TOPS Leadership Transition

The Gary/Clara Leadership era will end on January 31, 2002 when Gary assumes his new position as principal of the New South Shore K-8 school. Plans are already underway to make the transition as seamless as possible for the TOPS community.

We are currently advertising for an assistant principal and requests have been made to other administrators to refer good candidates to us. After we get a good pool of candidates, we will assemble an interview team made up of staff and parents. The team will submit their selection of the final candidate to the superintendent for final approval and assignment to TOPS. We expect the new assistant principal to start a few days prior to Gary’s departure.

Currently, Gary is at TOPS on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Harry Nelson, who retired as principal of Sacajawea in June, 2001, is here for Gary on Mondays and Thursdays.

Additionally, Jeanne Kuban, Administrative Intern from the University of Washington’s Danforth program is here on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. They are both doing a wonderful job. Please stop by and say hello to Harry and Jeanne when you are in the building.

Thank you for your continued support of my leadership. Working with the wonderful staff, students and parents at TOPS make it a joy for me to come to work every day.

Cheers!!

Clara Scott

Preparing for Parent-Teacher Conferences

By Jennifer Murray

Parent-Teacher Conferences are coming up. They are a good way to connect with your child’s teachers. It is important that parents have a clear understanding of school expectations and their child’s progress. Here are some tips to make your conference as effective as possible.

- **Talk to your child.** Find out what his/her favorite and least favorite subjects are and why. Find out if your child has any questions that he or she would like you to ask.
- **Remember that the conference is a dialog between you and the teacher.** Both parents and teachers can bring up concerns in order to make the conference as worthwhile as possible.
- **Write down questions in advance.** Ask things such as: Is my child in different groups for different subjects? Has my child missed any classes? Does my child participate in activities and discussions? Is my child working to his/her ability? How does my child get along with other students?

- **Think of information the teachers need to know about your child.** This may include recent family changes such as moves, death (including of pets), divorce, birth of a sibling. What does your child tell you about his/her school experience? Does your child have learning challenges that the teachers need to be aware of?
- **Ask the teacher what you can do at home to reinforce your child’s learning.** Try to leave with one or two specific suggestions.
- **Arrive on time.** This will allow you to take full advantage of the time the teacher has available for you.

While parent-teacher conferences are the only time structured for parents to hear about their child, they are not the only opportunity to do so. Teachers want to work as a team with parents in ways that best serve the students. If you need to be in greater contact with your child’s teachers, please take the initiative to make that happen.

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.
TOPS NO BAKE BAKE SALE LAUNCHES FOR 2001

Your co-workers and neighbors may have started asking you to buy wrapping paper, chocolate, and pizza to support their child’s school. Because our children attend TOPS we don’t have to do any such thing!

At TOPS, we limit ourselves to two all-school fundraisers each year – The No Bake Bake Sale and the Spring Auction. The money from these fundraisers goes toward paying for the programs that our budget does not cover:

- Elementary Art
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Drama
- Music
- School Counselor
- Computer Upgrades
- Before/After School Programs
- Additional Classroom supplies

Thanks to The No-Bake Bake Sale, you don’t have to cook or sell a thing. Just write a check or put it on your credit card. All amounts are accepted and welcome, and 99% of all of the dollars raised goes to the school!

Last year we raised over $75,000 for TOPS. This is our goal for this year. To do this we need the support of all families in the school. Last year 60% of the families contributed. This was an increase in participation over previous years. If every family contributes, we can surpass last year and have extra funds available for better programs and more of them.

There are forms available in the office. You will also receive a form and envelope in the mail. Remember that your donations are tax deductible.

Friends of TOPS is a 501(C) charitable organization. Tax ID#501(C)(94-3142402. Also remember to ask your employer if they will match your donation!

- Mastercard and Visa are taken and you can also give $ in 3 monthly installments. Just specify on your payment form.

- Please call Elaine Moberly 284-1066 or Laurie Black 285-7079 with questions.

PLAYGROUND WORK PARTIES COMING UP

Want to help put the finishing touches on the new playground? Now is the time to sign up for volunteer work parties. The Friends of Rogers Playground are organizing two weekends to install play equipment, landscape, spread wood chips, and more.

Saturday, November 10 and Sunday, November 11

We will install the largest play structure. Some heavy work – strong lifters needed!

Two shifts each day: 9am-1pm and 1pm-5pm

Saturday, November 17 and Sunday, November 18

Lots of jobs available. No skill or superhuman strength required. Work includes installing two more play structures, landscaping (tree and plant installation), helping with kids, spreading wood chips, serving refreshments, general tool organization, etc.

Two shifts each day: 9am-1pm and 1pm-5pm

We will also need to borrow a variety of tools including wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes, socket sets, mallets, hoses, and digging bars.

To sign up for one or more shifts, call Rebecca Sadinsky at 723-7378 or Laurie Stusser-McNeil at 323-4556 or e-mail ljstusser@home.com.

EDITORIAL COMMENT...

By Annie Gage

School Spirit defied me through junior high, high school, college…and then my son started going to TOPS. I really didn’t sign up to edit this newsletter with the idea of becoming a de-facto cheerleader as well. But I just can’t help myself. The cooperative games they play in P.E. fill me with gladness. And they’re doing research projects! In P.E.! Things have sure improved since the days of dodge ball and choosing teams in ways that could only leave some people feeling unpopular and inadequate.

Even though it can be hard to feel hopeful these days, both first grade classrooms have been doing activities that inspire a sense that their generation (at TOPS at least) is learning some really great skills that might help the planet survive.

I know that academically challenging, hope-inducing projects are happening at every level and in every topic at TOPS. Please, share your news with us. Let us in on the fun!

Rah rah rah.
SONICS ASSEMBLY KICKS OFF THIS YEAR’S “READ TO SUCCEED”

On September 28, TOPS students were treated to a visit by Sonics player Brent Barry, and King 5 sportscaster Paul Silvi. They were at TOPS to discuss how important reading is in our lives. Even though they both have busy schedules, they are able to practice the art of reading alone and with their families. Brent had fun with the students by showing a selected few how to dribble and pass. He then challenged a youngster to make a basket, and if he could he would give everyone his autograph.

The Read to Succeed program is sponsored in part by the Sonics and is an incentive program designed to get students to read outside of school for at least 20 days a month for at least 20 minutes a day. Records are kept on a specially designed chart. At the end of the month they are turned in for a chance at Sonics merchandise.

TEEN READ MONTH

The TOPS 7th graders were visited on October 18 by a very entertaining author of young adult books, David Lubar. He has written many books for young people, including his new book, Hidden Talents. His one-hour presentation was sponsored by the Seattle Public Library and included the message that ideas for stories just don’t come, but take hard work, and usually stem from experiences around you. He gave the example of watching a neighbor mowing his lawn every weekend, and how he turned it into a scary story. His visit also included writing exercises to help in expanding the narrative writing skills of the students. He was impressed by our students’ ability to use creativity in writing. One exercise, called “the hook”, challenged the students to start a story in such a way that the reader will want to read more. Examples from students: “I looked at my potatoes and they began to move,” and “I opened the door to my room and saw a 6 foot tall lizard lying on my bed.”

For more information on this engaging author go to www.davidlubar.com.

MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY BOOKS

On October 4, during Curriculum Night, the results of a year of hard work by the diversity coalition book committee were proudly displayed. These multicultural books and materials cover a wide range of subjects and were brought to us by funds from the annual auction. Staff and students will put them to good use in the coming years. They are now in their new home, the TOPS library.
SPORTS AND P.E. NEWS

By Don Zemke

TOPS P.E.

TOPS P.E. Students began the school year getting reacquainted with each other by playing a variety of cooperative games and activities. It’s great to see so many helpful, kind, respectful kids here at TOPS.

We followed up our games with the President’s Physical Fitness Test. This is a pre-test which the students use to set personal goals and then track their progress over the course of the school year. Our success-oriented program emphasizes effort and individual improvement.

Middle School P.E. students are working on group research projects. They research a sport, game, or activity that’s new to them and put together a presentation for other students.

SEATTLE KIDS MARATHON

TOPS students will again have the opportunity to participate in the Seattle Kids Marathon this year. Students who signed up began training on October 15. The goal is to run a total of 25 miles between October 15 and November 23rd. The last 1.2 miles is run on Sunday, November 25 at the Seattle Marathon, alongside world class runners.

ULTIMATE FRISBEE

This fall TOPS is fielding a middle school ultimate frisbee team. It has been a blast! We are a young team compared to some of our competition, but we’ve been able to compete, win some games and have a good time. Ultimate Frisbee is a non-stop, action-packed, co-ed sport that relies on the spirit of sportsmanship and places the responsibility for fair play on the players because there is no referee. Games are played for either one hour or until one team scores eleven points.

Games are played on Saturdays at Ingraham high school against eight other schools. Make a point of coming out and cheering our team on!

TOPS ROCK CLIMBING WALL

Thank you very much for your great support.
Phase one of the wall was installed on October 2nd. Thanks to our TOPS parents who have helped with the installation.

THE TOPS P.E. PROGRAM

by Helene Williams, 7th Grade, and Katrina Nelson, 8th grade

The TOPS Physical Education program has been very fun and exciting so far this year. In the first three weeks, the seventh and eighth graders participated in a variety of activities such as every day running (two laps around the block), ultimate frisbee, soccer, basketball, ping pong, and many others.

We have also had one guest speaker from the Cascade Rowing Program at Pocock Rowing Center. She talked about rowing and how it can keep you fit.

“I think that P.E. is so much fun and I really like our teachers Don and Eric,” said Helene Williams, 7th grade.

“I like Double Dutch because it’s challenging, and each time I jump I set new goals,” said another student.

We enjoy this program a lot and are looking forward to learning to rock climb when our wall gets installed.
**Two On Topics**

By Mary Chao

I remember coming to TOPS fourteen years ago and learning that TOPICS is a vital part of what makes our school special and fun. Children huddled in all the nooks and crannies, so excited that they were talking up a storm. Teachers were surrounded with mixed aged students learning the names of children not normally in their classes, teaching to subjects that enrich the active mind.

Our students come away from the experience with a passion to learn new things, an eagerness to share their learning, and leadership skills.

This is one program whose success depends on parents’ consistent participation. I invite parents/community resources to join us for two hours per week, twice a month, on special Thursdays and Fridays.

If you cannot commit to two consecutive days find someone who can do that second day. In other words ...team teach.

People teach to their passion: astronomy, fossil collecting, stamp collections, painting, poetry, playing music on the guitar, opera, Hawaii, holiday art from other cultures, Ukrainian eggs, pets, making and binding books, science topics, bridge building with ropes, paper mache, geology, drama, sign language, mazes, biology of sharks, bike safety, card making, food drives, Chinese New Year’s paper dragons, conflict peer mediators, knitting, tea ceremony and Kwanzaa. Some bring a small car group to go to the Fred Hutchison hospital center.

You are only limited by your imagination.

In previous years, Americorp staff organized the TOPICS program by using a set computer template to organize the different teachers/parents/students with assigned locations. With the new guidelines, TOPS did not qualify this year for Americorp workers. Therefore, we are honored to have a parent, Eden Malkoç, for a 3-month volunteer period ending in the end of December. We would like to have a parent volunteer for January – March and another for April – June. Please call Eden at 206-723-3519 or e-mail at memalkoc@hotmail.com so that there can be seamless transitions.

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**Do You Have a Five Year Old?**

Families with five year olds are needed for the U.W. Dept. of Psychology.

Family and Friends Project

This is a longitudinal study on family communication and friendship.

Couples must be married, living together, and have a 5 year old who attends school or child care at least 6 hours a week.

Families of color are encouraged to participate.

Your child will play age-appropriate games for research in a space capsule built especially for children.

Earn up to $150! for 10 hours of your time now, with opportunities for future participation in the next 5 years.

Call 206-616-4061

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** Foster Families Needed**

- In King County, there are hundreds of children in the care of the state of Washington who need caring foster families.
- These children, ages birth to 18 cannot live with their birth families due to abuse or neglect or because their families are unable to care for them.
- King County has a critical shortage of foster homes for children of all ages.

Donna Kellam, a foster home recruiter, asks that area families consider becoming licensed to provide foster care. We can also support and assist licensed foster families in our communities.

She can be reached at 206-352-2117.
FIRST GRADE EXPERIENCES WITH COMPASSION AND EMPATHY

By Teresa Nemeth

None of us really knew what to do that day. You know the one. I hate to refer to it by its date, because that also happens to be my daughter’s birthday. After awakening to a sickening punch in the stomach from the radio, I was faced with her expectant gaze – and the seemingly impossible task of smiling a birthday smile and pretending that her little 7-year-old world of birthdays and missing teeth and Good Everywhere was the real one. All the little symbols we’ve surrounded her with were wiped so cleanly away, there just wasn’t anything left to fall back on.

With her off to school, I was left numbly frosting birthday brownies and wondering what the teachers would do, faced not with one child’s gaze but all those gazes. All peering out from those little worlds we wish never had to be infiltrated or worn down or smashed by adult events.

The announcement that came over the school PA system that afternoon, as the last birthday brownies were being eaten, finally brought my emotions to the surface: Don’t turn on the TV alone, wait for an adult. That’s when my tears came.

Margie (Butcher) said later, she knew she could teach them to read and do math, she’d been trained for that – but how to talk to them about this? As she faced them, it came to her. She talked, and she let them talk. They read a book about kids being mean to someone who was different, and they talked about that. They went to Joan’s room and sang. They found faces for the horrific event. A first grade class displaced from P.S. 234 was forced to share space in a new school. Plans were drawn up: they would make a book, they would share their thoughts and songs in a video, they would send little gifts of bookmarks, pictures, necklaces. They suspended regular learning for a week and a half so they could craft a child’s response to a very adult event, and they sent that response to other children. They filled pages with kid-symbols – hearts and rainbows and girls with enormous bows – and added words of caring and hope with the help of their sixth-grade buddies.

At my son’s elementary school, everyone made an American flag – a good symbol whose usefulness to the “sad people in New York” my son nevertheless couldn’t explain. I take much more strength from the connections I think my daughter made, between childhood innocence and the world that is waiting for her involvement.

THANK YOU

My sons Ridge and Kai and I would like to thank all of the TOPS families who provided meals for us after the unexpected death of Bill, their father and my husband. We are deeply grateful for the many levels of loving support from the entire TOPS community during this very difficult time.

-Deb Carpenter

SEVENTH GRADERS DISCOVER FIRST GRADE

By Annie Gage

One day in mid-October 2001, TOPS seventh graders made an astounding discovery; a classroom that existed on the bottom floor of the school. Its usual inhabitants were out for a while, so the seventh graders from Mr. Ellis’ class made themselves at home at the desks, and declared the classroom their own. When the original peoples of that classroom returned, they were informed that they could use a corner of the room, but that was all.

This is how Mrs. B. followed up an earlier discussion with her first graders about Columbus and how he and others treated indigenous people when they arrived on the land they called America. The first graders expressed anger, discomfort and rage at their invaders, and after about fifteen minutes were given back their rightful space. Mrs. B. encouraged them to think about their experience and to imagine how it would have felt to be invaded for forever rather than just fifteen minutes.

Of course, along with the opportunity to empathize and learn history in a more accurate manner than most TOPS parents probably did, the experience was filtered in a totally first grade way. At least one child (ahem) plotted revenge by declaring that the seventh graders should have gotten wedgies.
TOPS Middle School Awarded Arts Grant

TOPS was awarded a grant from the King County Arts Commission. The grant was written by TOPS parents Rachel Brumer, Laura Hopkins, and Jill Rulkoetter, along with TOPS art teacher Luzita Roll. Their proposal was fully funded!

The project that was funded consists of six artist presentations for middle school students, held over the course of the school year. The artists will describe how and why they became artists, what their creative process involves, the practical aspects of their work, how they make a living doing their work, and the power their art has to have an impact on viewers.

The project objectives are:

- To view art as a means of self-expression in a variety of media
- To expose students to artists who are making political/social/cultural comments
- To build strong links to our community
- To promote an understanding of problem solving and the creative process.
- To develop organizational skills and critical thinking in students
- To give students the opportunity to experience work they might not otherwise see.

Students take an active role in making these presentations happen. They will contact the artist, do a short interview, design a poster to announce the event, introduce the artist to their peers, participate in a discussion group following the presentation, and write a review of the presentation, which will be published in TOPSNews.

To date, two of the presentations have been scheduled:

On October 24th, documentary filmmaker Sandy Cioffi will present her work to 6th and 8th graders.

Photographer Phil Borges will present his work in December. People may be familiar with the series of Tibetan portraits that he did for Amnesty International.

By sharing the work and lives of artists in our community with students, this program builds on TOPS’ already strong commitment to having a dynamic arts program that includes the riches of our region’s leading creative forces.

If you know of a particularly engaging artist you would like to recommend, please contact Rachel Brumer, at rbrumer@home.com.

Mathematics Homework Hotline

252-4690, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday
Sponsored by Seattle Public Schools/UW MESA

Photography Club

Come and join us!
The middle school photography club meets on Wednesdays after school from 3:30-4:30. We meet in Mark Ellis’ room. Please come with a 35mm camera if possible. We will shoot photos and go off campus for some photography as well.

Girls Middle School Soccer

By Hannah G.

Participation in the TOPS middle school soccer team gives you a great work out while having fun doing lots of different drills and playing games against all the other schools.

The team is off to a great start. At the time of this writing we are undefeated! We’ve been practicing on Thursdays and Fridays after school at the Montlake Community Center. Our games are on Saturdays at Memorial Stadium at the Seattle Center.

Mark Morales and Peter Gallagher are wonderful coaches. They’ve been great teachers. So far we’ve learned a lot and everybody gets to play. Our team has about the same amount of 6th 7th and 8th graders and we all play as hard as we can. The team is pretty full but we always accept newcomers. We hope you come and watch us play this season or consider playing with us next season.

Skiing/Snowboarding Program Gearing Up

It’s time to start thinking snow! The middle school ski program is gearing up.

Dates: January 18 & 25 ...... evening
February 1 .................. daytime
February 8 .................... evening
March 8 & 15.............. daytime

Note: This year, there are three Friday daytime ski dates!

There is a mandatory ski club meeting on November 8th, from 7-9 p.m.
Packets are ready – Come and ski with us.

Michael Clay, Emanuel George, Laurie Black, Janet Moore & Rita Nussli
TOPS FOOD DRIVE 2001-2002

Every year, TOPS has a food drive that benefits TOPS families in need. Suggested donations include:

Canned: fruits, vegetables, soups, juice, fish, meat, stews, nut butters, legumes, pasta sauce, chili

Dry Goods: rice, breakfast cereal, flour, corn meal, cooking spices, pasta and couscous, oatmeal, boxed meals such as macaroni and cheese, legumes, packaged meals, instant noodles

Personal Care/Household Items: toothpaste, toilet paper, shampoo, dish soap, toothbrushes, tissue paper, soap, paper towels

In keeping with Government Food Safety Guidelines, we cannot accept homemade foods, non-commercially packaged items, or partially used or opened items.

Look for the boxes marked “Food Drive” or bring your donations to the TOPS office through November 16, 2001.

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