

TOPS NEWS

September 2005 ♦ Volume 9, Issue 1

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

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Welcome Back! Just when the sun has made its arrival, we are already focusing on the new school year. That's right, the lazy days of summer are soon to be a fond memory but don't fret, we've got lots cooking at TOPS and we are ready for the new school year. On September 7th we will start our fantastic 2005-06 school year. We have been busy preparing for our students' arrival. Saream, Darlene, Joe and Mogos have worked hard to beautify our building. Helen has prepared the new mailing envelopes for the welcome letters from the new classroom teachers and they will be mailed by August 26. The TOPS kid phone tree can begin with kids comparing notes on which friends will be in their classes! The activity calendar is up to date. Middle school lockers have been assigned. Gerrit and I are finalizing plans for the school year.

ACADEMIC FOCUS

Our academic focus will continue to focus on math and writing. Emily Lauderback, our math coach, developed a math continuum for each grade level and will remain as a math consultant on a limited basis. The students were assessed in June, so teachers will know where each

student's skills are in the fall. Our language arts teacher, Lori Eickelberg, will continue to lead us in developing a building-wide scoring and assessment of student writing skills at each grade level. And our occupational therapist, Carey Goldenberg, will be working with teachers to implement "Handwriting Without Tears" throughout the elementary grades.

NEW STAFF

Please join me in welcoming our new fifth grade teacher, Nina Binder. Nina will be a wonderful addition to the fifth grade team, filling the vacancy left by Jason Kerber. We are still interviewing for a middle school special education teacher, to replace David Breese, who married this summer and relocated to San Francisco. Jennifer Murray will have a counselor intern this year, and we will have two AmeriCorps members to assist with the bullying prevention program.

Continued on page 13



TOPS at Seward
2500 Franklin Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102

Phone: (206) 252-3510
Fax: (206) 252-3511

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.

A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW EDITORS

Welcome to the first issue of *TOPS News* for the 2005-06 school year. There will be nine issues this year (September-June, except no issue for January), and we hope to have the newsletter in your mailboxes by the first of each month. The goal of the newsletter is to keep members of the TOPS community informed about what's going on at school.

Anyone is welcome to submit an article for the *TOPS News*. All you have to do is email it to topsnewsletter@gmail.com or place it in our mailbox in the office. The deadline for the following month's issue is generally the 2nd Tuesday of the month, and will always be included on page 2 of the newsletter. We will do our best to include every article submitted, although we do reserve the right to edit due to space limitations. We also welcome your photos, which should be emailed to csuzumura@mindspring.com. Would you like to write an article but don't have a topic? We'd be happy to share some ideas with you.

We are looking for a new school board reporter, as Kathy Wickward has now joined the Site Council. If interested, please contact Kathy at 323-4278 or email the newsletter editors at topsnewsletter@gmail.com. Louise Bush Rosen is looking for someone to help her report on the Site Council. If interested, contact Louise at mail@rosenfamil.com.

Thank you to some very special people who help make this newsletter a reality. *Cindy Suzumura* handles photos, design, and layout. *Toby Harris* is handling mailing this year, and would like to have a couple additional volunteers to help her with this project. *Don Zemke* takes many of the fantastic photos. And a big thank you to *Teresa Nemeth* for her leadership as newsletter editor for the past three years.

Lastly we welcome your feedback on the newsletter and can be reached at topsnewsletter@gmail.com. We hope you enjoy this back to school issue.

~Jamie Flaxman & Ann Simonson, Newsletter Co-Editors



SEATTLE
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A MESSAGE FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

A warm welcome back to returning TOPS families and to all the new families who join our wonderful community this year. It promises to be a full and exciting time and our success depends on all of us working together. We need your help.

There are many, many volunteer opportunities at TOPS. In addition to the annual TOPS events that need many volunteers – the Auction, elementary & middle school plays, Taste of TOPS, and the Art Walk, to name a few, there are many more chances to contribute your services. Some are... daily recess and lunch help (this is critical), and someone to coordinate that, Room Reps, stewardship committee members, class field trip coordinators, grant-writing folks, fund development committee members, class or grade book order coordinators, Seattle Kids Marathon organizers (for our TOPS kids), and of course, help in the classroom. In your Back-to-School packets that will be coming home with your kid(s), there is a sign-up sheet for you to return to TOPS, with what you would like to volunteer for. However, don't wait if you already know how you can help. Contact me any time: raniemier@seattleschools.org, or reach me at 252-3541.

Let's make this the best year ever for our school. I look forward to working with you all.

~Randi Niemer, Volunteer Coordinator

ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the first newsletter of the 2005-06 school year. Jamie Flaxman and Ann Simonson edit, Cindy Suzumura handles photos, design, and layout, and Toby Harris gets it mailed off to you. Don Zemke provides many of our photos. G & H Printing prints the newsletter.

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 by email to topsnewsletter@gmail.com or to the newsletter box in the main office. Please send photos to csuzumura@mindspring.com. Deadlines are the 2nd Tuesday of the month. The deadline for the October issue is September 13. Would you like to edit or otherwise help with our newsletter? Newcomers welcome. Please contact Jamie and Ann at topsnewsletter@gmail.com.

LIME GREEN

For those of you who have the TOPS Directory from last year, the cover was lime green. Remember how easy it was to find amongst other important piles on your desk? (OK – table, chair, counter-top, couch, washing machine, floor of your car, etc.) It is an eye-catching color. Well, we are going to try a little something new this year and make use of that eye-catchingness.

We will be sending home anything that needs a signature, or that has to be returned to TOPS, on a lime green sheet of paper. This will make it easier for all of us to locate the important, time-sensitive papers and get them returned back to teachers and staff immediately. So, take note! If it's lime green, return to the scene.

WELCOME NEW STAFF

By Jamie Flaxman

NINA BINDER-5TH GRADE

Nina Binder joins the 5th grade teaching team this fall. Nina is a ten year teaching veteran. She most recently taught 8th grade science at Denny Middle School in West Seattle. She has also taught 7th grade language arts and social studies at Mercer Middle School in Seattle and at Einstein Middle School in Shoreline. Nina lived in Ecuador for three years, where she taught 4th and 7th graders. When asked why she's switching to elementary school, she responded, "When I teach I like to integrate all the subjects, which was hard to do in a one hour block teaching science." Nina has a Masters in Teaching, with her credential in elementary education and additional endorsements in art and English. She received her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Colorado.

Nina is also well traveled. She took the 2003-04 school year to travel throughout Nepal, Thailand, and New Zealand. She has also traveled in Mongolia, and named her dog after a Mongolian friend, Khishigee. Khishigee is a 6 month old border terrier.

Nina moved to Seattle 15 years ago. When asked what brought her here, her response, "an airplane." At the time Nina was living in Philadelphia, and she visited a friend in Seattle, liked it, and decided to move here.

This summer Nina and Khishigee went on a road trip to visit friends in Montana and Colorado. They then flew

to Philadelphia to visit her family. Nina's hobbies include running, biking, swimming, mountaineering, and reading. She was reading the new Harry Potter book when called for this interview. Nina's favorite children's book is *House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer. Her favorite food is bananas, and her favorite junk food, ice cream.

Of coming to TOPS, Nina says, "I am so excited to be involved in a school with an active and supportive community!" She looks forward to having parents involved with the class, as she hasn't had much of this kind of support in the past due to teaching at middle schools.

ERICA BREWER-STRINGS

We are pleased to announce that TOPS will have a dedicated teacher of stringed instruments for students in 4th - 8th grade this year. The talented Erica Brewer recently received her masters in violin at the University of Washington and has taught music at Shorewood High School, Einstein Middle School and at T.T. Minor Elementary. She was recently admitted to the Tacoma Symphony, was past Concertmaster of the UW Symphony Orchestra, and is current Concertmaster in the Lake Union Civic Orchestra. Erica brings a wonderful mix of teaching experience, technical skill, and enthusiasm, and we are all looking forward to a great new year. She will tentatively be teaching two different sections of students on Wednesday and Friday mornings at 8 a.m.

TOPS STAFF, 2005-06

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Principal	
Clara Scott..... office.....	cscott@seattleschools.org252-3510
Assistant Principal	
Gerrit Kischner..... office.....	gakischmer@seattleschools.org252-3510
Counselor	
Jennifer Murray..... B306.....	jmurray@seattleschools.org252-3534
Family Support Worker	
Alesia Jessie..... B305.....	anjessie@seattleschools.org252-3529

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Administrative Secretary	
Helen Hundley..... office.....	hhundley@seattleschools.org252-3510
AmeriCorps Members/Bullying Prevention Program	
Sarah Causey.....	252-3510
Catrice Dennis.....	252-3510
Attendance Secretary	
Tiffany Ogami..... office.....	252-3518
Audiologist	
Erin Donlin..... C101.....	252-3554
Custodial Engineer	
Saream Dy..... custodial office ..	sady@seattleschools.org252-3525
Evening Custodian	
Joe Rivers..... custodial office ..	252-3525
Lunchroom Manager	
Annie Meyer..... lunchroom.....	252-3523
Nurse	
Annie Uomoto..... nurse's office.....	auomoto@aol.com252-3521
Office Assistant/ASB	
Colette Hubbard..... office.....	252-3513
Office Assistant/Budget	
Joann Sparks..... office.....	252-3512
Psychologist	
Shareen Eberle..... B conf. rm.....	252-3528
Volunteer Coordinator	
Randi Niemer..... office.....	raniemier@seattleschools.org252-3541

TEACHING STAFF

GRADES K-5

Kindergarten

Joby Moore..... C106.....	252-3552
Joan O'Connor..... C105.....	jeconnor@seattleschools.org252-3551
Lana Fuller, PEAK .. breakout.....	lsfuller@seattleschools.org252-3553

Grade 1

Leslie Nilan..... C103.....	lsnilan@seattleschools.org252-3569
Karen Wong..... C104.....	kswong@seattleschools.org252-3550

Grade 2

Carla Fetterley..... C102.....	cafetterley@seattleschools.org252-3570
Julie Gillett..... C201.....	jsgillett@seattleschools.org252-3544

Grade 3

Tracy Seefeld..... C302.....	tseefeld@seattleschools.org252-3546
Katie Waters..... C303.....	kmwaters@seattleschools.org252-3547

Grade 4

Mary Chao..... C301.....	mtchao@seattleschools.org252-3545
Joe Drummond..... C304.....	jcdrummond@seattleschools.org252-3548

Grade 5

Nina Binder..... B205.....	nlbinder@seattleschools.org252-3556
Rebecca Moslo..... B204.....	ramoslo@seattleschools.org252-3555

Art

Cynthia Livak.....	252-3510
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Special Education

Judy Holben..... B203.....	jmholben@seattleschools.org252-3543
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Special Education Instructional Assistant

William Smith..... B203.....	wjsmith@seattleschools.org252-3543
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GRADES 6-8

Grade 6

Darin Durand, math/ science.....	B302..... djdurand@seattleschools.org252-3557
Marianne Trangen, social studies / language arts.....	B301..... marianne.trangen@stanfordalumni.org ..252-3558

Grades 7-8

Dan Bloedel, science... B303.....	dmbloedel@seattleschools.org252-3359
Lori Eickelberg, language arts.....	B403..... lmeickelberg@seattleschools.org252-3564
Mark Ellis, math..... B404.....	mellis@seattleschools.org252-3565
Tom O'Connor, social studies.....	B402..... tkoconnor@seattleschools.org252-3563

Art, Grades 6-8

Luzita Roll..... B401.....	lmroll@seattleschools.org252-3562
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Special Education

John Daugherty..... B202.....	jtdaugherty@seattleschools.org252-3573
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Special Education Instructional Assistant

Beth Engel..... B202.....	252-3573
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ALL GRADES

D/HH Program

Adrienne Yoshihara... C101.....	amyoshihara@seattleschools.org252-3567
Elizabeth Hayden..... C101.....	eahayden@seattleschools.org252-3567

D/HH Instructional Aides

Jessica Morrissey..... C101.....	jamorrissey@seattleschools.org252-3567
Molly Knapp..... C101.....	252-3567
Tammy Jones..... C101.....	252-3567

ESL

Nicole Titus..... B300.....	nititus@seattleschools.org252-3542
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ESL Instructional Assistants

Anna West..... B206.....	252-3531
Manuel Bermudez..... B206.....	mhbermunez@seattleschools.org252-3531
Rain Zhou..... B206.....	252-3531

Learning Assistance Program

Katy Rohr-Smith..... B201.....	karohrsmith@seattleschools.org252-3510
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Librarian

Steve Haines..... library.....	shaines@seattleschools.org252-3530
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Occupational/Physical Therapy

Carey Goldenberg.....	cagoldenberg@seattleschools.org252-4776
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Physical Education

Eric Herndon..... gym.....	elherndon@seattleschools.org252-3516
Don Zemke..... gym.....	dwtzemke@seattleschools.org252-3516

Special Education Resource Room

Middle School: TBA... B304.....	252-3560
K-5: Patty Maffit..... B304.....	252-3560

Speech and Language

Shannon McCormick ..C conf. rm. ..	smmccormick@seattleschools.org252-3554
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BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Instrumental Music

4th grade: Charles Holmes..... B405.....	cehii1951@worldnet.att.net
5th-8th band: Paul Gillespie..... B405.....	pogilles@hotmail.com
5th-8th strings: Erica Brewer.... B405	

Kids Company (child care)

Ian Mullins..... C Bldg.	tops@kidscompany.org709-8487
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Spanish Language and Culture

Rebecca Rabbitt.....	rabbithutch@hotmail.com
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BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM KICKS INTO HIGH GEAR

By Gerrit Kischner, Assistant Principal

After a couple of productive years of laying the groundwork, the TOPS community is ready to move forward with a full-scale program to prevent bullying and teach children the kinds of “pro-social” skills they need to be positive members of our close community. The coordinating committee of staff and parents has been meeting and working throughout the summer, and we’re now ready for the school year to start positively for all students and to kick off the program formally at an assembly on Tuesday, September 20.

TOPS staff voted in January to adopt the Olweus Framework for a bullying prevention program (named for the work of Norwegian psychologist Dan Olweus) because it provided a basis for creating a program that was rooted deeply in our own school culture. Our challenge since has been to think through the social development that occurs in our students over the nine years they spend in our building, with an unusually stable student population, a strong “sibling” culture that overlaps various social networks, and a wonderful commitment to sticking with TOPS that comes from the clear decision that families make in the first place to come here. We’ve also been considering data that has come from the annual climate survey as well as the Olweus survey conducted in Kindergarten through eighth grade in May, and a more in depth survey looking at the nature of different kinds of teasing conducted by University of Washington graduate student Jodi Newman.

Any parent knows the powerful effect that the school environment and peers have on students of every age, and for that reason it’s essential that we work together as a community to ensure that students are receiving the same messages about bullying behavior throughout school and at home. As a staff we will be working hard to identify bullying and bring it to the attention of students and families. This means that many more of you than in the past can expect to hear from me or another staff member about bullying behavior, that your student has been a target of bullying, has engaged in bullying, or even that your student was a bystander in a troubling incident. These will not be easy phone calls to make. Sometimes the lines are very blurry, and it’s unclear what students’ motivations were. Sometimes a student who was a target one day might turn and be a bully towards another child the next day. What’s important to recognize is that increased attention to the issue is exactly what we’re trying to accomplish with this program, even if it’s not always clear exactly why students are doing what they’re doing.

Because of the importance of consistency in the messages that students are receiving about bullying, I hope all TOPS families will pay careful attention as this program develops throughout the next several school years. Here are some details to keep in mind at the outset:

1. It’s critical that we all know what bullying is in the first place. The working definition that we are using is that

bullying is intentional harm-doing that happens over time and involves a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power. Bully behavior can be both physical and emotional.

2. As a school, we will follow four clear rules regarding bullying:

- ♦ We will not bully;
- ♦ We will help students who are bullied;
- ♦ We will include students who are easily left out;
- ♦ When we know someone is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school AND an adult at home.

What this means is that we’re making a commitment as a school community to get involved in behavior that appears harmful to kids. It means that staff members, volunteer playground monitors, and students themselves will be encouraged to respond consistently whenever they witness behavior which looks like bullying. We may not always know the full story and we won’t pass judgment, but students can count on the fact that we will identify any behavior that “looks like bullying.”

And students will be expected to report incidents that are serious. A student would be advised to report an incident of bullying if it meets one of these conditions:

- ♦ There is intentional harm done, repeated over time and involving a power imbalance;
- ♦ Bullying continues even after the target confronts the person and tells him/her to stop;
- ♦ A target is physically hurt;
- ♦ The target does not feel safe telling the person to stop.

A system will be established after the kick-off assembly for students to report incidents anonymously. We will be working with students to ensure that they understand that this kind of reporting is intended to help somebody who is being hurt. It differs from “tattling” or “busting” which is intended to do harm by getting a person in trouble.

3. The TOPS bullying prevention program will be formally kicked off at an assembly on Tuesday, September 20 at 10 a.m. Parents are encouraged to come, and all students will be expected to continue the conversation that evening at home with a school-wide homework assignment to affirm the home-school connection on this issue. At the assembly we will also announce the winner of the contest to name the TOPS program. Students are receiving information about the contest at the beginning of the year. We hope to find a good name that can capture the positive, community-building spirit that comes with this program, a name that represents the theme that “we all belong” at TOPS, and a name that suggests a broad sense of citizenship and responsibility.

4. The core of our program will be class meetings that will happen at every grade level every week. At the outset, these meetings will seek to teach the basic skills necessary for understanding bullying and grappling with it. We

BULLYING PREVENTION BOOKS AVAILABLE IN THE TOPS LIBRARY

By Elizabeth Dickinson

As TOPS initiates the Olweus bullying prevention program this year, class discussions about how to be a good friend or reach out to those who may feel excluded, lonely, or teased may become a more integral part of your child's school experience. If you'd like to extend these conversations at home, or maybe just become more acquainted with the dynamics of school age bullying and its prevention, the TOPS library is a great resource.

Here are some samples of the more than 55 library books for kindergarteners through adults on bullying-related topics.*

For adults, consultant Terry Chadsey recommends *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander: From Preschool to High School—How Parents and Teachers Can Help Break the Cycle of Violence* by Barbara Coloroso. This comprehensive guide discusses cues that a child is being bullied, appropriate discipline for bullying behavior, involving bystanders constructively, and school and community policies to prevent bullying. Other titles available for adults include *Best Friends, Worst Enemies: Understanding the Social Lives of Children*, which describes children's social development and how parents can support their friendships, *Queen Bees and Wannabes: A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends and Other Realities of Adolescence*, and *The Bully-Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K-8*.

If you are interested in exploring issues of bullying with an early primary child, try *Nobody Knew What To Do: A Story about Bullying*, that affirms the importance of reporting bullying and seeking adult help. In *The King of the Playground*, Phyllis Naylor depicts a child who successfully uses words to transform a bullying situation into a friendship. Elizabeth Crary (author of parenting book *Pick Up Your Socks...and Other*

Skills Growing Children Need) has developed a story / manual, *My Name is Not Dummy*, that explores different reactions to name-calling and their possible consequences.

Other books for this age group celebrate the individual uniqueness that may be a catalyst for bullying. *Wings*, a picture book by Christopher Myers, portrays a boy with wings who stays true to himself in spite of the taunts of peers. *The Hundred Dresses*, a 1944 Newbery Honor book by Eleanor Estes, and *Pinky and Rex and the Bully*, also depict the rich inner life of children perceived as different, and their ways of dealing with the teasing of classmates.

Fiction for intermediate grade children that explores bullying and social dynamics includes *Blubber* by Judy Blume, *Bad Girls* by Jacqueline Wilson, *Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade* by Barthe DeClements, *The Bully of Barkham Street* by Mary Stolz, and *Agnes Parker: Girl in Progress*, a "vividly told"*** story of growth and self-acceptance. For those more interested in self-help nonfiction, reviewers (including kids) have recommended *Cliques, Phonies, and Other Baloney*, a blend of humor and practical advice about popularity and friendship, and *Stick Up for Yourself: Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem*. Middle schoolers may enjoy *Reluctantly Alice*, about the trials and joys of seventh grade social life; *Crash*, in which a seventh grade boy is transformed by his grandfather's stroke and a friendship with a Quaker teen; or *Freak the Mighty*, the story of two unlikely friends. The dark consequences of bullying are explored in *Drowning Anna*, a narrative about Anna's spiral into an attempted suicide told through diary entries and the voices of her friend and parents. A lighter take can be found in *Stargirl*, in which a fiercely original teen challenges the conformist high school culture, or *The Misfits* by James Howe, the upbeat story of four social "misfits" who decide to run for student council.

For more suggestions, consult our wonderful librarian Steve or the listing of the library's book collection related to bullying that will be available in the library in the fall.

* These books are not personal recommendations, as I haven't had the opportunity to preview them, but represent recommendations from other reviewers.

** School Library Journal review

Bullying Prevention Program continued from page 4

will communicate in the Go-Homes, on the TOPS website, and in homework packets what the themes are for the meetings each week, and we hope that families will make a point to discuss the themes at home as well. Over time, we may be able to expand our vision to one that includes a broader sense of the values we hope to grow in our children, one that ties closely to other central aspects of the TOPS community such as social justice, stewardship, and citizenship in general.

5. As we kick off this program, we are pleased to have a great wealth of help coming to our side. First, TOPS will host two AmeriCorps members who will be working every day starting September 14. These positions are funded by Friends of TOPS. Their role will be to assist the coordinating committee with all aspects of creating and communicating this program. They will also be seen every day on the playground, working closely with the students to create a positive environment. In addition, Jodi Newman, a graduate student in educational psychology at the UW, will collect

data to help us to quantify the baseline of bully behavior in our school and to help us assess the results of our program. All of the data that she collects will be reported strictly in aggregate, and parental permission will be sought regarding the collection of any personal information.

6. How new students start the year at TOPS will be especially important. This year, we are starting the year with a new student orientation, and we're very grateful for the great help provided by our student council as they make these students feel included from the start. Please help your child understand the importance (and great opportunity) in reaching out to these new students. Also, it's important to recognize that friendships can shift dramatically over the summer, particularly in fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. We typically see some difficult moments at the beginning of a school year as students work out their new relationships. Please be supportive and help your children to clarify in their own mind how they can be a good friend to their fellow students.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SITE COUNCIL CHAIR

The Site Council extends a warm welcome to all families at the start of another school year at TOPS. We invite each and everyone of you to come and attend one or more meetings, which are open to any interested parent, staff member, or member of the larger community. They are held each second Wednesday of the month from 5-7 PM in the library, beginning September 14.

Regular site council meetings will be preceded by our annual retreat on Saturday September 10th, location and time TBA. This is an excellent time to come and share your thoughts about what might be accomplished this year.

This year's incoming parent reps are: Brad Angell, Kathy Wickward, Ivy Teng Luong, Eric Blazevec and Ellen Markman. They each bring their individual talents and experiences to their new roles. Returning are Maureen Germani, Judith Lee, Linda Korbus, and myself.

One way we will keep you informed is via minutes and other items in *TOPS News*. Your grade band parent reps will have additional ways to keep the lines of

communication open. The TOPS web site has a link to the site council as well.

We are fortunate that the staff members who served last year will all continue to serve another year. They are: Clara Scott, Gerrit Kischner, Steve Haines, Lori Eickelberg, Judy Holben, Marianne Trangen, Katie Waters, Carla Fetterley, Leslie Nilan, and Ian Mullins of Kids Co. Without their invaluable contributions and helpful feedback regarding how suggestions and ideas might play out in the classroom setting, the Site Council would be less effective and most certainly more dull.

Last but by no means least, I want to thank outgoing parent reps Kathy Cox-Czosnyka, Steve Havas, Lianne Sheppard, Sheri Toussaint, Shirley Bossier, and Coalition for Social Justice rep Galen Motin-Goff for their time, efforts, and commitment during their terms.

Looking forward to seeing you and/or hearing from you this year.

~Marlies van Bergeijk, Site Council Chair

NEW HANDWRITING PROGRAM FOR GRADES K-5

By Jamie Flaxman

This fall TOPS will implement a new handwriting program, Handwriting Without Tears (HWT), for all students in grades K-5. Carey Goldenberg, TOPS' occupational therapist, will help teachers implement the program. The kindergarten teachers have been using parts of the program for years.

According to the HWT website (www.hwttears.com), the purpose of the program 'is to make handwriting an automatic and natural skill for children of ALL ability levels. Children who can write well with ease and

confidence do better in all of their classes, enjoy school more, and feel proud of their work. Children and teachers enjoy success with HWT because it makes handwriting easy and fun to learn. HWT focuses on both print and cursive.

Clara Scott, principal, has ordered enough supplies for each child, as well as the supplemental items needed to house a great learning library with music and tactile learning materials. Carey sees her role as a resource to the teachers. The program will be implemented approximately five minutes each learning day.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH ACTIVITIES

By Greg Flood

This year, TOPS 7th and 8th graders will have two fun options for additional math activities after school. Since the plans are still being finalized, please watch for more information in future TOPS newsletters and in take-home material from your student's class. Partial scholarships will be available.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE MATH OLYMPIAD

TOPS is adding 7th and 8th grade Math Olympiad activities to those already offered in the past to TOPS 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. This group will meet separately from the lower grades and will be led by University of Washington graduate students. Activities focus on Math Olympiad problems in a club-like atmosphere. Cost is dependent on

number of students participating, but will likely be in the range of \$90 to \$130 for the school year.

EIGHTH GRADE MATH ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

TOPS students who enjoy math, find it fun, and are looking for additional challenges in algebra and possibly geometry are encouraged to sign up for the after school math enrichment program. This will be more of an academic endeavor, as opposed to the club-like atmosphere of the Math Olympiad group. An experienced math teacher will teach it; the goal is to provide a greater comfort level for students desiring to enter Integrated II Honors Math in high school. Cost is dependent on the number of students participating, but will likely be in the range of \$320 to \$370 for the school year.

TOPS SPANISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM CONTINUES

By Sharon Mentyka

Exposure to foreign languages at an early age is a valuable gift we can offer our children and one that has enjoyed strong parental support at TOPS. Our school community's strong commitment to educating our children by using an anti-bias, multicultural approach makes language learning important. Foreign language study exposes students to the richness of other cultures and provides perspectives which aid in the appreciation of diversity, helping our kids develop a wider cultural outlook.

Foreign language learning in the early elementary years (even on an intermittent basis) has proven results in increased verbal skills in the child's native language and better success in foreign language study in later years.

Rebecca Rabbitt will continue this school year as our Spanish Language and Culture instructor, which will again be offered before and after the school day starting in late October. This will be Maestra Rabbitt's fourth year at TOPS, and her participation continues to bring structure and continuity to the program.

Besides that, the kids have fun.

The classes incorporate action, music, games, crafts and culture into the lessons. Maestra Rabbitt teaches through the total language immersion approach. She 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. Parents should keep in mind that language proficiency comes slowly. Do not be discouraged if you cannot pry a word of Spanish out of your child after some weeks in the program. With plenty of language input from the teacher, their ear is being trained and speech will emerge naturally, when the student is ready, much as it does with children learning to speak their native language.

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 they are 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."

Maestra Rabbitt grew up both in the United States and in Cuba. She is fluent in Spanish and English and considers neither her second language. In addition to language instruction, Rebecca also teaches nutrition K-12 through the Washington State University, Family Nutrition Education Program to at-risk youth, and basic computer and internet in Spanish through the King County Library System. She is also a practicing artist. She is certified in cross-cultural interpreter training and is a certified Washington State medical interpreter.

TOPS Spanish classes meet twice a week for a 45-minute period either before or after school starting in late October for 20 weeks. Students are grouped by age and level: (grades 1-3); (grades 3-5) and (grades 4-8). The program is parent funded but the program's reserve fund and additional Site Council funding ensures that the program is accessible to all families who wish to participate regardless of their financial situation. Last year, thanks to strong financial parent support, we were able to establish a reserve fund for supplemental activities and scholarships, which allowed us funding of additional hours for Rebecca to visit other interested classes during the school day, introducing them to the Spanish language.

Along with the capable input of librarian Steve Haines and the Multicultural Book Committee, we also identified and purchased over \$300 worth of Spanish language books at all levels for the TOPS library.

For additional information on the program, visit the TOPS website under Academics>Languages. Enrollment forms will be available in late September. If you have questions about the program, contact Sharon Mentyka, Parent Coordinator, at sharon@pidseattle.com

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, Librarian

"The love of learning, the sequestered nooks, and all the sweet serenity of books."
~Longfellow

Welcome to the 2005-06 school year.

LIBRARY HOURS 8:45-4:30 M-F

I'm looking forward to working with the TOPS community this year including the many fortunate new families that have their children enrolled. It will be a pleasure introducing the new students to our outstanding library.

Among the many new faces this year will be a volunteer in the library who will be with us once or twice a week. Alex Soldano (Allie Hamilton's grandmother) is no stranger to libraries. Having worked for years in the Seattle Public Library system, the very personable Alex will bring much needed assistance to the library.

One big difference in library operations will happen early in the school year. Seattle Public Schools has reached an agreement with the Seattle Public Library to share their Dynix operating system with us. That means that our card catalog will look similar to that of the public library. TOPS is one of five schools to have this "new look" initiated early in the year.

STATES MUSEUM

Late last school year our third graders treated the TOPS community to a display of their hard endeavors by having a museum of US states displayed in the library. Third grade teacher Katie Waters started this challenging end of the year project years ago. Now with Tracy Seefeld's class also involved with the museum, all of the states are represented. The extensive research was divided into sections. Each student made a poster showing their state's signs and symbols. The research next led them to investigate different aspects of their state from history, to climate, economy, landforms, and famous people among others. This information was displayed in a brochure format. The two-month project culminated with the museum display in the library.

Classes were invited to come and move through the states as the students described their findings. The observers were then given a stamp in their passport before moving to another state. This annual event drew many comments, especially from older students who have already participated. They were very excited to see the exhibit and talk to the students who studied the same state. The younger students looked with anticipation of participating in this highly motivating event. This project is one more example of the challenging, high quality accomplishments of our children.

STATUS OF THE LIBRARY

Each year as school ends I spend time bonding with the library by inventorying the books and materials. It provides a revealing look at what books have left their

home. Following is a look at the 2004-05 school year.

Total collection is approximately 8,100 volumes, with 6,500 titles.

MARKED AS MISSING

Those materials not checked out from the library
and not on shelves at time of inventory 115 volumes
Replacement cost (not reflecting cost increases)..... \$1,159

MARKED AS LOST

Books reported lost by patrons or from students who have left TOPS 34 volumes
Replacement cost..... \$320

On the one hand I realize that loss of books is a part of running any library, yet I still cringe. I also realize that some of these books will trickle back in this year as they are found in the far reaches of someone's personal space. If we were to replace every book the cost would represent over one-third of the total library budget, but some of the books are either out of print or are a multiple copy of a book that we already have. Thankfully we have many generous families who donate new books. One of my goals for this year is to be more vigilant in making sure that the books get checked out and back home in a timely manner.

Photo provided by Steve Haines



ET CETERA

Has everyone read the new Harry Potter adventure? I was amused when talking to a child who had the book tucked tightly under her arm the morning after the release of the book. She had already finished reading it, and was going to start it again. Of course she loved the new developments that unfold in the story. I guess I better get a copy.

What I was really waiting for this summer was when Christopher Paolini's next volume in the Inheritance trilogy, *Eldest*, was released. It is an incredible fantasy story for older readers. And my goal of visiting all of the newly opened public library buildings in Seattle? Well I hope to get to that before school starts.

3rd graders share information from their states posters with the TOPS community.

RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By Jamie Flaxman and Sheri Toussaint, including information reprinted from the June issue of TOPS News

This past spring Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Raj Manhas presented to the community his preliminary plan for restructuring the school district, known as "Reshaping the Future of SPS." This plan, driven by a projected \$20 million deficit in the 2006-07 budget, dramatically changed the student assignment and transportation plans for the district.

On May 17, Manhas announced that the district would respond to "overwhelming" public sentiment by significantly backing away from his preliminary proposal to reshape the district. However, in order to balance the 2006-2007 budget, difficult decisions and changes would still need to be made.

Manhas has appointed 14 highly qualified and accomplished individuals to form the **Superintendent's Community Advisory Committee on Investing for Educational Excellence**. The committee's charter is to "Provide recommendations on the development and implementation of a short and long-term financial plan/strategy to advance academic achievement and make every school a quality school." The committee will submit its final report to Manhas by December 15, 2005.

Collectively, committee members bring outstanding expertise in finance, budget management and leadership experience in large organizations; skill in marketing and communication; and experience in K-12 academic issues. The committee is co-chaired by Trish Millines Dziko, co-founder and executive director of the Technology Access Foundation. Formerly Millines Dziko had a successful career in the technology industry, including senior management roles with Microsoft. She is a member of several boards of directors, including the YWCA and Washington Digital Learning Commons, and is the parent of four young children, three of whom attend T.T. Minor. John Warner, co-chair of the committee, is retired from The Boeing Company as senior vice president and chief administrative officer. Warner has served on the boards of the Alliance for Education, Western Washington University, Islandwood, the Partnership for Learning, and the Pacific Science Center. Warner is the parent of two Seattle Public Schools graduates and grandparent to five children, two of whom attend school in Seattle. More information can be found at the committee's website, <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/committeeforexcl/index.dxml>.

According to district staff, the specter of school closures may again rise if this committee is not successful in finding other acceptable options to balance the budget. Although school closures are now off the table for 2006-07, the district intends to present a revised student assignment and transportation plan for implementation in 2006-07 that will likely include

reduced elementary and alternative school choice. It will, however, also include a provision to grandfather all students to their highest grade. Manhas committed to bringing forward his revised student assignment and transportation plan with time for extensive public comment before it is finalized. District staff are uncomfortable with the grandfathering provision because it would postpone any fiscal savings, particularly if transportation were also extended. Failing to extend transportation would present serious equity issues, as not all student families would be able to provide their own transportation to their school of choice.

The School Board has also formed a committee, the **Transportation Futures Community Advisory Committee**, to research transportation alternatives for students and staff, and make policy recommendations to the board's Policy and Legislative Committee. The district has been actively seeking nominations for positions on this committee, which will be comprised of 20 to 22 members representing the diversity of the district. Ten community members will be appointed, including parents and representatives from the health or fitness professions; a bicycle transportation organization; individuals with expertise in transit and transportation logistics; a traffic safety committee member; and a former or retired school bus driver. Seven SPS employees, including principals, teachers, and/or nurses, will also be appointed, as will two students.

Dan Landers, a Summit parent, has been appointed to the Transportation Futures Community Advisory Committee. Staci Delgado, a TOPS parent, and Alan Lloyd, an Orca parent, are on the email advisory list.

The scope of the committee includes a review of practices, procedures, and options related to walk-to-school, transportation service standards, bus fuels, public transportation options, incentive programs for minimizing vehicular traffic, crossing guards, school patrol, parking options and fees, ridership fees, and field trips.

Dr. David Levinger, an expert on issues of transportation and urban design, will chair the committee. A parent to a graduate of Seattle Public Schools, he presently serves as leader of Feet First, the region's pedestrian advocacy organization. The group will meet biweekly from early July through the end of September.

Communities for Public Education (CPE) is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to improving public education for all children. They believe that high-quality public schools are vital to the health of Seattle. CPE works to: (1) transform the relationship between the public schools, parents, and the larger community, (2) recruit families into the public schools, (3) develop community-supported solutions to pressing problems, and (4) improve public education for all children. Their goals are to:

Continued on page 11

REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD

By Kathy Wickward

The Seattle School Board has been busy this summer, passing a 2005-06 budget, authorizing expenditures on a variety of items including milk and juice, and an expensive contract with the National Urban Alliance to provide professional development services, passing a new PE policy, increasing the price of school meals (except for those on a reduced price plan), and passing student rights and responsibilities guidelines.

Superintendent Manhas announced the membership of the community advisory committee that will make budget cut proposals for the following year. Andrew Kwatinetz, who co-founded Communities for Public Education (CPE) out of Bagley Elementary when it was threatened with closure in April, is now a member of the committee. The district has not yet made a counter proposal regarding a revised assignment and transportation plan. Mark Green, the district's chief operating officer, expects the district will roll out another preliminary proposal, followed by a public engagement process, with a final proposal appearing sometime in November.

The board also approved the capital budget, including a reconciliation resolution that pulled \$1.7 million out of the capital budget to service the debt on (basically making payments on the loan for) the John Stanford Center. This move would essentially free up that money in the general fund to use in the classroom, in addition to \$2.2 million in I-728 funds that had not been appropriated. The board voted to hold back those funds until they had a concrete plan for their expenditure.

A report on the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) results showed a continuing and glaring achievement gap between students of European ancestry and students of African and Native ancestry. This will be the last year the ITBS is used, as the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) will take its place at the 3rd and 6th grade levels.

The district debuted a new web-based communication tool for parents called "The Source." Parents will be able to access their student's grades, schedule, assignments and assignment history, and other information online. District staff assured the board that at least five levels of security protect that information, and that teachers would be "strongly encouraged" to utilize the system. Six high schools will be able to use the system in September, with the remaining high schools and middle schools connected by October. The district plans to make "The Source" available to elementary schools with some modifications in the second semester.

In the year and a half that I have reported on the school board, I can honestly say that it has only become more interesting. This year could be pivotal for Seattle Public Schools, with a new board in November, the potential for massive assignment and transportation plan changes, and major budget cuts looming for the following year. Reporting on the board has given me the chance to meet and talk with board members, to become familiar with ongoing controversies, and to keep the TOPS Site Council informed on issues that could affect how TOPS will operate. Now that I have joined the Site Council, I'd like to pass this opportunity on to another volunteer or two. Interested parents can contact me to find out more at 323-4278.

Reshaping the Future of the Seattle Public Schools continued from page 10

- ◆ Encourage parents and *all* community members to act as stakeholders - not only in their local schools - but also in the future of their school district.
- ◆ Support community and district efforts to understand and address problems facing our schools. This includes addressing the achievement gap, declining enrollment, inadequate public school funding and unequal access to quality schools and programs.
- ◆ Promote the many "success stories" within our district and work to see them replicated.

TOPS parent Johnny Calagno has developed a website with information for the TOPS community on the district's school assignment and transportation policies. This website, <http://keepustogether.org>, has links to the committees and groups discussed in this article, as well as information on joining a Yahoo group created for TOPS community members to discuss the reshaping plan.

WEBSITES AND LIST SERVE ADDRESSES

TOPS Website: <http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops/>

TOPS Information on Reshaping the Public Schools:
<http://keepustogether.org/>

TOPS Info: This list serve has been created primarily to provide a central point of reference for addressing the "Reshaping Public Schools" discussion. To sign up, go to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TOPS_Info.

Communities for Public Education: This district wide parent group encourages parent involvement to improve public education for all children. For more information and to sign up for their weekly newsletter, go to <http://www.cpeseattle.org>.

Superintendent's Community Advisory Committee on Investing for Educational Excellence: <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/committeeforexc/index.dxml>

Seattle Public Schools Website: <http://www.seattleschools.org>

STEWARDSHIP IN THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

By Laurie Stusser-McNeil

With a year of planning under our belt, it's clear that the TOPS community wants the stewardship program to move ahead. Here we go!

With school starting soon, it's time to start thinking about how you'll get involved at school this year. Why not consider Stewardship Coordinator in your child's classroom?

New to the roster of volunteer positions, the Stewardship Coordinator for each class will work closely with the teacher and our AmeriCorps members to develop environmental learning opportunities and a regular program for caring for the class's "zone" on school and adjacent property. You will have plenty of support as part of the Stewardship Committee, and have the chance to actively work with students for positive change in their world. You'll hear more and have a chance to sign up on Curriculum Night.

In the meantime, talk to your kids about stewardship. Ask them what they know – they may surprise you!

A lot of planting, litter and recycling awareness, and environmental study went on last year across many grade levels. Help your children get ready for a new year as responsible environmental stewards. For example, last year's kindergarteners will be joining older students in Rogers Playground for the first time – help them and all the students understand what it means to respectfully use a public park instead of staying exclusively on school property. Explore the changing of the seasons as summer comes to an end. What's in the news regarding water usage? Talk about how our actions make a difference.

To get more involved in stewardship at TOPS, you can contact:

Cheri Bloom cnblooms@comcast.net
Molly LaPatra lapatra@comcast.net
Maggie McDonald maggiemcd@msn.com
Rebecca Sadinsky rsadinsky@comcast.net
Laurie Stusser-McNeil ljustusser@comcast.net

A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS

WHAT TOPS FAMILIES ARE CELEBRATING

Compiled by Lynne Goodrich (CSJ Member)

NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

National Hispanic Month, September 15 to October 15, calls upon the people of the United States, especially the educational community, to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

SEPTEMBER 2005 HOLIDAYS

September 1: Paryushan-Parra (Jainism) The holiest time of the year marked by fasting, worship of the Jina and eight nights of celebration. The world's almost four million Jains are almost entirely located in India. Jain religion, during its existence of over 5000 years, has never compromised its concept of nonviolence in principle or practice.

September 5: Labor Day (USA and Canada) Declared a national holiday in 1894 to honor all working people. First celebrated in the United States on September 5, 1882. The association of the holiday with trade and labor unions has declined over the years.

September 8: Janmashtami (Hindu) Birthday of Lord Krishna. Hinduism began in India in about 1500 BCE. Approximately 700 million people practice Hinduism today.

September 8: Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Catholic) Commemorates the birth of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus. One of the Holy Days of Obligation.

September 16: Independence Day (Mexico) National holiday in Mexico. El Noche del Grito is the night on which at midnight between the 15th and 16th of September 1810,

Father Miguel Hidalgo issued the proclamation "El Grito del Dolores" (the Cry of Freedom) uniting the Mexican forces against the Spanish.

September 18: Moon Festival (China, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Vietnam) Festival focuses on the mythology of the Moon Goddess. A harvest festival at the time the moon is brightest; a time to pay homage to ancestors.

September 22: Autumn Equinox Equinox is either of the two times during the year that the sun crosses the celestial equator, an imaginary line through the sky, and appears directly above the equator, the imaginary line that divides the earth into northern and southern hemispheres. When this occurs, the length of the day and the night are approximately equal at every place on earth. This day also marks the beginning of autumn.

September 22: Higan-E (Buddhist) Celebrates the equinox, which symbolizes peace, equality and harmony.

September 23: Native American Day Several states celebrate this on the fourth Friday in September. Congress has considered legislation to make it a national holiday, but it has not passed yet.

September 24: Laylat-Al-Miraj (Muslim) Commemorates journey of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca (the "Sacred Mosque") to the "Ultimate Mosque" in the Seventh Heaven and his return the same night. Muslims believe that on this night Muhammad prayed together with Abraham, Moses and Jesus in the area of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Muslim date is Rajab 27, 1425.

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.

SEPTEMBER

- 7 (W).....First day of school
- 14 (W).....Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 20 (T)Bullying Prevention kick-off,
Grades 1-8
- 27 (T)Curriculum night – 1st-2nd grades,
DHH, 6-7 p.m.
- 28 (W).....6th-8th grade individual pictures
- 28 (W).....Professional development block
time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 29 (Th).....K-5 individual pictures
- 29 (Th).....Curriculum night
5th-6th grades, 6-7 p.m.
7th-8th grades, 7:15-8:15 p.m.

OCTOBER

- 6 (Th).....Curriculum night - 3rd-4th grades/
Intermediate special ed., 6-7 p.m.
- 12 (W).....1st-3rd grade, DHH to SCT
- 12 (W).....Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 14 (F).....Professional development day;
no school
- 24-28 (M-F)....Spirit Week
- 26 (W).....Professional development block
time; 2-hour early dismissal

NOVEMBER

- 9 (W).....Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 10 (Th).....End of first quarter
- 11 (F).....Veterans Day; no school
- 23 (W).....1-hour early dismissal
- 24-25 (Th-F) ... Thanksgiving holiday; no school

DECEMBER

- 16 (F).....1-hour early dismissal
- 19-30 (M-F).... Winter break; no school

JANUARY

- 2 (M).....Winter break; no school
- 3 (T)Classes resume
- 11 (W).....Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 16 (M).....Martin Luther King Jr. Day;
no school

FEBRUARY

- 2 (Th).....End of semester
- 3 (F).....Day between semesters; no school
- 8 (W).....Professional development block
time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 8 (W).....Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 20 (M).....Presidents Day; no school
- 21-24 (T-F).....Mid-winter break; no school

MARCH

- 1 (W).....Professional development block
time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 8 (W).....Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 17 (F).....Professional development day;
no school

APRIL

- 5Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 10-14 (M-F)....Spring break; no school
- 21 (F).....End of third quarter

MAY

- 6 (Sa).....TOPS Auction at the Asian
Resource Center
- 10 (W).....Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 17 (W).....Professional development block
time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 29 (M).....Memorial Day; no school

JUNE

- 21 (W).....Last student day

A Message from the Principal continued from page 1

COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE/SITE COUNCIL

The Coalition for Social Justice led by chairperson, Bonnie Cech, had its annual retreat on Wednesday August 17, and has planned many exciting events for the new school year. Watch the Go-Home and *Tops News* for further information on these CSJ activities.

The Site Council has a new chair, Marlies Van Bergeijk, and they will hold their annual retreat in early September. You will find further information on the Site Council inside this edition of *TOPS News*.

CIVILITY

We will be implementing the Olweus bullying prevention program this year. Gerrit has a dynamite team of parents and staff who have planned the program for the fall. There is a wonderful article on this new program on page 4 of *TOPS News*. We will have the kick-off assembly on September 20.

NEW ROOF

The Brick building affectionately referred to as the "B building" has a new roof. We have installed new roofing

on parts of the C Building as well. You will notice that a noise wall is being installed along Boylston Avenue, a project that will not be completed until late October. As a result, school bus and drop-off areas will have to be temporarily modified. As you drop off and pick up your children, be aware of the construction work and changes.

Welcome to all of our new TOPS families. We are excited that you chose TOPS and look forward to your participation in the school.

We would like to welcome and thank our new co-editors of this newsletter, Jamie Flaxman and Ann Simonson, for taking on this awesome task.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and we'll see you on the 7th of September.

Cheers!

~Clara, Principal

CAMP AND FIELD DAY IMAGES

We had a great end to the last school year with all the TOPS camps, activities, and field day. Many great memories were created thanks to all the hard work and energy of TOPS staff, parents, and most of all, our students.





Photos provided by Jamie Flaxman and Cho Suzumura



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PUT AWAY THE FLOUR & GET OUT YOUR CHECKBOOK

From the No-Bake Committee

Be on the lookout for your TOPS No-Bake 2005 kick-off packet coming to you in September. This fall we are going to raise some big dough for our successful city alternative school. Our fall No-Bake goal is to raise \$72,000 and celebrate 100% participation from every family in our delicious TOPS community.

Our annual No-Bake drive is a fund drive, an appeal for funds, a call to action, an affirmation of our programs. This \$72,000 accounts for half our Friends of TOPS budget. It

is vital to our continued success. Detailed information of our TOPS budget needs will be included in your No-Bake kick-off packet.

No baking, no parties, no extra volunteer hours -- just good old-fashioned donations from the heart. All you have to do is write a check, stuff it in an envelope, lick a stamp and mail it along. Donate early and donate often.

We are going to make this year's No-Bake drive short and sweet. We will be closing the oven earlier this year to count the cupcakes (okay, the cold hard cash).

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