

TOPS NEWS

October 2004 ♦ Volume 8, Issue 2

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

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

The air is getting colder and the leaves are starting to fall: clear indications that September 22 marked the first day of fall! We here at TOPS have had another terrific start to the school year! In the classrooms I have seen so many examples of learning, including orange projects, number talks, and geography scavenger hunts, just to name a few.

On October 2, 12 – 4 p.m., the No-Bake kick-off carnival was held here at TOPS. The carnival marked the start of our annual No-Bake Bake Sale to raise money for student activities. Our goal this year is to surpass last year's rousing success and phenomenal total.

October 8 is a professional development no student day.

Site Council will hold its monthly meeting on October 20 from 5 to 7 p.m. in the library. Please note that Site Council meetings have been

changed to the third Wednesday of the month. All parents and staff are welcome!

The State of the School address will be on October 21 at 6 p.m. Please

mark your calendars for this opportunity to hear about our focuses and goals for the coming year.

Terry Chadsey will be at TOPS on October 28 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. for a parent introduction to bullying prevention [see announcement, page 16 and related article on page 9]. We are so excited to welcome this 30-year professional to our school. His many years of experience give him great insight into these issues.

Conferences will be held over the course of seven school days, November 15-23. On all seven days, school will be dismissed at 1:10 p.m. Please remember that attending your child's conference is important to his or her learning.

Please be respectful of the bus parking areas. It is imperative for busses to be able to park and leave in a timely manner because we share bus routes with another school. If you drop your children off on Louisa, please be as expedient as possible.

Cheers!

Clara



WHY BAKE? JUST DONATE!

*It's the dough
that makes "TOPS" rise*

**TOPS No-Bake Bake Sale
October 2, 2004 through January 14, 2005**

Our goals are 100% PARTICIPATION and
\$70,000 raised

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Photos provided by Don Zemke

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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.



**SEATTLE
PUBLIC
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WHY NO-BAKE DOUGH IS A KEY INGREDIENT TO A TOPS EDUCATION

By Ann Bergman, No-Bake committee

If you are new to TOPS this year, you probably have heard by now about the No-Bake Bake Sale, our annual fall fundraiser. The fall No-Bake and our spring auction provide the funding for Friends of TOPS, our nonprofit organization that is managed by the Site Council. TOPS parents and staff, through an annual planning process called RFP (Request For Proposals), designate how to spend the Friends of TOPS dollars to enrich and broaden learning at TOPS. The RFP process is managed by the Site Council.

Last year we reached our goals of 95% participation and \$70,000 in donations, which enabled many important programs to continue. However, those important programs are at risk unless we meet our goals again this year. What you may not realize yet is how essential these No-Bake dollars are to your child's education. No-Bake does not just put the frosting on the cake — in fact, the dollars for the No-Bake from parents, teachers, alumni, extended family, and other supporters of TOPS are absolutely necessary if we want to give our kids the first-rate education they deserve.

Unlike district dollars, which are strictly allocated, these Friends of TOPS funds give us an opportunity to put dollars where we believe they will be most effective for our children. Below you'll see how the school day of each TOPS student is impacted by No-Bake dollars and why donating to the No-Bake is an essential ingredient of our TOPS community.

Grade by grade, here are examples of how No-Bake donations play a vital role at TOPS. The following programs and services are partially or completely made possible by Friends of TOPS funds:

KINDERGARTEN

Weekly dance classes with Eric Johnson. Science supplies for the two-week introductory science class. Art supplies. Weekly singing class taught by our choir director. Participation in the chorus of the elementary school play (no try-outs— everyone is guaranteed a part).

FIRST GRADE

Two part-time teachers teaching literacy blocks one hour each day. That means reading instruction using the most up-to-date research about teaching reading, taught in small groups divided by skill level. Science materials for Mr. Bloedel's exciting science classes. Weekly visual art class with artist-in-residence. Weekly singing class taught by our choir director. Participation in the chorus of the elementary school play.

SECOND GRADE

Two part-time teachers leading literacy blocks one hour daily. Artist-in-residence weekly instruction in visual art. Science with Mr. Bloedel, supplies funded in part by Friends of TOPS. Participation in the Hummingbirds Choir. Participation in chorus of the elementary school play.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade drama workshop: production of a play mid-year, director funded by Friends of TOPS. Weekly lessons in visual art from our artist-in-residence. Science with Mr. Bloedel, supplies partially come from Friends of TOPS funds. Participation in the Hummingbirds Choir. An acting role in the elementary school play (by audition, everyone is guaranteed a role).

FOURTH GRADE

Fourth and fifth grade instrumental music program, along with some district money; Friends of TOPS funds the instrumental music instructor and sheet music. Weekly lessons in visual art from our artist-in-residence. Science materials for science with Mr. Bloedel. The Inspire Choir. The elementary school play.

FIFTH GRADE

Fourth and fifth grade instrumental music program. Along with some district money, Friends of TOPS funds the instrumental music instructor and sheet music. Science materials for science with Mr. Bloedel. Participation in the Inspire Choir. An acting role in the elementary school play.

SIXTH GRADE

Art supplies for art teacher Luzita Roll. Science with Mr. Bloedel. Participation in the Inspire Choir. Participation in middle school play, Friends of TOPS provides a stipend for director, play rights, sets, and supplies.

SEVENTH GRADE

Supplies for the French language program. Art supplies for art with Luzita Roll. Science with Mr. Bloedel. Inspire Choir. Middle school play.

EIGHTH GRADE

Eighth grade oral history project: students write and produce radio scripts. Celebration of eighth grade passage. Science with Mr. Bloedel. Inspire Choir. Middle school play.

THE ENTIRE SCHOOL

All of us benefit greatly by the following support services and resources, all possible because of Friends of TOPS dollars:

- ◆ School directory: lists phone numbers and addresses of all students, connecting us to each other.
- ◆ Monthly newsletter: the monthly newsletter you're holding in your hand or reading on the TOPS web site keeps us informed.
- ◆ Technology and curriculum integration: maintains and upgrades technology in our building.
- ◆ Library hours: extended so the library is open before and after school.
- ◆ Library books and supplies
- ◆ Math reference books

ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the first 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 zongora2@cs.com. Please send photos to csuzumura@mindspring.com.

Deadlines are the Friday after each Site Council meeting. The deadline for the November issue is Friday, October 22.

STILL LOOKING FOR A NEW EDITOR. Are you the one? Please contact Teresa at the above address, or Stacie Bonnelle, volunteer coordinator, at topsolntr@aol.com or 252-3510.

CARLA'S GOING TO JAPAN!

By Teresa Nemeth

Don't worry, she's coming back.

Carla Fetterley, one of our 2nd grade teachers, has been selected from a pool of over 2,000 applicants to travel to Japan as part of the Fulbright Memorial Fund (FMF). This November, she will join 200 other distinguished primary and secondary school educators from the U.S. in a three-week program that aims to promote greater intercultural understanding between the two nations. The FMF, sponsored by the government of Japan, was launched in 1997 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the U.S. government Fulbright program, which has enabled more than 6,000 Japanese citizens to study in the U.S. on fellowships for graduate education and research.

On her arrival in Tokyo, Carla will receive a practical orientation on Japanese life and culture and meet with Japanese government officials and educators. She will then travel, in a smaller group of 20, to prefectures (states) outside Tokyo, where she will have direct contact with Japanese teachers and students during visits to primary schools, secondary schools, and a teachers college. She will visit cultural sites and local industries, and will have a homestay with a Japanese family.

When she returns, Carla will share what she has learned with our community. We wish her a wonderful trip and look forward to hearing all about it!

REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD

By Kathy Wickward

The Seattle School Board meets every first and third Wednesday evening from 6 to 9 p.m. This year, I intend to attend most of them and pass on a report to you, the TOPS community. I will spare you the excruciating detail of every citizen complaint; and I hope to bring to light what some of the more cryptically worded resolutions mean. So, with those goals in mind:

(I must confess, I only attended part of the meeting this time)

Citizens take the podium for an hour of the meeting, presenting their issues for three minutes each. Among those presenting were representatives from the Asian-Pacific Islander program, which is operating without a budget, to ask for funding; the ACCESS program, thanking the Board for including transgendered individuals in its anti-harassment policy and outlining further steps the Board can take; and a few parents advocating for

improving choice in school assignments (such as lifting enrollment lids). There were also advocates for adopting a 10 ppb (parts per billion) lid on lead in the drinking water, and high school parents and counselors happy about the opt-out form specifically allowing students to exclude the military from collecting their directory information. [See article p. 5.] The No Child Left Behind act may render this illegal; this may become a significant fight.

The chief financial officer reported that it looks as if the district will end the fiscal year in the black, but was worried about years to come. He advocated lobbying the state and feds for additional revenue. The district reported they were not ready to present a water quality plan. Finally, the Board decided to take no action regarding a new contract for Superintendent Manhas, hence extending his current contract through August of next year.

Why No-Bake Dough is a Key Ingredient continued from page 2

- ◆ Multicultural school assemblies and resources
- ◆ Translation assistance
- ◆ Professional tutoring scholarship program
- ◆ Spanish after-school program scholarships
- ◆ Art Walk
- ◆ Music program
- ◆ Lunchroom loans
- ◆ Team uniforms
- ◆ Counselor position
- ◆ Volunteer coordinator position

We all share a common goal at TOPS: to make every student successful both academically and socially. To get there, we aim to ignite a spark of enthusiasm about learning in each student, so that each forges a positive connection with school that will last a lifetime. Your donation dollars ensure that every day every student at TOPS finds an interesting lesson on the menu that adds spice and flavoring to learning. No-Bake donations are one of the key ingredients to making sure all 525 of our children are successful learners!

SITE COUNCIL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 15, 2004

By Ellen Markman

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Clara Scott welcomed all to the new school year. TOPS' new vice principal, Gerrit Kischner, and Danforth administrative intern from the University of Washington, Robin Imai, were introduced. Clara reported that total enrollment is 525 students, with 22 new students not including new kindergarten students. Twenty-six students left TOPS, with 7 going to the APP program, 4 to private schools, 8 moving out of the district, 1 out of state, and 6 choosing to go to their neighborhood public schools.

Clara welcomed the eight new staff members to TOPS. She said that she celebrates the life choices the departing staff have made, from having babies to new careers to traveling around the world. Joe, the TOPS night custodian, has received a promotion and Clara welcomed our new custodian, Greg Banks.

BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM

Gerrit Kischner reported on the work of the BLT for the coming year. Last year the BLT had the goal of looking at student work in terms of differentiation (teaching to all different learning styles). This year the focus is math. The BLT will be looking at students' math work, supporting teachers and helping students think about their math work. BLT members are dedicated to reiterating the writing continuum in a math continuum throughout

the grade levels. They will also be starting a cultural competency continuum.

On October 8 the faculty will meet with Terry Chadsey to revisit their training on anti-bullying, and plan the parent training that will take place at the end of October. Terry Chadsey will give a presentation at the State of the School meeting October 21, and he will give the parent training at the end of October. [See announcement back page.]

BUDGET

Steve Havas, Site Council treasurer, reported that the Friends of TOPS budget is in good shape. [Look for a full explanation of the budget in the November TOPS News. You can also find it on the TOPS web site.]

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Jennifer Shaw, fund development chair for the last several years, announced that this will be her final year as chair. She would be happy to work with anyone interested in becoming the fund development chair in a transitional role next year. Contact Jennifer Shaw if you're interested, 324-4079 or Jennifer@aoki-sakamoto.com.

DRAMA

Linda Korbus reported that Julie Jamieson has hired a director for the middle school Shakespeare play (title unknown at this time). The play will be performed December 3 and 4.

REPORT FROM THE BLT

By Glen Tamura, parent representative

The Building Leadership Team (BLT) had its opening meeting on September 14. Lori Eickelberg, 7th/8th grade LA teacher, provided a historical perspective. BLTs were created by Seattle Public Schools to provide a mechanism for on-site advice to the principal on the development of a school's operating budget in a way that insures all staff have a representative responsible for making sure their voice is heard. At TOPS, parental input is also considered a key component of the educational process, and for this reason parent representatives were invited to participate on the TOPS BLT as well.

In addition to its budget role, the BLT is responsible for planning staff development to implement our vision for education at TOPS. Last year, Assistant Principal Chris Drape introduced the examination of student work as a springboard for discussion of curricular

issues. Other initiatives included the hiring of a "math coach" to train staff in mathematics teaching techniques and extensive training on "differentiation" (education-speak for teaching students of differing abilities in one classroom). Staff training in early September included a session on bullying – teachers noted that the vocabulary introduced at this training session has been heard from students on the playground, indicating that the training has already had an effect! This fall, development efforts will include continuing the conversation about bullying, training of new staff in various curricular approaches employed at TOPS, sessions for each teacher with the math coach, and examining student work to improve the teaching of writing.

The Building Leadership Team will meet on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month.

THE FERPA OPT-OUT FORM, NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND, AND THE MILITARY

By Kathy Barker

Included in your child's Go-Home package of forms is one called "Notification of Rights Under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Opt-Out Form."

Parents are given the choice to allow their child's name, phone number, and address to be released publicly, or to opt out of disclosure, with straightforward options listed. Less obvious is the link of this form with the controversial No Child Left Behind Act.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, signed into law by President George Bush on January 8, 2002, contains a section in Title IX called "Sec. 9528. Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information." This grants military recruiters access to students' private information so that the recruiters can target students at their homes. Legislation recognizing the need to bolster the numbers in the military (with increased military intervention, enrollment numbers cannot keep up with the need) by requiring high schools to provide military recruiters access to secondary school students was also mandated in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002.

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Defense, in a October 9, 2002, letter co-signed by Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, and Rod Paige, Secretary of Education (see http://www.aasa.org/government_relations/esea/ for link), applaud this collaboration of military and education. Chillingly, if a school does not provide the military with student names and access to students in the schools, it can lose its federal funding through NCLB. The military has always been a good option for many students and families, but it is increasingly the only option for poorer families. Many question whether it should be the business of schools to provide personnel for the military.

Thankfully, the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) remains law (albeit modified by NCLB), and allows individual parents to opt out of the disclosure requirement. But few secondary school parents

in the U.S. are told that the military will get and will use the information. Adding to the confusion, opt-out forms vary from school district to school district, and from school to school, with some districts and schools saying nothing publicly, some providing forms with varying amounts of explanation, and others having an opt-in, rather than an opt-out form.

This year, the Seattle school district FERPA form allows high school parents to withhold disclosure of all information, or specifically, just from the military. However, Holly Ferguson, Assistant General Counsel for the Seattle Public Schools, cautions parents and students that the military gets information from students in many different ways, and that opting out of disclosure only means that the school district will not release information: it does not ensure that recruiters won't find the student at home via other means.

Many local and national groups give advice to students and parents about the increasing pressure on high school students to join the military, and counsel them on career, educational, and financial options. Although K-8 students do not yet have to worry about military recruitment or drafts, the time comes quickly. Parents may want to consider now just why they would release any information about their children publicly.

<http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/no-child.htm> American Friends Service Committee

<http://www.watir.org/> Washington Truth in Recruiting

"Some Unaware Disclosure is Law," Dec. 5, 2002, The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, page 1. Deborah Bach

PARENTS! WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We would like to schedule multicultural assemblies for this year and we have found parents to be one of our best sources of information. Do you know of a group that can give a performance for a TOPS assembly that will teach students more about the group's culture of origin as well as entertain them? Do you know of an organization through whom we can find a performance group? We would really appreciate your help and suggestions.

Please contact Katie Waters at kmwaters@seattleschools.org.



Photo provided by Don Zentke

CSJ ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR THE YEAR

By Bonnie Cech

TOPS MISSION STATEMENT

We are committed to educating our students by using an anti-bias, multicultural approach in a safe and stimulating environment. We help all students to learn, to understand and honor diversity, to respect and care for themselves and others, to be responsible, and to achieve a high level of academic excellence. By eliminating the achievement gap, all students will meet or exceed standards, including those students historically underserved by the public school system.

TOPS VISION

We are creating a school that empowers students to be active participants, leaders, learners, and contributors to social justice.

At the Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ) retreat, held Saturday, August 28, a small but proactive group (10 people) of parents and staff met at the Miller Community Center to brainstorm ideas and plan the calendar of events, presentations, and discussion groups that will be sponsored by the CSJ during the 2004-05 school year.

The purpose of the CSJ is to support the TOPS mission and vision. A group of interested parents and staff, the Coalition seeks to understand and honor cultural diversity and social justice within our school and broader community. CSJ-sponsored activities are funded through a combination of monies received via the Friends of TOPS Request For Proposal process and a grant received from the King County Work Training Program, specifically earmarked for increasing student, staff, parent, and community member awareness of social justice issues.

This year the CSJ will focus on parent/staff educational events that center around three themes:

1. Bullying, cliques, exclusion
2. Family differences
3. Learning differences

These themes were chosen by the Coalition to support and enhance the school's priorities this year (e.g., bullying), as well as an interest in learning more and providing educational opportunities about the (sometimes) subtle and (always) important ways in which individuals, families, and cultures may differ. The TOPS community comprises a wonderfully diverse group of families from various cultures, races, religions, and language backgrounds, and includes same-sex-parent families and families with members who

are deaf or hard of hearing. It's a rich environment – and opportunity – in which to learn from one another. Similarly (and not unlike the mix of parents!), our student population comprises children with various learning strengths and challenges. Enhancing our understanding of these differences provides an opportunity for us to learn from and support one another – whether that be parent-to-parent or hands-on when volunteering in the classroom or on the playground.

Though the Coalition continues to finalize the calendar of CSJ-sponsored events and activities, a few highlights for the upcoming months are listed below. Look for updated information at the curriculum nights and TOPS State of the School, and throughout the year in future newsletters, the Wednesday Go-Home, posted "flyers" and announcements, and communication from your room reps. We hope that you will join us for these presentations and discussions. We also welcome your input, ideas, and involvement in the planning of future activities (shaping the themes, specific topics of interest, and/or featured speakers).

Thursday, October 7, 6:30 to 8 p.m.: CSJ meeting/discussion of Jennifer Murray's article on TOPS' anti-bullying program, facilitated by TOPS parent Karen Stuhldreher.

Thursday, October 28, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.: Introduction to Bullying Prevention, a presentation by Terry Chadsey (see details on page 16)

Thursday, November 4, 6:30 to 8 p.m.: CSJ meeting/follow-up discussion of Terry Chadsey's presentation, facilitated by TOPS staff, Jennifer Murray.

Thursday, December 2, 6:30 to 8 p.m.: CSJ meeting/discussion of how the TOPS mission is carried out in the classroom; featured TOPS staff TBA.

SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CLASSES TO BEGIN IN NOVEMBER

By Sharon Mentyka

In late November the TOPS Spanish classes will start up again, with Rebecca Rabbitt as our instructor for the second year. The classes are offered before and after the school day. Last year, approximately 35 students from grades 1 through 8 participated in the program, which drew great raves from students and parents alike.

TOPS is committed to educating our children using an anti-bias, multicultural approach. Foreign language study exposes students to the richness of other cultures and provides perspectives that aid in the appreciation of diversity. This contributes positively to the whole TOPS community environment. Small language study groups offer TOPS families who wish it the opportunity to supplement their children's curriculum with small classes where they can receive individualized attention.

This year, we hope to explore opportunities for crossover in curriculum and activities with Spanish-speaking ESL students and other classrooms as well. The classes teach through the total language immersion approach. Rebecca does not speak English in the classroom unless there is an issue of safety. This is often a shock for students and they do undergo a period of cultural acclimation. But, Rebecca says, "In my opinion, it is the only way to teach language as a communication tool. This is what a child or adult encounters when learning in a real-life situation, this is what people coming to America undergo. It's a process that can ultimately open the child's mind to new possibilities and to greater empowerment."

This year, the Spanish program will again offer three levels of classes, generally divided as follows:

- 1) Beginning classes for students in grades 1-3 (Monday and Friday 3:30 - 4:15 p.m.)

Continued on page 7

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, librarian

"Don't join the book burners...Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book."

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

Ah, the start of a new school year brings the students streaming into the library. Books, games, computers and more await them during their free time. It was enjoyable seeing so many new faces and learning new names this year, and at the same time it was sad to learn that some students weren't returning to TOPS.

Our library opens at 8:45 a.m. and closes at 4:30 p.m. After school the library is reserved for those wishing to do homework, research, or to read. When I am available I'm more than happy to help with homework. Parents and guardians are always welcome in the library to help with shelving books, reading, or just to "hang out."

This year we will not be participating on the KidSpeak Stage because, sadly, the Northwest Bookfest has been cancelled for at least this year. I know some of the children and adults will certainly miss this event, as will I. We had been participating for many years. We will still have our Young Authors Celebration in December, though.

This year September 27-October 1 was Banned Books Week. It's a week set aside annually to "celebrate our freedom to read." For the second year in a row Book-It All Over! presented "Danger: Books!" to our middle school at an afternoon assembly in



the gym. This was sponsored by the Seattle Public Library's foundation program. Book-It Repertory Theatre actors use almost every word the author has written. The actors speak both the narrative and the dialogue, which is much different from other theater we have seen. This year they read selections from three books that had been banned. They were *The Boy Who Lost His Face* by Louis Sachar, *All But Alice* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor. (We have these books in our library.) There was time for discussion and questions afterwards about the books and about the whole idea of "intellectual freedom." One of the actors told me that this is his favorite school to present to because of the intelligent questions and comments from the students.



Photos provided by Steve Haines

"Confused by a computer question? Stumped on a science question? Heartburn over a history question? Here are some great links from FirstGov for Kids to help you with your homework - this may even help you finish it faster!" Try http://www.kids.gov/k_homework.htm.

Spanish Language and Culture Classes continued from page 6

- 2) Continuing classes for students in grades 3-5 (Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 - 4:15 p.m.)
- 3) Continuing classes for students in grades 5-8 (Tuesday and Thursday 8 - 8:45 a.m.)

Classes meet twice a week for 45 minutes for a period of 20 weeks and a total of 40 classes. Class size is limited to 15 to 17 students. Cost is approximately \$230 per student. Partial scholarships ONLY are available; all parents are asked to contribute what they can.

Questions about the program? See the TOPS web site for a full description of the program (under Academics>Languages) or contact Sharon Mentyka at sharon@pidseattle.com or 223-0681. Applications are available from the web site and in the office, or watch for one in the Wednesday Go-Home. Enrollment deadline is October 29.

PARENTS: ARE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE OPPOSED?

By Laura Henry

TOPS has embraced a social justice mission as the centerpiece of its alternative program, a laudable goal in a school well-situated geographically and demographically to accomplish much in that area. Historically, the Friends of TOPS has allocated resources with diversity and social awareness as a focus. The commitment to closing the achievement gap at TOPS is unquestioned. But, with federal legislation and state policy already predominantly focused on closing the achievement gap and a levy in place that offers support for families and administration, is the Friends of TOPS spending enough of its discretionary resources on fostering quality academics for all students?

Social justice is served by eliminating barriers and creating maximum opportunities for individuals to realize their potential. The public schools have a special obligation to make those opportunities for people who cannot afford to use their wealth and connections to position their children favorably in society. Setting high standards and consistently sustaining children in their efforts to meet them with pedagogical, financial, and motivational support is how we help our children achieve their potential.

Washington's children sit in the fourth-most crowded classrooms in the country and TOPS is at the limit of the spectrum. I suspect boys in particular pay dearly for this. Up to a quarter of our kids are still struggling to keep up in writing, reading, and math by the time they take the 4th grade WASL, and less than half are ready for the challenges of science. While the passage of I-884 could rectify this in time, other local schools have taken things in hand by using parent-raised money to hire extra teachers in the first and second grades. TOPS needs a dose of this kind of realism.

We should not forget that we are doing more than raising perceptive social critics and policy makers; we are also raising doctors, engineers, research scientists, and programmers in a highly competitive job environment where majors in the social sciences and humanities face diminishing job opportunities.

I'm not saying TOPS should neglect the importance of history, identity, and collective group image in academic achievement for minorities. My son has basked in the diverse and respectful environment at TOPS where he can explore his Korean identity for the most part in safety psychologically. But we need to constantly remind ourselves that our foremost ethical duty is to give our children the tools to succeed after high school. In my memory, the cards have never been more stacked against the public schools. Things really have changed. Globalization has put intense pressure on the job market and U.S. students are increasingly unable to compete in the highest paying sectors in engineering and the sciences. But now, competition has stripped away employment benefits so that even blue collar jobs frequently do not carry medical insurance. We need to exercise extreme care over available resources to make sure that our students get a chance to become that of which they are capable.

This is not to blame teachers and administrators. In this era of rampant consumerism, we have to work harder than our parents did to communicate with teachers, keep track of what our children know and don't know, limit video games and TV, create healthy lifestyles, choose our children's extracurriculars wisely, and pursue educational experiences after school. We all know how much our children are influenced by their peers. We need to model positive discipline and strive for good communication in our homes, nurturing responsibility there, so our teachers can concentrate on teaching.

TOPS doesn't have to change its values to raise academic standards. Social justice and academic excellence are not mutually opposed.

DON'T JUST BLAME THE KIDS: THE LINK BETWEEN BULLYING AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

By Kathy Barker

Bullying, the abuse of an imbalance of power, is not something that rises in isolation only in school-age children, but is part and parcel of how adults deal with each other. While some quests for power are more overt, in general, we have learned to control and manipulate while talking nicely, in ways that are difficult to point out publicly, much like the indirect, relational bullying associated with teenage girls. Focusing only on students in an effort to curb bullying among the students is hypocritical and ineffective: we cannot expect them to behave in a manner that we, as adults, can't seem to manage.

For example, we say that it is unacceptable to be a bystander if you see something wrong being done to someone else. Do we, as adults, stand up and say something – directly – to someone we believe is behaving wrongly to someone else? Or would we feel divisive if we did, and so, keep quiet? And if we have felt guilty about not speaking up when we should have, how on earth can we tell our students that we expect them not to be bystanders to bullying any longer?

Adults are better at rationalizing their behavior, many tending to say (and believe) that their bullying actions are justified as they are for a higher cause. Person to person, as country to country, we have become used to using our power on people and places to further our philosophies. Are we right? Sometimes yes, sometimes no, maybe never. It is hard to get it right in the struggle between standing up for a cause and hurting another person. But we can't deny that we use and abuse power, and that our actions and attitudes affect our children.

One of the strengths of TOPS is the cultural, economic, racial, religious, and political differences among the families. This blessing brings a problem that more homogeneous schools don't have: rules for behavior and power use and communication and discipline are not common to all. Having a TOPS school culture, a shared and agreed-upon compromise culture, is a way to accommodate everyone, but the climate at TOPS has been hurt by the struggle to define the culture of the school. Alternative and/or academic? Hierarchical rule or vertical power sharing? Discipline or freedom? Authoritative or open? What input should parents have? Who chooses the curriculum? How is racism defined? Who gets to say?

An all-school program, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, run by our representative group, the Site Council, and with participation by parents, teachers, students, and administration, could provide the structure for the community to get past their individual philosophies, and provide a model of behavior for the students. The full program is needed to be effective, but at a cost of approximately \$6,000 might be a relatively inexpensive investment in the future. No program can be a panacea, and any program might be anathema to beleaguered staff, but letting some experts guide us in setting up and monitoring the school climate might just free us all up to concentrate on the business of being a school.

TOPS NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR LOCAL JAZZ TALENT

By Laura Henry

Paul Gillespie has a face familiar to jazz enthusiasts. TOPS' new string and band director plays tenor sax for the "Paul Gillespie Trio," the "Kevin McCarthy Quartet," the big band "Jazz Police," and others around town when he is not cultivating musical talent in Seattle area schools.

Grooving into his sixth year working with young people, Paul brings classroom experience from the Edmonds and Northshore school districts, where he taught all ages of music students, directed jazz ensembles, and worked as a K-8 substitute teacher. He is currently entering his second year of teaching music and directing elementary and middle school band at Brighton School in Lynnwood. There he has worked to expand an after-school jazz studies program, and to initiate as of this year elective arts classes in world music and guitar. During the summers, he teaches workshops on woodwind instruments, jazz studies, and music theory for 11- to 18-year-olds at the Burton Music Camp on Vashon Island.

At TOPS Paul believes a solid general music program that promotes musicianship will lift all boats, from the experimental jazz improviser to the aspiring classical performer. He says principal elements of starting such a music program are 1. consistency; 2. establishing a music library; 3. creating a well-organized, dedicated rehearsal

space; and 4. remaining well-informed about and taking advantage of Seattle's rich local music resources. For example, in addition to the fall, winter, and spring concerts, he hopes TOPS students will participate more often in solo and ensemble contests. Contests provide kids with objective feedback from other sources as well as inspire them to reach for the next level. As another example, special performances by the Seattle Jazz Repertoire Band and the Seattle Symphony's outreach program could give young players a window on professional playing. Paul stresses the importance of coordinating with the nationally recognized high school directors to whom TOPS sends its graduates, in order to excite and prepare our students about upcoming opportunities and challenges.

After graduating from Indiana University's School of Music with a music degree in performance, jazz studies, Paul lived in Brooklyn, New York, to immerse in jazz saxophone and to experience the incredible wealth of New York City arts. Among his favorite musical experiences: performing with twentieth-century music legend Stevie Wonder, and working with Mongolian musicians and educators in Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia. Paul's long-term goals are in music education and composition, and he plans to take music education classes concurrently while at TOPS towards a masters in musicology or ethnomusicology.

2004-05 TOPS CALENDAR

Note to all: 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.

OCTOBER

- 2 (Sa)..... No-Bake kick-off carnival, gym, 12-4
- 5 (T)..... Curriculum night - K, 6-7 p.m.
3rd-4th grades, 7:15-8:15 p.m.
- 7 (Th)..... CSJ meeting/discussion of TOPS anti-bullying program, 6:30-8 p.m.
- 8 (F)..... Professional development day; no school
- 19 (T)..... Parent math night, *Math Facts & Arrays*, 7-9 p.m.
- 20 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 21 (Th)..... State of the School address, 6 p.m.
- 27 (W)..... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 28 (Th)..... Bullying prevention presentation, 6:30-8:30 p.m., cafeteria
- 30 (T)..... Parent math night, 7-9 p.m.

NOVEMBER

- 4 (Th)..... CSJ meeting/follow-up discussion of bullying prevention, 6:30-8 p.m.
- 5 (F)..... End of first quarter
- 11 (Th)..... Veterans Day; no school
- 15-23 (M-T)... Elementary parent-teacher conferences
- 17 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.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.
- 15 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 20-31 (M-F)... Winter break; no school

JANUARY

- 3 (M)..... Classes resume
- 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

- 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
- 16 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 18 (F)..... Professional development day; no school

APRIL

- 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

- 18 (W)..... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 18 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 24 (T)..... Parent math night, *Patterns and functions/algebraic thinking*, 7-9 p.m.
- 30 (M)..... Memorial Day; no school

JUNE

- 15 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 21 (T)..... Last student day

BONJOUR FROM MARIANNE! BON VOYAGE?

By Marianne Trangen, 6th grade teacher

I have already had a number of inquiries about the spring break trip to Paris. It is great to see so much enthusiasm!

The last two trips have been delightful! Students and parents have enjoyed the chance to travel together in the company of their friends from TOPS. Paris, of course, is absolutely irresistible under any circumstances.



For those who might be interested, I want to clear up a few misconceptions:

Myth #1- This trip is only for TOPS French students.

Mais non! This trip is open to everyone at TOPS, their friends, and their family. This is an inclusive group, not an exclusive one.



Myth #2- Parents must accompany their children and work as chaperones.

Pas du tout! Some students come with their parents. Others don't. Adults who come on the trip are on vacation. **Our local guide and I take care of the logistics of the trip.** That includes supervision of TOPS students.

Myth #3 – There is no free time in the schedule.

Si! We have a great deal of flexibility on how we plan our days.



Photos provided by Marianne Trangen



Myth #4 – This trip will take place every year.

Non. This might be the last one for a while.

For more information, please contact Marianne at mtrangen@raincity.com.

INTRODUCING...JASON KERBER, FIFTH GRADE TEACHER

Interview prepared by Teresa Nemeth

How did you get involved in education/what drew you to the field?

The biggest influence on my decision to go into education was probably my stepmother, who taught 5th grade for over 30 years. The biggest influence on my educational philosophy, however, grew out of my experience working in inner city Chicago as a social worker. I saw the debilitating and damaging effects of poverty on adult lives. My job was to “talk” to people using a psychological/social interview instrument and then refer them to social services based on their needs. Working primarily with African Americans, a common thread emerged: institutional racism, especially as seen in failing schools, in combination with poverty provided little opportunity for success. Working with people at the “end of the line” was discouraging and this got me interested in all the ways that public education can be a catalyst for change.

What is your vision of an excellent school, or an excellent classroom?

I think for schools and classrooms to be excellent they need to, above all else, be intentional. This means that the teachers and administrators need to have a vision for what sort of community they want to create and take steps to make it happen. This vision only comes through trial and error, reflection, and continually revisiting and reforming our ideals. If you just accept someone else’s ideals (like our current cultural obsession with testing), then you’re not being intentional. Maybe your highest ideal is measuring student growth through numbers, but if it’s not, then you need to be intentional about your vision and put it into action. What this vision looks like from school to school and classroom to classroom will be different, but the more we are intentional, the better our chances are of creating something that reflects our most authentic values. For me personally, I’m interested in balancing children’s academic achievement (yes, this necessarily includes some testing!) with social and emotional development. The best overall method I’ve found that reflects my philosophy comes from the Responsive Classroom, a program developed by the Northeast Foundation for Children. The goals include: (1) What children learn is as important as how they learn. (2) The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum. (3) The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction. (4) There is a set of social skills children need in order to be successful academically and socially: cooperation, assertion, responsibility,

empathy, and self-control. (5) Knowing the children we teach—individually, culturally, and developmentally—is as important as knowing the content we teach. (6) Knowing the families of the children we teach and inviting their participation is essential to children’s education. (7) How the adults at school work together is as important as individual competence: lasting change begins with the adult community. I think having equally high academic and social/emotional standards provides an environment where children are more reflective, think for and know themselves, continually cultivate an interest in learning about their world, and are more likely to stretch themselves through calculated risks.

What would you like to accomplish here?

I hope to accomplish the goals I stated in the previous question in my own classroom and, in addition, to influence the values of TOPS in a way that is most useful to the whole school and its vision/mission. The TOPS mission and vision statements align well with my own values and I’m interested in the ways these ideals can really be “brought to life.” With the CSJ already active and a new stewardship committee, I see lots of opportunity as a teacher here at TOPS to exercise my interests. I’ve become interested in service learning recently and hope to begin integrating that into my classroom more and more as a “real life” expression of the values I try to cultivate with my students. There is so much parental, community, and administrative support at TOPS that the possibilities seem endless!

What is the best way for parents to communicate with you? What is the best way for them to share concerns?

I think family and teacher communication is vital to the success of children at school. I try to communicate as clearly as possible with parents my intentions behind what I’m doing. This doesn’t guarantee that you can “please all of the people all of the time,” but being forthright is important. As for concerns, I ask of my parents what I would ask of my kids, that they express their disagreement or concerns with honesty, but in the form of disagreeing with ideas, not people. I obviously can’t control how you feel, but I think it’s reasonable that you express your concerns in a respectful way.

Would you like to tell us anything about your family or outside interests?

My wife, Lori Rath, and I live in Mount Baker where we can often be seen trying to garden on our steep property! Lori recently opened up her own law and mediation practice in Madrona. She’s also interested in the issues of recent immigrants (especially in the Latino community) and is on the board of Casa Latina. We both enjoy traveling, from beach vacations to hiking and biking adventures. We also have both recently become interested in bird watching.



Photo provided by Don Zemke

INTRODUCING...REBECCA MOSLO, FIFTH GRADE TEACHER

Interview prepared by Teresa Nemeth

Rebecca graduated from the University of South Florida, where she majored in education and voice performance. She was a professional singer, performing opera and musical theatre in Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Rebecca has taught for 10 years and began her teaching career in Florida, her birthplace. However, wanting to explore the world, she and another teacher-friend took off on a two-month backpacking adventure throughout Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. While on her journey, Rebecca left resumes with many of the international schools and was hired by an international school in Singapore at the end of her two-month backpacking vacation. She taught for two years in Singapore before returning to the States. Wanting another adventure and after much research and consideration, she chose Seattle, although she had never visited. Six years later, Seattle is still her home.

How did you get involved in education and what drew you to the field?

Before college, I had worked with children in a daycare and had always known that I wanted to teach children. I wanted more than just an income; I wanted to make a contribution to society.

What strikes you as unique or special about TOPS?

At TOPS we strive for academic excellence, and we have incredible, dedicated teachers. There's an emphasis on multicultural and anti-bias education and our students are leaders within the school community.

What would you like to accomplish here?

I want each child to know that I care and want each student to discover his or her special gifts. I want to empower my students to be their best and to become leaders within the school, promoting social justice. We've been working on establishing a classroom community in which each child is an active participant, establishing a safe place where every one feels valued and respected. We wrote down our hopes and dreams for our classroom community, and I can only hope that every dream comes true.

What is your vision of an excellent school, or an excellent classroom?

Superior schools create positive communities in which the students are empowered to make a difference. This can be seen with a walk down the hall, a trip to the lunchroom, or by stepping into any classroom. You'll notice that everyone has the same vision and the children are proud to tell you all about it.

How can parents best support their children?

Parents are the most important role models. Education should be held in high regard. It only takes a few minutes to ask a child about his/her school day, but it goes a long way in sending a message that school is important.

How can parents best support you?

Parents can best help teachers by providing a regular time to do homework and physically checking to see that homework is being completed. Teachers want to hear if a child is feeling frustrated or discouraged, and it also feels good to know when everything is going well.

What is the best way for parents to communicate with you?

If parents send emails or notes when they have questions, it allows me to respond at a time when I'm not engaged with students.

What is the best way for them to share concerns?

When there is a concern, I like it when a parent sends a positive note or email asking for clarification, not assuming that he/she already has all the information. Sometimes, parents only get part of the story until speaking with the teacher.

Would you like to tell us about your family or outside interests?

I was born and raised in Florida, where my family still resides. I visit my family often; however, Seattle is my home and my friends are like family. I belong to a book club that was established almost six years ago by a group of friends. Our friendships have grown, and we cherish our monthly meetings. This November will be the Ya Ya's Sixth Annual Anniversary Dinner! I have a one-year-old Chihuahua named Blitz. When I'm not working, he gets toted around Seattle in my purse. I sing, play the flute and play piano, and I just started taking ballet lessons for the first time. Last spring, I bought my first condo, and I spent the past summer painting and decorating the interior. I travel as much as I possibly can and hope to plan a trip abroad this summer. I've visited over 13 countries around the world.



Photo provided by Rebecca Moslo

C.P.R. IN TOPS PE

By Camille Schumann, Anna Ludwig, and Emma Slaton, Grade 8

Recently in our 7th / 8th grade gym class we learned how to do C.P.R. taught by skilled medical instructor Charles Murphy. We learned the ABC's of C.P.R. in only two days!!! We'll give a quick lesson:

First, tell somebody to call 911!

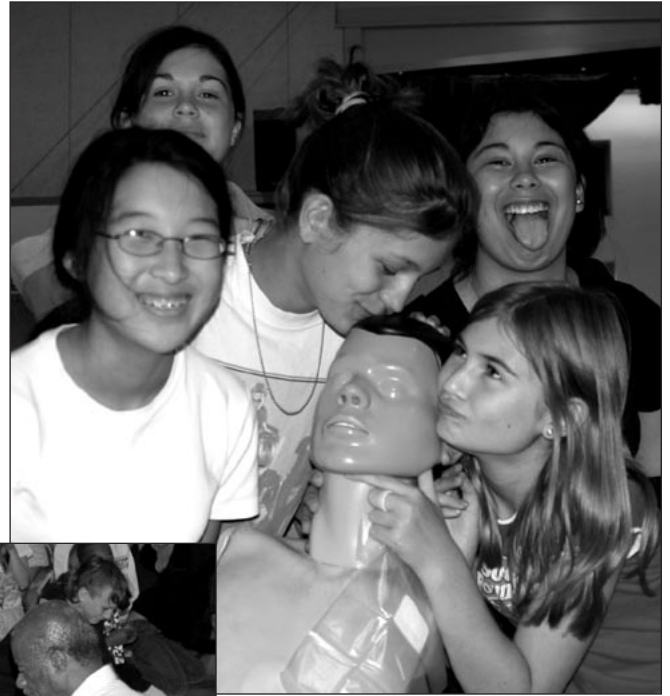
A= Airway; open the airway by tilting the chin back.

B= Breath; check to make sure they are breathing, and if not, give two small breaths.

C= Chest compressions; if still no breathing, do fifteen fast chest compressions and two breaths. Keep it up until help arrives.

WOOHOO! Now we have done the complete C.P.R. cycle. We all had a great time with the whole learning experience.

Emma Slaton quotes, "I had a blast." And Anna Ludwig agrees. Now we are all C.P.R.- certified thanks to Mr. C. Murphy and our lovely PE teachers Don and Eric. This class was profitable to our gym learning experience and the skills learned will accompany us in our life's daily battles. THANK YOU!



Photos provided by Don Zemke



TOPS FALL SAILING! PE EXPLORATION TOPIC OPTION

By Don Zemke, PE teacher

TOPS PE and the Center for Wooden Boats are teaming up to give TOPS 7th and 8th grade students the opportunity to learn to sail this year during PE and after school. U.S. Sailing-certified sailors will be teaching all aspects of sailing, including rigging, boat handling, basic skills, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

Sailboat racing is one of the fastest-growing sports in the country. Many of our local high schools now have sailing teams that compete in the spring. This high-speed, thrilling sport is not only very physical but also intellectually demanding, requiring quick thinking, strategy, and teamwork. With Seattle being surrounded by water and TOPS so close to Lake Union, this will be a great opportunity to get out on the water and try something new.

This year, Fridays in PE are dedicated to "Topic Exploration," in which students choose an alternative activity to research, develop skill in that area, and at the end of the quarter share what they learned with the rest of the class. TOPS 7th and 8th grade students who don't have PE this quarter will have the opportunity to choose sailing as a topic spring quarter.

Special thanks to Jake Beattie from the Center for Wooden Boats for working with us and starting what I hope is the beginning of a great relationship between the CWB and TOPS.



Photos provided by Don Zemke





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INTRODUCTION TO BULLYING PREVENTION

FEATURING TERRY CHADSEY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M., TOPS CAFETERIA

This presentation will include:

- ◆ overview of what bullying is and how it works
- ◆ case for why we must address bullying
- ◆ overview of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
- ◆ overview of how parents can help
- ◆ opportunities for questions and discussion

Terry Chadsey has spent 30 years in public education. He has taught grades K through 8 in Chicago, Australia, and Washington for over 22 years. For the past eight years, he's provided coaching and professional development for schools and educators.

He most recently managed the grant-funded Communities That Care initiative for Seattle Public Schools. One of the outcomes of this project was bringing the tested, effective Olweus Bullying Prevention Program to 13 middle schools in Seattle.

Terry has presented at national, state, and regional conferences and has published a handful of articles. He is a lead trainer for Positive Discipline and is a Courage to Teach facilitator. He holds degrees from Yale University and the University of Chicago. He received principal credentials in the first Danforth cohort at the University of Washington.

Childcare provided; call the office a day in advance.

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