Gong Xi Fa Cai! Chinese New Year was recently celebrated at TOPS, with many classrooms having activities and art projects around this holiday. Chinese classes have started after school for Kindergarten and a second class for 1st through 3rd grades.

February was Black History Month. TOPS had many activities to celebrate cultural awareness and celebrate our diversity. On February 9, Caprice Hollins spoke to parents on “Why Cultural Competence?” Caprice is the Director of Equity and Race Relations for Seattle Public Schools. One of her themes is promoting understanding of different backgrounds, ethnicity, languages, and cultural differences in our schools. For a summary of her presentation, please see the article on page 6.

We’ve had hundreds of visitors on the prospective parent tours. We are proud to welcome visitors and have a chance to showcase the accomplishments of our K-8 students.

Thanks to our fifth through eighth grade students who shared with visiting parents their educational and social experiences at TOPS. Also, many thanks to Linda Adams for coordinating the many parents who served as tour guides.

Our Speech Tournaments are in full swing and we are very proud of the speeches given so far by our elementary students. It is such good practice for them to prepare for this event. They are very articulate and poised. Our librarian Steve Haines talks more about the Speech Tournaments in his newsletter article.

Congratulations to our Writers in the School Program winners: Mikey Wong, Hannah Merrill, and Tran Huynh. Their work was selected for display at the John Stanford Center. The students, along with their families, teachers, and friends, were treated to a reception on February 13 in recognition of the students’ outstanding work.

Middle School has been busy

Many of our Middle School students have enjoyed their time skiing. Thank you to all the parent volunteers who coordinated this winter sports experience for our students. Many of our students experienced skiing for the first time.

Our Middle School ASB students worked hard to plan the Valentine’s Dance on February 2. It was very successful and well attended. Thank you to the parents and staff who helped plan and chaperone the dance.

Middle School students have just finished their first semester and their report cards are in the mail. Many

Continued on page 2

Taste of TOPS

Thursday, March 16, 2006
5:30-8:30 P.M.
Potluck Dinner and Student Talent Showcase in the TOPS Cafeteria and Gym

The Taste of TOPS is an all-school multicultural celebration, family potluck, and talent showcase. Our theme this year honors Central America, South America, and Mexico. We will have the opportunity to share a part of us that makes us who we are through the foods we love.

Entertainment ideas being discussed include: Capoeira, Peruvian singers, mariachi, learning salsa dance, and learning to make a papel picado (paper flower). Children (or adults) interested in performing during the talent show can obtain a form at the office. We invite you to join the planning team or volunteer at the 2006 Taste of TOPS! For more information, please contact: Bonnie Cech (bcech@cechsystems.com).

Taste of TOPS planning team:
TOPS Teacher Julie Gillett
Lynne Goodrich
Sheri Toussaint
Bonnie Cech
Galen Goff
Suzanne Oelke
Karen Stuhldreher

TOPS at Seward
2500 Franklin Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102
Phone: (206) 252-3510
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Principal: Clara Scott
Assistant Principal: Gerrit Kischner
Site Council Chair: Marlies van Bergeijk

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.
Lunch With Annie And Hannah

By Ann Simonson

If you’ve never visited TOPS during the lunch hour, you’ve probably never met two very important people. Allow me to introduce Annie Meyer and Hannah Christophe, our lunchroom staff at TOPS. I was amazed to discover there are only two people handling this job! Annie works from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and Hannah works from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. They feed about 50 kids breakfast, and 225 kids lunch.

Annie and Hannah continued their work as we chatted before the lunch hour. Annie explained that TOPS has what is considered a “bulk kitchen.” The monthly menu is determined by Nutrition Services at the School District office. Annie orders food a month at a time, and then confirms her orders 3 days in advance. The food is delivered each day for the following day. Entrees usually come frozen and are stored in the freezer until the following day when Annie heats them to a specified temperature. Annie stressed the importance of being organized in this job; as we talked I could see they were completely ready to serve, and serve fast.

Breakfast is served every morning from 8:30 – 9:15. On Monday mornings there is a cold breakfast of cereal, fruit, juice, and cinnamon toast. There is a hot entree offered as well during the rest of the week. Annie reports that the children of TOPS are very fond of cinnamon sugar toast; she makes 120 slices every morning, and they are always gone by the end of breakfast. There are two entree choices for lunch, with broccoli, carrots, and fresh salad, and several choices of fruit. There are often other fresh vegetables offered, and there is always a vegetarian entree as well. And of course dessert. There are two shifts of lunch served, at 11:40 and 12:10, and lunch is usually over by about 12:30. Then Annie and Hannah start in on the clean up. Before the end of her day, Annie finally sits down, eats her own lunch, and does paper work. The day goes by quickly because they’re so busy.

Annie has worked in school lunchrooms for 5 years, and has been at TOPS for one year now. Hannah has been here for 3 years. They both find the hours suitable for their other responsibilities, and enjoy the time they spend at TOPS. Hannah has two children in elementary and middle school, and Annie has children who are now in college. What’s the best part of the job? Annie loves the view from the lunchroom, and the big kitchen at TOPS. And, the best part, she says, is the teaching staff – they’re GREAT! She believes we are all very lucky to have not only an excellent principal and assistant principal, but a wonderful teaching staff as well.

As we finished our conversation the lunch hour was upon us, and Annie and Hannah jumped into action, opening up the kitchen and preparing for the imminent mass of children. I left the kitchen thinking we’re lucky to have Annie and Hannah feeding our kids every day!

Message from the Principal continued from page 1

students have shown improvement over last quarter. The Student in Good Standing Program is clearly working. Congratulations to our students and the middle school staff.

I have had the opportunity to write many recommendations for high school for our 8th grade students recently, and I am reminded as I write them that not only do we have many academically gifted students, but students who are involved in the arts, athletics, community events, and volunteerism.

Upcoming Dates and Events

Our second semester of school will be filled with many events and activities! In March, our 5th and 6th graders will go to camp. We’ll also host the Seventh Annual Taste of TOPS on Thursday, March 16. This is an opportunity for the TOPS community to share ethnic foods, entertainment, and celebrate the diversity in our school.

Saturday, May 6 is the TOPS Auction. The Auction Committee is working hard to make this event FUN and successful. It’s an opportunity for all families to be involved by volunteering time on the committee, donating items, and attending. If you need more information, please call our Volunteer Coordinator, Randi Niemer, at 252-3541. Her office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays. Her e-mail is raniemer@seattleschools.org.

At the end of March, we’ll begin preparing for the WASL/DRA testing. It’s very important to have good attendance and to avoid making appointments during testing for your students. They will not feel as much stress during testing if they get enough rest and eat a healthy breakfast. The test window for TOPS is April 19 – May 5th.

We hope you all had a nice mid-winter break, and are refreshed and energized for the remainder of the 2005-2006 school year.

Cheers!
~Clara
TOPS AUCTION CALL TO ACTION

By the TOPS Auction Committee

The TOPS annual spring auction is a mere two months away. Our goal is to raise $85,000 this year. We know we can do it, but we need every TOPS FAMILY to get involved to make this event fun and successful! We are asking every family to:

1. Procure or donate at least 3 items worth $50 or more by April 7. And yes, that is before spring break!

It’s EASY! And we are here to help! Follow this step-by-step guide:

STEP 1: Inventory your own resources. Are you a talented artist, artisan, cook, organizer, photographer, gardener or musician? Do you have any NEW (not used) items you can donate worth $50 or more? Do you have vacation property you can share? Do you have friends who are noted artists, famous athletes, or have access to unique opportunities?

STEP 2: Inventory the businesses you frequent and the organizations you belong to: restaurants, hairdressers, mechanics, museums, clubs, studios, etc. Most businesses are happy to donate items, so don’t be shy!

STEP 3: Identify the items you will procure. Hot procurement items include, but are not limited to: restaurant gift certificates, sports tickets, getaways, boat trips, retail gift certificates, and camps and lessons.

STEP 4: Check the TOPS auction website to see which businesses have already donated items or services.

STEP 5: Approach the businesses you’ve identified, preferably in person:

• Ask for the owner or manager.

• Introduce yourself as a family of TOPS and provide them with a copy of the procurement letter.

• Tell them that TOPS school needs their support.

• Ask them “Can your business support our school through a donation to our spring auction?” Remind them that all donations are tax deductible. Let them know that 350 people attend our auction and they will be listed in our catalog – great exposure!

• Fill out the donation form fully, giving the business their copy.

• Thank the owner/manager warmly!

STEP 6: Turn in donation forms to the TOPS office by April 7th. Be sure that the donation forms are fully and completely filled out! Preferably, the item to be donated should accompany the form, but the items themselves can be delivered to the office by April 26th. Perishable, large, or otherwise fragile items can be delivered to the auction site by 10:30 am on the day of the auction.

In the office you will find more donation forms and the procurement letter that you can present to businesses when you approach them - please pick one up if you haven’t already received yours (or if you need more forms for any other reason)! Don’t forget that one of your items can be a TOPICS FOR GROWN-UPS party! Contact Sandy Green at thetangeloes@hotmail.com or 328-1998 for more information.

2. Underwrite Auction expenses.

It costs about $13,000 to throw this party, some of which has been supported through generous underwriting. The less we must spend on the auction itself, the more money we can apply towards our goal! You can help by writing a check or donating supplies, food or beverages, or even decorations. Send your check made out to “Friends of TOPS” to Ellen Markman, 3715 E. Union, Seattle, 98122 or contact Tammy Luthy with donations of supplies at 322-3784.

3. Volunteer to help with planning or on the night of the Auction.

We are still in need of people to fill volunteer positions. If you can help, please contact Tammy Luthy at 322-3784 or thejeffandtammyshow@comcast.net.

THE SPECIAL AUCTION ITEM

By the TOPS Auction Committee

Anyone who sees a need for a specific school improvement is invited to submit their ideas to the site council by March 24. The site council is soliciting these ideas for the special auction item. Every year, during the live portion of the auction, attendees are asked to raise their bid cards to fund a specific need for the school, giving in increments from $25 to $1000 or more. This is typically an item that would fall under the category of a “capital project,” and one that benefits the entire school community. Recently, the special auction item collected between $15,000 to $20,000 for such school projects as multi-cultural books for the library, art display boards for the art walk, and sound dampening baffles for the gym. Often these projects came “packaged” with other items that benefited a specific program here at TOPS.

Last year’s special auction item raised $22,000 towards closing the budget gap. This had been proposed by BLT (the Building Leadership Team) when it became clear that the district would not provide adequate funding for basic programming. Strategic budget planning will take over to address this issue should it become an ongoing problem, so the special auction item is again open to projects suggested by the TOPS community.

Once you submit an idea, prepare to be its champion. That means writing a proposal outlining your idea, its likely cost, and how the project will be implemented. You will be

Continued on page 4
**SITE COUNCIL REPORT**

**FEBRUARY 8, 2006**

By Scott Winter

**BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Gerrit Kischner reported that the BLT presented a progress report on the TOPS 2005-2006 Transformation Plan to a group of peers from Blaine School. The presentation was an opportunity to obtain feedback on implementation to date and to discuss possible adjustments to the plan. Details of the plan can be found in the October 2005 Newsletter.

**FUNDRAISING**

Auction packets including information on the auction and donation forms have been mailed out to all TOPS families.

Maureen Germani reported that she is soliciting ideas for this year’s Special Auction Item (a big ticket school item that is described by the auctioneer and attendees raise their hands to indicate their contribution amount). The new gym sound system is a past Special Auction Item. The Site Council will select the item at their April meeting.

**DRAMA**

The 3rd graders will be presenting *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* on February 16.

**PRINCIPAL’S REPORT**

Clara Scott reported that approximately 50 parents attended the last middle school tour. There is one more elementary school tour.

Excerpts from the writings of four TOPS 7th graders are on display at the John Stanford Center as a part of Writers in the Schools program.

**UPDATE ON THE INTERMEDIATE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Judy Holben gave an update on efforts to persuade the District to retain the TOPS Intermediate Special Education program. The District has proposed to discontinue the program. Judy and parents presented at the January School Board meeting. The Site Council submitted a letter of support. Clara Scott and other TOPS staff have been working on behalf of the program as well. Judy reported that the *Seattle P-I* is putting together an article on the program. A final decision by the District is still pending.

**UPDATE ON READING BLOCK PROGRAM**

Second grade teacher Carla Fetterly and librarian Steve Haines gave an update on the Reading Block program for 1st and 2nd graders. The program, now in its fourth year, was developed in an effort to attack the reading gap. The students are divided into nine groups based on test results and teacher assessment. The group sizes range from approximately 10 to 15. Each group meets with a teacher for one hour per day to work on specific reading skill sets. The small group size allows the teacher to quickly identify where individual students need help and work to address those needs.

**THE SOURCE**

April Johnson from the Seattle School District gave a presentation on the Source, an information resource for parents and teachers. It was introduced this fall for high school and middle school students and is being phased in to elementary schools this spring.

The web-based program allows parents and guardians to view a variety of information about their student including classroom & homework information, test scores, and attendance records. District staff were available after the presentation to provide assistance in logging on to the system.

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**Special Auction Item continued from page 3**

 asked to present your idea in person at the site council and at the auction. Of course, if public speaking makes you faint with anxiety, you can ask a charismatic speaker to take your place. Finally, once the money is raised, you will need to see your project through to its completion.

Ideal special auction items have these characteristics:

- They fund one-time projects rather than on-going expenses. Pilot projects could be considered as well.
- They benefit the entire TOPS community, or a large portion of it. Benefits could be indirect.
- They address an academic need or solve a specific problem. Projects should fit the mission and vision of the school.
- They can be implemented within a reasonable time frame.

Talk to the teachers and staff about what they would like to see, about ideas that make their jobs easier. Think about your own child(ren)’s experience and what could make that better. Rally others to your cause. Then submit your idea to any site council member, or the site council chairs Marlies van Bergeijk (paul-marlies@world.att.net) and Maureen Germani (maureen@germani.org).
With all seven members in attendance, a unified Seattle School Board announced the establishment of a community advisory committee to develop a recommendation on school consolidations and closure. The driving force behind this decision is the imperative to redirect funding to improve academics and create quality schools and programs in every neighborhood.

The charge for the advisory group is to align existing and desired successful academic programs, initiatives, and best practices with school facilities. The group will consider such issues as strengthening academic offerings, establishing new programs, reconfiguring grade levels and schools, distribution and placement of programs and services across the district, aligning school capacity with current and future demographic needs, condition of school facilities, and the re-purposing of any excess space following the evaluation.

“As a school board, we are taking leadership regarding this issue and initiating a process as early as possible to involve the community,” said Board President Dr. Brita Butler-Wall. “We’ve listened to the community, learned from last year’s experience, and will take a new look at the issue.”

“Through various community discussions, including the work done by the Superintendent’s Community Advisory Committee for Investing in Educational Excellence (CACIEE), we believe that our community has an increased understanding of the need to take this very difficult and emotional step,” said Butler-Wall. “The facts are clear. Seattle Public Schools has significant excess capacity, which drains resources from every school in the District. Closing excess facilities means we can redirect our resources to the classroom. We can invest in academic improvements.”

“The process for developing a proposal for school consolidation differs in several important ways from the steps taken in 2005,” said Cheryl Chow, board Vice-President. “The most important change is to appoint a community-based advisory committee to ensure meaningful community input in the process, a strategy that has been effectively employed by districts around the nation that have faced the same challenges. In addition, greater consideration will be given to maintaining and enhancing successful academic programs. While there was substantial community engagement last spring, the board has specified that even more outreach is necessary, so that we can ensure the input of every constituency is received and considered.”

Two community members will be appointed by the board to co-chair the committee, which is expected to begin work by March 1. The other 12 committee members will be selected by an application/nomination process with equal representation from each quadrant of the city. Qualifications of committee members include the following: Leadership in academic and/or community, knowledge of the city quadrant in which they live, commitment to children, long-term and city-wide vision, and willingness to commit to criteria and principles adopted by the School Board. Committee members may be community leaders, parents/guardians, business leaders, or other concerned individuals.

The timeline for this work calls for final consolidation decisions to be made by the school board in July, with consolidations and closures implemented in fall 2007. The committee is expected to begin work by March 1, with a final recommendation made June 2. The committee will structure extensive community engagement throughout the development of their preliminary recommendation and will then refine the proposal for presentation to the Superintendent and School Board on June 2. Final action by the board will be the end of July.

“I applaud every member of the School Board for the initiative and courage they have shown in beginning this work,” said Superintendent Raj Manhas. “Our collective goal is to strengthen our school system - for the children of today - and for those who follow in the years to come. It no longer makes sense to operate more than 20 percent excess facility capacity when we are struggling to place sufficient resources into every classroom.”

“This is an opportunity for the community to come together to shape a school system that will truly be the best in the nation,” said Manhas. “We are fortunate that skilled, dedicated leaders are willing to devote their time and expertise to this critical work. I ask every member of our staff, all of our families, and every community member to provide input, and to respond thoughtfully as the work of the committee proceeds. I know that this is a difficult and emotional subject, and I will do everything I can to support our students, staff, and families as decisions are made.”

Peter Daniels, Director of Public Affairs
Seattle Public Schools, PO Box 34165, Seattle, WA 98124-1165
206-252-0203
TOPS FORUM ON CULTURAL COMPETENCE

By Joe Merrill

On February 9th, the TOPS Coalition for Social Justice and the Site Council welcomed Dr. Caprice Hollins, Director of Equity and Race Relations for Seattle Public Schools. In a wide-ranging presentation and lively discussion, Dr. Hollins described her efforts to provide the guidance and resources to develop cultural competency and equity within Seattle Public Schools. Her work involves assisting teachers, administrators, and parents to gain the awareness, knowledge, and skills we need to relate comfortably to a wide spectrum of people and implement classroom practices and curriculum that enable all children to thrive intellectually and socially.

Dr. Hollins grew up in Seattle in a mixed-race family, and speaks openly about how the diversity of her family and community affected her identity development and led her to explore issues of cultural competence in her life’s work. By articulating with humility and humor her own struggle to develop some measure of cultural competence, Dr. Hollins was able to engage those who attended the forum in a respectful and challenging conversation. We celebrated what has been accomplished at TOPS in integrating cultural competence issues into the classroom and school environment, discussed the challenges that middle school identity development present to this project, and raised areas where more work is clearly needed. Sometimes it is through our attitudes toward our own children that we can identify the work we need to do individually and in community. Dr. Hollins is available to support us in infusing cultural competence into every TOPS classroom and activity.

Dr. Hollins stresses how our culture leaves us little room to speak openly about our many differences, in how we look, what languages we speak, what kind of family we come from, and how we learn. This gives our children the subtle message that there is something wrong with these differences. To change this dynamic, we must develop new ways to speak with each other, even though we might be afraid to say the wrong thing and to be seen as part of the problem. Yet without these conversations, difficult as they might be, we cannot make the changes necessary for all children and families to feel welcome and valued at school.

Cultural competence can be envisioned as including work in three main areas: awareness, knowledge, and skills. We can cultivate an awareness of how racism, inequity, and privilege in society have affected us personally, generating stereotypes within us that make communication with others difficult and sometimes painful. Along with this personal awareness, we can increase our knowledge of how students, families, and communities, given our unique history, have been and continue to be affected by bias and racism. Finally, growing out of this awareness and knowledge, we can work to develop the skills we need to give affirmative voice to our differences and make our schools more welcoming to all students and families.

Dr. Hollins has a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Alliant International University in Los Angeles, and has worked at Atlantic Street Center, a local mental health agency that serves at-risk youth and families of color. She has worked with the African American Academy, and has taught courses on cultural diversity at a number of universities, including Antioch, Seattle Pacific University, and the University of Washington. She has been in her current position at Seattle Public Schools since 2004.

Our discussion of cultural competence and Dr. Hollins’ work will continue on March 2nd, 6:30-8:00, at the next Coalition for Social Justice meeting. The TOPS CSJ seeks to provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and administrators to come together and educate ourselves and the TOPS community about issues of academic equity, cultural diversity and social justice. All are welcome!

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CSJ CORNER

Welcome to the CSJ corner where you can look each month to find out what the Coalition for Social Justice has planned for its monthly meeting the first Thursday of each month from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the TOPS library. Childcare is provided.

CSJ is a group of parents, staff, and administrators who work together in support of the stated mission and vision of TOPS. The purpose of our work is to educate ourselves and the school community about issues of academic equity, cultural diversity, and social justice as they affect our school and the broader community.

MARCH 2 MEETING:

- Teacher Spotlight: Third Grade teachers Katie Waters and Tracy Seefeld will talk about aspects of their teaching and curriculum. Tracy will also talk about her recent visit to Mississippi after the hurricanes.
- Follow up discussion of Caprice Hollins’ talk.
- Taste of Tops Planning.

APRIL 6 MEETING:

- A Training Consultant from Learning Disabilities of Washington will share their experiences working with other schools in the area regarding learning differences.
- Planning for 2006-07 school year and RFP process: this will be a “mini-retreat” to discuss the direction/activities of the committee for next year.
**STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION**

*By Laurie Stusser-McNeil*

Spring is just around the corner—TOPS stewards have noticed the buds are starting to pop out on the trees and bulbs are breaking through the rain-soaked earth. Color will soon be coming back to the school landscape. And not a moment too soon in our opinion!

While there sadly seems to be a never-ending supply of litter to pick up in all the zones, weeding and mulching are also great opportunities to beautify the school grounds and learn about plant health. Stewards explore the perennial life cycle while also valiantly protecting their school’s landscape from the deadly invasion of yucky weeds.

The Stewardship team has met with Parks Department and School District gardeners and volunteer organizers to make sure we are helping their efforts around the school. The School District’s Self Help program has loaned us a healthy collection of tools and delivered mulch; Parks Department staff will help us protect the Rogers Playground hillside by talking about erosion with our stewards and delivering bark. The sandbox will get a new infusion of sand as well. Of course they are very supportive of what TOPS kids are doing to help the environment and encourage us all to get involved in the effort.

TOPICS on April 6 and 7 will focus on environmental issues in celebration of Earth Day. It’s your opportunity to go outside with 1-5th graders and get in the stewardship spirit. This gives me a chance to send out a heartfelt thanks to the many parents who are already leading teams into their zones on a weekly basis. The Stewardship program couldn’t exist without you. Rebecca Sadinsky is one of those parents, not to mention an original member of the Stewardship team. Rebecca is out with 7th and 8th graders every Wednesday, working with Mr. O’Connor to facilitate the challenging middle school schedule. Rebecca writes:

*It’s a mystery to me actually how this works, but I go to his class each Wednesday and get different kids. He stays with 1/2 of the class that is doing Social Studies and I take 1/2 outside. But, before I take the students, he gives them a talk about the meaning of Stewardship. I just love what he said in summary to them today as he was closing his explanation about why stewardship: “you are outside, helping out, doing some work in the fresh air and sun — it doesn’t get better than that.” It is just great to have him be unabashedly excited about this…and perhaps as a consequence of his speech and the sun as well, we had 14 dedicated 8th grade workers for 45 minutes today. Which makes my week. I love this stuff. I can get all moved about urban life and how cities are about ecology and human cooperation and dedication to making a livable diverse environment. It’s about many people pitching in to make their small corner of the complex web a bit better. I wish I could convey to the kids that the many treasures of the urban environment all come down to people they know and don’t know; to them, doing what they can and applying their talents to the physical and social world. Maybe when they are 25 they will remember!*  

I think Rebecca is conveying this message. I want to thank her and all the parents for their commitment to making the TOPS community and our world a better place.

(For more information and to get involved, write to ljestusser@comcast.net.)

“Twins” Mary Chao and Rachel show their school spirit on Teacher Day.
TOPS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By Toby Harris, TOPS parent since 1993

LOUISE CHACARTEGUI & TOPS

Louise was one of the original four staff members who started the Garfield Area Option Program (GAOP, later TOPS) in the portables at Stevens Elementary in 1976. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in May of 2004 and passed away in January of 2006, after celebrating her 62nd birthday on the 6th. The TOPS Historical Society would like to pay tribute to Louise for all the years she contributed to the TOPS community. Our memories of her tireless and creative energy along with her commitment and vision of alternative education will remain with us for many years to come.

In a November 1993 TOPS newsletter, Louise said that she especially enjoyed teaching the 2nd grade because it is a time of such change in children’s lives. She enjoyed watching as students became more independent, willing to take chances, and try new things. She found TOPS to be a school where there is a warm feeling among the staff and interest in learning new ways of teaching.

Louise used the city of Seattle as a classroom, taking her students on many innovative field trips and teaching them about the workings of the city. Throughout her years in the Seward building, both before and after the remodel, Louise was lucky enough to have classrooms with the best view of Seattle — of Lake Union, Gasworks Park, and the downtown skyline. She loved this view of the city and it inspired her to share city activities with her students. When the tallest building in the Pacific Northwest at the time, Columbia Center, was being built in 1984-85, Louise arranged for her class to have a tour of the construction site and see the building process. Her second graders also got a tour of the Kingdome!

Her classes also frequented art museums throughout the city, the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle Art Museum, and others. Her second grade classroom was always filled with art, and each year, she and her students decorated the classroom and halls with painted giant, colorful flowers. Her TOPICS were always popular, too. A favorite time of year for Louise was Day of the Dead, when she and Susan Mamlock (1st grade teacher) took their classes to visit Lakeview Cemetery and exposed the students to a healthy outlook on dying. A special treat for Day of the Dead was eating sugar skulls and cooking for the holiday.

This article was based on excerpts from a letter by Clara Scott dated January 20, 2006; an interview with Susan Mamlock, who worked with Louise at TOPS for over 25 years and remained a close friend; and the TOPS Archives.
Newer Math

By Jack Lee

This is a shortened version of a longer article that is posted online. The entire article is on the TOPS web page under Academics → Math, or at the web address at the end of this article.

"May you live in interesting times." It's an apocryphal Chinese curse, which beautifully captures our ambivalence about change. If you've tried helping your child with math homework lately, you probably know that our students are living in interesting times with respect to math education. Math curricula have changed dramatically over the past few years, and the changing isn't over yet.

This isn't the first time this has happened. Those of you who are about my age will remember the New Math. Introduced with great fanfare into K–12 education in the early sixties, it died an ignominious death before the decade was out. In its heyday, New Math provoked criticism and scorn that will sound familiar today.

Fifty years later, why are we again having trouble helping our kids with their math homework? Why are we again embroiled in passionate disagreements about the "right way" to teach math? Few TOPS families have failed to notice the troubled discussions of math curriculum flying around the Middle School email list and the Parent Math Nights. Math education at TOPS is changing, and we parents need to understand where the impulses to change are coming from and where they hope to go, if we wish to participate constructively in the process. The online version of this article includes some historical discussion about the history and motivations behind the current reform movement in mathematics education.

All of this tension came into sharp focus on January 23, when the Seattle School District sponsored a forum on the future of K–12 mathematics instruction, featuring an impressive panel representing K–12 and college educators. The impetus for the forum was the impending adoption of District-wide math textbooks at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The discussion soon revealed that there were deeper issues on people's minds.

Much of the discussion revolved around the relative merits of reform versus traditional approaches to math education, always with an eye toward how these merits should guide the District's upcoming textbook adoptions. Some of the speakers passionately articulated some of the common criticisms of reform curricula: their emphasis on leading students through their own discovery of mathematical concepts takes too much time, so that students are not introduced to all the necessary subject matter; they put too little emphasis on helping students develop computational proficiency; they touch on too many areas in a shallow way that does not allow sustained development of deep understanding; their treatment of geometry proofs is almost nonexistent, depriving students of their only significant opportunity to be introduced to rigorous logical reasoning; and the algebraic manipulative skills that are so important in all later mathematical work are given alarmingly short shrift.

Other speakers argued equally passionately that curriculum is not the problem, and changing the textbooks is not the solution; According to them, it is far more important to teach kids how to succeed and adjust the expectations of teachers, parents, and students; reform curricula can serve students wonderfully as long as the teachers are sufficiently well trained in how to use them. You can read more about the forum in the online version of this article, or you can watch a videotape of the entire forum on the SPS cable TV channel; see www.seattleschools.org/area/libc for the broadcast schedule.

Two days after the January math forum, the District's textbook adoption committee announced the final short list of textbook series that will move on to more thorough consideration. You can see the whole list on the committee's web page, www.seattleschools.org/area/math/math-adoption/mathadoptionhome.htm.

The only two series chosen for further consideration at the elementary level are TERC's Investigations and the University of Chicago's Everyday Mathematics series. I haven't had a chance to look at Everyday Math yet, but I've heard some good things about it, and I've also heard it criticized for omitting standard arithmetic algorithms.

The middle school short list is a bit more extensive, with four choices including the current CMP series. One middle-school choice that looks promising is Glencoe's Impact Mathematics: Algebra and More, which advertises "a complete algebra curriculum by the end of 8th grade." A common drawback of many "integrated" curricula is that they often fail to convey the beautiful unity and narrative structure of traditional subjects like algebra and geometry, so I like the idea of a curriculum that uses algebra as an organizing principle.

However, lest we expect too much from this textbook adoption, we need to realize that the committee's work is constrained by the requirements of the state's Essential Academic Learning Requirements and Grade Level Expectations. These reform-oriented standards were constructed in the 1990's, modeled on the NCTM Standards, and have been criticized for the same unbalanced emphasis on discovery at the expense of skill-building.

Perhaps the time has come to begin reassessing the Washington state math standards themselves. I invite anyone in the TOPS community who is concerned about the future of math education to join me in learning more about the state standards, the textbook choices, and the experiences of other school systems. TOPS math teacher Mark Ellis is on the adoption committee, and should be able to provide us with good information and resources. Let's see if we can figure out ways to translate what we learn into ways of supporting TOPS math teachers to help students learn all the math they need.

In addition to his roles as the TOPS webmaster and parent, Jack Lee is a math professor at UW, former middle and high school math teacher, and organizer of the extracurricular 8th-grade math enrichment program at TOPS. He can be reached at lee@oz.net. For the complete version of this article, go to www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops/academics/newer-math.html.
NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, Librarian

“A book burrows into your life in a very profound way because the experience of reading is not passive.”

~Erica Jong

“Worms and dirt in the library? No way,” I exclaimed as a student told me the title of her expository speech. “Oh, you mean gummy worms and Oreo cookies. Well that’s different.” That was just one of 16 subjects that were presented in this year’s expository speech category in our annual TOPS Speech Tournament. Open to students in grades three through six, this speech is a “how to” speech delivered in the library loft before four judges who use a point system to score the student’s performance. Everyone gets a certificate of participation and trophies are given to the students with the highest points. This is the first year we have had cats as a subject, and also how to play Mah Jongg, and how to play ping-pong. The students write their own speech and must present it in a three to seven minute time period. The previous week other students participated in the storytelling category, and coming up is oral interpretation, editorial commentary, and the 7-8th grade oral interpretation. “We’re in the thick of it.” A complete listing of the speeches and winners will be forthcoming.

What a delight it was to have a kindergartner, Cyrus, and his family parade into the library toting all of the books on the library’s “wish list.” These recent additions to the library were selected from “new book” lists and will be welcomed by all patrons. A big treat for Cyrus was helping to catalog the books, including adding a bookplate with his name on it. Thanks to all for donating books to our school. Look for a new wish list with this year’s honor books on it, including the Newbery Medal winner, *Criss Cross*, by Lynne Perkins, and Caldecott Medal winner, *The Hello, Goodbye Window*, by Chris Raschka.

So what are students using these days for finding information on academic subjects. Ms. Eich’s 8th grade students were in the other day to discover information on the civil rights movement. They randomly selected subjects ranging from Fred Shuttlesworth to the 13th amendment. They only had 45 minutes to find enough information to write a 2-paragraph paper discussing the subject and its relationship to the civil rights movement. Today’s students feel very comfortable sitting down at a computer and accessing information. At the same time they have not forgotten books as a source of information. The Internet provides a wider range of information, which creates new skills to be learned on how to “wade through it.” And remember the fun you had when trying to create that bibliography with all of the rules. Well [www.noodletools.com/quickcite](http://www.noodletools.com/quickcite), or [www.easybib.com](http://www.easybib.com) have taken all of the fuss out of it, creating more time for research and writing.

Found in the library.

King County library card on a wrist band.

The book *Eldest* sans cover.
**Ski Club**

*By Joelle Worthley, Grade 6*

Ski bus is one of the most fun things that happen in middle school. Everyone who goes has fun. On ski bus days, you have to bring your skiing or snowboarding stuff to the lunchroom and put it in the room for your grade. Then at 2:30 everyone comes to the lunchroom and picks out their stuff. After that we take it to the bus and put our skis or snowboards in compartments under the bus. Then we leave. Most people change into their ski clothes during the bus ride up. Some people change when we get to the lodge. We get there around 4:00 and most people have lessons at 5:00. Lessons go until 7:00; then you can do whatever you want as long as you’re with a partner. Most people go to the lodge at some time to eat dinner. You can bring food, but it’s easier to buy it.

Everyone is excited and most people are a little nervous their first time, but you get used to it. At 9:10-9:20, people start getting back on the bus. Skiing is fun, but it’s also tiring, so it can be a relief to get back on the bus. Also, at the end of the day everyone is really wet, so we all get a chance to dry off. On the bus ride back, everyone is a lot quieter than they are on the way up. Some people sleep. We get to TOPS at around 10:30 p.m. The parent chaperones unload the equipment and set it against the railing of the bus so people can find their snowboards and skis. Then everyone loads up and leaves.

Once again, ski bus is one of the most enjoyable activities in middle school. And it’s because of all the people that help out. Thank you parents!

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**Ski Club News**

*By Ryan Peperel Zenke, Grade 8*

Every school week begins, and slowly builds on middle schoolers until the progression of the first four obnoxious school days is suspended into a supreme, anxious, and relieving Friday; the blessed week day every student has ringing in the back of their heads as teachers elaborate about school subjects that will be forgotten in a couple of minutes. Nothing else in my mind could be a better release than dropping your schoolbooks, any knowledge from an epic school week, and hitting up the slopes with many other Seattle Public Schools at Snoqualmie Pass.

Skiing is a lifestyle to me, and no other reality at the kick start of a weekend seems better than a night session with my friends on the groomed bright white hills at Summit. Since the first Friday of January, new students and students who have participated in Ski Bus since sixth grade are enjoying and talking about their latest snow experiences from their historic nights. Whether it was shredding through new snow, or getting stuck and lost in deep powder, you can feel the hype generating from friends as they exclaim or experience memories that will last us into high school.
A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS
WHAT TOPS FAMILIES ARE CELEBRATING

Compiled by Lynne Goodrich, CSJ member

* MARCH IS WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH *

National Women’s History Month was initiated by the National Women’s History Project, a nonprofit educational organization founded in 1980 to “promote gender equity through education about women’s diverse lives and accomplishments.”

MARCH 2006 HOLIDAYS

March 1: Ash Wednesday (Christian) Marks the first day of Lent in the Western Liturgical year. Lent is a season of spiritual discipline, cleansing, and fasting. The name comes from the custom of making the sign of the cross on the forehead with ashes.

March 1: Dydd Dewi Sant (Wales) The feast day for the patron saint of Wales, St. David. Celebrated as a patriotic and cultural festival.

March 3: Hina Matsuri (Japan) On this day, also known as Doll Festival, parents celebrate their daughter’s happiness, growth, and good health. It originated about 1,000 years ago in the Heian Period (794-1192). Dolls dressed in the fashion of the people of the ancient court are displayed at home along with peach blossoms.

March 3: World Day of Prayer Worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year, and who, in many countries, have a continuing relationship in prayer and service.

March 6: Great Lent (Orthodox Christian) Many Christian Churches observe this period of fasting and penitence (40 days, not including Sundays), beginning on Ash Wednesday (March 1) and ending on the Saturday before Easter. Great Lent is an Orthodox Christian holiday that always begins on a Monday between February 15 and March 21. It is a period of self-denial observed with abstinence from meat, dairy products, wine, and olive oil.

March 13: Purim (Jewish) Like other Jewish holidays, begins at sunset and concludes at sunset the following night. A joyous celebration commemorating the intervention of Esther, a 6th century queen, who saved the Jews of ancient Persia from Haman’s plot. The book of Esther/The Megillah is read aloud in synagogue – children dress as characters in the story and hiss and use noisemakers whenever Haman’s name is mentioned.

March 14: Holi (Hindu) Celebrates spring and harvest, days getting warmer, winter over.

March 17: St. Patrick’s Day Celebrated in honor of Ireland’s patron saint who came to Ireland as a Roman slave at the age of 16 during the 5th century. He brought Christianity to many in Ireland. Celebrations in the US are secular and date back to 1737 when Boston held its first St. Patrick’s Day parade.

March 20: Spring Equinox When day and night are the same length.

March 21: Naw Ruz (Iran) Iranian New Year and very important celebration. Unlike many other festivals in Persia, Naw Ruz is not exclusive to one religious group. Always on the first day of spring in Iran. Recognizes the rebirth of nature with rituals practiced for more than 3,000 years.

March 21: Higan-E (Buddhist) Seasonal celebration for spring and fall when day and night are the same length, symbolizing peace, equality and harmony.
TOPS ROLLER SKATERS

By Sophie Segel, Grade 4

Every year, for two weeks in January, K-8th graders do skating in PE. Some kids bring their own skates, either roller blades, or normal skates. The school provides normal skates for everyone who needs them.

Kids have fun by skating together. Some kids hang on to each other’s waist to make a train. Some fall down on squishy mats together. Sometimes a kid without skates pulls a train of kids with skates!

Some kids work together to help each other skate. Some 4th graders, including McKenna and I, come down at 11:25 to help the little ones tie their skates. There are also some 8th graders who come down and help. The advanced skaters help the beginners learn to skate. At the end of the two weeks Sophie, Simone, Sadie, and Hana all helped Don and Eric organize and put the skates away.

TOPS STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE MARATHON; DECIDE TO TAKE PART

By Scott K. Bishop

Seattle, WA — At least 5 TOPS students took the opportunity to learn more about the history of the marathon by participating in the 2006 Seattle Children’s Marathon on November 25. The children's marathon is structured to allow kindergarten through eighth grade students to complete the full 26.2 mile distance at a rate that is fun and safe for their growing bodies...one mile at a time. During the school year students are encouraged to log the first 25 miles leading up to the event by running at recess, during physical education, and/or after school. They then complete the marathon by running a final 1.2 mile loop around the Seattle Center crossing the finish line in Memorial Stadium. The event is held the day before the Seattle Marathon. The program is designed to promote healthy lifestyles and personal physical fitness. It also encourages students to read 13 books and do 13 good/helpful deeds to correspond with the 26 miles. This year almost 2,000 students from around the Puget Sound participated in the run.

What is a Marathon? The marathon commemorates the run of the soldier Pheidippides from a battlefield near Marathon, Greece, to Athens in 490 B.C., bringing news of a Greek victory over the Persians. This is where the marathon got its name. Thousands of years later, people still run, but now they do it for fun. The first annual Boston Athletic Association marathon was conducted on April 19, 1897; the date was chosen to commemorate the famous ride of Paul Revere in 1775. The Boston Marathon remains the oldest continuously held marathon in the world. The current official marathon distance of 26.2 miles was established purely by accident at the 1908 Olympics in London. The course was originally laid out to be 26 miles long from Windsor Castle to the finish line in the stadium. However, at the last minute it was lengthened so that the race would finish directly at the royal box. In 1924, Olympic officials formally adopted the 26.3 mile distance.
**Girls Basketball At TOPS**

*By Ankober Yewondwossen, Grade 7*

Hi, my name is Ankober and I’m on the TOPS Girls Basketball team. I started in 6th grade and I usually play guard.

I love being on the team not just because I love playing basketball but because of the happy feeling I get when I’m around the whole team. We’re like one big family. No one is left out and we are always cheering each other on to do better or congratulating one another on a good game.

Eric has always been a fun coach and even during the worst games when we’re down by a lot he’s always the one person to lighten our spirits by cracking a joke or telling us that it’s the ref’s fault, and he tells us that we can do better.

Amber Kilgore’s Dad, Mark Kilgore, is the Assistant Coach this year and has been really helpful because he knows how to explain things well, and he seems to know a lot about basketball. He also lets us know if we did a good job, which we always appreciate.

I think we have had a really good season so far even if we lose every game. I’ll still be happy being around the whole upbeat atmosphere of the team.
CPR In TOPS PE

By Esra, Carrie, and Ryan, Grade 8

This past week in PE, a CPR Medic from the fire department named Charlie Murphy came to teach our 5th & 6th period gym classes CPR.

First we watched a movie that showed us how to identify different medical emergencies including cardiac arrest, stroke, choking, and more. Mr. Murphy discussed these issues with us and taught us what to do if we find ourselves in any of those situations. Covering these topics prepared us for the future and gave us confidence that we’ll know how to react should these emergencies arise.

In the next session, Mr. Murphy brought dummies to use for practice and to take the CPR test with.

Here are the ABC's of CPR that we learned.

Open the Airway
Tilt head back and lift chin
Check for Breathing
Check for signs of Circulation

If the victim is not breathing, first call 911. Give two slow breaths (2 seconds per breath) and then 15 chest compressions at the rate of 100 per minute and then repeat 2 slow breaths. Continue until help arrives.

This has been a valuable and fun experience. We are now certified in CPR and believe that we can save Eric and Don’s life if they go down with a heart attack… which is probably why they set up this class!
2005-06 TOPS Calendar
Send your events and dates to our webmaster, Jack Lee, at Lee@Oz.net. Please check Wednesday Go-Homes and the web site for updates.

**MARCH**
1 (W).......... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
2 (Th)......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
3 (F).......... Speech Tournament: Editorial Commentary, 9:15-11:45 a.m.
8-10 (W-F).... 6th grade to Camp Moran
8 (W)......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
10 (F)........ Middle School Speech Tournament: Oral Interpretation, 9:15-11:45 a.m.
14 (T) ....... BLT meeting, 4 p.m.
14 (T) ........ Newsletter deadline
16 (Th)....... Taste of TOPS, 5:30-8:30 p.m., TOPS lunchroom
17 (F)........ Professional development day; no school
21 (T)........ 6th-8th grades, Middle school SE to SCT
22-24 (W-F)....5th grade to Camp Orkila
31 (F).......... Skate King field trip, K-5th grades, 9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
31 (F).......... Middle School dance, 6:30-9 p.m.

**APRIL**
5 (W)......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
6 (Th)......... 2nd-5th grades to SCT
6 (Th)......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
10-14 (M-F).. Spring break; no school
18 (T) ....... Newsletter deadline
21 (F)......... End of third quarter

**MAY**
4 (Th)......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
6 (Sa)......... TOPS Auction at the Asian Resource Center
9 (T)......... 5th grade to Thornton Creek
9 (T) ......... BLT meeting, 4 p.m.
9 (T) ......... Newsletter deadline
10 (W)........ Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
12 (F)......... Kindergarten to SCT
17 (W)........ Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
18 (Th)....... 5th grade and Kindergarten to Children’s Festival
24 (W)........ 1st-3rd grades and Elem. SE, DHH to SCT
24-26 (W-F).. 7th grade to Mt. St. Helens
26-27 (F-Sa)..Elementary Play & Art Walk
29 (M)........ Memorial Day; no school

**JUNE**
1 (Th)......... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
6-9 (T-F)..... 8th grade to Deception Pass
9 (F)......... Middle School dance, 6:30-9 p.m.
13 (T) ......... Spring Concert
13 (T) ......... BLT meeting, 4 p.m.
16 (F)......... 8th grade Passage, 7-9 p.m., TOPS gym
20 (T) ......... Middle school to Wild Waves
21 (W)......... Last student day

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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.