

TOPS NEWS

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear TOPS Families,

I hope that you have had a blast this summer taking in all of the wonderful things that Seattle has to offer. The weather has been great and I am sure that time spent with your families and friends traveling across the country, providing shuttle services to and from day camps, sleepovers, and sports team activities have been very enjoyable and rewarding for you and your children. I look forward to welcoming them back on September 3 and hearing about all of the fun they had during summer vacation.

Chris Drape, our new assistant principal, and I have been working hard preparing for the new school year. I am looking forward to our mission and vision continuing to guide our work of creating a learning environment in which every student at TOPS will be successful, both academically and socially. Writing and math will remain our academic focuses, and we will continue to share ways that you can support these at home.

Last school year was very challenging for all of us in the TOPS community. I want to assure every family at TOPS that you are a valued member of the TOPS community, and what has made us a school that is desired by many is our embracement and acceptance of *every* family that walks through the door of TOPS.

We *cannot* allow what happened last year to shake our confidence in knowing who we are. Joan and Joby start

our new kindergartners and their parents with sharing family histories, teaching our students that all families don't look the same but they are all families! Through the sharing, kindergartners learn that families are different and diverse.

The staff continues to reinforce that we are a reflection of our Seattle community. Parents continue to support that thinking by providing opportunities for *all* students at TOPS to participate in every activity by providing the scholarship fund.

The reason I chose to come to TOPS was because it represented all the things that I believed in: strong academic program, dedicated staff, parent support, and a school that embraced and accepted all families. I continue to be proud of this school community knowing that I made a good choice.

In spite of our challenging year, our staff continued to keep the focus on our students' achievement, and many wonderful things occurred at TOPS—some for the first time.

Karen Hart took a student, Winston LaCoste, to Washington, D.C., for National History Day.

Luzita Roll won an art scholarship to attend the School of Art Institute in Chicago.

Lori Eickelberg was invited to score WASL papers in Olympia.

Marianne led a tour of parents and students from her French class to Europe.

Karen Hart taught Photography Club, which produced our first-ever hardcover, all-school yearbook.

Our choir sang at the opening of the new library.

Seventh and eighth graders hosted the CEO of Merck Pharmaceutical Company as guest speaker and TOPS was awarded



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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.



The Hummingbirds choir members

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**SEATTLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

WELCOME CHRIS DRAPE, NEW TOPS VICE PRINCIPAL

Between retreats, meetings, school year planning, and a weekend in there somewhere, Chris managed to send responses to some questions I sent via email. —*Teresa Nemeth*

ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the first newsletter of the 2003-04 school year. Teresa Nemeth and Dan Hurley work on the editorial side, Cindy Suzumura handles photos, design, and layout, and Toby Harris gets it mailed off to you. (I think she could use a helper: any volunteers?) Don Zemke provides our sports photos.

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

Submit your contributions to the newsletter box in the main office or, preferably, by Word file or email to Teresa at zongora2@hotmail.com. Please send photos to csuzumura@mindspring.com.

Deadlines for 2003-04 are Wednesdays September 17, October 15, November 12, December 10, January 14, February 11, March 17, April 14, and May 12. If newsletters are to arrive the first week of the month, there can be no exceptions to these deadlines.

Tell us about your past experience—how did you get here?

I have been a high school history teacher for 10 years, first at Lindbergh High School in Renton, and most recently at Rainier Beach High School. I moved to Rainier Beach because I care passionately for the population of students Rainier Beach serves, and that community in general. I have lived in Rainier Valley for 15 years, and have worked directly in efforts to empower the individuals and families who live here. Throughout these years my wife and I have been deeply involved with Emerald City Outreach Ministries (ECOM) – a grassroots community development organization focusing on the needs of African American families in Rainier Valley; and Emerald City Bible Fellowship (ECBF) – a multiracial church fellowship that has grown out of ECOM. For me teaching at Rainier Beach was an essential component of my role in the community. The decision to leave Rainier Beach was a very difficult one, but the struggles that Rainier Beach (and schools like it) faces were what motivated me to make the transition into school leadership.

Last year I had the opportunity to work at Nathan Hale as the Ninth Grade Dean of Students, and to learn with an incredible staff and school leader, Eric Benson. I also had the wonderful chance to be at TOPS for five weeks to help out while Mrs. Scott was out. (Interestingly, I have been following Mrs. Scott along – she also was at both Lindbergh and Nathan Hale, but we were never there at the same time.)

What do you like best about working in education? What hopes do you have for TOPS in particular, and what

A Message from the Principal continued from page 1

a \$2,000 donation from Merck.

TOPS had participation from the middle school in girls' and boys' soccer teams, basketball teams, track, and volleyball. Elementary students participated in after-school sports including Double Dutch.

Chess Club saw participation from all grades, winning many trophies.

The middle school had a Math Olympiad.

Elementary and eighth grades held a speech tournament.

Luzita organized the Art Walk.

There were the fabulous elementary and middle school plays.

We enjoyed the Taste of TOPS, organized by Stacie Bonnelle.

Instrumental music and the choir held their spring concert.

would you like to accomplish here?

It is the relationships that develop (among students, staff, and families) that I value most in education, and those relationships that I think are most critical in helping students excel. I am excited about becoming a working member of the TOPS community. I know a number of families already, and having been here last year for a few weeks I was able to meet more families and get to know the staff. Though my learning curve will still be steep, the fact that I know people already will allow for a smoother transition. TOPS is an incredibly unique place – a community that is deeply committed to the hard work of raising thoughtful children in a complex society. I hope that I can contribute to the continuing efforts to deepen the relationships and community of TOPS – to facilitate the communication and work that goes into developing such a learning community.

What else would you like to tell us about your life outside of work?

I have a wonderful family that keeps me sane and keeps me in line. I have been married for 14 years to Chrissie (yes, isn't that cute... Chris and Chrissie), and we have two boys, Andy (8) and Matt (5). When we aren't wrestling we swim, hike, and play soccer (I coach Andy's soccer team with the Mt. Baker/Lakewood Soccer Club). Andy and Matt go to Hawthorne Elementary School.

I have a great deal to learn as we move into the school year, but I am very excited and inspired by the chance to become a part of the TOPS community!

There were many other events, too numerous to mention!

We have a music committee at TOPS that is working hard to provide enrichment programs for TOPS students. Music includes choir, instrumental music, and in-class singing. We are always looking for new ideas and help with the music program! There will be information in the "Start of School Packet" for volunteer opportunities.

The "No Bake" Bake Sale Carnival – Saturday, October 4, promises to be a celebration of getting all families involved in the "No Bake" Sale and having fun, too! Save the date! The committee has been working very hard to make this a success.

Thank you so much for your commitment to TOPS, and welcome back!

Cheers!

Clara

A MESSAGE FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

By Stacie Bonnelle

I recently heard that "time is the new money." Well, if that's so, then TOPS is very wealthy, thanks to the many, many hours parent and community volunteers contributed during the 2002-03 school year. The TOPS Site Council encourages families to contribute 15-30 hours of their time during the year. This year I'll show just how rich we are with a bi-monthly report of TOPS volunteer hours.

The Site Council is once again able to fund my position as volunteer coordinator this school year--a result of your generosity during the "No Bake" Sale and spring auction. In my position, I wear a few hats: chair of the communications committee, recruiter of community volunteers/tutors, project manager for the enrichment program TOPICS, and chair of the Taste of TOPS.

The TOPS community could not function as well as it does without the hard work and countless hours contributed by Ellen Markman, editor of the TOPS family directory, Teresa Nemeth, editor of the TOPS newsletter (and this year to be joined by Dan Hurley), and Jack Lee, TOPS webmaster. I'd also like to thank all the parents who served on the communications committee as room reps--you are truly the lifeline of this community. I would like to encourage everyone to become involved in building better communication by volunteering as a room rep or contributing to the newsletter.

Last year, we had great community volunteers and happily, many are returning. This year, there are two volunteer

orientations in October for families new to TOPS and for new community volunteers. Returning TOPS families are encouraged to come and share their volunteering experiences. Job descriptions and WA State background check forms will be available in the main office, on the TOPS website, and in the start-of-school packets.

Third grade teacher Tracy Seefeld has agreed to manage TOPICS. The Site Council has set aside funds to offset the cost of supplies. Volunteers are encouraged to create engaging and fun projects to teach. TOPICS begins in October. The schedule will be in the office, and will be printed in the Wednesday Go-Homes and October newsletter. Tracy will begin scheduling in mid-September.

The Taste of TOPS is a multicultural potluck sponsored by the Coalition for Social Justice. This event is an example of all that is great about this school and what we can all strive for outside of its walls. This year the event will take place in March. If you have any ideas for themes or entertainment, stop by the office on Wednesdays or email me at TOPSVLNTR@aol.com.

Working at TOPS has been such an enriching experience. I've gotten to know so much more about myself through the Coalition for Social Justice Race Study Circles, I've been really listened to in Site Council, I've been challenged during the administration transition, and I've felt more connected through the Taste of TOPS. For this, I'd like to say thank you.

COMMUNICATION AT TOPS

By Lianne Sheppard

Ever wonder how to keep in touch with the myriad issues, kudos, and concerns in the TOPS community? There are multiple avenues, each with a unique focus and target. This article aims to give you a brief digest of some of the more "official" modes of communication at TOPS, at least from my perspective.

All **classroom teachers** have their own style of communication. They are very busy people, but with the best interest of their students at heart, they are often readily available to parents. The trick is to find a time and mode of communication that works well for you and the teacher. Some teachers are very responsive by email, others prefer other modes, such as talking in their classroom at certain times of the day. Appointments are best for some and drop-in contacts are better for others. Learning the most effective style of communication for each of your children's classroom teachers can be a real benefit to your working relationship. Regardless, a constant for classroom communication across the school is the **room reps**. Among their many responsibilities, these tireless parent volunteers convey

messages from teachers, the volunteer coordinator, and the principal, as well as announcing class social events. They are members of the communications committee, led by our volunteer coordinator, Stacie Bonnelle (TOPSVIntr@aol.com). The room reps manage the class (or grade, for middle school) phone tree and email lists. They are responsible for communicating many of the school's time-sensitive messages. Often these come first by email, so if you have an email address, be sure your room reps have it. (Note: this is as simple as being sure it is included on the TOPS directory form you will find in the beginning-of-year packet for each child.)

The **TOPS web site** (www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops) is a great resource for our entire community. It has gorgeous artwork by TOPS students, pages for each classroom, news, contact information, a calendar, Site Council information and archives, links, and much, much more. (See related article this issue.) Any item of interest is quickly posted by our volunteer webmaster extraordinaire Jack Lee (email lee@oz.net). If you can't find something on the web site

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TOPS STAFF, 2003-04

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Principal Clara Scott
 Assistant Principal Chris Drape
 Counselor Jennifer Murray
 Family Support Worker Alesia Jessie

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Administrative Secretary Helen Hundley
 Office Assistant/Attendance . . Linda Downing
 Office Assistant/ASB Susan Larson
 Office Assistant/Budget Joann Sparks
 Custodial Engineer Saream Dy
 Night Custodians Joe Rivers
 Lunchroom Manager Ernese McQueen
 Nurse Ann Uomoto
 Psychologist to be announced
 Resource room Patty Maffit
 Resource room John Daugherty
 Volunteer Coordinator Stacie Bonnelle
 Communication (CDS) Ann Lichtenstadter

TEACHING STAFF

Kindergarten Joan O'Connor,
 Joby Moore
 Kindergarten PEAK TBA

1st grade TBA (first-semester sub for
 Margie Butcher), Karen Wong
 2nd grade Carla Fetterley, Willie Jones
 3rd grade Tracy Seefeld, Katie Waters
 4th grade Mary Chao, Joe Drummond
 5th grade David McMillan, Ilsa Govan
 6th grade (SS, LA) Marianne Trangen
 6th grade (Math, Science) Rebecca Moslo (long-term
 sub for Lana Fuller)
 6th/7th/8th Art Luzita Roll
 7th/8th Science Dan Bloedel
 7th/8th Math Mark Ellis
 7th/8th Language Arts Lori Eickelberg
 7th/8th Social Studies Karen Hart
 Instructional Assistants
 Spanish Manuel Bermudez
 Vietnamese Bich Vu
 Special ed William Smith, Beth Engel
 ESL Nicole Titus
 PE Don Zemke, Eric Herndon
 Elementary Artist-in Residence . . Cynthia Livak
 Instructional Aide Katy Rohr-Smith
 Librarian Steve Haines
 Learning Assistant Program . . . Mike Anderson
 Hearing Impaired Program . . . Meredith McGahan

2003-04 TOPS CALENDAR

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

SEPTEMBER

3 (W) First student day
 10 (W) First TOPS Site Council meeting
 5-7 p.m.
 18 (Th) Eighth grade potluck, 6 p.m., cafeteria
 24 (W) 2-hour early dismissal

OCTOBER

1 (W) 2-hour early dismissal
 4 (Sa) "No Bake" kick-off carnival
 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. 12-4pm
 7 (T) Grades 4-8 to SCT,
Confessions of Charlotte Doyle
 10 (F) Professional development day--
 no school
 18 (Sa) NW Bookfest: TOPS students on the
 KidSpeak Stage
 23 (Th) State of the School address,
 community forum, 7 p.m.
 26 (Su) Daylight Savings Time ends
 29 (W) 2-hour early dismissal
 30 (Th) Grades K-2 to SCT, *The*
Gingerbread Man
 31 (F) End of first quarter

NOVEMBER

4 (T) Election Day
 11 (T) Veterans Day--no school
 17-25 (M-T) Elementary parent-teacher
 conferences
 27-28 (Th-F) Thanksgiving Break

DECEMBER

16 (T) Grades 1 and 2 to SCT, *The Lion,*
the Witch, and the Wardrobe
 18 (Th) Young Authors Conference
 22 (M) Winter Break begins

JANUARY

5 (M) School resumes
 15 (Th) Martin Luther King Jr. assembly,
 2:30
 19 (M) Martin Luther King Jr. Day--
 no school
 23 (F) End of semester
 26 (M) Day between semesters--no school

FEBRUARY

5 (Th) Grades 3-5 to SCT, *Tibet Through*
a Red Box
 16-20 (M-F) Mid-Winter Break--no school
 26 (W) 2 hour early dismissal

MARCH

3 (W) 2-hour early dismissal
 4 (Th) Taste of TOPS
 16 (T) Grades 5-8 to SCT, *Shape of a Girl*
 19 (F) Professional development day--
 no school
 31 (W) Poetry festival

APRIL

1 (Th) Poetry festival
 2 (F) End of third quarter
 4 (Su) Daylight Savings Time begins
 5-9 (M-F) Spring Break
 15 (Th) Grades K-4 to SCT,
Mrs. Piggle Wiggle
 24 (Sa) TOPS auction

MAY

19 (W) 2-hour early dismissal
 28 (F) Art Walk, elementary play
 31 (M) Memorial Day--no school

JUNE

11 (F) Eighth grade passage
 15 (T) Last student day, fifth grade passage

SITE COUNCIL MEMBERS REPRESENTING STAFF

TOPS PrincipalClara Scottcscott@seattleschools.org
TOPS Assistant PrincipalChris Drapecjdraper@seattleschools.org
Site Council Faculty Rep: Kids CoVanessa Huntertops@kidscompany.org
Site Council Faculty Rep: K-2Willie Joneswijones@seattleschools.org
Site Council Faculty Rep: K-2Carla Fetterleycafetterley@seattleschools.org
Site Council Faculty Rep: 3-5Mary Chaomtchao@seattleschools.org
Site Council Faculty Rep: 3-5Ilsa Govansendmegoodies@yahoo.com
Site Council Faculty rep: 3-5Tracy Seefeldtseefeld@seattleschools.org
Site Council Faculty Rep: 6-8Lori Eickelbergeick@qwest.net
Site Council Faculty Rep: 6-8Mark Ellismellis@seattleschools.org
Site Council Faculty Rep: CounselorJennifer Murrayjmurray@seattleschools.org

SITE COUNCIL MEMBERS REPRESENTING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Site Council Chair
Parent representative: 6-8David Sarjudavid@sarju.org
Site Council Assistant Chair
Parent representative: 6-8Kathy Cox-CzosnykaKcoxczos@ch2m.com
Site Council Treasurer
Parent representative: K-2Steve Havasshavas@starbucks.com
Site Council Secretary
Parent representative: 3-5Lianne Sheppardsheppard@u.washington.edu
Parent representative: K-2Sheri ToussaintSheritoussaint@hotmail.com
Parent representative: K-2Keith CohonCohon.keith@attbi.com
Parent representative: 3-5Elizabeth Dickinsonjoem@u.washington.edu
Parent representative: 3-5Richard Cassellrcassell@sourcetechnology.com
Parent representative: 6-8Shirley BossierSbossier@speakeasy.net
Eastlake Community representativeSusan KaufmanSkserafina@attbi.com
Bob GeballeBobg@oneacreplus.net
Coalition for Social Justice representativePriya Singhpriya173@attbi.com
Middle School Student Council representative (ASB)

COORDINATORS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

School Assignment Committee Co-ChairMarlies van Bergeijkpaul-marlies@worldnet.att.net
Volunteer CoordinatorStacie BonnelleTopsvlntr@aol.com
Communications Committee ChairStacie BonnelleHayden3rd@aol.com
Drama Committee ChairLinda KorbusLkorbus@att.net
Fund Development Committee ChairJennifer ShawJennifer@aoki-sakamoto.com
WebmasterJack Leelee@oz.net
Newsletter Editor for Site CouncilEllen Markmanellenmark@hotmail.com
Newsletter EditorTeresa Nemethzongora2@hotmail.com
Nominating Committee ChairTBA
PEAK CoordinatorTBA

SITE COUNCIL MEETING NOTES

JUNE 11, 2003

By Ellen Markman

NEW MEMBERS

Sixty ballots were returned to elect the new Site Council members this past spring. Sheri Toussaint and Steve Havas were elected to represent the K-2 grade band, Lianne Sheppard will represent grades 3-5, and Shirley Bossier grades 6-8.

New appointments were made to the Site Council executive committee. Dave Sarju will continue in the position of Site Council chair. Eileen Hynes, the Site Council vice chair, and Peter Dewey, the Site Council treasurer, both completed their terms at the end of the 2002-03 school year. Kathy Cox-Czosnyka had served as Site Council secretary for the past year and was elected vice chair. Liane Sheppard was elected to the secretary position and Steve Havas will serve as treasurer.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Clara Scott highlighted all the activities that closed out the school year.

Selected members from the Coalition for Social Justice, the Site Council, room reps, staff, and the newsletter editor attended two facilitated group meetings early in June to

address concerns over the school climate. The intention of the meeting was to begin to improve communication throughout the school and "work to give people a voice." (One result was the all-school facilitated meeting held June 9.)

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Jennifer Shaw reported on a successful year in the fundraising department. The auction raised \$70,000 net and the "No Bake" almost \$47,000.

Sheri Toussaint will be the chair for the "No Bake" Bake Sale for 2003-04. There will be a kick-off carnival for the "No Bake" October 4, 2003, with the goal of involving 100% of the TOPS community.

DRAMA

Linda Korbus, chair of the drama committee, reported that TOPS put on two great productions this past school year, the middle school play and the elementary school play. Box office and concessions proceeds were as expected.

They are hoping to do the middle school play in December this year to avoid conflict with the ski bus and the mid-winter break ski trip. The elementary play will be at the end of the school year with the Art Walk.

THE SITE COUNCIL RETREAT: GOALS FOR A NEW YEAR

By Lianne Sheppard

Thirteen dedicated members of the TOPS community attended the Site Council retreat on August 16. We came together for a morning of conversation and strategic planning, led by facilitator Sue Feldman. We spent the beginning of the retreat on sharing and team-building activities, including a discussion about why we will work for respect. Reasons mentioned included that respect is a fundamental value, an aspect of a culture of trust, the "right" thing to do, it honors individuals, it is a product of all the values we're trying to instill in our children, and it helps each person be whole and their best. The planning began with brainstorming to discuss our hopes for the next year. This was followed by condensing our hopes into five overall goals and discussing these in greater depth. The summary goals were to

- ◆ Increase involvement by improving communication and increasing welcoming
- ◆ Improve the school climate
- ◆ Foster quality governance with emphasis on clarifying roles of governance, improving communication, increasing leadership, and conducting long-range planning

- ◆ Support TOPS' mission with emphasis on clarifying our alternative identity, supporting the staff-driven educational goals (math, writing, social justice focus), supporting the enrichment program, and reaching underserved children and families
- ◆ Develop outreach and the spirit of giving beyond the immediate community

We divided into small groups to develop the first four of these. We tried to specify the evidence we felt was needed to show accomplishment of each goal. From this followed action steps and a timeline for our activities. The time was short so our planning and debriefing sessions were abbreviated. However, each group made solid progress on developing its goals. The intent is to have the action steps integrated into the Site Council agenda for the next year so progress can be made within the TOPS community on each of these areas. We came away from the day with greater appreciation of the passion we share for the TOPS community, the teamwork, thoughtfulness and honesty shown over the day, and the challenges we will face together.

CAMP LONG SPRING 2003



Photos provided by Wayne Duncan



THE SITE COUNCIL BUDGET—EXPLAINED!

By Elizabeth Dickinson

Families and staff contribute a lot of money each year to enhance our children's education. Last year, \$130,276 was raised through the "No Bake" Bake Sale and the spring auction. This money supplements the funds available to TOPS through the Seattle School District.

Each spring, the contributions raised in that year are budgeted for the following school year by the Friends of TOPS, a non-profit organization managed by the Site Council. In this RFP ("Request For Proposals") process, proposals for curriculum enhancements, community-building, or other projects to improve the school are solicited from staff, families, students, and TOPS committees. These proposals are discussed and evaluated by the Site Council, acting as the "Friends of TOPS," and those who have submitted a proposal are requested to answer questions at a budget meeting. A final budget is recommended and adopted.

For the 2003-04 school year, Friends of TOPS had \$145,185 available to spend on proposals. This money came from the "No Bake" Bake Sale (\$46,821), the spring auction (\$83,455), matching funds from the previous year's "No Bake" that came in after the previous year's RFP process (\$8,065), and unspent money from the 2002-03 year (\$6,844).

Here is how that \$145,185 will be used throughout this school year:

CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT: THE ARTS

Art for Every Child at TOPS—Special Auction Item: \$17,545

This money was designated by contributors at the spring auction. It will fund the middle school Artist Presentation Series, which brings in three artists from the broader community each year to share their work. It will also augment grant money for salary and supplies for the elementary art program, and fund an intern to work with middle school students in the ceramics studio. Finally, this money will be used to acquire permanent wall display surfaces as well as mobile display boards for the Art Walk and other school events.

Visual Artist: \$10,000

These funds will supplement a grant for artist-in-residence Cynthia Livak to provide weekly visual art instruction for students in grades 1 through 4, the Deaf and Hearing Impaired program, and special education classes. In addition, the art committee plans to acquaint teachers and parent art helpers with the excellent art curriculum materials purchased by the school district last spring.

Art Supplies: \$2,000

This money enables art teacher Luzita Roll to buy art supplies for students in grades 5 through 8.

Cell Portraits: Science Through Art: \$100

This will fund art supplies for a fifth grade project in which students create three-dimensional representations of cells, integrating art and the "Microworlds" microbiology unit.

Music Program: \$10,000

The music program, initiated with the spring 2002 auction special item, will continue this year with Friends of TOPS funding. It provides for the elementary and middle school choirs, as well as in-class singing experiences for kindergarten through second grade. Along with some school district money, it will also fund the instrumental music program for fourth and fifth graders. Money pays for music instructors, the choir director, the choir accompanist, and sheet music.

Drama—Elementary and Middle School Plays: \$2,500

The elementary and middle school plays will take place again this year, using this funding for director stipends, play rights, and costume and set supplies. Ticket, video, and concession sales also go toward the cost of producing these plays.

Drama—Third Grade Workshop: \$1,000

This money is used to hire directors for drama performances by third graders.

OTHER CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT

Literacy Block: \$16,500

Two part-time teachers will be hired with this grant to work with staff to offer literacy instruction in small groups to first and second graders for one hour each day. Small fluid groups and "best practices" in literacy instruction are resulting in enormous gains in performance and confidence for these early readers, and will, we hope, enhance academic achievement for all children throughout their lives.

Technology and Curriculum Integration: \$9,000

These funds will help maintain and upgrade technology, especially computers, in the building, and enable students to use innovative technologies—PCs, digital video equipment, cameras—for learning. Staff plan to acquire three new computers, hardware and software necessary for the full functioning of four computer labs, and a portable audio system for the lunchroom. This budget also pays an outsider consultant to maintain TOPS' network of computers.

Multicultural Education: \$4,900

The staff and parent multicultural committee hopes to enrich existing curriculum and field trips with diverse cultural perspectives and experiences. They plan to invite artists-in-residence (\$3,200) and authors (\$700) to the school, and to create multicultural assemblies (\$1,000) that

help students to explore and understand how our differing cultures influence our history, our social and political relationships, and our ways of seeing the world through art, math, and science.

Oral History Project: \$4,000

With a matching grant and production services from Jack Straw Productions, this project offers eighth grade students the opportunity to write and produce radio scripts as part of their study of Washington state history. This past year, students interviewed community members while exploring the theme "People Make a Difference."

Spanish Language Scholarships: \$1,500

This grant provides partial scholarships for students in the elementary before- and after-school Spanish program.

TOPICS Coordinator: \$500

This money is available to reimburse TOPICS leaders for supplies, in order to enable more families and staff to teach TOPICS.

SUPPLIES AND RESOURCES

Certified Teacher Learning Materials: \$5,400

This budget item provides 26 full-time teaching staff with \$200 each, and 2 half-time staff with \$100 each, to purchase learning materials for students. These may include classroom supplies or curriculum materials.

Communal Supplies: \$5,000

This enables the purchase of such supplies as paper, colored pencils, paint, and glue to be used in any classroom. The Building Leadership Team, in choosing to prioritize staff support in their allocations of school district money, budgeted almost \$5,000 less for supplies than was spent in 2002-03. This grant replaces that deficit.

Science Materials: \$3,200

This money buys science materials, mostly for the middle school but also for elementary school units. Materials include air rockets and hot wheels tracks and cars for physics, glassware and chemicals, and more.

Library Resources: \$3,000

This money is used to expand and update the library collection, which at about 8,500 volumes is small for a K-8 school. It also replaces lost books.

Multicultural Resources: \$3,000

Books, curriculum guides, and other resources for the library and individual classrooms are purchased with this money. Many of these resources are requested by teachers to enrich curriculum units and literature groups. They reflect the diversity of cultural experiences in the US and world today, and add an understanding of multiple perspectives to our children's education.

Physical Education Equipment: \$1,500

Supplemental Teacher Supplies: \$1,000

This is money available to teachers whose needs exceed the \$200 provided in the certified teacher learning materials budget. New teachers or teachers introducing a new curriculum study may have extra expenses for materials.

Middle School Supplies: \$600

This buys supplies for middle school math, social sciences, and language arts.

French Program Materials: \$100

These funds buy recordings, books, and games to supplement the textbooks for the French language program for seventh grade students.

COMMUNITY BUILDING: STAFF SUPPORT

Extracurricular Sports Stipend: \$1,500

This grant pays Don and Eric to coach and teach extracurricular sports.

Elementary Curriculum Stipend: \$1,500

This funds Steve Haines to keep the library open for students after school.

Staff Appreciation: \$500

This facilitates staff appreciation events such as latte days, lunches, and treats.

**COMMUNITY-BUILDING:
FAMILY SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT**

Volunteer Coordinator: \$8,000

This money funds the volunteer coordinator, who is present at TOPS one day a week and who coordinates tutoring and other volunteer activities by families and community members. The coordinator also works with classroom representatives in the communications committee.

School Directory/Newsletters: \$4,000

This grant supports the publication of the school directory, the monthly newsletter, and other communications.

Inclusive Strategies: \$2,140

This money seeks to provide all families with access to school meetings and events. \$1,440 is designated for childcare for events, forums, study circles, and committee and Site Council meetings. \$500 funds the translation of important letters or invitations. \$200 would provide bus transportation to the Taste of TOPS and other events if other transportation cannot be arranged. In the past, this has enabled the attendance of many BOC/ESL families.

Eighth Grade Passage: \$2,000

The celebration of eighth grade passage is supported through this funding for food, memory pictures and books, and printing and mailing expenses.

Continued on page 12

THE TOPS WEB SITE: A COMMUNICATION CENTER FOR THE TOPS COMMUNITY

By Jack Lee, TOPS webmaster

If you're new to TOPS or haven't had an occasion to visit the TOPS web site yet, put down this newsletter [[Now hold on a sec! -ed.]] and go take a look (www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops). Since it underwent a major renovation last fall, the TOPS web site has evolved into a "nerve center" for communication among parents, teachers, and administrative staff. Here are just a few of the things you'll find there: announcements and breaking news of interest to the TOPS community; contact information (school phone numbers and email addresses) for all TOPS staff; information about the TOPS mission and vision, school policies, and classroom schedules; online archives of Wednesday Go-Homes and *TOPS News*; Site Council meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes; volunteer information; and information about academic and extracurricular programs.

One of the most important features of the site is the **class buttons** across the top, which lead you to contact information and news about each classroom in the school. This year's site will look very similar to last year's, but there are a few changes planned. One of the "classroom" buttons will have a new name--with the exit of the Bilingual Orientation Center and the addition of the new Special Ed program to TOPS, the "**BOC**" button will be renamed "**SE**," and will lead to classroom contact information and news for families of Special Ed students.

Some of the main menu buttons on the left-hand side will have new names, which we hope will better reflect their contents, such as "**Extracurricular**" instead of "Activities" and "**Academics**" instead of "Programs." In addition, there will be a brand-new "PE" button, leading to information from Don and Eric about the TOPS PE curriculum, PE classes, and after-school sports.

One of the most important pages to keep track of is the **TOPS Calendar** page, accessible either from the **News** section or from the **Quick Links** column on the home page. Since there are several different places where TOPS calendar information is published (the web, *TOPS News*, and the Wednesday Go-Home), families have often wondered where to look for authoritative, up-to-date scheduling information. This year we are going to make an attempt to make sure that the web calendar is the "master schedule," so that it always has the most up-to-date

scheduling information. All the other calendars will be updated based on the web calendar. If you are scheduling a new TOPS event, or changing the scheduled time of an existing one, please be sure to send the date and time to me (lee@oz.net), and I'll see that it gets posted as soon as possible.

Making the site even more useful will depend on help from everyone in the TOPS community. If you are sponsoring or organizing any kind of TOPS activity, think about using the web site as a central repository for information that you'd like to make available to the community. If you're a room rep, think about posting important announcements, permission slips, and schedules of upcoming field trips. If you're a teacher, you can post homework assignments, handouts, class announcements, curriculum and syllabus info, samples of student writings and artwork, and addresses of web sites you'd like your students or their families to check out.

Think creatively! If you can think of anything else you'd like to see on the web, just suggest it to me, and we can think together about whether it's feasible and how best to do it. Posting materials on the web is easy--all you need to do is to send a quick email to me (lee@oz.net) whenever you have something you'd like to have posted on the web. I can usually get things posted within several hours, sometimes much more quickly than that, and virtually always within 24 hours. You don't have to learn how to create web pages. Just send the information to me in an ordinary email, or attach virtually any kind of document to your email (Word documents, GIF or JPEG images, PDF files, HTML web pages, or plain text files, among others). If you'd like to do more, you could create your own "home page" for your classroom or activity, and I'll put a link to it on the TOPS web site. If you know (or want to learn) how to create HTML files, you can build all the HTML files on your own computer, and then attach them all to an email and send them to me for posting. Any time you want to update a page, just send me the file(s) that have changed, and I'll replace the old ones. (Room reps, this is a great way for you to help out your teachers!) The more we all use the TOPS web site, the more useful it will be.

THE "NO BAKE" BAKE CHANCE TO HELP KEEP TOPS SPECIAL

By Jennifer Shaw

Welcome to another fabulous school year at TOPS! As you and your family are settling in to new morning schedules, getting back in the homework habit, and reconnecting with old friends, we want to take a moment to invite you to be an important part of what keeps TOPS a vibrant and special place.

Years ago, the parents and staff of the TOPS community decided to create the Friends of TOPS, a non-profit organization. Friends of TOPS was designed for the purpose of raising and managing private funds to supplement the educational programs at TOPS.

Those wise "founding families" of the TOPS community also decided to limit our fundraising efforts to two annual events so that we would not be inundated with fundraising pleas throughout the year. As a result, the "No Bake" Bake Sale every fall and the spring auction are the only school fundraisers and the only opportunities you have to donate funds to support our essential programs.

Friends of TOPS is operated by the TOPS Site Council in its "Friends of TOPS" capacity. Neither the school nor the district controls these funds. Friends of TOPS raises the money and the Site Council decides each spring how the money should be spent. The district has no say in how the funds are spent or allocated. Money you give to the "No Bake" Bake Sale and the spring auction will not be used to make up for the district's budget shortfalls.

Why is Friends of TOPS an essential part of our TOPS experience? You may not realize the many ways that Friends of TOPS funding affects your child on a weekly, or maybe even daily, basis. Friends of TOPS helps fund the middle school and elementary drama programs. It pays for some of the wonderful artists and performers who come to TOPS for assemblies. It pays for extra classroom and art supplies, supplements the music program and the eighth grade passage and funds many other programs that we at TOPS have come to accept as essential parts of the TOPS educational experience.

Of course, TOPS is a public school. We all pay taxes and our schools should all be adequately funded so that every school has sufficient resources to create the kind of environment that the TOPS community has created. But the reality is that the school district can only provide us with the basic necessities: teachers, administrators, a beautiful building, and basic supplies. To go beyond the basics takes parent and community support.

Imagine what TOPS would be like without the art

programs, the drama, or the multicultural artists and performers. Imagine what your child's day would be like if we were limited to the bare-bones budget from the school district. Friends of TOPS funding is one thing that keeps TOPS special.

We know that every TOPS family understands the importance of a quality education. We also want each family to understand that being a part of a community means taking responsibility for keeping the community functioning. That is why we are happy to invite you to become a

Photo provided by Jeff Heft



The elementary play chorus

fully participating part of our community by giving to the "No Bake" Bake Sale.

Very soon you will receive a "No Bake" Bake Sale donation form. We do not ask you to buy anything, or bake anything. We just ask you to consider the important programs that benefit you and your children at TOPS and send in whatever amount you can afford to keep these programs operating. If you have questions or would like to help, please contact the "No Bake" chair, Sheri Toussaint, at 722-4526 or sheritoussaint@hotmail.com, or the fund development chair, Jennifer Shaw, at 325-4079 or Jennifer@aoki-sakamoto.com.

TOPS ARTIST PRESENTATION SERIES

By Rachel Brumer

Three years ago I started the Artist Presentation Series for the middle school students with Luzita Roll. Since the program began, the students have enjoyed meeting some of Seattle's most compelling artists. We've chosen artists whose work is especially interesting to middle school students. Three artists who've been especially well received are Heather Dew Oaxen, who showed video portraits of incarcerated youth, Phil Borges, who shared photographs and stories of his travels to Afghanistan, and Patti Warashina, who showed slides of her ceramic work, which spanned more than 30 years. At the end of each

presentation the artist takes questions from students, who ask engaging and thoughtful questions. During these presentations, students observe the creative process at work, unique problem-solving approaches, and dedication and perseverance fueled by passion. Thus far, we have funded the program from the King County Arts Commission's Arts in Education grant. I am proud that this program is here at TOPS and am grateful to the TOPS community for its support. This year, we will continue the program with money raised from the auction and host three new artists.

Site Council Budget—Explained! continued from page 9

Emergency Assistance: \$1,500

This money is available to the family support worker to provide emergency financial support for families in need.

Translation: \$1,000

This funds interpreter services during parent-teacher conferences and other times when communication with families is needed.

Volunteer Appreciation Fund: \$300

This buys snacks for communications/room reps meetings, and small gifts/treats for volunteers at the end of the year.

Lunchroom Loans: \$200

These are money loans to children who have forgotten their lunches.

FUNDRAISING EXPENSES

"No-Bake" Sale: \$2,000

This money will go for advertising and postage for the "No Bake" fundraiser, as well as supplies for a kick-off carnival.

Auction: \$12,000

This provides advance money for spring 2004 auction expenses.

OTHER

Site Council Contingency Funds: \$5,000

This holds \$5,000 in reserve for unanticipated needs and requests from the school community during the 2003-04 school year.

Finance Committee/Site Council Expenses: \$1,200

This funds insurance and non-profit registration for Friends of TOPS and the Site Council.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to TOPS with their money, time, and/or energy this past year!



The elementary play



Photos provided by Jeff Heft

READING BLOCK: OFF AND RUNNING

By Mollie Martin

Imagine if you will a place where children can learn at their own pace, with other children at the same level and with teachers encouraging them every step of the way. You'll all be happy to know that this place exists right here at TOPS!

Learning to read is one of the cornerstones of education, the foundation upon which our children will build their academic futures. However, learning to read can also be fraught with challenges and complications. Children learn to read in varying ways and at varying speeds, and individual attention in a classroom full of kids is not always possible. So in order to provide the kids with individualized lesson plans tailored to their reading level, Reading Block has been established.

Reading Block is a new program, instituted just last year, which combines the students of the two first grade classes with those of the two second grade classes. The children are assessed on their reading abilities and are then divided into nine groups. The nine groups were based partially on feedback from the research reading assessments done by University of Washington Professor Virginia Berninger and her group earlier in the year. The Reading Block teaching staff last year consisted of the classroom teachers (Anna Aoki, Margie Butcher, Carla Fetterley, and Willie Jones), reading specialists (Mike Anderson and Nicole Titus), Pacific Oaks interns (Suzanne Riekes, Emily Munson, and Kate Sweeney), other TOPS teachers (Mary Chao and Tracy Seefeld), and the TOPS librarian (Steve Haines). Beyond the fact that so many people are willing to pitch in to make Reading Block a success, the two most important aspects of the Reading Block program are its structure and what Margie, TOPS first grade teacher, describes as its fluidity.

The nine Reading Block groups are comprised of students with like reading abilities and are taught by the teacher best able to support their needs. This enables the children to learn in the best possible environment. The other aspect of the Reading Block structure that contributes to its success is the fact that the size of each group is determined by the needs of the students. For example, the group with the greatest need for one-on-one attention in order to help them reach their reading goal is taught by a reading specialist and consists of only three or four students. The larger groups consist of kids who are meeting or exceeding reading standards.

In addition to the common sense structure of the groups within Reading Block, the groups are very fluid. Because students learn to read in fits and spurts, it is important that individual progress be assessed on a regular basis. Just because a student may be a bit slow learning the basics in the beginning of the year doesn't mean that he or she won't catch up to and even pass up peers who may have grasped the basics sooner. This aspect of the reading process is addressed by the assessments that take

place twice during the school year. After these assessments, the children are shifted around as necessary. In addition to the assessments, the Reading Block teachers meet each Friday to discuss how their students are doing, and often shifts are made this way as well. This means that a student who suddenly jumps several levels ahead in his or her reading doesn't have to wait for the assessment time, but can be moved up immediately. Conversely, a student struggling with a particular aspect of reading can be shifted to another group temporarily in order to receive the extra help needed. In addition to the flexibility of this program, the way in which it is executed contributes greatly to its success.

I remember being divided into reading groups in elementary school as well. Clusters of five or six kids would sit around the room and everyone knew who was at what level. This structure hindered much of the learning process because of the competition that was fostered by everyone being in one room. Another negative by-product of the reading groups of old was the fact that children were often pegged early on as "slow readers," which had a way of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Unlike the old model, Reading Block discourages competitiveness by separating the groups completely. Each group is taught in a separate room and the groups aren't numbered by level, so the children really have no idea who is ahead and who is behind them. Instead, they are all learning at the pace and in the environment that is best suited to them. And since none of the children are pegged "slow learner" or "fast reader," the children strive to learn what is in front of them rather than wondering where they rank.

I visited each of the Reading Blocks and was terribly impressed not only by the diversity of learning going on, but also by the enthusiasm of the teachers—and, as a result, of the students. It is clear that the teachers are committed to the program and they believe that it is working. "In twenty-five years of teaching, I have never seen children progress so quickly in their reading abilities," says Willie Jones, a TOPS second grade teacher better known as Mr. J. Even TOPS librarian Steve Haines has volunteered his time to the program. He teaches a group for an hour each day in addition to his duties at the library.

Visiting the Reading Blocks was a delightful and eye-opening experience. It is clear that, although the teaching styles are different, all of the teachers believe in the program, believe in the students, and have all in their own way created an atmosphere that is not only conducive to learning the basics but instills a love of reading as well. If reading is the cornerstone of education, then this program will prove to be the seed of our children's love of literature in the future. I am impressed with my own child's progress in learning to read and, more importantly, in learning to love it. Keep up the good work!

Communication at TOPS continued from page 3

that you think should be there, contacting Jack can often be part of the route to getting what you need. Chances are if you want to know it, somebody else in the TOPS community does too, so don't be shy!

The TOPS **Wednesday Go-Home** is sent home every other Wednesday with the students. Its purpose is to relay to every TOPS family current happenings and updates from the office and other TOPS groups. The content is relevant to the whole school community. The Go-Home used to be sent every week, but in the past year or so it was switched to every other week to cut costs. If your child is unreliable about bringing anything home, or if you don't know whether to expect a Go-Home in any given week, you can find the current and all past issues on the TOPS web site (under "news"). While the Go-Home is an ideal forum for learning about important news events and other time-sensitive information, last year it was underutilized. It seemed that less important postings were retained for months on end while many important postings that should have been included were omitted. Let's hope it is better this year! If you have an item you wish to have included in the Go-Home, talk to Helen Hundley in the office (or email lhundley@seattleschools.org) at least two full work days in advance.

TOPS News (this newsletter) is parent-funded and coordinated. It is mailed to each TOPS home at the beginning of every month of the school year. All members of the TOPS community are encouraged to submit to the newsletter. Send contributions by email to Teresa Nemeth (zongora2@hotmail.com), or drop them off in the newsletter box in the office. Submission deadlines are Wednesdays mid-month, usually the same day as the Site Council meeting. Please check the publishing column on p. 2 for details.

The **TOPS Site Council** is an elected body of about half teachers and half parents, along with other staff (most notably our administrators). The Site Council is one of the governing bodies of the school. (The other important governing body is the Building Leadership Team – more about that in an upcoming article.) The Site Council has responsibilities for leadership, advocacy, fundraising, financial stewardship (of parent-raised funds), and strategic planning, all with the overarching goal of assuring the highest standards of educational excellence and inclusive support of the school community. Most TOPS committees report to the Site Council and send representatives to its meetings. Site Council meetings are

held every second Wednesday of the school year from 5 to 7 p.m. at the school (location TBA). All members of the TOPS community are welcome to attend. Each month's meeting report is included in the next issue of *TOPS News*, and more detailed information is available on the TOPS web site.

The **office staff** are wonderfully helpful and supportive. They do everything from nursing care and attendance to answering questions and keeping the school running smoothly. They are remarkably unflappable amidst the hubbub of the school day, and always available to assist in whatever ways they can. They are happy to take calls from parents, but ask that if at all possible parents refrain from calling at the beginning and end of the school day – these are the busiest times in the office. Through them you can make an appointment with one of our principals. Student absences and late arrivals should be reported in advance to the attendance hotline (252-3518).

Some of the TOPS groups maintain **Yahoo! discussion groups**. The TOPS Site Council discussion group is intended for Site Council members (who are automatically enrolled). At the discretion of the TOPS Site Council, other members of the TOPS community may be enrolled to listen to the dialogue among members. (Non-members are asked to limit their postings to this forum.) See the links from the TOPS Site Council web pages for more information. Another discussion group is moderated by the Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ). This group focuses on supporting the vision of an anti-bias, anti-racist school and removing disproportionality in education. All members of the TOPS community are welcome to join. Send an email to TOPS_CSJ-subscribe@yahoogroups.com, or check out the link from the TOPS web site.

Then there's **informal communication** at TOPS. This is facilitated by the fabulously comprehensive TOPS Directory, which lists phone, address, and email contact information for all families willing to be included (most are). It has staff and committee members listed as well. There are endless perspectives and histories to learn from informal conversations with other parents and staff. Please note, however, that it is in the best interests of the entire community to keep our communication focused on positive and constructive avenues of supporting the education of all the children at TOPS.

Best of luck for a positive and productive school year full of good communication!

TOPS AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD: TOWARD RECONCILIATION AND SOLUTIONS

From Paul Framson:

A group from TOPS continued through the end of last school year to meet with neighborhood representatives. This note provides my motives for participating in these meetings and my observations from them, and raises the key questions that linger.

My motives for participation in the meetings were three. I did not want the relationship with the neighborhood to be left indefinitely characterized by the rancor of last fall's struggle. Having a neighborhood school (T.T. Minor) a block and a half away from my home, I found legitimacy in the neighborhood's desire for the same. I believe good will come of collaboration with the neighborhood.

These meetings were near exemplary for airing conflicting persuasions. We took risks, rose to passion at times, calmed down, listened, and were concise enough to provide for expression by all. Truth, reason and trust accumulated in proportion to our investment. The neighborhood representatives understood why TOPS is not a neighborhood school.

We from TOPS came away with a new appreciation of the lack of neighborhood schooling for Eastlake/Roanoke, summarized here. Eastlake/Roanoke is on the northwest margin of the central cluster, so they have neighborhood privileges only at schools to the south and east (and not Stanford and Greenlake to the north and west). Of nearby schools to the south and east, (Montlake, McGilvra, Stevens, Lowell (AP) and TOPS) the first three use their largesse to buy down their class sizes, rather than expanding their enrollment; the last two are not neighborhood schools. Circumstances of three different classes combine to deny Eastlake/Roanoke access to neighborhood schooling.

An ideal solution would spread accommodation as thinly as possible among schools that could offer neighborhood capacity. What could this solution look like? The northwest

boundary of the central cluster could be redrawn to give Eastlake/Roanoke access to Stanford and Greenlake. Montlake, Stevens and McGilvra could expand their enrollment. Lowell/AP could house programs currently at Montlake, Stevens or McGilvra. Many people would change the way they do things.

I have left TOPS out of the solution, and therein lies the first of my lingering questions. Should TOPS contribute, and if so how? The other question is, is anything missing from this view?

From Margie Butcher, first grade teacher:

Compounding the difficulty for Eastlake/Roanoke residents is this: families living closest to any given school have first priority for entrance, those a little further next priority, and so on, block by block. The schools fill up before those at the outer edges have a chance at seats. Basically, the Eastlake/Roanoke residents will always have their kids sent to the closest under-subscribed schools. And as one under-subscribed school improves and gets more popular, the Eastlake/Roanoke kids then get sent to the next under-subscribed school--so there is no predictability or consistency. One very simple solution would be to have all the neighborhood school assignments done by lottery within the boundaries of each school. If everyone living in the area drawn around a school had an equal chance, then no one would be disadvantaged by living a few more blocks away than someone else.



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We still need volunteers! Please contact Jennifer Shaw at 325-4079 or Sheri Toussaint at 722-4526.

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