A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

It is hard to believe that we have a month of school under our belts already. It doesn’t take long for us to get into the full swing of school activities. We had a great start to the school year. Our careful work in assigning students to classes is paying off. Thank you for trusting us as we used our new process. Unfortunately, the busses proved to be an issue for the first few weeks of school. For several nights we found ourselves at school late with a busload of kids waiting to go home. We also heard from many families who waited and waited for their children to be dropped off after school.

Fortunately, things have improved and we are on schedule for the most part.

Before school started our staff participated in “Courageous Conversations about Race,” along with the rest of the Seattle School District. It was a great opportunity to explore how our perceptions of race affect students’ academic performance. Before students returned to school, staff also met to learn more about bullying behavior and to address issues of civility in school. While we certainly have wonderful students at TOPS, we all saw some room for improvement in the way students treat each other and adults. TOPS staff decided to adopt a common set of civil rights for our school (please see related article: TOPS Civil Rights, Our Mission in Action). We have already seen a benefit from using a consistent language with our students. I hope you find them beneficial to use at home as well.

As I have visited classes I have seen them working on ways to prevent, recognize, and stop bullying. Kids are becoming skilled in this area and are demonstrating that they can be active contributors to social justice.

We hope our entry area feels a bit more welcoming. Thank you to the Knutson family for donating the plants that are sprucing up the hallway, as well as three large frames. Thank you to the Duncan family for the donation of a Native Heritage in Washington State print, which looks great in our hallway. Lee Ann Clark is busy writing our mission and vision in calligraphy, which will soon be framed and displayed in our entry area. Thank you to Junne Park for potting the plants and assisting with decorating. Please see our website or Go-Home for a current wish list for the school.

We hope that you found Curriculum Night helpful. Students benefit when parents and students all receive the expectations and information from the teacher. There are several Curriculum Nights remaining; if your child’s is coming up, please take advantage of it.

Speaking of helping your child, I hope that you can find a way to get plugged in at TOPS. Both your child and the school will benefit when you spend time working in the classroom, in garden areas around the school, on the playground, or on a committee. Please find something to do for the school that you will enjoy. Think about joining a committee that interests you. I hope to see you at our next Site Council meeting on October 16 or our next Coalition for Social Justice meeting on October 3.

Cheers!!!!

Clara

JOIN THE ARCHIVES PROJECT

Learn more about TOPS and Seward history, look at photographs...read newsletters from the 1980s...talk to people involved in TOPS from the beginning...do as little or as much as you are able. We’d like to get started as soon as possible. If you’re interested, please contact Toby Harris at 634-3951 or tojj@earthlink.net

TOPS NEWS

The monthly newsletter of TOPS, a Seattle Public K-8 alternative school.
ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the second monthly newsletter of the 2002-2003 school year. Teresa Németh is the editor. Cindy Suzumura and Margie Slovan handle layout and design. Heather Burgess and Nancy Lambert take care of the mailing.

We happily receive your contributions: 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. Unless you fanatically despise Hotmail, in which case you could try zongora@cs.com (just kidding, Amy!). Deadlines for 2002-2003 will be the 10th of each month.

Anyone interested in working on the newsletter should contact Teresa at 325-8320 or at one of the above email addresses.

FORUM
ADDRESSING THE ASSIGNMENT CRISIS

By Galen Motin Goff, Member, Coalition for Social Justice

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and stars – you have a right to be here.  

~Anonymous

Will TOPS remain a K-8 school drawing from children of all neighborhoods? During the summer an effort was launched by a group of neighborhood parents which if successful will change the current assignment plan and in the process erode the climate and multicultural vision and mission of our school. To the 37 parents from Eastlake, Roanoke Park, and North Capitol Hill neighborhoods whose kindergartners were not admitted to their reference schools of Montlake Elementary and Stevens Elementary, an “assignment crisis” exists. The ramifications of their demands, however, make it an issue of social justice and a threat to the right of all Seattle children to have access to the excellence of our school.

As an immediate solution, the 37 “Parents for Equitable School Assignment” created a brochure in which they proposed the Seattle Public School Board follow the example set in 2000/2001 at Stevens Elementary and create at TOPS a one-time only “balloon” class of kindergarteners. It’s called a “balloon” class because the group of half-time kindergarteners would create an enrollment bulge that would move with the children as they progress through the grades with the same teacher until all are absorbed into a regular classroom. As for space, the parent group proposed occupying the room given to our new class of hearing-impaired children. According to their brochure, the displaced students – who like the majority of TOPS families come together from all around Seattle and richly contribute to the excellence of our school.

The School Board declined to take a vote on the “balloon” class, thanks in part to efforts by members of the TOPS community who worked hard late summer to ensure the Board understood the long-term impact of a sudden addition to TOPS. But the problem in the central cluster related to access to reference schools still exists. As does the understandable frustration of the petitioning parents.

They feel the School Board and Superintendent “have a clear moral responsibility” to remedy their situation by changing the assignment plan to give their children priority in placement. They say they are “pro-public school” parents who want to be at TOPS and “are precisely the kind of families the District finds supportive and energetic.” Yet because they threaten flight from the district into private schools, their support seems to depend upon the assigned school. They say MLK Elementary, at approximately three miles away, isn’t close enough for them to be active and involved and that their “children have a right to attend a local school where they are in classes populated with their friends and neighbors.” For many parents at TOPS, private school is not an option and proximity has not dammed their support or hindered their ability to volunteer. As for those TOPS parents unable to be as involved, should their children be denied the chance to be here? Are these families any less valuable to the makeup of this community – a community reaching beyond the narrow confines of neighborhood to educate children in a multicultural environment that safely prepares them to actively participate in the world?

Under the leadership of Principal Clara Scott and Assistant Principal Bruce Denton, TOPS educates children from a variety of backgrounds using an antibias, multicultural approach to celebrate diversity and foster a climate which is closing the achievement gap and enabling all children to become learners, leaders, and contributors to social justice. By rallying to the needs of children with special physical, learning, and language challenges and by courageously conversing about race and its impact upon academic success, the TOPS community embraces District goals and serves as the example of how children of different neighborhoods and needs can come together and achieve social and academic success. At this moment in Seattle’s history, achieving both diversity and neighborhood schools are conflicting goals. How can TOPS continue providing a quality education for many — including students historically underserved by the public school system — if its community becomes a reflection of only those who can afford to live nearby? Will admission to TOPS become a “right” reserved for children from immediate neighborhoods or remain a trailblazing educational opportunity existing as fairly as possible for all?

In October and November, as the Board takes a look at the assignment process, it is hoped these questions will be answered in a way which continues serving the needs of the larger neighborhood in which we all live.

Every family entering TOPS brings gifts — their children, their dreams, their time and money. TOPS parents from the Eastlake, Roanoke, and North Capitol Hill neighborhoods built a playground, lead Site Council, and energetically serve this community in many capacities — as would the 37 petitioning parents, no doubt. But isn’t the greater goal to nurture all Seattle Schools so the children in every neighborhood can thrive? Each parent holds in their hands and heart the ability to help support District goals and transform whatever school their child attends into a TOPS. Seeing the oneness and championing the rights of children beyond our block is the first step.
**THE STATUS OF THE TOPS LIBRARY**

*By Steve Haines*

**NEW MULTICULTURAL BOOKS** – The multicultural book selection committee has been hard at work selecting and procuring many new books for our library and classrooms. Most of the books were selected with teachers in mind after they decided what they needed to help support their classroom’s curriculum. It was then up to the astute committee (Elizabeth Dickinson, Arthur Dorros, Gary Owens, Gary Luke, and Sally Buckley) to find appropriate matches. Many of the new titles have to do with Vietnam and Southeast Asia, which is our area of study this school year.

**YEAR-END INVENTORY** – Every June after the students have departed I perform an inventory of all the library materials. It is very revealing to observe how many books are not on the shelves. Many of the books accidentally missed getting checked out and haven’t been returned. Students and teachers have misplaced others. Many eventually return. This year there are over 100 items that are either lost or missing from the collection. With replacement costs for hardbacks running between $16 and $20, one can see that much of the library budget would be taken up in replacement costs.

Fortunately, not all of the books need to be replaced. Some may be out of print, and some have duplicate copies.

This year I’m going to work hard at keeping losses down so that the majority of the budget can go toward purchasing materials that will help support the curriculum at TOPS.

**DONATIONS** – Each year we get many book donations. Some volumes go into the collection, and many others go to other students, especially those in the BOC classes. We also appreciate the generous monetary donations from families, which help with replacement costs of those “pesky” lost books.

**USING THE LIBRARY** – Our hours are from 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The hours in the afternoon vary depending upon my schedule, i.e. meetings, etc. Students are welcome to use the facilities, especially after school, to read, work on homework, or do research for a class project. Because there is after-school tutoring going on, many afternoons the library is reserved for more serious endeavors. TOPS has a wonderful facility, Kids Company, which can be utilized before and after school as a place where your child can be in a stimulating and engaging atmosphere.

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**A MESSAGE FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR**

*By Marlies van Bergeijk*

The school year is already in full swing, once again. A lot of activity is going on behind the scenes, especially as it relates to the upcoming No Bake Sale. For families new to TOPS: The No Bake is our fall fundraising event. Participation is extremely easy: you determine the amount your family can afford to support enrichment activities at TOPS, you write a check, and return it to school in the envelope you will receive by late October. The plan this year is to have a clearer beginning and ending date. Beginning in late September, after all families have returned their family directory consent forms, Eric Olson and crew will update the database. Ellen Markman has graciously agreed to be our directory project manager. Our goal is to mail out 2002-2003 directories by the end of October. Please hold on to your old ones until then.

We are in the process of interviewing candidates for the volunteer coordinator position and are confident a new person will be on board by October 1. I haven’t secured a full-time position elsewhere yet and even when I do, I don’t plan on completely disappearing from the TOPS scene. It has, overall, been a real pleasure to serve the TOPS community in this role and I will miss being involved in this way.

I want to part with a request: Please be clear with your student before he or she goes to school what the plan is for returning home. Every school day afternoon, usually starting around 2 p.m., a good many calls come in from parents who need office staff to relay messages to their kids about after-school transportation plans. I have made such calls myself on occasion, when unanticipated things happened, and I have answered those calls on Thursdays when I am at school. The office staff goes out of its way, literally, to pass on these messages. Knowing their dedication to the welfare of the students, they will continue to do so. However, I am sure that Helen, Joann, Linda, and Susan would appreciate all efforts of families to work out the details before the school day starts. Thanks on their behalf.
2002-2003 TOPS Calendar

OCTOBER
1 (T)............. Our Only May Amelia at SCT, grades 3-5, 7, 8
2 (W)............... 2-hour early dismissal
3 (Th)............. Grade 3 Curriculum Night 6:30-7:15 p.m.; grade 4 7:30-8:15 p.m.
4 (F).............. Hat Day
9 (W)............... Kindergarten Curriculum Night 6-7 p.m.; BOC 7-8:30 p.m.
11 (F)............. Professional development day-no school
16 (W).............. Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
17-18 (Th-F) ... TOPICS 2:30-3:10 p.m.
18 (F).............. Hat Day
24-25 (Th-F) ... TOPICS 2:30-3:10 p.m.
25 (F).............. Hat Day (you get the idea: every Friday)
30 (W)............... 2-hour early dismissal

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
13 (W)............. Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
18 (M)............. Elementary parent-teacher conferences start
27 (W)............. Last day conferences. 1-hour early dismissal
28-29 (Th-F) ... Thanksgiving Break

DECEMBER
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
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
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
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
4 (F)............. End of third quarter
7-11 (M-F)...... Spring Break
16 (W)............. Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.

MAY
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
11 (W)............. Site Council meeting 5-7 p.m.
18 (W)............... Last student day, 1-hour early dismissal

IN MEMORIAM
Hazel Frossard
1912-2002

By Steve Haines

Many of you may not remember Hazel Frossard, our volunteer emeritus. She came to us on a bright fall day back in ’93 with a willingness to help any way she could. And help she did, from tutoring students in handwriting and reading to shelving books in the library. She even set up a teacher resource file with new material that she donated. Hazel had been a teacher in Seattle for 30 years. She lived close to TOPS, and wanted to remain active and close to children. Her mantra was “we must help the children, they are our future”. She certainly endeared herself to all she came in contact with over the years. A forsythia bush (Hazel’s favorite) will be planted on campus in her memory.

WHY, HOW, AND WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD LEARN A SECOND LANGUAGE?

By Sharon Mentyka

Since 1997, TOPS parents, staff, and faculty have been exploring opportunities for foreign language learning for TOPS students that would not overburden our teachers or threaten the current curriculum and enrichment programs. The level of support among TOPS families for a Spanish language program remains high, particularly among K-5 parents. As these children move into the middle school years, the World Languages Committee hopes to establish a strong middle school Spanish language program that can provide our students with enough competence, knowledge, and skills to qualify them to enter an advanced (second-year) high school language class. Yet with so many demands already placed on our children, parents might reasonably ask: Is it important that my child learn a second language at a young age? Why?

Here at TOPS, there is a strong commitment to educating our children using an anti-bias, multicultural approach. An important step in offering a “world-class” education to our students is to make opportunities for learning a second language available as early as possible in their lives. Foreign language study exposes students to the richness of other cultures and provides perspectives that aid in the appreciation of diversity, helping our kids develop a wider cultural outlook. Foreign language learning in the early elementary years (even on an intermittent basis) has proven results in increased verbal skills in the child’s native language and better success in foreign language study in later years. There is also research that shows learning a foreign language at a young age helps develop important cognitive abilities, with the best window of opportunity lasting roughly from age one until puberty. During this time, continued on page 7.
REPORT FROM THE SITE COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 11, 2002

By Ellen Markman

ELECTION RESULTS

The newly elected Site Council officers were announced. The new Site Council chair is David Sarju. Co-chair is Eileen Hynes. Treasurer is Peter Dewey and secretary is Elizabeth Dickenson.

FUND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Co-chairs Randi Neimer and Jennifer Shaw have set goals for TOPS’ two fundraisers this year. The 2002-2003 No Bake Sale has a goal of $75,000, and the spring 2003 auction also is expected to raise $75,000.

The co-chairs sought approval for funds to go forward with a pilot scrip program. Due to questions that could not be answered about cash flow and the complex nature of a scrip program, the Site Council decided it was not a matter that could be decided in one meeting. It will be discussed further in October.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING REQUEST

Fifth-grade teacher Ilsa Govan and parent Heather Worthley requested supplemental funding for the fifth-grade community-building retreat. Because they are moving the dates of the camp to the beginning of the year and extending it to 3 nights/4 days to take advantage of the community-building curriculum at Camp Sealth, the cost of the camp has gone up. They requested $1,500 to offset the difference between parent cost and retreat expense.

Because the camp meets the goals of the TOPS vision/mission statements, the Site Council voted, 15-4, to approve $1,500 funding for the fifth-grade camp. There was an amendment to solicit funding from the Coalition for Social Justice to help with the cost. It was noted that the teachers view this camp experience in part as a training ground for future years, when they will be able to lead such camps themselves, at other parks, without outside teachers. They will bring what they learn back to the school and conduct trainings for other teachers and parent facilitators.

SITE COUNCIL BYLAWS

Janet Moore reported that the new Site Council bylaws will be published in the October newsletter. This is necessary because proposed changes to the bylaws need to be published in order to be approved.

*Editor’s note: please see pages 9-11 of this issue for the bylaws, and direct questions and comments to Janet Moore.

ADVANCING TOPS MISSION

David Sarju, Site Council chair, spoke briefly regarding the Site Council’s strong support of the new TOPS mission statement. A group will form to promote the mission; a subset of the group will address the issue of assignment to TOPS.

STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT

Eighth-grader Tracy Tate, Student Council president, reported that Student Council has changed to ASB (Associated Student Body). The Student Council went to camp over the summer and learned how to hold effective meetings. They recommend the camp for future TOPS student councils.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Clara Scott reported a smooth opening to the school year and is excited to see everyone back. TOPS has welcomed 20 new students this year, in addition to the kindergarteners. TOPS has welcomed several new staff members. Meredith McGahan is the new teacher for the hearing-impaired program. Anna Aoki is the new first-grade teacher and Venise Poole-Jones is the new fifth-grade teacher. Additionally, Randall Davison is the new instrumental music teacher for fourth and fifth grades. Hiromi Pingry has returned this year as a certificated teacher. Junne Park has been restored to full time and there are six new interns from Pacific Oaks learning and helping in our classrooms. Marlies has agreed to stay on for another month as volunteer coordinator.

DRAMA

Linda Korbus announced that Todd Jamieson will direct the middle school play this year, A Midsummer Night’s Dream. He directed it this summer at the Seattle Children’s Theater, and the drama committee is excited to have him on board. The play will be held Friday and Saturday, February 7 and 8, 2003. Julie Jamieson has found two directors for this year’s third-grade mini-plays.

COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN INVITATION

By Sheri Toussaint

Members of the Coalition for Social Justice would like to invite TOPS families to join them the first Thursday of each month (but please verify meeting dates with the office) from 6-7:30 p.m. in the TOPS library. Childcare is available—just call the office to sign your child up. The CSJ discusses many interesting and pertinent issues, and at the beginning of the meeting there is a thirty-minute book discussion. The current book is Uprooting Racism, by Paul Kivel.

If you would like to be on the CSJ listserve, please send a message with your email address to me, Sheri Toussaint, at TOPS_CSJ-owner@yahoogroups.com.
COLLECTING OUR HISTORY: TOPS ARCHIVES PROJECT

By Toby Harris & Debrah Walker

We have been an innovative, diverse, and successful school since our beginnings in the 1976-77 school year. Add to our own history the history of Seward: our current lunchroom, originally a two-room schoolhouse built in 1893, is the oldest continually used school structure in Seattle. Parents and staff are already taking up the History Committee’s idea to solicit and review materials from years past, and we are looking for others to join in the effort.

TOPS, first known as Garfield Area Option Program (GAOP), began seeking a home in the Central District and ended up at Stevens Elementary School. After a few years, the name changed to TOPS (The Option Program at Stevens) and we spent many years in portables there. TOPS staff and parents persistently pursued their vision of expanding to include middle school and moved to the unused Seward building for the 1991-92 year.

Examples of some innovative alternative educational ideas produced at TOPS include the City School program, Children and Architecture, TOPICS, and the Underground Railroad Project. We’ve been a school able to successfully adapt and respond to changing circumstances. We struggled to exist, to expand into a K-8 program, and then to find and work for a better, safer facility to house our growing school. Seward was beautifully remodeled from 1997-99 and now the TOPS community is truly settled into our transformed and delightful space as we continue to challenge and nurture our children.

Let’s document that history! Each year we lose staff and families who played key roles in TOPS’ past. Many of them have boxes of materials stored away in their homes or classrooms. We want to make this history accessible for our current school community and neighborhood. We hope to build up a small archives collection to be housed at TOPS. During this first year, we will focus on collecting TOPS history from 1976 to the present and Seward history beginning with the years when our paths crossed. We also plan to develop guidelines and procedures for preserving current TOPS history. In the future, we hope to add additional Seward School history.

Using high-quality archival standards, we will create a well-organized, accessible collection. We hope that it will grow as the years pass and be used for research purposes and curriculum ideas. Many elementary and middle school TOPS teachers are enthusiastic about developing curriculum around this history. Our goal is that the archives will give students a starting point for learning even more about the past, human relationships, the power of coming together, architecture, our local history, and more. We already have a potential oral history project brewing in the middle school for next spring.

The History Committee needs volunteers for this new archives project. If you enjoy looking through photographs and written materials, if you’re a historian, an archivist, or have any interest or skills to offer, please contact Toby Harris at 634-3951 or tojj@earthlink.net.

Vi Hilbert, revered elder of the Upper Skagit Tribe, mesmerized Ms. Hart’s eighth-grade social studies class last spring with tales such as “Lady Louse” from her legacy of stories from the Lushootseed culture. Hilbert, a linguistics scholar, has spent the past 35 years gathering and preserving the language, stories, and culture of Puget Sound First Peoples.
TOPS CIVIL RIGHTS: OUR MISSION IN ACTION

By Susie Martin, Danforth Administrative Intern

As you may recall, last year the TOPS community spent a lot of time crafting our mission and vision. This year you can watch it come alive. Each month we’ll report on one classroom’s activities that support our mission and vision.

Did you hear the second-graders talking about their “rights being violated”?

Or maybe it was a first-grader . . . . Anyone who has ever encountered a student from one of Mr. J’s classes knows that the rights they are talking about are the civil rights, a list of five rights Mr. J teaches to create a community of respect among his students. This year, in alignment with our vision to “empower students,” the staff has recognized the value of what Mr. J has been doing and has adopted the civil rights for the whole school.

On the first day of school, first-graders in Margie’s and Miss Anna’s classes were introduced to the right to hear and be heard. Margie plans to introduce one at a time, “working toward understanding, then adding a new one.”

After less than a week, students are already showing understanding. For example, one first-grader remarked that the reason it was important to move through the halls quietly was that noisy halls might “violate the right to be heard” inside another classroom. As Margie noted, for a first-grader, that is “powerful language.”

Margie’s first-grade students are making paper quilts with positive illustrations of each right, to act as reminders and decorate their classroom walls. Their first quilt shows students sitting at the rug listening to each other, raising their hands, and having one-on-one conversations. These drawings were inspired by real experiences from class, recess, and the lunchroom as well as role-plays acted out in the classroom.

Margie noted that she was inspired by the “sense of compassion and respect that Mr. J has for his students and the students have for each other.” Imagine the power of all students practicing the civil rights! Don’t be surprised if your child reminds you of her or his rights at home. Showing respect for these rights can be a powerful tool at home and at school.

Learn A Second Language continued from page 4

Second language acquisition is effortless. After puberty, changes occur in the palate and the structure of the brain which make it much harder to learn a new language.

Last May, K-5 parents were asked to indicate their interest in participating in a Spanish program, and a presentation was made to the incoming kindergarten parents in June. As a result, this year approximately 40 TOPS families will participate in tuition-based before- and after-school Spanish language instruction. TOPS currently contracts with A.C.E. World Language Program. Parents pay approximately $285.00 for 40 classes (45 minutes, 2 times a week). Site Council funding ensures that the program is accessible to all families who wish to participate, regardless of their financial situation. The K-5 Spanish program offers TOPS families who wish it the opportunity to supplement their child’s curriculum with small classes where the children can receive individualized attention. The only real difficulty is finding available teachers for the limited times (before and after school) the instruction can be offered here.

The classes follow the natural pattern of first language acquisition when teaching a second language, allowing comprehension to precede speech production. The teachers are native speakers or have an equivalent command of the language, having lived and worked or studied abroad. They incorporate action, music, games, crafts, and culture into the lessons. Parents should keep in mind that language proficiency comes slowly. Do not be discouraged if you cannot pry a word of Spanish out of your child after some weeks in the program. With plenty of language input from the teacher, the student’s ear is being trained, and speech will emerge naturally when the student is ready—much as it does with children learning to speak their native language. If you’d like to supplement their learning, A.C.E. recommends borrowing some Spanish language picture books or tapes from the library, or trying one of the many language learning software programs available for kids. Most importantly, keep it fun and your child will be happy to keep learning.

For more information on the program methods and expectations, parents should attend a presentation by A.C.E. in early October (date to be announced).

If you are interested in joining the TOPS World Language Committee or if you are a Spanish-speaking parent and would be interested in observing the classes or participating in other ways in the development of the program, please contact Sharon Mentyka, Program Parent Coordinator, at sharon@pidseattle.com, or call 223-0681.

OUR CIVIL RIGHTS

I have a right to learn about myself in this class. This means that I will be free to express my opinions without being interrupted or punished.

I have a right to be happy and to be treated with compassion in this class. This means that no one will laugh at me or hurt my feelings.

I have a right to be myself in this class. This means that no one will treat me unfairly because I am different.

I have a right to hear and be heard in this class. This means that we will listen when someone is talking. No one will yell, scream, shout, or make loud noises.

I have a right to be safe in this class. This means that no one will hit me, kick me, push me, or hurt me in any way.
TEACHER PROFILE: MEREDITH MCGahan

By Amy Hagopian

Meredith McGahan really wanted a job in the Edmonds School District this year. She'd survived a first year teaching in Seattle and wanted to return to the city where she'd grown up—and the Edmonds district had a good program for the deaf and hard-of-hearing kids she'd been trained to teach. Lucky for us, the Edmonds hire just didn't quite work out, and our eager and well-organized TOPS administrative team jumped at the chance to hire this dynamic new teacher. And it seems McGahan couldn't be happier at the outcome.

TOPS' new deaf and hard-of-hearing program (hereafter called simply “hearing program”) is located in room 202, where a mixed-age bilingual orientation center (BOC) classroom used to be. That BOC class moved to the John Stanford School, making way for our new hearing program. There are, by the way, two remaining BOC classes at TOPS, although they are slated to move to Stanford by and by.

Seattle Public Schools has one other hearing program, located at Viewridge School. Lowell used to have a program, but that's the one that’s “moving” to TOPS. Our hearing program has only three youngsters in it at the moment, although both the class size and the number of classes are likely to grow. Parents will need to actively select TOPS for this program, as there are no automatic assignments.

McGahan taught at Roosevelt High School last year, where she was featured in one segment of National Public Radio's continuing series on the school. It was the “lonely teacher” segment, which some of you may remember. McGahan described being in the last portable on the left, deep into the Roosevelt portable pool, where she rarely met any other faculty in the building. As a matter of fact, she was asked a few times too often for her hall pass when she did appear in the building, a testament both to her youthful appearance and her general loneliness at the school.

There is a debate in the deaf community about the best way to educate people with hearing problems. One end of the continuum advocates “oralism,” which emphasizes lip-reading, speech, and using all available residual hearing. The other end of the spectrum advocates a “bi-bi” approach (referring to bi-lingual and bi-cultural values), in which students are first taught American Sign Language (ASL) and then taught sign systems that employ English, a language with a very different syntax from ASL. In the bi-bi approach, voice is typically under-emphasized.

The TOPS model will land somewhere in between, using “total communication,” or a “child-centered” approach. McGahan will use both sign and voice to communicate with her students. "We want our kids to be able to communicate in whatever is the best for them," she explained. “Some think if you are not emphasizing ASL, you are forgetting the cultural aspects of being deaf.”

But McGahan, who has normal hearing herself, is very sensitive to the cultural issues and says she plans to bring in deaf role models to work with her students.

McGahan is thrilled to be at TOPS. “Every teacher has been welcoming,” she said, adding that on the first day when she walked into the office there was a big sign in finger spelling saying, “Welcome to TOPS.” She was moved to tears. “The kids have been welcoming, too,” McGahan said, asking to play with the hearing students on the playground. “TOPS has a welcoming family nature that is very warm.”

Parents are encouraged to interact with the program in several ways. Toy donations are welcome (the kids are aged 5, 7, and 8). Parents can watch, help, and/or participate in the classroom. McGahan is also happy to tutor parents seeking to learn ASL.

McGahan did her undergraduate work at Washington State University, and got a master of special education degree from Lewis & Clark College in Portland. She did her student teaching at the Texas School for the Deaf in Austin.

When you see her in the halls, don’t ask to see her pass. Meredith can be reached at mmmcgahan@seattleschools.org or 252-3573.
BYLAWS OF THE TOPS AT SEWARD SITE COUNCIL

Adopted 3/96

Proposed changes 2002

I. STATEMENTS OF VISION AND PURPOSE

A. Vision Statement

We are creating a school that empowers students to be active participants, leaders, learners, and contributors to social justice.

B. Mission Statement

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, we will ensure all students meet or exceed standards, including those students historically underserved by the public school system.

C. Purpose of the bylaws

These bylaws establish a set of rules and procedures approved by the TOPS school community to guide the governance functions of the site council.

D. Purpose of the site council (this area needs further discussion from the site council)

The site council serves as one of the governing bodies of the school, with responsibilities for leadership, advocacy, fund raising, financial stewardship, strategic planning, and assuring the highest standards of educational excellence. We operate under the current school district policy with regard to site councils.

II. MEMBERSHIP

A. Expectations

Members of the site council represent and are expected to communicate with their constituency, but they vote in the best interests of the school as a whole. Members of the site council are not paid for their services to the site council.

B. Community

The TOPS at Seward Site Community shall be defined as the following: the building principal, vice-principal, all certificated and classified staff, all in-building programs, all parents or legal guardians of children enrolled in TOPS, and enrolled students.

C. Site council

The site council membership shall consist of 22 individuals, and 11 of these shall be employed to work at TOPS. The 11 staff members shall include the principal, vice-principal, and representatives for certificated staff, non-certificated staff, and staff of the child care program at the school. [[Wording here may need to be discussed.]]

There shall be 11 non-staff members, including parents and guardians of children enrolled in TOPS, a representative from the middle school leadership council, and residents of the Eastlake community.

D. Elections/voting

With the exception of the building principal, the vice-principal, the childcare program representative, and the appointed Coalition for Social Justice representative, members of the site council will be elected. Efforts will be made to recruit members who are representative of the entire school population, especially with regard to ethnic and economic diversity. Each member has one vote. The membership of the site council will include:

эм Building principal
эм Nine certificated staff representatives, based on student enrollment, from the middle school, the elementary school, the BOC, and at large, elected by the entire certificated staff (teachers, librarians, etc.)
эм One representative from the childcare program in the building, selected by that program (currently Kids Company)
эм Nine parents, based proportionately on student enrollment in the following grade-bands:
  a) from K through Grade 2
  b) from Grade 3 through Grade 5
  c) from Grade 6 through Grade 8
  d) at large.

Each parent site council member shall be elected by the TOPS parents through public ballot. The grade-band an elected parent represents is determined by the grade the child will attend the September following the spring election; a parent with two or more children must decide which cluster s/he will represent. A parent representative must be the parent, legal guardian, or foster parent of a child enrolled at TOPS at the time of the election, and must not be employed at
TOPS by the Seattle School District. A parent must resign from the site council when his or her student(s) stop attending TOPS.

- One representative is appointed to the site council by the Coalition for Social Justice committee whose role will be to promote the minority interests of the parent and student bodies.
- One community representative with one vote will be chosen by the Eastlake Community Council. The community representative must not be a parent.
- One student representative will be chosen by the TOPS Middle School Student Council

E. Membership terms

The site council membership shall be for two years, with elections in May. The term begins at the June meeting. If a member resigns before the end of his or her term, his or her replacement shall serve to the end of the member’s term and shall be eligible to serve an additional full term. All terms will be for two years with parents serving a maximum of two consecutive terms. Replacements will be appointed by the site council executive committee and ratified by the voting membership of the site council.

F. Friends of TOPS

Members of the TOPS site council automatically serve as directors of the 501©(3)(nonprofit) corporation known as “Friends of The Option Program at Seward (TOPS)”, hereafter known as Friends of TOPS, the purpose of which is to provide a legal entity which can accept gifts and donations, and expend the same, to support the educational programs at TOPS.

G. Removal of members

An elected member of the site council may be removed from office for misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance by a recall election, which may be initiated by the site council or the constituency group from which the member was elected. The procedures are the following: 1) the site council may request a recall election after a three-fourths majority vote of its members, or 2) the constituency group (e.g., parents, faculty, classified staff) may request a recall election by a petition containing the signatures of 5 percent of its bona fide members. The recall election will then be conducted by the appropriate constituency group within 60 days of the recall motion or petition.

H. Nominations process

The executive committee of the site council shall appoint a nominations committee to recruit at least two candidates for each open parent and faculty position prior to the scheduled election. Candidates shall be sought who represent the diversity of the school population, who are committed to the concept of school self-governance, and who would be energetic, positive and progressive site council members. The nominating committee shall supervise the elections process, and shall also see to it that the representative positions for Eastlake Community Council, students, childcare provider, staff, and parent diversity are filled in the manner prescribed in these bylaws.

III. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A. Leadership

There shall be four officers of the site council: chair, assistant chair, secretary, and treasurer. These officers shall be elected by the site council at its June meeting, for the following academic year. Those at the June meeting whose terms are expiring shall not vote on new officers. An officer’s term shall be no longer than two years. The assistant chair may be selected with the intention of preparing to serve as chair. An executive committee, consisting of the principal, the elected officers, and any other individuals in positions deemed necessary by the executive committee, will serve as a leadership team.

B. Chair

The powers and duties of the chair shall be to have general supervision, direction, and control of the business and affairs of the site council.

C. Assistant chair

The role of the assistant chair shall be to aid the chair in carrying out his or her functions, and to learn the job in preparation for running for chair at the appropriate time.

D. Secretary

The powers and duties of the secretary are to keep minutes of all the site council meetings, to maintain all important documents (such as bylaws, plan), to maintain and annually publish the site council roster, to see that all notices are given with the provisions of these bylaws or as required by law, and, generally, to perform all duties of the secretary as required by the executive committee of the site council.

E. Treasurer

The treasurer shall chair the finance and budget committee of the Friends of TOPS corporation, and shall supervise the work of that corporation’s appointed financial manager.

F. Principal

The principal of the school serves automatically on the site council (although not eligible to serve as chair), and his or her powers and duties are as described in school district policy.
IV. MEETINGS

A. Calling meetings

The site council shall meet on a monthly basis in a designated meeting room within the school. A quorum consists of a majority of the membership. The annual meeting calendar shall be placed in the school directory and the newsletter, and shall be announced at all parent meetings. Emergency meetings may be called by the executive committee, with 24 hours’ notice posted in the school office, a phone call to all members, and an announcement on the information line. All meetings are open and public. The site council encourages active participation from the entire school community.

B. Absenteism

If a member has two consecutive unexcused absences, the chair shall contact the person, requesting an explanation of the absences and the member’s intentions about remaining on the site council. Said member may be subject to removal by the executive committee.

C. Agenda preparation and distribution

The executive committee shall prepare and distribute an agenda for each site council meeting in advance of the meeting.

D. Committees

The site council shall create committees to accomplish its tasks, and shall solicit members to compose such committees. The committees shall select their own chairs (except budget and finance, which is chaired by the elected treasurer, and the nominating committee, whose chair is appointed by the executive committee). Committees may involve people who are not on the site council, and will determine their own meeting schedules. Committees are expected to send representatives to the site council meetings to report on their activities, and are permitted to participate fully in site council discussions. The only committees the site council is required to create are the budget and finance committee of the Friends of TOPS corporation, and the nominating committee.

E. Decision making

Decisions shall be made by consensus. The chair of the site council is responsible for moving the group towards, and listening for, consensus. Consensus means that all present are afforded an opportunity to participate in the discussion, everyone understands the issue under discussion, and the minority is assured the issue will be revisited within a specified period of time. Consensus does not mean that everyone necessarily agrees or that everyone thinks the decision is best. The minority must be willing to allow the majority to move forward, and the majority must have the courage to make progress in the face of minority opposition. In cases of serious division, where there is no clear majority, the issue shall remain undecided until a majority position emerges. While everyone present is eligible to participate in the discussion, those named as members of the site council in section IID shall be asked to raise hands in favor and/or opposition when necessary.

F. Records

A file of the current strategic plan, site council policies, and minutes shall be maintained by the secretary in the school library and/or the school office at all times. Minutes of the last site council meeting shall be distributed to all site council members, along with the agenda of the upcoming meeting, prior to each meeting.

G. Financial Manager

The Friends of TOPS corporation shall have a financial committee with three people responsible for transactions: the depositor, the check writer, and the treasurer (who approves check requests, balances accounts, and prepares reports to the IRS and site council, among other things). It is advised that the treasurer have an accounting background.

V. BYLAWS CHANGES

Bylaws modifications may be made by consensus of the site council membership when: 1) the proposed changes have been announced in the school newsletter, and 2) the proposed changes have been discussed at one meeting and are voted on at the following meeting.

VI. DISSOLUTION

The site council may dissolve itself at any time provided it believes it has given the school community adequate time and opportunity for discussion.

Please send corrections, suggestions, and comments to:

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2500 Franklin Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98102
OR call 283-7284
OR send an email to dj_moore@speakeasy.net
NORTHWEST BOOKFEST

By Steve Haines

It’s that time of year again. The Northwest’s largest literary arts festival is coming to Sand Point’s Magnuson Park Saturday and Sunday, October 19 and 20. Once again TOPS will be involved Saturday morning on the “Kidspeak Stage”. Students will have the opportunity to practice speaking in front of an audience by sharing selections from their own writing. Last year our emcee was Derek Munson, author of the engaging book Enemy Pie. Look for details in an upcoming Go-Home or see Steve in the library for more.