

TOPS NEWS

April 2005 ♦ Volume 8, Issue 7

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

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Testing time is upon us. Spring signifies that the district- and state-mandated tests have to be administered to all students during the testing period of April 18 to May 6.

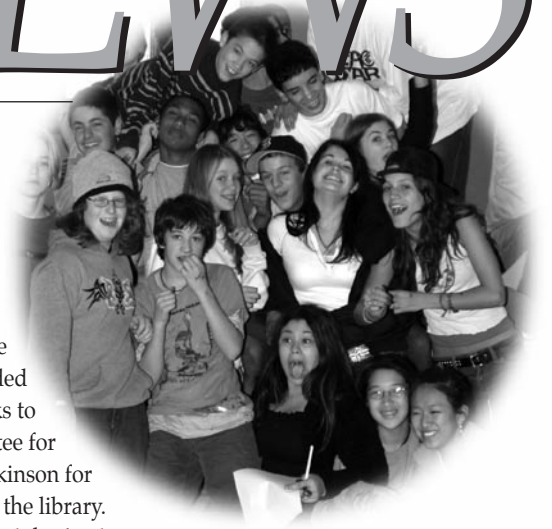
There are several new groups being tested. Third grade will be taking the reading and writing WASL. Fifth grade will be taking the science and the reading and math WASL, the sixth grade will be taking the reading and math WASL and the ITBS in reading, math, and language. Seventh grade will be taking reading, writing, and math. Eighth grade will be taking the science, reading, and math WASL. Our bilingual students took the WLPT assessment February 14 - March 11. Please make sure that your son or daughter is at school during the test periods, gets a good night sleep, eats a healthy breakfast, and brings a bottle of water. Teachers will provide snacks for test breaks.

Our sixth annual Taste of TOPS "Matsuri" (festival), this year honoring Japanese culture, was a smashing success! The sushi, origami, taiko drummers, kendo martial arts, and demonstrations were fantastic and enjoyed by everyone in attendance. The evening culminated with the individual class participation and the student talent showcase. It was awesome!!!

Thanks to Carla Fetterley, 2nd grade teacher, who took the lead in sharing her experience in Japan. Carla, Cynthia Livak (elementary art teacher), and Julie Gillett (2nd grade teacher) provided the decorations in the hall. Thanks to Lynne Goodrich and her committee for the sushi table and Elizabeth Dickinson for the multicultural book display in the library. Thanks to Marlies van Bergeijk and the food committee for organizing the food set-up and clean-up. Many thanks to Bonnie Cech, chair of the CSJ, who made sure that all events were staffed with a lead person. Thanks to Sheri Toussaint for coordinating the talent showcase, Mary Chao for supporting the decorations through TOPICS, and Helen Hundley, our secretary, for putting it all together with building permits, room locations, and calendar dates.

The Site Council community forum was held on March 16. The topics for discussion were the value of the TOPS

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Assistant Principal:
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Site Council Chair:
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NEWSLETTER ONLINE

The TOPS newsletters are available online in PDF format 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.

SIX QUESTIONS FROM THE AUCTION COMMITTEE

Have you been procrastinating? Do you realize that your auction procurement items are **due this month**? Don't wait any longer! **April 27** is the deadline to turn in those fabulous goodies to the TOPS office. We are looking for new items, gift certificates, getaways – all new and all worth \$50 or more. Pound that pavement, call in those favors, it's time to create our auction marketplace.

Do you have money left over from the No-Bake Sale? Do you have a line on supplies for the auction night party? **Help us underwrite** expenses! As they say, a penny saved is a penny earned. Help us to earn more from the auction by keeping our costs down. Send contributions to Ellen Markman: 3715 E. Union Street, Seattle, 98122. Donations are tax deductible.

Do you like to throw theme parties? If so, you already have an auction item! **A TOPICS for Grown-ups Party!** Simply decide on a date, theme,

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TOPS Spring Auction 2005



Artwork by Kay Morrison



SEATTLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

SITE COUNCIL COMMUNITY FORUM

"THE VALUE OF THE TOPS PROGRAM AND ASSIGNMENT; IMPACTS OF THE ASSIGNMENT AND TRANSPORTATION PROPOSALS"

ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the seventh newsletter of the 2004-05 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 zongora@gmail.com. Please send photos to csuzumura@mindspring.com.

Deadlines are the Friday after each Site Council meeting. The deadline for the May issue is April 22.

Would you like to edit or otherwise help with our newsletter? Newcomers welcome. Please contact Teresa at the above address.

FORUM OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ **INFORM:** Inform the school community about district-level proposals and discussions about assignment, transportation, and alternative schools in the context of their effect on TOPS.
- ◆ **LISTEN:** Gather information from the broader school community to communicate with the school board effectively: What is valuable about TOPS? Why is TOPS a high-demand program? How is TOPS alternative; how could the alternativeness or value be strengthened?
- ◆ **TRANSFER INFORMATION:** What are school-community expectations for Site Council members in working on district-wide issues? How can everyone communicate back to the district?

By Teresa Nemeth, with support from Marlies van Bergeijk, Maureen Germani, Judith Lee, Gerrit Kischner, Steve Havas, and Lianne Sheppard as small-group leaders at the forum, as well as Sheri Toussaint, Kathy Cox-Czosnyka, Elizabeth Dickinson, and Clara Scott

PART I. INFORMING. Maureen Germani and Sheri Toussaint spoke on the following:

- ◆ *The district expects a \$12 million budget shortfall in the short run, and \$20 million (annually) in the longer run*
- ◆ *The district is considering ways to save money, including transportation changes, school closures, and consolidation*
- ◆ *A switch to neighborhood schools could affect TOPS and other alternative schools because of transportation changes or loss, and possible program changes*
- ◆ *The School Board is reviewing policies and recommendations regarding student assignment, transportation, program placement, start-up procedures, and closure/consolidation for alternative schools.*
- ◆ *The district is reviewing possible definitions of "alternative"; the definitions they are discussing were shared here*
- ◆ *The role and progress of the Alternative Schools Committee was explained*

PART II. LISTENING. Meeting attendees broke into 5 groups of about 8 parents, each group facilitated by a site council member, plus one group led by Gerrit Kischner intended to provide a focused group for staff input. As there were few staff in attendance, the full staff will conduct this discussion on April 6 and a report will follow. The following is an attempt at compiling the brainstorming and input provided by parents. The intent, for this article, is to leave comments as close as possible to the way they were taken down by group facilitators, with the limitation that more was generated than can be repeated here. The idea is to provide transparency, and not over-summarize or misrepresent. Thus, it must be understood that not everyone agrees with every comment here. Comments have been grouped loosely under themes that emerged.

Responses to the questions "What is valuable about TOPS?" "What defines TOPS?" "What needs to be preserved?" "What is alternative about TOPS?" "What sets TOPS apart from neighborhood schools?" "Why did you choose TOPS?"

WE HAVE CHOSEN TO COME TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY.

We are an intentional community. People want to be here, and it's palpable. It's not where it is that makes it what it is. It attracts market-share: families who would otherwise go private. It provides access for underserved communities, particularly in the central area and south end. We offer an alternative to charter schools. We are a community based on choice rather than on geography. More self-selection means more alliance of values.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.

Teachers and parents work together to provide a great academic program. Teachers welcome parental involvement in a way they don't at other schools. There is a high level of parental commitment. The culture fosters contribution of parental expertise and excellence for benefit of children. There is parent-staff governance, with relationships based on roles rather than rank. There is parental participation at all levels.

DIVERSITY PLUS EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE.

Educational excellence at TOPS provides an alternative to APP/Spectrum, which separates kids out. *We see at TOPS, or were attracted by:* rigorous academics; high performance; cutting-edge instruction; best practices teaching; nontraditional methods of teaching, including the setting, teaching styles, emergent learning, and multi-age teaching; a well-defined understanding of education as process over product; more progressive education; critical thinking by students about their own educational process; a more child-centered curriculum; TOPICS (where small groups of students choose diverse, independent, multi-age learning opportunities); experiential and integrated education (e.g., camps, field trips, interdisciplinary units); holistic education (development of the whole child, attending to social and emotional as well as intellectual growth—e.g., class

meetings, civil rights, bullying prevention); no textbooks; strong arts program that integrates disciplines; art and inquiry-based science integrated K-8; music, art, drama, and camps form a continuum across grades; the speech tournament; cooperative learning; breadth of learning/developing all skills; more progress learning for living and working in 21st century; approach to curricular development (teachers are willing to change); exploring different methods to ensure all students achieve; nurturing different learning styles; innovative education; literacy program/reading block; our "City School" legacy (focus on our urban environment and community as a base for study); emphasis on a world vision and critical examination of issues; encouragement of personal involvement in consideration of social/historical issues (more than at neighborhood schools); presentation of multiple perspectives in areas of study and more in-depth explorations of topics than at other schools; excellent extracurriculars: drama, math Olympiad, chess, sports, music.

Diversity of economic level, culture, and race is a primary attraction, named more than any other single characteristic (except educational excellence, with which it appears equal—see above). Also the "all-city" (actually "multi-cluster") draw. Appealing are the anti-bias curriculum; emphasis on social equity issues; multicultural emphasis; integration of families' cultures into curriculum; the presence of the Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ); the large number of multicultural books; the Taste of TOPS multicultural potluck with focus on a particular culture each year; holiday articles in the newsletter; the current mission statement, which leads to success for all students; the emphasis on achievement for children of color, in addition to different learning styles, which results in gains for everyone.

UNIQUE SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

Our school has a unique energy. Individuals are valued here. There are many community-building activities. The kids are encouraged to think of themselves as part of a community, and to care about each other. We love the K-5 buddies program (partnering kindergarteners and 5th graders). We have a sense of shared values, including responsibility, social justice, caring. The stewardship program is being initiated as a parent-staff partnership teaching the children to care for their school, community, and world. The school community is truly celebratory and encouraging of nontraditional families (in a deeper, more genuine way than other schools). There is a lot of community involvement. The real strength of TOPS lies in its climate and structure. Everyone is encouraged to take ownership of the school and interface with the community.

Other responses: We like the small school size; the K-8 program (no middle school transition, small middle school, continuum of academics and extracurricular activities); neighborhood choices were poor; the central location; being able to walk to school (does not universally apply, of course); the long history of the program; the good facilities.

Responses to the questions "What do we need to do to make sure TOPS continues to be alternative/creative/innovative?" "What is your definition of alternative, or what should the district definition be?"

WE NEED TO RECONNECT WITH OUR ALTERNATIVE ROOTS AND REENERGIZE.

We need to look forward, not rest on our laurels, and reinvent ourselves with an eye to our own history. We need to overcome various factors that have intervened to possibly weaken the program: a lot of alternative practices are now best practices, there is the perception of possibly less support from administration and district/board, and there is an increased emphasis on testing. We need to communicate our alternativeness to current and prospective families, who may be drawn because of test scores or facilities. TOPICS need to be reenergized, and expectations raised. The "City School"/urban program needs to be strengthened and revitalized. Academics need to be strengthened: return to offering a true alternative to Spectrum by providing all with that level program (truly challenging all children). Parental involvement needs to be strengthened. Parents helped found TOPS, and need to own its success. We need to make the environmental focus stand out. We need to re-think the multicultural emphasis and make it real. A good definition of alternative includes shared leadership, child empowerment (encouraging good choices), flexibility, community dialogue, and shared vision.

WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF OUR ADMINISTRATION, DISTRICT, AND BOARD.

We need to strengthen the "process of teaching" and "content of curriculum" points mentioned above (a lot of alternative practices are best practices now, and the emphasis on standards has degraded our alternative content). We need better partnership and trust from the administration (disagreement is ok, honest dialogue is needed). More effort needs to be made to select staff who have an alternative vision or approach, and more effort made to orient new staff so they understand what is special about TOPS and what traditions are core and need to be continued year to year. We need support from the district to be alternative. Racial diversity is essential to our mission, which is valuable; make no changes in transportation and assignment.

WE NEED TO REVISIT OLDER MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS.

We were attracted by the previous mission; the current one is not great, though we don't disagree with it.

From Kathy Cox-Czosnyka

Thanks to all for a terrific dialogue! This type of conversation, engaging our community in the educational and social questions that impact our children, defines and maintains our alternative culture. I was delighted at the turnout and thrilled with the energy in the room. People stayed long afterward because they were energized by what was going on. It is an internal conversation, but it is also an effort to define our communication with the district. We encourage all who could not attend to participate as we continue the conversation. As one parent said, "Every school should be like this!"

THIS YEAR'S SPECIAL AUCTION ITEM: BRIDGING THE BUDGET GAP

By the auction committee, with Steve Havas and Gerrit Kischner

This year TOPS, along with every other school in the Seattle district, will face budget cuts from the state for the 2005-06 school year. TOPS' administrators face some painful decisions about where to cut programs. In light of this situation (which will be explained in more detail in the coming months), Friends of TOPS (the Site Council acting as a nonprofit board of directors) has voted to provide the TOPS operating budget \$48,000 out of Friends of TOPS general funds raised for 2005-06. This sum will allow TOPS to submit a budget of expenses to the district that preserves the current staff and core curriculum.

This is a significant amount of money, and represents a high percentage of the money that has typically been raised in previous years. We are counting on the famous inspiration and generosity of the TOPS community to preserve the curricula and key programs (such as literacy block and drama) we treasure and maintain the existing level of resources available to our teachers and kids. Previous Special Auction Items have included the gym sound system and art display board. This year, however, we are not talking about extras, we are talking about basics.

Read the auction article on p. 1 to find out what you can do to make this year's auction successful. And we hope to see you on May 14!

A Message From the Principal continued from page 1

program, and assignment and transportation proposals. The school board has asked alternative schools in the district to define themselves. The discussion centered on what we want to preserve and strengthen at TOPS. (Please see article p. 2.)

There were breakout sessions and discussions about next steps. Thanks to all of the parents who were able to come out and participate. The discussions were rich and will continue. Please watch for next steps in the process. Thanks to the committee who worked so hard to lay groundwork for the meeting: Judith Lee, Gerrit Kischner, Maureen Germani, Teresa Nemeth, and Sheri Toussaint. A special thanks to our Site Council chair, Kathy Cox-Czosnyka, for supporting the alternative school discussion and extending the meeting time.

Please remember to support our upcoming auction on May 14. This year we would not have been able to maintain current programs with existing staff without the help of the Friends of TOPS (our nonprofit financial body, managed by the Site Council). We are experiencing more academic mandates with less funding from the local and federal government. Next year we will have to have some serious conversations about how to support all of the things we value here at TOPS. Your contributions to the auction help all the students at TOPS enjoy a memorable school experience. Please procure or donate three items or underwrite auction expenses, and by all means plan to attend the auction.

Happy spring!

Cheers! Clara

2004-05 TOPS CALENDAR

Send your events and dates to our webmaster, Jack Lee, at Lee@Oz.net. Please check Wednesday Go-Homes and the web site for updates.

APRIL

4 (M) Elementary play auditions, 2 p.m.
7 (Th) CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
7 (Th) All day TOPOICS day for middle schoolers
8 (F) End of third quarter
11-15 (M-F) .. Spring break; no school
20 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
22(F) Newsletter deadline
26 (T) Parent math night, *Probability & statistics*, 7-9 p.m.
27 (W) Auction donations due in office

MAY

5 (Th) CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
13 (F) Middle school dance, 6:30-9 p.m.
14 (Sa) TOPS auction, Asian Resource Center
17 (T) Class pictures
18 (W) Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
18 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
18-20 (W-F) .. Grade 7 to Mt. St. Helens
20 (F) Artfest, 5:30-9 p.m.
20(F) Newsletter deadline
20 (F) Elementary play, 7 p.m.
21 (Sa) Elementary play, 2 and 7 p.m.

24 (T) Parent math night, *Patterns and functions/algebraic thinking*, 7-9 p.m.
25-27 (W-F) .. Grade 5 to Camp Orkila
30 (M) Memorial Day; no school

JUNE

1 (W) Spring music concert, 2 and 7 p.m.
2 (Th) CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
3 (F) Grades K-2 to Camp Long
7-10 (T-F) Grade 8 to Deception Pass
15 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
20 (M) Grade 5 "moving up ceremony"
20 (M) Middle school to Wild Waves; elementary field day
21 (T) Last student day

REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD

By Kathy Wickward

Discussion of school consolidation criteria dominated Seattle School Board meetings in the month of March, with the results of the Board vote fairly well covered in the press. In short, the Board discovered its own policy did not require it to formally adopt any set of criteria in order for the district to move forward with further study of the consolidation option, contrary to the assumption it had been operating under for the past three months. The end result was the unanimous adoption of a substitute motion introduced by Mary Bass directing district staff to do further analysis of the 10 proposed criteria by April 20. What this means is that the staff will look at every school in the district against the proposed criteria, then make a proposal that includes recommending a list of schools to be closed. As Mary Bass pointed out, some of that analysis appears to have already been done.

Board members provided a glimpse of their stand on the consolidation issue in their commentaries. The majority of members took great pains to state they were opposed to closing schools, but wanted to leave that option open. Dick Lilly believes the budget problem is the district's payroll. Irene Stewart stated, "Full enrollment will accomplish as much as any school closure," and wants the district to focus on its 700 dropouts and increasing its market share (wooing back students from private schools). Brita Butler-Wall and Darlene Flynn feel they are looking at a train wreck of a budget and that there are worse options on the table than closing schools. Mary Bass is primarily concerned about equity: certain criteria appear to unfairly target schools in the Central and South areas that have been all but completely ignored by the district. Basing a closure decision on academic achievement and test scores, for example, is unfair to schools that have fewer resources.

The Seattle Education Association (SEA), the teachers union, supports school consolidation as an option. A handful of teachers addressed the board March 16, observing that a small school with scant resources can't exactly live up to its promise in educating kids. A parent testified that there appears to be a glut of under-enrolled traditional schools. By closing the traditional programs

and adding more alternative programs, which are in high demand, the district will increase the number of enrolled students without raising their costs.

Board members have been given a list of 80 or so budget options – some revenue generating and some cuts – 60 of which have savings estimates attached to them. This list should have been available at the community budget meetings in late March. Two budget meetings are scheduled for April: Tuesday, April 5, at Olympic View starting at 6:30 p.m., and a bilingual forum at Aki Kurose Middle School Thursday, April 7, from 6 to 9 p.m.

Brita Butler-Wall is holding an additional set of office hours where members of the public can meet with her one-on-one for about 15 minutes. She will continue to meet at the Honey Bear Bakery on Mondays from 8 to 10 a.m., and is now also available at the School Board office in the Stanford Center, Thursdays from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Other School Board business items included:

- ◆ Continuing to use Heery International as their project management company for the four remaining BEX II (Building Excellence) levy projects under active design, deferring any decision on the remaining three projects.
- ◆ Approving a nearly \$1 million change order with Hoffman construction for the redesign of Roosevelt's HVAC system. The board was forced into a vote on this, as work has already started on it, however the contingency funding in Roosevelt's budgets covered the change.
- ◆ Revising the district's customer complaint procedures and repealing an outdated policy that referred complainants to the district's legal office.
- ◆ Listening to a huge amount of complaints from First Student drivers regarding the decision of the board to re-bid the transportation contract, in order to include a labor harmony agreement in the new contract. A majority of the First Student drivers (according to their public testimony) have no interest in SEIU (Service Employees International Union) and believe the union has been involved in a number of illegal activities. A handful of Durham drivers desired the policy change and want the chance to vote on union representation. They were present to thank the board.

Six Questions from the Auction Committee continued from page 1

and number of people to invite. Design a poster, plan your party, and have fun! Special donation forms are available in the Go-Homes, in the office, and through Sandy Green at thetangleos@hotmail.com or 328-1998.

Can you volunteer the night of the auction? We still need help! This is a great, one-shot way to participate! Contact Tammy Luthy at 322-3784 or jheft@seanet.com.

Would you jump at the chance for a three-night getaway at the Freestone Inn in the Methow Valley? Then jump!

Take the chance and buy a raffle ticket for \$5. Tickets will be on sale on the first two Fridays in May, on the night of the auction, and through Jamie Flaxman at jamieandsam@earthlink.net.

Will you come to the auction? **Did you** save the date? **Auction night is May 14, 2005!** Save a little extra for the **special auction item** "Fund the Budget Gap" (read more in the Special Auction Item article, p. 4). Bring friends and family to our party! We hope to see you there!

SITE COUNCIL REPORT

FEBRUARY 16, 2005

By Louise Bush Rosen

GENERAL/INTERNAL SITE COUNCIL ISSUES

Site Council members discussed several general issues, including the potential need for a policy regarding parent-organized after-school activities, specifically those using the TOPS facility. Members also discussed the need for web site and newsletter coverage of the following issues: middle school orientation, 8th grade passage, and May and June camps.

Gerrit Kischner reported that the city will conduct gypsy moth spraying in the Eastlake neighborhood during the last two weeks of April and the first week of May, and that TOPS will provide 24-hour notification before the spraying takes place.

Maureen Germani stated she is collecting names for nominations to next year's Site Council, and that everyone should email her should they have someone they wish to nominate.

Finally, Site Council members discussed the school district's archives; the district has stated it does not possess sufficient TOPS archival documents. Librarian and Site Council member Steve Haines stated that TOPS does have a full set of archives and that he will contact the school district about making those available.

DRAMA REPORT

Linda Korbus reported that David Crandall will not be writing a new musical for TOPS as everyone had hoped, but that TOPS will be performing a revue of all the plays he has written for us to date. She further stated she hopes TOPS will be able to perform the musical *Grease* next year.

Linda also stated she is pricing the purchase and installation of eight microphones and sound baffling for the ceiling in the gymnasium.

COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CSJ)

Galen Goff reported that Gerrit Kischner, assistant principal, and Jennifer Murray, counselor, will give a talk regarding the Olweus civility, or anti-bullying, program on April 7.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Gerrit Kischner gave the principal's report on behalf of Clara Scott. Gerrit reported that TOPS has formed a coordinating committee to help implement the Olweus civility program. The coordinating committee, which has now completed a training program, consists of the following people: staff Jennifer Murray, Tracy Seefeld, Luzita Roll, Marianne Trangen, Don Zemke, Leslie Nilan, and Gerrit Kischner, and parents Elizabeth Braverman, Tanya Salmi, Katrina Stensland, and Katrina McCargo. Gerrit stated that the committee is doing a great job and he believes the school will start off next year in a whole new and more positive frame of mind. The

committee will conduct a school-wide survey, tentatively set for May 10, to gather information regarding students' experiences with bullying and civility issues.

Gerrit also reported the WASL will take place during the three weeks immediately following spring break. Third through eighth grade students will be taking the WASL, which Gerrit said will tax the building's resources, since TOPS creates small groups for students being tested and each group needs supervision.

The chess tournament will take place on March 19, and in celebration of Earth Day, which is April 22, TOPICS will focus on stewardship issues on April 21 and 22. Finally, Gerrit reported that the school has raised \$804 for the Mr. J fund, for which Mr. J sends his appreciation.

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Kathy Cox-Czosnyka stated she wanted to publicly thank Jennifer Shaw for her work as the fund development chair as Jennifer's tenure comes to an end, and that she is enlisting everyone's help in recruiting a new Chair as soon as possible.

Kathy then raised the issue of the Special Auction Item (where a needed big-ticket school item is described by the auctioneer and attendees simply "raise the paddle" to contribute). Site Council members discussed a number of suggestions for this year's Special Auction Item, including funding the Olweus program and general enhancement of the building, including a scoreboard and a school readerboard. (See FRIENDS OF TOPS section, below.)

BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM (BLT)

Gerrit Kischner reported that TOPS is in the middle of its annual budget process and is currently creating its Transformation Plan, which is a Seattle school district requirement whereby each school states its vision and plan for the following school year. Gerrit reported that the TOPS Transformation Plan for next year focuses on building on the work done by staff this year in the areas of math curriculum, writing, literacy blocks, bullying prevention, and identity/mission.

Gerrit reported that the Seattle school district is in the throes of a budget crisis, and that TOPS is suffering cuts to basic programs such as the learning assistance and full-day kindergarten programs. He reported that, as a result, the BLT has been wrestling with what it believes is an approximately \$48,000 shortfall in funding TOPS' 2005-06 school year budget (although Gerrit stated he believes the school district may correct its calculation with respect to special education and ESL students, which would close that \$48,000 gap by approximately half). The BLT contacted Steve Havas, TOPS treasurer, with a request that TOPS fund the \$48,000 required to ensure the security of the school's budget for next year.

The TOPS Site Council then adjourned its meeting and Friends of TOPS called its meeting to order.

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ART COMMITTEE SEEKS VOLUNTEER PAINTERS FOR ARTFEST

By Phil Czosnyka

We are looking for some volunteers to help finish painting the movable art panels that will be used for ArtFest on May 20. We will be in the gym April 2 from 9 a.m. until we are finished, which should be around 1 p.m. Anyone interested can contact me by email at pczos@msn.com or by phone at 633-4324.

FRIENDS OF TOPS SEEKS FUND DEVELOPMENT CHAIR

By Kathy Cox-Czosnyka, Site Council Chair

Jennifer Shaw has served our community as the fund development chair for at least the last four years (probably more, but that is as far back as my family has kept the TOPS directories). Jennifer has taken on work-related responsibilities that will make it impossible for her to continue in this role for TOPS in the future. So, Jennifer, thank you – you have done a great job providing vision and cohesion for our fund development program.

TOPS is a dynamic community that responds well to challenge and change – the challenge for all of you in the TOPS community: who among TOPS parents would like to work with Jennifer for the remainder of the year to transition into the role as our new fund development chair?

Jennifer has provided some information that roughly defines the job (although, as with any job, the specifics are shaped to the strengths of the person filling the role!). Key roles, from Jennifer, include:

- ◆ Oversee the fundraising -- more on the No-Bake than the auction.
- ◆ Inform the community of our fundraising philosophies (for instance, speaking at State of the School).
- ◆ Act (for the TOPS community) as a filter for all fundraising requests or proposals so that we don't duplicate efforts or bid against ourselves for funds.
- ◆ Work with the No-Bake committee: help with the mailings, presentations, and carnival, and with setting the fundraising goal.
- ◆ Coordinate with the auction committee to help them set their financial goals .
- ◆ Chair or coordinate the selection of a special auction item.
- ◆ Help with other fundraising issues when they arise, such as helping to set guidelines and limits on non-No-Bake/ auction events so that we don't overwhelm our community with pleas for money.
- ◆ Help some with the budget development .

◆ Help to cultivate grant writers.

◆ Attend Site Council meetings.

Jennifer says, "It isn't a big job. Anyone who is willing to keep in touch with other TOPS folks will be able to do it."

The key role of Friends of TOPS and Site Council (in its role as the board of directors of Friends of TOPS) is to help provide resources to our school – both financial and volunteer. The fund development chair and all those who work on our major fundraisers are providing essential service to the school. (Remember, the financial resources go to support core and enrichment programs at TOPS. Art, music, and drama programs are all dependent on successful fund development.)

Please, if you have the energy, coordination skills, and interest, contact Jennifer or me and volunteer for this job!

Kathy Cox-Czosnyka..... kcoxczos@ch2m.com

Jennifer Shaw jennifermishaw@hotmail.com

FRIENDS OF TOPS AND (FUTURE) FUND DEVELOPMENT CHAIR SEEK NO-BAKE CHAIR FOR THE 2005-06 SCHOOL YEAR

Sheri Toussaint and Kirsten James have spent the past two years taking the No-Bake Bake Sale to new heights of success. Thanks, both of you, for your energy, your dedication, and the creativity you brought to this effort.

The No-Bake begins soon after the start of school. For the past two years it has begun with a carnival which has proved successful and popular, and which has given our community a celebratory beginning to the year. However, this success has required a solid start on the part of the event coordinators in August. Friends of TOPS and the yet to be named fund development chair will be seeking a new chair for the No-Bake. If you are interested in helping with our fundraising efforts but not ready to take on the fund development chair position, please consider becoming the No-Bake chair for next year! If you are interested, contact Jennifer or Kathy (contact info above).

Site Council Report continued from page 6

FRIENDS OF TOPS

Steve Havas stated that in order to fund TOPS' proposed budget for the 2005-06 school year, Friends of TOPS would have to agree to fund the \$48,000 shortfall at this meeting. He stated that while he believes TOPS is currently in a negative cycle of committing funds before those funds are actually available (i.e., the auction has not yet taken place), Friends of TOPS has no choice but to commit the funds if it is to maintain the status quo for the 2005-06 school year as far as staffing, curriculum, and other programs are concerned. He stated he believed Friends of TOPS should approve the BLT's request to commit the funds.

As a result, Friends of TOPS then passed a motion to draft a letter to the Seattle school district committing those funds.

Finally, Friends of TOPS discussed and agreed that the Special Auction Item this year, rather than funding Olweus or building enhancements as previously discussed (see FUND DEVELOPMENT, p. 6), should be to simply fund the gap between TOPS' 2005-06 budget and the money it currently stands to receive from the School District. Tammy Luthy, auction committee chair, approved this idea. (See article p. 4.)

Friends of TOPS then adjourned its meeting, and the community forum began (see article p. 2).

ELEMENTARY PLAY: MAY 20 AND 21

By Julie Jamieson

THE OSCARS ARE COMING TO TOPS!

Auditions for the first annual Academy Awards will be the week of April 4, and rehearsals will begin after spring break, on April 18. Auditions are for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders. All interested K-3 students will join us on May 16 for the final week. The performance will be a black-tie event, so start scouting for formal wear. There will be music, dancing, and lots of "entertainment" on the red carpet. Please join us, and see you there!

NOTAS AND NOTICIAS

By *Maestra Rabbitt*

I was very proud of the attitudes and actions of all the Spanish students who were able to perform for the Taste of TOPS talent show. I know that they were all nervous about doing an activity in Spanish and dancing and singing on stage.

The 1st through 5th graders danced the conga playing the *guiros* and *timbales* they made and wearing *mascaras de carnaval* and *flores de carnaval* they also created. The middle school students made two *figuras de carnaval* around our *animales del bosque de lluvia* theme and acted as stage managers and musical support (on the congas).

Thanks to the students and parents who helped and to the school for allowing us to participate.

Conga – a Cuban carnival dance

Guiros – a type of percussion instrument

Timbales – a type of percussion drum

Mascaras de carnaval – carnival mask

Flores de carnaval – brightly colored paper flowers used in festivals

Figures de carnaval – figures that are used in carnival dances and processions

Animales del bosque de lluvia – animals of the rain forest

NOTAS Y NOTICIAS

Por *Maestra Rabbitt*

Todos mis estudiantes de español que participaron en la actividad de Taste of Tops (Sabor de Tops) actuaron de buena forma y tuve mucho orgullo en ellos. Se que estuvieron nerviosos de tener que hacer algo en español, de tener que cantar y bailar en el escenario.

Los de primer a quinto grados bailaron la conga, tocando guiros y timbales con mascararas de carnaval y flores de carnaval puestos, todo hecho por ellos mismos. Los de la clase de la secundaria hicieron figuras de carnaval con el tema de animales del bosque de lluvia y actuaron como directores del escenario y dieron el aporte instrumental, tocando las congas.

Gracias a todos mis estudiantes y a los padres y también a la escuela por darnos esa oportunidad.

Community Forum continued from page 3

There is a sense of it being incomplete. We need a better mission statement to define how we are alternative. The new mission statement is too limited and the process of coming up with it didn't embrace the school's history.

Responses to the questions "What role do you expect the Site Council to play in relation to the School Board and its decisions?" "What would you like to see as a product/outcome of this forum?" "What do you want us to communicate to you? How? When?"

CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ALTERNATIVE, AND HOW WE WANT TO BE.

Ensure staff opinions are engaged in direction-setting. Encourage and allow partnership and ownership. Focus on community responsibility. Review and update the mission and vision for the school to reflect values that were incorporated in older mission/vision statements. The process of redefining the mission will help us define how we are alternative.

CREATE IDENTIFICATION FOR TOPS THAT CAN BE COMMUNICATED WITH TOPS, GREATER COMMUNITY, AND BOARD.

Get a strong understanding that the administration is constantly seeking to embody what it means to be alternative pedagogically as well as multiculturally. Set and communicate expectations for parents. Synthesize and present a statement to the community. Energize the

community. Reemphasize the actual program. Advocate vigorously. Provide talking points for communication with school board, media, etc.

III. TRANSFERRING INFORMATION

Groups shared quick summaries of their discussions with the larger gathering. Parents were encouraged to contact their school board members, and also to contact the school with any concerns. This newsletter summary will hopefully serve as a basis for talking points and evolving plans and discussions. In addition, the questions posed at the meeting were sent to parents via room reps, with the aim of collecting more responses.

BEYOND THE MEETING (next steps):

The Site Council will wait for more input from staff, and from parents who are still sending their responses to the questions, and then will summarize these results to craft a message to the School Board. Also, there appeared to be great desire and a lot of energy around continuing this conversation. Where and how we do so will be a topic for Site Council, but input from you on how you would like to participate and areas in which you are particularly interested is greatly desired – please contact your Site Council representative!

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, librarian

*"There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away,
Nor any Coursers like a Page
Of prancing Poetry..."*

~Emily Dickinson

April is National Poetry Month, so share a special poem today. Poem books can be found in the library in the language section (811 Dewey call number). We have many favorites, including books by perennial favorites Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky, and for young adults we have books by Janet Wong and Nikki Grimes. An interesting and motivating poetry web site for children can be found at www.gigglepoetry.com.

LIBRARY TRANSFORMED

For one night last month the books were jumping on the stacks and the library windows were vibrating to the rhythmic crescendo of taiko drummers as they entertained a large crowd from the TOPS community during the annual Taste of TOPS. The Seattle youth group called Kaze Daiko, which is one of seven taiko groups in the city, performed different traditional and contemporary Japanese songs. Their taiko (literally big, fat drum) instruments are made from wine barrels, and are beaten with *bachi* (sticks). We are talking LOUD.



It was mesmerizing to watch as the drummers rhythmically beat the drums in unison and combine this with their movements among the drums. Kaze has a web site found at www.kazedaiko.tripod.com. Thanks to Carla Fetterley, 2nd grade teacher, for bringing this group to us.

by Cynthia Kadohata, and was very moved. *Kira-Kira* (kee'ra kee'ra), Japanese for glittering or shining, is a story told by Kate Takeshima and concerns life with her older sister Lynn, whom she adores, as they grow up in rural America along with their parents. I was taken by the family's struggles as observed by Kate, and with her close relationship with her older sister, who teaches her about the intricacies of life. The book is for 11- to 14-year-olds and would make a great read-aloud.

Thanks to all families that have donated books to the TOPS library from the wish list. All of the titles on the newest list were donated. A new list will be out soon. Our students really appreciate the new books.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SPEECH TOURNAMENT

Stomach butterflies are past and nerves are back to normal now that our annual speech tournament has drawn to a close. This tournament, which has been with us since the early days of TOPS, challenges students in grades 3-6 and 8 in a series of speech categories (note: 7th graders participate in History Day projects). Students voluntarily sign up for one of the four types of speeches, and if they are selected from their class they then join a total of 16 students and give their speech to four adult judges in the library loft. They are given points based on their performance, with the top four students receiving a trophy. All participants get a certificate of participation, plus the intrinsic reward of having accomplished a fairly difficult task. We should all be proud that we are associated with such creative and talented children.



2005 NEWBERY MEDAL WINNER

I just finished the new Newbery medal winner, *Kira-Kira*,

2005 SPEECH TOURNAMENT WINNERS

Storytelling (3- to 8-minute memorized speech taken from a published story)

Naomi Schwarz Score One for the Sloths
Sasha Barker-Aderem.. Dog Breath
McKenna Niemer Thomas' Snowsuit
Sabrina Scott Arnie the Donut

Expository (3- to 8-minute student-written "how to" speech)

Tova Steele..... "Ice Skating"
Rebecca Ehlers..... "How to care for your hermit crab"
Lena Mentyka "Origami"
Sean Gallagher..... "Fishing, sailing, a rock climbing knots"

Oral Interpretation (3- to 8-minute memorized published or original poem, speech, or story)

Sam Heft-Luthyspeech by Jimmy Carter, "An Invisible Line of Racial Segregation"
Lily Rorick.....poems by Jack Prelutsky
Jonah Urypoems by Jack Prelutsky
Emma Sadinsky.....poems by Jack Prelutsky

Editorial Commentary (1:45- to 2-minute original persuasive speech)

Koji Pingry "iPods for Kids"
Hannah Merrill "Save the Rainforests"
Daniel Smith "Sugar and Hyperactivity"
Alex James..... "Car Horns"

8th Grade Editorial Commentary (3- to 8-minute memorized speech)

Abigail Roth "A Woman's Place" by Naomi Wolf
Zoe Barker-Aderem..Remarks by Al Gore
Lucas Chapel.....excerpt from *Nerd No More* by Christine Franklin

A large thanks to all students and staff who work so hard to make this valuable experience happen each year. See you next February.



Photos provided by Steve Haines

WHAT TOPS FAMILIES ARE CELEBRATING

Compiled by Lynne Goodrich, CSJ member. Please send comments, additions, and suggestions to goodrich_yas@msn.com.

APRIL 2005 HOLIDAYS

April 1: April Fools Day The day originated with changes in the calendar. At one time New Year's was celebrated on March 25. In 1582 King Charles IX adopted the Gregorian calendar and the beginning of the new year became January 1. Those who refused to accept the new date or simply forgot received foolish gifts and invitations to nonexistent parties.

April 5: Third Moon (Chinese) Also known as Spring Remembrance, Ching Ming ("clear and bright") is when Chinese families show their respect by visiting the graves of ancestors to clear away weeds and make offerings of wine and fruit.

April 6: Organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints The "Church of Jesus Christ" was officially organized in the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, on April 6, 1830.

April 8: Buddha's Birthday (Buddhist) Celebrated by Buddhists in Japan, Korea, and the United States. One of the most important of Buddhist holidays. The founder of Buddhism had the given name Siddhartha and lived in India from 563 BCE to 483 BCE. Ceremonies include the offering of flowers, burning of incense, and bathing statues of baby Buddha with ladles of sweet tea.

April 13: Gudipadwa (Hindu) The beginning of the Hindu New Year. Also called Yugadi or Ugadi.

April 13: Cambodian New Year A major holiday based on the lunar calendar and celebrated for 2-3 days. Homes are thoroughly cleaned to remove unclean spirits and new clothes are made to represent a new beginning.

April 18: Ramanavani (Hindu) Birth of Ram, incarnation of Vishnu (the Preserver) in Hinduism.

April 21: Id-Mawlid-Al-Nabi (Muslim) The Prophet Muhammad's birthday.

April 22: Earth Day First observed on April 22, 1970. The goal of the day is to attract attention to the need for clean air and water and the need to conserve the earth's natural resources.

April 23 – May 1: Passover (Jewish) Festival of Freedom. Pesach is an eight day observance which begins at sunset of the 15th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. It celebrates the delivery of Jews from Egyptian slavery and commemorates the historical ideal of freedom. A ceremonial feast known as the Seder takes place on the first two nights of Passover with the reading of the Haggadah and the eating of symbolic foods.

April 30: Beltane (Celtic) A Celtic festival named after the god Belenus and meaning "brilliant fire." The festival starts with two bonfires made from nine different woods. Modern celebrations include maypole dances and jumping the cauldron for fertility of reproduction and imagination.

SUMMER MUSIC PROGRAMS FOR TOPS STUDENTS

Sent in by Paul Gillespie, middle school band and orchestra teacher

Questions: Paul Gillespie, pogilles@hotmail.com

MUSIC CENTER OF THE NORTHWEST

www.mcnw.com

206-526-8443

Summer Woodwinds Camp (Junior), July 18 – 22
Music Center of the Northwest is a community music school offering a wide range of music classes, ensembles and private instruction for youth and adults. Located in Greenwood Neighborhood of North Seattle (94th and Aurora)

SEATTLE DRUM SCHOOL

www.seattledrumschool.com

Lessons, music classes and ensembles—jazz and rock, excellent staff!

MUSIC WORKS NORTHWEST

www.musicworksnw.org

425-644-0988

Community music school—located in Bellevue, offers summer music camps for youth.

BURTON MUSIC CAMP

www.burtonmusiccamp.com

206-622-3935

Excellent music camp for grades 6 – 12-- strings, voice and band--located on Vashon Island. Four week-long sessions July 3- 30 (jazz week is week four).

SEATTLE YOUTH SYMPHONY

"Marrowstone-in-the City 2005"

www.syso.org

206-362-2300

Three sessions of music camp for youth, ages 7 – 14. Top-notch teachers! July 18 – August 6.

MARROWSTONE

www.syso.org

206-362-2300

Intensive summer camp in orchestral music held at WWU in Bellingham July 24 – August 7.

BELLEVUE YOUTH SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA

www.byso.org

425-467-5604

Summer music camp for youth, July 25 – 29, and August 1 -5.

DAILY PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND BRAIN FUNCTION

By Don Zemke, PE teacher

Oftentimes we think of physical education in terms of increasing our personal level of fitness and having opportunities to learn and practice social skills. There is also a growing collection of evidence that shows physical activity enhances brain function AND academic performance.

Movement accelerates the flow of key nutrients to the brain, like oxygen and glucose. A lack of oxygen to the brain results in disorientation,



Photos provided by Don Zemke



- ◆ Aerobic activity not only increases blood flow to the brain, but also speeds recall and reasoning skills.

Because the TOPS community has always supported daily PE we're not only improving the physical and emotional well being of our students in PE class, we're also helping them improve their academic performance. Neurokinesiologist Jean Blaydes-Madigan says: "Movement, physical activity, and exercise change the learning state into one for retention and retrieval of memory... This evidence is a sound argument for daily physical education."

confusion, fatigue, sluggishness, and concentration and memory problems. Vigorous activity in a physical education class gives the brain its needed nutrients.

Here are a few points from brain research studies that support the importance of daily physical activity:

- ◆ Swedish neuroscientist Dr. Germund Hesslow says that, all things being equal, a physically active child will have an advantage in learning versus his or her counterparts. Mental focus and concentration levels in young children improve significantly after engaging in physical activity.
- ◆ Numerous studies have found that students involved in athletics generally have higher grades and standardized test scores than their peers.
- ◆ Children who engage in daily physical education show superior motor fitness, academic performance, and attitude toward school as compared to their counterparts who do not have physical education.



SIXTH ANNUAL TASTE OF TOPS: "MATSURI"

Photos provided by Don Zemke

By Sherice Toussaint, Grade 4

Matsuri means festival. The Taste of TOPS was so awesome! Everybody looks forward to the TOT because it's always cool in some way. This year we had a sushi food demonstration, a kabuki, Japanese film, an origami craft table, samurai and kimono photo booths, taiko drummers, and a kendo martial arts demonstration. The classes who performed were Joby and Joan's kindergarten class, Carla Fetterley and Julie Gillette's 2nd grade class, Don Zemke's Double Dutch team, and Ms. Rebecca Rabbitt's Spanish class. The students who performed were Leo Shannon and Riley Calcagno and their dads,

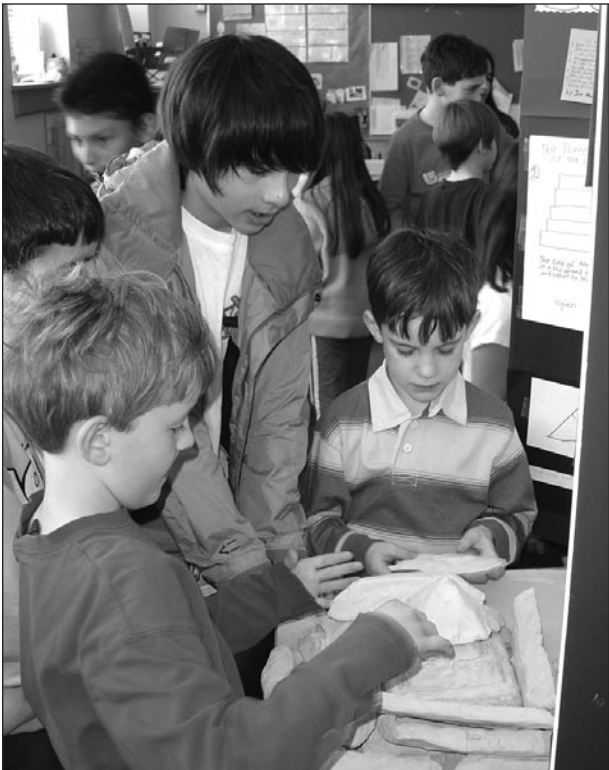


Brian Tamura, Conor Courtney, Atticus Pennylegion-Hurley, Simon Angell, Omar Haddouch, Will Roth, Stephan Jones, John Tamura, Sherice Toussaint, Rachael Timmen, Kylin Sandstrom, Clara LaPatra, Anna Duncan, Jane Markman, Lani Chapko, Edna Pennylegion-Hurley, Sylvie Nemeth, and Rebecca Ehlers.





1ST GRADERS TOUR THEIR 6TH GRADE BUDDIES' EGYPT MUSEUM



Photos provided by Teresa Nemeth

SIXTH GRADERS AT CAMP MORAN

Bird calls, tree identification, night hiking, wolf calls, and everyone made it to the top of Mt. Constitution!



Photos provided by George Nemeth



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EARTH DAY 2005: A STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITY FOR TOPS

By Laurie Stusser-McNeil

Get out the garden gloves, grab a litter bag. Earth Day is April 22 and TOPS is celebrating with a school-wide stewardship event.

We're looking forward to a wildly successful, two-day, community-building Earth Day celebration and a stewardship program that is fully sustainable for the future. Join the excitement as we truly make a difference in our world by helping our children learn to take responsibility for their individual actions and develop a respect and appreciation for their surroundings.

Different grade bands will "adopt" zones around TOPS, the Franklin Green Street, and Rogers Playground. These zones will be cared for on a regular basis and used for environmental learning throughout the year. On April 21 and 22, students will participate in earth stewardship projects and get to know their zones. Activities may include a first round of clean-up, weeding, planting, and learning. Get involved! Contact your child's teacher and see what you can do to help. No doubt many of you have skills, time, and energy to offer.

Tools are a key aspect of the stewardship program, and we look forward to developing a tool/supply shed. Take a look at our tool wish list and see what you've got lying around. Or hit the garage sales this spring and hunt for:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 15 buckets with handles
(olive bucket type) | 5 flat head rakes |
| Clean Green bags (no limit) | 30 child-size gloves |
| 15 hand trowels | 30 adult-size gloves (15 medium
and 15 large) |
| 15 hand diggers/cultivators | 10 plastic watering cans |
| 5 standard shovels, 5 child-size
shovels | Wheel barrow (1 or 2) |
| 5 leaf rakes | 3 regular brooms |
| | 3 push brooms |

The stewardship committee is made up of parents, teachers, and administrative staff. For more information, contact Laurie at ljstusser@comcast.net.

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