Message from the Principal

We are close to the end of the first quarter of school already. Thank you to all the parents who attended our curriculum nights. We had fantastic turnouts and it was a great opportunity for teachers to share their curriculum, classroom policies, and homework expectations with all of you.

November is a very busy time! Our No-Bake Sale is in full swing. Our chairperson is Randi Niemer; she had a crew here last week that collated, stuffed, and stapled. The big mailing has gone out, and there has already been a great response! We all know how important this fundraiser is to TOPS. The goal this year is $82,000. The No-Bake funds many of our extracurricular activities and programs at TOPS. Our goal is 100% participation from TOPS families.

Volunteerism is outstanding again this year. Randi Niemer is our Volunteer Coordinator. If you are new to TOPS and have not had an opportunity to volunteer yet, please contact Randi at 252-3541.

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled for November 13-21. Please remember that school dismisses at 1:10 p.m. for those seven days. If you have a middle school student and missed curriculum night, please call the office to sign up. If you have an elementary student, contact the classroom teacher if you do not have a conference time.

The Stewardship Committee and the classrooms are actively involved in maintaining our beautiful landscape. The Kindergarten and the 5th grade buddies are doing a recyling/compost pilot project. Please remember to put your cans in the the large blue recycling container.

The middle school students had their first TOPICS field trips. They all had a great time spending the day in an out-of-the-building learning experience.

Thank you to Bob Morrison for painting our donated scoreboards from Garfield purple to TOPS blue. Thank you John and Gail Chase for the donation of ice cream for TOPS students. Thank you to Johnny Calzagno for donating two trombones for instrumental music.

I Need Your Help!
Please remember NOT to park in the bus zone. If you need to give last minute instructions, pull down near the field. The busses are on a tight time schedule to get students delivered to other schools.

Please DO NOT cross the street between buses. It is a bad example for kids. We are trying to teach them good safety habits.

We are in need of games appropriate for kindergarten students. Rainy days are coming and we will need to keep them entertained inside.

Cheers,
~Clara

The TOPS Newsletter Needs You

Layout/Design Volunteer
The TOPS Newsletter comes to you each month, because of volunteers. The Site Council provides funding for the printing, and volunteers put the newsletter together. In order to continue the newsletter, we need a volunteer to step up and do the monthly layout and design work.

A template exists and training is available to help you. Layout experience required. Existing newsletter files are in Adobe InDesign.

Time commitment is approximately 6 hours/month, generally the 3rd week of the month. This is a great way to meet and exceed your TOPS volunteer requirement.

Please email topsnewsletter@gmail.com if you’re interested in helping.

December/January TOPSNEWS Deadline
Monday, November 13. Submissions to topsnewsletter@gmail.com
BEING A 5TH GRADE BUDDY

By McKenna Niemer, Grade 5

When I first thought about 5th grade, I was nervous. Then I remembered that we get Kindergarten buddies. I was afraid I wouldn’t get one because I was going on a trip with my family and we were planning to leave sometime earlier than the time we got Kindergarten buddies. My parents said we would stay for buddies and Cedar River. I couldn’t wait until we were assigned buddies. The day we got our buddies I was so excited because I didn’t care which one I got because I wanted all of them. My buddy is Ada. I share her with Lucy Corbit. I love having a Kindergarten buddy because it is a chance to feel responsible, to help them accomplish new things, to help them learn, and to make new friends. It must be exciting for the Kindergarteners too. I remember when I was in Kindergarten and I got my 5th grade buddy. The more you get to know your buddy, the better friends you will become, and your buddy will be a part of your life you will never forget.

TOPICS

By Gerrit Kischner, Assistant Principal and Tracy Seefeld, 2nd Grade Teacher

TOPICS has a long history entwined in the alternative roots of TOPS. These enrichment classes taught by teachers, parents, staff, community members and, at times, older students met nearly every day in the early years of the school, formed the core of the City School aspirations of the program and constituted much of the social studies and science curriculum. Later, TOPICS classes were offered three days each week, and students worked the other two days presenting “Learners’ Theater” about what they had learned earlier in the week. Over time, the TOPICS program has evolved to accommodate new additions to the curriculum, but it remains core to the kind of learner-centered, authentic, hands-on learning that defines TOPS as an alternative school. The involvement of the full community in developing and teaching TOPICS is central to the kind of family involvement that keeps us thriving.

There is no doubt, however, that the educational environment in our city, state, and nation has changed dramatically since the early days of TOPS, and with these changes come new challenges for keeping the TOPICS program a vital part of what we do. Teachers face new mandates to meet curriculum standards, and fewer families are able to volunteer on a regular basis during the school day. In response, we curtailed TOPICS during the 2005-06 school year while we studied the shape of things to come. In June, we asked the parent community to respond to an on-line survey in order to provide their input on a number of aspects of the program that we have been wondering about. Well over 100 parents responded to the surveys: 49 parents and staff responded to the survey designed for people who had experience teaching a TOPIC, and 84 parents responded to a more general survey intended for parents who had not taught a TOPIC. Every grade level of student was represented remarkably evenly (although this year’s third grade parents took the prize for the most responses – 22 percent!). Even though some parents may have filled out both surveys, this response was tremendous, and it has been very helpful as we have entered into a second year of revitalizing the program.

The response was generally encouraging. Eighty-five percent of respondents expressed that they felt TOPICS was an important part of the TOPS curriculum, and many people offered helpful suggestions. In the responses below, I have included the open-ended responses to a few key questions in order to give a sense for the breadth of responses we received. There were some responses that were clearly negative by parents who do not feel that the program has much overall value. I have not included these responses below because this forum does not allow for a full discussion of the questions. As a faculty, however, we have spent time with the full responses and will continue to do so.

Here are some immediate changes we’ve made this year to TOPICS in response to this feedback:

- There are a few single day TOPICS (1:00 - 3:20) on scheduled Fridays to accommodate parents who cannot commit to two consecutive days. Other TOPIC days remain scheduled on Thursdays and Fridays from 2:30 - 3:20.
- We have created two “theme-based” TOPIC days on which all TOPICS will align with a single theme: on January 12 will be “Social Justice” (this comes on the Friday before Martin Luther King Jr. Day), and on April 6 the theme again is “Earthday.”

Continued on page 6
YOUR DONATIONS TO THE TOPS NO-BAKE MAKE THE FOLLOWING STAFF AND PROGRAMS POSSIBLE FOR TOPS FAMILIES

- OUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR, JENNIFER
- OUR ELEMENTARY ART TEACHER, CYNTHIA
- ELEMENTARY SCIENCE WITH MR. BLOEDEL
- SCIENCE MATERIALS FOR ALL GRADE LEVELS
- SCHOOL DIRECTORY AND NEWSLETTERS
- TUTORING
- LITERACY BLOCK
- LIBRARY SUPPLIES & MULTICULTURAL BOOKS
- MIDDLE SCHOOL & ELEMENTARY PLAYS
- CHOIR PROGRAM
- INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PROGRAM
- OLEWEUS ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAM

- VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
- 3RD GRADE DRAMA PROGRAM
- TASTE OF TOPS
- 8TH GRADE PASSAGE
- ACT THEATRE YOUNG PLAYWRIGHT PROGRAM
- SUPPLIES FOR EVERY TEACHER & CLASSROOM
- CHILD CARE
- SPANISH, CHINESE, & SAILING LESSON SCHOLARSHIPS
- SPORTS TEAM UNIFORMS
- SAFETY COMMITTEE

PLUS MANY, MANY MORE BENEFICIAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR KIDS

* Please mail this form and your tax-deductible donation in the enclosed envelope. No-Bake Deadline: December 31, 2006 *

Name ___________________________________________________________
Address _________________________________________________________
City________________________State_________Zip_______________________
Phone __________________________E-mail ____________________________

We would like to donate: ☐ $1000 ☐ $500 ☐ $200 ☐ $100
☐ $50 ☐ $25 ☐ $10 ☐ $5 ☐ Other $ ___________

Method of Payment
☐ Check (make payable to Friends of TOPS) ☐ VISA ☐ Mastercard

Card Number __________________________ Exp. Date __________________

Signature ______________________________

☐ I would like to pay in 3 monthly installments (credit card only)

Please consider giving your family and friends an opportunity to give to Friends of TOPS. Provide information below and a letter will be sent.

Name ___________________________________________________________
Address _________________________________________________________
City________________________State_________Zip_______________________

We’d like to thank your family by listing you as a donor in the TOPS Newsletter. Dollar amounts will not be listed.

Please check the box if you do NOT want your family’s name published. ☐

☐ My employer will match my donation.

Company ______________________________

Please include signed company matching form.

Friends of TOPS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
Tax ID #94-3142402 All donations are tax deductible.
By Scott Winter

The meeting began with a visit from Schools First board member Kerry Cooley Stroum. Ms. Stroum reviewed the background of school financing for Seattle schools with a focus on the role of the Operating Levy and the Building Excellence Capital Levy. Renewal of these two levies will be on the ballot on February 6, 2007. Ms. Stroum asked for the support of the TOPS community as Schools First works to promote passage of the levies. The Site Council voted to endorse the efforts of Schools First. A volunteer will be sought to coordinate activities of the TOPS community in support of the levies.

**Principal’s Report**

Ms. Scott reported that the curriculum nights were successful and well attended. She also noted that the year is in full swing with students already busy going out on field trips and engaging in a variety of after school activities.

The first lunch time Mix it up Day was held recently. During a Mix it up Day lunch, students sit with others they normally don’t sit with. This will be a regular event for the upcoming year.

**Building Leadership Team**

At their most recent meeting, the BLT approved Teacher Excellence Fund proposals from 6th grade teacher Marianne Trangren and school counselor Jennifer Murray to attend the 2006 International Bullying Prevention Conference. The conference takes place on November 2 and 3 in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Drama**

Ellen Markman reported that the Middle School play will take place this year in February instead of December. Tentative performance dates are Thursday, February 8, Saturday, February 10 and Monday, February 12.

**Site Council Retreat A Success**

By Glen Tamura, Site Council Chair

We had an exciting and productive Site Council Retreat on September 30. We had an excellent turnout of both parents and staff. Thanks to all who came and offered their hard work and insight.

The purpose of the retreat is to orient new Site Council members (like myself!), and to design a work plan for the year. As part of the orientation, Site Council members described their jobs. It was amazing to hear about all the hard work that Site Council members do to keep the Site Council and our School humming along. What became very clear through these presentations was that things only “hum along” because there are many people working very hard behind the scenes.

We also discussed our priorities for the year, and then broke into working groups to create work plans on the new areas of priority that we defined: communication, finance, alternative education, and advocacy. The full work plans will be posted on the TOPS Website. Briefly:

**Communication – Chair: Vance Martin. Goals:**

1. Creation of a comprehensive solution for communicating key information both within the school community and outside to the greater community.

2. Work to enhance the public perception of TOPS, and to bring about an increased awareness of who we are, what we do, and our value to the community.

**Advocacy – Chair: TBD. Goals:**

1. Create one on one relationships with key School Board and District personnel.

2. Increase visibility of TOPS community at all district level decision making forums through consistent attendance.

3. Create a pro-active stance and effective messages on issues of importance to TOPS, including transportation and assignment.

4. Develop a reputation for the TOPS community for being consistently active and engaged in district issues that affect TOPS directly but also affect issues of educational quality and equity across the District.
**TOPS Movie Night**

*By Paul Shannon*

For its first event of the year, the CSJ (Coalition for Social Justice) showed the documentary film *People Like Us* as the focal point of an evening devoted to issues of economic class and cultural division in America. Forty adults were in attendance, along with 20 kids; the kids watched two different age-appropriate movies (*Akeelah and the Bee* and *Mad Hot Ballroom*) which also addressed matters of class and race.

I found *People Like Us* to be both entertaining and disturbing. Rich and poor, black and white, people from Appalachia or Baltimore, high school preppies, jocks and nerds, are all shown living separately, and all keenly aware of their class and status. Social groups in a Texas high school troubled me the most: the groups were rigid; they were based largely on money and race and in interviews, the students showed little comprehension of those outside their group. I detected no sense of common citizenship. I could not help but wonder: Will our kids end up in high schools like this? Do the early stages of these divisions appear in middle school, or earlier? Is there anything we can do to mitigate them?

A lively if brief discussion followed the film, which concluded with many of those present expressing an interest in continuing the discussion further. One parent attendee, for example, asked “Do you think you can change your class?” Another expressed an interest in exploring class differences at TOPS, where these separations are not unknown, and where a crucial part of our mission and identity as an alternative school is to create and sustain a community in which everyone equally belongs.

For those unable to attend, CSJ is looking into the ability for families to check the movie out for viewing at home and/or showing it a second time. Discussion will continue at a future CSJ event. (See the CSJ Corner.)

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**CSJ Corner**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**NOVEMBER:**

**A Two Part Discussion, Thursday November 2 at 6:30 p.m.**

An Update on the TOPS CARE Program—Join us for a discussion with Jodi Newman to learn about what she is discovering about TOPS Anti-Bullying Program. Ms. Newman is a graduate researcher at the University of Washington who is doing research on the TOPS version of the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program which is now in its third year.

**A Follow Up Discussion of the film People Like Us**

We will continue the discussion of the film on social class in America that was shown for TOPS Movie Night. The focus of the discussion will be on how TOPS can address class issues. Note: If you have not seen the film and would like to, contact Karen Stuhldreher at kstuhldr@sccd.ctc.edu.

**DECEMBER:**

**Teacher Spotlight, Thursday December 7 at 6:30 p.m.**

Sixth Grade Teacher Marianne Trangen will talk about the various ways in which the TOPS mission is carried out in her classroom and through the sixth grade curriculum.

Both of these events will be held in the TOPS Library. Childcare can be provided through Kids Co. Contact the office at 252-3510 to reserve childcare.

**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 social justice as they affect our school and the broader community.

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**Site Council Retreat a Success continued from page 4**

**FINANCE - CHAIR: IVY TENG. GOALS:**

1. Structure the budgeting process to tie to the Transformation Plan, and develop a policy that guides funding of core vs. supplemental programs.
2. Define procedures for project managers, including accounting processes, spending reports, and program evaluation.
3. Define supervision and evaluation of staff hired with Friends of TOPS money.
4. Define procedures for emergency and cash reserves and use of money that becomes available after the budgeting process is completed.

**ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION - CHAIR: KATHY WICKWARD. GOALS:**

1. Define the approach to Alternative Education at TOPS to support the current vision and mission statements of both TOPS and the Seattle Public Schools.
2. Work with the Communication Committee to create a message that clearly communicates our Alternative Mission, Vision, and Approach.

If you are interested in working with any of these or other Site Council Committees (Council for Social Justice, No-Bake, Auction, Stewardship, Newsletter, Music, Art, or Development), please contact Randi Niemer, the TOPS Volunteer Coordinator.

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**PARIS, HERE WE COME**

*By Marianne Trangen, 6th Grade Teacher*

**Ooh La La!**

We have the biggest group yet already signed up to come to Paris and London with TOPS this spring. It is not too late for you to join us. In fact, if you sign up by December 1, you can save some money. We will leave on Friday, April 6 and return on Sunday, April 15. This tour is for TOPS students, their parents, their family members, and/or their friends. If you are interested, please contact Marianne at mtrangen@raincity.com. You can find out more at www.myexpolorica.com/Trangen-9470.
2006-07 TOPS Calendar

Send your events and dates to our webmaster, Jack Lee, at webmaster@topsk8.org. Please check Thursday Go-Homes and the website for updates.

November
1 (W) Grades 4th, 5th & 6th to SCT
2 (Th) Grades 7th, 8th, & Middle school SE to SCT
2 (Th) CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
7 (T) BLT meeting, 4 p.m.
8 (W) Picture make-up day
8 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
9 (Th) End of first quarter
10 (F) Veterans Day; no school
13-17 (M-T) Parent Teacher Conferences
20-21 (M-T) Early dismissal, 11:00 a.m.
22 (W) 1-hour early dismissal
23-24 (Th-F) Thanksgiving holiday; no school
29 (W) High School choices night, 6:30 p.m.

December
5 (T) Winter Concert, 2 p.m.
6 (W) 1st grade, DHH to SCT
6 (W) State of the School, 6:30 p.m.
7 (Th) CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
12 (T) BLT meeting, 4 p.m.
13 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
14 (Th) Young Authors Celebration
15 (F) 1-hour early dismissal
18-29 (M-F) Winter break; no school

January
1 (M) Winter break; no school
2 (T) Classes resume
10 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
11 (Th) Martin Luther King Assembly, 10:30 a.m.
15 (M) Martin Luther King Jr. Day; no school
16 (T) 2nd & 3rd grades to SCT
30 (T) Kindergarten to SCT

February
1 (Th) End of semester
2 (F) Day between semesters; no school
7 (W) Professional development day;
2-hour early dismissal
8, 10 (Th, S) Middle School play
9 (F) Middle school dance, 6:30 p.m.
14 (W) Kindergarten 100 day celebration
14 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
19 (M) Presidents Day; no school
20-23 (F) Mid-winter break; no school

March
7 (W) Professional development day;
2-hour early dismissal
14 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
15 (Th) Taste of TOPS
16 (F) Professional development day;
no school

April
21-23 (W-F) 5th grade to Camp Colman
30 (F) Middle school dance, 6:30 p.m.

May
1-4 (T-F) WASL Testing
5 (Sa) TOPS Auction at the Asian Resource Center
9 (W) Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
16-18 (W-F) 7th grade camp
16 (W) Professional development day;
2-hour early dismissal
18-19 (F-S) ArtFest
19-19 (F-S) Elementary play
28 (M) Memorial Day; no school
30 (W) Spring Concert, 2 and 7 p.m.

June
5-8 (T-F) 8th grade camp
20 (W) Last student day

TOPICS continued from page 2

Our hope is that these details from the survey help to spur everyone’s creative thinking. In TOPICS, the true diversity of the TOPS community should be loud and clear. Please contact Tracy Seefeld, the TOPICS coordinator, with your ideas and questions.

Do you feel the TOPICS program plays an important part in the school’s curriculum? If yes, what makes the topic program important to have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes. It gives students a chance to choose a topic of their interest that they would like to learn.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. The students are given a chance to learn a variety of skills.</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. The students are given the chance to take a direct hands on approach in their education.</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I don’t think it plays an important role.</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are some ways to structure TOPICS that you feel would strengthen the program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offer theme-based TOPICS in which all TOPICS on a given day would relate to a single theme</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow students to enroll consecutively in the same TOPICS</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use TOPICS to teach a specific curriculum over the course of the year (ex: social studies or ‘City School’ units)</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change in structure needed</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TOPS Historical Society

By Toby Harris, TOPS parent since 1993

Not so long ago, in January of the 2003-04 school year, TOPS middle school students began to participate in TOPICS again. The TOPICS program has been available only to 1st through 4th graders for several years, though it started out school-wide. Middle school students were offered eight choices for the one-day TOPIC “Student Exploration and Experience,” an activity led by their teachers, which took them away from school grounds and classroom walls.

After the success of the first one, the teachers have offered “Student Exploration” topics twice each year, in the Fall and the Spring. Looks like we have a new tradition! Here is a big sampling of student offerings during the last couple of years.

- Play with Clay All Day - A visit to Patti Warashina’s art studio and hearing from Mark Horiuchi while digging into a hunk of clay;
- Gallery Walk - Wander through art galleries in Pioneer Square and visit an artist in her studio;
- Up, Up and Away - Explore careers, then visit the Museum of Flight and the Aviation Learning Center to experience life as a pilot;
- City Streets Adventure - Head downtown to NW Second Harvest and help with food bank chores; then Pike Street Market and First Avenue Service Center to make some bag lunches for others;
- Urban Hike - Choices have included around Lake Union to explore the parks and businesses, finding public art downtown, Queen Anne Hill, Alki Beach, Capitol Hill, and Madison Valley;
- Take a Hike - Hike Tiger Mountain or Twin Falls;
- Adventures in Election 2004 - Visit King County Records and Elections as they prepare to count ballots and view famous presidential campaign commercials;
- Sail Puget Sound to Blake Island - learn to sail and hear about the history of the island; rowing, kayaking and swimming are other water-related offerings;
- Dirt, Corruption, Sewers and Scandal - Take the Underground Tour, Klondike Museum and Uwajimaya’s;
- Just Move and Pho-Get About It - Dance at Velocity Studios and have a Pho lunch on Broadway;
- A Biking Choose Your Own Adventure - Bike to Edmonds, take a ferry, tour Seward Park, or conquer the Burke Gilman Trail;
- Checkmate - Chess tournament and lunch at Daly’s.

A couple of new choices for this Fall’s topic were Pike Place Market; table tennis at Washington Table Tennis Center in Bellevue; an exploration of Spanish culture by eating tapas and paella, visiting stores, bodegas, and markets and hearing a rock band called MANA; and investigating the mystery of Bainbridge Island’s lure.

Many of these topics remind me of the City Schools emphasis at TOPS which began with a 1982 state-awarded grant entitled “Citybound: Survival Skills for the Urban Environment.” Read about this next month!

A Monthly Calendar of Holidays

What TOPS Families Are Celebrating

Compiled by Lynne Goodrich, CSJ member

* November Is National American Indian Heritage Month

The purpose of National American Indian Heritage Month is to honor and recognize the original peoples of this land.

November 2006 Holidays.

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

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

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

Nov. 9: Independence Day (Cambodia)

Nov. 9: Berlin Wall (Germany) The Berlin Wall opened in 1989, symbolizing the end of the Cold War.

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

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

Nov. 14: Children’s Day (India) Birthday of India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharal Nehru. Nehru loved children and this holiday is a celebration of children with cultural programs in schools.

Nov. 15: Guru Nanak’s Birthday (Sikh) Birth of the founder of the Sikh religion in 1469.

Nov. 16: Louis Riel Day (Canadian Aboriginal) Louis Riel was a Metis leader who in 1885 led a rebellion and lost against Canadian authorities. Today his name is a symbol for Native independence.

Nov. 19: National Adoption Day (USA) This day is a national collective effort to raise awareness of the 118,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families.

Nov. 19: National Bible Sunday An ecumenical observance by churches in the U.S. in celebration of the bible.

Nov. 24: American Thanksgiving Celebrates the Pilgrims’ first successful harvest.

Nov. 24: Hmong New Year Celebrated with everyone in a community. A time of rest from harvest and work and a time for courtships and new beginnings.

Nov. 27: Advent (Christian) The period beginning the first of four Sundays before Christmas.
NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, Librarian

“A good word is like a good tree whose root is firmly fixed and whose top is in the sky.” -The Koran

You know what it’s like to be sailing along using your wonderful computer technology to sort through and craft your work when, all of a sudden, something goes askew with the computer or program, and you are asking yourself whatever happened to good old paper and pencil. I have little patience or time in fixing all of the quirks that technology throws our way. I depend on others to get me through the bumps.

One such person is 8th grader, Art Hedman. I have counted on his tech savvy on many occasions. Over the years he has taught himself the ins and outs of both PCs and Macs. Last year he took a TechStart class for 5-13 year old students from the Technology Access Foundation. Students in the class spent 2-3 hours a week using tech based activities to improve math, reading, and critical-thinking skills. He hopes next to be included in the Technical Teens Internship Program where he can specialize in web development, or programming, or network engineering. This program comes with a summer internship and a cash incentive for successfully finishing the program. Among Art’s many successes was being one of 25 students to receive last years Mayor’s Scholar Award for service to the community. Former TOPS student, Michael Haruta, also was a recipient of the award last year. Observing our student’s many successes over the years is a strong incentive, and a wonderful benefit to working at TOPS. I know Art is well on his way in finding his niche. Now about next year…

Once a year the state offers a Teacher In-service Day to all educators. This year October 13 was time to work in your building or to get out to other classes. This is also the time (Oct 12-14) for the annual WLMA (Washington Library Media Association) Conference. This year’s theme was Stretch Yourself and was held at the DoubleTree Hotel near the airport. There were a multitude of activities, and of course the concurrent sessions didn’t allow one to see everything. But I did pick up some good hints on keeping students from copying material from a source when doing a report, and of course what’s hot in new young adult literature. Now to process all that information, but wait school is Monday and…

DANGER: BOOKS!

By Marianna White, Grade 5

During Banned Books week, (Sept. 23-30) our school had a group of actors from “Book-It” come and talk to us and recite from a few banned books. The Seattle Public Library sponsored this event. The books presented included chapter five of Whale Talk by Chris Crutcher. This book was challenged in 2004 by a group in Georgetown for language and racism. Also presented was chapter 22 of Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech. It had been challenged in 2004 by a group in Georgetown for language and racism. The last book presented was chapter 4 of William Golding’s Lord of the Flies. It had been challenged in 1981 for implying man was an animal, and for violence and language. We all enjoyed the performances and the discussion after. During the discussion we were asked if we would read Whale Talk to a younger child if they asked us to. About half the students said yes, and half said they wouldn’t read it. Six out of seven people liked Whale Talk over the other books. One said, “I like Whale Talk because it has a powerful message.” Another person said, “I like Walk Two Moons. Whale Talk was too intense, but I guess teachers will have a different perspective than kids.” I think she is right. Everyone has a right to have a different opinion on the “danger” books, and that is our freedom of choice.

TIME TO CHECK YOUR CLOSETS

The kindergarteners are looking for games they can play during rainy day morning recess.

- Cards
- Checkers
- Connect Four
- Legos
- Chutes & Ladders
- Blocks
- Candy Land
- Matching Games
- Perfection
- Any Age Appropriate Game

ALL DONATIONS ARE MUCH APPRECIATED!

Questions: Email Kelly Hampton khampton@seattleschools.org

New Games

Complete Used Games
I'm sure many of you are aware of the great nation wide marches against legislation around immigration and immigrants. Many of the folks who come here (from every continent) do so to find better financial futures, many come fleeing political strife and civil war, many come without documents, some with temporary visas and some with granted political refugee status. I am proud to have been part of a movement to help bring political refugee status to people fleeing jail, torture, and the threat of being desaparecidos for their political views, and to be a part of a movement to help immigrants acclimatize to this culture.

The great majority of undocumented workers who come here work hard and long to support family here and in their home countries. Many wish to return and do so. Many consider the United States their new home, and their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are born U.S. citizens. While very few employers are cited or fined for employing undocumented workers, many industries and cities would shut down without this labor force.

“Hispanics” are becoming the largest “minority” in the U.S. as more and more must leave their beloved homelands to find work, crossing deserts, rivers, and whole countries to come here to work in whatever they can find. Some areas have talked about not allowing children who cannot prove to be here legally to go to school to get a formal education. Anyone with a Spanish accent, whether born here, or here with legal documentation or not, is subject to many types of harassment.

When my students talk about how I only say good things about Latin America, or their eyes widen in delight at the beautiful melody of “las mañanitas,” or students in general at TOPS ask me when will we have a salsa class and hail me in Spanish, or past students of mine and children from families whose dominant language is Spanish stand arm in arm and tell me, “but maestra Rabbitt, we all speak Spanish!” I know I have reached a goal of putting a face on the folks from Spanish speaking countries and their cultures, demystifying them and helping to take away the stigma of how “they” came here and promoting that we are all of one world.

Two films to rent: “Born in the U.S.A” and “El Norte.”

Desaparecidos- (deh-ah-par-eh-cee-doze) Disappeared literally, in this context it means those who are detained by police, military, and paramilitary forces and literally disappear.

Las mañanitas- (lahs mahn yah nee tahs) A traditional birthday song in Spanish, very melodic and long. “Happy birthday to you,” in Spanish, is often sung nowadays in many parts. In Cuba, a short happy birthday song, which is not the English version translated, is usually sung.
SAILING

By Miranda Price, Grade 8

Every Friday at 2:30, twelve students get to experience the joy of swiftly (or not) sailing across Lake Union. Many people have a lot to say about why they like it even if it’s not many words.

“The water,” to quote Chanda Jones an eight grader in the program.

“Just not having a class with homework,” to quote another student.

“Just the sailing.”

The 12 students ride in small two person El Toros and there are two groups. One group has no name and one is called “group therapy” for more experienced sailors. The very nice and patient teachers (Greg and Tom) quickly teach us to handle anything, wind or no wind, on the beautiful lake. It is a great opportunity for students and even if you’re not a child you should at least try and feel the water under you and the wind in your hair.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

By Gerrit Kischner, Assistant Principal

Parent-teacher conferences are an annual rite of passage in schools and they carry tremendous expectations. Parents and teachers alike spend the first few months of the school year sizing up what the year might bring for their students, and they anticipate the conference as the best chance to provide undivided attention to the needs of that child. That is a huge expectation for a half-hour conversation (even less in the upper grades). A few years ago, as I was anticipating my own conference as a parent for the first time, I found a book written by one of my heroes, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, whom I first met as a college freshman and who is one of the giants in the insights she provides on the role of schooling in the United States. The book is The Essential Conversation: What parents and teachers can learn from each other (Random House, 2003).

The book portrays a series of profiles of parents and teachers from a wide variety of public and private schools around the country. She speaks to the challenge parents and teachers have in shedding the many pressures on everyone involved in the conferences. Her essential conclusion is that parents and teachers must endeavor to speak their truth about the child which they share responsibility for educating. If parents can come to the conference prepared with a vivid anecdote about their child to share which helps portray some aspect of their child that they hope the teacher can understand, that will provide a useful springboard for building collaboration between families and teachers. Similarly, when teachers can share a classroom anecdote, that helps reassure parents that the teachers knows their child as an individual.

There is a wonderful interview conducted with Professor Lightfoot conducted on the PBS NewsHour about the book. You can read the full interview (and stream the video!) at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/july-dec03/parent_10-15.html.
ULTIMATE FRISBEE AT TOPS

By Riley Stusser, Grade 6

Ultimate Frisbee is a really fun sport! Even if you’ve never played before, it’s an easy sport to learn—and Coach Don can help you learn everything about the game.

I started playing Ultimate Frisbee two years ago and I was hooked from the start! Ultimate is kind of like football, only you use a Frisbee, you can’t run with the Frisbee, and you can’t tackle other players. Ultimate has a lot to do with teamwork and sportsmanship—and if you have both of these things, every game you play will be fun and exciting.

After the second year that I played Ultimate, my sister Rachel wanted to play too—and once she started playing other girls joined the team.

Every Saturday for 6 weeks in the fall, there are exciting games against other middle schools held at Ingraham High School—check the TOPS website for information and come out and cheer for us!

When I score touchdowns, or make an exciting play everyone on the sidelines gets really happy and it feels really good to help my team!

So basically, you should come out and join the team or come to the games ’cause either way you’ll have a great time!

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