A Message from the New Volunteer Coordinator

I’m Stacie Bonnelle, the new volunteer coordinator at TOPS. I want to thank you all for such a warm welcome. Filling Marlies van Bergeijk’s shoes will be an enormous task. But with all of the help she’s given, I feel comfortable enough to just jump right in!

I hope to create a program called TOPS Flex. Volunteers in the TOPS Flex program will make themselves available to fill in “at the last minute.” Notification will be anywhere from 4 to 24 hours. There are two volunteer periods: morning/early afternoon (before 1 p.m.) and late afternoon/evening. “Flexers” will fill in only twice during the semester. This will be especially helpful during lunch and recess. The more volunteers we have in the program, the more successful it will be.

Mike Anderson (Learning Assistant program) needs tutors for all subjects. The school district offers tutor training. The meetings will take place November 13, 7:30-9 p.m., and December 9, 6:30-9:30 p.m. This is an excellent opportunity for you to get your extended family and close family friends involved at TOPS. Call me at 252-3510 or email me at TOPSvlntr@aol.com for more information.

November 23 is National Family Volunteer Day, sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation. This is a great time for your family to adopt a garden area. We are still looking for a gardening coordinator to keep track of area assignments. For more information on Family Volunteer Day go to: http://www.pointsoflight.org/events/seasons.cfm. Call 252-3510 or e-mail me at TOPSvlntr@aol.com for your garden spot!

All TOPS families are encouraged to participate in these volunteer opportunities.

I am so happy to join the TOPS community and I look forward to working with you this year.

Stacie Bonnelle

A Message from the Outgoing Volunteer Coordinator

These past few years I have written on more than one occasion. This time I would love to be able to look into the future, to the November 6 school board meeting, to know the results of the vote on the assignment plan proposal for TOPS kindergarten 2003. In my five years as a TOPS parent I don’t recall another issue that has given rise to this much passion and strong opinion. Literally hundreds of hours have been spent: by Site Council assignment committee members, other TOPS parents, and members of the Seattle community at large. Hours spent voicing and exchanging opinions via an Internet listserv, writing letters to school board members, discussing the topic in the hallways and on the playground, attending meetings, speaking at public forums, and exchanging telephone calls.

The energy and effort that has been expended is truly formidable. It demonstrates that TOPS families care deeply about their school and what it stands for. But not just about this school. Many people have asked pertinent questions about what plans there are to increase the desirability of other schools in other parts of the city. Suggestions have been made as to how TOPS community members can be helpful in those efforts. Outsiders have expressed their respect for how organized the TOPS community has been around this whole issue.

I suspect that the results of the vote may engender more strong emotions and new resolve to action. What that will be, I don’t know and I won’t predict it. However, I sincerely hope that opinions will continue to be expressed with civility and respect for individuals, even if we disagree with their viewpoints. Let’s continue to think about our actions, verbal and otherwise, and about how we would use them as a civic lesson for our children.

Marlies van Bergeijk
The school board is discussing proposals that would give children from the immediate neighborhoods priority entrance into TOPS. For current information, please access the website at www.geocities.com/tops_faces/TOPS_FACES.html. The final vote will be taken at the school board meeting on Wednesday, November 6 at 7 p.m., at the John Stanford Center, 2445 Third Ave. S. The meeting is open to the public.

**The Assignment Issue: Another Perspective**

By Jules James

I am an Eastlake neighbor and TOPS parent (Alex, second grade). For the past two years, I have been at TOPS/Seward almost every day. From May through August, I was an advisor to the Seward reference area parents whose kids were mandatorily assigned. I apologize to everyone for the words “crisis” and “emergency” now resounding through the TOPS community. The increased need for local seats at TOPS/Seward School should have been no surprise. As a longtime advocate for local kids at TOPS/Seward, I should have comprehended the 2000-2001 extra kindergarten class at Stevens Elementary as a hint of what was coming. And I should have recognized that the passage of the class size initiative (I-728, Nov. 2000) guaranteed a future of increased demand and less capacity. Smaller class size obviously causes increased popularity. I failed to see what is now so obvious.

Then the May 2002 enrollment letters arrived. Roughly 90% of the prospective kindergarteners from the three neighborhoods within eyesight of TOPS/Seward received none of their school choices. [Supporting information has been requested from the district enrollment office; unfortunately, this figure could not be confirmed at the time of printing.] By comparison, roughly 90% of prospective kindergarteners citywide were placed in their schools of first or second choice, according to the 2001-2002 Enrollment Guide for Parents. Citywide, virtually every prospective kindergartener enjoyed the choice to attend his or her reference school. Exactly none of the kids from Eastlake, Roanoke Park/Portage Bay, and North Capitol Hill had a chance of a seat at their currently-designated reference school, according to scatter diagrams created by the school district June 4, 2002, and shared with the Site Council shortly thereafter. [Not confirmed at printing.]

Most of the local incoming kindergarteners were mandatorily assigned to Martin Luther King Elementary. Some have suggested those families go make that school good. But placement at MLK is distance-based. If Eastlake families successfully invested into MLK and improved that school, it would become more attractive to the families of its surrounding neighborhoods. So incrementally but eventually, MLK’s popularity would squeeze the far-away Eastlake neighbors out. The end result would be mandatory assignments to the next closest struggling school.

There are some who believe the above facts are irrelevant, that TOPS serves a higher purpose than neighborhood needs. This position might once have had merit. But since 1997, it has been our school district’s policy-adopted vision that every Seattle kid needs to have a reasonable expectation of attending the neighborhood’s elementary school. So an alternative to neighborhood schooling which disenfranchises neighborhood kids illogically prioritizes the exception over policy.

The local enrollment numbers likely won’t subside. In this section of the city, the school district is succeeding in attracting kids. And the neighborhoods are succeeding in attracting families. These are incredibly positive developments to be nurtured and encouraged rather than ignored or opposed.

TOPS is an excellent program. But for 25 years it has changed. From K-5 to K-8, a cluster draw to a multi-cluster draw, from Stevens to Seward to McDonald to Seward, from within a district committed to racial bussing to within a district committed to neighborhood-centered education. I believe our alternative program is strong enough at its core to accommodate — with verve — its next significant change.

Which change(s)? I like the dynamics of the “split kindergarten” proposal. Half the seats are placed according to distance, the other according to the multi-cluster lottery. But classrooms won’t be half neighborhood kids. Such factors as ESL set-aside seats, sibling priority, normal attrition, and relocations assure that the TOPS alternative draw remains the significant numerical majority and dominant educational climate. Win-win: a vibrant alternative program that just happens to meet neighborhood needs.

All neighborhood kids deserve to have a reasonable chance of placement into their neighborhood’s school. That includes Eastlake kids at Denny-Fuhrman (1895-1906), Seward (1906-88), Colman/Seward (1988-90), TOPS/Seward (1990-) and beyond.
**NEIGHBORHOOD ASSIGNMENT PLAN WILL RESULT IN IMBALANCE AND INEQUITY**

*By Sheri and Keith Toussaint*

TOPS (The Options Program at Seward) grew through the work of committed parents and teachers out of the desire to provide a school program where students' academic abilities and home environments reflect the diversity of the city of Seattle. In 1974, parents looked for a home for an alternative program in the Central District. They were told that there was no room, but the Seattle school district allowed parents to start the predecessor to TOPS at Latona. In 1975 the program was given a home at Stevens Elementary. After boundary changes in 1980, the program changed its name from GAOP (Garfield Area Option Program) to TOPS. In 1988 TOPS was still a relatively small school. Parents and staff began a long-range planning effort to expand TOPS to a K-8 school. In 1991, TOPS moved to the vacant Seward building while school system administration looked for a permanent home. Now it is 2002 and we are still at Seward, in a newly remodeled building which has become more attractive to everybody. While Seward was a neighborhood school before it closed in 1988, TOPS has never been a neighborhood school.

The school board has consulted “scatter maps” indicating where students who attend TOPS reside in the city. That only tells part of the story. Without knowing what the population density is in each area of the city (especially for children in the TOPS age group), even the scatter maps can be misleading.

This particular look at the data takes the existing TOPS student body by zip code. Further, we used the 2000 census population of persons 14 and under in those zip codes. Finally, we computed a “per capita” enrollment at TOPS: number of students at TOPS per 1,000 children 14 and under in each zip code. The following table shows the top 10 zip codes using this metric.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zip</th>
<th>TOPS Students</th>
<th>Total pop. ages 0-14</th>
<th>TOPS students per 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98102</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1,186</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98112</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3,221</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98101</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98103</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>6,047</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98199</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2,829</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98118</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>9,100</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98122</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4,261</td>
<td>8.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>98107</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2,853</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>98144</td>
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<td>5,023</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98119</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2,089</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One finds that the number one zip code by this measure is 98102 (Eastlake, Roanoke Park, West Capitol Hill) by a very large margin. An important factor to consider is that only 1,186 children under 15 reside in 98102. The next zip code by an equally huge margin from the rest is 98112 (Montlake, Madison Park, East Capitol Hill). The oft-quoted idea that many students come from the south part of the city is muted significantly once one realizes that over 9,000 children (under 15) reside in the 98118 zip code.

Given our understanding of the proposed assignment process, namely that 1) neighborhood preference would be given for half of the slots remaining after siblings and ESL are accounted for, and 2) neighborhood people could still apply for non-neighborhood preference slots, our result is that 75% of the non ESL slots will be held by neighborhood families by 2014.

We have not seen a single account of facts that corroborate the claim that “90% of the prospective kindergartners from the three neighborhoods within eyesight of TOPS/ Seward School received none of their school choices.” For example, in the 2002-2003 school year:

- 37 families in the former Seward reference area requested seats in kindergarten through the district.
- 12 (32%) of those families of those chose TOPS as a first choice
- 6 (50% of those who chose) received TOPS as an assignment
- 3 chose not to accept the assignment (opting for private school instead)

[figures provided by the district enrollment planning department]
TOPS VOICES

At first glance it may seem difficult to classify TOPS in the same way that we might the APP program at Lowell or the African-centered program at the African American Academy, but we have developed a specific educational philosophy over the years that makes us in our way as distinctive as those schools. There must be room in the Seattle school district for this kind of choice.

~Sandi Kurtz

If we give 25%, that’s not going to be the end of it. Once we’ve conceded that TOPS isn’t what we say it is, but some sort of hybrid neighborhood/alternative school, then the board can move the bar at any time.

~Glen Tamura

While I don’t really want to think about moving except as a very last resort, the idea I’ve heard that I like best is to change places with MLK (although it probably isn’t big enough). We’d see how important getting into a school in the neighborhood really is....

~Galen Goff

TOPS parents/teachers/staff helped build one of the academically best and most diverse schools in the district. How many other schools or parents, looking at the district’s careless treatment of TOPS, will want to follow in our footsteps? I do agree with the sentiment that TOPS (along with others in our cluster) needs to do more to support the entire cluster, and on a larger scale, the district. Of course, one way we do that is by simply doing what we do, and succeeding. But I would also strongly support a proposal which committed us (along with others in our cluster) to providing specific aid (time/money/technical) to any poorly performing schools within the cluster.

~Steve Magasis

There is something very powerful in maintaining the vision. As a last resort, I might vote to move, if it meant holding onto our vision and the ability to create a great alternative education for our children. It is just as easy to take a bus from the Central District as it is from Eastlake to downtown.

~Peggy Hoban

As Rev. Braxton said yesterday to the congregation at Mt. Zion regarding the issue of moving or creating a second location for the church: “...It’s not the location that defines us, it’s the purpose.” Our purpose is to make a high-quality, anti-bias, multicultural education equally accessible to all children. Towards that end there is no compromise that will work.

~Galen Goff

Someone in this school district has to hold the line for diversity as a guiding principle.

~Gretchen Chambers

What I am wondering is why providing convenience for the families of the Eastlake/North Capitol Hill area has to come at the cost of both the diversity and alternative education that TOPS currently provides. Couldn’t the burden be spread among all the schools in the area?

~Lionel Halvorsen

Why are we accepting this as a political reality? TOPS is being sacrificed. This policy will change the culture of TOPS in a very short time, driving some parents to leave for other schools. We’ll lose teachers who have been committed to our mission. Create a database that shows TOPS demographics in 5-7 years after this policy is in place and see what it shows. Everything will change.

~Sharon Mentyka

I am appalled by the patent unfairness of any plan that maximizes the probability that one set of families will get into a good school by reducing the probability that other families (who might have NO good options in their cluster) can get in. I would like to hear Superintendent Olchefske answer the question “what is the problem that this proposal is trying to solve?” If there are not enough good schools for the North Capitol Hill/ Roanoke families, is that not even more true for hundreds of families in the southerly clusters? I don’t think that many on the board really care about dismantling TOPS but I wonder if they care about being even-handed, especially when it looks like socioeconomic discrimination in the end.

~Pam Vandalsen

With the large percentage of siblings (the average is 19, over the last three years) entering kindergarten each year, most or all of an incoming class would be siblings and neighborhood kids. The implication of such a policy for the mix of new students is clear.

~Michael Chapko

Isn’t the issue that we need more schools like TOPS? We cannot just divide the pie into smaller and smaller pieces. I do not want to feel that I have to choose between a good education and having my children in a diverse population...I want both.

~Bridget Albright

continued on page 5
Kathy Cox-Czosnyka was introduced as the new Site Council secretary. She joins Dave Sarju and Eileen Hynes, co-chairs, and Peter Dewey, treasurer, on the Site Council executive committee.

**BUDGET**

Peter Dewey, Site Council treasurer, explained how money passes from the Friends of TOPS through Site Council. He described the internal controls provided by a three-person finance committee, the non-profit status of Friends of TOPS, and the budget process.

**ADVANCING TOPS’ MISSION VIA THE COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Tilman Smith, one of three facilitators of the Coalition for Social Justice, spoke about CSJ’s role in the assignment plan debate. The CSJ is linked philosophically to FACES (Fair Assignment for Children Everywhere in Seattle) and has a role in helping give analysis in terms of the assignment plan as it relates to institutional racism and oppression. The proposed assignment plan is not supporting either the Seattle school district’s vision of academic achievement for every child, nor the TOPS mission statement.

The CSJ also advances the TOPS mission through the upcoming Fall 2002 study circles, facilitated by Garry Owens (parent) and Fran Davidson (educator). The study circles will focus on racism in education, race and the achievement gap, and the pathway to an emerging multicultural education curriculum. The CSJ also supports TOPS staff with multicultural education assemblies and is planning a speaker for later in the year for both staff and parents dealing with multicultural education. The Coalition is currently reading “Light in Their Eyes”, which focuses on multicultural education and what that means for TOPS. The CSJ also sponsors the Taste of TOPS.

The Coalition is active in articulating why it is important to keep TOPS a multi-cluster draw. They are interested in recruiting a more diverse kindergarten group. They financially supported the community-building fifth grade camping trip last month, and they would like to replicate the TOPS study circles in the middle school and at Garfield, exploring racism and oppression.

**IMPROVING SITE COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

The Site Council would like to improve the communication between it and the school community. There was discussion about soliciting more attendance from the larger school community and how to make Site Council more accessible.

**FACES REPORT**

Keith Cohon reported on the work that FACES has done in a very short time frame to address the proposed assignment plan. FACES was created to gather input and communicate with the larger community about TOPS’ concerns with the changes in Seattle school district assignment plan. The school board will vote November 6 on the proposed change, and FACES has balanced these tight time constraints with trying to include the community as part of the solution in organizing its efforts. It was noted that TOPS is finding that it is dealing with a moving target as the issues and school board activities change rapidly.

The FACES committee is chaired by Marlies van Bergeijk and Sheri Toussaint. Dave Sarju is the committee spokesperson to the school board. Steve Magasis is communicating with other alternative schools and Galen Goff is the media/press contact.

FACES has discovered a larger issue of disproportionality that the assignment proposal does not address: 75% of the children in the central cluster are children of color while 75% of the children in the 3 “high performing” schools in the central cluster are not of color. Currently there are no new proposals before the school board to solve the issue of disproportionality and there is hesitation whether Site Council should advocate another solution to the school board.

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I’m from Seattle and remember vividly when the district began a bussing program in the 1970s to try and achieve racial equity in the schools. Seattle was the largest district in the country to make that effort without being ordered to do so by the courts, and though the program had many flaws, it was a sincere attempt to fix what was, and in many ways still is, a major problem in our city. The philosophy of the school district has shifted radically since then, and the emphasis on neighborhood schools is only one example of that change, but our school, and the north-south reach of its “super-cluster”, is a remnant of that earlier mindset. To use a cliche, Seattle is a city of neighborhoods, and it is one of the strengths of our school that we draw from so many different ones. To shift that balance by reserving a chunk of seats for just one community will weaken us all.

~Sandi Kurtz
THANKS,
LOUISA’S!

By Jules James

Thanks to Louisa’s Bakery for 100 empty and clean half-gallon milk cartons. Fifty became mailboxes for first-graders and 50 shall soon be worm bins for the kindergarteners. This is the third year running Louisa’s has taken the time to collect, clean, and donate milk cartons.

FUN IN THE...SNOW!

By Joni Marts

Don’t forget the MANDATORY parent meeting if your student is interested in the ski program this winter! Parents and kids interested in the ski program must come to the meeting on Tuesday, November 12 at 6:30 p.m. in the lunchroom. It will be a time for answering questions, finalizing forms, and signing up for seating on the buses.

Ski dates are planned for:

Fridays: January 10, 17, 24; Feb 7, 28
Monday: January 27

IMPORTANT PARENT FORUM IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SKI MEETING

The middle school grant parent forum on chaperoning will take place immediately following the ski program meeting. Just move on down the hall to the TOPS library and enjoy an evening with Victor Larson and Jennifer Murray, who will have information about how to handle those special social situations parents encounter while chaperoning. This forum should conclude sometime between 8:30 and 9 p.m.

Kids Company will be available for the younger kids (ages 5+). Middle-schoolers ONLY may stay in the lunchroom to study, perhaps watch a video, and eat pizza (pizza and pop provided). There will be parental supervision for the middle-schoolers in the lunchroom (parents wishing to supervise – please contact Joni Marts).

It is imperative that we know how many kids will go to Kids Company and how many will be in the lunchroom. Please contact Joni Marts at (206)545-4541 or email her at jonimarts@myexcel.com to give her the head count (when calling, give your name, return phone number, name(s) of your child(ren), and where they will be for the evening (Kids Co. or the lunchroom). All sign-ups must be done before November 10, so that Joni can confirm supervision for both rooms and order pizza for the middle-schoolers.

2002-2003 TOPS CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

1 (F) ..........End of 1st quarter (middle school grades)
7 (Th) ........... The Big Friendly Giant at SCT, grades K, 2-4
11 (M).........Veterans Day. No school
12 (T)..........Mandatory middle school ski meeting 6:30 p.m., lunchroom
12(T)...........Middle school parent forum, Chaperoning 7-8:30 p.m.
13 (W) ..........Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
18 (M) ..........Elementary parent-teacher conferences start. Early dismissals
27 (W) ..........Last day conferences. 1-hour early dismissal
28-29 (Th-F)....Thanksgiving Break

DECEMBER

3 (T)...........Middle school parent forum, Sexuality 7-8:30 p.m.
4 (W) ..........2-hour early dismissal
11 (W) .......... The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe at SCT, grades K-3, 5
11 (W) ..........Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
20 (F) ..........1-hour early dismissal for Winter Break
23 (M) ..........Winter Break begins

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.
20 (M) ..........Martin Luther King Jr. Day. No school
24 (F)..........End of semester (middle school)
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
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

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) .......... Nicky Somewhere Else at SCT, grades 1-3
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.

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NEW MULTICULTURAL BOOKS

By Elizabeth Dickinson

The new multicultural books are in! The TOPS community, through the Site Council, has enhanced the library with 175 new books and videos. Many of these new resources were chosen to enrich the elementary classes’ year-long focus on Vietnam and Southeast Asia, as well as to strengthen the capability for middle school social studies research and learning. A sampling of the new books our children will find on the library shelves includes:

**Celebrating Ramadan**
By Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith. A photo-essay that introduces Islam and follows an American Muslim boy as he celebrates Ramadan (3-7)

**Voices: Poetry and Art from Around the World**
Selected by Barbara Brenner. An anthology published by the National Geographic Society (3-8)

**We Were There, Too!: Young People in U.S. History**
By Phillip Hoose. A book of biographies of children and youth, including sailors with Columbus, spies, factory workers, cowboys, and advocates for social justice (3-8)

**The Mekong River**
By Kim Dramer. An exploration of the history, geography, and environment of the river in six Southeast Asian countries (5-8)

**A History of US**
By Joy Hakim. An 11-volume history of the United States published by Oxford University Press (5-8)

**The Great Canoes: Reviving a Northwest Coast Tradition**
By David Neel. A book that describes the canoes and canoe nations of the Northwest coast, and introduces contemporary canoe makers (3-8)

**Multicultural Science and Math Connections**
By Beatrice Lumpkin and Dorothy Strong. An activity book that highlights the contributions of 14 world cultures to math and science (5-8)

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2002-2003 TOPS Calendar continued from page 6

**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

**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
ACCOUNTABILITY

By Bruce Denton, Assistant Principal

Like most educators, I started teaching because I care about children so much and I want to make a difference in their lives. We start in our careers ready to positively influence our students and excite them about the world of learning. In our dream world, students would be energized just to be at school learning, and they would sit in awe and amazement, hanging on our every word. The reality of the job is that students aren’t always thrilled to be here and we can spend a lot of time managing student behavior. I’ve never met an educator who entered the profession because he/she wanted to be a disciplinarian. Although it isn’t the highlight of our job, discipline is a natural and important component of it. At TOPS, we realize that making mistakes is a natural part of growing up. As much as possible, we seek to take advantage of these times as learning opportunities.

Students may not admit it, but they want and need clear expectations and limits. The school staff works hard to ensure that we give clear, consistent messages about our expectations. We discuss the expectations, model them, and give students the opportunity to practice through written projects, pictures, and role-plays. Finally, we hold students accountable when they do not follow rules or expectations. We may talk with students about the issue, help students problem-solve, or assign consequences. We take into account the age of the student, severity of the action, and whether or not the problem has been ongoing.

When we all work together as a team, your child will receive consistent messages. That means that he/she will learn the “system” quicker and know what to expect. Being consistent plays a huge part in helping children understand and follow expectations. We actually do them a disservice when we enforce rules inconsistently, excuse poor behavior, or rescue our children from consequences. Your child will benefit greatly when you help him/her accept responsibility for his/her actions and follow through. Sometimes doing the right thing is tough, but your son or daughter will find that it gets easier each time. I truly believe that this empowers individuals. They will become better problem solvers and they know they have permission to not always be right.

The staff at TOPS thanks you for all of your hard work. We are blessed to have such a wonderful group of students here. By holding students accountable with integrity, consistency and respect, we are preparing responsible citizens for life.

FIFTH GRADE CAMP

Linda Korbus reported that the financial shortfall from this year’s extended fifth grade camp at Camp Sealth was far less than expected and that donations are still coming in. The fifth-graders wrote letters thanking the Site Council for its support. Dave Sarju commented that the kids were “stretched” a lot.

ASSOCIATED STUDENT BODY

The ASB had their first meeting and decided that the Halloween middle school dance will be November 1. They formed a t-shirt committee to look into making t-shirts to raise money. They came up with other fundraising ideas and will bring a proposal to Site Council next month.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Clara Scott reported that curriculum nights went well. All music classes have started, as well as the middle school forums. A six person grants committee was formed October 1 to coordinate grants and write grants. They have put a box in the office to collect any grant information from the community at large. She invited anyone who hears or knows of any grants TOPS may like to apply for to share the information.

Ms. Scott said the effect of the Seattle school district budget crisis on TOPS is unknown at this time. She will relay the information as she receives it, but hopes the impact will be small.

MUSIC

Bruce Denton reported on the financial status of the music programs at TOPS. He will return next month with a proposed budget.

DRAMA

Linda Korbus announced that David Crandall will once again write this year’s elementary school play. They need 15 black and 15 white choir robes.

CONTRIBUTION

Linda Williams of Homestreet Bank presented a $250 check to honor the volunteer efforts of their employee, Amie Eng, at TOPS. Homestreet Bank has community partnership grants for employees who contribute 30 or more hours to non-profit organizations in the community. Amie is the mother of Andrew in Ms. Anna’s first grade class and works in the finance department of Homestreet Bank. Amie took a week off work the first week of school to volunteer in Andrew’s classroom.
PUTTING OUR MISSION INTO PRACTICE

By Meredith McGahan, Primary Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher

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

As a teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students in a multi-age classroom, I am often put in a precarious situation. My interaction with other teachers and programs can be limited. There is no perfect fit, no one team or grade band with which to collaborate. Instead, I have the opportunity to work with many. So when I volunteered to write this article about the TOPS mission and how it comes to life in my classroom, I thought it would be simple. All I would have to do is study the mission statement and express how I put that mission into action in my classroom. Easy enough, right? Not exactly. As I sat down to write this, a hundred thoughts about the mission and my classroom went through my head.

I first thought of how the very existence of the new deaf and hard of hearing program, as well as my classroom itself, shows my commitment and that of the entire TOPS community to serving the “historically underserved” students in Seattle. Thoughts of how culture and diversity often become the central themes for units I teach came to mind. The intense focus on language in my class strives to attack the achievement gap deaf and hard of hearing students often face throughout their school careers. I thought of how my students’ hearing loss alone makes them a diverse population. But the more I thought about the TOPS mission, the more I began to realize that I could not look at my classroom as a closed entity. Rather, I had to examine the mission from a much larger perspective.

When I viewed this assignment with a wider lens, things became clearer. The TOPS community’s willingness to welcome a new program of diverse learners, the commitment to closing the achievement gap through the new elementary literacy block program, and embracing the presence of multiple ethnic, racial, and religious groups are all ways in which the mission statement is realized every day. The adoption of our civil rights is another way in which we are striving to teach students to “respect and care for themselves and others.” Our mission statement is a vision of what we want to be, and in many ways it is the image of what we are.

This mission statement does not and cannot live in individual classrooms alone. In order for this mission to survive it must be in every classroom, in every grade. In order for it to thrive it must go beyond classrooms and permeate the hallways, lunchroom, and the playgrounds.

BE A POLLWORKER

By Sue Wardle

Attention TOPS parents with flexible work schedules: Want to earn about $120.00 for one day’s work, twice a year? Please join the election team here in the TOPS library for the general election on November 5. We are constantly short of pollworkers.

The TOPS library is a King County election site. A parent of a TOPS student is needed to run this small four-precinct polling place in September and November. The job title is “Inspector” and the employer is King County.

Two hours of paid training is required every two years. The inspector supervises three pollworkers and the hours are 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., two days each year. In addition, there is a Saturday morning pick-up of election supplies prior to each election day.

As current inspector, I am happy to discuss the job details with interested parents. Call me at 547-6097 or email me at jaywardle@prodigy.net. I have done this job for five years, and my daughter graduates from TOPS this year.
MORE MUSIC AT TOPS

By Laurie Bo Roth

If music is the universal language, then the TOPS community truly spoke with one voice last spring to support music at every grade level this year.

Thanks to all the parents and staff who raised their hands at the auction, we raised a whopping $11,300 for music at TOPS! But it’s important to recognize and thank everyone who contributed to this effort: the parents who made their voices heard to get choir chosen as the special auction item; the parents (and students) who offered inspired statements for our auction fliers; the hard-working auction committee and volunteers; and of course, everyone who raised their bid numbers (or sent in a check!) to support a great music program at our school.

And what changes are in store as a result? Thanks to facilities money from the Site Council, we’ve already purchased the set of colorful riser blocks you may have noticed at our final concert last year. The wheeled blocks are easy to move around – making them useful for classroom activities, drama productions, and school assemblies. It’s great to be able to see those smiling faces as our children perform.

We’ll now be able to purchase sheet music for both the elementary and middle school choirs – which will go a long way in educating students about the fundamentals of music, part singing, sight reading, and harmony. And we’ll have accompanists for concerts, freeing Sari to conduct the choir.

A large chunk of the money will go toward funding the salary of both our choir and instrumental music instructors. At the eleventh hour last summer the district did reinstate partial monies (less than a half-day salary) for grades 4/5 instrumental music, but auction funds will be required to cover the rest.

Sari Breznau, our choir director, is returning this year with an expanded schedule, coming in two days a week. She’ll be adding in-class visits to the second grade classrooms to her weekly visits to the kindergarten and first grade classes, as well as rehearsing the two choirs. Barbara Solowan will return to teach middle school strings once a week and we are happy to have two new instrumental instructors this year: Randall Davidson is teaching the grade 4/5 beginning instrumental class, and Jakob Breitbach will be teaching our middle school band. Look to future issues of this newsletter for interviews with these exciting new music instructors.

NEW DIRECTIONS

We also hope to create a more collaborative music program this year – and we are trying to explore what that would look like. Perhaps a handful of our talented instrumentalists could accompany the choir on selected songs, or serve as the “band” for individual drama productions. Perhaps all the music students – band, strings, and singers – could join together for one (or two) show-stopping numbers at our spring concert. And we’re hoping to take our students out into the community, either by joining with another school for an “off-site” concert, or performing at a community venue like the Children’s Festival at Seattle Center. Maybe even Benaroya Hall!

One can always dream. Our goal has been to create and maintain a music program that is open and accessible to all – a program that nurtures not just those students who have a “gift,” but those who don’t, those whom music will help succeed in other academic areas, and those who might not have any other opportunity to discover their talents.

Clarence Acox, Director of Garfield’s award winning music program, has long advocated public funding of early music education in the public schools. As he says in the article at right, “There are songs inside all our children.” We hope, thanks to our growing music program and the support of the TOPS community, to hear more of them this year — loud and clear.

MUSIC COMMITTEE SEeks YOUR INPUT

Have an idea? We’d like to hear what you’d like to see happen with music at TOPS this year – and you don’t even have to join the committee. (Though we’d love it if you did.) Ideas for concerts, suggestions, feedback, new ideas, and offers of help are all welcome. We have no pre-scheduled meeting dates, so just call (or email) anytime and let us know what you think.

Laurie Bo Roth (548-0582), boroth@attbi.com
Eileen Hynes (325-1135) ehynes@fhcrc.org
THE BEAT WITHIN: MUSIC SHOULD BE PART OF EVERY CHILD’S EDUCATION

By Clarence Acox, Garfield High School

I can’t help but be concerned about the overall state of music education in our schools. Music has touched the lives of many children, but it also has missed too many. The strong music programs . . . have very slender and fragile roots. When the budget ax is raised, music is always on the chopping block of “optional” programs that students don’t really need to be well educated. . . .

I’ve been a music educator now for more than 30 years [and] I believe that the arts in general, and music in particular, should be a part of every child’s education. The world that I grew up in and the world our children are entering surely are very different. But the arts are no less valuable to an individual in the 21st century than they have been in the preceding centuries.

Let me briefly make the case for music. Music inspires. It is both emotional and intellectual, and because of that it provides a powerful strategy to get young people “hooked” on learning. Research is showing that children are genetically “wired” to acquire language skills, and those of us who have spent our lives around young people believe the same is true of music. There are songs inside all of our children. It is our job, as educators, to connect children with their musical roots. As with language, the earlier this instruction begins, the better.

Musicians learn to be team players. They are constantly challenged to test the limits of their abilities. When they perform, they learn that hard work pays off. There is a growing body of research suggesting that students who participate in music programs do better academically, including scoring higher on college-entrance tests, and that students from disadvantaged backgrounds realize especially strong gains in grades and test scores from participation in music.

Music students learn the all-important skills of listening and individual discipline. I believe music is great training for many of the skills that students will need to succeed in life, regardless of their field.

We all know money is tight in our schools and likely to get tighter. But that’s not a reason to shortchange a large number of students when it comes to providing what can be a superior education. We need to work together, with the resources we have, to make sure all students have an opportunity to explore the beat that is within them.

Excerpted from “Music should be part of every child’s education” by Clarence Acox, Seattle Times, June 23, 2002. Mr. Acox is director of Garfield High School’s national award winning jazz ensembles, the recipient of Educator of the Year from Down Beat magazine, and is an accomplished musician in his own right. For the complete story, go to SeattleTimes.com and search under Acox or the date, June 23, 2002.
TEACHER PROFILE: ANNA AOKI

By Amy Hagopian

As one of his last acts of good will for TOPS, former principal Gary Tubbs told Anna Aoki what an awesome school this is. She fell for it, as have the rest of us, and Aoki is now our new first grade teacher in room C-104.

Aoki is a newly minted teacher, having just graduated from the University of Washington’s Master of Teaching program in June of this year with certification for teaching grades K-8. She did her student teaching at Bailey Gatzert Elementary in the primary grades, as well as long-term substitute teaching in a kindergarten special education classroom there.

“TOPS has great spirit,” Aoki says. “I am thrilled to be a part of such a positive environment where everyone seems so committed to the children.”

This new teacher is working first to see that her first-graders develop a sense of community within the classroom. “I’m concerned with the development of the whole child,” she says. “The children have to pull together body, mind, and spirit. Right now we are working hard on the emotional and social side of ourselves in the classroom.”

It’s a big change from Bailey Gatzert, where a number of families are struggling with homelessness and survival. Parents at TOPS have the luxury of spending time at school and providing a lot of support for their kids. First grade parents will soon be coming in to supervise reading groups, for example. One revelation to Aoki was the “room rep” concept. “It’s an amazing thing to have so much help!”

First grade room reps for Aoki’s classroom are Lynne Goodrich and Laurie Stusser-McNeil.

There are 26 kids in Aoki’s class this year. “Which means 26 different personalities!”

Aoki has divided the class into four groups, each named for a house at Harry Potter’s Hogwarts: Slytherin, Hufflepuff, Gryffindor, and Ravenclaw. Kids who demonstrate outstanding teamwork are awarded points, and the team with the most points at the end of each week wins the House Cup. This form of management creates an environment where teams work together for a common purpose.

Students are working on the TOPS civil rights, the focus of most classrooms this fall. “Since we have been working on and studying each right, students have started to take ownership for their actions,” Aoki notes. She’s teaching about elders and rainforests in social studies. The science curriculum this year will include weather, and students may even hatch some eggs in an incubator.

In addition to bringing new talent to the primary grades, Aoki offers a boost to our middle school athletic program. She is excited about volunteering in the spring to help coach track for older kids at TOPS, as running was one of her passions in college. She was a two-time Pac-10 conference champion, a three-time All American runner, served as team captain four times at the UW, and was UW Scholar Athlete of the Year. Aoki even did an internship with UW athletic director Barbara Hedges.

Welcome to TOPS, Anna Aoki.

Anna Aoki can be reached at runannarun@hotmail.com.
FIFTH GRADE COMMUNITY-BUILDING RETREAT: THANK YOU, SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS!

By Gretchen Chambers

This year’s fifth grade overnight experience has already happened, and not just its timing was different. Instead of an end-of-the-year celebration, our overnight was cast as a community-building retreat with the purpose of laying a healthy social foundation for the school year.

For three and a half days in the first week of October, at Camp Sealth on Vashon Island, our fifth graders, their teachers, and many parents participated in team-building and communication workshops and challenges. Camp Sealth’s excellent and well-informed staff designed and directed the community-building program. We also squeezed in a scavenger hunt, some environmental education, archery, arts and crafts, “capture the flag” by flashlight, and lots of great free time on the beach.

Our extraordinarily talented and big-hearted teachers, Ilsa Govan and Mrs. Jones-Poole, provided critical direction and insight in every way: crowd control, scheduling, making s’mores, campfire singing, curing homesickness, enforcing cabin cleaning – you name it, they did it.

We have not yet held a debriefing meeting as this goes to print, but the prevailing buzz from volunteers and students is that the retreat was fun and productive in many ways. The volunteers and teachers will discuss and document observations for reference by future camp organizers. In the meantime, we wish to acknowledge the many generous, inspired, skilled, and loving contributions made by supporters and volunteers.

Retreat vision & coordination: Dave Sarju

Research & organization: Linda Korbus, Ilsa Govan, Gail Hall, Cynthia Ivata, Heather Worthley, Debra Zawada, Susan Larson, Janice Lovell, and Gretchen Chambers

Gear transportation and settling in: Pam Haruta, Ann Hedreen, Rus Thompson, Bernie Hall, Pat Helgren, Vance Martin, Cynthia Ruggeiro, and Julie DeChurch

Camp nurse: Debra Vonahme


Scholarship sponsorship: The three-night stay and special program put camp costs beyond several families’ start-of-the-year budgets. Those who couldn’t pay fully helped in other ways. Scholarship support came from other families, including several grandparents; the Site Council; Coalition for Social Justice; Photographic Art; and Seattle Spine and Rehabilitation Medicine.

WHAT DO THE PINK RIBBONS MEAN?

By Erin O’Connor, Roanoke Park resident

On one of our nice sunny days, soon, take a walk around the Roanoke Park neighborhood and look for the 27 big elm trees festooned in pink. You’ll find elms at every corner of Roanoke Park itself. You’ll see a spectacular specimen in the center of the Broadway Ave. E. side of the park and two towering specimens across the street on the west side. Many more elms line the curb lawns on both sides of E. Edgar St. and march all the way out to Harvard Ave. E. bordering the freeway. City Arborist Nolan Rundquist has called this “one of our city’s significant stands of elms.”

These magnificent trees are in peril. Dutch Elm Disease has arrived in the Northwest: Tacoma has already lost 260 elms, and we’ve lost 41 trees in and around Seattle in the last two years. Anyone who has seen the depredations of Dutch Elm Disease in the East or Midwest will easily imagine how this neighborhood would look and feel without its mitigating canopy of elms.

But there is hope. Through careful pruning and a program of inoculation and testing (already begun), the elms may be saved. For more information, or to send a donation to the Seattle Community Council-Roanoke Neighborhood Elms Fund, please contact Erin O’Connor at 322-2125.
MIDDLE SCHOOL GRANT ACTIVITIES

By Joni Marts

This year will be filled with special activities for middle school students and parents. These activities are funded through a grant received by TOPS currently in the fifth year of a seven-year cycle. The purpose of this grant is to provide information and focused activities to sustain and increase positive developmental traits in our adolescent students.

PARENT FORUM CALENDAR 2002-2003

Middle school parent forums will generally take place in the TOPS library from 7-8:30 p.m. In most cases, Kids Co. will provide childcare for parents who sign up ahead of time at the office.

If you have any questions, please call Joni Marts at (206) 545-4541.

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<th>NOTES</th>
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<td>Chaperoning</td>
<td>Victor Larson</td>
<td>Focus on handling middle school field trip situations, i.e., ski bus, etc.</td>
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<td>Kids Co. will be available – you must sign up with the office. We will try to have an activity for kids staying after the ski meeting (maybe a movie? Pizza?).</td>
<td>Jennifer Murray</td>
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<td>Limits, accountability, and responsibility with computers, music, and movie literacy</td>
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<td>February 4</td>
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<td>April 1</td>
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<td>May 6</td>
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<td>Jennifer Murray</td>
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<td>June 10</td>
<td>8th Grade Transition</td>
<td>Victor Larson</td>
<td>Parents get the “scoop” from former TOPS kids who are now in high school!</td>
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**Our First Field Trip**

*By Linda Orantes’ BOC class*

Yesterday we went to the arboretum on the bus. First we played a number game. Then we went walking with Monica.

We saw ducks, two great blue herons, squirrels running in the trees, and a big eagle’s nest. Monica told us four things animals need: space, water, food, and shelter.

Then we went upstairs and saw many diamonds. We saw a volcano, a mammoth, a saber-tooth tiger, and a mastodon. We saw eggs of birds and dinosaurs. We saw the Indian totem poles.

We ate lunch on the bridge. Then we went to the museum on the bus.

We saw things from many countries. We saw a Korean wedding. We saw a fish trap. There were masks from many countries. We saw a canoe and drums.

We came back to school. We were happy and tired.
TOPS P.E. 2002 PROMISES FUN, FITNESS – AND HEART

By Don Zemke, TOPS P.E. teacher

TOPS students began the school year learning how the TOPS civil rights are applicable in P.E. We followed up with cooperative games and activities where working together, being helpful, and thinking creatively were the goals. A large number of students really took to heart our TOPS message of being helpful and kind, with our new B.O.C. students as well as with the students from our new hard of hearing class. Some of our students were sent to the principal for extra positive reinforcement for being especially kind and helpful.

Next we plowed through the President’s Physical Fitness Test battery. We plan on using those scores as well as Records Day scores to set personal goals and monitor progress.

Since then we’ve learned how to throw and catch frisbees, even how to play ultimate frisbee, and have spent some time on soccer as well. We’ve also managed to fit in some unicycling, juggling, foosball, ping-pong, jump rope, stretching, rock climbing, and gymnastics.
TOPS Ultimate Frisbee

By Joy Saltzberg

It was a beautiful fall day as my daughter Emma and I headed to our first ultimate frisbee game. The sun was shining as TOPS faced Salmon Bay in the season opener. I had never heard of ultimate frisbee prior to Emma joining the team, but was told that it was a lot like football or soccer, only played—with a frisbee.

In reality, it was like football with no physical contact. When a team scores, it’s called a touchdown and the team is given one point. Defensive tactics are similar to those in basketball. And as with basketball, height gives you a big advantage in both defense and offense. What seemed most unusual about this sport was that the kids refereed the game themselves. If a foul was committed, the team fouled had to claim it. The kids did an amazing job of officiating.

The game action was quick. Arianna Toussaint passed to Alex Keo and he scored. Then, Andrew Abson threw another scoring pass to Alex. Next, Anthony Aly passed to Jared Lawson for the touchdown and Jared passed to Molly Moore for one more touchdown.

The TOPS defense was not giving Salmon Bay much of a chance to complete passes. Molly intercepted one of their passes and handed off to Joel Keylon for the point. This was quickly followed by another scoring pass by Anthony to Andrew. The next three touchdowns were Alex to Joel, Kyle Kurokawa to Jesse, and Andrew to Spencer Houck.

Salmon Bay finally got a break and responded with two quick touchdowns of its own. Then, Emma Saltzberg passed to Spencer to score once again for TOPS. Salmon Bay came back to score one last time before Joel threw to Alex Keo for one more TOPS touchdown. The final score was TOPS 11, Salmon Bay 3.

The tradition is for each team to make up a cheer to for the opposing team. The resulting cheers were given and accepted. By the time we headed home, I was hooked. This frisbee stuff is the ultimate!

Middle-schoolers play ultimate frisbee every Saturday at Ingraham High School. Start times vary.
A VISIT FROM DAVID LEVIN

By Benjamin Miller, Grade 6

TOPS P.E. classes got to meet ski filmmaker David Levin. It was a great experience to meet somebody who could take his passion, skiing, and now be able to make a living skiing and making movies. David was a really cool guy. He had good ideas about making movies and trick skiing.

It was interesting to find out how the film was made. He told us about how we could be really good at stuff like skiing or filmmaking and how he started making films at his school using i-movie, like we are. He also puts a lot of humor into his movies. I liked when he put all the bloopers in with the credits. He called it “crash credits” which he said really gets the viewer to know who the sponsors are.

David was easy to talk to. He is really nice and a funny guy. It was fun having him here at TOPS. He showed us ski tricks and gave us some tips. He told us that he had filmed most of it by skiing along with the skier who was being filmed with his camera in hand.

David is from Southern California but will be living at Whistler this winter, where he will begin work on his new movie project. David also works for a brand new company called “Armada” which makes twin-tipped skis designed specifically for trick skiing. I think that it’s cool that David gets paid to ski and make i-movies!

YOU’RE INVITED!

By Gretchen Chambers

Please join other TOPS parents for dessert, conversation, and a glimpse into a special part of our community at a reception for the ADWAS transitional housing project “A Place of Our Own” Thursday, November 14, 7:30-9 p.m. in the TOPS library.

ADWAS, Abused Deaf Women Advocacy Services, has launched a campaign to build a domestic violence shelter for deaf and deaf-blind victims. Though deaf abuse victims can use hearing-based shelters, these shelters do not use their language and do not have appropriate equipment, including visual alerting devises (e.g., flashing lights to warn of fires, people at the door, a telephone ring). Often, staff relies for interpretation on victims’ children. Also, the communication isolation deaf residents may experience at hearing shelters often causes them to return to their abusive relationships. This is why ADWAS will build the fully accessible transitional housing these people need. Let’s spread the word: The larger community should know about this effort, so it can lend recognition and support. Let us know if you plan to attend: Gretchen Chambers at 632-0651 or Laura Hopkins at 706-9075.
"BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION" FUNDRAISER CONTINUES

By Janet Morrison

This year TOPS will again participate in General Mills' Box Tops for Education fundraising program. We have set an earnings goal of $500. If all grades participate, this goal is easily attainable. How many bowls of cold cereal does your child eat in one week? Those empty boxes can add up to cash for our school.

How it works: Simply clip Box Tops coupons from participating products and send them to our school. The collection box is located in the office. We are excited to report that this year, Box Tops is doubling the number of brands it includes. You'll find Box Tops coupons on hundreds of Pillsbury, Green Giant, Totino's, Progresso, Old El Paso, and Gold Medal products, in addition to General Mills' Big G cereals, fruit snacks, Betty Crocker products, Yoplait yogurt, and many others. (For a full list, see www.boxtops4education.com.) Our school gets 10 cents for each Box Top redeemed.

This is an easy way for students, parents, grandparents, and the whole community to get involved with our school. If everyone takes part, it will make a big difference for the students at TOPS. With potential school district budget cuts looming, every dollar of funds raised is greatly needed.

If you have questions, please contact Janet Morrison at 634-2203 or janetm@blarg.net.

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