A Message From The Principal

In this season of Thanksgiving, as fall slowly winds itself through November on its trek towards winter, I find myself reflecting on all I am thankful for as principal of TOPS:

Assistant principal: I am thankful for Gerrit Kischner. He brings a cool, calm, and collected perspective into every conversation. He truly has the best interest of every student at heart.

Office staff: I am thankful for our office staff. We are fortunate to have the best office staff in the Seattle public school system. A warm welcome greets every visitor to our school: parents, students, and community alike.

Counselor: I am thankful for Jennifer Murray. She recognizes the gifts of all of our students. She works to help each student to feel good about themselves and realize their potential to become respectful, caring, and productive people.

Staff: I am thankful for the staff. They are always willing to try new things and help students endeavor to overcome every challenge. They hold firm to the belief that every child can, must, and will learn. TOPS staff share a mutual respect. They are willing to use differences to enrich and elevate one another. They teach and lead by example.

Students: I am thankful for the students. Our students are gregarious, thoughtful, energetic, enthusiastic, enjoyable, curious, intelligent, socially minded, earnest, caring, quiet, empathetic, and above all else, hungry for learning. I am thankful for our new programs: Special Education, ESL, and DHH populations. They enrich the lives and experiences of all of our children. Our students will be better prepared to celebrate and honor differences throughout their lives.

Parents: I am thankful for the parents. A more dedicated group of parents cannot be found. They are generous with both their time and their resources. TOPS parents are willing to do anything to enhance our learning community. They are thoughtful and take all points of view and ideas into consideration. Our parents tirelessly donate their time and efforts to Site Council, CSJ, newsletter, communication committee (room reps), auction, No-Bake, classroom volunteering, TOPS directory, TOPICS, drama, and camp coordinators, etc.

Educational interns: I am thankful for our educational interns. We are provided with very competent and able administrative and teacher interns.

Eastlake community: I am thankful for the Eastlake community. Both the Eastlake council and businesspeople are generous in their support of TOPS.

Custodial and lunchroom staff: I am thankful for the custodial staff. They are always willing to participate in our kindergarten camp. The custodial staff keep our building clean and beautiful. Our lunchroom staff keep our students well fed.

Volunteer coordinator: I am thankful for our volunteer coordinator. She gives countless hours towards organizing all of the volunteer efforts at TOPS.

All of the above inspires me to come to work and give my very best every day. Thank you all for making TOPS a wonderful place to be!

Cheers!
Clara
STATE OF THE SCHOOL

By Sandi Kurtz

The annual State of the School meeting is usually a combination of “what we’ve done” and “what we’ll be doing.” This year’s session on October 20 was a mix of past accomplishments and upcoming challenges, both concrete and theoretical.

To open up the “what we’ve done” section, Site Council Chair Kathy Cox-Czosnyka gave a brief update on the recent Council retreat, where they used the survey circulated last spring to help identify four areas where they’ll put most of their energy this year. If you haven’t yet filled out a survey, the Site Council is still accepting them – contact Kathy Cox-Czosnyka at kcoxczos@ch2m.com for a copy. The categories (climate and community, communication, academics mission/vision, and Council structure/responsibilities) are fairly general, but there are more specific projects underneath these headings. High among those is the upcoming anti-bullying program (details in the Site Council report, p. 4), which the Site Council is co-sponsoring with the Coalition for Social Justice and the Building Leadership Team. Some of the funding comes from Friends of TOPS monies, which are administered by the Site Council. Kirsten James, speaking for the No-Bake drive, was pleased to report that we are almost at 40% of our monetary goal, thanks in part to a vigorous start at this year’s Carnival. The drive will continue until January 15 (and they certainly won’t turn away any donations made after that date), so we are in a good position to achieve the total goals of $70,000 and 100% TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation. By now, everyone should have received a letter at home with an explanation of the TOPS community participation.

Submit your contributions to the newsletter box in the main office or, preferably, by Word file or email to Teresa at zronga2@cs.com. Please send photos to cszumura@mindspring.com.

Deadlines are the Friday after each Site Council meeting. Exception: the deadline for the December/January issue is Friday, December 3.

Would you like to edit or help edit this fabulous publication? Newcomers welcome. I’ll show you how it works. Are you the one? Please contact Teresa at the above address, or Stacie Bonnelle, volunteer coordinator, at topsvlntr@aol.com or 252-3510.

Assistant Principal Gerrit Kischner and Danforth intern Robin Imai gave a quick overview of TOPS’ experience with what Kischner calls “the colossal testing movement.” Although we can use scores like the WASL to look at the school as a whole, or even at the progress of a group over time, he reminded that we still need to follow up on the needs of individual students. Teachers are trying to meld these two viewpoints, using “daily check-in” kinds of monitoring to see where the overall picture sits in relationship to the kids in the classroom that day.

As far as the WASL itself and other tests are concerned, TOPS’ scores can be found on the Seattle Public Schools website http://www.seattleschools.org/area/site/test/schoolpages/993.xml (though the 2004 WASL isn’t posted yet). Our scores have improved over the last testing report, both for specific grade levels and, more significantly, for individual groups of kids as they progress through the grades. With a relatively small student population, the latter change is more telling, since it compares a group of students to their previous work rather than to a different group of kids. In what seems to be the inexorable move towards standards-based evaluation, TOPS will phase out use of the “Iowa Tests” after this year’s 3rd and 5th graders take them.

One of the more positive aspects of this emphasis on standards has been the ongoing work teachers have put in over several years to coordinate or “align” teaching throughout the grades. Lori Eickelberg spoke about this process in teaching writing, showing examples of a “writing to a prompt” exercise that the whole school did at the beginning of this year. (These samples are posted in the front hall display case, and are definitely worth the detour to take a look.) In the case of writing, TOPS teachers began working on “alignment” before the school district issued its own standards, identifying the steps that a skillful writer goes through and the methods teachers can use to help students master that process. With the philosophy that writing is “how you show what you know,” these skills underpin almost every other kind of learning, and are the main vehicle for teachers and other adults to see how a student is actually doing.

After similar work with the reading curriculum starting about six years ago, the school is moving on to look at math. Emily Lauderback, who is spending the year at TOPS courtesy of money from the Gates Foundation, is working with faculty to help coordinate the math curriculum, and came to the State of the School meeting to talk about this project. (See Emily’s article p. 10.)

As usual with a meeting of the TOPS community, there was more discussion than could fit into the scheduled time, and the meeting broke up with people still discussing “what we’ve done” and “what we’ll be doing.”
REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD

By Kathy Wickward

That there are nine proposed amendments to the school assignment plan conceivably belies the notion that the Seattle School Board is unresponsive to parent concerns. Directors Lilly and Butler-Wall, directly addressing needs expressed by constituents in their subdistricts, proposed six of the nine amendments. Eastlake parents will get a larger share of kindergarten seats at TOPS if the Board passes an amendment to apply distance as a tiebreaker to 20% of the open kindergarten seats after siblings have been assigned to TOPS.

The Board started work on overhauling the assignment plan in the spring of 2004. Realizing that it could not come up with a comprehensive plan in time, the board met with staff and created the amendment package, which it introduced in a motion October 6, with action to be taken November 3. In a community meeting Oct. 19, Brita Butler-Wall stated she did not know if the TOPS amendment has enough votes to pass. However, she outlined a number of values and assumptions that she, and presumably the rest of the Board, holds in regard to the issue:

1. Returning to a predominantly neighborhood-based assignment plan will save the school district transportation funds.

2. Alternative programs are great, however many “mainstream” schools are adopting the more progressive methods of the alternative schools. Hence, some programs once considered alternative are no longer so.

“Alternativeness” falls along a continuum.

3. A diverse school is not as important as an excellent school in raising student achievement levels.

4. Integration does not work to achieve the board’s primary goal: to reduce disproportionality in student achievement.

5. Families are looking for equity and predictability in the student assignment plan.

The amendments are designed to be temporary measures. As the Board discusses school assignment in its five year plan, everything will be on the table, according to Brita Butler-Wall.

The district is, however, committed to addressing and supporting an already diverse population, and at the October 6 meeting announced actions taken recently. Superintendent Manhas introduced a new director of equity and race relations, Dr. Caprice Hollins. The Board and 20 of the district’s senior staff will attend a three-hour training on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender student issues. And the staff has completed a major addition to the district web site. Families speaking Spanish or Vietnamese as their first language can now click on a globe on the district’s home page to access critical information in their language.

School Board meetings are held every 1st and 3rd Wednesday at the John Stanford Center at 6 p.m. Brita Butler-Wall’s next community meeting is November 15 in the Bryant Lunchroom. She also holds office hours Mondays from 8 to 10 a.m. at Honeybear Bakery / Third Place Books.

REPORT FROM THE BLT

By Gerrit Kischner, assistant principal

The Building Leadership Team has finalized the professional development plan for the year with an agreement to build the following pieces into the calendar:

1. Math: Emily Lauderback, our math coach, will work with K-5 teachers several Wednesday afternoons a month.

2. Research methods: Middle school teachers will use the time K-5 teachers are focusing on math to collaborate on the development of common research expectations for middle school students.

3. Writing: Time will be devoted throughout the year to revisiting the writing continuum developed at TOPS a few years ago. In October, students at all grade levels wrote to a single prompt (“Choose an object that is personally meaningful to you and/or your family, and write a letter to your teacher describing the objects and explaining why it is so meaningful.”), producing a first-draft, on-demand writing sample that teachers can use through the year to plan their implementation of the curriculum. The BLT hopes to provide for students to produce a second writing sample in May so that teachers may study the students’ progress.

4. Bullying prevention: A coordinating committee has formed with eight staff members to study the possibility of implementing the Olweus Bullying Prevention framework. It is hoped that grant monies will allow this committee to get initial training, and the BLT has built time into the professional development calendar for the committee to return to the faculty as whole in March with its findings.

5. Emergency preparedness: The BLT agreed to reserve one early-release day (February 9) for staff to participate in a larger-scale emergency drill.

6. Cultural competency: Work has begun to define “cultural competency” and to lay out a K-8 continuum to ensure continuity and growth from grade to grade. This is a large undertaking that will likely continue into the 2005-06 school year.
DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED ASSIGNMENT PLAN CHANGE

Jules James, TOPS parent and Eastlake resident, presented Brita Butler-Wall’s proposal to the School Board amending the assignment plan to apply the distance tiebreaker for all kindergarten applicants to 20% of the open seats after siblings are assigned. Jules encouraged Site Council to see this new assignment plan as an opportunity rather than a compromise. The current members of the Seattle School Board are conducting their annual review of the assignment plan, with much of the discussion focused on the high cost of transportation. All-city and multi-cluster schools are especially in the spotlight. Jules noted that both TOPS and the Eastlake community may be on the political sidelines as new assignment and transportation plans sweep through next year. Jules suggests that if TOPS is a pilot program for a hybrid placement system (both distance-based and lottery assignment by percentage), we could possibly preserve TOPS as an alternative school, rather than see it become another neighborhood school with assignment based solely on distance.

Site Council members concluded that they could not reach a consensus to support Ms. Butler-Wall’s proposal until they had polled their constituents. The Board welcomes comments and is scheduled to vote on the adjustments to the assignment plan on November 3.

ASSOCIATED STUDENT BODY (ASB)

Robin Imai, Danforth administrative intern, announced the new ASB executive committee. The middle school students voted to have Hannah Repass serve as president, Georgia Jamieson vice president, Emma Slaton secretary, and Michael Haruta treasurer. They were busy planning a November dance and assembly at the time of the site council meeting.

SCHOOL BOARD REPORT

Kathy Wickward gave her report from last month’s Seattle School Board meeting. (See article p. 3.)

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Clara Scott listed a number of the activities to be undertaken by staff and students in the coming weeks.

BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM (BLT)

Gerrit Kischner reported for the BLT (See BLT report p. 5.)

TREASURER’S REPORT

Steve Havas, Site Council treasurer, stated that the Friends of TOPS is solvent. He has deposited a large portion of the money in the Friends of TOPS account into a certificate of deposit so it can earn a bit of interest before it is spent.

DRAMA

Linda Korbus, drama committee chair, reported that Julie Jamieson will direct the elementary school play in the spring, and Dave Crandall has agreed to write another play!

The 3rd grade students are working on a production of “Sideways Stories from Wayside School” (from the Louis Sachar series), a departure from Shakespeare, this fall.

COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CSJ)

Galen Goff spoke about the CSJ goal to make TOPS more open and welcoming so that no one feels oppressed. She described the CSJ as augmenting the Site Council’s work fulfilling the school mission statement by filling in some of the more personal puzzle pieces, making families feel whole and included in the community.

BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM

Gerrit Kischner, Elizabeth Dickinson, Wayne Duncan, and Kathy Barker gave presentations to Site Council about the bullying prevention program currently underway with the Terry Chadsey training and what the future program could look like.

Gerrit Kischner reported that the staff has participated in a one-hour training session with Terry Chadsey, focusing on how to identify bullying. Jennifer Murray followed up this session providing teachers and staff with a consistent language to use with students.

Both CSJ and the BLT have incorporated an anti-bullying program as part of their goals. The BLT has affirmed these goals by allocating staff development time to anti-bullying training. The staff has formed a coordinating committee to study schools following the Olweus program. Dan Olweus is the author of the book Bullying at School and a recognized expert in the field of peer relations and bullying.

Elizabeth Dickinson spoke about the parents’ role in the anti-bullying program. Parents need to be fully informed about the subject and committed to sustaining what will be a multi-year program if instituted. There will need to be specific training of parents so language used with students is consistent in the classroom, on the playground, and at home.

Wayne Duncan, a TOPS parent and clinical psychologist, works with children and families around the issues of peer relations and bullying. He spends time helping families and kids craft responses to “bullying” situations and create a more positive school experience. It is possible to work toward creating a caring community with larger goals of being an inclusive, accepting community where students are able to do their best work.

Wayne emphasized that effective anti-bullying programs are comprehensive and broad-based. They involve all staff, students, parents, and teachers. Bullying happens

Continued on page 6
The stewardship committee presented at the October 13 staff meeting and received unanimous support in moving ahead with facilitated study groups. Everyone in the TOPS community will be invited to join us as we explore the development of a sustainable, school-wide stewardship initiative that will encourage responsibility and respect of the world around us.

Carla Fetterley, Katie Waters, Joan O’Connor, and Lori Eickelberg have agreed to represent the teaching staff as we study the possibilities and develop a program from the inside out, investigating curriculum opportunities and “teachable moments” inherent in caring for our environment.

Goals for the stewardship program include:
1. Develop healthy respect for the environment, beginning at school. School buildings, school grounds, Rogers Playground, the Franklin Green Street, and all other spaces commonly used by the TOPS community are our responsibility to treat with respect and care.
2. Encourage all students to make a meaningful contribution to the school environment, allowing them to experience the capability they have to impact the world at large.
3. Create a legacy for the future, giving students an opportunity to enhance the school environment with creative, positive initiative.
4. Increase community service opportunities within the K-8 TOPS experience.

The study groups will be led by a facilitator, a stewardship coach if you will, who can lead us in intentional discussion and help bridge the various issues, interests, and needs of different grades, teachers’ current work loads, and scheduling challenges.

The first session will be in early December; keep an eye on the Wednesday Go-Homes for the date and join the discussion!

Comments or questions? Contact Laurie Stusser-McNeil at lstusser@comcast.net. Other committee members: Rebecca Sadinsky, Molly LaPatra, Cheri Bloom.

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2004-05 TOPS CALENDAR

Please 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.

**November**

4 (Th) .......... 3rd grade to Soundbridge at Benaroya Hall, 10:45 a.m.
4 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting / follow-up discussion of bullying prevention, 6:30-8 p.m.
4 (Th) .......... GLBT families dinner, 6-8 p.m., Washington Middle School
5 (F) .......... End of first quarter
6 (Sa) .......... 4th grade swim party & potluck, 5-7 p.m., Medgar Evers Pool
9 (T) .......... Middle school forum, Kids and Cyberspace, 7-8:30 p.m.
10 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
10 (W) .......... Kindergarten potluck, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
11 (Th) .......... Veterans Day; no school
15-23 (M-T) .... Elementary parent-teacher conferences, dismissal at 1:10 p.m.
16 (T) .......... 1st, 3rd, and Judy’s class to SCT, Bumnicula, 9:30 a.m.
25-26 (Th-F) ... Thanksgiving holiday; no school
30 (T) .......... Parent math night, Computation & Homework, 7-9 p.m.

**December**

2 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting / discussion of TOPS mission in classroom, 6:30-8 p.m.
3 (F) .......... Middle school play, 7 p.m.
4 (Sa) .......... Middle school play, 2 and 7 p.m.
15 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
20-31 (M-F) ... Winter break; no school

**January**

3 (M) .......... Classes resume
6 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
17 (M) .......... Martin Luther King Jr. Day; no school
19 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
25 (T) .......... Parent math night, Math Vocabulary & WASL, 7-9 p.m.
28 (F) .......... End of semester
31 (M) .......... Day between semesters; no school

**February**

3 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
9 (W) .......... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
15 (T) .......... Parent math night, Fractions, measurement, & geometry, 7-9 p.m.
16 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
21 (M) .......... Presidents Day; no school
22-25 (T-F) ... Mid-winter break; no school

**March**

2 (W) .......... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
3 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
4 (Sa) .......... Middle school play, 2 and 7 p.m.
15 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
18 (F) .......... Professional development day; no school

**April**

7 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
8 (F) .......... End of third quarter
11-15 (M-F) .. Spring break; no school
20 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
26 (T) .......... Parent math night, Probability & statistics, 7-9 p.m.

**May**

5 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
18 (W) .......... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
18 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
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.
30 (M) .......... Memorial Day; no school

**June**

2 (Th) .......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
15 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
21 (T) .......... Last student day
Nothing helps better create the habit of reading than new books to peruse. Our library is now flush with new books thanks to the generous donation from Writers in the Schools. As reported last May, this Seattle Arts and Lectures – sponsored program brings writers into the schools to help teach writing to young adults. Their generous donation of $500 netted us 32 new books that run the range from a book about unusual occupations, to a volume of the “most influential slam, hip hop, performance art and contemporary poets in the world today,” to a complete book of dragons. Our language arts instructor Lori Eickelberg was able to get this writing program again this school year for our 7th and 8th graders.

Another large group of new books came in thanks to funds from Friends of TOPS, through the CSJ multicultural book group. Our students are now enjoying books that range from sign language to bullying to African history. (See article by Elizabeth Dickinson, p. 14.) It doesn’t stop there. Last year William Smith, special education instructional assistant, donated money for library books. Today younger students are enjoying many new nonfiction books on animals, countries, and biographies. I would also like to thank the families that have donated books to the school. We appreciate your generosity in fostering literacy for our students, and for keeping that reading habit going.

As we head into the “indoor season” the library could use some Kleenex for noses, and old pencils, games, and scrap paper for busy hands. The library is open most days from 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., including during the upcoming parent-teacher conferences. Students are welcome after school to read or do homework. It is not, however, a daycare. I can’t provide supervision to those who would act to disrupt others trying to work. Kids Company, on the other hand, can provide fun activities in a homey setting for children who need to “actively unwind” from the school day. And as always, adults are welcome to hang out in the library to work on their reading habit with all of our new books.

Site Council Report continued from page 4
in the hallway, lunchroom, playground, usually not in the classroom. Custodians, bus drivers, and playground supervisors all need to be included. Dan Olweus stresses the importance of creating a multi-year program. He has noted decreases in bullying occur in the second year after intervention. There has to be a long-term commitment, noting that we are dealing with complicated issues of power imbedded over years. A program needs to be tailored for the particular school community. Data collection is important to analyze how a program is performing. A steering committee needs to be established that is truly representative of the whole school community.

Kathy Barker discussed what bullying looks like at TOPS, and why it is important for a community like ours to consider adopting a comprehensive anti-bullying program.

Kathy Cox-Czosnyka closed by asking Site Council members to consider whether TOPS should take on a program of this size.
A MESSAGE ABOUT THE NO-BAKE “CARNIVAL” KICK-OFF

By Sheri Toussaint, No-Bake chair

The second annual No-Bake Carnival Kick-off on Saturday, October 2, was a wonderful event with an abundance of community spirit. The No-Bake committee would like to thank TOPS parents, students, alumni, and faculty for working 143 volunteer hours at the carnival. A special thanks to the dunk tank teachers. Your participation was above and beyond the call of duty and the carnival was a huge success because of all of you.

The underwriting effort was outstanding. Thank you to Starbucks and Steve Havas for coffee, tea, and condiments; QFC and Tammy Luthy for the bottled water; Yuen Lui and Barb Lui for the dunk tank poster, No-Bake necklaces, and buttons; and Keith Toussaint for the carnival punch cards.

(See p. 15 for No-Bake update and donor list)
INTRODUCING…DARIN DURAND,
NEW 6TH GRADE MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHER

Hello, my name is Darin Durand and I’m happy to tell you a little bit about myself. First I must say that I’m very excited to be at TOPS! All of my encounters with the TOPS staff and parents thus far have been wonderful. One of the reasons I am so delighted to be at TOPS is the tremendous amount of parent involvement. As a new parent myself, I have been learning firsthand how many supportive family, friends, and community members it takes to raise our son, while keeping our own support networks. I believe more now than ever, that it takes a village to raise a child.

I was born in the tiny town of Spooner, Wisconsin, but my family moved to a suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota, when I was eight. I consider myself a Minnesotan and attended the University of Minnesota for my undergraduate and graduate studies – Go Gophers! I began my collegiate career with the intention of studying business. One summer I taught at a YMCA camp and realized that the world of finance was not something I was passionate about. So after two years of school I changed my major to education.

While at the U of M I met Dr. Roger Johnson, one of the forefathers of cooperative learning and the founder of the Cooperative Learning Center. Under his tutelage I developed skills and insights into the vast benefits cooperative learning has in the classroom. Research shows that students enjoy learning more and retain more knowledge using cooperative groups. I use many of these approaches in my classroom – one example is the establishment of base groups (groups of four or five students who work together to solve problems or puzzles, create games, and teach each other). My wife and I still have dinner with Roger and his wife a couple of times a year.

My student teaching was in a multi-age classroom at Highlands Elementary in Edina, Minnesota, and I acquired my first full-time teaching position in the very same classroom. One of the great things about this school was its focus on cooperative learning, which helped foster my teaching abilities in this area. It also allowed me to work with kids from ages 6-11 and witness their road markers for educational and social development. I spent most of my day with 3rd-5th graders but then swapped classrooms with my teaching partner for two periods a day, which was 1st-3rd graders. The school was similar to TOPS in its parental involvement, which is always something teachers love to have.

I then decided I wanted to eliminate the commute and teach in or near the community I where was living. I was hired as a middle school math teacher at VOA Middle School. The school was quite a contrast from teaching at Highlands. The class sizes were smaller, but the students were much rougher, with many needs in basic math skills. There was little to no parental involvement; however, the staff was extremely hardworking and dedicated to reaching our student population. During my two years at VOA I was able to become technology and environmental camp coordinator – two jobs I very much enjoyed. My contrasting experiences at Highlands and VOA taught me that learning and teaching must be done holistically. Just like adults, when children experience turmoil in one area of their lives it permeates all other areas, including their ability to learn.

My wife is an Oregonian (seventh generation, and she’d say Go Ducks!) and when we decided to start a family there was no question that we’d move back to the Northwest. Elisha Samuel Durand was born on July 9. He keeps us smiling as he changes every day. It is such a joy being a father.

We bid goodbye to the Midwest and flew to Oregon to stay with my wife’s parents at the end of July. Then, after a brief stay in the hospitality of the home of Jules James (TOPS parent), we found an apartment one block from TOPS. I feel so blessed to be at TOPS and in the warm embrace of its community.

On a more personal note, I love the outdoors, which is why Washington is such a great state for me to live in! I wake up every morning hoping to catch a glimpse of the Olympics. I love camping, hiking, fishing (my father-in-law is trying to make a fly fisherman out of me), swimming, biking, and most sports. I’m happy to be a Mariners fan and hope that they get things turned around next year, but the Twins will always be first in my heart, as well as any team who can beat the Yankees (Go Red Socks!).
NEW IN THE NEWSLETTER: A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS

WHAT TOPS FAMILIES ARE CELEBRATING

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

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH
The purpose of National American Indian Heritage Month is to honor and recognize the original peoples of this land.

NOVEMBER 2004 HOLIDAYS

Nov. 1: Dia de los Muertos (Mexico), Day of the Dead. Begins at the end of October and closes with visits to the graves of families and friends, where decorations are left.

Nov. 2: All Souls Day (Catholic) Commemorates the faithful departed.

Nov. 3: Wuwuchim (Hopi New Year) Celebrating with songs, prayers, and dances.

Nov. 11: Veterans Day (USA) and Remembrance Day (Canada) Honoring the men and women who have served in the armed forces.

Nov. 12: Birth of Baha’u’llah, 1817 Founder/prophet of the B’hai faith. Spiritual unity of humankind celebrated.

Nov. 12: Diwali (Deepavali), Hindu Festival of Lights Festival of lights and fireworks celebrates fortune, wealth, and generosity.

Nov. 14: Eid-ul-Fitr (Muslim) Marks the end of Ramadan (Oct. 15 to Nov. 14), the month of fasting, and is a festival of great celebrating.


Nov. 25: Thanksgiving (USA) Celebrates the pilgrims’ first successful harvest. The custom of giving thanks did not originate with the pilgrims. The Wampanoags gave thanks as an integral part of celebrations called Nickommo, which are still held today.

Nov. 26: Hmong New Year (Laos) The New Year, which starts at the full moon of November, symbolizes the end of the harvest and a start of new lives or a new beginning.

Nov. 26: Guru Nanak’s Birthday (Sikh) Birth of the founder of the Sikh religion in 1469.

Nov. 28: Advent (Christian) The period beginning the first of four Sundays before Christmas.

LEARNING AND READING DIFFICULTIES

NATIONALLY KNOWN LEARNING SPECIALIST TO SPEAK

Saturday, November 13, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Kane Hall

Dr. Mel Levine, nationally renowned pediatrician and learning specialist, will speak at the University of Washington’s Kane Hall on “Understanding the Phenomenon of Learning and Reading Difficulties.” Sponsored by the Washington State Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (WABIDA), the lecture targets parents, educators, psychologists, and anyone interested in how children learn.

Dr. Levine believes that children with learning difficulties are not learning disabled; their minds are just “wired differently.” He is author of A Mind at a Time, a New York Times bestseller for more than six months. He has been featured on Oprah and in Newsweek, USA Today, and Teacher.

Dr. Levine will discuss ways that parents and educators can understand how brain functions affect learning, how to identify learning differences without labels, and bring optimism and hope to the process of addressing children’s individual challenges.

To register, go to www.interdys.org. WABIDA members: $100; nonmembers $130. More information is available at www.WABIDA.org, or contact Stacia Kirby at 363-1492.
A NOTE FROM EMILY LAUNDERBACK,
TOPS MATH COACH

My task is to assist TOPS in articulating and aligning the mathematics curriculum and instruction to close the achievement gap. I will be working closely with the teachers and sometimes the students to ensure that all of TOPS has a consistent approach to developing number sense and computation strategies. Working in the Edmonds School District at College Place Elementary, a Title 1 school with the highest needs in the district, I had excellent training through the Edmonds Math Project, a National Science Foundation Grant. Working with some of the national leaders of mathematics reform, I experienced a complete paradigm shift in the way I view mathematical thinking and learning. Students become naturally engaged when allowed to use their own problem-solving ability rather than simply memorizing rote algorithms.

As we know, the WASL is becoming an extremely high-stakes assessment. It is not simply a “4th grade” or a “7th grade” test, however. It takes all of the staff and parents to support the students in order for them to meet the standards set forth by the state. The mathematics standards are very difficult for us as adults to fully internalize because we were not taught in the way that has now proven most beneficial for our students’ learning. It is therefore also one of my goals to help educate any parents who are interested in helping their students.

During this school year, parents will have the opportunity to learn more about how mathematics is being taught and assessed today. An excellent, quick read is Math: Facing an American Phobia by Marilyn Burns. Burns is a major driving force in mathematics reform. Fortunately, the book is fairly light, and she has a great sense of humor!

Here are some suggestions for what parents can do to best support their children in today’s mathematics classrooms:

- Discuss real-life math situations where you are estimating. Think out loud and ask your child to help you. Children will develop the skill of knowing when to estimate and to what degree by using it in real contexts.
- Include your child in measurement activities. Again, real life situations are where we learn skills and concepts most efficiently. (For example: If you are buying a new rug, ask your child to help you measure the area of the floor with a tape measure. But don’t stop there. Talk about what area means in the room and how that measurement will help you to buy the new rug, ensuring that it fits.)
- If you have questions or concerns about your child’s homework or mathematics experience, please contact his/ her teacher, or email me anytime at: emily.lauderback@comcast.net. You may also reach me through the main office at 252-3510.

By the end of the 2nd trimester (March):
- 1st graders will recall addition facts through at least sums to 12.
- 2nd graders will recall addition and subtraction facts through at least 18 (20?).
- 3rd graders will recall multiplication facts for 0’s, 1’s, 2’s, 3’s, 4’s, 5’s, and 10’s.
- 4th graders will recall multiplication and division facts through 12’s.

Here are some suggestions for what parents can do to best support their children in today’s mathematics classrooms:

- At the designated benchmarks, practice the basic math facts with your child. Focus on relationships to learn the facts, not just memorization. (For example: I don’t know 8 x 6. However, I do know 8 x 5 = 40, plus one more set of 8 = 48.) Use what the child does know to build and arrive at the answer.

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PARENT MATH NIGHTS
Elementary commons, 7 to 9 p.m.
November 30 .... Computation and homework
January 25 ........ Math vocabulary and WASL
February 15 ...... Fractions, measurement, and geometry
April 26......... Probability and statistics
May 24......... Patterns and functions/ algebraic thinking

Learning and practicing their math facts. The new grade level expectations are listed below.

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- 3rd graders will recall multiplication facts for 0’s, 1’s, 2’s, 3’s, 4’s, 5’s, and 10’s.
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KINDERGARTEN AND 5TH GRADE BUDDIES SEE SPAWNING SALMON AT THE CEDAR RIVER

On October 22, kindergarten and 5th grade buddies went to the Cedar River to learn about spawning salmon as part of their study of the salmon life cycle and habitat. Thanks to the teachers and all of the volunteers for making this annual event possible.

Photos provided by June Fung
ULTIMATE FRISBEE

By Emma Saltzberg, Grade 8

Hi, my name is Emma Saltzberg. I’m an 8th grader this year at TOPS, and right now one of my favorite things to do is play Ultimate Frisbee. So far, we’ve won most of our games with our losses being really close.

Most of us on the “A” team have been playing together now for three years under the direction of coach Don. Some of the players like Brady Wells, Max Miner, and Kyle Kurokawa have developed into exceptional throwers. Others, like Alex Keo, Matthew Hall, Malik Owens, and Robby Low, have become great long throw catchers and defensive specialists. The reason our team is so successful though is because we have a great core group of people who know how to work the disc up the field using our good hands, aggressive defense, and the ability to throw accurately. These players include myself, Taizo Pingry, Jared Lawson, Michael Haruta, Eric, Shanice, and Ayona Hall, Jessica Savage, Jesse Lovell, and Ankober Yewondwossen.

What’s cool is when everybody on the field is focused, communicating well, moving quickly to the open spaces on the field, and moving through our opponent with precision for the score. It’s the best feeling in the world! Also, the thrill of seeing all my teammates around me all together, no matter if we win or lose, through thick and thin, we’re together.

Photos provided by Don Zemke
FENCING

By Cleo Stannard, Grade 6

When the sixth grade has PE, we have an area of choice on Friday where we get to choose what sport we’d like to study. Some of us have chosen fencing. Fencing may look easy, but it requires lots of concentration and balance. You have to know what you’re doing, otherwise you can get hurt. You have to be careful, and wear lots of protection, and handle the foils respectfully. Don helps us learn moves and shows us how to parry (block) and how to lunge (attack).
NEW MULTICULTURAL BOOKS

By Elizabeth Dickinson

The rains have begun, a perfect opportunity to check out TOPS’ new books on global cultures and social justice. The library and classrooms received more than 185 books last year, thanks to Friends of TOPS funding for multicultural books.*

As always, we bought books for all ages and resources that would support teachers’ curricula. We also improved our collection in three specific areas: books for young adults/advanced readers, books featuring deaf or hard-of-hearing children or teaching American Sign Language, and books on social aggression, inclusion/exclusion, and bullying.

Here’s a sample of some new books I’d like to curl up with:

**Grade K-2 picture books:**

What’s more anticipated than losing that first tooth? *Throw Your Tooth on the Roof* (Beeler) describes rituals to part with lost teeth the world around, and my son has pored over all the possibilities for over a year while hopefully wiggling his front teeth. Children may also relate to the lively heroine in *Jamela’s Dress* (Daly), who parades through the streets in fabric that her mother has bought to make herself a dress for a wedding. As you can imagine, trouble ensues but is happily resolved in this story set in South Africa. Perhaps less dramatic but equally warm and attuned to children’s experiences is a series that depicts Moses and his deaf or hard-of-hearing classmates as they meet up for the first day of school, attend a play, and enjoy a concert. *Moses books, Millman*

Finally, the vividly illustrated Japanese folktale *Yoshi’s Feast* (Kajikawa) describes two neighbors at odds; the rich one garnishes his simple meal of rice with the delicious smell of eels broiled by his poor neighbor, who gets poorer each day because he can’t sell enough of his cooking. Check out the book to see how they work it out.

**Grades 3-6:** David Macaulay’s popular series on architecture continues with Mosque, a description of building a mosque and its surrounding complex of buildings representative of 16th-century Turkey. Pair this with *What You Will See inside a Mosque* (Khan) to enhance your understanding of Muslim sacred spaces and practices. Traveling forward from medieval Istanbul to the contemporary United States, you can find *Children of Native America Today* (Dennis & Hirschfelder), a striking photo-essay of children from 25 American Indian cultures engaged in everyday activities. Or enjoy some fabulously illustrated anthologies of folktales from around the world: *Fiesta Femenina: Celebrating Women in Mexican Folktale* (Gerson), *Children of the Dragon: Selected Tales from Vietnam* (Garland), *Nelson Mandela’s Favorite African Folktales, The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* (Hamilton), *Fair is Fair: World Folktales of Justice* (Creeden), and *While Standing on One Foot: Puzzle Stories and Wisdom Tales from the Jewish Tradition* (Jaffe & Zeitlin).

**Grades 6-8:** *Made You Look: How Advertising Works and Why you Should Know* (Graydon) offers young consumers insight into the advertising industry, including ad and product placement in schools. Another book that makes you open your eyes is the highly acclaimed and timely *In Defense of Liberty: the Story of America’s Bill of Rights* (Freedman). It describes historical and contemporary controversies over civil rights as fought in landmark court cases and experienced in human lives. Social relationships on a smaller scale are explored in *Odd Girl Speaks Out* (Simmons), which focuses on social aggression among girls, or *On the Fringe*, a book of short stories about outsiders in high school. For lighter fare, try *The Conch Bearer*, a fantasy quest set in India; an autobiography of a U.S. immigrant and citizen entitled *Facing the Lion: Growing Up Maasai on the African Savanna*; or *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, the story of a boy and his autistic sister, whose father is a prison guard on Alcatraz Island in the 1930s.

**Families and staff:** Looking for ideas for TOPICS? Page through *Math and Science Across Cultures* (Bazin & Tamez) or *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World* (Bigelow & Peterson). Want to know what your kindergarten children are signing or what social dynamics are rocking your child’s classroom? Try *Talking With Your Hands, Listening With Your Eyes: A Complete Photographic Guide to American Sign Language* (Grayson), *Ophelia Speaks* (Shandler), or *And Words Can Hurt Forever* (Garbarino).

Or just come browse through the collection and discover your own favorites. If you would like to recommend books or other resources, please contact Steve Haines or Elizabeth Dickinson.

* This project was initiated by the Coalition for Social Justice and made possible by the dedicated work of Arthur Dorros, Steve Haines, Eileen Hynes, Gary Luke, and Elizabeth Dickinson.
NO-BAKE BAKE SALE DOUGH-NATIONS
By Sheri Toussaint, No-Bake chair

NO-BAKE BAKE SALE OCTOBER 2, 2004, THROUGH JANUARY 14, 2005

Our goals are 100% participation and $70,000 raised

Thank you, TOPS families, friends, faculty, and alumni parents who have made financial contributions and pledges to the No-Bake Bake Sale. As of October 20, 2004, we have received $27,210.00 in donations from 98 donors. Our average donation is $277.68. Please remember to check with your employer to see if they will match your donation.

As of October 20, the third week of our campaign, we have raised 39% of our goal.

No-Bake appeal letters, brochures, and envelopes are available in the TOPS office and on the TOPS web site No-Bake page.

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The Other Side of the Table: Parent Conferences

By Gerrit Kischner, assistant principal

Early on in my teaching career, I discovered that I could learn a lot about my students by starting every conference with the simple question, “So, how does the year seem to be going for ____?” Parents usually seemed a little surprised by the question – they were ready to hear me recite all the progress report information that I had already sent home – but they never failed to launch into enlightening descriptions of their children that helped me understand their children far better than I ever had before. In turn, this understanding often helped me explain my observations about how the child learned in the classroom.

This year, as a kindergarten parent, I’ll be sitting on the other side of the table, and I can’t wait. (It’s OK, I’ve been called an over-eager kindergarten parent before.) To prepare, I’m reading a book now that I highly recommend to the entire TOPS community. It’s called The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (Random House, 2003). Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot is a professor of education at Harvard whom I have long admired. She’s a careful and brilliant observer of schools and the way they work. In this book, she portrays a wide variety of teachers and parents in a way that reveals the challenge we face in parent conference to avoid ritual and “sentimentalism” and helps to suggest ways we can observe our children and students in ways that allow us “to see who the child is and what he or she needs.”

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Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against in any of the District’s employment or educational activities can file an internal discrimination complaint with the District’s Affirmative Action Office.