A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Thank you to our auction committee for planning and coordinating such a fabulous event! As always, the evening was wonderful. I enjoyed all the class projects and student work that decorated the Asian Resource Center. Thank you to all who helped, attended, or provided financial support for TOPS.

At the end of April, our fourth- and seventh-graders breathed a collective sigh of relief as they completed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. Although our fourth-graders and seventh-graders were the only students to take the tests, it is important to remember that the WASL assesses students on what they have learned from kindergarten on up through fourth or seventh grade. We won’t see results until the fall, but we are confident that TOPS teachers have prepared our students well.

There are only two months of school left, but we have a lot to do and much to look forward to. On May 7 we have a two-hour early dismissal. Our staff will continue the alignment of our math curriculum and meet in their race study circles. Our study circles are researching topics such as the impact of self-esteem on learning and the relationship between multiple intelligences and race. At the end of the year, staff study circles will present their findings and action research results to the rest of the staff.

Staff members are also busy developing class lists for next year. We are working hard to ensure that classes are balanced and that students are in environments that will help them succeed. We have decided that we will be personalizing our process this year. Instead of posting class lists on the school doors or website, teachers will mail welcome letters to families during late August.

In a few weeks, our seventh-graders will be heading off to camp. We know that they will learn a lot, be safe, and of course have fun, under the direction of Mr. Bloedel and Mr. Ellis. As always, I am looking forward to the art walk and the elementary play. It is exciting to see the multiple talents of TOPS students showcased in these events.

Cheers!

Clara

ED TAYLOR LEADS OUTSTANDING WORKSHOP: ATTACK THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP II

By Sally Jo Gilbert de Vargas, Professional Development School Coach

On Thursday, March 20, TOPS parents and staff enjoyed a stimulating and challenging evening with Dr. Ed Taylor, UW Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Dr. Taylor (who stated that he prefers to be addressed as Ed!) opened his two-hour workshop with a thought-provoking quote from W.E.B. DuBois: “Of all the civil rights freedoms that we have fought for in the last 250-300 years, the right to learn is one we must fight for to the last ditch.” Ed’s goals for the evening centered around four major topics:

• Desire to be public about our strengths and our problems here at TOPS

• Struggle against complacency

• Understand and problematize the “achievement gap”

• Discuss TOPS in the context of the larger community of schools

Continued on page 2
**ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE**

Welcome to the ninth monthly newsletter of the 2002-2003 school year. The newsletter is edited by Teresa Németh, designed by Cindy Suzumura, and mailed to you by Heather Burgess and Nancy Lambert. Don Zemke provides our sports photos.

We need your submissions: calendar additions, classroom news and news from the larger community, faculty notes, committee reports, opinions, profiles, compliments, congratulations, children’s art, photos, and anything else significant to the TOPS community. Submit your contributions to the newsletter box in the main office or, preferably, by electronic file to Teresa Németh at zongora2@hotmail.com. The remaining deadline for 2002-03 is Wednesday, May 14. If newsletters are to arrive the first week of the month, there can be no exceptions to this deadline. Anyone interested in working on the newsletter should contact Teresa at 325-8320 or the above email address.

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**FORUM**

Hi, I’m Grace. That’s Will. Well, I wish I were Grace—she’s so gorgeous.

We didn’t know Will was gay when we got married. We thought it was something like hair color—if you didn’t want to be a brunette, you could dye your hair blonde or red, problem solved. And he really liked me. Actually, I think he really loved me. Love is complex and varied. It’s hard to know what the right kind is, or what kind of love suits what situation. What’s the right kind for sharing a life and a home, and raising children?

But it turned out it wasn’t like dyeing your hair, it was about identity on a much deeper level. So our marriage had to end. Except that he still loved me, and I loved him. And we had children who really enjoyed both of us, and both of us together.

So we set about constructing a different kind of family. He held on while I let myself feel bitter and victimized. I held on while just about everyone I loved and respected told me I really should divorce him and marry a proper father.

I think we’ve convinced them all by now. The details might take some getting used to, but our family is pretty amazingly happy. We could hardly have done it alone. We couldn’t have done it without all the people working on a broader scale to make being gay at least tolerable, if not quite acceptable.

Which brings me to my main point, actually: it takes all kinds of people to make the world a better place. There are people who work as activists, confronting issues head-on, and there are people who value personal connections above all and work for peace and justice through those channels. I’m pretty sure I’ve even seen people switch types, depending on the issue. I appreciate both of these types at our school, especially this school, and I’m always hoping each will be less offended by the other.

I’m leaving this anonymous because I want you to wonder which seemingly normal, correct family has this surprise element. And I’m thankful to be in the world at a time when so many of you feel able to accept us, and him, without hesitation.

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Ed Taylor continued from page 1

In his opening remarks he emphasized his own personal story. He described the crucial nature of the role of key teachers and a safe school environment in his own educational journey. He explained that, although we define the achievement gap based on standardized test data, he urged us to “Be careful about quantifying a moral issue.” In other words, the way we go about assuring that each and every student reaches the pinnacle of his or her personal success requires humanizing the process. He asks us to continue to ask tough questions, such as “What does each racial category (White, African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian) actually look like? What different types of students comprise each group, and what specific learning needs do they have? How do we talk about privilege and opportunity? How does privilege play itself out in our community? He reminded us that there are multiple ways to measure achievement, engagement, and involvement, and challenged us to keep creating disequilibrium among ourselves and even among our children/students, so we can break out of the boxes of our preconceived notions of why children achieve – and why they don’t.

After Ed’s opening remarks, we broke into smaller groups to discuss the following questions:

1. What are some of the things the TOPS community has done well towards narrowing the achievement gap?
2. What is the evidence of our progress?
3. What are some of the challenges we face in attending to this work?
4. How can TOPS families act to serve a broader segment of Seattle’s population?

After discussing these questions, each group reported back to the larger group their ideas and questions for further consideration.

Altogether it was an engaging and energizing evening! We are grateful to Ed Taylor and the Coalition for Social Justice and Sheri Toussaint, Beth Wheeler, Elizabeth Dickinson, Tilman Smith, Marlies van Bergeijk, Garry Owens, Ben Low, Dave Sarju, Bruce Denton, and Clara Scott for all the thoughtful effort and careful planning that made this event possible. We look forward to follow-up events and discussions!
By Eileen Hynes

David Sarju began the meeting by acknowledging that in this community we may not always agree but we need to always respect each other and listen.

It was not possible to vote on the minutes from the last meeting because there was no quorum. Attendance was low because of Passover.

**Principal**

Clara said that the children had worked hard in the Common Cents campaign. She also reported a change in the announcement of class assignments: next year, no class lists will be posted, but instead letters will be sent letting families know which teacher their child will have. The reason for this is that families have been calling the school asking to have their children moved to classes with their friends. Class sizes are not going to increase. The numbers in the contract for teachers are: grades K – 3=28; grades 4 – 8=32. But at TOPS, the numbers will be as follows: K=25; grades 1 and 2=26; grade 3=28; grades 4 and 5=31; grade 6=30, and grades 7 and 8=29.

**Building Leadership Team**

There was no report this month.

**ASB President**

Traci Tate reported on the middle school sweatshirt project. She said there was a great yearbook this year, and wondered whether there could be scholarships available to purchase it. Sheri Toussaint will look into this. Tilman Smith suggested the Site Council sponsor scholarships.

Traci also reported on the pep rally, Spirit Week, and the talent show, and said that chaperones were needed for the May 2 dance.

**Treasurer**

Peter Dewey requested folks turn in receipts so bills can be paid. There is still money available.

**Volunteer Coordinator**

Stacie Bonnelle reported that volunteers are needed for putting mailing labels on the newsletter next year. She is working with Mike Anderson to get tutors to students who need them. Thanks to Jules James for helping with the prospective parent tour volunteers. There may be no district-supported training for volunteers next year.

**No-Bake**

Jennifer Shaw reported that the No-Bake did well.

**Coalition for Social Justice**

Tilman Smith reported that Mr. J gave a well-received presentation at the last meeting. The CSJ is working on trying to integrate the topics of homophobia and heterosexism into its discussions. The CSJ is one of the natural places to address issues that have emerged recently in this community.

**Request for Proposals**

There was discussion on the RFP process. Sheri Toussaint will mention the process at the auction and invite people to participate, as wide community participation is desired. The timeline and form are posted on the web. It was suggested that next March or April there be an article in the newsletter outlining requirements and expectations.

**Site Council Nominations**

Information binders need to be made and passed out at the retreat in late June. The new executive committee will be elected at the June meeting.

**Summer Childcare**

Kids’ Company is enrolling for summer childcare! If you are interested, feel free to stop in anytime or give me a call at 709-8487. I look forward to meeting you!
Vanessa Hunter, Program Director
FIFTH-GRADERS EXPLORE ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING

By Nick Thompson and Alex Tuai, Grade 5

Gleaming skyscrapers, thousands of feet high. Sparkling bridges stretching across a beautiful river, miles long. Perfectly shaped domes, and much more. These are all the work of a highly skilled architect. In Mrs. Poole’s fifth-grade class these wondrous skills are what the students have been learning about for these past few months. Kids’ minds are now bursting with things that Linda Korbus, structural engineer, has taught us.

In class, we watched movies about buildings and bridges. We learned a lot about the history of certain types of buildings and bridges, and how they are made. We got to see how buildings stay up, and why sometimes they don’t. While the videos were playing, we took notes on them. “I learned that triangles are the strongest shape and most domes are made out of them,” said Gordon Loop, one of Mrs. Poole’s fifth-grade students.

For one project, we had to choose a famous building or bridge that we wanted to learn more about. We had to do research on the structure to find out certain things like who designed it, and then write a short biography of that person. We also had to do an illustration of the structure. “I learned a lot about how they make bridges, and the parts inside them,” said student Jacob Moore.

In another part of the architecture unit, we had the pleasure of walking to an apartment building near our school that was getting built. We walked there at the end of almost every day. Our class took notes and drew pictures about what the workers were doing. “I learned what the steps of making a building are, what the parts of a building are, and how the parts are used,” said Moore. Korbus also told us things about what the workers were doing, and how those things affected the structure.

For another project, we had to do blueprints. They were fun to draw but sometimes they were hard to understand. “The blueprints weren’t the best part, and it was confusing at points,” said Sinclaire Manning, another student.

We had to make the elevation(s) and the floor plan(s) of the building or structure that we were making. Some people enjoyed making these, but some didn’t and they had problems. “The blueprints were cool, because you got to measure angles, heights, and width,” claims Loop.

After we did the blueprints, we took them and got our materials needed to make the final model of our building. We had to use the blueprints that we had made before to know what to build for our structures. That is how we knew how to make the final structures. The final structures are currently located in the library. There are
bridges, buildings, and much more. Some people made real life structures. Take Sarah Cohen for instance. “I made the Golden Gate Bridge. My challenges were trying to put the cables into the Styrofoam. My other challenges were putting the cables on the outside of the foam into the wood,” Cohen explained.

“I made a double-decker bridge. I learned more about bridges and how they stand up and hold together,” said Ryan Zemke. We all had challenges and fun times making these buildings.

This wasn’t all easy though. There were many hardships and challenges. Many of the students had trouble taking notes on the movie. “Some challenges that I had were having everything on my final structure stick together with the glue, and having the trusses on my bridge be equal,” said Zemke.

We couldn’t have just done this whole unit all by ourselves with no teaching. We owe all our knowledge to Linda Korbus, professional structural engineer, who has been teaching us about architecture and engineering for these past few months. “Linda taught us a lot about architecture. It opened a whole new career choice for me,” said Malcolm Olson. We all give our thanks to Linda for teaching us so much.

TOPS FAMILIES SPEND SPRING BREAK IN PARIS!

By Marianne Trangen

It is hard to believe that only a week ago nine students and seven parents from TOPS were spending their days together on the Champs Elysees, at the Louvre, at the Eiffel Tower, and even at the Moulin Rouge. We were fortunate in so many ways. All of the kids and adults enjoyed each other’s company. The weather was brilliantly sunny, if rather chilly, almost every day. We did not experience a hint of anti-American sentiment. Our toughest decisions involved whether to have pain au chocolat or a croissant (or both!) with breakfast. That is my kind of vacation.

For months before our departure, I got questions from several of you about whether there would be another trip next year. I answered that it depended on how this trip went. Right now I am now saying DEFINITELY!

Among our travelers was my daughter, one of the two participants who were not from TOPS. I did not anticipate the advantage that travel with a mixed-age group offers to parents. After spending most of our time together on various excursions, we settled down to a civilized meal for dinner each evening. Adults sat at one table. Children sat at another. Everyone was happy to share their impressions of the day with their peers.

It was gratifying to see my French students have a chance to apply what they have learned. Some were in Europe for the first time, while others are seasoned travelers. If you would like to see pictures from our trip, go to www.explorica.com and enter Trangen-5229 as the Tour ID. From there, click on Tour Diary, where you can read about our daily activities and look at a few photos. There is nothing quite like Paris in the springtime.
SHE HATED HER NAME
WHY I DO FAMILY HISTORY PROJECTS

By Joe Drummond

When I began teaching in the Seattle Public Schools I felt that I had a strong background in multicultural and antibias education. I had studied books by Paulo Freire, James Banks, John Dewey, Bell Hooks, Howard Zinn, Derek Bell, Louise Derman-Sparks, W.E.B. DuBois, Lisa Delpit, Herbert Kohl, etc. I had a strong philosophy of teaching with a deliberate purpose for doing what I do. It was a conviction for positive social change. When I got my first job as a fifth-grade teacher, the reality was overwhelming. I knew that to engage all students I would have to find something to make the curriculum meaningful to them. What interest or meaningful connection, at all, would my Cambodian students have in learning about the Oregon Trail or about the Harlem Renaissance? I also asked the question to myself, how can I engage these students, create a meaningful connection for them, when I don’t even know what’s important to their culture or what their culture is all about, for that matter? I had students whose families were from Somalia, Cambodia, Russia, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Laos, Mexico, China, and Nicaragua. Furthermore, I felt I was culturally incompetent with my knowledge and understanding of the different values and ways of living within American culture. Lastly, my students were actually embarrassed by their cultural background. I had a Laotian student whose name was Bouavane. She said that she “hated” her name and preferred to be called Sarah. I had a student whose family is from Central America and he was embarrassed to let any of his classmates know that he was fluent in Spanish. I’ve seen this happen time and again. This was the year 1997 and cultural genocide was still happening, whether intentional or not!

The rationale for the family history project that I do as a fourth-grade teacher at TOPS is based from the above dilemmas. I wanted to create a social studies project where all students could have a meaningful connection and take some pride and action toward their family background. I wanted to learn along with my students by gaining some cultural awareness and sensitivity, and instilling in the children to strive for cultural competence and be antibias leaders. Underlying all aspects of the above philosophy, I needed to teach the essential academic learning requirements in language arts, social studies, and math.

Family histories can be a very sensitive issue. We have many preliminary class discussions about what makes a family. I tell the class about my dad and stepmother, about students with two moms, a friend of mine who was adopted by his grandparents, etc. I stress with parents/guardians and students that they are not forced to do any family research that they don’t feel comfortable doing. We all have family secrets. When I introduce the project to the class we define family as the most important people in someone’s life.

We start the project by doing a name poem/story. Students research their name by asking parents and guardians, and then they tell the story of their name. Or, they have the option of writing a poem about it. Next, we do a family recipe. Students are required to write down a recipe that is important to them or their family, along with a short essay about the history of the recipe within their family. They are required to answer the five W’s: who, what, when, where, and why. Next, we write a narrative biography of an elder family member. Students do a formal interview and write their elder’s story based from their notes. Next, they make a family history timeline where they pinpoint important events that happened within their family history or any important historical events outside of the family that are important to their family. Next, we make a family tree. I am very open with this component and reemphasize the definition of family as being the most important people in someone’s life. I find it interesting that the traditional family tree isn’t applicable to many families. Finally, we have a potluck where families are invited to see other children’s work and to try some new foods brought by other families.

I’ve been doing this project for several years now and it is not without flaws. My hope is that after this project, students learn some skills and gain a little more pride in who they and their peers are and where they come from.

Excerpted from a presentation given to the CSJ this year.
CHESS CLUB HOSTS TOURNAMENT

By Gene Nelson

On Saturday, March 29, 180 students representing over 50 schools converged on TOPS for a day of chess. Among the players were 30 TOPS students grades K-8, with 12 of them playing in a tournament for the first time! There were five rounds of chess, and sunshine in between while the kids waited for the next round to begin. There is usually a lot of waiting-around time. Players had plenty of time to play ball and run about—it is a chess tournament and a play date at the same time!

Students are divided into sections by grades K-3, 4-6, and 7-8. The TOPS chess players made a great showing, with the following results:

K-3 SECTION (FIRST-EVER TOURNAMENT):
Top Overall: Jackson White, 3rd
Kindergarten: Carmelita Palagi, 1st; Margot Maraghe, 7th
1st grade: Alex Hamilton, 5th *; Marianna White, 7th; Harris McNeil, 8th *
2nd grade: Jack McDonald, 13th
3rd grade: Asa Palagi, 2nd; Benji Oh, 6th

4-6 SECTION:
Top Overall: Timur Maraghe, 7th
4th grade: Eli Davis, 3rd; Jack Yates, 4th; Ryan Tam, 9th *

7-8 SECTION:
7th grade: Andrew Wolf, 1st

TEAM AWARDS:
TOPS, 1st place K-3 section
TOPS, 2nd place 4-6 section

The day’s activities ran very smoothly thanks to all of the wonderful chess club parents who came forward to help. Special thanks to chess coach Mark Morales, to Master chess instructors Bill Schill and Alan Holzman, and to Jack Lee for website support. The chess club players meet every Tuesday after school in the third- and fourth-grade commons area. Two classes are organized by skill and experience level. If you are interested in enrolling your child in the chess club and classes next year, pick up an entry form. Then he or she can be ready for next year’s TOPS chess tournament!

Winning TOPS Kindergartners Margot (left), Carmelita

Some of the TOPS team
Back row (l-r): Marianna, (guest), Joseph, Timur, Nicholas
Middle (l-r): Jack, Koji, Deric, Eli
Front (l-r): Eugene, Ryan, Sophia

For more pictures, look on the TOPS website, www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops/activities/chess.html
BULLYING IS EVERYBODY’S PROBLEM

By Kathy Barker

What is bullying? It was once defined solely by physical violence, or by the threat of physical violence. As such, it was a behavior usually identified with boys, and with a particular kind of boy. The definition has been expanded to include any unpleasant behavior from one person or group directed against another person. The expansion of the definition means that we recognize that many people, not just a single person or group, are capable of bullying behavior.

For boys, this behavior usually still has physical overtones, as it is often concerned with physical attributes such as sports ability or strength. Those smaller or physically weaker are targets of remarks, jeers, or fists. Boys less competent at reading social cues are particularly at risk for ridicule. Sexual statements are one of the more usual comments among boys.

Bullying by girls has a very different appearance. Rather than hitting or making fun verbally, girls engage in what is known as relational aggression (Simmons, R. 2002. Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Aggression in Girls. New York, Harcourt, Inc.). They exclude, they pass rumors, they manipulate by being friendly one day and cold as ice the next. There appears to be no anger and no conflict, and to teachers, no malice, so girl bullying is often not recognized. It is certainly seldom dealt with at all.

There are a variety of approaches taken by different schools to counteract bullying. Some schools follow a set curriculum, some have made their own programs. Some anti-bullying programs are run by counselors, some by teachers, and some by parents. In general, the theory is to teach children to recognize and manage all conflict effectively, and to eliminate bullying as an acceptable part of the school culture.

Long before the implementation of the transformation plan, Beacon Hill School considered the social climate and environment to be as important as academic topics in educating students. The focus of counselor Mary Hoy is empowering all children to deal with problems and come up with solutions. “We don’t want to label a child as a bully or a victim,” she says. “Both are part of a situation. Our philosophy is that we will help every child solve problems.” To do this, there is a multi-pronged approach, with imbedded curriculum in some of the classrooms being the foundation of training. Exploring social competency skills early, kindergarteners and first-graders follow the Dina Dinosaur classroom curriculum to improve relationships with peers. Second-graders follow a combination of the Dina Dinosaur curriculum and the Second Step Program, which promotes problem solving; third- through fifth-graders follow the Steps for Respect Curriculum, a curriculum that teaches social and emotional skills for violence prevention. Teachers at Beacon Hill like this program, which is literature-based: the children use books such as Blubber, by Judy Blume, and There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom, by Louis Sachar, to identify and solve bullying behaviors.

In addition, there is a Peace Patrol, composed of fifth-graders who watch out for misbehaving students on the playground. In order to be considered for this highly desirable position, students have to write a letter detailing why they would make a good conflict manager. The 15 students chosen are trained in conflict management before the start of the school year. They work in teams on the playground, and report to a playground manager, and their presence and actions have drastically reduced bullying on the playground.

Bullying is a prevalent and pervasive problem in schools throughout Seattle and King County. Among the findings of a report on King County are these:

- 21% to 30% of students in grades 6 to 12 reported being bullied “a lot” or “every day.” Another 48% to 50% reported being bullied “sometimes.”
- Eight out of 10 students in 8th grade reported being bullied “sometimes,” “a lot,” or “every day.”
- Many students would tell another student to stop bullying if they saw a bullying incident occur. However, nearly equal numbers would either “walk away” or “stay and watch.”
- Nearly half of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students reported having been harassed based on their perceived sexual orientation. However, 7 out of 10 students who reported harassment based on perceived sexual orientation identified as heterosexual.
- Students who report harassment also report feeling less safe at school.
- Students reporting harassment may be at greater risk for suicide or have other mental health concerns.

(From Public Health - Seattle & King County issued “Public Health Data Watch: Bullying and Based-Based Harassment in King County Schools,” August, 2002.)

Despite fierce and prolonged resistance (some complained that a bill aimed at curtailing bullying and harassment in schools amounted to a gay rights measure), Anti-bullying/ Safe Schools Bill HB 1444 was passed by the Washington legislature in 2002. This bill makes it clear that harassment for any reason is unacceptable, and requires school districts to set up policies against harassment, bullying, and intimidation by August, 2003, and to provide funding to train teachers and administrators.

However, Governor Locke’s latest budget proposal calls for elimination of the funding for anti-bullying training (as well as the salary raise for teachers already approved by referendum). Each school is again left to its increasingly diminished resources to deal with bullying.

With or without state funding, some schools have already decided that improving social interactions among the students is a priority. In the fall of 2001, every school in Seattle began implementing its own transformation plan, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, designed to move each student to maximum performance level. The Building Leadership Teams (BLT) at some schools have included addressing bullying and improving the social climate as part of the transformation plan, and have already begun implementing curriculum or training in the classrooms.
Undoubtedly, the playground is where much of the bullying behavior at elementary schools occurs. Parent and playground volunteer Shelly Sundberg, of Lowell School, was shocked to overhear negative and mocking statements from students on the playground. She documented what she had heard in a letter to the staff, and largely through her efforts and those of other parents and staff, Lowell School now has a social skills program that focuses on bully-proofing and character education simultaneously.

The bully-proofing program is based on the book *Bully-Proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary School* (Carla Garrity et al, 2000). Shelly and a Lowell teacher have compacted the eight lessons of the book into three, with each class receiving three 1-hour lessons. These lessons help students to define bullying behavior, teach them how to intervene when observing such behavior, and explain the difference between tattling and reporting bad behavior.

Character education is literature-based, and uses the Daily Oral Language with Character books. Grammar, stories, and poems explain one character trait a month. The traits described are honesty, honor, respect, accountability, excellence, self-control, fairness, caring, and civility, all learned within the context of language arts skills building.

Parent and staff education is another important part of Lowell’s approach to bullying, since the behavior of the adults profoundly affects the climate of the school. There are PTA speakers on social and emotional issues, as well as articles and book reviews in the monthly newsletter. The results of school climate surveys are also included in the newsletter. Offenses and consequences are drawn up by the social skills committee (a committee composed of teachers and parents), and are made clear to all parents.

Since offenses include actions such as embarrassing someone, or name-calling about clothing or possessions, staff and volunteers must be very vigilant. Such vigilance requires work, and volunteers, including Shelly, regularly patrol the playground during recesses.

Like Beacon Hill, Kimball Elementary School uses Second Step as the basic curriculum. The anti-bullying program is run by counselor Aster Dibaba, who goes to each class once a week, trains the teachers in the curriculum at the beginning of every year, and manages a squadron of fourth- and fifth-grade conflict managers.

“If you work on solving the problems, the children can learn. They won’t be afraid,” says Aster. She firmly believes that giving the children the language of non-violence helps them build a culture in which bullying cannot flourish. Children are taught not to be victims; they learn to report any unkindness and they see that bullies are disciplined effectively. Reporting has become part of the culture, and isn’t considered to be tattletaling. There are frequent talks with the students about the frustration that leads to bullying, and the strategies that all people can use to avoid bullying or being bullied.

Identifying bullying behavior is one of the empowering tools taught at Kimball, and the more subtle bullying behaviors, such as “Let’s not be her friend,” are taken as seriously as overt or physical pressure.

The program is only a few years old, and the effects weren’t seen the first year. There wasn’t great enthusiasm for the training in the school. But by the end of year two, the amount of incidents serious enough to warrant a trip to the office have decreased dramatically. Aster expects that, as more and more of the students learn the language of personal responsibility and empowerment, the incidents will decrease even further.

TOPS students are not at all immune to bullying, and many students have complained to parents about words and actions not always heard or seen by adults. By the time students have reached middle school, bullying is commonplace: the students have known each other for many years, and many find it difficult to change the way they interact with people they didn’t like or play with in kindergarten. Negative behaviors become entrenched.

We are certainly helped by the presence of counselor Jennifer Murray. Jennifer holds many counseling services for TOPS children. These include classroom sessions for diversity awareness and anti-bullying strategies, where she utilizes parts of Second Step, Bully-Proofing Your School, and other character education curriculum. Jennifer also works with small groups of children, as well as individuals, to deal with more specific needs.

In addition, most of the teachers have devised their own creative ways to address character, bullying, and diversity issues in the class: recent newsletter articles have highlighted many of these wonderful approaches.

Yet bullying goes on.

“We—parents and staff—could do a better job of recognizing what bullying looks like and taking kids seriously when they say they are being bullied,” Jennifer says. Perhaps this is the crux of our problem at TOPS: that in the face of the diversity of culture and opinions, we as a school have not reevaluated and clarified just what we consider to be hurtful behavior. As we move towards less simplistic definitions of diversity, our definitions of bullying need also become less restrictive. If we don’t know what bullying is, our children won’t, either.

All bullying, however subtle, needs to be dealt with immediately and consistently. But most bullying takes place outside the classroom, out of view of the teachers. Parents can help enormously by actively managing conflicts on bus lines or at recess. Yet the number of playground volunteers falls off in the higher grades, just when the problems escalate. Parents will have to be more active at school, more vigilant at home, if we are to make all bullying unacceptable at TOPS.
**MR. TUBBS’ NEW SCHOOL**

By Amy Hagopian

I ventured south to visit former TOPS principal Gary Tubbs’ new school, “The New School @ SouthShore.” I received a warm welcome from everyone there, testament to the school’s mission: “Be a loving community of purposeful learning that honors the whole child: body, mind, and spirit!”

The school offers a year-round calendar (September through July), has a Kids’ Company program for before- and after-school activities and intersessions, and has small class sizes (17 or fewer). The building currently houses only 100 pre-K and kindergarten students, with the intent to add a new grade level each year until it achieves K-8 status.

Mr. Tubbs described the packaged curriculum, known as High/Scope®, as “hands-on constructivist.” Not wanting to display my ignorance, I went home and looked it up. The High/Scope website ([http://www.highscope.org/](http://www.highscope.org/)) describes the curriculum: “Teachers give children a sense of control over the events of the day by planning a consistent routine that enables children to anticipate what happens next. A central element of the day is the ‘plan-do-review sequence,’ in which children make a plan, carry it out, and then reflect on the results. The daily routine also includes times for small- and large-group experiences and time for outside play.”

“The only rules here are about safety and respect,” Tubbs said. “Everything else is negotiable.” He explained the children and staff decided that running through the building is unsafe, but kids did negotiate permission to skip.

The kids are beautiful. When they come in, many with a family member, they’re enthusiastically greeted at the door. The ethnic composition is varied: 45% black, 33% Asian, 12% white, and 10% Hispanic. Many mothers in Muslim garb were in evidence.

To promote “the spirit,” there’s a “spirit assembly” every Friday in which everyone participates. When I was there, there was singing, some kids demonstrated new gymnastic skills, and there were four minutes of silence for reflection (and they really were silent!). One of the affirmation chants the kids knew went like this: “I am smart. I am very smart. And I will be smarter, because the harder I work, the smarter I get.”

Once a month, there is a “gratitude lunch,” when the big open space is set with tables with tablecloths and flowers, and guests from local churches and community organizations are invited.

Like at TOPS, there are frequent field trips. During the week I visited they had been to both the zoo and the Seattle Children’s Theater.

For the body, the school has set aside one of its rooms for the yoga studio, complete with a Korean water lake mural on the wall. The idea is to teach kids skills that help them gain power over themselves. “Kids need to know they can control their choices,” Tubbs said. “Self discipline is important here. Sitting still in a positive way is a skill. It all works together to calm ourselves.” Music and visual arts are two other important components for the “body.”

The old South Shore school building, which features “delightful” 1970s décor and color schemes, is scheduled for a remodel during the 2004/2005 school year. And it’s a good thing, too, because there were lots of white buckets around to catch the drips from the ceiling.

Tubbs, who has committed to spending three years at the New School as principal before he retires, says, “I just want to be the grandpa for the school. I don’t want to do all the paperwork any more.” Nonetheless, we old-timers at TOPS will remember how Tubbs was a master of the paperwork game that kept good teachers and attracted new talent. At the New School, he has negotiated an understanding with the teachers union that allows him to build a staff that “embraces the vision, and nurtures the children’s spirits in a secular way.”

We’re glad you’re having fun at the New School, Mr. Tubbs, and wish you all the best.
“NEXT STEPS” QUESTIONNAIRE

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS! Please take a few minutes to share your suggestions for the NEXT STEPS we at TOPS might take to nurture the growth of ALL our children and to create a community where all families feel welcomed and valued. Your suggestions and priorities will guide our work with staff and parents to make a difference for all students. Thank you! The Coalition for Social Justice

Please choose three of the following ideas that you think are important for the “next steps”... and add your own ideas!

☐ Exploring what we can learn from other school districts that are also working toward greater equity in academic achievement

☐ Opportunities for families to share cultures, traditions, or talents with each other and our children (e.g. in TOPICS, classroom curriculum units, multicultural assemblies, participatory music or art festivals). Specific ideas?

☐ Forums or workshops on such topics as homework support, effective volunteering in the classroom, building community within a class or grade, teasing/bullying, school discipline issues

☐ Supporting staff in implementing next year’s cultural focus: finding artists, offering personal knowledge or resources for curriculum enrichment in the classroom, helping plan multicultural assemblies, and more

☐ Speakers on eliminating the achievement gap, multicultural education, or promoting cross-cultural communication and community in schools

☐ Other: Please elaborate!!

☐ “Courageous Conversations” on race and education, following the day-long model created by UW professor Glenn Singleton and used by the Seattle teachers this year

☐ Conversations about analyzing the who, what, where, when, how, and whys of celebrating holidays at TOPS

☐ Further study-circle explorations, perhaps including the wider community

☐ Lending library on diversity, achievement, and multicultural education for staff and families

☐ A mentorship program

☐ Increased individual tutoring and classroom help by parent volunteers

☐ More all-school events like Taste of TOPS. Please give ideas for events!

2002-2003 TOPS CALENDAR

MAY
1 (Th)................Coalition for Social Justice meeting, 5-7 p.m.
5-9 (M-F).........Teacher appreciation week
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 4:45-7 p.m.
21 (W) ..........The Shakespeare Stealer at SCT, grades 2-6
21-23 (W-F) ....Grade 7 to Mt. St. Helens
26 (M) ...........Memorial Day. No school
28 (W) ...........Spring concert, 2 and 7 p.m.
30 (F)............Art Walk and elementary school play
31 (Sa) .......... Elementary school play, 2 and 7 p.m.

JUNE
3-6 (T-F) ........ Grade 8 to Deception Pass
5-6 (W-Th).....Grades 3-4 to Camp Arnold
10 (T)..........Middle school parent forum, 8th Grade Transition, 7-8:30 p.m.
11 (W) ...........Site Council meeting 4:45-7 p.m.
12 (Th) ..........Grades K-2 to Camp Long
17 (T)............8th-grade Passage
18 (W) ..........Last student day, 1-hour early dismissal
If you would like to participate, please provide your contact information:

Name: ____________________________________________________________

E-mail: ___________________________________ Phone number: _______________________

What project would you like to help put into action?

Do you have suggestions for multicultural books and other resources that you would like to see in the school library or in the parent/teacher loaning library?

What do you think is happening in the classroom or in the school as a whole that is successfully reducing the achievement gap, embracing diversity, or encouraging inclusiveness and community? What is not?

Please return this questionnaire by May 30th to the CSJ Mailbox in the TOPS office OR come in person to share your ideas at the CSJ meetings. We meet on the first Thursday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. in the TOPS library. Childcare provided. Call in advance 252-3510. The Coalition for Social Justice thanks you for your help!!!

Name (optional): ___________________________________ Child(ren)’s grade: ____________________

SITE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

By Marlies van Bergeijk, Member, nominating committee

The nominating committee is pleased to inform you that a number of parents have stepped forward to announce their candidacy for the Site Council. They are: Steve Havas, Sheri Toussaint, Jules James, Lianne Sheppard, Judith Lee, Shirley Bossier, and Dave Sarju. By the time you read this, several others may have joined them. They each will write a statement to tell you what inspires them to run. These statements will be published on the TOPS website and in the Wednesday Go-home at the beginning of May.

Voting will occur mid through late May. All individual parents and legal guardians of students will be able to cast votes. In early June the results will be made public and the newly elected Site Council members will begin serving their terms.
SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS LEARN CPR IN P.E.

By Joel Keylon, Grade 8

On March 28, the seventh- and eighth-grade P.E. class took a cardiopulmonary resuscitation course. This course was taught by William Murphy, a Seattle Fire Department member.

The course was taught according to the American Heart Association 2000 guidelines. In this class students were taught about the ABCs of CPR which helps you remember the steps for reviving somebody. The ABCs stand for airway, breathing, and circulation. If the victim is unconscious, open the airway: tilt the head back and lift the chin. If not breathing, breathe: give 2 slow breaths (2 seconds per breath). Check for signs of circulation:

normal breathing, coughing, movement. If none then start CPR: for an adult, 15 chest compressions at a rate of 100 times a minute, then 2 slow breaths. Continue until help arrives!

In the course the class watched a movie on CPR and had some discussion. After the movie the class then practiced CPR on plastic dummies. After practicing and learning on the dummies, all the class members were certified that day by the instructors.
**PING-PONG IN P.E.**

*By Zeke Sarju, Grade 5*

Hi, I’m the champion of the fifth grade and I like Ping-Pong a lot. I feel good that our school has Ping-Pong and that we get to play it often. I really liked playing in our tournament. In the early rounds Georgia played a great game that I thought I was going to lose and then in the championship game Ryan led for most of the game until I came back at the end to beat him. It was a great game.

Every year since first grade we get 10 additional tables for two weeks. I wish we had more time for Ping-Pong because a lot of people get more chances to play, improve their skills, and the games get better. In P.E. we get to try a lot of different sports. It’s good to play not just one sport but different sports.

If you want help, Don will help you because he knows the game of Ping-Pong and is the master...so you can get better. Having opportunities to play Ping-Pong is another reason why I love P.E.

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**2003 PROSPECTIVE PARENT TOURS**

*By Stacie Bonnelle, Volunteer Coordinator*

Eleven prospective parent tours were presented at TOPS between January and March. The excitement began with the school district’s Kindergarten Fair. Mrs. Scott, Mr. Denton, Anita Stewart of Kids Co, and parents Sheri Toussaint and Marlies van Bergeijk assembled our information booth and answered questions. Our exposure at the fair encouraged visits—to the tune of 200 parents for next year’s kindergarten classes.

There were approximately 325 parents for all tours—roughly equal to the 2002 tours and slightly down from the 2001 tours.

Thanks to our 2003 tour volunteers: parents Ellen Markman, Galen Goff, Sandy Green, Janet Moore, Pam Haruta, Alex Johnson, Pat Helgren, Randi Niemer, Sheila Gilligan, Maureen Germani, Marlies van Bergeijk, Beling Wong, and Richard Phillips, and students Carolyn Moore, Sophie Raider, and Christopher Krumm.

A very special thanks to Jules James, who helped with tour logistics and assisted me in innumerable ways.

Being a prospective parent tour guide is great volunteer opportunity. All info will be in next year’s information packet and in the volunteer information binder on the main office.
This is my first year on the TOPS volleyball team and so far it has been a great experience. My team and I have learned a lot of new skills, have worked hard, and have had a lot of fun. It's been really cool watching our team get better and better as the season progresses.

Coaches Caroline and Angela have prepared us with with a whole variety of drills designed to keep us moving and improve our skills. Our coaches have stressed working together as a team, performing under pressure, and being aggressive.

Playing on the volleyball team has given us opportunities to meet new people from other schools as well as the opportunity to get better acquainted with our peers. It's also really fun to play league games in the TOPS gym, which is the best site around.

I've been impressed with how hard the whole team works while still having fun. One of the great things about our team is when one of us messes up we don't get mad. We take it for the team and that is a lesson we have all learned!
A NEW GARDEN

By Meredith McGahan

Spring has arrived! To celebrate the change of seasons and continue our study of living things, the K-2 deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) class has planted a garden. We are sharing the garden space near the gym with the intermediate BOC class and are very excited to watch it grow. Before spring break, we planted lettuce, cucumber, carrot, zucchini, pea, lavender, and wildflower seeds. Our entire garden was planted from seed. To our surprise, when we returned to TOPS after our break, we saw the start of many new plants! The lavender and lettuce seem to be growing the fastest. Please stop by and watch our garden grow. We would love for you to see what we are doing. Remember to respect the plants — they are living things!

Photo provided by Don Zemke

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