IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

By Annie Gage

TOPSNews seeks your suggestions for summer activities. What has worked for your children and your family? Let us know what makes these activities great and help us collect contact information. Send your suggestions to gagegreen@earthlink.net or put them in the newsletter mailbox in the office by March 15. We’ll publish your ideas in the April newsletter.

We’ve already gotten the following information about summer opportunities:

The Seattle Center Academy offers middle school youth hands-on experience in the arts and sciences. The program includes both specialized and integrated programs for students with disabilities. For two weeks your child can act, sing, dance, paint, and produce videos. The classes are taught by local arts professionals, and are described as “not expensive.” The session runs from July 29-August 9, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Bus transportation, lunch and snacks are provided. Scholarships are available. Application deadline is April 26.

For more information, contact the Seattle Center Academy at 206-233-3959, email to academysc@ci.seattle.wa.us. You can visit their website at www.seattlecenter.org.

The Northwest School offers domestic and international students, grades 5-10, a wide range of enrichment and special interest classes, arts courses, recreational sports and outdoor activities. Last year, they hosted students from across the U.S. and from 14 different countries. For more information, contact Susan Mueller at 206-328-1129, ext. 20.

Seattle School District has had to scale back its summer semester program. The following programs will be offered:

3rd grade-Literacy Focus (3 hours/day), 6th grade-Computational Fluency (3 hours/day), 9th grade-Integrated Literacy and Mathematics (6 hours/day), 11th/12th grade-credit retrieval. Enrollment forms will be available at TOPS by March 15.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SKI PROGRAM

By Janet Moore

We are having a great year! The snow has been wonderful, and the first three trips have been super. We have two more day ski trips planned for March 8th and 15th. Please arrive by 7:45 a.m. so we can leave by 8:00. We will return home between 5:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Lots of people work MANY hours to make the ski program at TOPS a success. Michael Clay has been the chair and head chaperone. Laurie Black has organized all the chaperones. Julie Braybrooks has helped with morning unloads. Emanuel George and Janet Moore have served on the committee. Thanks to all the folks who have or will chaperone. We could not have this program without the help.

Thanks for not parking on Boylston when you come to pick up your children – it makes it much easier for the buses to pull in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th># of parents needed</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Topic themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 21, 22</td>
<td>...................5</td>
<td>March 7</td>
<td>Flowers &amp; Vases for Auction</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 28, 29</td>
<td>...................3</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Flowers &amp; Vases for Auction</td>
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<td>April 18, 19</td>
<td>...................5</td>
<td>April 4</td>
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<td>April 25, 26</td>
<td>...................6</td>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>Producing a Newspaper-photography, weather, sports, cartooning</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2, 3</td>
<td>...................5</td>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>Producing a Newspaper-photography, weather, sports, cartooning</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 23, 24</td>
<td>...................6</td>
<td>May 9</td>
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Teachers are planning a Thematic on Science. Speak to your child’s teacher.
**WINTER OLYMPICS AT TOPS**

By Don Zemke and Eric Herndon

Not to be outdone by the Olympic games in Salt Lake City, the TOPS P.E. department kicked off its own set of winter games. P.E. students divided into groups, chose a country to represent, and the games began!

Just like in Salt Lake City, some of the events were individual and others involved teams. One of the most popular individual events was the “Towel Sled” in which students sit or stand on a towel at the free throw line then pull themselves to the wall with a rope while being timed. Other events included traversing the rock wall for time, towel tug-of-war, towel skate, group relays, and hockey.

Along with the emphasis on competition for these events, we also discussed sportsmanship, geography, current events, and had a lot of fun!
TOPS CALENDAR

MARCH – JUNE 2002

MARCH

1 (F) ....................... Oral Interpretation speech tournament
4 (M) ....................... Race and Education Study Circle I
TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.
4-8 ......................... Direct Writing assessment
7 (TH) ........................ Editorial Comment speech tournament
8 (F) ........................ Professional Development day,
No School
8 (F) ........................ Middle School Ski Club, meet at TOPS
at 8:00 a.m.
11 (M) ...................... Race and Education Study Circle I
TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.
11-15 ....................... ITBS Testing
12 (T) ...................... Middle School Parent Forum,
7:00-9:00 p.m., TOPS Library
12 (T) ...................... 2nd-4th graders attend Into the West,
SCT, 10:00 a.m.
13 (W) ........................ Site Council Room Rep meeting, 5:00 p.m.
14 (TH) ..................... Showcase Assembly of all speech
trophy winners
15 (F) ........................ Professional Development Day,
No School
15(F) ........................ Middle School Ski Club, meet at TOPS
at 8:00 a.m.
18 (M) .................... Race and Education Study Circle I
TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.
18-22 ....................... ITBS Testing
20-22 (W-F) ............... 6th Grade Camp, Camp Moran
25 (M) .................... Race and Education Study Circle II,
TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.

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.
17 (W) ........................ Site Council Meeting, 5:00 p.m. in the LRC
19 (F) ...................... Third Quarter ends
19 (F) ........................ K-5 Assembly, 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
Gloria Albetta, musician and story teller
22 (M) ...................... Race and Education Study Circle II,
TOPS Library, 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
14 (T) ...................... 2nd-7th graders attend Holes, SCT,
10:00 a.m.
14-16 (T-TH) ............... 7th grade camp
16 (TH) ........................ Spring Concert, time TBA
17 (F) ...................... Learning Improvement Day, No School
27 (M) .................... Race and Education Study Circle II,
TOPS Library, 6:30 p.m.
AUGUST

4 (TH) ....................... Spring Break
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, 5:00 p.m.
12-14 (W-F) .............. 5th grade camp, Camp Kirby
14 (F) ...................... 2nd grade Slumber Party
19 (W) .................... Last student day

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, 5:00 p.m.
12-14 (W-F) .............. 5th grade camp, Camp Kirby
14 (F) ...................... 2nd grade Slumber Party
19 (W) .................... Last student day

SYLVIE UPDATE

As of February 14, Sylvie had traversed across the wall 62 times!
“It’s a lot harder now that we have the overhang
between the two walls!” she says.
WHAT A WONDERFUL STAFF!

By Janet Moore

The staff appreciation committee has hosted three events this year. We delivered a back to school dinner for the teachers on an in-service day. In November, we held a latte day during which we delivered lattes and treats to each teacher or staff room. During the last week in January, we provided a soup and bread lunch.

Many parents helped by baking, purchasing or serving the food. A big thanks goes out to all these folks: Doug Chapman, Mike Courtney, Alice Dubiel, Elizabeth Garfield, Judith Gille, Sandy Green, Tammy Luthy, Chris O’Leary, Janet Morrison, Sheri Toussaint and Lisa Waller.

If you would like to help or if you have a great idea of something to do for the teachers, please give Janet Moore a call at 206-283-7284.

THANKS TO G&H PRINTING
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