

# TOPS NEWS

June 2004 ♦ Volume 7, Issue 10

The monthly newsletter of TOPS, a Seattle Public K-8 alternative school

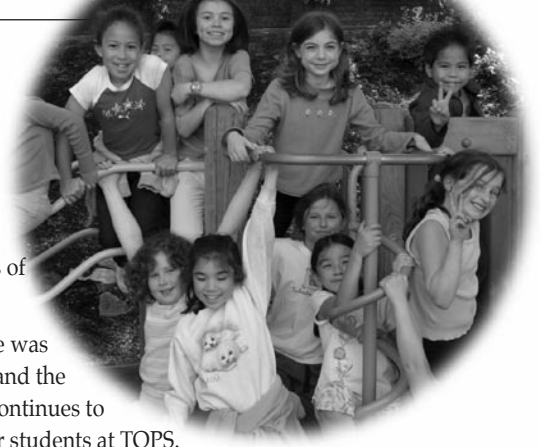
## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Can it really be June already? As the school year comes to a close at TOPS we have a lot to celebrate and be thankful for—what a great year! This year we have continued to improve our reading and writing scores for all of our K-8 students. Students continue to amaze us with their love for reading—before school, during school, and after school. Our literacy blocking coupled with the hard work from our teachers and our wonderful librarian have encouraged students to stay challenged! This year we had many students from Karen Hart's class participate in the History Contest, in Seattle at the Shoreline Center for the regional contest and in Ellensburg for the state contest. This year Mark Ellis took sixth through eighth grade students to participate in the Math Olympiad. Our eighth graders won 1st place and the sixth grade team was 3rd. TOPS students continued to wow everyone with their quick thinking. Our new after-school Math Challenge class for eighth grade students, taught by Jack Lee with assistance from UW graduate students, helped to prepare students for honors classes as they enter high school. TOPS also had the opportunity this year to congratulate one of our eighth grade students, Adlai Pappy, as one

of the Mayor's Scholars for the city of Seattle! Our third grade plays, kindergarten puppet show, and fifth grade and kindergarten salmon project were all highlights of this year.

May was filled with activity; there was the school auction, the Art Walk, and the spring concert. This community continues to amaze me with its support for our students at TOPS. The No-Bake Sale was a great community-building celebration and fundraiser. We raised an all-time high of \$79,000. The auction raised over \$89,000 dollars and was attended by many families and community members. Thanks to Luzita and Cynthia, TOPS art teachers, the Art Walk was a tremendous success; families were able to view wonderful creations by our young artists. The instrumental music classes and choir gave an outstanding performance at the spring concert. The concert was both inspirational and lovely to listen to. Thank you to Charles

*Continued on page 2*



TOPS at Seward  
2500 Franklin Avenue East  
Seattle, WA 98102

Phone: (206) 252-3510  
Fax: (206) 252-3511

**Principal:** Clara Scott

**Assistant Principal:**  
Chris Drape

**Site Council Chair:** Dave Sarju

### NEWSLETTER ONLINE

The TOPS newsletters are available online in PDF format, usually before the printed copy arrives in your mailbox! From the TOPS home page (<http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops>), click on *Latest Newsletter* in the *Quick Links* section.

## AUCTION RAISES \$89,000!

*By Kathy Wickward ♥*

Wow! The preliminary total is in and receipts from the May 8 auction reached \$89,000 – well beyond the goal!

All the elements were in place to make the evening a fine, festive affair. The lovely décor, particularly the paper lanterns created by Barb Lui ♥ and Judith Gille ♥, contributed to the air of sophistication about the Asian Resource Center that evening. (Barb also made the heavenly silk eye pillows that were the raffle gift.) Auctiongoers were surrounded by a fantastic array of silent auction items – wine baskets, massages, spa trips, restaurant certificates, boat rides, music lessons, artwork, sports tickets, tech equipment, and the nifty CD slide show of kindergarten pictures, to name just a few. Essential Bakery stepped in and donated “a mountain” of their wonderful artisan bread, and we were treated to a

fine variety of wine from the Columbia Winery, beer from Georgetown Brewing and Hales, and the yummy dinner provided by Whole Foods and served by TOPS alumni. Whole Foods also donated over 15 cases of the juices and other beverages that we enjoyed.

Spirited bidding at the live auction, led by auctioneer Steve Hardy, left the crowd breathless at times, with some items topping \$1000. Todd Moore's ♥ passionate plea for the sound system in the gym helped to raise \$18,760 towards cutting down the reverberations-ations-ations in the TOPS performance space. And finally, helping to speed checkout were the computers loaned by Ellen and Jon Markman ♥, and printers loaned by Peerless Systems Imaging Products, aptly networked by Greg Tuai ♥. Thank you to all who bid in the live and silent auctions.

*Continued on page 3*



**SEATTLE  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS**

# THE HEART THING

By Teresa Nemeth

## ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the tenth newsletter of the 2003-04 school year. Teresa Nemeth edits, Cindy Suzumura♥ handles photos, design, and layout, and Toby Harris♥ and Peggy Riehle♥ get it mailed off to you. Don Zemke provides many of our photos.

We need your submissions: calendar additions, classroom news and news from the larger community, faculty notes, committee reports, opinions, profiles, compliments, congratulations, children's art, photos, and anything else significant to the TOPS community.

Submit your contributions to the newsletter box in the main office or, preferably, by Word file or email to Teresa at [zongora2@cs.com](mailto:zongora2@cs.com). Please send photos to [csuzumura@mindspring.com](mailto:csuzumura@mindspring.com).

An old friend called the other day. I don't know how we got there, but he ended up telling me about a time he wanted to go in a women's bookstore to look for some things, and they wouldn't let him in because he was a man. He didn't force it of course, and he guessed he could see their point, but as a women's studies major he found it something of an impediment. We talked about some of the benefits and drawbacks—for surely there are both—of identity politics. One negative spin-off has to be that if you can't own any part of discussion of a problem, it's hard to own part of the solution.

After putting considerable time and energy into fascinating but difficult discussions around school this year, with mixed results, not to mention multiple hours on this newsletter, probably also with mixed results, I walked in to the spring music concert, played the piano for Sari's sweet choirs, and, after very *minimal* expenditure of time or energy, received applause and flowers. I am going to confess right here and now that

*A Message from the Principal continued from page 1*

Holmes, Paul Gillespie, Scott Teski, and Sari Breznau for their supportive directing for our students.

The elementary play included a special tribute to Todd Jamieson♥ with a portrait and plaque, renaming our stage in his honor.

Our Deaf and Hard of Hearing program continues to grow and improve. Students are progressing well and have been able to mainstream into classrooms with the help from families, teachers, and instructional assistants. Next year we plan to have a few new students and two new staff members join our program.

This has been a challenging year regarding personnel.

It began with Mr. J's diagnosis of cancer. He is doing as well as can be expected, and we hope he will be able to return in the fall. Our two fifth grade teachers are leaving: Ilsa for educational study and Jill for travel around the world with her family. Rebecca Moslo was moved from sixth grade to fifth grade and we have hired a wonderful male teacher for the other fifth grade position. The sixth grade position, vacated by Rebecca, has been filled

I had something like a Sally Field-Oscars moment—the “you like me” bit. Apparently, I needed it. The only reason I am mentioning it is that I have the sense many of us need what I happened to get: a moment when at least part of the community says ok, we'll take you, despite whatever is or was, even despite lingering questions in some quarters about the state or quality of your heart... So, I'm going to at least share the wealth by putting a, hmm, how about a ♥ after every parent volunteer's name appearing in this newsletter issue. It's not that I want to neglect our FABULOUS staff, it's that I happen to be focusing on the parent volunteers just for now.

So I asked my friend why he persisted in getting a degree in women's studies—indeed, why he remained committed to considering women's issues at all—after having doors (literal and figurative) shut in his face. He said, “Some people might think they own a topic. And in some cases, in some contexts, it might really seem like they do. But I finally decided, you know what, they don't.”

Peace.

with another wonderful fit for TOPS. Our first grade position, vacated by Margie Butcher, has been filled with a wonderful teacher who is definitely knowledgeable about the TOPS community. We have been very fortunate to get some great teachers for TOPS.

Our focus this year on our math curriculum has allowed us to continue to explore curricular strategies to improve our performance in math. Our new math coach, Emily Lauderback, will work with our K-5 team for the remainder of this year and next year to align our curriculum with both the district and state standards. Emily will also be consulting with Mark Ellis, our middle school math teacher, so that we can continue to have a smooth transition in math from elementary school to middle school.

Next year our school will embark on the exciting adventure of helping students to organize themselves better. TOPS will be initiating the use of daily/weekly planners so that the students can continue to improve their time management and organization skills. We hope that this also helps the parents and students communicate better about projects and homework deadlines.

All of us at TOPS wish you a safe, fun-filled summer. Remember to encourage your students to read throughout the summer and visit their local libraries often. We will look forward to seeing you all again in September for another wonderful school year.

Cheers!

Clara

From Teresa:

I would like to pass this job on to someone else. Aren't you out there somewhere, an eager new editor? At least I would welcome a teammate or two. Please contact Stacie Bonnelle or me. In the absence of volunteers, I will continue (especially now that I've figured out I can use Adobe, wow this is cool). Please check with me in early August about the deadline for the September issue. Tel. 325-8320, or use email address above. Thanks SO much for the many informative and thoughtful articles this year—we really did get the information out!! I will create an index (possibly for web site posting) so that we will have a kind of reference tool for future years. Next year's newsletters may not need to be so big...

# SITE COUNCIL REPORT

MAY 12, 2004

By Ellen Markman♥

## BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM

Chris Drape reported on the process of affirming staff for next year's BLT. Mark Ellis, Luzita Roll, and Joe Drummond will be new to BLT, joining Lori Eickelberg, John Daugherty, and Joby Moore. [See May issue for more on the parent component.]

The most recent BLT meeting focused on staff development. They are looking forward to the next school year, examining what worked and what needs to change for next year, developing a solid plan as this school year comes to a close.

## SCHOOL BOARD REPORT/SCHOOL BOARD COMMUNITY MEETING

Kathy Wickward reported that the school board meeting was notable for much public discussion around water issues in schools, disproportionality, and reports from parents dissatisfied with mandatory assignments.

Kathy also reported on a community meeting school board representative Brita Butler-Wall held last month at TOPS. The assignment plan was a main topic of conversation. In the Montlake reference area, eight kindergarten families had TOPS as their first choice, and two were placed at TOPS. TOPS has 48 kindergarten seats available, with 6 held for bilingual students, and 22 siblings entering next fall, leaving 20 open kindergarten spots. It was emphasized that the current assignment plan does not guarantee placement; it is a choice plan.

There was discussion about the tremendous transportation cost the district assumes to support the current "choice" assignment plan. The school board will

review the assignment plan in the coming months with regard to a neighborhood school assignment plan with the goal of reducing transportation costs.

It was stated that TOPS is a stale alternative school; many qualities that initially made TOPS alternative have now been adopted by many other schools. Site council members reacted to these comments with surprise and dismay.

Marlies van Bergeijk♥ mentioned that Brita Butler-Wall has office hours on Mondays from 8 to 10 a.m. at the Honey Bear Bakery in Ravenna near Third Place Books on NE 65th.

## AUCTION

The auction committee reported on a very successful auction event on May 8 at the Asian Resource Center. Spirits were high, and over \$89,000 was raised to support TOPS, exceeding our goal and contributing to the many programs that distinguish our school. Thanks to everyone who participated in every way, from procurement to attending to cleaning up!

## RFPs

Many of the proposed RFPs were discussed and promoted by staff and site council members. The overwhelming theme, as the site council reviews RFPs and the inevitable need to make cuts due to more requests for dollars than dollars are available, is whether the RFPs are "kid-centric": is the RFP directly serving the children? Following tonight's meeting, the site council finance committee will make recommendations to the site council executive committee, which will report back to the site council next month.

[For more on the site council budget, see "The Site Council Budget—Explained!" by Elizabeth Dickinson♥, TOPSNews September 2003.]

## DEAR TOPS COMMUNITY,

I want each and every one of you to know how grateful and truly awed I am by the love and support and help and kindness you have shown my family and me. I am astonished by the amount of people that have come forward to help us and I can say nothing more than I thank you with all my heart.

From Julie Jamieson♥

---

*Auction Raises \$89,000 continued from page 1*

Many, many folks contributed to making the auction a success, particularly all of you who procured items, designed class projects, and offered your time and talents to the highest bidders. There were some splendid items on that stage! The talented artists who illustrated this year's theme of "Looking Beyond" were Emma Johnson, Anna Czosnyka, Kate Macklin, Anna Ludwig, and Kyle Kurokawa. Finally, much appreciation is due to the many volunteers who helped on the night of the auction, setting up, serving

food and beverages, collecting bids, adding numbers, and cleaning up. Thank you so much for your help!

The auction committee worked tirelessly to make the evening a memorable affair, so feel free to congratulate them as well. They are already thinking about next year, so please give them your comments and suggestions. Send your ideas to Tammy Luthy♥, 206-322-3784 or [jheft@seanet.com](mailto:jheft@seanet.com). Better yet, join the committee; new faces are always welcome!

# LESSONS FROM MRS. SEEALL'S BIOLOGY CLASS

By David Sarju♥, Site Council Chair

TOPS is a school that thrives in part due to parent involvement. But can you have too much of a good thing?

This year the TOPS site council explored the ever present and somewhat taboo issue of the parent/teacher relationship. TOPS teachers rarely let on that the involved parent can at times be a two-edged implement. At the same time, shouldn't parents expect that assistance and input are welcomed?

As basic as the human survival elements of fear and pain that Mrs. Seeall palpably demonstrated, in her Bottoms School biology class, is the instinct to protect our progeny. (Bottoms School was the fictional middle school in our elementary play.) On our worst days we might look like parents on steroids, over-expressing the genes that code for preservation. We want what we believe is best for our child and assume that our ideas might also benefit the other 29 students in our child's classroom. Or perhaps we, TOPS parents, are the quintessential well-researched Seattle consumer: informed and involved. Do we expect the same level of dialogue and input in our child's classroom that we expect with our naturopath when discussing personal health? Do we desire the same amount of involvement that we have with our landscape architect when designing our home garden? Should we change our expectations of input if the garden is shared with 29 other families?

Many TOPS traditions, including our strong drama and arts programs, originated with parents. In fact, the school itself was birthed by parents. Isn't it then legitimate to expect that parental input would be welcomed and invited at TOPS, one of our district's original alternative schools? Have we unknowingly abused the privilege or have

parents' roles been abridged for other reasons?

Simply recognizing that we may have different needs opened my eyes. Stating parents' needs and hearing the needs of teachers was instructive:

- ◆ How do teachers clearly and kindly decline a parental offer for teaching the parent's recently discovered curriculum?
- ◆ How do parents accept "No thank you" without feeling snubbed?
- ◆ How do parents discuss a child's unique learning style or concerns regarding classroom management?
- ◆ Armed with a month of stories from our beloved and believable nine-year-old of how Ms. Teacher is unfair to "all the boys" (or "all the girls"), how do we approach the teacher without disclosing our brewing bias?
- ◆ How do teachers receive questions and suggestions without hearing them as indictments?

The best advice I recall came from Mr. J (Willie Jones) more than a year ago. Last school year, during a contentious time in our community, Mr. J helped me to remember that each person was simply trying to do what he or she thought was best.

Currently, a group of faculty, administrators, and parents are working to develop suggestions that could help us to achieve our shared goals of building and modeling respectful relationships. If these are issues that speak to you, stay tuned; we'll offer our "well researched" suggestions in the fall. In the meantime, we can appreciate the many things that work well at TOPS and be thankful our children do not attend Bottoms School.

Thanks to all staff and volunteers who worked hard on last month's budget process, and to treasurer Steve Havas♥ for so ably leading us through it.

## TOPICS ACROSTIC POETRY

**T**eachers  
Outrageous  
Partnership  
Students

By Isabella Green, grade 3

**M**arvelous  
At bat  
Running  
Innings  
Newsworthy  
Energetic  
Racing  
Strikeout

By Jack McDonald, Grade 3

**B**asketball player  
Around and  
Shoot  
Kobe best player  
Everybody loves player  
The team basketball  
Basketball is so fun  
Again I love it  
Lay up  
Long shot

By Kiseri Gebrese Lassie, Grade 2

# THE AUCTION: AN ALL-COMMUNITY EFFORT

By Tammy Luthy♥

On auction day, amidst the hubbub, chaos, and excitement of set-up, a TOPS dad looked around in amazement and laughter, proclaiming, "This is just like a barn-raising." TOPS auction IS like a barn-raising: it takes hundreds and hundreds of hands to build the TOPS auction.

On auction day we raised \$89,000+, the culmination of weeks of phenomenal efforts by the entire TOPS family, our students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents, neighbors, families, and alumni.

This is the joy and strength of the TOPS community joined together, each person giving the best he or she had to give: the time, the labor, the cash, the art, the talent, the creativity, and the love.

Here is a glimpse at how many hands joined together to build our auction. These numbers are educated estimates. We have rounded up to be sure that every hand is counted in our success!

Hundreds of HANDS procured 400+ auction items – wrote letters, approached businesses, asked a friend.

Hundreds of HANDS donated handmade items – sewn, painted, knit, planted, baked, or built.

Hundreds of HANDS donated personal services – wills, massages, dinners, professional consultations.

Hundreds of HANDS created amazing class baskets – food, art, books, entertainment – stunning!

Dozens of HANDS simply wrote a check.

1052 HANDS worked on the class projects – students, teachers, and parents.

260 HANDS delivered auction items to the school and auction venue.

126 HANDS worked auction night – registering, banking, closing and presenting auctions.

28 HANDS created teacher and administration "special day" donations to our auction.

54 HANDS provided nourishment and beverages on auction night – catering, serving, and bartending.

64 HANDS set up the auction hall – from putting up tables to wiring for sound and lights.

40 HANDS mailed auction information and thank-yous to our families and donors.

22 HANDS built and printed signs for the auction.

42 HANDS kept the TOPS families informed through newsletters, email, and Go-Homes.

10 HANDS created our dessert dash.

14 HANDS sold raffle tickets.

12 HANDS managed the data entry and computer systems of this \$85K event.

4 HANDS built the gorgeous handmade table lanterns.

10 HANDS created the auction catalog.

16 HANDS created the gorgeous seventh grade student art used in the LOOKING BEYOND theme.

28 HANDS met monthly throughout the year to keep the auction on track and plan a great party.

8 HANDS manned the heart of TOPS, the TOPS office, creating a home base for the operation.

28 HANDS cleaned up the auction (next year – think 100 hands!).

THANK YOU to EVERY generous and hardworking hand who joined to build our successful TOPS auction!!

---

## 2003-04 TOPS CALENDAR

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

### JUNE

1 (T) ..... Grades K-2 and DHH to Camp Long

1 (T) ..... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.

1-4 (T-F)..... Grade 8 to Deception Pass

2-4 (W-F) ... Grade 5 to Camp Kirby

3 (Th) ..... CSJ meeting, 6-8 p.m., library

3-4 (Th-F) .. Grades 3 and 4 to Camp Arnold

7 (M) ..... PEAK meeting, 5 p.m., lunchroom

8(T) ..... Middle school orientation, 6-7 p.m.

9 (W) ..... Grades 5-8 to SAM

9 (W) ..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library

10 (Th) ..... Kindergarten puppet show, 7-8 p.m., lunchroom

11 (F) ..... Grade 2 to Golden Gardens

11 (F) ..... Eighth grade passage, 7 p.m.

14 (M) ..... Fifth grade passage

15 (T) ..... Grade 3 to Alki

16(W) ..... Elementary school field day

16 (W) ..... Middle School to Wild Waves all day

17 (Th) ..... Last student day, one hour early dismissal

18 (F) ..... Professional development day for teachers

# NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, librarian

*"I must say that I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go to the library and read a book."*  
~ Groucho Marx

Photo provided by Steve Haines



Lois Lowry autographs books for 6th graders.

What's that under the bed? No, it's not a monster. Could it be, is it your missing library book? Conversations like this are going on in many homes as the school year winds down. All of our library books must return to their "home base" so that they can be inventoried and readied for the next school year. Please be on the lookout for any books that have a barcode on the back, and TOPS at Seward library stamped on the inside cover. Although it may be easier to pay for a lost book I would much rather get the book back. Thanks.

Marianne, Rebecca, and their sixth graders made a short trip to View Ridge School May 7 to hear noted author Lois Lowry speak to several hundred students and adults about her experiences as a writer. She has written 31 books, including 2 Newberry medal winners. She was in town to talk about her new book, *Messenger*. It is the last book in a trilogy that started with *The Giver*. She didn't think she would ever write a sequel to the first book,

which is set in the future and uses memory as a theme, but she received so much mail asking her what happened to the main characters that she finally relented. The second book, *Gathering Blue*, also takes place in the future, and has only several references to events in the first novel. It isn't until her new book that we get to meet up with Jonas, the main character in *The Giver*. Her engaging, easy-to-read writing style make these books "must reads" for those who value the importance of human connections.

She answered many of the students' questions about writing, such as how long it takes to write a book: 6-9 months. She recounted several funny stories about where her ideas for writing come from. Essentially she tries to observe everything around her and to use those experiences as well as her memories to write from.

After her talk she retired to the library, where she autographed books students had pre-purchased. This event was sponsored by All for Kids Books.

I want to wish everyone an enjoyable summer filled with good reads. Don't forget the new downtown library opened in late May. The branch libraries are giving out free bus passes to use to get there, and the Seattle Public Library will be having summer reading programs for youths and young adults in all of their branch libraries. There's nothing better than whiling away a summer afternoon under a tree (or even in one) with a book.

Enjoy!

---

## MATH FOR FUN AT MATH OLYMPIAD

By Lianne Sheppard ♥

Did you ever wonder what two dozen fourth and fifth graders were doing after school at TOPS every Thursday? They went to Joe's room to do math ... for fun! Thanks to the personal interest and initiative of several UW math students, these TOPS students had the opportunity to discover another rich and wonderful side of math. They were challenged to solve problems in small groups and then again for homework. And learning went well beyond the classroom when the homework problems became a family affair.

Christopher Hanusa, Rosalie Tepper, Ivy Ng, and Dustin Foster all worked with the program. Chris and Rosalie are math graduate students. Chris is a PhD student and Rosalie is about to graduate with her master's degree. Dustin and Ivy are undergraduate math majors who want to become grade school teachers. Chris and Rosalie had participated in math competitions in grade school and wanted to share their enthusiasm for math with children. A fellow UW math student had created and run a similar program at Montlake Elementary and that inspired

these students to try their hand at TOPS. They wanted to empower children to be excited about math. They hoped TOPS students would become comfortable with oft-feared word problems and become more mathematically inclined. They hoped to turn on kids to math in the same way that they had been turned on by great teachers and positive experiences when they were this age.

These budding student teachers approached the class with passion and enthusiasm. Thanks to their work the TOPS students have become more skilled and comfortable with math problems, progressing from wanting assistance to even begin a problem to ably selecting methods to solve the majority of the problems on their own. Rosalie commented that the program atmosphere was more like a math club than a class. The relaxed atmosphere had its positive and negative sides in that students who weren't engaged were easily distracted while some of the students had boundless enthusiasm. Chris observed that even external appearances can be deceptive since "even if some [students] look disinterested, they can turn right around and surprise you with a remark that is spot on!" Rosalie

*Continued on page 11*

# I AM A MACROPHAGE: FIFTH GRADE CELL PORTRAITS

By Kathy Barker♥

Cells are beautiful but mysterious, the immune system complicated. It might be hard for anyone to sit and



listen to long lectures about the wonderful cells that protect our bodies from bacteria, viruses, and other invaders. But through an RFP called “Cell Portraits,” art and science were combined in order to introduce the fifth grade students to the cells of the immune system in a creative and hands-on way.

The project was done to accompany the Inquiry Science MicroWorlds module, in which cell structure and function were explored. Both Jill and Ilsa’s classes participated, with help from art teacher Luzita Roll [editor’s note: and from Kathy!].

The students first learned about the origin of the immune cells, and how each specialized cell works with the others to control infection and prevent cancer: they also learned about the



“overfunctioning” of the immune system, which can result in allergies. They looked at dozens of light and electron micrographs of immune cells to see what these

cells actually look like, and they asked dozens and dozens of questions to understand how the immune system works.

Each student picked one of the immune cells he or she had learned about. (The macrophage, a long-lived, multifunctional cell, was the favored cell for many, but others chose basophils, eosinophils, dendritic cells, neutrophils, B-cell, or T-cells.) Next, the students did a drawing/collage (and in one case, a sculpture), using mixed media, to portray the cell performing its task. As much as possible, the main function of the cell was highlighted by exaggeration of the part of the cell involved, or by representation of the cell function by a human activity. Battlefield imagery was used by many students, but no two portraits were alike.

Lastly, each student wrote up a brief autobiography, such as might appear in a museum, in a gallery of portraits, speaking for the cell he or she had chosen. The idea was to give each cell a personality, to ascribe very human motivations and reactions and feelings to the cells,



Photos provided by Kathy Barker

for—well, just for fun. We know cells don’t think, but by pretending they do, by putting themselves in the bloodstream and tissues of the human body, the students were able to isolate and define very complicated cells and cell functions.



Jill’s fifth grade auction

project also explored the interface between art and science. Under the guidance of parent Molly LaPatra♥, each student did a relief of an immune cell in copper, and these were all attached to form a beautiful hanging of 30 interpretations of cells.

Science is art, and art is science. The fifth grade students can do it all!



# HOW YOUR MONEY IS SPENT: MAKING (AND LEARNING) MUSIC AT TOPS

By Laurie Roth ♥

So you know TOPS has some kind of music program, or maybe you've seen third graders jumping stairs in the big scary middle school building at lunchtime, making their way to the music room. Or you might know there's something that starts in fourth grade, but you're not sure what. And you know that this program somehow it gets paid for by—well, what or who exactly? Site council, something called "FOT" (what's that, again?) or some mysterious grant? Well, the music program is not so mysterious and it's actually funded by you—the parents, staff, and community members who donate to our two big fundraisers at TOPS each year. The site council, acting as the nonprofit Friends of TOPS, disperses funds to a slew of programs that submit proposals each spring, and one of them is music.

The Music Program includes in-class singing for three grades, to different choirs, and three different levels of instrumental instruction. Almost half the students at TOPS are involved in the music program, and yet it's often hard for parents to navigate what options are available because choices change a bit with each grade level. This article hopes to explain how the music program works, how we are funded, and what we hope the program will look like next year.

## VOCAL MUSIC AT TOPS

The choral program was begun three years ago in an attempt to address the dwindling support for music on the part of the school district. For several years there had been no formal program for music for the lower elementary, and parents worked with Clara Scott to lead two choirs and conduct in-class singing in the kindergarten and first grade classrooms. Enter Sari Breznau, choir mistress extraordinaire.

The program was a terrific success, but the elementary choir was bulging at the seams, with upwards of 50-60 kids wanting to sing in the Hummingbirds elementary choir. This past year, in-class singing was extended to the second grade classrooms, and the Hummingbird choir was limited to students in grades 3 and 4, bringing the total to a more manageable 30+ students.

We hope to continue this program next year, with Sari visiting the K-2 classrooms one day a week for 25 minutes of singing. Third and fourth graders can sign up in the fall to join the Hummingbirds. Membership in the Hummingbirds choir is voluntary, and as such students and their parents are asked to sign a contract to

signal their commitment to choir and to follow the rules and attend rehearsals. One of the important things for the younger kids to understand is that choir meets one day a week during lunchtime. Students are given extra time to eat their lunch, but must do it (quickly) after choir rehearsal. The Hummingbirds are always a high energy group and have a lot of fun both in rehearsals and at performances. This year they've been learning part singing (two-part and descant), and their musicianship is truly impressive for such young singers. (Not to mention those actors in "Froggy Went a' Courtin'!")

## MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOIR

Fifth graders can move on to the Inspire Choir, which is open to students in grades 5-8. This choir also meets at lunchtime and works at learning even more challenging music, building on the skills they've learned in the elementary program. Each year in addition to the two concerts and the MLK assembly we try to find at least one (and hopefully, two) venues for the choir to perform off-site in the wider community. This past winter, both choirs got a great opportunity to perform their holiday songs at the New School. And as we go to press the Inspire Choir has been invited to perform in late May at the Hutch School: the school operated by the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center for children with cancer and their siblings. The Inspire Choir will perform and then conduct a sing-along with the patients, staff, and families. We expect the inspiration (and the music) will flow both ways at this concert.

In addition to her weekly work in the classroom and with the choirs, Sari helps out with class parties and special kindergarten concerts at Louisa's throughout the year. Sari's work was originally funded by the same grant that supplemented the instrumental program, but last year was funded wholly by the site council (Friends of TOPS).

## INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PROGRAM

When students reach grade 4, traditionally they were offered the opportunity to learn to play an instrument with district-provided instructors who came to the school to teach fourth and fifth grade. For the last few years, the school district has only been able to fund an instructor for one half-day a week, which would severely limit the number of students who can participate. At TOPS, we used site council (parent) funding and an outside grant to help pay for an additional (contract) teacher last year, which meant that beginning fourth graders were taught by Charles Holmes, the district teacher, but fifth through eighth graders were taught by Jakob Breitbach (and then Paul Gillespie, after Jakob left to pursue a recording contract).

Next year we unfortunately can no longer use the outside grant for funding music programs at TOPS, which is why we must ask for all TOPS music funding to come from the site council—from the money we raise in the No-Bake and the spring auction. If that funding comes through,

## WANT TO HELP?

The TOPS music program is looking for parents willing to help the music committee with decisions and direction. The music committee is responsible for recruiting the contract teachers and guiding the music program's several different branches. We evaluate the program and write the RFP request for funding from the site council each year. We are actively looking for new members—so if you love music and care about music education for all students, please join us. We need you. (And our meetings are fun — over coffee at Louisa's.)

To join the committee, or simply to offer suggestions or ask questions about the music program, please call Laurie Roth (548-0582) or email ([boroth@comcast.net](mailto:boroth@comcast.net)).

fourth graders will still take instrumental instruction with a district-provided teacher, and fifth graders will continue with Paul Gillespie. In fourth and fifth grade, this instruction comes as pull-outs during the school day.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL MEETS MORNINGS**

Middle school band and string players meet before school, with the band meeting three mornings a week at 8 a.m. and the string ensemble meeting one morning a week at 8 a.m. The older kids meet in the morning to avoid after-school conflicts and because our prior grant funding required that they meet before or after school. We are very fortunate that Paul Gillespie, our instrumental instructor, has agreed to teach fifth grade instrumental music as well as middle school band and orchestra next year. Paul is a terrific instructor who also teaches at Brighton School in Edmonds, and having continuity from one year to the next should be a boon for our students as they progress from elementary to middle school music.

In the past few years, middle school band focused on improvisational skills in concert, with each player learning to stand up and solo while the band plays backup—an important (although scary) thing for students to experience before they graduate to high school music ensembles. And the string ensemble brought down the house at the concert with their very impressive work with visiting artist Scott Teski this past spring [see article this page].

We're looking forward to a great year of music next year with terrific instructors and our enthusiastic and talented students. The important thing to remember is that music education is available for every child—and it is possible

## **2004 TOPS MIDDLE SCHOOL STRINGS**

*By Noah Cohn, Grade 8*

This year's middle school strings has been much different than last year's. There have been many new faces (I can't really remember who because it's too early in the morning), a new teacher, and best of all, new music.

Scott Teski came in the middle of the year. He is a junior at the University of Washington and plays the bass in the orchestra. Scott has helped us through many problems with our music and always has a good tip about how to play louder.

Special recognition goes out to Keith Cohon♥. Keith is a TOPS parent who plays the viola. He may always be five or ten minutes late, but once he is playing with us, we can hear the difference. I don't know how he does it but he knows everything about the violin and viola. He's had a lot of experience playing in orchestras. Special recognition also goes out to his wife, Yumi Hiraga♥, our only cellist.

As we all know, TOPS isn't the biggest school in the Seattle school district. What I mean by this is that we don't have a very big selection of string players. I admit, we aren't the best string orchestra but that's not my point. My point is, it's a great experience to be playing in a string orchestra (at quarter to eight in the morning).

Since I am graduating and going to GHS next year, I am wondering about the future of middle school strings. If any fourth or fifth graders want to be in middle school strings, they should start practicing now. They should also start getting up at seven o'clock and playing their instruments as loud as they possibly can.

for your child to learn music even if he or she hasn't participated before, has never taken private lessons, or doesn't have access to an instrument. While it's best for the teachers (and students) if we all start together in the fall,

it's never too late if your child is truly motivated. The TOPS web site has contact information for our music teachers; please feel free to contact them with any questions you have about your child's interest or skill level.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND**

*By Abby Chin-Martin, Grade 6*

Every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday about eight middle schoolers scramble over to TOPS at 8 a.m. They sit down and start on the B-flat scale up to the "ninth degree," says Paul, our band teacher. Paul is our savior: about four months ago our band teacher, Jakob, left to go play in another band. Our band hadn't gotten together for about three months. That's when Paul came, and now we are all together and having a great time at band. Our only problem is the number of people in our band: we need more! Our band isn't really a band, it's more of a "group." Having a small band doesn't affect how we sound, though. That's why we want you to come join us! Here's a list of happy people playing in our band. It says what they play and what grade they're in:

Abby, grade 6, flute	Alex, grade 7, clarinet	Eli, grade 8, guitar
Eliana, grade 4, flute	Nolan, grade 8, trumpet	Paul, teacher
Allie, grade 6, clarinet	Joe, grade 7, trumpet	

Hope you can join us!

# FIRST DAY: A MIDDLE SCHOOL NIGHTMARE

Written and directed by Todd Jefferson Moore and Max Moore



Photos provided by Vance Martin and Cindy Suzumura

# SCIENCE BY KAYAK: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN TOPS, THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, AND ZYMOGENETICS

By Alex Price, grade 8, and Mary Harty♥

Each spring since 2001 the TOPS sixth graders have participated in "Science by Kayak." This project, funded by Zymogenetics and UW Chemistry (thanks Zymo and UW!), teams college students with TOPS sixth graders to study the biology and chemistry of aquatic ecosystems within the context of Native American culture. The college students spend four Tuesdays teaching the topics of water quality analysis and ethnobotany. The first session involves teaching the students about acidity. The students test the acidity of various household products by using



colorful indicators. They are also taught about the effects acidity has on organisms living in aquatic ecosystems. The second experiment teaches students about the importance of dissolved oxygen in water. The dissolved oxygen test involves performing a series of chemical steps utilizing the technique of titration. The third laboratory activity

exposes students to the various ways in which Native Americans have utilized plants for medicines, foods, and materials. For example, students learn that the precursor of aspirin can be extracted from willow bark. They learn that both Douglas fir and hemlock needle tips may be steeped in hot water to make a refreshing tea which is high in vitamin C. They learn that red cedar, called the tree of life by the Kwakwaka'wakw, is used for making canoes, houses, clothing, and art, and is still held with the highest respect by all Northwest Coast native people for its healing and spiritual powers. The students are then shown how to extract natural dyes from plants such as Oregon grape, blueberries, red alder, and hemlock, and how adding metal ions or varying the acidity affects the color of the dye. The culminating event in the curriculum is an all-day kayaking field trip to Washington Park Arboretum, where students apply their newfound knowledge to identify native plants and birds and determine the water quality of Lake Washington. This field trip always generates lots of enthusiasm for learning science!



Photos provided by Mary Harty

---

*Math for Fun at Math Olympiad continued from page 6*

commented, "I was impressed with the maturity of the students who weren't afraid to ask a classmate for help and the students who did a great job explaining their solutions."

Chris said that the most rewarding aspect of his experience at TOPS is that "many kids have developed confidence about problem-solving and have showed the enthusiasm about math that I had hoped. Every week the kids had another homework problem. Most needed at least a little guidance from parents, and that was also great. To me, math is a collaborative effort, especially more advanced math. I know that this is a part of the learning atmosphere at TOPS, and I am happy that we were able to work with the culture and bring in more fun math." Rosalie added that she enjoyed seeing "the students really getting into the problems and coming up with ideas on how to approach them. On some problems we'd have several students come up with different methods for solving them. Also, we got to show them

some interesting areas of math that students don't often see at that age—a few of our weekly homework problems were even based on ideas from our undergraduate and graduate math courses!" When I asked what surprised them, one of Chris's replies was, "It's hard to come up with good homework problems!" Rosalie added, "I had hoped students would enjoy the program, but I was surprised by just how eager many of them were."

The Math Olympiad teachers appreciated the support, understanding, and dialog with the parents. They felt welcomed and comfortable in the school and are particularly grateful to Joe for letting them use his room. While Chris and Rosalie won't be back next year, Ivy, Dustin, and maybe some other UW students are interested in renewing the program. With the same level of support from the TOPS community, our school can continue to be a great place for kids and families to discover the joy of math.

# IS MATH AN “AFTER-SCHOOL” SUBJECT?

By Sarah Meeker♥ and Amy Hagopian♥

Jack Lee wrote a compelling and convincing article in the last issue of TOPS News promoting an after-school math enrichment program for the middle school. Indeed, he makes it hard for caring parents of traditionally high-achieving students to question the benefit of charging ahead. Nonetheless, we think there is a down side that needs to be debated.

We all want the best for our kids, but these special, selective programs can lay a trap. What benefits some kids—typically those who least need it—can leave others behind. What we are doing is creating alternate routes to math success for a few, rather than addressing shortcomings of the current curriculum for all. The after-school program allows the regular program to evade scrutiny by more involved parents whose children’s needs get met by the special add-on program.

Jack Lee points out that the TOPS mission is to “help all students to achieve a high level of academic excellence.” We argue that our mission statement did not intend after-school enrichment programs in the basic academic subjects be established to cater to the school’s top students. While this “enrichment” approach may not meet the traditional definition of tracking, it dangerously skirts the edges. All TOPS teachers should be able to individualize their teaching to challenge each student. We should be striving to create a school where a program like this is not necessary.

We know that the kids who participated in the program this year strongly benefited from it. One of us (Sarah) has an eighth grade daughter who did the seventh grade independent modules last year and then joined the after-school program this year. Her math confidence was admittedly turbocharged by the program. The other of us (Amy) has a seventh grade daughter who finished the modules as well. Our two sons, both TOPS graduates who are now juniors at Garfield, also did the independent math modules when they were here. The modules, however, didn’t begin to measure up to the benefits that the individualized instruction of the math enrichment program offered. Our public school, which preaches an anti-bias curriculum, should be spending our resources and energy on assuring each and every student gets the best instruction, even those who appear to be marginal in math or have parents who don’t push them.

The failure to incorporate advanced math instruction into our daily math program creates disproportionate achievement for students who can’t avail themselves of enrichment. This program costs money. Yes, scholarships will be available, but when is the last time any of us struggling to pay another “enrichment” bill asked for a hand-out? A lower middle class family isn’t poor, but still can’t easily spare \$300, and might very well opt out rather than ask for help.

The current program is held after school, which puts up a barrier for a child who has to use the after-school bus to get home (because he or she lives too far away to get a ride home at 5 or has to get home to babysit a younger sibling).

Further, we may be among the now admittedly minority at this school who believe this program violates the “alternative school” origin and mission of TOPS. This school once attracted families who believed that perhaps even more important than academics was the personal, social, and emotional growth of our kids. We believed our school could advance social justice by building the skills of conflict resolution, social and personal responsibility, equity, and self-esteem. We may have become victims of our own success: Succeeding in our original mission had the byproduct of creating academic success, which in turn has attracted families that are primarily interested in that academic achievement byproduct, even if we sacrifice our fundamental social justice concerns.

Social development requires holding open time for kids to do non-academic things. Music, sports, community service and family time are sacrificed when we pile on the homework and the after-school “enrichment” programs in the basic academic subjects.

We have some suggestions for developing a more inclusive and balanced approach to providing math excellence at TOPS. First, urge the current math staff to become more engaged in hands-on teaching and confidence-building. The key ingredient to math success, given normal intellect, is confidence. We understand other middle school math programs may move much more quickly and efficiently through the curriculum than we do. Second, if such an extra program is to be provided, make it free, during school hours and structured as a “math club,” where participating kids are challenged at their own pace, help each other, and work on group problem-solving.

If the after-school program is implemented anyway, barriers to entry should be minimized. Money, aptitude, parental influence, student motivation, learning styles, and scheduling are all barriers. We hope each and every seventh and eighth grader at TOPS can get the wonderful boost that our eighth grader is getting this year. We thank Jack Lee and Mark Ellis for their thoughtful interest in advancing math instruction at TOPS.

## A RESPONSE FROM JACK LEE♥

Many thanks to Amy and Sarah for their very thoughtful article, and for opening a vitally important discussion. I hope it will stimulate a vigorous conversation in our community about the goals of TOPS, and about how the math curriculum and the various enrichment programs contribute to those goals.

I’m sure we’ll have plenty of opportunities next year

*Continued on page 13*

# RUGBY

By Claire Simon and Quin McKinley, Grade 8

Having never experienced the game of rugby before, we thought the rules seemed awkward. Learning rugby was one of the many opportunities exposed to us in PE this year.

The rules of the game are similar to football: you can't pass forward, and you try to carry the ball over the end line. But a few things were different: you could kick the ball, and it's a much rougher game. In PE we were only allowed to play "touch" rugby, but we liked the action



Rugby was lots of fun and a great new experience. Although it feels strange at first, we were really involved in the game, and everyone had a good time. TOPS' two new rugby balls are put to good use in PE and at recess. Come play with us sometime at PE!



of the game; it's a lot faster than football and involves tactical thinking.

It was unfortunate that the rugby player who was a special guest in PE was not available to come teach the seventh and eighth grade girls, but Don was a great leader and motivator. He informed us about rugby opportunities in the Seattle area that we could get involved with and how it's a growing sport in many colleges. You can find rugby opportunities at [www.seattle.rugby.org](http://www.seattle.rugby.org).



*Is Math an "After-school" Subject? continued from page 12*

to carry on the conversation. But since this is the last newsletter of the year, I'd like to offer a couple of comments now. First of all, academic excellence needn't be seen as conflicting with the other goals of TOPS, nor simply as a "byproduct" of them. My family chose TOPS because we were so impressed by the school's commitment to a combination of personal, social, and emotional growth, social justice, and academic excellence. There are other schools we could have chosen that focus on one or another of these components to the exclusion of the rest, but what makes TOPS uniquely attractive is the way it blends them, recognizing that each enhances the others. Don't most TOPS families feel similarly?

Second, students who are successful at math and inspired by it, far from being those who "least need" math enrichment, are exactly the ones for whom it's most vitally important to their personal growth—just as a gifted singer needs an inspiring choir director, and a gifted athlete needs expert coaching. This is not to say that enrichment opportunities should be restricted to the gifted, but just to point out that helping students to enhance their gifts is one of the things that child-centered alternative education is all about. When all children are enabled and encouraged to develop their talents as fully as possible, everyone is enriched in unanticipated ways.

# VOLLEYBALL TEAM ENDS SEASON ON A WINNING NOTE

By Carolyn Papineau, volleyball coach

On Saturday, May 15, the TOPS volleyball team ended its season by defeating African American Academy, 25-7, 17-25, 15-13, in a play-off game at Ballard High School. Led by the strong serving of eighth graders Molly Moore and Andrea Carey, the TOPS team finished the season with a decisive win. In the second game our vastly improved sixth grade team nearly put together a comeback for a win, falling just short. This was a season marked by incredible skill improvement and teamwork. The highlight for me, as a coach, was the last regular season game of the year, when the TOPS team came back to win the first game of a match against Hamilton after being down 1-9 early on. Hamilton is the only team that defeated the top-ranked team in our division, Summit. TOPS lost the match 1-2 in a deciding third game, but the heart and desire the players showed throughout those three games is something we've been building towards since I joined the program at TOPS four years ago.



This year 18 players participated in the spring volleyball program, a number unheard of in years past. The 2005 season will be the first official season when enough players participate to ensure a JV schedule, allowing everyone more playing time! The group of sixth graders that joined the program this season was a special one. There were three younger siblings of players I've coached in past years. It was the largest and overall most talented group of sixth graders to have joined the TOPS team.

Volleyball doesn't stop with the end of our season! I encourage all current and new players to take advantage of the after-school volleyball on Tuesdays that Don Zemke helps make possible. Don and I will also be holding Friday evening volleyball at the TOPS gym; it is a great chance for those heading off to high school with intentions to try out for a team to sharpen their skills, and for new players to get a jump on skills they need for next year. There are dozens of camps in the Northwest area during the summer. I highly encourage anyone interested in playing next year to take advantage of these opportunities. You can always contact me for information at 860-8441. I hope to see an even LARGER group of sixth graders next season join our fun and increasingly successful program! Thank you to Don Zemke, who supported us all year long, and all the parents of the athletes. Good luck to all the eighth graders...I'll miss you. GO TOPS VOLLEYBALL!!

---

## TRACK

By Catherine Means and Miriam Schwartz, Grade 8

Every Thursday around 1:15, you can see a large group of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders leaving the school campus to compete in track meets involving middle schools from around the city. This group of kids practice two days a week for their assigned events. With coaches Eric Herndon and Tony Payne, these kids work very hard and their efforts are seen through their exceptional showing at these meets.

On May 13, TOPS middle school participated in the city track meet. Several 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places were obtained. We are fortunate to have a talented group of runners to represent us.

Eric and Tony were great coaches. They allowed the team members to have a lot of fun while still keeping them on track. This memorable track season was a great way to finish off the school year.



# PE AT TOPS IS THE BEST

By Lena Mentyka, Grade 4

[This article was *not* solicited by our PE teachers. -ed.]

The best thing about TOPS is the PE teachers, Don and Eric. They're fun and they don't let you get too rowdy.



Most PE teachers come in and say "1-2-3, 1-2-3," then go home. Don and Eric spend time with you and if you want Don to throw a football or Frisbee or spot you in gymnastics, he'll do it and then give you some tips on how to do better. Eric will

play basketball and football and help you with your technique. Eric also makes jokes to make it more enjoyable.

PE is really beneficial to your body. It makes you strong and gets your heart going.

It's really good to do sports outside of school, too. I do swimming three times a week after school. It wakes me up and gives me energy.

One of my favorite things this year in PE was doing flexed arm hangs, shuttle runs, and sit-ups for time. Thank you Don and Eric!



---

## MIDDLE SCHOOL ULTIMATE FRISBEE 2004

By Eric Zemke, PE teacher

Are you interested in playing a fast-paced, exciting, co-ed team sport when school starts? If so, consider playing on the TOPS middle school Ultimate Frisbee team.

Playing Ultimate Frisbee is not only a lot of fun but also an excellent way to get in shape for winter sports. The skills necessary to be successful can be mastered rather quickly simply by throwing a 175-gram disc (available at Fred Meyer or Big 5 for about \$10.00) around with your friends and family this summer. Ultimate Frisbee discs also travel well in the top of your suitcase when you're traveling!

In order to participate you need a current Seattle school district sports physical form on file. Summer is a good time to get that out of the way for any sport that you want to participate in over the course of the school year.

Because the TOPS middle school girls soccer team plays in the fall, we really need girls to participate. So, if you're not planning on playing TOPS soccer, give Ultimate a try.

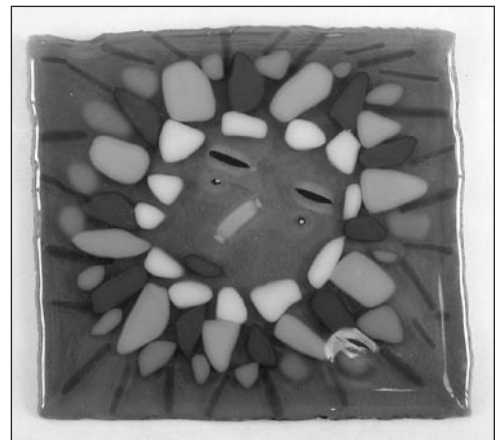
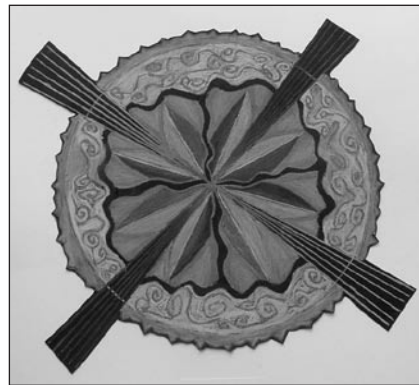
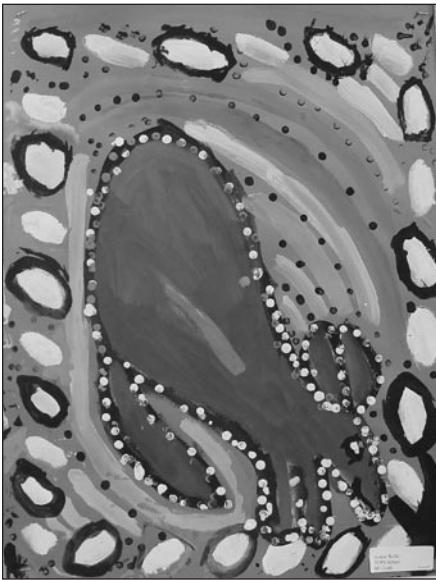


SEATTLE  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS

Seattle School District No. 1  
PO Box 34165  
Seattle, WA 98124-1165

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Seattle, WA  
Permit No. 3904

# TOPS ART FEST 2004



*THANKS TO G & H PRINTING, 2370 EASTLAKE E. 329-9888*

The Seattle School District is an Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action employer and employs individuals without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, handicap/disability or sexual orientation. The Seattle School District provides Equal Education Opportunity without regard to race, creed, color, nation origin, sex, mental states, handicap/disability or sexual orientation. The District complies with all applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to Titles VI, VII, and IX of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), RCW 49.60, Law Against Discrimination, and RCW 28A.640 "Sex Equality," and covers, but is not limited to, all District programs, courses activities (including) extracurricular activities, service, access to facilities, etc. The Title IX officer and 504 coordinator with overall responsibility for monitoring and ensuring compliance is: Rick Takeuchi, Manager, Affirmative Action Office, W/MBE, 815 4th Ave. N., Seattle 98109. Phone (206)298-7175. 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.