A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Happy February. Can you believe that we are halfway through the new school year? We began the second semester for middle school on January 26. Report cards for the first semester will arrive in the mail the first week of February.

Please take time to review and discuss the report card with your students, praise them for their hard work, and challenge them to improve if needed for the second semester.

We are continuing our school visitsations for incoming students. We have approximately 50 visitors for the K-5 weekly visits and 20-25 for each middle school visit.

The speech tournaments this month will be exciting. The students have worked very hard preparing their presentations. We will announce the winners in the next newsletter.

Thanks to all of the District staff and volunteers serving as judges for the tournament. And a special thanks to our librarian Steve Haines for coordinating the event.

The middle school ski program coordinated by Janet Moore is in high gear. Approximately 85% of our middle school students leave school at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, headed for the ski slopes at Snoqualmie Pass. It is wonderful time spent together, skiing and socializing.

Also, the middle school tried something different this year. It’s called Middle School Topics. Students and staff spent time away from school on mini-field trips to various community agencies and museums, time in the art room at TOPS doing pottery, and filmmaking with Karen Hart.

Our K-5, including DHH and Judy Holben’s class, spent a fun-filled end of semester break at Bellevue Skate King. Thanks to Katie Waters for coordinating the trip and to all parents who chaperoned.

Congratulations to the No-Bake committee for their hard work. They were awesome!! So are all of our parents, staff, and community members who contributed to the No-Bake!

The auction committee has been quietly working, preparing for the TOPS auction on Saturday, May 8. Please mark your calendars and be thinking “DONATIONS!”

Parent who drive students to school—please make an effort to get them here on time. It is very disruptive to classrooms when they arrive late. Thanks!

Happy Valentine’s Day and thanks for all of the support that you give to our students at TOPS.

~ Clara

ELEMENTARY ART PROGRAM WITH CYNTHIA LIVAK

By Carla Fetterley, second grade teacher

Art Adventures Around the World is the theme of this year’s elementary art program. Students spend an hour each week in art class with Cynthia. In upcoming weeks, students will try their hand at making coil pots inspired by African ceramics, and dot paintings in the style of Australian Aboriginal artists.

First through fourth graders are currently doing Chinese brush paintings of animals. The year started with pastel drawings of African art and Mexican masks, followed by copper foil luminaria, inspired by celebrations of light around the world, for the winter solstice.

These activities and more are sponsored by the generous parent support given during the No-Bake and TOPS auction. Thanks to the special focus of last May’s auction, the artist-in-residence is able to spend an extra six weeks with students this year, as well as use some special materials like the copper foil.

Last year saw the formation of an arts advisory committee which has been extremely helpful in organizing volunteer support of the elementary and middle school visual arts program, and overseeing the administration of the art department budget. The committee provides the forum for Cynthia to work closely with Luzita and parents in planning joint activities such as the Art Walk in

Continued on page 3
COMMUNITY MEETING WITH BRITA BUTLER-WALL

By Michelle Pennylegion

On Tuesday, January 13, the first “Update on Seattle Public School Issues: District 3 Community Meeting” was held at TOPS. This meeting was sponsored by Seattle school board director Brita Butler-Wall, who has adopted the concept of a regular community meeting from director Mary Bass, the recently elected school board president. According to Butler-Wall, Bass initiated this concept in her own district and it has proven to be wildly successful.

Although only about 10 community members attended, an important conversation with the new school board began. Butler-Wall introduced herself and her family and then solicited issues from meeting attendees. Specific issues that community members raised included school district communication, the current drop-out rate, how south Lake Union development will impact schools in the area, neighborhood schools, disparities within the central cluster, alternative schools, and the assignment policy. Director Butler-Wall expressed that she thought these community meetings were not necessarily the best forum for discussing many of these issues at length since some were very controversial and people had strong feelings about them, approaching them with differing philosophical opinions.

Butler-Wall did have three specific issues on which she was both soliciting input and providing information. These were:

1. Charter School Bill: It is expected that the state legislature will consider a charter school bill this session. A charter school is a publicly funded school but does not fall under the direct responsibility of the school board or publicly elected officials. After looking carefully at the issue and taking public testimony, the Seattle school board has passed a resolution against the bill. There was significant discussion about the pros and cons of the concept of charter schools. The only public hearing on the bill will be held Monday, Martin Luther King Day. Currently the health education committee in Olympia is in favor of the bill. Butler-Wall pointed out how unfortunate this is.

2. School Nutrition: Butler-Wall is very interested in the nutrition environment in schools. She is currently identifying a five-member committee to look more closely at this and review the literature. Her interest stems from a recent Surgeon General’s report which documented a significant increase in childhood obesity. She is also soliciting names of individuals who are interested in this issue. Please see contact information below if you wish to be put on this list.

Suggestions to improve the nutrition environment included carrying over students’ free and reduced lunch status until the end of the following September to ensure that students can receive lunches during the first weeks of school, and so administrators will have a chance to provide intensive follow-up around the forms with some families; pay more attention to the needs of students from other cultures; and offer water regularly.

3. Feb. 3 School Levies: These levies are for both operating expenses and capital improvements. In order for the vote to be valid, a large percentage of registered voters must vote. In order for the levies to pass, a supermajority of 60% must vote in favor.

Other discussion points:

Butler-Wall is also conducting a systematic review of the current Seattle school board policy binder. After a very quick review of just the policies related to academics, she believes that many of the policies may be out of date, some may be in conflict with each other, some are platitudes rather than policy, and still others appear to be micromanaging. In the process she expects that some policies will be consolidated and others eliminated. She did not say how the community will be informed about these specific changes.

There was also some conversation about Seattle school district facilities planning. A map of all of the SD facilities and the current status of each facility is available on the web site.

Contact information for Brita Butler-Wall, PhD.
School Board Director, Dist. 3
Stanford Center: 2445 3rd Av. S. (3rd & Lander)
Tel. 206.252-0040 or 206.729.3202
Email: brita.butler-wall@seattleschools.org
web: www.electbrita@drizzle.org
District 3 Office Hours:
Mon. 8-10 a.m. (whenever school is in session)
Honeybear Bakery / Third Place Books
20th Ave. NE and NE 65th St., bus # 71
A QUILT FOR CAROLYN!

Fifth graders celebrate completion of a quilt they made for Carolyn Dawson in support of her fight with cancer. The quilt was stitched by many students and friends. Barbara Stannard and Christine Clarke then used their artistic talents and hard work to put the quilt into its final form. Craig and Joan report that Carolyn is doing well now and we’re happy to see her back at school!

Elementary Art Program with Cynthia Livak continued from page 1

May and capital improvements like the display walls that are currently being planned. Look for a display of elementary and middle school student work at the neighborhood Louisa’s Café on Eastlake which began in late January.

Students and staff both enjoy doing art with Cynthia. She knows her stuff, works endless hours in her little “storage room,” and she continues to be supportive and flexible in meeting the needs of individual staff. How fortunate we are to have Cynthia Livak heading up our elementary art program.
SITE COUNCIL MEETING NOTES JANUARY 14, 2002

By Ellen Markman

ASB

Arianna Toussaint, ASB president, updated Site Council on the latest ASB meeting. The middle school students feel they need more choice and fewer rules, specifically relating to dress code, running club, and tardiness. They would like to form a rules committee consisting of three or four ASB members to discuss improved rules. Clara Scott suggested they inform the administration of their concerns.

ASB is planning a dance on February 13.

HOME STREET BANK AWARD

Home Street Bank annually recognizes employees who make significant contributions to the community. Amie Hong, parent of Andrew (grade 2) and Alec (K), gave up a week of vacation to help out at TOPS the first week of school. Home Street Bank recognizes Amie as a valuable employee in the finance department, and was pleased to donate $250 to TOPS to honor Amie’s work here.

CLIMATE DISCUSSION FOLLOW-UP

Last month’s Site Council meeting was devoted entirely to a discussion about the parent-teacher relationship at TOPS. Dave Sarju commented that it was clear at that meeting there is one thing teachers and parents have in common, and that is a desire to have TOPS a place where teachers want to be. The December meeting captured issues and solutions which will hopefully be crafted into expectations for relationships between teachers and parents. A small group of teachers and parents will be meeting in the future to discuss the issues and solutions.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

The executive committee of Site Council has been asked by the administration and teachers to have parents regulate their email communication and model respectful communication for our community and our children. A draft of email etiquette at TOPS was presented and Site Council voted to publish this to the larger community after editing by the executive committee.

RFP PROCESS

Steve Havas, Site Council treasurer, noted that February is the time for Site Council to become active regarding the upcoming RFP process. The finance committee will spend time in February updating the process and looking at the possibility of targeted fund donations.

There have been situations in the budget where money needed to be spent that did not fit into an existing account. The Site Council voted to approve a measure to put $500 into a discretionary fund with Clara Scott as project manager.

NO-BAKE SALE

Kirsten James reported that the No-Bake is within $6000 of reaching its goal in the final week of the No-Bake Sale. A final effort to call people who had not yet donated and outreach to the local community by Marlies van Bergeijk was quite productive.

SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

Marlies van Bergeijk reported on the community meeting Brita Butler-Wall held at TOPS on Tuesday, January 13. A broad constituency attended, and it was a very informative meeting. Marlies said the new school board appears to be much more transparent, and they want to represent all students, not just those in their districts. It would be helpful if TOPS had a representative at school board meetings, bringing feedback to the Site Council. If you are interested in taking on this role, contact Dave Sarju or Marlies van Bergeijk.

EASTLAKE – TOPS RELATIONSHIP

Dave Sarju reported on the status of the Eastlake – TOPS relationship since last spring. Following the assignment crisis there was a desire to rebuild the relationship between TOPS and the Eastlake community and several members of TOPS and the Eastlake community met in the spring and came to a few understandings:

1) The community accepted that the TOPS mission was truly important to the school, and was not fashioned to keep Eastlake out of the school. They acknowledged that TOPS was attempting to have a diverse student population.

2) TOPS was not the sole solution to the assignment issue. A solution was more likely to be found in the central cluster.

The question now is whether Site Council and parents want to continue the dialogue, and do we want to work with the community around the assignment issue, or do we wait to respond?

Bob Geballe, the Eastlake representative to Site Council, added that the school and community have the same goal – to provide wonderful learning experiences for children. It is a win-win situation for both sides when one looks at what the school can bring to the community and what the community can bring to the school. Bob suggested that the solution may involve TOPS becoming more of a central cluster school, where economic and racial diversity are present, but quite segregated. He pointed out that the proportion of underserved students at TOPS is not as great as TOPS would like it to be, and perhaps drawing from so many clusters is reaching too far to achieve the goal of the mission statement. He suggested that if the central cluster were the primary draw for the school, diversity may be higher. Dave Sarju noted that this idea was not just Bob’s idea, but something they had talked about last spring.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

The first elementary visit was held Tuesday, January 13. Sixty-three families attended, 51 for kindergarten. The Kindergarten Fair will be held January 31 at the John

Continued on page 7
A MESSAGE FROM THE NO-BAKE COMMITTEE

By Sheri Toussaint, No-Bake chair

Never doubt that the work of a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

~ Margaret Mead, anthropologist

YOUR DOUGH MADE TOPS RISE $66,354.15

The No-Bake committee would like to thank ALL of the TOPS families, friends, faculty, alumni parents, and many others for your outstanding support, valuable volunteer hours, and generous contributions to this fundraising campaign.

WE HAD 322 CONTRIBUTORS WITH AN AVERAGE DOUGH-NATION OF $206.07

The TOPS faculty goes way beyond the call of duty and we would like to say thank you for donating your time and money to the continued success of TOPS. There were 20 teacher volunteers (dunk tank and carnival games), 60 carnival volunteers, 151 carnival volunteer hours, 6 committee members, and over 300 committee volunteer hours. Thank you to Keith Toussaint for his technical expertise, Jack Lee our web site advertising manager, and a special thanks to the awesome No-Bake committee members Kirsten James, Jennifer Shaw, Ann Bergman, Barb Lui, and Judith Gille.

WE KNEADED PARTICIPATION AND WE GOT IT: 92% PARTICIPATION AND $7,460 IN VOLUNTEER HOURS

This campaign was a huge success because of all of you, from the abundant community spirit at the carnival to every contribution. There were a number of No-Bake “firsts”:

- Spanish and Vietnamese translations for advertising
- expanded opportunities to participate (via the carnival)
- newsletter articles regarding the Friends of TOPS budget
- creation of a new donation database
- an alumni mailing list
- donation checks deposited within five business days
- $3,126 in underwriting from TOPS families and companies

NO-BAKE BAKE SALE OCTOBER 4, 2003 THROUGH JANUARY 16, 2004

Our official fundraising campaign has concluded. However, the bakers have not left the bakery and it’s the yeast we can do to continue accepting dough-nations until the end of the 2003-04 school year.

Thank you for your generosity and support in making TOPS an outstanding program.

2003-04 TOPS CALENDAR

Please check Wednesday Go-Homes and the web site for updates.

FEBRUARY

3 (T) .............. Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
5 (Th) ............ Grades 3-5 to SCT, Tibet Through a Red Box
6 (F) ............... Speech tournament: storytelling
7 (Sa) ........... All-city tutoring training at Meany Middle School, 8:45 a.m.-1:05 p.m.
10 (T) .......... National African American Parent Involvement Day
11 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library
13 (F) .......... Speech tournament: expository
16-20 (M-F) ... Mid-Winter Break--no school
25 (W) .......... Volunteer orientation, 3-4 and 6-7 p.m., library
27 (F) .......... Speech tournament: oral interpretation

MARCH

2 (T) .......... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
3 (W) .......... 2-hour early dismissal
4 (Th) .......... All-city tutoring training, Meany Middle School, 8:45-1:05
5 (F) .......... Taste of TOPS, 6-9 p.m.
16 (T) .......... Grades 5-8 to SCT, Shape of a Girl
19 (F) .......... Professional development day--no school
21 (W) .......... TOPS chess tournament
21 (W) .......... Volunteer orientation, 3-4 and 6-7 p.m., library

APRIL

1 (Th) .......... Poetry festival
1 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6-8 p.m., library
2 (F) .......... End of third quarter
4 (Su) .......... Daylight Savings Time begins
5-9 (M-F) .... Spring Break; chess camp at TOPS
13 (T) .......... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
14 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library
15 (Th) .......... Grades K-4 to SCT, Mrs. Piggle Wiggle
21 (W) .......... Class pictures

MAY

4 (T) .......... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
6 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6-8 p.m., library
8 (Sa) .......... TOPS auction
12 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library
12 (W) .......... Communications committee, 7-8:30 p.m.
19 (W) .......... 2-hour early dismissal
21 (F) .......... Art Walk, elementary play
22 (Sa) .......... Elementary play, 2 and 7 p.m.
31 (M) .......... Memorial Day--no school

JUNE

1 (T) .......... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
3 (Th) .......... Kindergarten puppet show
3 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6-8 p.m., library
9 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library
11 (F) .......... Eighth grade passage
15 (T) .......... Last student day, fifth grade passage
THE "HOW YOUR MONEY IS SPENT" FEATURE RETURNS!

THIS MONTH...MULTICULTURAL BOOKS

By Elizabeth Dickinson

When my daughter arrived at TOPS in first grade, she announced to us that her favorite place at school was the library, with its feeling of spaciousness and shelves filled with unopened treasures. Perhaps that is why one of my favorite activities at TOPS has been buying multicultural resources for the library. But it is also because I hope that each child at our school will be able to share the joy of experiencing that “this place is for me!”

The multicultural book committee has the pleasure of buying $3000 worth of books, videos, and CDs for the TOPS library and classrooms this year. Top priority is given to teachers’ suggestions for books that would enrich their curriculum or augment collections for literature groups. We also welcome recommendations from families, who can help ensure that each year’s selections are exciting and diverse.

But where does the “multicultural” enter into this process? What sets this fund apart from the regular library funds is our focus on finding resources that support TOPS’ vision of a culturally relevant, anti-bias education. Here is what that means when it comes to books.

First, we look for books that reflect the diversity of the families in our school and city, so that each child will find his or her own identity reflected and affirmed in this public space. Books like Jamaica and Brahma or Yoko depict life in an early elementary classroom with children of different races. Folktales like The Monkey King Wreaks Havoc in Heaven or The Tale of the Firebird might be stories you heard growing up in your family, and then find echoed in school. Our growing collection of bilingual books—featuring Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Thai, and Chinese dialects—enables children learning English as a second language to find their first languages affirmed at school, and provides resources for English speakers to see and learn other languages.

This goal supports and extends the family history explorations that are part of the curriculum in so many TOPS classrooms. Last year we added Celebrating Families, Hannah’s Journal—the story of an East European immigrant girl’s experience, and In My Grandmother’s House: Award-Winning Authors Tell Stories About their Grandmothers as part of this focus.

Second, we emphasize books that explore how many different cultures contribute to and shape the math and science, social studies, arts, and language arts our children study. Last year, for instance, we bought the award-winning books The Blues Singers: Ten Who Rocked the World by Julius Lester, and The Pot That Juan Built, a story, told in the rhythmic form of “The House That Jack Built,” of the Mexican potter Juan Quezada, who recreates the pottery-making process of ancient Mexican peoples. The posters in the middle school depicting the Math of Arabia, Math of India, Math of the Navajo, and more, came from the multicultural resources fund. And the new CD/
Learning about the culture or cultures of the people who speak the language you’re studying is as important as learning the language itself. We can never truly know a culture other than our own, but trying to find aspects that we can admire in another culture is important. Children are by nature more open than adults and I am very glad when my students want to discuss what they don’t understand or what they misconceive about Latin American and Spanish cultures. I rejoice anytime students find a food, art, dance, music, dress, tradition, word, or gesture that they like from a Spanish-speaking country. This process of discovery helps them to respect others, to demand respect for themselves, to be comfortable in new situations, and to be open to different points of view.

One of the customs that many adults from this country find hard to understand about folks from Latin America and Spain is the custom of not getting down to business right away. Being sociable is very important in Spanish-speaking cultures. For example, five minutes after meeting you, a Cuban will know everything about you and your family and will have invited you, if not to their home, at least to tomar un cafecito. When you go to the house of a Latin American or Spaniard you will always be offered a drink or to partake of food. In many countries, it is considered polite to refuse that which is offered twice and accept on the third offer, but to not accept at all is considered the height of rudeness. Likewise, not to offer is unthinkable. The saying “Mi casa es su casa” comes from a long tradition of hospitality that has deep cultural, historical, and economic roots and is much more than just a polite phrase.

At the same time, many Latin Americans who come here to live are often puzzled and put off by the lack of hospitality they receive in their personal and professional dealings with North Americans.
EXPLORING HOLIDAYS

By Toby Harris and Margie Butcher

The Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ) at TOPS is made up of parents and staff passionately committed to fulfilling TOPS’ anti-bias, multicultural vision. Social justice work is extremely emotional, hard work and the CSJ has remained committed to working through these tough issues.

Many members have wanted to explore what role, if any, holidays should have at TOPS. At the January CSJ meeting, we began an exploration of the celebration, or lack thereof, of holidays at TOPS. We invited Julie Bisson to help lead us through our initial discussion. Julie Bisson is an early childhood education trainer, college instructor, published author, and consultant on culturally relevant and anti-bias curriculum, with a specialty in holiday curriculum.

Julie led us in a brief dialogue of what holidays mean to us now as adults and from our own childhoods, and the diversity of meaning holidays hold for us. She then talked about the most common treatment of holidays in classrooms today, and we saw how challenging it is to present holidays in a culturally relevant way. We also discussed the history of holidays at TOPS, and the challenge teachers face in our school in particular.

Those in attendance were excited at the prospect of talking to staff and parents to develop an anti-bias holiday policy that would guide us all in how to approach the holidays year-round. This policy would be developed after exploratory discussions among teachers, and then a community discussion potentially with the guidance of Julie Bisson.

Foremost in all of our minds would be to further our mission of developing anti-bias, multicultural curriculum and raising our children in healthy, respectful environments.

You can read more about Julie Bisson and her concepts at www.rootsforchange.net, and especially the article “Rethinking Holidays from an Anti-Bias Perspective” (http://www.rootsforchange.net/index.cfm?Group_ID=3807).

The CSJ would like to hear from the larger TOPS community, families, staff, and students about this issue. Where do you stand?

❖ Do you think holidays should be a part of the multicultural curriculum at TOPS?
❖ Would you like to see a holiday policy developed?
❖ Could this be a step in realizing our goals of anti-bias awareness?
❖ You can join the listserve by emailing TOPS_CSi@yahoogroups.com. Or, send an email to Margie (margie@drizzle.com) and she will post it. There is also a CSJ comment box in the office.

ONE TEACHER’S PERSPECTIVE BY, MARGIE BUTCHER

Holidays have not been a big part of my classroom. I made this decision with the intention of being culturally sensitive. I felt that if I could not do an adequate job of exposing the children to all holidays, I would rather not bring any holidays into the classroom. If I felt that if I could not do an adequate job of exposing the children to all holidays, I would rather not bring any holidays into the classroom. Therefore, I have not attended CSJ meetings in the past but have followed the CSJ’s plans with interest, attended an anti-racist study circle, and wondered about ways we might further implement a multicultural focus at our school.

Bisson’s methods and my discomfort do not dictate that there shall be no mention of Christmas at school. There’s a subtle yet powerful difference between participating in a ritual, and learning about or acknowledging and discussing another’s holidays and culture.

A school-wide holiday policy could help guide and facilitate conscious decision-making about curriculum and activities. A thoughtful, anti-bias, inclusive holiday policy would develop our awareness and steer us forward in our commitment to this focus. Actions always speak louder than words.

ONE PARENT’S PERSPECTIVE, BY TOBY HARRIS

I have not attended CSJ meetings in the past but have followed the CSJ’s plans with interest, attended an anti-racist study circle, and wondered about ways we might further implement a multicultural focus at our school.

Holidays, and how they’re acknowledged, has been one area which directly impacts my family and so I attended January’s CSJ meeting. I found Julie Bisson’s presentation and CSJ members’ discussion enlightening and reaffirming as a way to truly put into action TOPS’ community beliefs and commitment to multiculturalism. Bisson was able to strip away the controversies without taking away our intense personal emotions and experiences around our own rituals. She enabled us, in a short period of time, to see just how much our approach to presenting and exposing our children (or not doing it) can make others uncomfortable, and why. She talked about “teaching” rather than “celebrating,” honoring each person’s background and rituals, and introduced a broader way of looking at holidays.

An example of a TOPS ritual which caused unintentional discomfort for some occurred for many years but no longer happens. Each December, TOPS students would perform a winter concert at Westlake Mall. I believe it was kindergarteners through third graders who went on the field trip downtown to sing. These were winter holiday songs which included Christmas, Chanukah, and one or two songs in another language or cultural tradition. Because it was a variety of songs, it was felt that it was a multicultural activity. Each year, I felt uncomfortable about this activity. Why? The kids were so sweet and beautiful – how could anyone feel uncomfortable, you might say. I struggled with why, but eventually figured out that it was because this really felt like Christmas caroling, which was not a ritual my family participated in normally. And though other holiday songs were thrown in, they were out of context. We were also caroling at a shopping mall, essentially participating in the commercialization of Christmas. If it wasn’t caroling but just singing, why didn’t we do it in the spring? Was this activity ever examined in a thoughtful, deliberate manner prior to setting it up? On the surface, it’s harmless. But to some not part of the dominant culture, it was a little invasive and uncomfortable.

Bisson’s methods and my discomfort do not dictate that there shall be no mention of Christmas at school. There’s a subtle yet powerful difference between participating in a ritual, and learning about or acknowledging and discussing another’s holidays and culture.

A school-wide holiday policy could help guide and facilitate conscious decision-making about curriculum and activities. A thoughtful, anti-bias, inclusive holiday policy would develop our awareness and steer us forward in our commitment to this focus. Actions always speak louder than words.

A TEASER FROM TOBY

Save those old TOPS t-shirts! Especially the really old ones. More later…

(Hmm, what could she be planning?)
**RUN KINDERGARTENERS RUN!**

By Denise Gonzalez

During the first week back from the holiday break, I was shocked—and delighted—to hear the following news from my son D’Angelo, who’s in Joan O’Connor’s class: kindergarteners would begin to have PE.

I had suffered a very different, negative shock at the beginning of the school year when Joan and Joby explained to parents that kindergarteners didn’t have PE, nor were they regularly allowed to play in the gym due to scheduling conflicts with the older kids’ classes. Sure there’s recess, but on rainy days, kindergarteners spend their recess in the classroom. And as you know, winter in Seattle can be one three-month-long rainy day.

Joan was sympathetic to my concerns. She had developed her own solutions to allow active kindergarteners to stretch out, including taking the class for walks around the building during “rainy recess.” On Wednesday mornings, dance movement instructor Eric Johnson visits the classroom. Also, in Kids Company, the after-school care program, Vanessa Hunter offered a group of children the chance to train for and participate in a kids marathon last fall.

I discovered the free Friday after-school sports program, too, in which my son participates. Overseen by Don Zemke and Eric Herndon, it looks a lot like PE, giving kids the opportunity to run, play, and discover different types of games and sports. If you visit the after-school sports program, you will quickly sense the importance of physical education that goes beyond kids blowing off steam. You will see kids physically pushing themselves, working together and supporting one another. You’ll see strategies emerge on teams, and watch as kids deal with both success and defeat. You’ll also see adults acting as positive role models in promoting fitness. In fact, the program has been so popular that the instructors have had to limit it to grades K - 2 in January, March, and May, with grades 3 – 5 participating in February, April, and June.

After returning from winter break, the kindergarten classes were invited to join the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program during their daily PE class. The catch is that each individual kindergartener will only have PE one day a week—with 50 kindergarteners total, the teachers have broken them up into small groups assigned to one specific PE day. While I applaud the fact that kindergarteners have PE at all, I think the school can do better than that. Restricting kindergarteners from drinking chocolate milk (that privilege begins in the first grade) is one thing; restricting kindergarteners from daily physical education is another.

The Centers for Disease Control and the American Heart Association are among many organizations that recommend daily PE beginning in kindergarten and continuing all the way through high school. The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services are even making grants available to hire staff and increase capacity for programs that promote daily physical activity in schools. Healthy habits begin at an early age, and with rapidly rising rates of obesity and diabetes among American youth, promotion of daily physical activity and healthy eating choices should be a priority for both parents and educators. Additionally, research has shown that children who regularly exercise do better academically. Personally, I know that my own son is more focused, positive, and better able to manage his emotions when he has the opportunity to actively play, run, and exert himself for at least 30 minutes a day.

I’m encouraged by the efforts made by Joan O’Connor and others at TOPS to make regular physical activity a part of our children’s school day, and would challenge the school administration to find a way to make daily physical education part of the core curriculum—not a special privilege or extracurricular activity—for all of the students, including the kindergarteners.

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**TOPS FAMILY SKI WEEKEND, FEBRUARY 19 – 22**

By Julie Braybrooks

The TOPS family ski weekend is coming up! The Mission Ridge ski area, only twelve miles from accommodations in the town of Wenatchee, offers alpine skiing and snowboarding lessons, as well as tubing and cross-country skiing nearby on weekends. Non-skiers have also found snowshoeing can be great fun on trails as tubing and cross-country skiing nearby on weekends. Non-

The Cedars Inn is just 20 minutes from Mission Ridge. Rooms cost $61 plus tax. Kids 18 and under stay free. They offer continental breakfast, indoor pool, and outdoor hot tub. If you are calling after January 31, you may not receive this rate; however, you can ask if they might extend it to you. Rooms are going quickly. If there are none at The Cedars, you may try calling La Quinta Inns, as some TOPS families are staying there. ANY Shell Gas Station will give you a voucher for 2 for 1 adult lift tickets at Mission Ridge for FRIDAYS ONLY.

Simply take your receipt into the cashier and she or he will staple a voucher onto your receipt. Traditionally we have held a family potluck Friday night (6:30) in a large meeting room the Cedars Inn provides. Plan on bringing a dish to feed six to eight people and a beverage to share. Lots of families drive over on Thursday in order to get a full day of skiing in on Friday.

Mission Ridge has a discount program called the “Three-0 Club” for students in grades six through twelve who have earned a 3.0 grade average or better. However, with their new $10 membership fee it is only a discount if you buy lift tickets on three different days. Check out the requirements on their web site (missionridge.com) under “rates” and “3-0 Club.” If someone would like to organize a group purchase of tickets (15 or more), look on the web site at group sales. If you have a Summit at Snoqualmie season pass, bring it along; last year we were given a 20% discount for showing it.

Reservations: 1-800-358-2074 or 509-886-8000 (tell them you are with TOPS school)

For more information contact Julie Braybrooks at 324-6090 or jab.ges@earthlink.net.
ELEVATORS
Elevators are cool
I go up
I come down
I go up
I come down
I press all the buttons
I get out and
Shop my heart out.
~ Lily Rorick

THE MOON
I think the moon is so beautiful!
The moon is shiny
The moon is white and so shiny
The stars are white like the moon
Because they love the moon very much.
~ Kathy Le

STAMPEDE
Fat cats run across flat grass
Big pigs stomp along muddy crud
Enormous tortoises knock against the sidewalk
Large dogs charge at long logs
Lobster monsters make way in the bay
Giant moose are on the loose
So keep your eye out
‘Cause little critters are all about
~ Corey Greengage

THE SHOE!
My shoe is stinky
My shoe is the stinkiest shoe you could ever
Smell in your whole shoe smelling
Career!
~ Whit Gilligan

SAND DOLLAR
I found a sand dollar
Smooth all over
The star looks smooth too
The sun on the bottom
With electricity coming out
A mermaid comes up
I give it back
~ Annie Rorick

POETOPICS
Poetry written by students during a three-week TOPIC led by parent Annie Gage

FRIENDS
Friends are supposed to be
Caring about each other
Friends are supposed to be
Sharing, playing with each other
Friends are not to be fighting with
And are supposed to be playing with.
~ Aretha Luong

BLAME THE BRUSSEL SPROUTS
Blame the brussel sprouts!
Blame the brussel sprouts!
If you don’t blame those Brussel Sprouts
They’ll run about
They’ll shout and pout!
They’ll make you fart
Trust me, it’s no piece of art
Blame the brussel sprouts!
Blame the brussel sprouts!
~ Isaiah Hoban Halvorsen

PIE AND THANKSGIVING
Pie my oh my
Pie my oh my
My pie I love pie
Wonderful pie I get pie
On Thanksgiving I eat
Pie only pie
My oh my
~ Philip Patterson

TALKING ABOUT TOPICS
By Annie Gage

I love TOPICS. I think they are fun to create and to teach. I enjoy the excitement I see in children’s faces when they arrive at a TOPICS session. I value the opportunity they give our children to spend time with kids outside their own grade-level. I believe that it’s refreshing and renewing for teachers and students alike to have a break from the school day routine. I like it that my son gets exposed to things like Mancala and Spanish and apple varieties and crafts that we aren’t likely to do at home.

So I always feel a little sad when I hear from him that there were not enough volunteers for TOPICS to happen.

I’m aware that there are many reasons for this. I heard one parent say about TOPICS “I wish they would just go away!” Some parents find TOPICS burdensome, question their value, or just don’t have the kind of schedule that allows them to teach a TOPIC now and then.

However, maybe you are a parent who would like to teach a TOPIC but you haven’t because you can’t imagine how your particular set of skills could translate into a small-group activity for children. If that describes you, or if you’d just like to bat around some TOPICS ideas, I invite you to give me a call (632-2618) or send me an email (ag1958@earthlink.net). I would be delighted to help you figure something out.
THIRD GRADERS PERFORM AS YOU LIKE IT AND MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Leslie shares some big news

Backstage huddle with Eli

Sabrina wonders whether Will really should rescue his mean big brother Owen from the tiger

Anna, Arell, and Lilly receive news of a visit

Alex, Arell, and Andrew make up a good story for Tere

Lani, Rebecca, and Kylin hatch a plan

Andreas, Walker, and Mike in the forest of Arden

Applause well earned!

Play photos provided by Kirsten James, Bill Laputra, and Sheri Toussaint
**TOPS Auction 2004 is Saturday, May 8!**

*By the auction committee*

It’s time to start thinking about the TOPS Auction 2004! This year’s event takes place at the Asian Resource Center once again—with Steve Hardy returning as our auctioneer. This year’s theme is “Looking Beyond,” inspired by some wonderful drawings done by seventh grade students in Luzita’s class. Our fundraising goal for the auction is $75,000. You will soon receive a packet of information and donation forms in the mail, including a sample donation request letter you can personalize and send out. As we get into the swing of things we will be updating the auction page of our school web site, where you can look for ideas on procuring and information on volunteering. Closer to the date, you’ll actually be able to see pictures and descriptions of items up for bid. So don’t forget to check the site.

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

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

Getting items for the auction is easier than you’d think. All it takes is a few quick conversations with people who can donate a product or service to the auction. You’d be surprised how often people are more than happy to contribute—and it’s great free advertising for them. These are people you talk to every day: your grocer, soccer coach, hair stylist, masseuse, your favorite ice cream store and restaurant owners, theater operators, book store managers. Everywhere you usually spend your time or money, that’s where the items come from. Check with your employer, too—many have programs to donate to causes just like ours, especially when their employees put in volunteer hours. And when auction night comes, remember to submit your employer’s matching funds forms for anything that’s a donation (such as money towards teacher dinners, the funded item, or just plain cash.)

Wouldn’t it be great if we could put all the money raised directly into TOPS? Each year it costs somewhere around $10,000 to put on this event. If we were able to have most of these expenses underwritten it would make a big difference. Do you or someone you know own a business that would be willing to donate money or services to the auction? Their company name and logo can be displayed and listed in the catalog. Please call our co-coordinators Dan Tobin (325-8155) or Rhian Lombard (325-5395) if you or someone you know would be interested or if you have ideas and suggestions.

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

Be sure to fill in your procurement slips completely. We’ll need all procurement forms turned in to the TOPS office by April 14, but if you need more time to actually get the item to school, that deadline is Wednesday, April 28. If you run out of slips, you can pick up additional forms at the office. Please fill them out completely and correctly, and you’ll save a whole lot of time for our volunteers.

It’s also time for your class to start thinking about their auction art project. The class projects are often the highlight of the live auction…and bring in a lot of money! If you have any questions or need ideas, call class project coordinator Gloria Albetta at 783-0148. The kids are really proud of their contribution to their school, the projects themselves are quite wonderful, and the artwork and the evening’s energy combine to create a bidding frenzy. Again, just ask an auction veteran!

The class theme baskets that have become a new tradition have been very successful and fun to put together. Usually one person coordinates and lets the class know the theme (sometimes the kids come up with the theme). Families can then send in their contributions and the coordinator puts it all together in some kind of interesting basket or container. If your teacher is donating an event or activity, maybe your basket can coordinate with it. To avoid duplications, please have the coordinator call Gloria Albetta at 783-0148 as soon as you know what theme your class has chosen.

There are still some important committee positions and jobs to be filled. We’re looking for volunteers to coordinate the raffle, the underwriting effort, and the live auction section of the event. Please call Tammy Luthy at 322-3784 if you’re interested in getting involved, and she can give you the details. Any other auction questions? Please call co-chairs Dan Tobin or Rhian Lombard.
TOPS BASKETBALL

By Noah Cohn and Carver Low, grade 8

The TOPS basketball team has had many ups and downs. Even though we have lost most of our games so far this season, we still keep a good attitude about it. We enjoy playing with friends after school. We owe a lot of thanks to our coaches, Thomas and Paul. They have been coaching at TOPS for four years now, this being their fourth year. They devote their Monday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons to coaching us.

We have had a lot of fun watching our teammates get better. There have been some very funny moments, like when Anthony and Brady collided during warm-ups before a game. Overall, TOPS basketball hasn’t won many games, but we still enjoy the experience.

THE UNICYCLE CHALLENGE

By Anna Duncan and Lani Chapko, grade 3

Unicycling is a hard thing to do. Once you learn how to do it it’s really fun! It takes a lot of practice and hard work to learn to ride the unicycle. It took a year of hard work for us to be able to pass the unicycling test.

In order to pass the test we had to go around the circle in the middle of the gym five times without falling off. When anybody accomplishes that goal, Don buys them pizza for lunch!

Of all the different things that we get to do in PE, we really feel proud to have mastered the skill of unicycling.

HOCKEY IS REAL COOL

By Izaak Goodall, grade 4

Hockey is my favorite thing to do in PE because you can do so much in it. You also get the puck more often than in basketball and soccer. You can get a bunch of exercise. You can tackle or be tackled. And it is the most famous game in Canada! The difference between floor and ice hockey is that floor is played on, amazingly of all, the floor and ice is played on ice.
January No-Bake Bake Sale 2003-04 Contributions

No-Bake Bake Sale October 4, 2003, through January 16, 2004

Thank you, TOPS families, friends, faculty, and alumni parents for your financial contribution and pledges to the No-Bake Bake Sale. As of January 16, 2004, we have raised $66,354.15 from 322 contributors with an average donation of $206.07.

Payments $58,099.15, Pledges $3,550, and Employee Matching Funds $4,705.

Contributors (Legend: *TOPS Student, **TOPS Faculty, ***TOPS Alumni Parent)
Exploring Holidays continued from page 8

I also know many teachers who have tried to do what they felt was an adequate job with holidays, only to be criticized for their efforts. After a while, it can be easier to just stay away from the subject. The one exception in my classroom is Thanksgiving, which I teach from multiple perspectives, providing both a multicultural and anti-bias approach to this holiday.

After listening to the other CSJ members at the January meeting, and hearing what Julie Bisson had to say, I now have a very different opinion about the role of holidays in my classroom. I have realized three important things.

1. The highest priority.
2. The second (and I feel even more important) reason is that if we truly want to present a multicultural curriculum at TOPS, we must teach the children about others not like themselves. And holidays are one powerful way to do this. Holidays are such an important part of our children’s lives, it is natural for them to want to share and learn about what the others do at home. The third reason is that holidays and the way different holidays are treated in our culture is an important way to talk about bias. For most classrooms and schools that do choose to celebrate holidays, December is the “big month”...and that says so much about whose holidays are valued most and given the highest priority.

This meeting made me rethink how I approach holidays. And it reminded me how in virtually every subject area, we must teach the children about others not like themselves. And holidays
Seattle School District No. 1
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Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against in any of the District’s employment or educational activities can file an internal discrimination complaint with the District’s Affirmative Action Office.

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4-15 February, 12 – 5 p.m.
Washington State Convention & Trade Center Exhibit Hall at the AAAS Annual Meeting

The Pacific Science Center and the Institute for Systems Biology have partnered with AAAS to bring to you one of our most popular FREE events held Saturday, 14 February and Sunday, 15 February.

Visit the AAAS Exhibit Hall to find inspiration in lab demonstrations that show the fun of science, kid-friendly chemistry projects, and other intriguing events.

For information on activities, shows, and workshops: www.aaasfsd.org

Fun events and free prizes for all!
◆ Oobleck!
◆ Slow Ball Machine
◆ Storybook Science
◆ Marvelous Moon
◆ Space Odyssey Exhibits
Free ice-cream made right in front of your eyes with liquid nitrogen! Four times a day!
Every participant receives a free flashin yo-yo!
Free shuttle buses too!
Plus, drawings throughout the day for fun, exciting prizes!

FREE
Everyone is invited!
All of these educational workshops and activities have been designed for children and families to promote interest in science and demonstrate the excitement of discovery.

Fun events and free prizes for all!
◆ Super Cool Science Show
◆ Physics on Wheels
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