SPRING INTO ACTION - TOPS AUCTION 2003 IS SATURDAY, APRIL 26!

By the Auction Committee

It’s time to start thinking about the TOPS auction 2003! This year’s event takes place at the Asian Resource Center once again – with Steve Hardy returning as our auctioneer. Our fundraising goal is $75,000. This year you will receive a packet of information and donation forms in the mail, including a sample donation request letter you can personalize and send out. As we get into the swing of things we will be updating the auction page on the TOPS website, where you can look for ideas on procuring and information on volunteering.

Every year each family is asked to procure three items that can go into either the silent or live section of the auction, or in the very successful raffle that was introduced last year. As with the TOPS No-Bake Sale, all money raised goes to benefit all our children. All of the “extras”, and many things you wouldn’t think of as extras, are funded through our efforts. Think of life without the elementary and middle school drama programs, instrumental and choir groups, money for library books, classroom supplies, a middle school counselor, an elementary art teacher, multicultural assemblies, science and technology equipment, and many other school essentials.

So please participate by sending in your items, volunteering to help the committee, working the day of the auction (call auction volunteer coordinator Tammy Luthy at 322-3784), and by coming to the auction and bidding. And besides raising money for TOPS, it is one of the most enjoyable social events of the year – just ask any parent or teacher who has attended in years past!

Getting items for the auction is easier than you’d think. All it takes is a few quick conversations with people who can donate a product or service. You’d be surprised how often people are more than happy to contribute – and it’s great free advertising for them. These are people you talk to every day: your grocer, soccer coach, hair stylist, masseuse, your favorite ice cream store and restaurant owners, theater operators, bookstore managers. Everywhere you usually spend your time or money, that’s where the items come from. Check with your employer, too – many have programs to donate to causes just like ours, especially when their employees put in volunteer hours.

Wouldn’t it be great if we could put all the money raised directly into TOPS? Each year it costs somewhere around $10,000 to put on this event. If we were able to have most of the expenses underwritten it would make a big difference. Do you or someone you know own a business that would be willing to donate money or services? Their company name and logo can be displayed and listed in the catalog. Please call Kelli Knutsen at 282-8477 or Barbara Lui at 725-3204 if you’re interested or know someone who would be.

Other ideas? Our very most successful items the last few years were definitely restaurants or home-cooked dinners, sports tickets, and vacation rentals. Next time you go to your favorite restaurant for dinner, ask the owner if they could donate a dinner for two. Collaborate with friends to create and serve a theme dinner, bake a six-month supply of chocolate chip cookies, wash cars. Theme baskets. Anything with chocolate or wine. Can you donate a week at your summer cabin in the mountains? A weekend at the beach? An afternoon sail on your boat? Mariners tickets? Knitting or golf lessons? The possibilities are endless.

HELP WANTED ON THE AUCTION COMMITTEE

We need a procurement coordinator—someone who can help spearhead and track auction donations. Letter writing and personal contacts would be utilised. Join other TOPS families in making the 2003 auction a success.

Contact Tammy Luthy jheft@seanet.com if you are interested.

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FORUM

JOIN TEACHERS IN OLYMPIA ON STATEWIDE DAY OF ACTION IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

By Marianne Tranget

In the face of likely major budget cuts to Seattle and other school districts, Seattle’s teachers, paraprofessionals, and office staff have voted to close school on January 14 to rally in Olympia. Parents, guardians, and students (if accompanied by a parent or guardian) are invited to join them.

The district administration will be meeting with the Seattle Education Association (SEA) to reschedule the school day, most likely on June 19. (The last student day is currently scheduled for June 18.)

Why a large rally in Olympia? Why now?

“We are sorry about the inconvenience that this will cause to many parents and students,” said SEA President John Dunn.

“But we can’t let the governor and legislature tear down the schools we work so hard to make successful. Our students would be hurt far more by major funding cuts than by changing the date of a school day. Our schools can’t take more staff reductions, and they also need quality teachers who will stay. Teaching in Seattle is becoming a revolving door because it pays so little. We can’t let it get worse.”

Over half of Seattle’s teachers have been working in the district for five years or fewer. They are retiring or leaving to work in less expensive areas, or better paid states. Washington’s pay is the lowest on the West Coast, and Seattle’s pay is the lowest urban pay in the nation when cost of living is taken into account.

In last year’s legislative session, Seattle’s budget was cut $6 million in state budget cuts reflected in this year’s budget. Teachers lost a day of planning together. Positions were cut and staff laid off. The governor proposed cutting the staff’s cost of living adjustment, promised by Initiative 732, but he did not have the required two-thirds support from the legislature.

The upcoming biennium’s predicted $2 billion state budget shortfall is even worse than the last’s. The governor and legislature will either have to raise revenues or make drastic cuts. Without parent and educator mobilization, they will likely take the path of least resistance: cuts.

Although voters overwhelmingly passed Initiative 728 (Class Sizes and Professional Development) just two years ago, the legislature can now modify it with a majority vote. The same is true of Initiative 732 (Educator Cost-of-Living Allowances), also passed overwhelmingly. For the first two years after an initiative passes, it takes a two-thirds vote of the legislature. We are now in the third year, and can expect these initiatives to be a focus of cuts along with other education funding.

“We are asking parents, guardians, and their children to join us on Tuesday, January 14. We shouldn’t have to fight for decent education funding for our kids. But if we have to, let’s do it together. The cost of doing nothing is more than we can afford,” said Dunn.

Details on the Olympia rally will be posted at www.seattlewa.org by January 9. Thousands of educators and parents are expected.

TOPS Auction continued from page 1

Be sure to fill in your procurement slips completely and bring your items to the TOPS office by Wednesday, March 26.

If you run out of slips, you can pick up additional forms at the office. Please fill them out completely and correctly, and you’ll save a whole lot of time for our volunteers.

It’s also time for your class to start thinking about their auction art project. The class projects are often the highlight of the live auction…and they bring in a lot of money! The kids are really proud of their contribution to their school, the projects themselves are quite wonderful, and the artwork and the evening’s energy combine to create a bidding frenzy. Again, just ask an auction veteran!

The class theme baskets that have become a new tradition have been very successful and fun to put together. Usually one person coordinates and lets the class know the theme (sometimes the kids come up with the theme). Families can then send in their contributions and the coordinator puts it all together in some kind of interesting basket or container. If your teacher is donating an event or activity, maybe your basket can coordinate with it. To avoid duplications, please have the coordinator call Ellen Levi at 282-5596 as soon as you know what theme your class has chosen. We’ll need a procurement form filled out so we know it’s coming, but the basket itself can be delivered, if necessary, on the day of the event.

Please be sure to attach a typed list of the contents and a value to the outside, just in case some of the goodies are hidden from view.

Any other auction questions? Please call co-chairs Dan Tobin at 325-8155 or Sheri Toussaint at 722-4526. You may also email Sheri at shertoussaint@hotmail.com.
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Happy New Year! I hope that you all had an enjoyable vacation time with family and friends. As a result of your generosity, the Adopt-a-Family program was able to embellish the winter holidays for fifteen less-fortunate families. Once again I was impressed by the way the TOPS community consistently reaches out.

It is hard to believe it is time already, but we are starting our elementary visitations this month. Visitations will take place on Wednesdays: January 8, 15, 22, and 29, and February 12 and 26. Parents of incoming students will be visiting to learn about our program offerings and tour the K-5 building. We would love volunteers to help out. If you are interested, please contact Stacie, our volunteer coordinator.

As I walk through the school during the day, I see both staff and students are hard at work. The majority of our students continue to work diligently and show respect for others. Unfortunately, we have also noticed that an increasing number of students are failing to respect each other’s Civil Rights. In the middle school, we have had to close the Commons and the computer lab due to vandalism of the computers, furniture, water fountains, and bathrooms. In the elementary grades we have noticed a rise in aggressive language and behavior in the classrooms as well as during recess time.

The staff at TOPS strives to help students take responsibility for all of their actions and maintain standards of behavior that we can all be proud of. When a student or group of students is sent to the office, we work very hard to thoroughly research the problem and sort out the facts. We like to keep you informed so students know that we work as a team to support them through thick and thin. When you come to school to talk to us about your child’s behavior, please remember that we all want what is best for kids. We watch your children seven hours or more a day and see many amazing and wonderful occurrences, but occasionally students make bad choices. We all want the best environment for learning and that requires a foundation of trust. We trust you to prepare your child socially, to teach them to respect themselves and others and to be accountable for all of their actions, positive or negative. I hope you trust us to educate your child and to reinforce your teachings as we hold students accountable for all of their actions.

Nine years is such a short time to get our students ready for the next leg of the journey. Let’s continue to work together, to build trust, and to remember what is best for kids. Our students will reap the benefits of our teamwork.

Good luck with those New Year’s resolutions!

Cheers!

Clara

MLK PRINCIPAL MEETS WITH TOPS COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

By Gary Luke and Tilman Smith

The Coalition for Social Justice had its usual full agenda for our December meeting, and we had the added good fortune of having Mr. Barry Dorsey, the principal of Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary, present to talk to us about his school community. Mr. Dorsey, who has been at MLK Elementary for fifteen months, described his school as one with solid instruction, dedicated teachers, improving facilities, and students who were “blossoming flowers”. He explained that the school had made some significant changes in instruction styles, resulting in higher achievement and ITBS scores for his students. He credited his teaching staff, the small, intimate setting at MLK—where the average class size is 16 students—and strong community support from Seattle Central Community College, the University of Washington, and the Bush School, among others. He welcomed TOPS support and stressed that their doors are open at all times for visitors and volunteers. Extracurricular activities already in full swing include a chess club and a garden project. For more information about volunteering, please contact the MLK volunteer coordinator, Alma Brown.

In our continuing effort to learn about multicultural education as an antidote to racism in education, CSJ participants are reading The Light in Their Eyes by Sonia Nieto. This month’s discussion centered on the assumptions underlying whose culture accommodates whose in schools, and how dominant-culture thinking often equates differences with deficits. We will continue with this discussion in January, focusing on Chapter 4, where we will more closely examine Nieto’s guiding principles for creating positive learning communities, and how they could be actualized at TOPS. A copy of Chapter 4 is in the TOPS office, and a copy of the book is available in the TOPS library for loan. Please feel free to participate in these discussions even if you haven’t had the opportunity to read.

Happe Byers provided us with a brief update on an ongoing segment of the CSJ focused on holiday celebrations at TOPS. She and Susan Davis are hoping to use some articles to help us discuss the place of holidays in school, and how they can augment multicultural education. We need to think about in terms of being respectful to all families.

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**SITE COUNCIL MEETING REPORT**

**DECEMBER 11, 2002**

By Ellen Markman

**INTRODUCTION OF EASTLAKE REPRESENTATIVE TO SITE COUNCIL**

Bob Geballe was officially introduced as the Eastlake Community Council representative to the TOPS Site Council. He is also serving as an ad-hoc representative for Eastlake parents looking for public school placement in the area. Bob is a teacher at an alternative high school on “the other side of the Sound” and gave some background on the work of the Eastlake Community Council. They were involved in having the TOPS building become a designated historical site, and were active in trying to persuade the school district not to close Seward School in the late 1980s. The ECC is involved in many broader issues including transportation, parking, and greenspace planning.

Dave Sarju noted that language is a powerful tool, and he suggested that, out of respect for the current program, community members be mindful that “TOPS” refers to the school program and “Seward” to the building.

The Eastlake Community Council has monthly meetings in the Eastlake Room in the TOPS building (near the gym). It meets at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month.

**COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF TOPS**

Clara Scott reported on the efforts being made to increase the awareness of the TOPS program throughout the clusters. TOPS will be participating in kindergarten fairs sponsored by the Seattle school district as well as Head Start mini-fairs. The focus is to make all neighborhoods within TOPS cluster areas (South, Southeast, Central, Northwest, Queen Anne, and Magnolia) aware of the program, especially in communities underrepresented at TOPS.

**VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNICATION**

Stacie Bonelle, TOPS volunteer coordinator, said she is proud to be a part of the TOPS community, where parents are such great advocates for their children. She encourages parents to remember to think of “the child sitting next to your child,” when volunteering, and to think of how each student and each classroom contributes to the school as a whole. Stacie reported that she is recruiting volunteers from the Eastlake community and is working with parent Jules James on a parent-volunteer orientation. Mike Anderson is always in need of tutors and Stacie is looking into a tutor program at the University of Washington to help meet the tutoring needs. Teachers are filling out a volunteer assessment form to help Stacie define their needs.

**PRINCIPAL’S REPORT**

Clara Scott reported that the elementary school visits at TOPS will be held on Wednesdays, January 8, 15, 22, 29 and February 12 and 23. To assist with these tours please contact volunteer coordinator Stacie Bonelle (topsvoltr@aol.com).

Barry Dorsey, principal of Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary, attended the last Committee for Social Justice meeting. He talked about the new literacy program he has implemented and the resulting increase in test scores at MLK. He invited the TOPS community to come and look at their program. He has been at MLK for 15 months and is working hard at improving academics and the physical site. They are looking forward to painting and planting bulbs. (See related article in this newsletter.)

TOPS will have the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. assembly on January 15, 2003 at 2:30 p.m. Classes will be performing, as well as the choir. All are welcome to attend.

The first grade will have their Elders Day on January 19, 2003. The third grade will host an evening performance of their play this year for those unable to attend the daytime performance.

Parent conferences were very successful, with most rooms reporting 100% attendance. The food drive was also a great success. Twenty TOPS families received food from all the donations, with the remainder going to local food banks. Ms. Anna’s class won the food drive contest with 176 items collected. The first-graders will have an ice cream celebration.

**NO-BAKE FUNDRAISER**

Ann Bergman, chair of the No-Bake sale this year, reported the No-Bake has raised $19,265.00 as of December 11. There have been 112 donors, with an average donation of $172. Big donors from previous years have cut back somewhat, but the encouraging news is that 40% of the current donors have not given in the past (and only a small percentage of those are new kindergarten families). While the money raised to date is far short of the goal of $55,000, Ann was hopeful that the No-Bake will reach its target by December 31. She reminded everyone that ANY donation counts, that 100% participation is the goal. The money given to the No-Bake will be well spent directly on TOPS programs, and does not go to the Seattle school district. Now more than ever, TOPS needs this support.

**COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Tilman Smith, co-chair of the CSJ, said people in the TOPS community have been wondering how they can get involved at MLK Elementary. MLK has a volunteer coordinator, Alma Brown, who is looking for volunteers. Contact her at MLK if you are interested.
### 2002-2003 TOPS Calendar

#### January
- **6 (M)**.............School starts again
- **7(T)**.............Middle school parent forum, *Parenting in the Techno-times*, 7-8:30 p.m.
- **8 (W)**.............Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
- **10 (F)**...........Middle school ski club to Snoqualmie, leave TOPS – 2:30 p.m., return to TOPS – 10:45 p.m.
- **17 (F)**...........Middle school ski club to Snoqualmie, leave TOPS – 2:30 p.m., return to TOPS – 10:45 p.m.
- **20 (M)**...........Martin Luther King Jr. Day. No school
- **24 (F)**...........Middle school ski club to Snoqualmie, leave TOPS – 2:30 p.m., return to TOPS – 10:45 p.m.
- **24 (F)**...........End of semester (middle school)
- **27 (M)**...........Middle school ski club to Snoqualmie meet at TOPS – 7:45 a.m., return to TOPS – 5 p.m.
- **27 (M)**...........Day between semesters. No school
- **30 (Th)**..........*The Outsiders* at SCT, grades 6-8

#### February
- **4 (T)**...........Middle school parent forum, *Stress Management*, 7-8:30 p.m.
- **5 (W)**...........2-hour early dismissal
- **7 (F)**...........Middle school ski club to Snoqualmie, leave TOPS – 2:30 p.m., return to TOPS – 10:45 p.m.
- **7-8 (F-Sa)**.....Middle school play (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*)
- **12 (W)**...........Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
- **17-21 (M-F)**....Mid-Winter Break. No school
- **26 (W)**...........2-hour early dismissal
- **27 (Th)**.........*Go, Dog. Go!* at SCT, grades K-1, 3
- **28 (F)**...........Middle school ski club to Snoqualmie, leave TOPS – 2:30 p.m., return to TOPS – 10:45 p.m.

#### March
- **4 (T)**...........Middle school parent forum, *Focus on Boys*, 7-8:30 p.m.
- **5 (W)**...........2-hour early dismissal
- **12 (W)**.........Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
- **21 (F)**.........Professional development day. No school
- **26 (W)**...........2-hour early dismissal

#### April
- **1 (T)**...........Middle school parent forum, *Focus on Girls*, 7-8:30 p.m.
- **4 (F)**...........End of third quarter
- **7-11 (M-F)**....Spring Break
- **16 (W)**.........Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
- **26 (Sa)**........TOPS 2003 Auction

#### May
- **6 (T)**...........Middle school parent forum, *Parents and Kids*, 7-8:30 p.m.
- **7 (W)**...........2-hour early dismissal
- **14 (W)**.........Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
- **21 (W)**.........*The Shakespeare Stealer* at SCT, grades 2-6
- **26 (M)**.........Memorial Day. No school
- **30 (F)**.........Art Walk and elementary school play
- **31 (Sa)**........Elementary school play

#### June
- **10 (T)**.........Middle school parent forum, *8th Grade Transition*, 7-8:30 p.m.
- **11 (W)**.........Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
- **18 (W)**.........Last student day, 1-hour early dismissal

### Assignment Committee Report

**By Marlies van Bergeijk**

The Site Council committee that worked on the assignment issue this past fall has had two additional meetings since the November 6 vote, to discuss what we learned and what work remains to be done. At the first meeting, we identified three very broad areas of focus:

1. Work that can be done inside the TOPS building.
2. Work that can be done in the community at large, including communities neighboring TOPS.
3. Work at the district level regarding assignment policies.

We decided to brainstorm about each heading and develop some specific ideas and action plans. We were scheduled to introduce and discuss these ideas at the December 11 Site Council meeting before asking the larger TOPS community to sign up for specific areas of involvement. Due to the overflowing agenda we were unable to do this in a meaningful way, and we asked instead to postpone the discussion until the January meeting.

In our committee discussions it became apparent that area #1 has a lot of overlap with the work of the Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ). Under the leadership of Beth Wheeler and Elizabeth Dickinson, we will work closely with this group, and will propose a focus on communication about the CSJ’s activities in order to increase participation in the broadest sense. (KEEP YOUR EYES ON THIS SPACE.-Ed) Some of us are working on organizing multicultural assemblies about Vietnam. We also plan on re-inviting Ed Taylor (the UW education professor who helped kick off our Attack the Gap campaign a few years ago) to talk about his ongoing observations at schools around the country and current research as it relates to Attacking the Gap.

We have formulated fewer concrete action plans for areas #2 and 3 headed by Ben Low, Michelle Pennylegion, and Sheri Toussaint. This is due in part to the fact that these involve building relationships within the central cluster, which will require time and careful planning. However, the Eastlake community council already has elected new representatives to the TOPS Site Council, and TOPS parent Jay Pickering has expressed a willingness to serve again.

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VISION AND MISSION IN MR. J’S ROOM:
WINTER PROJECTS

By Susie Martin, Principal Intern

About eight years ago, Mr. J began spending summers at First Place, an organization that provides schooling and support to families in transition due to crisis. Mr. J was struck by students explaining that they were “not poor, just disadvantaged.” He remembers the comment of one child in particular: “Like you Mr. J, you just have the advantage of a sports car.”

Mr. J did not forget these words at the end of the summer when he returned to his classroom. When winter vacation rolled around, his desk was piled high with gifts from students. He looked at the pile, appreciating his students’ thoughtfulness and recognizing his own advantages. While he appreciated the gifts, he did not need them. On the other hand, he knew people who did. Mr. J packed up the gifts and delivered them to First Place. If only his students could have known how powerful the gifts were.

The following year, Mr. J opened his students’ eyes to the power of giving. Even a second-grader can contribute! Mr. J implemented Winter Projects, a tradition that continues in his class today. At the beginning of December, he tells stories about giving his own time and then asks the students to look and see where they might put their energies. The children are well-versed in caring for each other because they have been using the Civil Rights. They have also read selections from books like Random Acts of Kindness, so they know the difference just one person can make. In the first weeks of December, students search for a person or place in need of extra hands and heart. On December 20, they make cards that present their plans for giving over the winter vacation. This year several students are planning to go to the burn unit at Children’s Hospital. One child has decided to go to a retirement home to play games with the residents. The possibilities are endless and the second-graders are reaching out. Mr. J and Miss Kate will videotape the students presenting their cards, so the students can discuss the projects. It is powerful to see the children becoming aware of their own gifts and of the impact a second-grader can have on the world. Mr. J shares the videotape with his family as a part of their holiday celebrations. When people watch it, he says, “there is not a dry eye in the house.”

A CLASS OF FUNK

By Max Sitcov, Grade 8

On November 7, 2002, a group of four dancers came and gave the eighth and seventh grades a dance lesson, which was sponsored by On The Boards. They have been back-up dancers to a lot of famous singers, like Will Smith.

They didn’t just teach us some crummy old dance routine; they taught us a mixture of moves from the “funk” era. They also taught us about hip-hop. They taught us how it was made and the impact of hip-hop. They told us that hip-hop is a mixture of a lot of different music like tap, jazz, funk, and more.

The routine that they taught us was broken down into easy steps, which we did to the beat of the music. They finished the whole class off by a performance, which was amazing. It was all synchronized into their routine. They were running up to one another and doing back flips. They shook our hands after the performance and we thanked them.

I think the class was very fun and meaningful. We got to learn about music that has been stereotyped for years, and they explained its development and growth to us. I thank On the Boards for putting that together for us.
**NO-BAKE SALE DONORS**

Donor list as of December 16 (list provided by Ann Bergman)

Abson, Kim

Albetta, Athena & Frank Fabens

Allworth, Randy & Julie Miles

Aly, Sorayya Appadolo

Ames, William & Gretchen Chambers

Bergman, Ann & Michael Rorick

Blazevic, Eric & Dana

Braybrooks & Simon Family

Burns, Dennis & Alyson

Cairns, Mary

Cage, Anne

Cech, Frank & Bonnie

Chapel, Paige

Chapin, Ed & Kay

Chapman, Doug & Karol King

Chin, Andrea & Vance Martin

Clark, Robert & Caroline Johnson

Cohen, Judith & Sarah Cohen

Comstock, Ken & Glen Tamura

Coops, Dinah & Stephan Havas

Cousins, Ananda & Francia Recalde-Cousins

Davenport, G. Gordon & Xue-Qiao Zhao

Davis, Susan & Bruce Kochis

Dawson, Craig & Joan

DeChurch, Julie

Dewey, Peter & Marian Valentine

Dodd, Michael & Jade

Dorros, Arthur

Dubiel, Alice

Ellis, Mark

Enriquez, Daniel & Anita

Fandel, John & Mona

Fox, Rebecca & Robert Heller

Framson, Paul & Marilies Van Bergeijk

Galloway, Jerry & Anne Adophson

Garfield, Elizabeth

Gille, Judith

Gilson, Signe & Kounts, John

Girts, Debbie & Richard Phillips

Green, Jim & Sandy

Hahn, Toni

Hale, Bob & April

Harris, Toby & Ronald Shure

Heft, Jeffrey & Tammy Luthy

Hexter, Ester & Larry

Hoang, Minh Ung & Hung Thi Nguyen

Hurley, Daniel & Michelle Penny

Legion

Jamieson, Todd

Johnson, Ann & Michael Frost

Johnston, Alex & Kristin

Jones, Janis

Korbis, Linda & Greg Flood

Kovnat, Steve & Susan Lichtenberg

Kraft, Mary

Kristjanson, Martha & Robert

Krumm, Karin Berghoefer & Anton

Kubota, Ken & Grace

LaPatra Family (L. Jean Rowe for)

Loop, Kim & M. Eden

Low, Ben & Peggy Riehle

Luke, Gary & Beth Wheeler

Macklin, Allen

Magaña, Adán

Manglinong, Rebecca / Jackie & Joseph Ginez

McKeon, Thomas & Kathryn

McRae, Kimberly

Meeker, Sarah

Merrill, Joseph & Elizabeth Dickinson Family

Miyagawa, Lea Ann

Montagna, Elizabeth & John

Moore, Janet & Doug

Moseley, Vicki & Geoffrey Mathay

Nelson, Erica Chung & Gene Nelson

Niemer, James & Randi

North, David & Alison

Nutter, Paul M.D.

Oldham, Davis & Julie Alexander

Onouye, Barry & Yvonne

Palmer, Ann

Patterson, Philip & Maresa

Pekaar, Janna

Perla, Juan & Sally

Pickering, Jay & Rachel & Family

Price, Randy & Mary Harty

Questad, Stephen & Jo-Ann

Reingold, Carol

Remijan, Mark & Catherine

Rivera, Luis & Bok

Robinson, David & Roxanne

Robinson, Tim

Sadinsky, Rebecca & Chris Pfohl

Sarju, David & Michelle

Schacht, Walter & Cima Malek-Asiani

Schwartz, Steve & Peg Maas

Scott, Robert & Kirsten

Scott, Maude & Tom Blue

Segel, Ginger & Robert Kubiniec

Setzer, David

Shaw, Jennifer & Mark Morales

Shields, David & Laurie

Shumann, Amy & David

Sitcov, Steve

Slaton, Catherine

Smith, Tilman & Michael Nailen

Soldano, Lisabeth

Son, Mark & Jessica

Stannard, Mathew & Barbara

Stusser-McNeil, Laura & Kevin McNeil

Swett, Jana M & Paul Loovis

Tarico, Valerie & Brian Arbogast

Tarpley, Debra & Charles Manning

Toussant, Keith & Sheri

Tuai, Gregory & Ben-Ling Wong

Turner, Louisa

Ury, Andrew

Van Dalisen, Pamela

Walker, Debra & Daniel Baldner

Weiner, Winifred for Brady & Austin Wells

Weinstein, Phil & Barbara

White, David & Carol

Woestwin, Anya

Woestwin, Carl

Wong, Peter & Marat

Wong, Winnie

Worthley, Jean

Yarrow, Joyce & Gary Gorland

Zemke, Donald & Deborah
THE INQUIRY SCIENCE PROGRAM AT TOPS
HOW PARENTS AND TEACHERS CHANGED SCIENCE EDUCATION IN SEATTLE

By Kathy Barker
“I love science!”

How did this happen at TOPS? Those of us who learned science in elementary school by lectures and memorization may find it hard to understand the enthusiasm with which students greet the Seattle school system’s inquiry science lessons. Science lessons are now not only simple and interesting; they are actually fun. It is through the combined resources of parents, teachers, principals, scientists, volunteers, and numerous organizations in Seattle that this deceptively simple instructional program has come to revolutionize our classrooms.

Inspiration: A parent-teacher collaboration. It was a collaboration between the parents and teachers at Bryant Elementary in the early 1990s that started the now nationally recognized, city-wide science program in Seattle. Parents wanted more science, and, with resources at the school strapped, stepped in and themselves taught the first grade science classes. It worked well. The parents and teachers extended the program from grades 1-5 the following year. It worked even better.

In 1992, the parents and teachers organized to write a grant, determined to make a good science program available to all children in the city. The first grant was for $3000.00, and the inquiry science program in the Seattle public schools was born.

Over the next few years, those involved found help and money from multiple sources. Some of the original parents at Bryant were scientists, and the desire to really help bring a deep understanding of science to everyone has brought in scores of volunteer scientists from the colleges and industries in the Seattle area. Scientist Ben Saylor wrote a grant to take time from his research to develop science content for elementary schools. Lillian McDermott, a physics researcher from the University of Washington, spent summers in those early years teaching physics to elementary school teachers. Area scientists continue to work closely with teachers in the continual readjustment of the inquiry science curriculum.

Through the then newly formed Department of Molecular Biotechnology at University of Washington, Lee Hood and Valerie Logan worked with the Bryant group to apply for a National Science Foundation (NSF) Systemic Change Grant. This grant, funded in 1995, gave the 5 years of funding that saw the expansion of a one-class program into a city-wide initiative. The grant’s main focus was to give the teachers the tools needed to transform science education in each classroom.

Teacher training. Elementary teachers are given 100 hours of instruction. For those who haven’t specialized in science in college, this makes them much more comfortable with the content. In the beginning, the teacher training was quite tedious. Gradually, the program organizers realized that they needed to teach the classes to the teachers in the same way the teachers would teach the students. Teacher education now concentrates on the background and instructions needed for three modules, or topics, per grade.

While the benefits of taking the teaching training are enormous, so too is the time commitment and effort required. TOPS third grade teacher Tracy Seefeld loves the program, but well understands the difficulties in getting all teachers to take the training.

“I personally, do not have a strong science background. As I embarked on the 100 hours, I was hoping that I would become more excited about the prospect of teaching science. I did! I caught a spark about science!” she says.

But when Tracy switched from teaching second grade to teaching third, she needed to take another 40 hours of training to learn the third grade curriculum. This meant that two summers and numerous school quarters were spent studying science at the adult and student level. Was it worth it?

Tracy says yes. The financial remuneration was small, the personal sacrifices great, but the professional skills gained are extremely valuable. After the training, she is better able to help her students get excited and interested in science. With the clear curriculum, it is easier now to work with interns in the classroom. And Tracy noticed what many other teachers have noticed: Students who have taken the inquiry science classes are better able to express their thoughts orally and in writing in their other subjects as well.

Continuity from K-5 (and on through 12). Before the establishment of the inquiry science program, every teacher

What is Inquiry Science?

Inquiry science is just as the name says — learning science through asking questions. The questions come from the students themselves, as they work through a series of sequenced hands-on experiments on a particular topic. And the answers come from the students themselves. Bit by bit, piece by piece, the students figure out how sound is made, why rain comes from clouds, how soil composition affects plant growth, what the components of healthy food are. They learn to think, to work through options, to evaluate, to reason, to come up with the principles behind the facts. They are scientists.

In addition, inquiry science is not dependent on prior knowledge. Asking the right questions is an ability that all children can learn, regardless of background.

Inquiry science unifies: all children share the language of science.

What makes the Seattle inquiry science program unique?

1. Teachers and scientists work together on choosing topics and developing content.
2. Each topic is “packaged” into a module. Modules for each topic include detailed lesson plans for each day, background information for the teachers, and the materials needed for all experiments.
3. Teachers take instruction in the use of the particular modules for their grade.
4. The modules are re-evaluated constantly for effectiveness and success in the class.
had his or her own science curriculum, and that curriculum was not necessarily correlated with other grades or integrated into any school program. A student might have science every day in second grade, and have it once a week in the third grade, and the topics might have nothing to do with each other. Now, science in each grade will build on the year before to deepen understanding.

At TOPS, Dan Bloedel has inspired scores of middle school students to love science, and has set the scene for other talented science teachers here. But not every middle school is so fortunate. Few middle school teachers feel capable of grappling with the details of teaching science. Those that do must struggle for financial and curriculum support. The Middle School Science Systemic Change Partnership is now extending the strong basis of elementary school inquiry science into other middle schools.

The National Science Foundation is funding $1,575,000 for this five-year teacher professional development program, and these funds are being matched by a host of academic, industrial, and non-profit organizations. As for the elementary school local systemic change project, focus is on providing teacher training (130 hours) for science modules, with the goal of making science a core subject in all schools. Several universities are providing science expertise and leadership to keep the teacher training interesting and on target, and the school districts provide funding for the material. Caroline Kiehle, a long-time Seattle middle school teacher, is in charge of this multi-district program.

Programs are also underway to expand science in the Seattle high schools, and to the families of Seattle school children.

The Science Materials Center. It can take years—and often, a teacher’s own money—to acquire the materials needed to teach a few hands-on science topics. Indeed, it is often the need to plan for and acquire the materials needed for science classes that have put teachers off of teaching science. So each topic, each module, comes with all the materials needed. Each kit, then, must have materials for the entire class, for each of the 20 or so experiments that make up each module. The Science Materials Center is located in a warehouse in Fremont. It is headed by C.J. Tomlinson, and is staffed largely by volunteers—school children and adults. Here the kits are assembled and packaged, and delivered to the schools, and here the kits are renewed after use before rotation to another school. Much of this work is tedious: counting small bottles, writing tags, filling small bags with a set number of small items. But it is vital. Knowing the materials are good and are available frees the teachers to teach.

The future of the program. From the point of view of teachers, students, scientists, and parents, the grass-roots inquiry science program has been amazingly successful. The program constantly solicits evaluation on content and presentation from students and teachers, and uses that feedback to fine-tune the programs. Outside evaluations have been sought as well. Recently, the Inverness Research Association gave the program its highest rating, for an unprecedented second year. According to Inverness, this is extremely rare for an urban school district. Despite the success of the inquiry science program, its future in Seattle is not assured. The Seattle school district took over funding for the K-5 program after the expiration of the five-year grant, and is also funding the materials for the middle school. But every year there is a shift in administration, and it is a challenge to keep the district interested.

Elaine Woo was the assistant principal at Bryant Elementary in 1992, and is now the project director for Seattle’s K-5 inquiry-based science program. She sums up the program so far, saying, “Before, elementary children had almost no science. Now, elementary students in Seattle have a rich, steady diet of inquiry-based science instruction. In addition to learning about the natural world, they are increasing their critical thinking and problem solving, communication, and mathematics skills.” Children who love science—what a revolution those determined teachers and parents started at Bryant.
TOPS MISSION/VISION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

By Don Zemke

The TOPS P.E. program aligns with the TOPS mission statement and vision by using an anti-bias, multicultural approach to teaching. We have the same expectations for all students regardless of their ethnicity, gender, athletic prowess, or even their ability to speak English. Since our “success-oriented” program is based on participation and effort, TOPS students are able to experience a variety of different sports and activities in a positive, non-threatening environment.

P.E. creates a safe and stimulating environment through a diverse curriculum, which provides an activity for every student, regardless of his/her interest. Examples include rock climbing, unicycling, frisbee, juggling, double-dutch, and gymnastics. Lifestyle activities as well as a variety of alternative games and activities are emphasized.

Improving self-confidence and self-esteem is a cornerstone of the TOPS P.E. program. Through their active participation, students become more confident, assertive, emotionally stable, independent, and self-controlled. Eric and I have observed many proud students report their success on the rock wall—making it across the overhang, going across in record time or blindfolded, and/or traversing while tethered together. Some of our students actually report that they learned to ride a unicycle before learning to ride a bike! TOPS unicyclists push their limits by learning to ride in one place, ride backwards, and ride our giraffe unicycles.

A primary goal of our program is to know that each student feels comfortable and safe in P.E. class. Students set goals and work to improve their own scores. They are not compared to other students but are challenged to improve their own personal scores. Throughout the year, students have numerous opportunities to develop social skills by working cooperatively, learning sportsmanship, resolving conflicts, and behaving as good citizens.

Especially noteworthy is how helpful, caring, and kind our P.E. students are with our new students in both the Bilingual Orientation Center program and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing class. Observing our students’ welcoming and friendly behavior towards the new students is something that makes us particularly proud.

Assignment Committee Report continued from page 5

as the TOPS representative on the Eastlake community council. Anyone else interested in this should contact Dave Sarju.

There are plans for conducting a needs assessment of central cluster schools, after speaking with cluster director Pauline Hill. In addition, there is strong interest in developing a cluster-wide newsletter that would feature a specific school each month to assist with marketing these schools during the enrollment period.

The committee will also continue to send reps to school board meetings, and plans to keep that body apprised of the work continuing at TOPS as a result of the activities in the fall.

We recognize that some people prefer to get involved when the goals and tasks have been clearly defined, while others like to get in early to help set the agenda. Wherever you find yourself along that spectrum, please make yourself known. We very much need all the energy that was so palpable at TOPS during the fall, to continue the work that remains to be done.
P.E. offers students many opportunities to strengthen their **peer relationships while learning to socialize** more successfully. (This is especially critical during late childhood and early adolescence.) Our students **have** to cooperate and work together to participate in activities. Understandably, students also learn that they have certain **individual rights**, and learn about the need to **respect the rights of others** through this direct participation.

**Kinesthetic learning opportunities** are bountiful. For many students, learning occurs when they can move, touch, and directly experience concepts. Through our continual integration of academic curriculum into the P.E. experience, students benefit from **academic excellence** and, we hope, eventual **elimination of the achievement gap**. Our activities are designed to instruct or reinforce math, language arts, technology, art, and science. Our reference to the large map in the gym helps students **honor diversity** in the ethnic backgrounds of their classmates. The presence of our wonderful Bilingual Orientation Center helps contribute to the rich diversity of our student population.

TOPS P.E. **provides an outlet for stress** for our students on a regular basis. P.E. activities serve as a major vehicle for releasing tension and anxiety, and can provide a positive alternative for students who otherwise would “release” this through “acting out” and other negative behavior. Most classroom teachers agree that more students are ready to learn and easier to manage after their P.E. class.

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**“THE LIGHT IN THEIR EYES” : AN INVITATION TO DISCUSS**

By Elizabeth Dickinson

What would a school that embraced multicultural education look like? This question has sparked the reading and discussion of educator Sonia Nieto’s book, *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*, in the Coalition for Social Justice. Nieto argues that “Failure to learn does not develop out of thin air; it is scrupulously created through policies, practices, attitudes, and beliefs.” Multicultural education is the effort to change school teaching, counseling, and disciplinary policies and practices, as well as the personal attitudes and beliefs that underlie them. It is far more than simply adding “ethnic tidbits” to an existing curriculum. A school that was genuinely engaged in such a transformation would have high expectations of all of its students. Teachers would view their students’ experiences and identities as assets in their learning, and would expect to learn from and with their students. Families would be seen as meaningful partners in student learning, and the quality of relationships between families, students, and school staff would be considered central to educational success. Classroom teaching would be collaborative and active, and nurture children’s ability to think critically, solve problems, and see subjects and issues from more than one perspective. Students would be able to identify prejudice and institutional oppression, and feel empowered to think creatively about addressing them. This discussion about *The Light in Their Eyes* and how it relates to the TOPS community is only beginning in the Coalition for Social Justice and our school. Please come join us to be part of it at the next CSJ meeting, January 9.
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